

Boyink.com Redesign Design Brief

Branding

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What/Who is Boyink Interactive?

Boyink Interactive is just me – Michael Boyink. I don't ever plan to have employees – preferring instead to pull in other contractors as required.

I started the business in 2002 after getting laid off, looking for work, and finding project work instead of a job. But what started as "unwilling entrepreneurialism" has become the best job of my life.

I used the "interactive" word because at the time I didn't know if I would end up doing web development or database/desktop software. I've done both (at least in the early days) but for the last 4-ish years it's been all web.

I started out doing it all – the initial sales work, IA, design and implementation. These days I prefer to do the client engagement and the IA/problem solving, wireframes, etc. At that point I'll get a freelance designer involved to do the visuals. I have also gotten out of the PSD to HTML work – preferring instead to outsource that. Once the project has static HTML/CSS files I jump back in and do the ExpressionEngine integration.

These days my world is about evenly split between Boyink Interactive and Trainee.com – and that's how I intend to keep it. I love training and developing and how they work together to keep both my communication and development skills sharp.

Branding – How I See Myself

I always describe myself as neither an introvert nor extrovert – just a "vert". I enjoy speaking to groups of people, but also like being heads-down writing code. But couldn't do either one of those exclusively.

I consider myself relatively handy around the house – up to the point of major construction or renovation. My primary hobby is an old Jeep which I've done a fair amount of rebuilding/refurbishing.

Our daily driver is a '96 Roadmaster Station Wagon complete with the fake woody package. We chose it because it was the perfect intersection of price and capability –but have also enjoyed the retro factor and playing against the minivan type.

I have a pretty good sense of humor – growing up with my last name it was necessary for survival. I'll be the first one to crack a joke at my last name – both to get a laugh and also because it diffuses it for anyone else.

My degree is in Communications – and I see myself as a communicator first and technologist second. Websites are communication puzzles to me (who is the audience, what do we need to say to them, and how do we best do that) rather than technological puzzles (should the site use AJAX, JQuery or MooTools?).

I'm a reject from the corporate world. I couldn't stand the politics and pretentiousness, preferred a more casual workplace, and liked to ask "Why?" a lot.

I tend to focus on one skillset and get very good at it. 10 years ago I was called (Microsoft) "Access Mike" by my clients as I spent most of my time developing Access applications and wrote a few articles for magazines, etc. These days it's the

same thing with ExpressionEngine – only taking the article-writing further and making a business out of it (Train-ee.com).

As Boyink Interactive I have done work for every previous boss/employer going back 15 years – even the one who asked me to leave his business because I didn't agree with the direction of the company.

I'm a first-generation professional hailing from a lineage of manual laborers, farmers and skilled tradesmen. My father was a blue-collar municipal worker who worked swing-shift for 27 years. This has left me with a strong work ethic – but also a sense of pragmatism towards technology. I continually feel very blessed to be able to do what I do.

A while back I posted a blog entry on running a small business – and it's a good one to reference here as it speaks to the day to day values I have as a business person: <http://www.boyink.com/splaat/comments/on-running-a-small-business/>

Essentially – I know my work isn't going to win any design awards or be noted for its trend-setting use of technology. But what it will do is meet client/business requirements & budget, deliver a clean, well organized, professional user experience be built with stable, proven, and reliable technologies, and leave the client happy and ready to hire me back again.

Branding – How Others See Me

As part of writing this brief I asked current/past clients to describe me using 3 adjectives. Here are the results:

Relationship	Years Known	Adjectives	Notes/Comments
Client	3	Knowledgeable, Helpful Honest	
Client	1	Pragmatic Steady Balanced Dependable	
Contractor	0.5	Present Expert Communicative	Respond quickly, always available, initiate communication, keep things rolling
Employer/co-hort, friend	6	Mellow Easy-going Professional in a casual way	
Client	2	Easy-going Capable Confident	You take a mysterious process (web development) and put people at ease that

			it's going to all go OK.
Friend/Peer	3	King of EE Noble Independent	
Employer/co-hort, friend	4	Honest, Genuine Intuitive Gracious	
Employer/co-hort, friend	11	Creative Caring Faithful	
Client	7	Realistic Conservative Helpful	Interested in using only the resources needed to accomplish the task.
Client	2	Honest Straight-forward Hard-working Approachable	When we were looking for an EE designer / developer, I was put off by many of the sites listed in the Pro Network as quite a few portrayed quite a self-important attitude and I was concerned that our job would not be large enough / important enough to them to get their full attention. I was looking for someone who would give each job their all, regardless of the size of the company hiring, give a fair price and the necessary training to get us up on our own two feet with EE.
Client	2	Fast Reliable Knowledgeable	I've been working with Mike for over two years now, and it's been a real pleasure. He's fast, reliable, and has an encyclopedic knowledge of what Expression Engine can and cannot do.
Client	15	Professional	Handle yourself

		Fun Knowledgeable	professionally. Appropriately, you don't take yourself too seriously. You understand your industry very well.
Contractor	2	Reliable Knowledgeable, Professional Nice	
Customer	2	Helpful Reliable Friendly	
Customer	1	Experienced Active Straight-shooter	When following you on Twitter its interesting to hear your commentary on politics, your projects and the world in general... I feel that you have a cynical style - but not in a bad way as I'm very cynical myself. You call 'em as you see 'em. - which I think clients benefit from, because if something stinks, you wouldn't be afraid to tell them. you're a professional at your craft and you know what you're talking about.
Peer/Customer	1	Wise Helpful Family-oriented	
Peer	4	Straightforward Helpful Friendly no-BS	

Keyword Cloud

Here are the results from <http://wordle.net> with the above keywords and some other testimonials put in:

Realty Company	EE Consulting	EE Forums
Author	Web Strategy, EE Consulting	Personal
Manufacturer/Retailer/Service Provider	Web Strategy	Local Business Group
Design Firm	Web Strategy, EE Implementation	Personal Contact
Blogger	EE Implementation	EE Pro Network
Communications Firm	EE Implementation	EE Pro Network
Investment Firm	Web Strategy, Implementation	Personal Contact
Software Company	Web Strategy, EE Implementation	Personal Contact
Non-Profit Consultant Firm	Web Strategy, Project Management	Personal Contact
Manufacturers Association	Web Strategy, EE Implementation	Client Referral
Web Designer	EE Implementation	Personal Contact
Interactive Agency	EE Implementation	Train-ee Class
Translation Company	Web Strategy, EE Implementation	EE Pro Network

Preferred/Ideal Work Models

1. Direct Client
 - a. End client approaches me directly.
 - b. They have a budget of at least \$5K, and are willing to let me lead them through the process and work with my preferred tools and partners.
 - c. I do the research and come up with the site IA and branding requirements.
 - d. I contract with a freelance visual designer and PM the process through until a satisfactory design is achieved.
 - e. I then contract an HTML slicer who turns the Photoshop files into static HTML and CSS.
 - f. I then do the CMS implementation, work with the client to get content into the system, launch the site and maintain the client relationship going forward.

2. Subcontractor
 - a. I'm approached by a web design/development firm, ad agency, or communications firm regarding a project they're undertaking for one of their clients.
 - b. I may or may not be involved in the initial research and brand direction – quite often there are design templates already existing and the site just needs implementation.
 - c. I may or may not facilitate getting the design templates translated the HTML/CSS.
 - d. Most often I am working with a Project Manager from the hiring agency.
 - e. I may or may not have direct contact with the end client.

- f. I do the ExpressionEngine implementation, making implementation recommendations along the way based on business and design goals as communicated through the hiring agency.
- g. I may or may not have continued involvement with the project – sometimes I'm just providing development bandwidth, and any post-launch concerns are handled by the hiring agency.

Redesign Goals

Overall I'm actually pretty happy with the match I'm seeing between my desired and perceived brand. However, I do want to nudge the site to be a more whimsical and less corporate, yet still maintain a clean & professional look (vs. heavily layered).

Must Haves

- The pogo stick element. I've gotten a ton of positive response to it over the years and people love how it plays off my name and communicates the fact that I have a sense of humor.
- A simplified portfolio. Watching the stats it's apparent that hardly anyone uses the pagination links to see more detail about a project.
- A more focused business model. Looking at my past clients I see it breaking down into two main offerings
 - Complete site builds where I manage the entire project bringing in freelancers as need be.
 - EE implementation services for other web firms.
- A prominent connection to Train-ee.com. Train-ee.com has been featured on Smashing Magazine, in a bunch of CSS galleries, and is heavily referenced from the EE forums and wiki. I get a fair amount of consulting work from people who start with Train-ee materials, so need Boyink.com to maintain the relationship when they come from Train-ee.
- Twitter tied to the design. At first I didn't want to promote my Twitter feed on my site because I was using Twitter to vent about clients – but I think I'm ready to connect the two now.

Like to Haves

- The illustrations that are included with this document. These are custom pieces done in trade for some EE work. I really like them and how they get around the issue of having photos that go out of date. I am not 100% married to them though if they can't be worked into a design that meets the other goals. I like whimsical, but it needs to stop short of cutesy.
- A fixed-width design. I did the current fluid design because I never had before and wanted to see how it played out. I've never felt completely at-home in it.
- A grid-based design (preferably 960.gs) – so that if I need a new page type I can use existing design elements with some starter code to get there.

- A higher focus on typography.
- The same architecture – with possibly removing search from the main nav. Search could just appear on the pages that need it: weblog and hobbies.
- Simple navigation implementation -- preferably just unordered lists.

On the Table

- Color scheme. It's always been primarily blue – but am open to other color schemes that achieve the design goals and support the brand.
- Logo (alternatively, sticking with essentially the same logo but losing the pogo-guy and adding an exclamation point). This logo was done by a designer friend, and I like it as it seems to suit my casual yet professional style – but know how difficult it can be to work an existing logo around a new design direction.
- Fonts/Typography
- Footer design – I can go either way here, using the footer area to give options to the user or going to simpler & more focused pages by losing it.
- Comments. I'm currently undecided on whether the new site will have commenting or not. I've been blogging less anyway – with bringing in Twitter and moving EE related posts off to Train-ee I'll not have as much use for the Boyink.com blog. I might just be over comments.

Page Types

I see these as being the unique page types within the content of the site:

- Home Page
- Train-ee Feature Page
- Work/Portfolio Overview
- Work/Portfolio Detail
- Blog Index
- Blog Single Entry
- Contact

Content Outline

Home

- Logo/Brand Positioning
- Train-ee Link
- Dev Portfolio Link
- Randomized Testimonials
- Latest blog/news posts
- Latest flickr photos
- Latest Jeep/trailer blog posts
- Latest Tweet

About

Teach

- Train-ee Overview

Work

- Development Portfolio
Overview
Some linked case studies

Write

- Blog/News
Categories
Linked to single entry/comments

Fun

- Overview page
Jeep Blog
Bantam Trailer Blog
Photography (Pulling from Flickr)

Contact