

Wireframes

A wireframe is a stripped-down representation of an interface, typically a Web site. Wireframes allow a developer to work at a high level towards usage-based design, without worrying about colours, fonts, content, or underlying technologies. The purpose of a wireframe is to define the "what" and "who" rather than the "how."

Wireframes attempt to answer:

What is going to be presented? Who is the audience?

Wireframes do not answer:

How is it going to be built? Where is it going to reside? When is it going to be ready?

Wireframes help define the elements of an interface that will remain constant, as well as the elements that are expected to change. A wireframe is also useful for determining some basic information architecture, showcasing how the same content may be accessed by more than one means.

Typically, wireframing is one of the first steps in developing a new Web site. In addition to creating new wireframes, I have found it useful to deconstruct competitors' Web sites in an effort to identify what elements an audience is likely to expect from my client's site.

The process for creating wireframes for an existing Web site is surprisingly easy:

- Do a screenshot of the page you wish to deconstruct.
- Paste the screenshot into your favourite design application (Visio or Illustrator work well).
- Overlay screenshot with labelled boxes.
- Wash, rinse, repeat.

The following sample wireframes are from projects completed while working at [Navigata Communications](#). I am not keeping the wireframes current, so it is possible that they are no longer accurate for the sites outlined.

Allstream

Logo	Promo #1	
Home/Language/Site Map/Search		
Promo #2		
Product Segmentation		
Main Navigation	News Releases	Promo #3
		Promo #4
	Customer Care (segmented by audience and product)	Promo #5
Promo #6		
Legal		

Wireframe for <http://www.allstream.com>

Bell Canada

Logo	About Bell/Jobs/Contact Us/Language and Regional Segmentation	
	Search	
	Customer Care/Store Locator	
E-commerce	Product Segmentation	Authentication
Audience Segmentation		Customer Care
Promo #1		411 Directory
		Promo #2
Online Support/Legal		

Wireframe for <http://www.bell.ca>

Sprint

Logo	Promo #1	
Home/Language/Site Map/Search		
Promo #2		
Product Segmentation		
Main Navigation	News Releases	Promo #3
		Promo #4
	Customer Care (segmented by audience and product)	Promo #5
Promo #6		
Legal		

Wireframe for <http://www.sprint.com>

BT

For Home/For Business/About BT/Search/Contact	
Promo #1	Promo #2
	Promo #3 (including audience segmentation)
Audience Segmentation	
411-style Directory	Authentication
Investors/Careers/Legal/News/Accessibility/Society and Environment	

Wireframe for <http://www.bt.com>

Hewlett-Packard

Today's Date		Language Selection	
Promo #1	Random Image	Audience Segmentation	
Promo #2			
Product Segmentation		E-commerce	
		Support	
Contact		Keyword Search	
Company info/Jobs/Press Releases/Promotions/Newsletter			
Legal			

Wireframe for <http://www.hp.com>

Autodesk

Country Selection	About us/Contact/Search	
Products Distribution Support	Case Studies	Flash Promo
Subscribe	Audience Segmentation	
Download Press Releases Events		Product Promo
About us/Contact/Search		Legal

Wireframe for <http://www.autodesk.com>

Fujifilm

Corporate Info	Products	Search
Random Image #1	Random Image #2	Random Image #3
Promo		Logo
News Headlines		
Contact/Site Map/Outlet Finder/Sales and Service		

Wireframe for <http://www.fujifilm.com>

Brooklyn Chamber

Header/Keyword Search		
Chamber Information		Authentication
Service Segmentation		Join
Random Image and Case Study		
Chamber Events	Community Events	Chamber News
Sponsors		

Wireframe for <http://www.brooklynchamber.com>

Maras

Audience Segmentation			
Application Tracker	Authentication	Downloads	Homepage
Promo #1		Promo #3	
Promo #2 (including audience segmentation)			
Service Description/Legal			

Wireframe for <http://www.maras.co.uk>