Loopagroup - Travel Network Logo and Website

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Abstract

This report contains information on working with a client and the internet, designing a travel network’s logo and website look and feel.
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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Statement of Problem:

Level Studios in San Luis Obispo is looking to create a travel network logo and
web site.

Purpose or Objective of the Study:

When it was time to choose a senior project, I examined my portfolio and looked
for areas of graphic design that were missing, such as web design. This project will
show that I am a well rounded designer. Many companies are now looking for web
designers and knowing how the web works is helpful.

Limitations of the Study:

Some limitations were lack of time, travel issues, conflicting schedules for
meetings and consultations, and limited web font selections. For example, most of the
meetings took place Monday nights. However, sometimes the clients had to stay late at
work and could not make it to some meetings. When there was a Monday holiday, some
members of the group were out of town and could not meet. Regarding typography,
the client saw all serif fonts fit for the web appeared the same. Common fonts to all
versions of Windows and Mac equivalents are: Arial, Arial Black, Helvetica, Gadget,
Comic Sans, Courier New, Georgia, Impact, Lucida Console, Lucida Sans Unicode,
Lucida Grande, Monaco, Palatino, Book Antiqua, Tahoma, Trebuchet, Verdana, Symbol,
and Webdings. Since I am used to working with print design, I am used to working with
CMY colors. Switching to working with RGB colors was confusing at first because I
was not getting the exact same color on the web as I would in CMY. There is also a
limitation on resolution because the web is only 72 dpi and everything is pixilated, so it
is difficult to create small type or icons.

Most of the graphic design projects assigned at Cal Poly are fictional projects
with varied limitations. However, working with a client requires more patience and
adjustment to the design process. This senior project is a small glimpse of what it
is like to have clients in the “working world.” However, my clients know I have other
schoolwork to do and I only have ten weeks to work on this project.
Chapter 2 – Review of Research

Through social networking, people can use networks of online friends and group membership to keep in touch with current friends, reconnect with old friends or create new friendships through similar interests or groups. Besides establishing important social relationships, networking members can share their interests with other members by joining groups or networks. Some networking can also help members find a job or establish business contacts. Most social networking websites offer additional features such as blogs and forums, members can express themselves by designing their profile page to reflect their personality (i.e., Myspace). People of all ages and backgrounds have discovered that they can benefit their lives through the contacts they make on a social networking website.

There are a few features common to all successful social networking websites (i.e., Facebook, Myspace, Bebo, Friendster, hi5, Netlog...etc): profile, security, networking features, search, and a legitimate friend focus. Profiles are the heart and soul of social networking sites because it is a place where they can express their thoughts and feelings, post photographs and show off their network of friends. The most popular social networking websites put a strong emphasis on the user’s profile, making it easy to use and still reflect the user’s personality. All social networks should provide the ability to set profiles to private in some way or another and be able to report and block users. Many social network sites contain additional features including music sections, video uploads, groups, and more. The object of a social network is to find friends and expand relationships. Top social networking websites allow members
to search for other members in a safe and easy to use environment. Common search
functions include the ability to search by name, city, school and e-mail address. The
best social network sites keep profiles and search options private enough that the only
people that can find the user are the ones actually looking for users in their own school
or neighborhood networks.

Loopagroup is a travel network created by employees at Level Studios in San
Luis Obispo, CA. The creators wanted a graphic designer and web developer student
from Cal Poly to work on this project as their senior project. This project encompasses
designing a logo along with multiple web pages for a functioning web site that will
launch by the end of this year. Some main features of Loopagroup includes connecting
with other students abroad, finding a travel mate or roommate, and buying and selling
travel gear. This social network is not limited to students only, it is a network designed
for those who volunteer, study, vacation, move, or make a business trip abroad. Users
can join networks organized by country, city, school, and reason for going abroad.
People can add friends and send them messages, and update their own personal
profile to notify friends and family about themselves. The website’s name refers to
connecting users to other people abroad so they do not have to travel or live alone.
Many students travel abroad alone and do not know what to purchase or do when they
arrive at their destination. Through this social network, users connect with people who
can give advice and recommendations to make their travel experience better.
Chapter 3 – Procedures and Results

Logo Development

Symbol:

Loopagroup is connecting people who are traveling abroad. The client wanted a simple logo that was not difficult to read and could be easily recognized, so the idea for the logo is start from something large and broad narrowing down to the specifics step by step. Experimentation involved shapes intersecting each other to “loop” everything together. Loopagroup’s final logo is a spiral of circles that begins with large circles on the outer ring and almost creates a loop to smaller circles. Our concept for the look and feel for the website is all based on the logo, and they wanted the logo to be simple and clean looking without a lot of clutter. Loopagroup’s name is meant to be one word and not to be broken.
Typography:

Since Loopagroup is one word and the logo is not complicated, it looks best that the logo and wordmark be on one line horizontally. Through experimentation, the font Gnuolane looked best complimenting the logo’s perfectly round look and feel. This font is slightly vertical and looks good because the name is long.

Colors:

The idea for the colors was choosing an earthy color that represents growing. Earthy greens and yellows were played, but in the end, a unique green color, PMS 378, was
chosen as shown here:

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**Website Development**

**Page Design:**

Loopagroup's web page dimensions are 940 x 705. To refer back to the design of the logo, the navigation bar, buttons, and boxes all have rounded corners since the logo itself uses circles. The navigation bar, placement of the logo in the upper left hand corner, and footer are repeated throughout all the pages for consistency. For the rest
of the page body, a three column grid is used. All boxes and buttons have rounded
corners repeating the look and feel from Loopagroup’s logo.
Color:

Loopagroup’s web site design is based all around the logo, so the main colors for the logo are primarily used in the web site. But to add some variation, colors of the same hue and different opacities of the grey and green are used from the logo color palette. A blue, magenta, green, and orange were added to the homepage and created accents for tips and reminders on the step by step sign up pages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Hex Color</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>80% Black</td>
<td>R208 G90 B132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20% Black</td>
<td>R91 G102 B34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30% Black</td>
<td>R239 G164 B32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50% Black</td>
<td>R110 G183 B68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fonts:

The web has a limited font selection, and since the Gnuolane font is not a web font, we used typefaces that were similar to the shape of Gnuolane. Arial is used for the headings and titles. Georgia was tested for the rest of the type, but using a sans serif font for the entire site looked best. Finally, Trebuchet was picked to be used for the headings and titles and Arial is used for everything else.

Gnuolane
Arial
Georgia
Trebuchet
Images:

There are a few images used for the site such as homepage images, “smiley” icons, edit, delete, and dollar price icons, calendar, and the country flags. All the icons were created in Illustrator and Photoshop except for the country flags. The “smiley” faces are round, referring back to the logo for consistency. We found all 250 flag icons on the web we are able to use. The icons we found are also mimicking the round shape of the logo as well.

Flag icons were used for the Groups and Networks
Process:

Home Page

First homepage design contains a navigation bar, login, title, description, rollover map, and user image and quote rotation.

Next draft is more organized and centered. Some type is made smaller, but still looks flat and boring.
New navigation bar is designed to imitate the round characteristic of Loopagroup logo. The login is designed by incorporating the logo. Client also wanted larger buttons and a search for where the user would like to go abroad.

Client did not want the site to look flat, so the new navigation is made to pop out more with shadows and an emboss look. They also wanted to incorporate more colors to the homepage to make it more appealing to users. However, the client felt the glossiness was too much and the red and blue colors were too bold and compete too much with the logo.
Homepage now has icon links leading user to main usage sources of Loopagroup, connecting students abroad, finding travel mates and roommates, and buying and selling travel gear. This look is less flat and fills up the space nicely keeping a clean and organized look and feel. Login and sign up butons are links to be consistent with the other links on the navigation bar. When they were buttons, they stood out and brought unneeded attention. Footer imitates the navigation bar for consistency.

More finalized homepage contains all the elements the client wants. The Loopagroup logo and box beneath the navigation stands out now. Colors do not compete with the Loopagroup logo and are soft enough work well with the greys.
Login and Sign Up

The login and sign up pages are very similar. The first initial designs contained all the elements the client was looking for, but is flat and contains too much white space. Fill in boxes look like they are floating.
Both the login and sign up pages have a rounded corner box to the right that gives users more information about Loopagroup to fill in some space. The client wanted to incorporate a captcha for more security for the website.
New navigation, footer, buttons, and fonts replaced the old ones. The space is filled up nicely while still looking clean. Fill in boxes are now stacked instead of the text being place to the left of the boxes to be more aligned and organized.
Sign Up Steps (Step 2)

These are the steps for the user to sign up for Loopagroup. Step 2 is connecting users to their travel groups based on where they are going abroad. The orange color helps tips stand out for users. Arrows beneath the navigation bar shows the steps they need to go through to complete the sign in process. Green shows the step they are on, grey with a check mark is a completed step, and the other greys are steps they need to complete. As you can see, the page is incomplete, but this is a draft.

Updated fonts are incorporated.
The new navigation, footers, fonts, and buttons are incorporated. Elements are centered to eliminate empty space that was on the right. Tip bar has a rounded corner in consistency with the rest of the website's look.

Sign Up Steps (Step 3)
Step 3 is information for the user's profile. However, the page still looks empty and boring because the space is not utilized.

Navigation, footer, fonts, buttons, and fill in boxes are updated.
Finally, step 4, is a helpful way to keep friends and family updated. This is where the edit and delete icons are placed.
Navigation, footer, buttons, and fonts are updated.
Profile page is everything the user needs to be a part of Loopagroup. The left side contains their profile picture, information, list of friends, list of groups, list of photos, and a map. The middle of the profile are all things the user can edit for other people to see, such as, telling people where they are, a message board, travel blog, places they want to go and have gone, travel likes and dislikes, and items to buy and sell. Finally the right side are updates, events, and reminders for the user when they are logged into Loopagroup.
Everything in the profile now looks more organized. However, overall it looks plan and boring. The client suggested we incorporate colors and tabs because their eyes do not know where to look at because the large colors on this page are white and greys. (Blue boxes are placement for user's profile pictures.)
Now the profile looks more appealing and less crowded with text. The client is very pleased with this look, especially how the colors work together as pastels. They also like how the tabs are well incorporated and matches the overall look and feel, and they like how the map looks against the light blue color.

Results:

This design went through many changes; most were made toward the end. Initially, the design was flat because the colors and elements were flat. The space was not utilized and many groups of text felt like they were floating and out of place. Now, the end result
has a modern feel and invites more color. Text is not bunched together in one area, but is more spaced out to give it more breathing room. The Loopagroup logo colors, green and grey are still the main colors used, but blue, orange, and another green are used to compliment the logo’s green and grey colors.
Chapter 4 – Summary and Recommendations

Loopagroup is a social travel networking website connecting travelers who go abroad through networks and groups, helping them find travel mates and roommates. Throughout this project, I’ve worked alongside employees of Level Studios who are the original creators of Looapgroup. I came on board with this project when they had just come up with the idea and were given the approval to move forward with this project. I was only responsible for the design of the logo and the pages. (Level Studios chose another student to code the website as his senior project. Altogether, I was working with two employees of Level Studios as my “clients”, and the student web developer. This was my first web design project working with a client and web is not one of my design strengths. However, from this project, I improved my Photoshop skills and gained a greater understanding of how the web functions.

My Recommendations:

Do not have your heart set on your original idea because there are always going to be changes made along the way. There were times when I felt like my ideas were not being recognized or the client was choosing a design direction I did not agree with. However, I was certain about some of my choices, I reasoned with the client and everyone else involved so they could understand the effectiveness of my design. For example, the clients had many ideas for the homepage and wanted to incorporate everything while still maintaining a clean, neat, and organized feeling. But with all their ideas of including a rollover map, images with links to connect users to other abroad, finding a travel mate or roommate, and buying and selling travel gear, multiple
login lines with rounded corners, and text, it was difficult to fit everything neatly while maintaining a spacious feeling. It took time and reasoning to convince the clients to eliminate some elements. I found it was especially important to have a voice and stand up for design that makes sense and is esthetically appropriate.

Do your research and gain inspiration from books, magazines, and other websites. HOW Magazine and Wired Magazine give great ideas for layout designs. Another useful resource I found useful was Smashing Magazine, a website and blog offers resources and advice to web developers and web designers. It provides graphics, inspiration, fonts, “how-to’s”, tools, and tutorials for anyone interested in working with web design. Some of the books I’ve read discuss typography on the web and how to make it successful. Inspiration does not only come from books or other print material, but from web users as well. I have found inspiration from my peers in my Senior Project class because they understand typography and layout design, which I was struggling with for web. So, it is always a good idea to get other designer’s opinions on your projects.
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