

Memo of Transmittal

To: Lori Baker
From: Jason Zahn, Jessica Welu, Ameer Kramer
Date: 12/8/09
Re: Country Aire, LLC Website

Included is the final version of the Country Aire, LLC website. To access the website, please use the following:

<http://10.10.8.250/weluj/home.html>

About the Website

Country Aire, LLC is the Pipestone, MN Municipal Airport. Our client, Robert Dykstra, is the airport manager. The airport had never had a website but our client expressed keen interest in developing one that would serve to help pilots in the area or traveling in the area and also promote the city as a place to visit and the airport as a place to learn, experience, and utilize. Therefore, we had to create an effective and informative website from the ground up.

Our client's main concern was that the audience's primary needs be met. Together, we determined that the main audience for the site would be:

- Pilots in the area or planning to travel to the area
- People in the area who are interested in flying
- Community members
- Travelers interested in visiting the Pipestone area
- Businesses who need to travel to/from the Pipestone area

While the audience includes a wide range of people, the main audiences' needs could be broken down into two main categories: piloting needs and visiting needs. After establishing the two main reasons visitors would come to the website, we broke the two requirements down into specific needs.

The audience coming to the website looking for piloting information would be most interested in the services the airport offers (including fuel, maintenance, rental, programs, events and training), aeronautic information (including local weather, runway specifications, and location), and links to pilot organizations and websites.

While the other reason, visiting needs, may seem like a completely separate need, it involves much of the same information required in the piloting needs. The audience coming to the website for visiting needs might be most interested in location, weather, local events, local attractions, rental information, etc.

We decided that the website's purpose was to first be informative—get the pilots the required aeronautic and airport information they needed, and second, to promote visiting the area. The main audience would be looking to the website for quick information, thus our pages needed to be short, concise, and provide the correct information at the correct time.

Process of the Website Creation

When beginning the website, we first met with the client to research the information that we would need to include to meet the audience's needs. We spent the first two weeks researching, writing, and categorizing information for the website. We divided the required topic up between us so that the research and writing would take less time. Since Jessica knew more about the aeronautic language, she was in charge of making sure the necessary information was included and easily found and understood on the website. Jason worked closely on setting up a template for our site and worked with Jessica on the airport and aeronautic information, while Ameer was in charge of finding visitor information.

Since we were writing for a specialized group (mainly pilots who needed specific information written in a specific way), we spent part of the time testing the writing with pilots from the airport to make sure all the required information was correct.

After struggling with creating a homepage from scratch, we decided it would best suit our needs to learn the creation of a website while creating an effective and functional website for the client if we used a template with CSS already created.

After finding an appropriate template and experimenting with practice pages, we were able to find a design that fit the audience's needs. We spent a lot of time working on the homepage first because this was one of the most important pages for the pilots. The homepage needed to include specific aeronautic information that would be easily noticeable and readily available without completely dominating the page.

Jason created templates of the content and pathway pages so that we could easily work on the pages separately and still have a consistent look on all pages. After the templates were in place, we divided the pages up and placed the written information and pictures we had previously taken on the pages. The pages came together easily and quickly.

When we did the usability test in class, the test went over well. The testers liked how the information was nested and found the website mostly appealing. There were three main worries that arose during the test, however—the link to the home page was a little confusing, the sub-links switching with the new pages, and information placement/wording.

Some of the testers were not sure where to click to return to the homepage because the link was the company logo. In order to make this clearer, we decided to add a “home” link underneath the logo and keep the logo linked to home that way users could choose either option.

The sub-links created confusion for many of the testers. We had the set up so that if the user clicked on a certain page the link to the page they were on would disappear from the list since it seemed redundant. However, when the users tested the pages, they were confused about why links were disappearing and they had a hard time knowing where they should next click because of this. Since the disappearing links were more distracting than a continuous group of links, we decided to switch how the links were displayed. Now, no matter what page the user goes to in the category all the sub-links will remain in place.

A third worry was that the information placement/wording. Some of the testers were unsure of where to find certain information under the main links. While they were unsure if it was because they were not the intended audience and might not know the correct terms they could not find the information or if it was because of the wording of the main and sub-links. After going back and forth about this issue, we decided to rename a few of the links and see if they were more useful. For example, changed “Airport information” to “Aeronautic Information” to make the distinction between that link and Airport Services clearer.

After the changes, we asked a few of our friends to test the website and they had an easier time finding the information but still had a little confusion. We then called the client and talked with a few experienced pilots at the airport. After telling them the name of the links and asking them the same questions of where they would look to find certain information, most found the information in the first or second try. We

decided that since they were our target audience, that the new wording should make the website easy to navigate for our audience.

We also decided to change the external links so that they would open in a new window. After watching the testers, we agreed that we didn't like the links taking them completely away from our website. Then the only way to get back to the website would be to hit the back button or retype the url. We decided having the external links open in a new window would still keep the audience on our website while still giving them the information they need.

Future Changes

Although we got almost everything we wanted to accomplish done, there are always changes we wish we could make if the time allowed.

If we had the time to make more changes, we would have liked to create more interactivity within the pages. A lot of the information requested by the client involved pricing. For example, he wanted to have information on fuel, flight training and reviews, and hanger and storage rental. One of the main things audiences want to know with these topics are prices. However, because the prices (especially for fuel and flight training) are like gas prices—they fluctuate constantly—and the fact that he didn't want to have to constantly be editing the webpage every time it changed, we were reluctant to put the prices on. We came across another airport website, however, that had a fuel gadget that showed the price at their airport and airports in the area, and the gadget seemed to change automatically when the price changed. Unfortunately, we did not have the time or the knowledge to put something similar on our website.

We would also have liked to put an interactive map to the airport for both land and air travel on the website. However, because the flight directions had to be calculated in a particular way, our client wanted to be the one to put in the flight directions when we hand over the website to him. Because the flight directions are the most important thing and we already had a quick description of where the airport was on the homepage and contact page so that people driving there could easily find it, we and the client agreed that we would let him do both the land and air travel so that the directions were written in a similar fashion and didn't offset each other in any way.

Had we been able to work more with the design, we would have liked to perhaps add a little more to the aesthetic nature of the website. However, we all agreed that instead of accidentally going overboard in the design, we wanted to stick with a simple look that was easily functional. After all, our main concern was that the

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information be available and the website be easy to navigate. In the end, we believe our design and writing has accomplished those tasks.

Contacts

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us via email at: weluj@southwestmsu.edu or by calling Jessica at (507) 820-2343 or Jason at (320) 226-9018.