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## Website design creative brief template

All the creative news is worth knowing on January 12. Also among Liam Neeson is a particular set of skills: selling tickets to the cinema. Taken 3 ends the weekend at number one at the box office, taking \$40.4 million in its North American debut. Better Call Saul gets the right trailer. The show's creators have said definitively, not Jesse and Walter in season one of Better Call Saul. But this new, extended trailer for the show has us no longer looking at James McGill's pre-breaking bad life, which includes parking attendant Mike Ehrmantraut and big brother, Chuck (played by Michael McLean). Ach crème-centered humanity. After a year like 2014, and this year's somber start, simple pleasures are more important than ever. And now you can't even count on it. That's right: Cadbury has balls up a recipe for the inexplicably popular Easter cream egg (chocolate is already milk milk). It's similar, but not exactly milk, the company said, and has even reduced the number of things in multiple packs from six to five. What's next? Will they change the cast of Burn Notice? All older, accomplished LadiesFirst, fashion brand Celine has announced that 80-year-old Joan Didion would front her new campaign. Now, Saint Laurent has included none other than songwriting legend, and 71-year-old wife Joni Mitchell in its Spring/Summer '15 ads. Mitchell was photographed by Saint Laurent creative director Hedi Slimane. Benedict Cumberbatch strikes again. The man nominated for best actor for portraying scientist Alan Turing showed that last year's expertly executed move to U2 at the Oscars was no coincidence using the same technique on Meryl Streep. Well done, sir. Read our Globes recap at the Golden Globes. McDonald's upsets people by evoking 9/11. Boston bombing News celebrates how franchisees use their street side soapbox to comment on everything from local affairs to global issues had Twitter buzzing during the Golden Globes. If you are a creative person living in today's world, people will expect to be able to find a few examples of your work online. How you decide to put it out there, though, is entirely up to you. I started on the web in the early aughts when I created a gallery for my creative work. I call it a gallery because it was just that: an empty space with pictures in a row that related to some projects I wanted to share with friends. Since then my site has evolved, disappeared, come back, and spawned other sites that express my thoughts and identity online. Each development was an opportunity to share new work in a way that reflected how I wanted people to experience it. I work on the web every day. I help designers, artists and galleries discover and create their online presence. And for seven years I have designed and led teams at Etsy, a platform that helps millions of creative people around the world use the web to make income from their crafts. In all my work, I have learned that each person brings his own body of knowledge and perspective when your own space online. The unique approaches that each individual brings to the experience are what makes the Internet an interesting place to explore. Before digging into this guide, I recommend reading Laurel Schwults' essay, My website is shifting the house next to the river of knowledge. What could be yours? It's a great sister piece to this more practical guide, and provides many possible surveys of website format. As Laurel mentions in his essay, artists excel at creating worlds. I hope this guide will help you start creating you. [Illustration: Sean Suchar] Start with why consider your ultimate goalSeat planning an online presence with the ultimate goal in mind, i.e. what you hope to achieve by doing your job online. This goal can be as simple as sharing your best pieces of writing with friends and acquaintances, or making the internet a little weird and more wonderful by documenting my creative process daily. It can also be more ambitious and concrete—I would like to sell enough ceramics to be able to hire a studio assistant, or I would like to showcase my best curatorial work to help me get more grants and residencies than I did last year. Goals can feel intimidating, especially when applied to creative practice. Before you consider the ultimate goal for putting your work online, you may find yourself asking: Won't having a goal just make me feel limited or cause my site to end up feeling fabricated? The answer is no. As with designing something or making a work of art, using restraint can help you be more focused and resourceful. It will also ensure that you plan your site in a way that is achievable, sustainable and useful for your practice. Getting Started: It's not that hardStarting can be difficult. So I'll offer you a six-stage mini-guide on how to get what might feel like a daunting task off the ground. To complete this short process you will need a blank sheet of paper, something to write with, a timer (you can create one Google search), your intuition, the ability to temporarily avoid critiquing yourself, and about 30 minutes. Mini-guide to create a destination for your creative presence on the web: Take a deep breath. We'll calm down. Set the time to 15 minutes. Then, free-write some ideal results (aka potential goals) that you have for sharing your work online. Hold off on assessing these results—just write down what appears in your mind. Try to write five to 10 ideas. The more specific you can be, the better. If you feel stuck to one, simply move on to the next. When the list is complete, use the minute timer to explore and circle the two results/goals that most resonate at the gut level. This is your moment to tune into your inner guide. Spend five minutes expanding each of your circled goal ideas. You can do this by typing a long and more specific description that gives the target more colors. You can also take pieces from one and add them to the destination you're more excited about, or you can merge the two together if it makes sense. Voila, you have narrowed down your reasons for making a website into one particular goal! Read your last goal aloud. How does it feel? Perform twists if necessary. Note: If you get to the end of this process dissatisfied with your goal, feel free to take a moment's break and then play it again. Congratulations! You have officially started the process of creating an online presence. Writing your goal down means you're 33% more likely to get your site up. Putting it in a place where you can see that every day is even better. So, a minute to celebrate. Who is this for and what should it look like? Identify the audience of your website! [Illustration: Sean Suchar] When you get a job online, you add it to a public space. This is the case even if you design your website to be a small collection of images and links holding together several lines of code. For this reason, it is very important to consider the needs and wishes of your future website visitors. As with your site's goal, being specific about your audience will help you focus exactly on your site's content and form should take shape. Spend some time imagining your website's ideal visitor, and write a list of things that might be important to their experience. Ask yourself: Who are you creating this website for? What kind of experience is that person looking for? Where do they come from? Are they friends, artists, curators, potential clients, or anyone else? To get even more specific about your audience, it may be helpful to think about people in your existing community who match the profile of your ideal visitor. Then you can imagine that the person wants, needs and motivation to visit your site. Once you have created this ideal visitor profile, feel free to give them a name. Then keep in mind next to your goal as you continue to work on your website. Get inspired by exploring other WebsiteChances you've visited some of other creative people's websites and you can easily remember a few of your favorites. It is worth your time to reconnect this site to see what makes their site successful. What does their web presence look like? Can you interpret their ultimate goal from their site design? As you explore different websites for inspiration, keep your goal and audience in mind and take notes on what you do and don't like. You will probably find a remarkable number of similarities and differences between pages you visit. Similarities are usually aimed at meeting common expectations for each visitor to the site regardless of their differences are what make the experience of visiting an artist's website memorable, and usually relate to their specific practice, technical ability and creative feeling. As you are brainstorming some of your favorite creative websites, I will share a few of mine: Visual artist, curator, writer and teacher Morehshin Allahyari uses a custom WordPress site that works well for both desktop and mobile browsing, and for screens of all sizes. It keeps content organized into logical sections that correspond to how it works: artwork, curatorial, writing, teaching, contact. Visual artist Petra Cortright creates an expressive experience with morning web atmospheres. The arrows point to a deliberate 30-second scroll to finally get links to her work. Visual artist and programmer Damon Zucconi resists common navigation buckets by creating a sprawling and immersive portfolio that can be filtered by Not Everything and Mostly Everything. Visual artist and writer Jenny Odell uses her own start page (a page that loads before the site's main content appears). Once you're around the splash page, she uses the grid layout to make it easy to navigate her projects and write. Creative director and designer Seokhoon Choi creates graphic one-page pages that work more or less like a business card. He has all the key information he needs to get in touch, while expressing his personal aesthetics. Early tech pioneer and artist Tom Jennings used his site to share an unassuming 25-year-old archive with 30,000+ pages of content, all written in basic HTML with easy CSS styling. The line at the bottom of the home page shows that the page has no trackers, no ads, no javascript. Designer Carly Ayres uses a public Google Doc for her site. The name, [Carly Ayres] WEBSITE FINAL, is winking at the file naming procedures because few digital files are still final. Doc is open to comments and editing from anyone online, making her site a real public-space graffiti and all. Now that you pass some people on my list, you can go out and explore the people who inspire you. Most of all will share their website links in their social media profiles, so browsing Twitter or Instagram can be a good place to start your research. When browsing, do and make sketches of layouts and ideas you like. Once you've gathered enough inspiration, it's time to make good use of it. Think strategically about what will live on your site! [Illustration: Sean Suchar] By listing exactly what you want to share on your site: words, pictures, projects, music, blog posts, news, links, or whatever. Before you do this, go back to why you decided to put things on the internet—yes, your ultimate goal. If you're like me, there could be years (or even decades) worth of work hanging around. Sharing it all probably doesn't make sense. Would your ideal audience sift through the entire archive trying to find their best projects? The way you choose to balance and contextualize your past, present, or even future work on your website is entirely up to you. Ultimately, it gives you the power to say exactly what you want to say about yourself and your practice-free sense of duty to be completely comprehensive. It's entirely up to you to decide what you want to share and how you want to share. Basic organizationA as you've explored other sites, you've probably noticed these four basic types of pages: Work/Projects: A portfolio-style presentation of things you've done or done that together give you a good representation of what you're doing and what you want to do. This could be a more thorough archive, or just a few highlights—it's up to you. Information: A page that shares a short statement about who you are and what you're doing, plus (if you want) a longer paragraph detailing your newer work, the specifics of your practice, or anything else you want to share. Some people include a link to a more detailed resume here, but you don't have to. Contact: Easily share pages on how visitors to your site can get in touch with you, whether via email, social media or the contact form. This is sometimes combined with the Information page. News: If you are planning to post frequent updates, it's a good idea to have a section on your site that is only for announcements. You can also use this section to create pages about new projects before they are ready for the Work/Projects Portfolio section. Start sketching your site on papers the first instinct to get started may be buying a domain or registering on a platform. However, starting sketching with paper and pencil is useful because it's much easier to play and try more approaches. Doing this initial job will help you better understand what options your site will need when it comes time to choose a platform or framework or even a domain name. With your content in mind, take time to make a few wireframe drawings of what your site might look like. Before you start sketching, consider these questions: What are the key pages you need? How can anyone move around? How often will you update your pages with new projects? Where will you share news or other updates? How does someone sign up for a mailing list (if you have one) or find your social media profiles? Where can visitors find information on how to get in touch? What will be unique about the overall look site and/or experience? As you sketch, keep referring back to your end. Be playful at first, then revisit what you drew with a more critical eye. At some point, consider your site from the perspective of the ideal visitor that you identified earlier. From their point of view, what might be missing? What information will not be useful or relevant to them? Which elements will feel a connection with your work, and as you to a person? When you get to the point where you feel good about your sketchbooks and you know the basic pages and components you want to include, it means you're ready to get started in virtual space. [Illustration: Sean Suchar] Technically speaking! If you want a code or not a code Now you can ask, should I code my own site? To answer this question, simply confirm your existing coding skills (or lack thereof), assess what you need to learn to create pages that you are excited about, and then think about whether it makes sense for you to spend more time needing to build a site from scratch. Know that there is no need to encode your own site these days because there are tons of flexible, easy-to-use platforms out there. If there are web skills that you are looking to develop, coding your own site can be a great learning opportunity. Plus, there are a lot of great courses and guides out there. Just keep in mind that learning the code when creating your site can add significant time to your project. The fast-start platforms for building the pages below allow you to customize themes to meet most of your design needs. In addition, extensive documentation and support is available with each platform. With the exception of Squarespace, each of the below also offers a free version. To pay for the platform you will get more features and options, including the ability to register your own domain name, which I highly recommend. With this in mind, here are the most commonly used platforms: WordPress.com: This is the most common platform on the web for building and maintaining small sites. It has many templates and plugins to meet most of your needs. WordPress.com offers relatively low prices compared to other options. Squarespace: This platform offers a wide range of beautifully designed templates that work sensibly in all screen sizes. It also provides many customization options. They have 24/7 customer support that is sensitive and helpful. Wix: This platform is easy to use and flexible, and includes automatic backup sites. They have a wide range of templates with a handy algorithmic helper called Artificial Design Intelligence (ADI) to guide you through setup. Unfortunately there is no live support (just email), so when you encounter a problem, it may take a little longer to resolve. Weebly: This platform is similar to Squarespace and Wix in many ways—including settings, features and pricing. They have a more limited selection of themes, but they work on all screen sizes. Themes can't be edited the way you'd like. DIY Frameworks [Illustration: Sean Suchar]: If you adept, exploring these DIY options can be rewarding, and will make your site feel more unique. Keep in mind that these options will require more steps, skills, and time than the platforms listed above—even if you already know how to code. Note also that if you plan to sell things from your site, you'll have even more work to do here. All these frameworks are free, but require you to pay for your own site hosting and domain registration. I've listed DIY approaches in order of complexity, with the simplest options toward the top: Basic HTML: If you've got the basics of coding but have a desire to do something technical, this option is a great place to start. Seth Price's site is a good example of a remarkable artist with a basic HTML page. WordPress.org: This is a free and open-source version of WordPress. Most companies that offer web hosting and domain registration have one-click installation options for this version of WordPress. You get many benefits similar to paid WordPress.com listed above, but they play a bigger role in maintenance, upgrades and security. Note that without certain plugins, these sites can be vulnerable to security threats. Indieweb: Developed by other creatives, Indieweb is the first framework I used to create my site in graduate school. It's free, flexible and simple, but requires you to know how to create databases, use FTP, and change permissions for files. They have useful tutorials for getting things set up quickly. GitHub Sites: For the most technically adept, it's a great choice. You'll need to sign up for your domain from another service. It offers fast static sites, version control, and free hosting. The templates that you add with this setting are very basic, and you may want to make larger changes to them. If you choose this route, I recommend using Sitemate to make editing content easier. Your name dot com Once you have chosen a platform or framework, you are ready for one of the most exciting steps: buying a top-level domain name. This is basically buying addresses on the internet. Now, if you have a fairly common name, there's a good chance yourname.com can already be taken. So, worry no: it gives you one more opportunity to be creative. Domain names have become more abundant in the last few years, with the introduction of many alternatives to .com. If you can't get yourname.com, try choosing something memorable when it comes to your creativity, personality or audience. The personal favorite domain name was John Michael Boling's now. There are also many fun alternatives .com, including pizza, club and info. You can browse available custom domain names here. Note: iwantmyname.com a good tool for exploring available domain names, but I highly recommend buying a domain name through a platform web hosting services that you will use. This will make managing your site over the years much easier. More on this below... Once you have your domain name picked, how do you buy it? If you decide to go with a quick-start platform, each one will have its own guide to buying a domain, and it will probably automatically connect to your site after purchase. If you have chosen a DIY framework route, there are dozens of sites that will register a domain for you. If you want to make your setup easy, it's a good idea to buy a domain with a company that can also host your site. The service I personally used for this purpose is DreamHost. They have reliable uptime, affordable prices, and are completely carbon neutral. If you want to delve deeper into the possibilities of registration and hosting services, you can read this list of reviews. [Illustration: Sean Suchar] The web is ever-evolving, and hopefully your site will evolve too. But before it can evolve, it has to live. As with other creative endeavors, perfection is the enemy of progress. It's easy to get stuck in all the possible ways you could create your site. For this reason, it is best to set a deadline for yourself, get feedback, and start the damn thing. Here are some basic steps to follow when you start a website: Gather all the content you plan to publish to your website and organize it based on where it lives. If you have pictures or articles, they've been combined into a single file. (Nerdy note about those big pictures that you're probably using: eventually, you'll want to resize them.) Through TinyPNG before uploading them. This is a free service that will compress large images to help your site load efficiently for visitors.) Use your earlier sketch as a guide, either with a quick-start platform or from scratch, to immerse yourself in building the original version of your website. Think about what you're doing as a prototype, or a minimally viable product that will change and improve as you experiment and get feedback. At this stage, don't be afraid to get every picture or article you'll have to do it later. Share your prototype with a few people you trust who also know you and your practice well. You can do this by simply emailing a link, or better yet, by sitting with them and having them explore your site while you watch. Tell them your goal, and then ask for their feedback. Note: You will get something very valuable at the moment. In the future, when people on the Internet view your finished pages, you will not sit with them. This means that you will have no idea how people will perceive your site and therefore how they will perceive you. Use this time with your trusted friends to see what their first impressions are, what they say about you, and whether they think the experience will work to help you achieve your goal. Based on the feedback you receive, you may want to tweak some things or even rearrange your site completely. (Remember: how your sites come to life come to life to you, so it's okay to cherry pick the feedback you agree with.) If you make adjustments, ask for a second round of feedback—from the same friend, and maybe a new, too—see how your newer version lines up to your destination. Hopefully after a few rounds, you will be sure that your new site achieves what you want it to achieve. Finally, add the rest of your content and put on all the finishing elements. (This is the moment to process your great pictures using TinyPNG, as I mentioned in the nerd side note earlier.) Once your site is complete, send it to another trusted friend (preferably someone who is good at catching typos and details) and ask them to review it quickly. [Illustration: Sean Suchar] Starting day Congratulations, you've put the finishing elements on your site and now it's time to get started into the world! Just like how you built a site that suits your style, you can run it in your own style as well. I have several friends who wanted to make their notifications more intimate by sending an email note to people they want to share with BCC'd. Some other friends would go for a wider audience using Instagram and/or Twitter to share news such as launching a new site. Any way you want to share your new home on the web is great if it feels right to you and keeps your goal and audience in mind. For more tips on thoughtful approaches to supporting your work, read the creative person's guide to the thoughtful promotion of Kathryn Jaller. If you've made it this far and successfully launched the site, that's a big deal. Please do me one last favor and celebrate all your hard work. Treat yourself to something special, and admire what you have achieved. Appendix: Maintenance Mode [Illustration: Sean Suchar] Some basic steps follow before you start building your website: Like your own human body, the website consists of many ever-so-mild shifting components, and therefore worth doing at least an annual examination to make sure everything works as they should. Here's a checklist of recommendations for keeping your site running smoothly once you have it: Make sure your domain and hosting account is set to auto-renew. If you can afford it, invest in a multi-year contract from the beginning to save some money on the long haul, and ease things on your future self. Use password manager and/or create a private and secure document that contains all your account information and login information. The more complicated your setup is, the more important this documentation will be when something goes wrong or when you finally need to renew that hosting contract by three years. Sign in to your account manager every year and back up the site to your computer or thumb drive. This archive will be nice to look at for years from now when your site has evolved and changed. It also comes in toss at rare moments when content is lost or the service goes down. (Note: If you are on a platform such as SquareSpace, a little more complicated) [Illustration: Sean Suchar] In summary... Creating a space for yourself online with your own domain and style is one of the most important things you can do to share your work. As you think about how to present yourself and your work online, don't obsess about getting everything perfect. Keep your setup simple, and focus on your goal and audience. Once it's up, pause to celebrate your effort and success. Then go back to doing the work you'll be excited to share in the next web update. Update.