WFYI And Butler EPICS

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The project we chose to work on was with the WFYI public television and radio station. There were two problems that they were experiencing and we were tasked with fixing them. The first was with their email templates that they were using to send information about their programs to their users. The CSS and HTML code WFYI was using was pulling a special custom font from google. When viewed in some older versions Microsoft Outlook, the font that was being used for links was being overridden and converted to an inconsistent font. Our goal with this problem was to figure out a way to stop Outlook from overriding the font so that the email would look consistent for all users. On the same email template, the photo at the top was being cut off when viewed on some versions of Microsoft Outlook as well. Our goal was to fix this problem so that all images would fit uniformly on the email template. The second problem that WFYI wanted us to work on was a redesign of two of their other email templates: No Limits and Indiana Lawmakers.

We chose this project because we were all interested in working together to help a local non-profit that may not have been able to afford to make these fixes by themselves or pay another group to fix it for them. We also wanted to work with a company that does a lot of good in the community. We, as a group, strongly believe that WFYI is an important part of the Indianapolis community and that public forums for information are an important part of society. It was an easy decision to choose WFYI because of this.

Our main correspondent was Chris Bowman. We met with him and the rest of his team at the WFYI headquarters in downtown Indianapolis to get a good feel for what he wanted from us and to get a push in the right direction. Our team members are Mike Pajkos, Josh Excell, and Harry Winter. Mike’s main objective for this product was to focus on the template redesigns and to act as Client Liaison. Josh and Harry had some experience with computer programming and some experience with HTML so they took up the objective of fixing the font and image formatting changes. They also gave Mike feedback on his redesigns when he requested.

In this report, we will be discussing what our initial problem was, the specifications we wished to achieve and our process of fixing the problem. We will also discuss how we kept in touch with the customers, how we organized and managed the project, and what could be accomplished in the future.

After meeting with Chris and the team at the WFYI headquarters in downtown Indianapolis, we had got a good idea of what exactly they wanted us to do and what they wanted the final product to look like. Starting with the email template formatting issues, our main goal was to completely fix the font changing issue and to have the images always scaling correctly. Ultimately, we wanted to have every email client on every platform and operating system to display the link correctly. As we worked through the project, however, we found that some old versions of Outlook, especially on outdated operating systems, just were not compatible with the html files we were using. Our goal was then changed to have at least 80% of users display the link correctly. With the email redesigns, our goal was to update the templates to look more modern. The templates we were given looked quite outdated and didn’t flow well so we wanted to break up the large blocks of text and change the colors to be more muted and easy on the eyes. In terms of specifications, to be considered finished we needed the approval of Jenny on Chris’s team who oversees the designs.

For both the INLM and NoLimits design schemes, we initially focused on a segmented layout. The design we were handed had dense pockets of text and was difficult to digest, at first glance. Our first round of designs incorporated blocked, colored text boxes that offered a more reader friendly layout by dividing up the text by section. Upon second revision, we matched the consistency of the WFYI email design, by incorporating colored dividers and matching, color heading text. Thus, we are able to help maintain the WFYI branding style, while making more verbose stories, easier to digest.

The standard text editor we utilized was sublime. We edited the preexisting HTML/CSS code to account for the layout errors with the given images. Initially, the images locked to span a certain pixel value of the screen layout. However, by changing the image dimensions to a certain percentage of the screen, we were able to create a more adaptable layout. Moreover, by changing the font families to one native to Microsoft Outlook—and not exclusive to Chrome—we were able to resolve the font issues, as well.

As the display errors were largely, visually based, repeated testing was mandatory. For our initial designs of both email templates, we utilized MailChimp’s preview mode as a precursor to sending test emails. Once our designs were solidified, we sent emails to different email servers. Moreover, by noting how each template behaved on different devices—from Mac laptops to Android portable devices—we were able to develop consistent displays for both desk based, and mobile computers. Because our group had a wide variety of devices at our disposal, we were able to simultaneously test our email layouts to pinpoint and troubleshoot any errors. For example, there was a display error on Android 4.0 software, however, when compared to updated Android software, we could pinpoint that our error was software specific. Furthermore, we were able to look at WFYI demographic percentages, by mobile phone. By identifying that a significantly smaller percentage of viewers, compared to their entire demographic, was using outdated Android versions, we could conclude that very few people were affected, if any at all.

Throughout our time on this team we needed to keep a structure accurately distribute the workload as well as skillsets. In our team, we had a total of 3 people. Josh Excell was the team lead and took responsibility to make sure the project was done in a timely fashion as well as all requirements, and deliverables were completed weekly. He also constructed WSR’s to make clear for the progress of the group. This process was then shown to WFYI’s team on the epics website. He was also a coder for the project. Harry Winter was our main Programmer, and he worked on the HTML and CSS files to fix WFYI’s needs. While being an active participant in that he also had his hand in the template design with Mike. Mike Pajkos was the team liaison to the WFYI team, as well as lead designer for the group.

Our team split the work fairly. We had Josh and Harry tackle the coding aspect of the project and we had Mike work on designs for new templates. For example, Josh and Harry Worked on the HTML code for the Font issue, and the image displacement. Josh also did the WSR’s and Harry did some design testing. Mike was constantly emailing Chris, and keeping us updated on requirements and changes. Mike worked on the WFYI “No Limits” page and redid that as well as redid “INLM” page/

We worked in a very cohesive group, out average week consisted of two class periods, one of which we would develop a game plan and conduct research. The second day we would code or begin the work and find errors and work with each other to find a solution. Then throughout the week we would finish the, up and report back the following week. If we ran into an issue that wasn’t easily solvable we would look to WFYI’s team for guidance which we did multiple times. When there was even a larger issue or we needed to review what we have done, we went into WFYI and held a 30 minute meeting with the team, this was to gain a better understanding of our objectives and for them to give us feedback on the work we had performed.

In the future, there are a lot of options with moving templates to a more responsive nature for mobile and desktop views. If possible a team could take on the WFYI website and make a bot be able to snip out articles and objectives set by an administrator and deliver those in a template format to the desired demographic or device. There also needs to be a naming and coding convention document created to not run into these types of bugs so that is a clear and functional way for anyone to develop it. Some things the next team can look for include the HTML code we worked on and CSS knowledge to style the HTML for the team.