

# **Branding Project for xpedx.com**

By

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Submitted to

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## **Abstract**

The Branding Project for xpedx.com was created as an alternative for xpedx owned companies to sell their products over the World Wide Web without the high costs incorporated with creating an e-commerce site of their own. This paper will discuss the key functionality of Branding that allows companies to have a site of their own for their customers. This paper will also examine the key users that the Branding Project will benefit. I will also discuss the key components that were used in order to complete this project. I will give specific examples of companies that are currently benefiting from the solution the Branding Project has created.

# **Branding Project for xpedx.com**

## **1. Statement of the Problem**

### **1.1 Definition of Need**

Currently xpedx uses their business site to sell products to a number of different customers. There are a number of different areas in the site where xpedx logos and references to xpedx are clearly visible. xpedx acquires many different companies each year. xpedx practices what is known as entrepreneurial integrity. This allows companies to retain their name, logos, and many of their business practices. Many of the companies have expressed interest in using the current xpedx e-commerce site. xpedx would like these companies be able to use the current site with the look and feel of their own company. Our companies would also be able to present to their customers the website as a convenient new way to place their orders and find information.

### **1.2 Areas of IT Emphasis for the Project**

The two basic areas of the IET curriculum that I utilized while creating the branding solution were programming and multimedia. I used each of these throughout the project. They proved to be invaluable.

#### **1.2.1 Programming**

The largest portion of the work was the programming that needed to be completed. Every page in the site had to be modified in order for this to work. The majority of the code to be changed was ASP. There was some mild HTML modification

that had to be done. The HTML modification proved to be more tedious than difficult. All of the programming work was done using Visual InterDev 6.0. This proved to be the best choice for a few reasons. The main reason being that a solution could be created which would allow me to see all of the pages incorporated in the site. This helped in keeping track of which pages had been completed and which pages still needed their modifications. I also completed all of the HTML work using Visual InterDev. This task was easily completed using the find/replace feature. I basically searched for the specific image and replaced it with a variable. This work basically consisted of identifying certain images or text within the site and replacing them with a variable that was to be identified later by the ASP code. Much of the programming work was completed using current pages, however, a lot of new pages were also completed. These pages were company specific information that would be accessed based on the current company/URL.

### **1.2.2 Multimedia**

Basically every image on the site had to be modified in order for each company to have its own look and feel. I used Adobe Photoshop 5.5 to complete all of these modifications. The majority of the images were fairly simple however the addition of animated gif images proved to be a bit more complicated. To do this I used Adobe ImageReady 5.0. This allowed me to look at the animation frame-by-frame, also layer-by-layer. This has allowed me to cut out the current layer and input the image of the new company. The multimedia was a large portion of the work. In addition to modifying the current images I created templates for future sites that will allow a quick and simple change for companies to be added in the future.

## **2. Review of the Literature**

I did not have to do a lot of research for this project. I basically had a set of requirements that I followed in order to provide each customer with a site that would fulfill their wants and needs. When researching the initial problem I looked at code examples to find out exactly how to read a URL. I have been using Visual InterDev for some time now. Basically, I did not need any training on how to use its various components. I also use the Adobe products quite often and I have found that I learn a lot more easily if I just play with the software. Whenever a road block presented itself within the Adobe Products, I found their help section to be a quick and simple reference.

## **3. Product Descriptions and Intended Use**

### **3.1 User Profiles**

#### **3.1.1 Customers**

These individuals make up the majority of the users on the site. Everyday thousands and thousands of customers log in to the xpedx.com site to search catalogs of items and place various orders. The customers are expected to have knowledge of the products and services that xpedx provides. In addition the customer should have a general knowledge of how to navigate through a typical e-business site.

#### **3.1.2 Customer Service Representative (CSR)**

This is a group of internal customer service workers that provide support to the customer trying to navigate the site. In addition, these individuals often

place orders on behalf of the customers. The CSRs are expected to have a high level understanding of the site in order to assist customers at the highest levels possible. These individuals are problem solvers and are the first line of defense in addressing any issues that may occur with any function on the site. The CSR's also maintain an open line of communication with the development team in order to report any bugs.

### **3.1.3 Marketing**

The marketing team maintains the news and advertising on the site. They often look in on the site to make sure that the news items and announcements are up to date. These users are low level and are not expected to perform any functions on the site. In addition to this they use the site for reporting usage and generating figures based on sales on the site. Many times marketing represents the customers' wants and needs and submits enhancement requests to the site.

### **3.1.4 Management**

Management usage of the site is to maintain a specific level of quality. Much like the marketing group, these individuals browse the site looking for any potential problems or changes that need to be addressed. Management prioritizes the enhancement requests based on their observations. These individuals are expected to have a solid understanding of e-business and site navigation.

## **3.2 Product Description**

I plan on using two areas of the curriculum from the Information Engineering Technology program. Programming will make up the majority of the project while multimedia will constitute a smaller less complex portion.

### **3.2.1 Programming**

In order to complete this program virtually every page in the site will need to be modified. In addition to that a number of new pages must also be created. All of the modification will be done in ASP or VB script. All of the programming will be completed using Visual InterDev.

### **3.2.2 Multimedia**

With the addition of new companies a large number of new logos must be created for the site. This is a long and tedious process. Many of the images must be created specifically to fit within the borders of the current site. Animated images must also be created. I plan on using Adobe Photoshop and Adobe ImageReady to create these images.

## **3.3 Interface Scheme**

### **3.3.1 Logos/Text**

All of the logos/text affected by branding are based on the URL. This is set in the init.asp file located in the svc folder. The code is as follows:

```
' Top Left Session logo
  if session("clogo") = "" then
    dim sname
```

```

sname = Request.ServerVariables("Server_Name")

if instr(1, sname, "zeller") then
    session("clogo")="/images/top_Zellerlogo.gif"
elseif instr(1, sname, "xpedx") Then
    session("clogo")="/images/top_xpedxlogo.gif"
elseif instr(1, sname, "western") Then
    session("clogo")="/images/top_westernlogo.gif"
elseif instr(1, sname, "nation") then
    session("clogo")="/images/top_Nationwidelogo.gif"
end if
end if

' Text Session variable
if session("ctext") = "" then
    dim lname
    lname = Request.ServerVariables("Server_Name")

    if instr(1, lname, "zeller") then
        session("ctext")= "Zellerbach"
    elseif instr(1, lname, "xpedx") Then
        session("ctext")= "xpedx"
    elseif instr(1, lname, "western") Then
        session("ctext")= "Western Paper"
    elseif instr(1, lname, "nation") then
        session("ctext")= "Nationwide"
    end if
end if

' Right Nav Session Variable
if session("cleftlogo") = "" then
    dim snamed
    snamed = Request.ServerVariables("Server_Name")

    if instr(1, snamed, "zeller") then
        session("cleftlogo")="/images/Zellerbach_auctions.gif"
    elseif instr(1, snamed, "xpedx") Then
        session("cleftlogo")="/images/xpedx_auctions.gif"
    elseif instr(1, snamed, "western") Then
        session("cleftlogo")="/images/Western_auctions.gif"
    elseif instr(1, snamed, "nation") then
        session("cleftlogo")="/images/Nationwide_auctions.gif"
    end if
end if

```

There are a number areas in the code that need to be changed in order for site to work for the different companies. The following are specific examples:

1: The top left logo on each page is coded with the following bolded variable:

```
<td align=left valign=top><img src=
"%= session("clogo")%"
width="106" height="50"border="0">
```



Figure 1. Top Left Logo

2: Anywhere there is company specific text should be coded as the following bolded variable:

```
<b class=newsHead>&nbsp;
<%= session("ctext")%>
News</b><BR></td>
```



Figure 2. Content Text



Figure 3. Right Hand Nav

3: The right column logo variable which is coded as follows: ` <!--#include virtual="about/zabout.asp" --><%  
elseif instr(1, aname, "xpedx") Then  
    %> <!--#include virtual="about/xpabout.asp" --><%  
elseif instr(1, aname, "western") Then  
    %> <!--#include virtual="about/wabout.asp" --><%  
elseif instr(1, aname, "nation") then  
    %> <!--#include virtual="about/nabout.asp" --><%  
end if%>
```

This is the same on each of the following:

Accounts.asp

Capabilities.asp

Vision.asp

Productline.asp

Solutions.asp

About.asp

Therefore, in order to make changes to a specific company's page you would have to do it to the specific page. For example, if you wanted to make a change to a Zellerbach company it would have a "Z" in front of the page name. So if a change needed to be made to the Zellerbach "vision" page it would need to be done in the zvision.asp file. This is the same for every company.

#### **4.0 Deliverable/Objectives**

- Create a solution that allows companies to use the xpedx.com site as their own
- Modify the look and feel of the site to reflect each company
- Provide customized information about each company for the user
- Add features for each company based on requests
- Provide relevant contact information for each user based on the site they have logged in

#### **5.0 Development**

The development of this project went along as planned. A set of requirements were approved and delivered at which point development began. I had access to all of the necessary tools to complete the project.

## 5.1 Timeline

### Senior Design I Fall 2001

#### Weeks 1 – 4

- Present the current problem
- Research possible solutions
- Determine the correct solution
- Determine feasibility
- Present the solutions to a business analyst
- Agree on requirements
- Begin Design

#### Weeks 5 – 10

- Complete Design
- Present final Design
- Present timeline
- Begin Development

## Senior Design II Winter 2002

### Weeks 1 – 4

- Continue development
- Present final design
- Present prototype to Business Analyst/Manager
- Gather feedback

### Weeks 5 – 10

- Modify Prototype
- Submit for Review
- Complete Punch List
- Complete Development

## Senior Design III Spring 2002

### Weeks 1 – 4

- Begin testing
- Modify bugs
- Request promotion to the staging server for business testing

### Weeks 5 – 10

- Submit completed code for review
- Submit code for promotion to production environment (request to go live)

## 5.2 Budget

| <b>Product</b>                                                            | <b>Cost</b>   | <b>Source</b>                              |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Windows Server 2000                                                       | \$999         | Microsoft.com                              |
| Visual Studio<br>-Visual InterDev<br>-Visual SourceSafe<br>- Visual Basic | \$1,079       | Microsoft.com                              |
| Adobe Photoshop 5.5<br>-Photoshop<br>-ImageReady                          | \$609         | Adobe.com                                  |
| Purchase URL's(*6)                                                        | \$420         | Register.com                               |
| International Paper Servers                                               | \$132         | Information Systems<br>International Paper |
| Hardware(system)                                                          | \$2000        | Microcenter                                |
| Miscellaneous                                                             | \$500         | (estimate)                                 |
| <b>Totals</b>                                                             | <b>\$3581</b> |                                            |

## 6.0 Proof of Design

I feel as though I met all of the deliverables specified within the deliverables.

Each new customer is met with new requests and I feel the original deliverables set allow for the requests to be made in a simple and timely manner. The completed deliverables are:

- Create a solution that allows companies to use the xpedx.com site as their own. This is completed and currently there are a number of companies using the site as their own. From the time that the Branding Project came into fruition the number of orders and the amount of business we do has increased.

- Modify the look and feel of the site to reflect each company. Each company has a specific set of images/logos, text, and static html pages that are referenced every time they type in their company specific URL. Each page has a common theme however it is clear that you are looking at another company site.



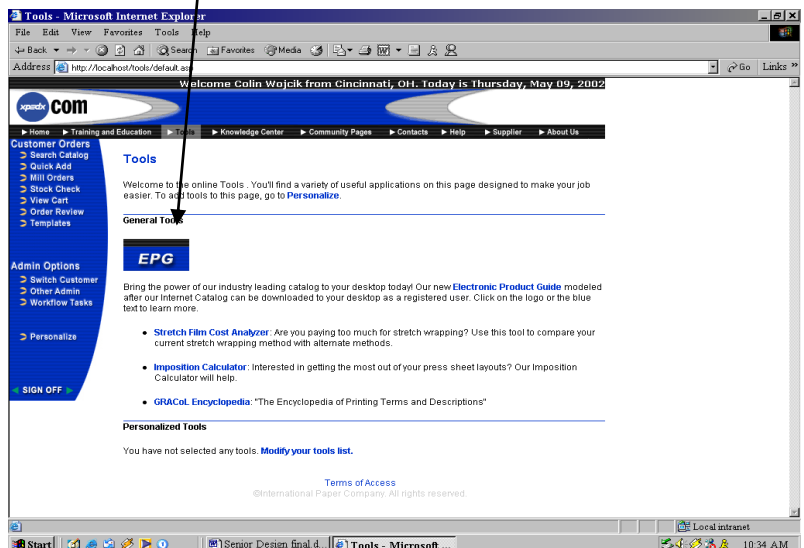
Figure 5. Kirk xpedx Logo



Figure 6. xpedx logo

- Provide customized information about each company for the user. Each customer has company specific information located in certain areas of the site. Links to these pages were added by request. Most of the specific customer info is located in the about us section or the contacts section.
- Add features for each company based on requests. Some companies have specific tools their customers use. Many times they request we add these tools to their specific site. An example is the **Electronic Product Guide** tool. This link allows you to download a product guide directly to your desktop allowing you to browse the current catalogs without logging into the Internet.

Figure 7. EPG Screen



- Provide relevant contact information for each user based on the site they have logged in. Each company provides their company specific information, which is called, based on the URL.

## **7.0 Conclusion**

This project was very important to the xpedx.com site. It has increased the business done on the site. This would be a typical example of the types of projects I complete at xpedx. The site is relatively new and unlike many of the e-commerce sites around the world, our business has steadily increased over the last few years. By providing solutions to our site such as the branding project we intend to do whatever it takes to make sure the customers know that their comfort on the site is our #1 priority.

Maintaining a schedule and meeting school expectations was the hardest part of completing this project. Usually a project like this would be done a timelier manner. The requirements are delivered and the design specifications are approved and the build begins. The customers are anxious and completion in a timely and through manner is the most important part. The project is tested and delivered to the Internet.

Completing this project has taught me a lot about creating a good business plan and applying it to successful projects, the importance of maintaining a detailed schedule, and completing the project as requested.

## Appendix A.

Site Diagram:

| <b>xpedx.com</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>Default.asp</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>Portal Functions</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>Benefits</b>                                                                                                                                                                                |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>- User logs onto to there desired website. They may include:<br/> xpedx.com<br/> zellerbachonline.com<br/> western-paper.com<br/> nationwidepaper.com<br/> kirk.xpedx.com<br/> bulkleydunton.com</p> <p>- They are directed to default.asp</p> <p>- This is typical information page this is where the branding process begins.</p> | <p>- Read through a list of specific includes</p> <p>- init.asp reads the URL and sets a session variable which will determine the graphics throughout the site.</p> <p>- init.asp also determines a certain amount of text to be used throughout the site.</p> | <p>- Contacts Section<br/> This section allows users to find specific contact information for that particular company. This is determined by code in the contacts.asp page</p> <p>- Help.asp<br/> This section is also company specific and based on the URL provides that information</p> <p>-Tools.asp<br/> Provides specific tools requested by each company</p> <p>-Training<br/> Allows companies to feature their specific training ability</p> | <p>- Allows xpedx owned companies access to our e-commerce site without the cost of creating their own.</p> <p>- Quick and efficient to add other companies.</p> <p>- Fairly easy to edit.</p> |

## References

1. Adobe Systems Incorporated. *Adobe Photoshop 5.5 User Guide*. San Jose, CA. Adobe Systems Incorporated, 1999.
2. Homer, Alex. Sussman, Dave. Francis, Brian. *Active Server Pages 3.0*. Birmingham, Alabama, Wrox Press Ltd. April 2000