Working in Web Teams

Many talents are involved in producing an effective Web site. A site that is interesting and valuable to its users is a work of art, literature, science, and technology. Everyone has some talents in each of these subjects, but most of us have individual talents or a special interest in particular areas.

The most effective Web sites are usually designed by teams of people with different talents and interests. Some common roles on Web teams include:

- ***Content developer.*** All Web sites are intended to communicate information. *Content developers* are responsible for creating the information that Web sites communicate. On an academic Web team, this role may be filled by experts in particular subjects. On a corporate Web team, the content may come from business executives. On a commercial Web team, clients who hire the team to produce their sites often provide the content.

- ***Copy writer or copy editor.*** Almost all Web sites use text to communicate their content. Creating that text is the responsibility of *copywriters* and *copy editors*. *Copywriters* specialize in communicating content in ways so that everyone can understand. Writers may edit their own copy on small Web teams, but separating the roles helps to make sure content is communicated effectively and without mechanical errors.

- ***Designers.*** The overall look of a Web site has a major effect on whether users find the site interesting or boring. A *graphic designer* is usually responsible for most of the artistic decisions involved in producing a Web site. A designer that specializes in Web sites may be called a *Web designer*. Web teams often have designers who specialize in audio, video, or animation as well as graphics. Commercial Web teams often have *creative directors* who manage all artistic aspects of Web site development.

- ***Project Manager.*** Members of effective teams know how to share responsibilities and work together. Most teams function more smoothly when someone is responsible for coordinating the work of all members. *Project managers* have responsibilities that affect the performance of the team as a whole, such as schedules and budgets. Sometimes, this role is filled by a *producer*, especially on more artistic or entertaining Web sites.

- ***Programmer.*** Most large Web teams, whether academic, corporate, or commercial, include *programmers* who write computer code that makes Web sites more interactive. A programmer on a Web team may write anything from simple scripts to complex database applications. A large Web team may have a *software engineer*, a programmer who specializes in managing the development of code and making sure it works correctly.

- ***Specialists.*** Web teams sometimes include a variety of people with very specialized expertise. Two common *specialists* are *information architect* and *usability engineer*. Information architects specialize in organizing content so that users can quickly and easily navigate through the site to find what they need. Usability engineers specialize in making sure that site designs do not delay any group of users from quickly and easily finding the content they need. On all but the largest Web sites, specialists are usually brought onto the team at particular times during design or evaluation.

- **_Webmaster._** One of the most familiar, but least understood, roles on a Web team is _Webmaster_. Someone must be responsible for making sure that the site is always working correctly and efficiently, and is updated. This responsibility often includes a very wide variety of tasks, anything from responding to user questions or complaints to troubleshooting complex software and hardware failures. _Webmasters_ of larger sites often have backgrounds in engineering or system administration.