

August 2010 Newsletter



If you are receiving this message, it means that I have done work for you in the past, I am doing work for you now, or you have expressed interest regarding me doing work for you in the future. If you would prefer to not receive further emails, please let me know about it.

Being that it is August, I will be sending out invoices to any of you for whom I have done work in July, or for those who have not yet paid for previous months.

News & Info

Health Watch – Just another reminder, as I mentioned last month, I am scheduled to have a minor surgery August 12th. I am going to have to take it easy for a few days afterwards, so I won't be doing much work.

However, there may be other issues that will affect the amount of time I will be able to spend working for a while. This is much more serious and unfortunate and involves Leila, my "significant other".

About six years ago, they found some lumps in her breast. It was what is called "Ductal Carcinoma In Situ" (DCIS). This is the least dangerous form of breast cancer, but there is still the dreaded "C" word. At the time she had a lumpectomy, underwent seven weeks of radiation and, until recently, has had no major problems with her regularly scheduled mammograms. This last time, however, it appears the DCIS has reoccurred and it looks like it may be more invasive. What we've heard so far is maybe stage 1 or 2. We have a bunch of appointments and it looks like she may have to go with mastectomy and reconstruction this time. I recently made a little money from the sale of my parents' house and Leila had mentioned in the past that she really liked her cousin's Lexus SUV so I told her I would get her one. For now, however, I think that, instead of getting her a shiny new car, I will get her a shiny new "rack"... ;o}

To those of you who believe in the power of prayer, we would appreciate all the positive karma we can get. Thanks.

Image Conscious – A lot of my time is spent dealing with images I receive from clients. This often involves cropping, editing, resizing and on and on. I thought it might be informative to discuss some of the types of images, what affects how much space they can take up, etc.

There are numerous formats to display images. Some are able to be displayed in browsers and some are not.

The simplest one is called a "bitmap" and usually has the suffix ".bmp". As its name implies, a bitmap file is made up of an array of bits of different colors mapped to form an image. You can have a monochrome (black and white) bitmap, a 16 color bitmap, a 256 color bitmap or what is called a 24 bit bitmap which allows pretty much an unlimited number of colors. As you might imagine, the greater the variety of colors, the greater the size of the image. These files are not generally used in browsers.

The image formats you see most frequently on the internet are ".jpg" or ".jpeg". The name "JPEG" stands for "Joint Photographic Experts Group", the name of the committee that created the JPEG standard, among other standards. This standard involves compressing an image so that it takes up less space, but still retains clarity. The JPEG compression algorithm is at its best on photographs and paintings of realistic scenes with smooth variations of tone and color. For web usage, where the amount of data used for an image is important, JPEG is very popular. On the other hand, JPEG may not be as well suited for line drawings and other textual or iconic graphics, where the sharp contrasts between adjacent pixels can reduce clarity. Such images may be better saved in what is called a lossless graphics format such as GIF, which I will discuss later.

The way they do their compression is obviously pretty complicated, but I would like to give a little bit of a "nutshell", simplified description. For example, if you have a portion of an image that takes up 100 pixels of the color red, followed by 100 pixels of the color white, you would have 2 color designations and 2 multiplier designations which take up less space than 200 individual designations. As I said this is way oversimplification and it is not *exactly* like that, but it gives

you a general idea of what I am talking about, plus there is a method to my madness here. If you have a simple, fairly uniform background to your images, they will take up a lot less space than if you have a busy, complex background.

The other popular image format I described above is “.gif”. The Graphics Interchange Format (GIF) is a bitmap image format that was introduced by CompuServe in 1987 and has since come into widespread usage on the internet due to its wide support and portability. This format allows a single image to reference up to 256 distinct colors. It also supports simple animations. The color limitation makes the GIF format unsuitable for reproducing color photographs and other images with continuous color, but it is well-suited for simpler images such as graphics or logos with solid areas of color. And it has the capability to have a transparent background, something that you cannot do with JPEG images.

There are numerous other formats with suffixes like “.TIF”, “.PNG”, “.PDF”, “.PSD”, etc. They vary in complexity and versatility. As I use PhotoShop, I am partial to the “.PSD” format. With this format (and some others), you can have multiple layers to your image so you can edit portions of an image without having to affect the rest of the image. A good example of this would be the numerous mastheads I create for the top portion of web pages. In a simple case, I would have a bottom layer with a background consisting of a single color, a gradient or a pattern. On top of that I would place an image, such as a headshot. On another layer I would add some descriptive text. In this manner I can easily change the background, headshot, text, etc. and move them around independent of each other. Unfortunately, these take up a large amount of space, so what I usually do is save the layered file for editing at a future date and then save a copy as a “flat” file like a JPEG or a GIF and use that on a web page.

You don't really have to know about this stuff or have to deal with it, but I thought it might help to know what I think about when I am working on your images..

Clients & Affiliates

(In this section, those of you who would like to can place ads, tips, references, etc. If you have something you would like to submit, please [email](#) me and I will get it in the next newsletter.)

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Thank you all for your business (and potential business...)

Jim