



Content and Design: A Synchronistic Development Model

This article is an overview of Float Solutions' **Synchronistic Development Model**.

The Popular Design Process

In the traditional development cycle, designers create sites that fit into **conventional content models** such as blogs, portfolio sites, e-commerce centers, etc. Alternatively, sites have been designed using the document model approach. In this model, content is usually designated at the project inception. This process can be used very effectively. However, **web development is a unique blend of the document and the application model**, and as such, requires a unique approach.

When we expand further on the above idea, we find that the traditional development model goes something like this:

The project initiator **provides either a site concept** (i.e. "I want a blog with some static content pages that I'll be able to update easily. Also, could you integrate my logo?"), or a **site content outline** (i.e. "A word / pdf document with headings and paragraphs outlining the site's content"). This process is a linear development model, meaning that the concept is **provided and static**. The developer builds on the concept up until the time of project completion and launch, at which point the site updates are handled by the project initiator.

Using the **synchronistic development model**, we allow the project concept to dictate the best way to organize content, going as far as to allow the content to **mutate the design as it matures and changes**.

The Unified Design Process (merging content creation and design)

“

Ideas are refined and multiplied in the commerce of minds. In their splendor, images effect a very simple communion of souls. - Gaston Bachelard

”

What we are suggesting is a unique spin on the project design lifecycle, **a process that merges the creation of content with the creation of the website or application**. The below figure illustrates the Unified Design Process in comparison to a more traditional development model.

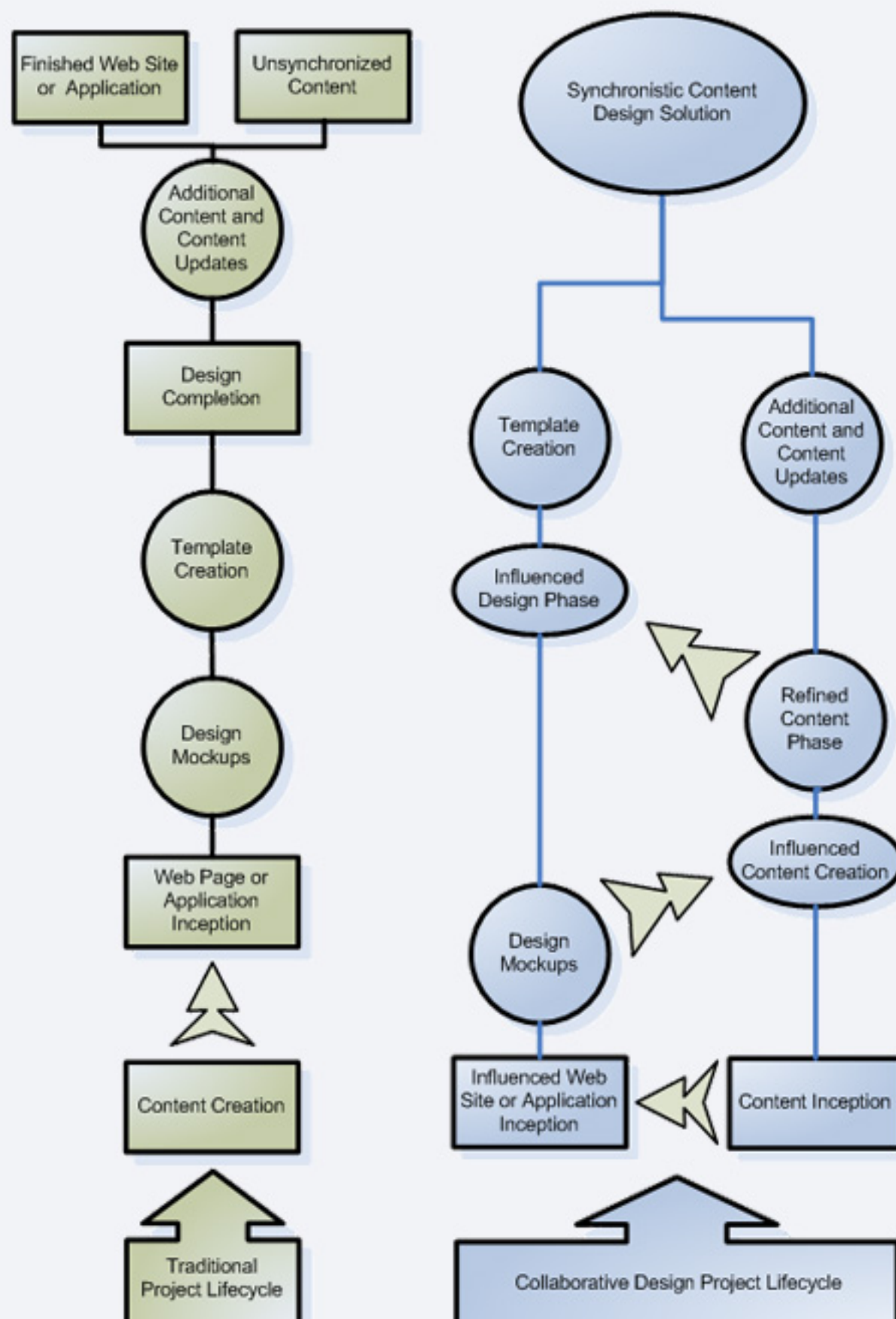


Figure 1. Collaborative Design Methodology vs. a conventional design methodology

A new level of **innovation in usability** becomes possible when we allow the design of a web site and the creation of its content to occur simultaneously. Site design is focused around how to communicate the informational concepts specific to the individual project. Additionally, information concepts are influenced not only by the **web as a medium**, but by the individual designer's style, form, and industry knowledge.

Allowing interaction between designers and writers during every stage of the development process takes the project beyond the offerings of traditional development models. Working on the **information concepts** while at the same time doing **wire frames** and **designing color schemes** allows form and function to develop in an **innovative and enhanced way**.

Once the **creative scaffolding has been synchronized**, the refinement stage begins. During this stage, the wire frames get filled out, and the content develops synchronistically.

Usability testing is conducted for the **high level informational concept**, as well as for the **technical concept**. If changes are made to the technical aspects of the site to accommodate usability, the information concepts will react and adapt to those changes. Similarly, if changes are made to the information concept, technical aspects of the site will react and **adapt in a usable fashion**.

The Future of Web Design

The time is right for change in the world of web design and content creation. Technologies like **AJAX**, **XML**, and **RSS** are revolutionizing web design as we speak. We are in a **transition stage** where the web is becoming more focused on application as opposed to traditional web pages created using the document model. The information conceptualization and content creation processes needs to evolve with the web and move into the **much-lauded Web 2.0 era** or go the way of the dinosaurs.

We will be following this document by **publicly releasing** our internal development documentation and tools.

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