

Approaches to the Web Design Process

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Overview

- What we mean by “Design”?
- Why it matters
- Web design principles
- Trends
- Approaches to the web design process

Starting things off...

- I am not a web designer or web developer
- But I've been responsible for managing the design and development of many websites
- Interested in applying general web design principles and methods to web mapping sites
- Some things I've learned:
 - GIS people are not necessarily good designers
 - There's a lot to be learned from dedicated web designers

What do we mean by “Design”?

- No generally-accepted definition of “design” exists (wikipedia)
 - applied differently in a varying contexts.
- Some popular approaches include:
 - KISS
 - There is more than one way to do it (TIMTOWTDI)
 - Use-centered design
 - User-centered design
 - Critical design
 - I’ll know it when I see it (IKIWISI)

Design Matters

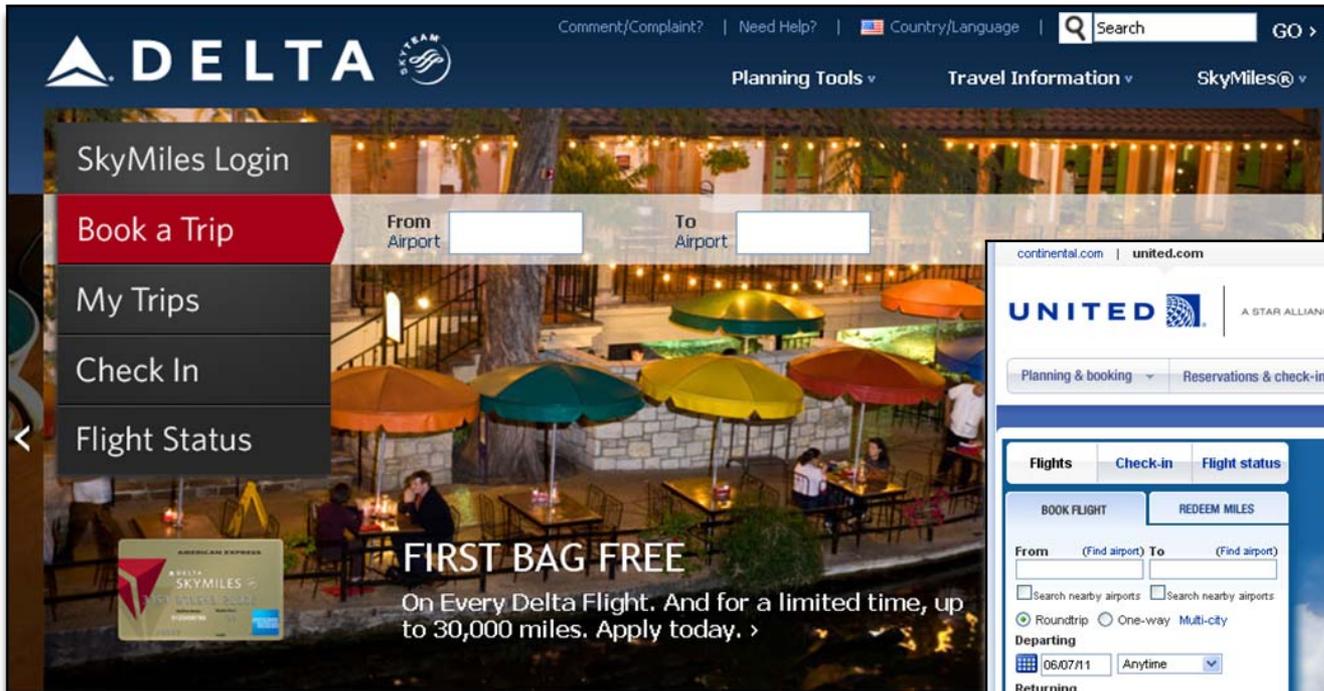
Form and function should be one, joined in a spiritual union, using nature as the best example of this integration. - Frank Lloyd Wright



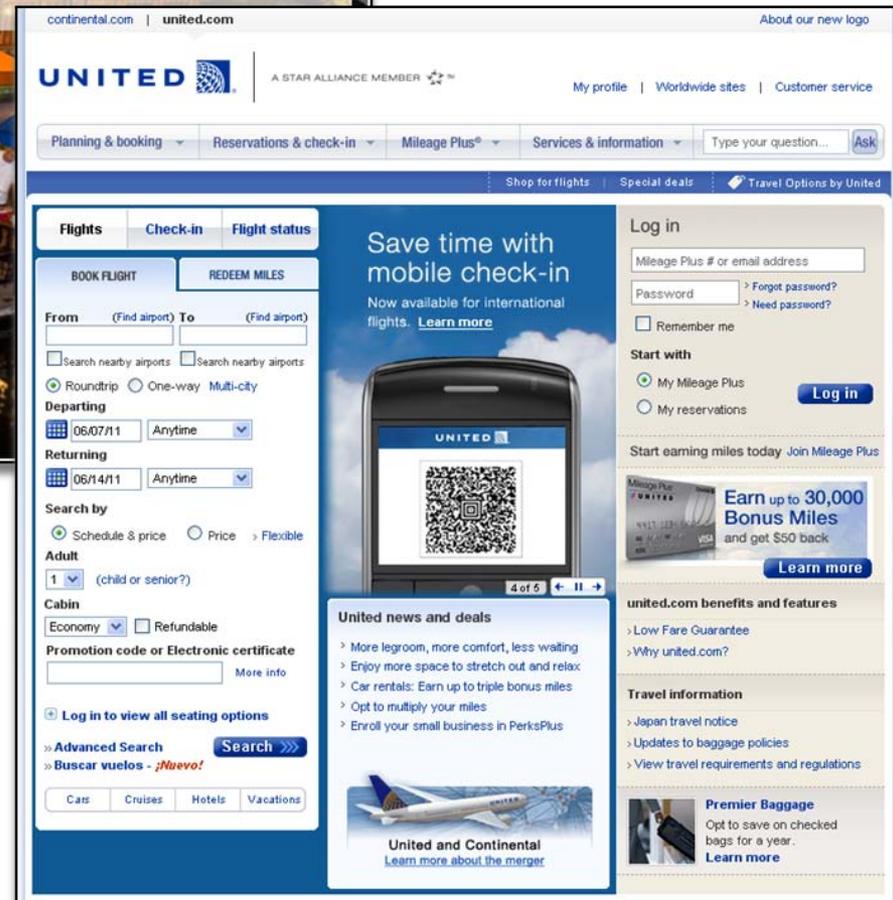
Functional Spec vs. Design



Functional Spec vs. Design



The image shows a design mockup for the Delta website. At the top left is the Delta logo with the 'SKYTEAM' logo to its right. Navigation links include 'Comment/Complaint?', 'Need Help?', 'Country/Language', a search bar with 'GO >', 'Planning Tools', 'Travel Information', and 'SkyMiles'. A vertical sidebar on the left contains 'SkyMiles Login', 'Book a Trip' (highlighted in red), 'My Trips', 'Check In', and 'Flight Status'. The main content area features a background image of an outdoor cafe with colorful umbrellas. A 'FIRST BAG FREE' promotion is displayed, stating 'On Every Delta Flight. And for a limited time, up to 30,000 miles. Apply today.' Below the promotion is a 'DELTA SKYMILES' card. At the top right, there are input fields for 'From Airport' and 'To Airport'.



The image shows a design mockup for the United website. At the top left are links for 'continental.com' and 'united.com', and 'About our new logo' at the top right. The United logo is prominent, with 'A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER' below it. Navigation links include 'My profile', 'Worldwide sites', and 'Customer service'. A secondary navigation bar contains 'Planning & booking', 'Reservations & check-in', 'Mileage Plus', 'Services & information', and a search bar. Below this is a 'Shop for flights', 'Special deals', and 'Travel Options by United' section. The main content area is divided into several sections: 'Flights', 'Check-in', and 'Flight status'. The 'BOOK FLIGHT' section includes fields for 'From' and 'To' (with 'Find airport' suggestions), 'Departing' and 'Returning' dates and times, 'Search by' options (Schedule & price, Price, Flexible), 'Adult' count, 'Cabin' selection, and 'Promotion code or Electronic certificate'. A 'Log in' section is on the right, with fields for 'Mileage Plus # or email address' and 'Password', and options for 'Remember me', 'My Mileage Plus', and 'My reservations'. A 'Save time with mobile check-in' banner features a QR code on a smartphone. A 'United news and deals' section lists benefits like 'More legroom, more comfort, less waiting'. A 'Premier Baggage' section offers 'Opt to save on checked bags for a year'. A 'Log in' button is visible in the bottom right of the main content area.

Q: What's the single most important question to ask when designing a website?

A. Who is going to use this site?

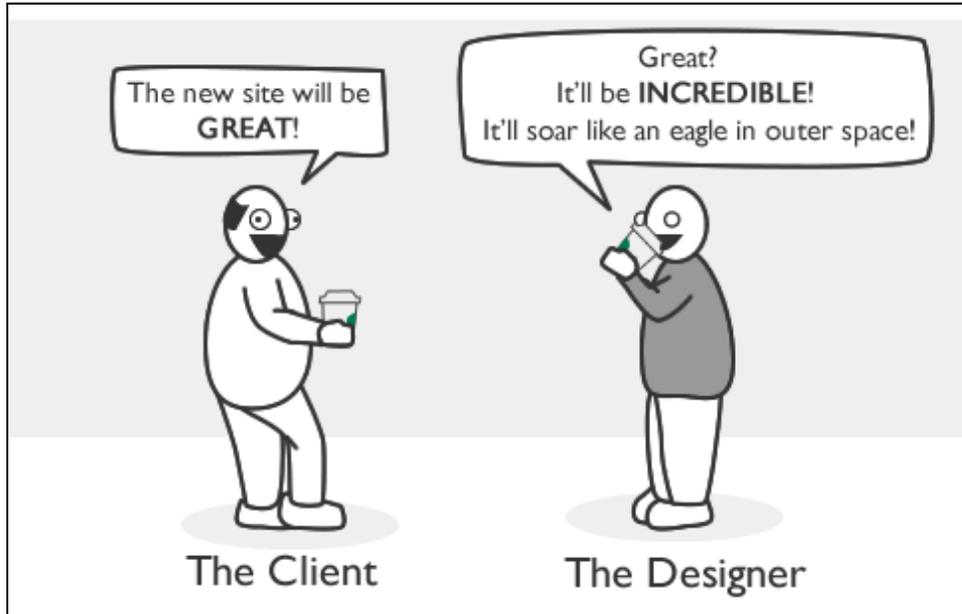
- GIS Experts?
- Public Safety Officials?
- Real Estate Appraisers?
- Home Owners?
- Broadband Service Providers?
- Students?
- Planners?

What is the role of the designer?

- Take an active role in the design process and help say “no” to:
 - Project managers
 - Sales team
 - Customers who are “losing their way”
- Stays focused on:
 - the audience
 - the overarching website goals
 - the integrity of the design

Web Design "Hell"

(from the Designer's Perspective)



I love it! Looks amazing!
I want to make love to it!

But...

"Can you just add...."
"Make it pop..."
"More edgy..."

Courtesy of
http://theoatmeal.com/comics/design_hell

Just a few “minor” changes.



Hello! Welcome to our website! I am miffles!
I love treats and biscuits! LOL
PS. My owner is a retard



The Toast

Boyd's has been in business since 2003 selling toast which pretty much changed the world. When you eat our toast, your mouth is taken on an enchanting journey of awe and wonder. [Click here](#)

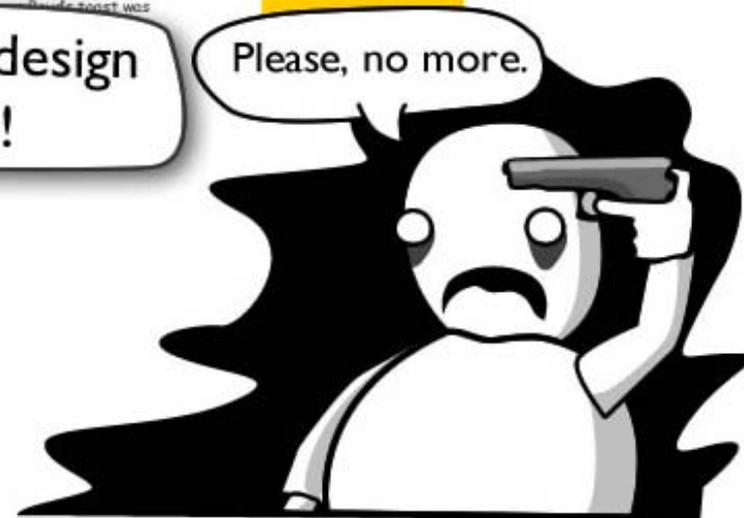
A Little History

Matthew Boyd Inman was sitting in his kitchen one day eating bread. He thought to himself "This is super lame! I want this...". [Click here](#)



Flavors

Burnt to Perfection
Bacon Toast
Lightning Toast
[More Flavors](#)



Principles of Effective Web Design

1. Don't make users think

- Site should be obvious and self-explanatory
- Intuitive navigation and architecture
- Try to reduce question marks to 0

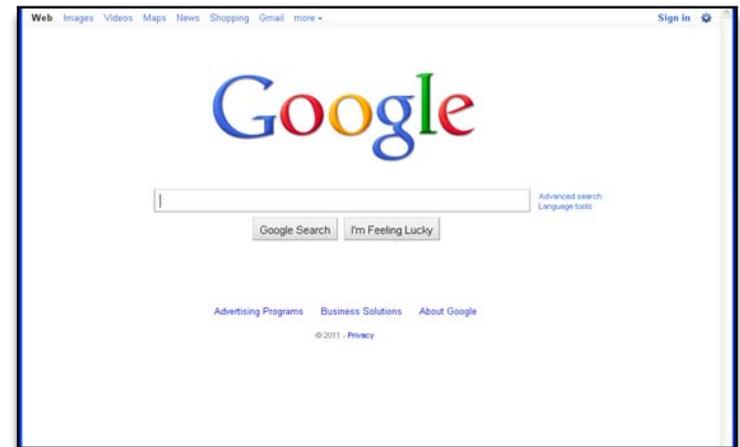


Principles of Effective Web Design...

2. Don't squander users' patience
 - Remove all barriers to information
3. Manage to focus user's attention
4. Strive for feature exposure
5. Avoid unfamiliar technical terms

Principles of Effective Web Design...

6. Strive for Simplicity
7. Don't be afraid of the white space
 - Reduce the cognitive load on visitors
8. Use a “visible language”
9. Conventions are our friends
 - People spend majority of their web time on *other* sites
10. Test early, test often



Q: What's the 2nd most important question when designing a web site?

A: What are your users looking for?

- Information
- Define the goal, not the tool



Web Design Trends

- Dictated by the changing needs and preferences of customers
- Early websites focused on aesthetics and graphic appeal
 - Flash elements
 - Dynamism
- Today – not enough to just be beautiful
- Must be functionally efficient!
 - Consumers are impatient

Courtesy of Skyje social design blog 4/25/11

Web Design Trends

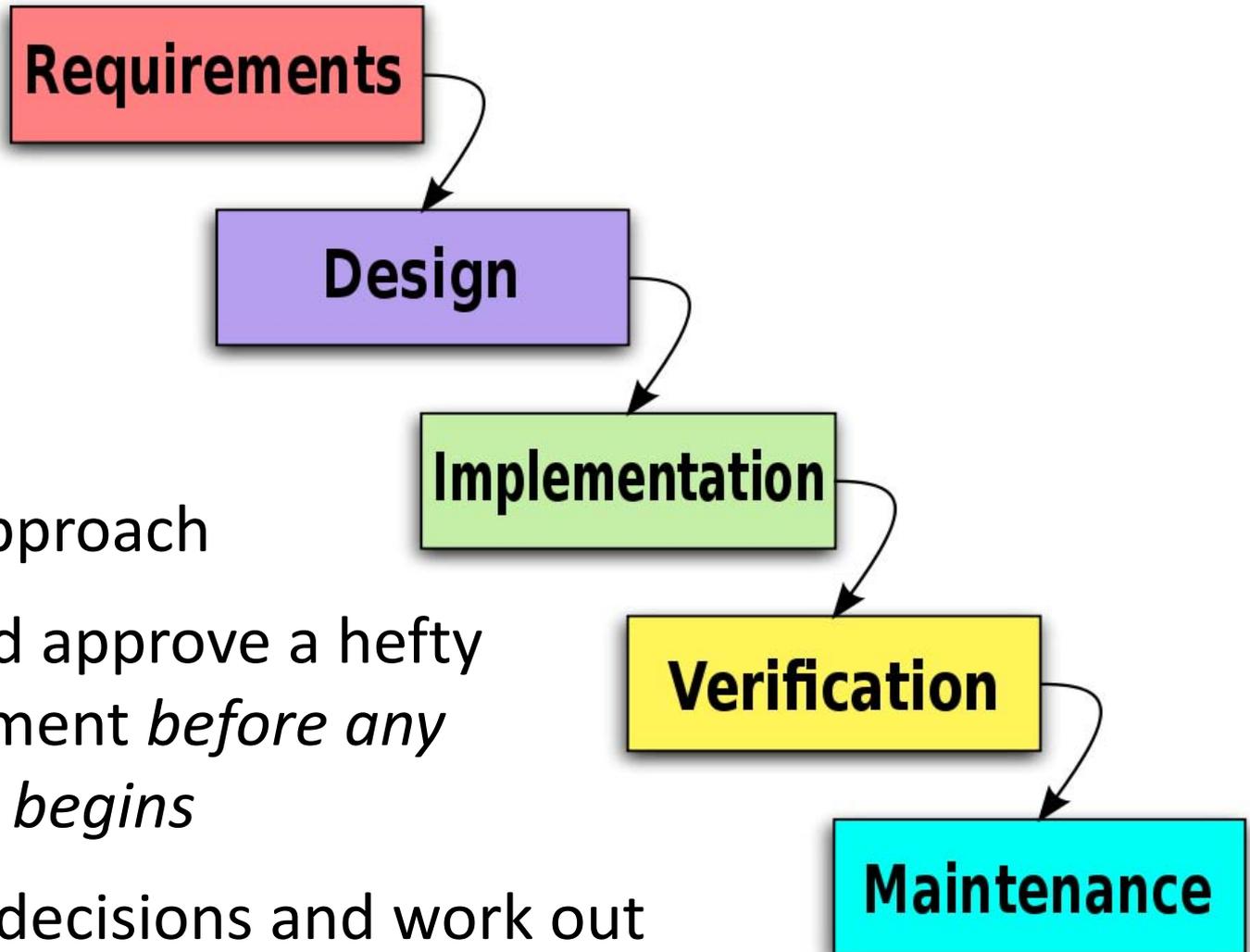
- Newer websites use very little or no Flash elements
- Focus on loading time
- HTML5 and CSS3 are gaining popularity
- Use of simple layouts
- Design for small screen devices
 - No mouse, touch screen



The Design Process Can Not be Open Ended

- Many methods
 - Waterfall
 - Agile
 - agile (with a small “a”)
- None is “right”
- But everyone must agree to the process

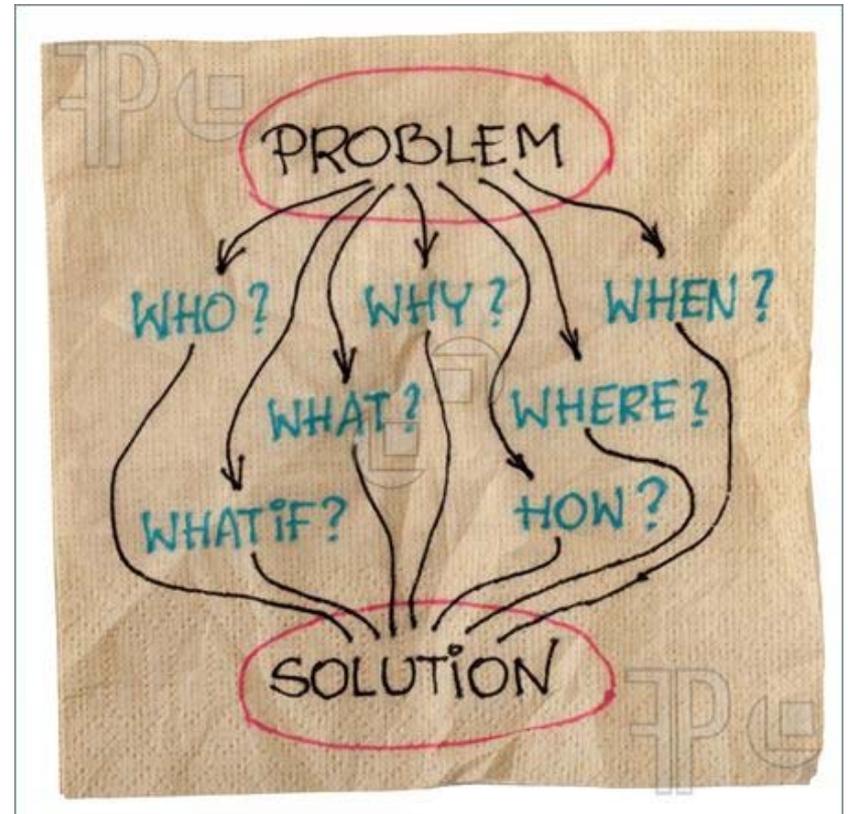
Waterfall Approach



- Traditional approach
- Complete and approve a hefty Design Document *before any development begins*
- Make all the decisions and work out the complexities first

Elements of Traditional Design Document

- Definition of Target Audience
- Site goals
- Wireframe layout
- Aesthetic requirements
- Accessibility requirements
- Security
- Comparative Analysis
- Architecture diagram
- Site map
- Functional specification
- Content description
- Technical architecture



Waterfall Approach

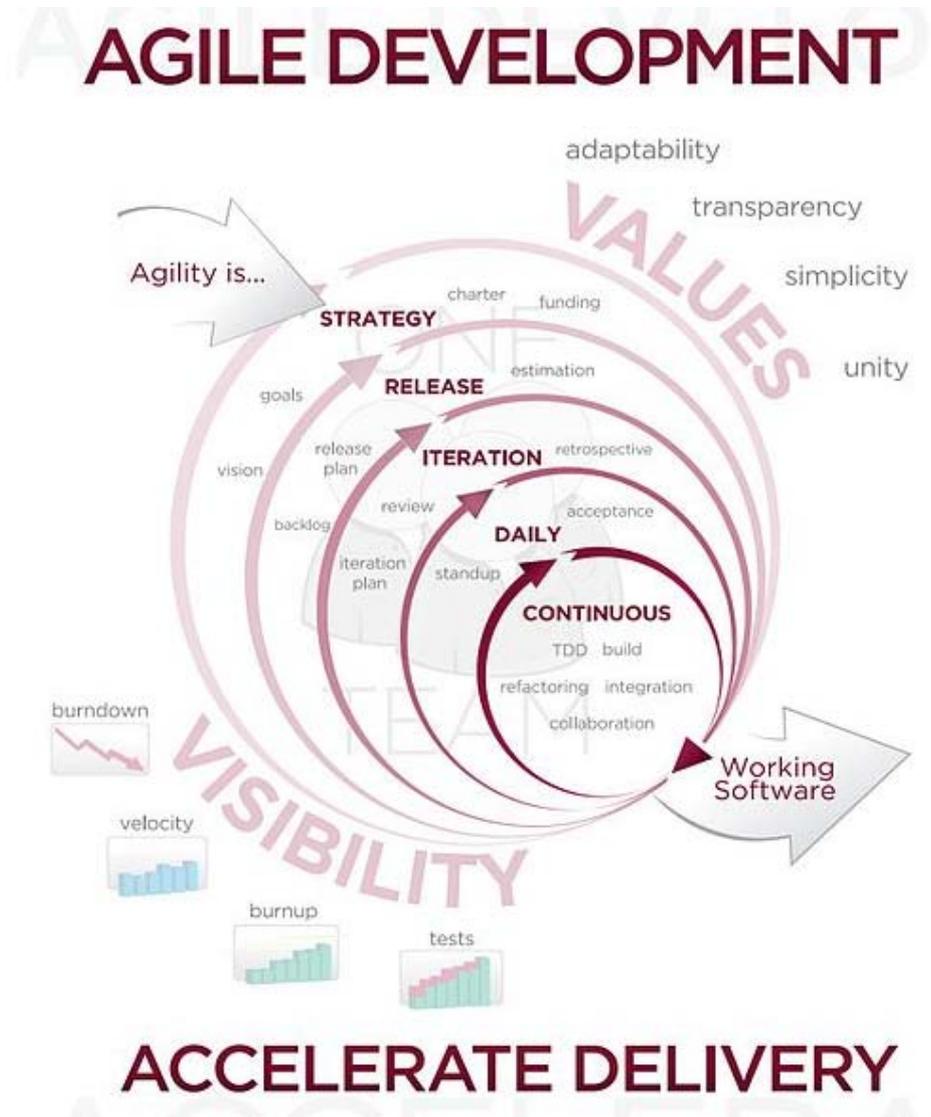
- Software as a “product” that gets finished, wrapped up, delivered
- Can spend 20% of budget without a single line of code
- Provides clear path to end goal
- Assumes a “static” end product that will have subsequent versions and hard launches

But critics say:

“Why do we build software the way we build an aircraft?”

The Agile Process

- “Agile Development” refers to very proscribed process
- Software as a Service
- Always evolving
- Developer “Scrums”
- Focus on quick releases of available functionality



The Agile Manifesto: 4 Main Values

- 1. Individuals and interactions** over processes and tools
- 2. Working software** over comprehensive documentation
- 3. Customer collaboration** over contract negotiation
- 4. Responding to change** over following a plan

“While there is value in the items on the right, we value the items on the left more.”

What's Realistic?

- Budget, Contract, Timeline may actually determine design process
- Hosting location
- Who's using it?
- Who's calling the shots about functionality?
- Are the functional goals broad or restrictive?
 - Can functionality be prioritized or is all “must have”?

agile with a small “a”

- Design document describes:
 - Intended user
 - Functional goals
- Build version 1 quickly and share
- Continuously improve
- Try & See

Recommendations

- Not every project needs a Designer, but design is part of every project
 - Recognize how it fits in
- Define your audience
 - Who's using it and what do they need to do
- What's the appropriate design method for the project?
 - No “right” method, but decide up front
- Know your organization's strengths and weaknesses
 - Sometimes you're too close to the details
 - Need someone who can step back

Thank You



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