

# **Results from Myths, Realities, and Promotions Survey**

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# Purpose of Survey

- **To identify the “myths” faced by information architects and the “realities” they use to argue them.**
  - IA myths offer two things to AlflA: content for the institute’s Web site, and a broader understanding of the IA community.
- **To identify promotional vehicles and messages**
  - As AlflA continues to build momentum behind information architecture, the institute needs to understand what messages will be most effective, and what channels to use for promotion.
  - By understanding the promotional vehicles and messages used by information architects, the institute can support and supplement those activities.

# Survey Vehicle

- The survey was designed with SurveyMonkey.com.
- The survey was distributed to the SIGIA-L mailing list via email on 27 August 2002.
- As of this writing, it has received 183 responses.
- In retrospect, the survey had some shortcomings:
  - Because of the way SurveyMonkey works, the structure of some of the multiple choice questions led to some results that may be hard to interpret.
  - Because none of the questions was mandatory, the percentages herein reflect the number of people who RESPONDED to the question, not the total number of participants. Where appropriate, this report will clarify the statistics.

# Summary of Responses: Myths

- **The three most popular responses:**
  - Since I have a simple Web site, I don't need an information architect. (70%)
  - Information architects do sitemaps and wireframes. (65.5%)
  - If I had time, I could probably do information architecture myself. (63.6%)
- **Most popular open-ended response:**
  - Many of the open-ended responses referred to the relationship with visual designers.
    - "Information architecture cramps visual designer's style."
    - "Visual design is information architecture"
    - "IA's are frustrated designers"
- **Conclusions:**
  - Content for the Web site should include a description of the array of IA activities and how those activities scale up and down.
  - Content for the Web site should show how IAs are different from other user experience and engineering disciplines and how they work with these disciplines.

# Summary of Responses: Realities

- The question asking about how people have responded to myths was purely open-ended. 54 people offered ideas. The most common response was to show examples, primarily of IA deliverables, but also of sites with good IA.
  - “Successful projects speak louder than words.”
  - “I just try to prove whatever myth I've encountered wrong through my performance.”
  - “By doing a good job with my work and showing the process the to develop strong, clear sites.”
- The question soliciting “realities” could have been phrased better. Instead of asking how have people responded, we should have asked what kinds of messages do they use to respond.
- **Conclusions:**
  - The Institute’s Web site should link case studies to selected myths, which can be used to debunk specific IA misperceptions.

# Summary of Responses: Promotions

- About equal numbers responded in the affirmative to whether IA needs promoting and whether they spend time promoting IA.
- The question asking about whether IA needs promoting got 93 responses and 80.6% said that it does.
- The question asking whether the respondent spends time promoting IA got 91 responses and 81.3% said that it does.
  - On a strange note: checking survey results intermittently, we found that this number occasionally exceeded the number of people responding positively to the first question.
- **Conclusions:**
  - This is a real need, and providing tools to help IAs promote the craft would not be a waste of time.

# Summary of Responses: Audience

- Only 82 people responded to the question asking about target audiences for promotional activities.
- Internal audiences scored highest - decision-makers (70.7%), business colleagues (68.3%) and technical colleagues (67.1%) earning the most responses.
  - Among the Client audiences listed among the choices, decision-makers earned the most responses at 57.3%, the same number of responses as for Internal-Creative.
  - One possible explanation is that many people are no longer working in consulting roles. Perhaps the choices for this question could have been worded better to take into account internal clients or customers.
- **Conclusions:**
  - To date, the institute's target audience has included decision-makers and "business" colleagues. Perhaps we should also include technical and creative colleagues to help them understand how they can collaborate with IAs.

# Summary of Responses: Promotional Vehicles

- **Effective Vehicles**

- By far, the two most effective vehicles for promoting information architecture were “working collaboratively” (83.5%) and “informal meetings with colleagues” (72.9%).

- **Used Vehicles**

- Respondents indicated that they have tried “working collaboratively,” “pointing people to online resources,” and “informal meetings.”

- **Referrer**

- Perhaps the most telling question on the survey with respect to promotional vehicles was the first asking users to indicate how they had learned about the survey. Respondents were asked to select either SIGIA-L or “other.” Of the 59 people who indicated “other,” 42 said they learned about the survey on Elegant Hack.

- **Conclusions:**

- Although “working collaboratively” and “informal meetings” were voted the most effective vehicles, it may be worth exploring those where respondents indicated that a vehicle was effective, yet hardly used:
  - Teaching a class in non-IA venues
  - Collaborating with local technology and creative groups
  - Networking in the local business community



# Summary of Responses: Promotional Messages

- **Effective Messages**

- By far, the three most effective messages for promoting information architecture were “information architecture can improve usability” (), “information architecture will improve ROI” (), and “information architecture can cut costs” ().

- **Used Messages**

- Respondents indicated most that they have tried “information architecture can improve usability” (). The next most used message was “information architecture can cut costs” ().

- **Conclusions:**

- The choices “information architecture can make your job easier” and “information architecture can increase revenue” earned the least overlap between “effective” and “used.” These might be worth exploring.

- **Note**

- Results for “Massive amounts of information architecture demand information architecture” were thrown out because the typo might have confused some respondents.

# Suggested Next Steps

## •Content Development

- Having established some guidelines for content needs in these areas, the Institute should develop information that addresses myths and for the promotional vehicles indicated.

## •Further Research

- The institute's editorial schedule will continue to grow. Further research can be used to determine whether the content developed effectively meets the needs of the audience.
  - The site should become a research tool itself, soliciting feedback from users.
- The institute's promotional footprint will also continue to grow and we must determine the most effective use of our promotional dollars, both in terms of venues and messages.

## **Appendix**

### **results from previous user needs survey**

# Initial User Model

Given that this survey was designed to gauge need in the IA community, the initial user model will be need- based. Survey results lead to identifying three kinds of needs:

- **Training**
- **Marketing and Education**
- **Project Management**

The following slides include a **definition** of each need, plus a recommended **course of action** for filling it.

# Training

Two groups clearly emerge: those who are enthusiastic about formal classes, and those who haven't found a good reason to go a class. Either way, people are searching for classes on advanced topics. Some results suggest that the need for training might extend beyond the classroom.

Find ways to train information architects in advanced subjects.

Find ways to train information architects outside the classroom.

# Marketing and Education

While respondents report a general awareness and understanding of information architecture, the survey results suggest there is a lot of need in this area. Information architects need help explaining the craft to people within their business community.

Identify tools for educating people in the information architect's business community.

# Project Management

According to our respondents, information architects run out of time and do not like project management. Perhaps this is a call to action to develop tools to help in this area.

Develop tools for managing time,  
communicating with team members, and  
working with project managers.