You have **CLASSIFIED YOUR SITE** *(11)* and discovered that there will only be internal users and the it is a stative site. These people have used pre-web applications that determine their expectations of the new site. You have **STORED CONTENT IN A DATABASE** *(64)*. You need to show the state of the database using natural metaphors *(PRIMING AND INTERFERENCE (56))* . You understand **USE OF COLOUR** *(53)*, **TRANSFER EFFECTS** *(18)* and **THE HALT AND THE LAME AND THE STRANGER AT THE DOOR** *(51)* . You may need to allow users to transfer skills from an existing application.

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**Problem**

How can you design the site to cater for the expectations and preferences of the target users? How can you then guarantee that users with disabilities will not be inconvenienced or discommoded?
One the one hand you don’t want to let users redesign the site to the extent that it becomes completely non-standard; but on the other, you need to allow for variation from user to user and perhaps country to country.

In this situation the display of state is an important feature of the interface. So is its ability to overcome the natural resistance of users who have gotten used to an existing application.

Example

One company is currently building a web-based application to support entrepreneurial commodity trading and scheduling of the resulting shipments. Users view shipments and their contents in a spreadsheet type view. The user can perform actions on the shipments and their contents; e.g. a shipment contains movements, and an operator can link movements to deals or stock inventory. Shipments and movements have a well defined state model, each transition being the result of a significant action in the business process.

Users can sort and filter their data. Movements and shipments have hundreds of associated attributes which can be entered (from items such as ‘Start of Unloading’ through to quality metrics). Users can edit a movement or shipment and provide new data at any time.

The system presents new and modified deals in a quasi-real time fashion. This allows the user to handle problems such as the trader changing a deal in a way that puts the system into an error state. When the system is in an error state the user is notified of the offending deal updates. The user can then choose to accept changes or perform another operation that will bring the system back into a legal state.
The legacy application was in Excel, so the designers gave the site the look and feel of a spreadsheet to exploit transfer effects. Now they needed to provide state indicators.

One way to show the state of a deal in a clear, intuitive way is the use of red and green colour coding. However, this would not be helpful if the user happens to be colour blind. Thus, the designers provide a facility for the users’ to select the two colours they wanted to use.

**Therefore**

Provide a means for users to configure the interface to allow for their preferences or disabilities. Do not allow them to make changes that might interfere with the function or usability of the site. If there is a legacy application then either provide a similar look and feel (using a NATURAL METAPHOR) or allow the user to configure their pages to the same effect.

Do not apply this pattern to public sites.

This pattern is terminal within this language.

**Contributors and sources**

*Andy Schneider*