

**A Process for Developing the Structure of Need-Based Web Sites:
Technical Report 29**

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April 23, 2001

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A Process for Developing the Structure of Need-Based Web Sites

Introduction

This paper is intended to be used along with information found in *Design Strategies for Need-Based Internet Web Sites in Counseling and Career Services: Technical Report 28* (Sampson, Carr, Panke, Arkin, Minvielle, & Vernick, 2001). Exploring the rationale behind need-based design addresses questions such as “Why is this approach important for Web-site design?” Understanding the reasoning behind the approach allows an organization’s members to decide whether or not to employ a need-based approach. If an organization decides to take a need-based approach, the next step is to ask, “How can the organization’s members implement this approach?” This paper addresses this “how” question.

In the research and design of our own organizational need-based Web site (<http://www.career.fsu.edu/>), we discovered that employing a need-based approach requires the development of new ways of thinking. The approach is different from traditional Web sites that may simply list available resources and services. In the case of a need-based Web site, an eight-step process can be used to work through the Web site’s structure. These steps include:

Step 1: Defining Your Audience(s)

A need-based approach is rooted in the philosophy of providing audience members with the resources and services that best meet their specific needs. The first step to accomplishing this task is to clearly define the audience(s) that your organization intends to serve.

Step 2: Defining the Needs of Specific Audience Members

Often, members of an audience bring similar requests for resources and services to your organization. Outlining and presenting these needs in language that is familiar to audience members is an important step to encouraging audience members to move further into a Web site.

Step 3: Creating a List of Your Organization’s Resources and Services

Before your organization can link the needs of audience members with resources and services, it is important to outline what resources and services are available. The creation of this list is the first step to bringing audience members in contact with resources and services to address their needs.

Step 4: Defining the Purpose(s) that Your Resources and Services Address.

Knowing the purpose of a resource or service is the key to understanding which needs it addresses. This understanding of purpose leads to knowing where the resource or service belongs in the design of the need-based Web site.

Step 5: Matching Specific Audiences to Resources and Services via Needs.

When the needs of specific audience members are linked to the appropriate resources and services that address those needs, the maximum effectiveness of the need-based Web site is achieved.

Step 6: Writing Outcome Statements

Brief outcome statements can provide motivation and realistic expectations for using the resources and services that audience members discover on your organization’s Web site.

Step 7: Writing Audience Goals

Providing audience goals is a motivational technique that allows audience members to understand the potential of the Web site to meet their needs.

Step 8: Composing Additional Features to Facilitate Linking Needs with Resources and Services.

By following the need-based trail, audience members are introduced to the resources and services that address their needs. However, there may still be some question as to how to begin using the resources and services. Features, such as a pop-up window that contains “how to” information, allow audience members to obtain instruction regarding the application of specific resources and services to their needs.

This paper provides step-by-step instructions and worksheets to help developers accomplish these tasks.

It is important to note that, for the purposes of this paper, the term “audience” will be defined as the individuals who are served by an organization. This provides the opportunity to take a broad look at whom the organization is intended to serve, and how the Web site fits into this mission.

Step 1: Defining Your Audience(s)

The first step is to develop a list of audiences that your Web site is designed to address. Consider the following questions when creating your list:

- a) According to the mission of your organization, who is your organization designed to serve?
- b) Who most often requests resources and services or contacts your organization?
- c) Who may benefit from resources and services that you offer?

Example 1.1:

The audiences served by the Florida State University Career Center.

Audience	Sub Group 1	Sub Group 2
Student	Current	Prospective
Alumni	N/A	N/A
Community Member	N/A	N/A
Employer	N/A	N/A
Faculty, Staff or Administration Member	N/A	N/A
Family Member	N/A	N/A
Professional	N/A	N/A

Since individual audiences may have distinct sub groupings, you may also need users to further clarify their audience membership. In the example above, the student audience is divided into two distinct sub groups, those who are currently enrolled at the University and those who are prospective students (not yet enrolled). When users select the “student” audience they are delivered to a second page that asks them to further clarify their audience membership.

Use the [Step 1 Worksheet](#) to define your audience(s).

Step 2: Defining the Needs of Individual Audience Members

The second step is to brainstorm the typical needs that specific audience members bring to the organization. A need is defined as “the gap between what individuals know and what is necessary for them to know to solve a problem” (Sampson, et al, 2001). The following two activities are helpful in defining audience needs.

First, consider the following questions when conceptualizing needs for your specific audience members:

- a) What questions do individuals typically ask when they come to your organization?
- b) What is your expert opinion about the needs of your users or clients?
- c) What resources and services do audience members ask for, in which you reply, “no, we do not offer that resource/service, but here is where you can go”? (New need or service)

Remember that different members of a specific audience may have varied needs. For instance, one current student may need to choose a major, while another current student needs to find a summer job or internship. In addition, individual members of a specific audience may have more than one need. For example, one current student may need information on resume writing as well as information on job openings.

Example 2.1:

The career needs (Audience Needs) of the current students at Florida State University.

Audience	Audience Needs
Current Student	College major
	Information about occupations
	Education options after graduation
	Internships, co-ops, or other work experience
	Jobs and interviews

Second, use present tense, action verbs to present these needs. Doing so can provide a motivational tool to encourage your audience members to focus on their current situation and to get involved in the process. You can choose a present tense verb from Table 1, or come up with one of your own.

Table 1: Sample Present Tense Action Verbs

Apply	Gather	Participate	Seek
Examine	Identify	Read	Take
Explore	Learn	Register	Understand
Find	Match	Review	Visit

Example 2.2:

The career needs (Audience Needs) of the current students at Florida State University written in active voice.

Audience	Audience Needs
Current Student	Choose or change my college major.
	Explore career options and information.
	Explore education options after graduation.
	Find internships, co-ops or other work experience.
	Find a job or interview on campus.

Use the step-by-step directions in the [Step 2 Worksheet](#) to tailor this information to your organization. When you have completed this step, put this worksheet aside for later use.

Step 3: Creating a List of your Organization's Resources and Services

Step three involves brainstorming the range of the resources and services that the organization provides to individuals. The goal is to get a working list of what the organization has to offer, so that these items can be accurately presented on the organization's Web site. When completing this step, consider the following questions:

- a) What resources and services does our organization advertise?
- b) What resources and services do our audience members most frequently request?
- c) What "little known" resources and services exist that need to receive greater publicity?

Example 3.1:

A short, sample list of the resources and services offered by the Florida State University Career Center.

Resources and Services
Match Major Sheets
Introduction to Career Planning Class
Workshops
Internship and Co-op Program

Use the [Step 3 Worksheet](#) for help working through this brainstorming process.

Step 4: Defining the Purpose(s) that Your Resources and Services Address

Step four is to concretely describe the purpose of the individual resources and services that you listed in Step 3. In doing this, you are expressing the needs that specific resources and services address.

Consider the following questions:

- a) What is the purpose of this specific resource or service?
- b) What was it designed to do?
- c) Who is it designed to serve?
- d) What gap does it fill in our organization?
- e) How does it help our organization function efficiently?

Keep in mind that one resource or service can address several different needs.

View the example on the next page of how needs can be associated with resources and services.

Example 4.1:

This example contains the resources and services presented in Step 3 and some of the functions that those resources and services fulfill. It is not a comprehensive list as this would take up too much space.

Resource or Service	Needs Addressed by the Resource or Service
Match Major Sheets	Links specific majors to possible occupations.
	Lists resources in The Career Center that help individuals explore specific majors and occupations.
Introduction to Career Planning class	An undergraduate course that helps students explore interests.
	An undergraduate course that helps students choose majors.
	An undergraduate course that helps students learn job search skills.
Workshops	Help students choosing a major.
	Help students develop job search skills (e.g. resume writing, interviewing).
	Help students learn about specific fields of work (e.g. public service).
Internship and Co-op Program	Help students gain experience before graduation.
	Help students gain and practice job search skills.

Use the [Step 4 Worksheet](#) to record the needs that correspond to your organization's resources and services that you brainstormed on the [Step 3 Worksheet](#).

Step 5: Matching Specific Audiences to Resources and Services via Needs

In step five, you will use the worksheets you completed in Steps 2 and 4 to connect your audiences and their needs to the resources and services that address their needs. Begin by placing the two worksheets side by side. This is demonstrated in the example on the following page.

Example 5.1:

Place the Step 2 Worksheet and Step 4 Worksheet together.

Step 2 Worksheet		Step 4 Worksheet		
Audience	Audience Needs	Resource or Service	Needs Addressed by the Resource or Service	
Current Student	Choose or change my college major.	Match-Major sheets	Links specific majors to possible occupations.	
	Explore occupational information.		Lists resources in the Career Center that help students explore specific majors and occupations.	
	Explore education options after graduation.	Introduction to Career Planning class	An undergraduate course that helps students explore interests, choose majors, learn about the world of work, and develop job search skills.	
	Find internships, co-ops or other work experience.		Workshops	Help students choose a major.
	Find a job or interview on campus.			Help students develop job search skills (i.e. resume writing, interviewing).
Internship and Co-op Program			Help students learn about specific fields of work (i.e. public service).	
			Help students gain experience before graduation.	
			Help students gain and practice job search skills.	

Next, pull out the Step 5 Worksheet. The Step 5 Worksheet will be used to record the connections that you make between the “Audience Needs” and the “Needs Addressed by a Resource or Service”. Make the connections by completing the following activities.

1. Copy the audience name from the Step 2 Worksheet into the Audience box on the Step 5 Worksheet.

- 2. Copy the first need from the Step 2 Worksheet into the first Audience Needs box on the Step 5 Worksheet.

Example 5.2:
Step 5 Worksheet, Activities 1 and 2 Completed

Audience	Audience Needs	Resource or Service
Current Students	Choose or change my college major.	

3. Examine the “Needs Addressed by the Resource or Service” column on the Step 4 Worksheet. Compare the need statements in this column to the “Audience Need” that you just wrote into the Step 5 Worksheet.
4. If two statements are equivalent, or if a resource or service seems to address a part of the Audience Need, write the name of the resource or service into the “Resource or Service” column of the Step 5 Worksheet.

Example 5.3:

Step 5 Worksheet, Activities 1 through 4 Completed

Audience	Audience Needs	Resource or Service
Current Students	Choose or change my college major.	Match Major Sheets
		Introduction to Career Planning class
		Workshops

5. Write the second “Audience Need” from the Step 2 Worksheet into the second box in the “Audience Need” column of the Step 5 Worksheet.
6. Repeat activities 3 and 4 for the second “Audience Need”.

7. Continue this process until all of the Audience Needs are connected to the resources and services that fulfill those needs. The final product will look something like the following example:

Example 5.4:

Step 5 Worksheet, All Activities Completed

Audience	Audience Needs	Resource or Service
Current Students	Choose or change my college major.	Match Major Sheets
		Introduction to Career Planning class
		Workshops
	Explore occupational information.	Match Major Sheets
		Introduction to Career Planning class
		Workshops
		Internship and Co-op Program
	Explore education options after graduation.	Introduction to Career Planning class
		Workshops
	Find internships, co-ops or other work experience.	Workshops
		Internship and Co-op Program
	Find a job or interview on campus.	Workshops
Internship and Co-op Program		

Step 6: Write Outcome Statements

The sixth step is to develop outcome statements. Outcome statements help users understand what they might achieve by following a particular link on a Web page. Outcome statements should be used for intermediate links that lead to several resources or services (need statements) and for direct links to specific resources or services (the lowest level of the Web site).

To create an outcome statement for intermediate links that lead to several resources or services:

- a) Choose a present tense verb from Table 1 on page 5, or choose one of your own.
- b) Combine this verb with one or more of the answers to the following questions. You can also create your own questions as needed.
 1. How can the resources or services on the next page be described?
 2. How will the resources or services on the next page help users achieve their goals?
 3. What do the resources and links on the next page have in common?
- c) Edit the outcome statement for clarity and brevity. In general, statements should not be longer than 15 words (or about two lines of text).

To create an outcome statement for a direct link to a specific resource or service:

- a) Select a present tense verb from Table 1 on page 5, or choose one of your own.
- b) Combine this verb with one or more of the answers to the following questions. You can also create your own questions as needed.
 1. What might the user achieve by using the specific resource or service?
 2. What has this specific resource or service helped users do in the past?
- c) Edit the outcome statement for clarity and brevity. In general, statements should not longer than 15 words (or about two lines of text).

Example 6.1:

Intermediate links to several resources or services and their associated outcome statements (in italics):

Choose or change my major

Learn what's involved in choosing a major and what resources are available in The Career Center.

Explore educational information and options

Identify the information you need to make a decision about continuing your education.

Direct links to a specific resource or service and associated outcome statements (in italics):

Attend Career Center events

View a calendar of expositions, workshops and other activities that will help you in your career planning and job hunting.

Match FSU majors to occupations

Identify computer, Web, and print-based resources that help you match FSU majors to occupations.

Copy the content of the [Step 5 Worksheet](#) to the appropriate columns on the [Steps 6 & 7 Worksheet](#).

Next, add Outcome Statements to the [Steps 6 & 7 Worksheet](#) to see how they fit into the larger structure.

Step 7: Writing Audience Goals

The seventh step is to develop audience goal statements. These statements are included after their corresponding audience labels on the home page of the Web site. (See the examples below.) The purpose of the goal statement is to broadly describe for users the needs that will be met and the resources that will be found by following a particular audience link. Users should be able to perceive that their goals (i.e. needs) are similar to those of a given audience.

To write audience goals statements, do the following:

- a) After an audience link add a verb from the list below, or use one of your own.

delivering	looking	requiring	seeking
hunting	needing	searching	wanting
- b) Next review the outcome statements for the needs identified for the audience.
- c) Determine the major themes that the outcome statements share and list them after the action verb you selected.
- d) Edit the audience goal statement for clarity and brevity. In general, these statements should not be longer than eight words.

Example 7.1:

Audience goal statements (in italics) are included below:

I am a:

Student *seeking career, education, or job assistance.*

Alumni *looking for help with job, education, and career decisions.*

Employer *interested in offering career opportunities to FSU students and alumni.*

Family Member *wanting to assist in the career process.*

Professional *delivering career services or creating career resources.*

Record your Audience Goals on the [Steps 6 & 7 Worksheet](#).

Congratulations! Most of your need-based design Web site is complete!

Step 8: Composing Additional Features to Facilitate Linking Needs with Resources and Services.

The final step is to provide guidance for individuals who use your organization's resources and services to address their needs. One solution is to provide audience members with a link to a pop-up window. A pop-up window is a smaller, supplementary, new window that appears. It usually does not contain a full page of information, specifically excluding navigation and address bars. It is used "primarily to keep the user in the flow of the transaction" and can be used to provide "context sensitive help" (Nielsen, 1999). This kind of help provides specific aid concerning an individual resource that the user has engaged. It is important to note that not all resources need such a context sensitive or "How to" pop-up window. Determining which resources are complex enough to require extra support for the user is left up to staff expert judgment (Sampson, et al, 2001).

Several key elements should be incorporated in "How to" pop-up windows:

- The resource name
- The audience name
- A definition of the resource
- The procedural steps for using the resource
- A description of where find additional help

Other possible elements for a "how to" pop-up window are example uses and strategies for best use of the resource. [Step 8 Worksheet](#) contains a template for building a "how to" pop-up window, in addition to two samples.

SAMPLE OF STEP 1 WORKSHEET:

Defining Your Audience

According to the mission of your organization, who is your organization designed to serve?

Students	Alumni
Professionals	
Community Members	
Employers	
Staff, Faculty and Administration	

Who most often requests resources and services for the clients that you serve?

Current Students	Alumni
Prospective Students	Community Members
Family Members	
Employers	
Staff, Faculty and Administration	

Who may benefit from the resources and services that you offer?

Current Students	Alumni
Prospective Students	Community Members
Family Members	Professionals
Employers	
Staff, Faculty and Administration	

Compile a master list of the audiences named above:

Students	Family Members
Alumni	Professionals
Community Members	
Employers	
Faculty, Staff or Administration Members	

Step 1 Worksheet: Defining Your Audience

According to the mission of your organization, who is your organization designed to serve?

<hr/>	<hr/>

Who most often requests resources and services for the clients that you serve?

<hr/>	<hr/>

Who may benefit from the resources and services that you offer?

<hr/>	<hr/>

Compile a master list of the audiences named above:

<hr/>	<hr/>

SAMPLE OF STEP 2 WORKSHEET:

Defining Audience Needs

Use the audience members from the Step 1 Worksheet “Defining your Audience Members” and the questions below to fill in this worksheet. Make as many copies of this worksheet as needed to provide space to outline the needs for each of your audiences.

- a) What questions do individuals typically ask when they come to your organization?
- b) What is your expert opinion about the needs of your users or clients?
- c) What resources and services do audience members ask for, in which you reply, “no, we do not offer that resource/service, but here is where you can go”? (New need or service)

Audience:

Audience Needs

Current Student

Choose or change my college major.

Explore occupational information.

Explore education options after graduation.

Find internships, co-ops or other work experience.

Find a job or interview on campus.

Audience:

Audience Needs

Step 3 Worksheet: Comprehensive Listing of Your Organization's Resources and Services

What resources and services does your organization advertise?

<hr/>	<hr/>

What resources and services are most frequently requested by your audience members?

<hr/>	<hr/>

What "little known" resources and services exist that need to receive greater publicity?

<hr/>	<hr/>

Compile a master list of the resources and services named above:

<hr/>	<hr/>

SAMPLE OF STEP 4 WORKSHEET:

Defining The Purpose(s) that Your Resources and Services Address

Use the resources and services from the Step 3 Worksheet “Comprehensive Listing of Your Organization’s Resources and Services” and the questions below to fill in this worksheet. Make as many copies of this worksheet as needed to provide space to outline the needs for each of your resources and services.

- a) What is the purpose of this specific resource or service?
- b) What was it designed to do?
- c) Who is it designed to serve?
- d) What gap does it fill in our organization?
- e) How does it help our organization function efficiently?

Resource or Service:

Needs Addressed by the Resource or Service

Introduction to Career Planning class

An undergraduate course that helps students explore interests.

An undergraduate course that helps students choose majors.

An undergraduate course that helps students learn job search skills.

Resource or Service:

Needs Addressed by the Resource or Service

Workshops

Help students choose a major.

Help students develop job search skills (e.g. resume writing, interviewing).

Help students learn about specific fields of work (e.g. Public Service).

SAMPLE OF STEP 5 WORKSHEET

Matching Specific Audiences to Resources and Services via Needs

Use the Step 2 and Step 4 worksheets, the instructions from Step 5 of the text, and the following chart, to organize the specific audiences, needs, and resources and services that address those needs. Make as many copies of this worksheet as needed to connect the needs and resources/services for all of your audiences.

Audience	Audience Needs	Resources or Services
Current Students	Choose or change my college major.	Match Major Sheets
		Introduction to Career Planning class
		Workshops
	Explore occupational information.	Match Major Sheets
		Introduction to Career Planning class
		Workshops
		Internship and Co-op Program
	Explore education options after graduation.	Introduction to Career Planning class
		Workshops
	Find internships, co-ops or other work experience.	Workshops
		Internship and Co-op Program
	Find a job or interview on campus.	Workshops
		Internship and Co-op Program

SAMPLE OF STEPS 6 & 7 WORKSHEET: Bringing Everything Together with Outcome Statements and Audience Goals

Audience	Audience Goals	Audience Needs	Outcome Statement (need/link)	Resources or Services	Outcome Statement (resource or service)
Current Student	Explore majors, occupations and educational options.	Choose or change my college major.	Learn what's involved in choosing a major and what resources are available in The Career Center.	Match Major Sheets	Identify computer, Web, and print-based resources that help you match FSU majors to occupations.
				Introduction to Career Planning class	Learn about an undergraduate course that helps you explore interests, find majors that might fit you, and develop job search skills
				Workshops	Participate in the FSU Career Center's "Choose a Major" workshop.
		Explore occupational information.	Match majors to occupations and learn what other options and materials are available to assist in career decisions.	Match Major Sheets	Identify computer, Web, and print-based resources that help you to match FSU majors to occupations.
				Introduction to Career Planning class	Learn about an undergraduate course that helps you explore interests, find majors that might fit you, and develop job search skills
				Workshops	View a calendar of workshops and other activities that help you explore occupation and career options.
				Internship and Co-op Program	Explore internships, co-ops and a variety of programs available for FSU students.
		Explore education options after graduation.	Obtain the information you need to make a decision about continuing your education.	Introduction to Career Planning class	Learn about an undergraduate course that helps you explore interests, find majors that might fit you, and develop job search skills
				Workshops	View a calendar of workshops and other activities that will lead to a more effective graduate or professional school search.
	Find internships, co-ops or other work experience.	Explore internships, co-ops and a variety of programs to help you gain experience.	Workshops	View a calendar of workshops and activities that lead to a more effective job search.	
			Internship and Co-op Program	Explore internships, co-ops and a variety of programs available for FSU students.	
	Find a job or interview on campus.	Register for on-campus interviewing, come to career workshops, and learn about FSU's Career Expositions.	Workshops	View a calendar of workshops and activities that lead to a more effective job search.	
			Internship and Co-op Program	Explore internships, co-ops and a variety of programs available for FSU students.	

Steps 6 & 7 Worksheet: Bringing Everything Together with Outcome Statements and Audience Goals

Audience	Audience Goals	Audience Need	Outcome Statement (need/link)	Resources or Services	Outcome Statement (resource or service)		

SAMPLE 1 OF STEP 8 WORKSHEET

Composing Additional Features to Facilitate Linking Needs with Resources and Services.

How to Use Seminole Connection COMMUNITY MEMBER

Name of Resource

Seminole Connection

Definition of Resource

Seminole Connection is a database of alumni and friends of the university who are willing to serve as information resources and networking contacts to FSU students.

Example Uses

- As a member of the Tallahassee community, you may elect to be included in the database.
- Students and alumni can search the database and may contact you directly for assistance with their individual career development and planning.

How to get the most from Seminole Connection

N/A

How to use Seminole Connection

- Complete the on-line registration form, which includes information about your career field, employer, geographic area, industry, and contact information.
- Indicate the way in which you would like students and alumni to contact you (i.e., e-mail, phone)
- Respond to students/alumni who contact you at your earliest convenience. Share any information/insights you have to help them in their career development and planning.

How and when to get help

If you have questions about how to use Seminole Connection, come to Room A4101 of the Career Center to ask for assistance or call (850) 644-6431 and ask to speak with a career advisor

SAMPLE 2 OF STEP 8 WORKSHEET

Composing Additional Features to Facilitate Linking Needs with Resources and Services.

How to Use Seminole Connection FACULTY/STAFF/ADMINISTRATION MEMBER

Name of Resource

Seminole Connection

Definition of Resource

Seminole Connection is a database of alumni and friends of the university who are willing to serve as information resources and networking contacts to FSU students.

Example Uses

- As a faculty, staff, or administration member at FSU, you may elect to be included in the database.
- Students and alumni can search the database and may contact you directly for assistance with their individual career development and planning.
- Seminole Connection can also be incorporated into class assignments as an additional resource for career information.

How to get the most from Seminole Connection

N/A

How to use Seminole Connection

- Complete the on-line registration form, which includes information about your career field, employer, geographic area, industry, and contact information.
- Indicate the way in which you would like students and alumni to contact you (i.e., e-mail, phone)
- Respond to students/alumni who contact you at your earliest convenience. Share any information/insights you have to help them in their career development and planning.

How to get help

If you have questions about how to use Seminole Connection, speak to a Career Advisor by either visiting the Career Center in University Center, Room or by calling at 644-6431.

Step 8 Worksheet: Composing Additional Features to Facilitate Linking Needs with Resources and Services.

*Required Elements

***How to Use** _____
[Resource Name]

***for** _____
[Audience Name]

***Definition of Resource:** [Brief definition]

Example Uses: [Two or more specific situations where this resource is useful]

How to get the most from _____
[Resource Name]

[Strategies for best use of the resource]

***How to use** _____
[Resource Name]

[Procedural steps for how to use the resource]

***How to get help**

If you have questions about how to use _____ **[Resource Name]** or if you use
_____ **[Resource Name]** and become unsure about your next steps, come to
_____ **[Organization Name]** to ask for assistance or call _____ **[Organization Phone Number]** and
ask to speak with a _____ **[Organization Representative]**.

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