

Branding online





The core principles of branding are just as relevant for marketing online as for more traditional methods of brand promotion. Katapult offers some insights, guidance and practical advice...

A brand will only truly work online if it accurately reinforces its core values: the dynamics that differentiate it from the competition and engage and motivate its target audiences. By reinforcing these, you will be reproducing the brand's formula for success and so will stand a greater chance of making the desired impact online.

If not detailed in the brief, your client may be able to supply you with guidelines outlining the brand values and set out how the brand should be executed – some impose exacting specifications on how benefit from the creative's interpretation.

However, if the guidelines make for a poorly executed brand then that brand will execute poorly online – of course, this may present you with an opportunity to suggest a review of the brand identity and infrastructure in question. Also, there are still brands out there that have been developed primarily for use offline – for example, the colour palette may not work online.

In the absence of brand guidelines, it's worth collating as much material as you can from your client to build a holistic view of the brand, its key messages and to understand the ways it's executed across different materials. Developing this brand style to work successfully online can be a challenge – essentially, all elements within a web page design (away from the all-Flash websites) are contained within boxes. However, there are many workarounds for

creating visually appealing designs which appear less 'boxy'. The limits imposed on web design often generate interesting and innovative solutions; the secret is to know what's possible with the technology available.

It's also vital to ensure that you have a clear understanding of your target audiences and their online behaviour. Are they seeking interaction and entertainment? Or do they want to get in and out with the minimum of fuss through clear signposting to specific information?

You should also consider the role of the media you're producing for. For example, how does the online element integrate with campaigns across other media that the client may be running? Is the online element required to just satisfy requests for information or to encourage consumers to purchase?

So, understanding the brand, your target audiences and the role of the media you're producing for are all key. By working closely with your client and asking the right questions, you will develop a clear brief that will drive look, feel and functionality.

The following tutorial focuses on some practical measures you can take to get brands working successfully online – creating and sending branded content in the form of a newsletter and achieving improved brand visibility online through the creation of an XML sitemap. Having recently rebranded Katapult, we've used elements from our own branding to illustrate the processes involved.



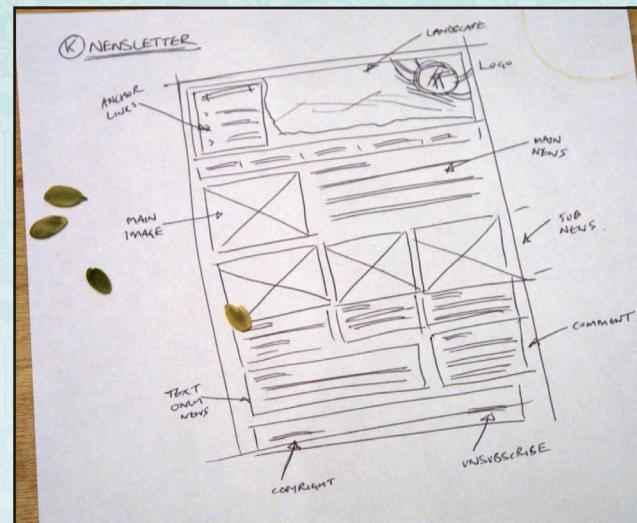
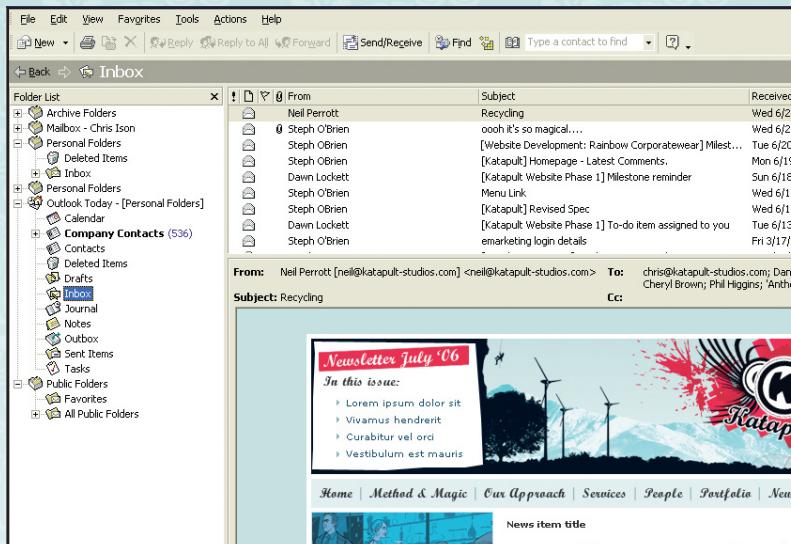
Expertise provided by brand communications agency Katapult, www.katapult-studios.com.



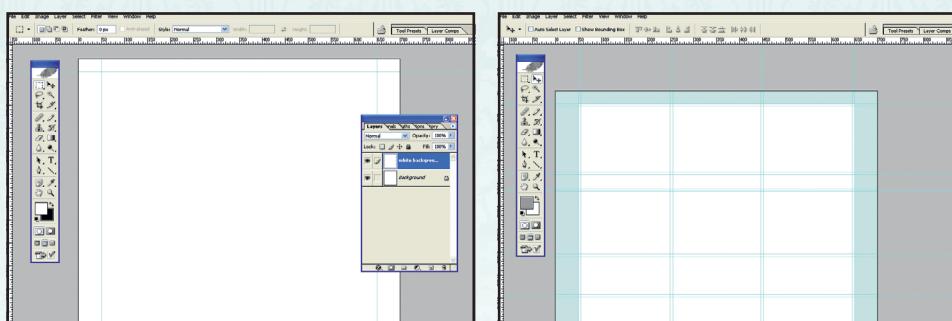
You'll find some files to help you with this tutorial on the Computer Arts Projects CD87 in the DiscContent\Tutorials\Tutorial Files\Web branding folder.

Part 1: Designing for online media

We use a newsletter to illustrate the design process, but the same rules apply with any web content...

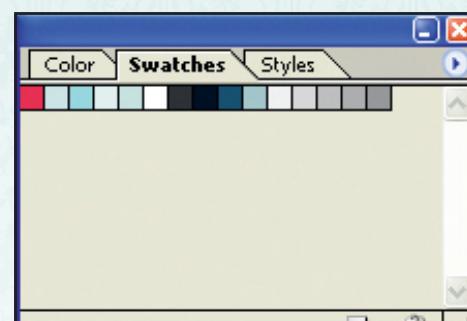


1 For the purposes of this tutorial, we're creating a newsletter visual in *Photoshop* which will provide us with the structure to create an HTML page. This is not a tutorial on CSS/XHTML layout, but instead offers a few pointers and tips on how to prepare your graphic layouts.

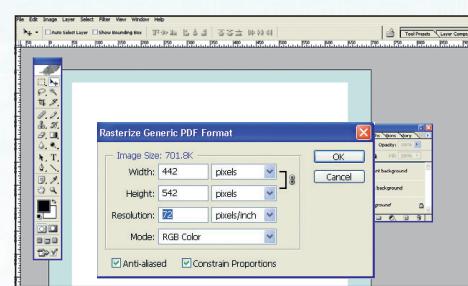


3 Create a new document in *Photoshop*. Remember that this design will eventually be arriving in somebody's Inbox, so your document should really be no bigger than around 600px fixed width and 72dpi (screen resolution).

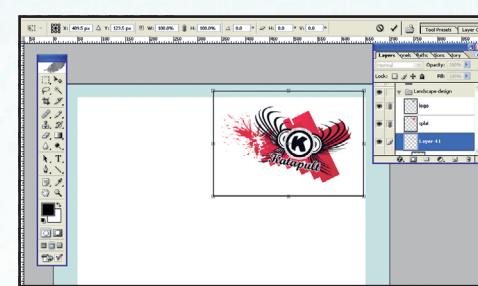
4 It's important to be pixel perfect when designing for the web, because it'll make your job easier further along in the process if every element of the design in your *Photoshop* document is positioned as it would appear in the finished newsletter. Make sure all your guides are set to use pixels.



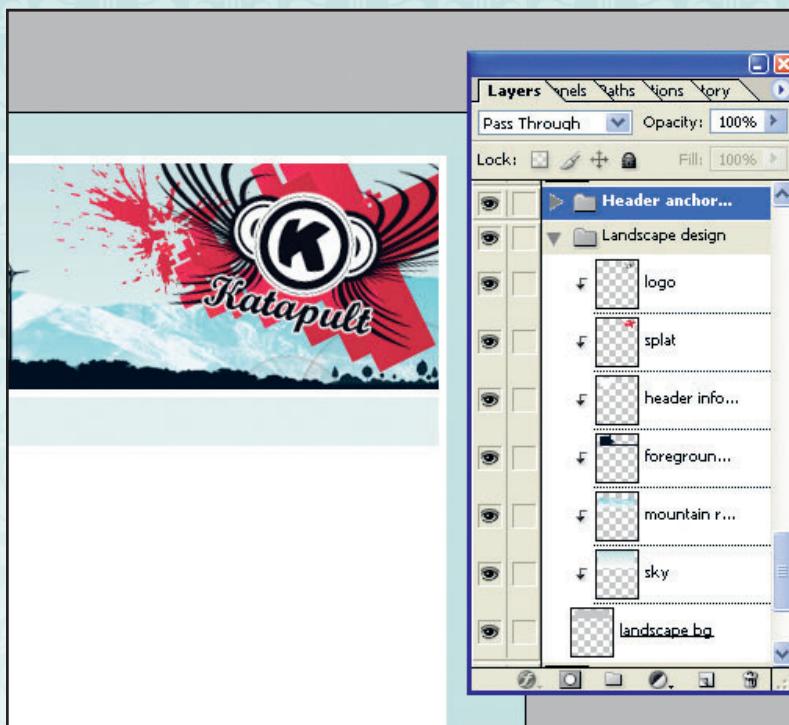
5 Add background colours and fill in areas with elements of your design. Keep the information structure hierarchical, ensuring that the most important news items are near the top. When working to brand guidelines, you may find it useful to include a swatch of important colours.



6 When bringing your logo into *Photoshop* from *Illustrator* or *FreeHand*, import it at the exact size it will be used. Any resizing within *Photoshop* will cause pixel degradation. If you're unsure, import the logo at a larger size and reduce it.

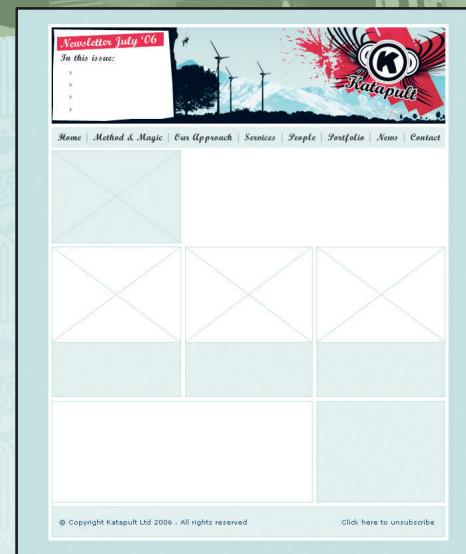


7 Drag and drop the logo onto a new layer within your design. If you have to resize it, try to transform to 75 per cent, 50 per cent or 25 per cent – this technique will result in little or no pixel loss.



8 Be methodical: organise your *Photoshop* document and create layer sets for groups of elements. This not only helps you to remember the content of each layer, but allows you to disable layer sets, which can be extremely helpful when it comes to slicing up the site.

9 Import any other elements required or generate them in *Photoshop* until you've reached the desired layout. Allocate areas within your design for important news items with images and other, text-only items. A footer area should also be added for small print, including the all-important, and legally required, unsubscribe link.



10 Now, it's worth adding some dummy text to your layout to help you make a design decision about which font sizes and colours to use. <http://lipsum.com> is a great tool for generating random Lorem Ipsum text.

Lorem Ipsum

"Neque porro quisquam est qui dolorem ipsum quia dolor sit amet, consectetur, adipisci velit..."
"There is no one who loves pain itself, who seeks after it and wants to have it, simply because it is pain."

What is Lorem Ipsum?
Lorem Ipsum is solely dummy text of the printing and typesetting industry. Lorem Ipsum has been the industry's standard dummy text ever since the 1500s, when an unknown printer took a galley of type and scrambled it to make a type specimen book. It has survived not only five centuries, but also the leap into electronic typesetting, remaining essentially unchanged. It was popularised in the 1960s with the release of Letraset sheets containing Lorem Ipsum passages, and more recently with desktop publishing software like Aldus PageMaker including versions of Lorem Ipsum.

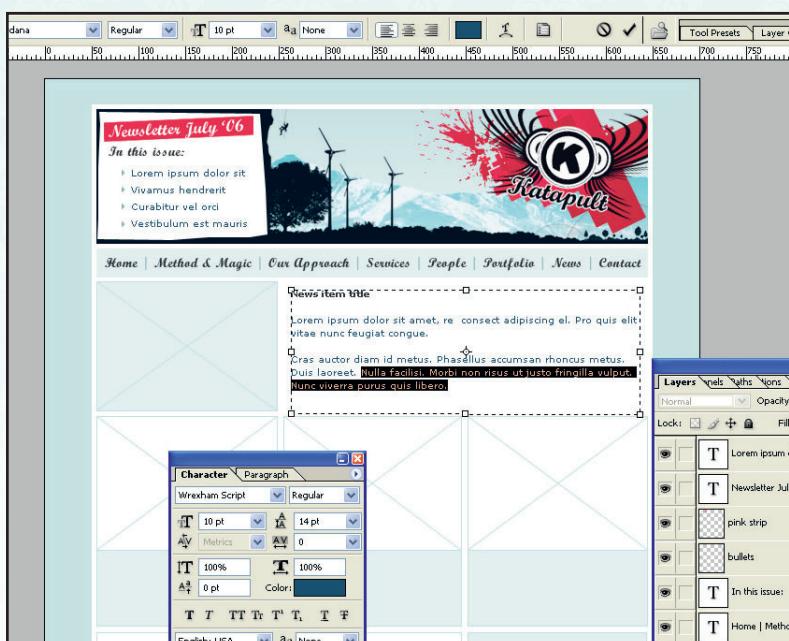
Where does it come from?
Contrary to popular belief, Lorem Ipsum is not simply random text. It has roots in a piece of classical Latin literature from 45 BC, making it over 2000 years old. Pseudo-Latin characters were chosen primarily to reflect the class of the word in classical literature, discovered the undebatable source. Lorem Ipsum comes from Chapter 1 of "De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum" (The Extremes of Good and Evil) by Cicero, written in 45 BC. This book is a treatise on the theory of ethics, which is why it has survived so long. The original text of Lorem Ipsum... "Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet..." comes from a line in section 1.10.32.

The standard chunk of Lorem Ipsum used since the 1500s is reproduced below for those interested. Sections 1.10.32 and 1.10.33 are repeated twice as apposite sections 1.10.32 and 1.10.33.

Why do we use it?
It is a long established fact that a reader will be distracted by the readable content of a page when looking at its layout. The point of using Lorem Ipsum is that it has a more-or-less normal distribution of letters, as opposed to using 'Content here, content here', making it look like readable English. Many desktop publishing packages and web editors now use Lorem Ipsum as their default model text, and a search for 'Lorem Ipsum' will uncover many websites still in their infancy, containing placeholder text.

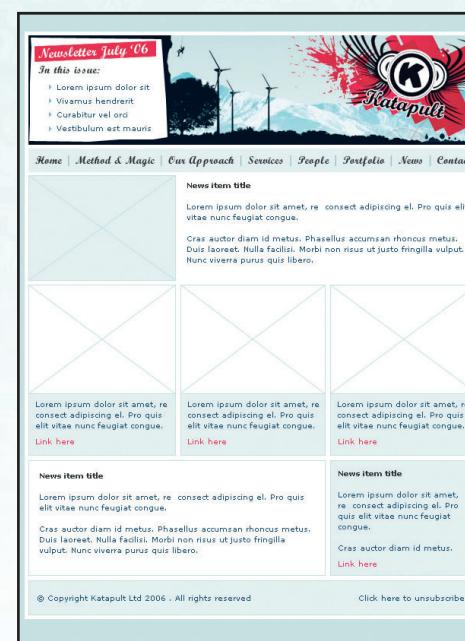
Where can I get some?
There are many vendors of passages of Lorem Ipsum available, but they rarely have the same focus as this site, so just take what you need, as opposed to using 'Content here, content here', making it look like readable English. Many desktop publishing packages and web editors now use Lorem Ipsum as their default model text, and a search for 'Lorem Ipsum' will uncover many websites still in their infancy, containing placeholder text.

Paragraphs
 Start with Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet.
 Words
 Lines



11 Draw a text box using the Type tool, paste your text into the text area, change the font to 10pt Verdana (or another common system font) and set Anti-aliasing to none. This shows you how the text will look and how much real estate it will occupy.

12 The *Photoshop* file is now pixel perfect and is ready to be cut up to produce a completed HTML document. Find out how to do this over the page.



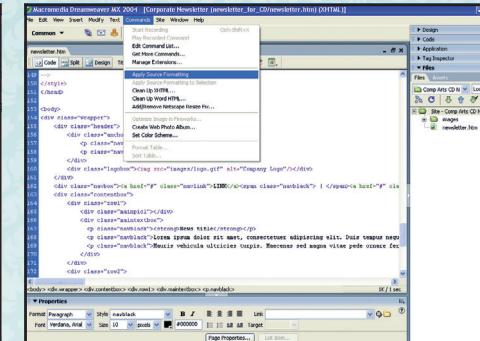
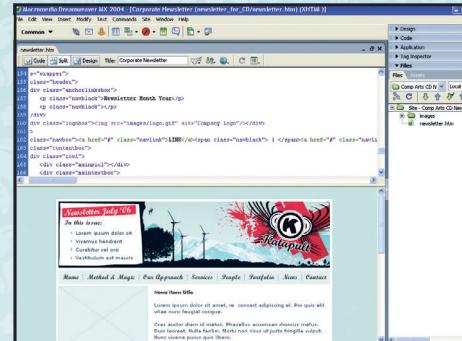
Resizing

If you want to resize elements fractionally, start by drawing a stroked box around the element on the same layer. Resize using the Transform tool – the box essentially 'protects' the edges of the important elements from pixel loss. Then simply erase the stroked box to leave behind the resized element.

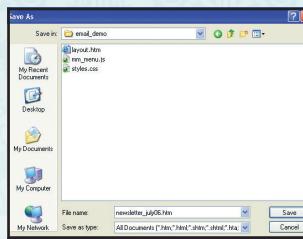
Part 2: Creating an email newsletter

We show you how to send a branded email using *MailList Controller* from ArcLab...

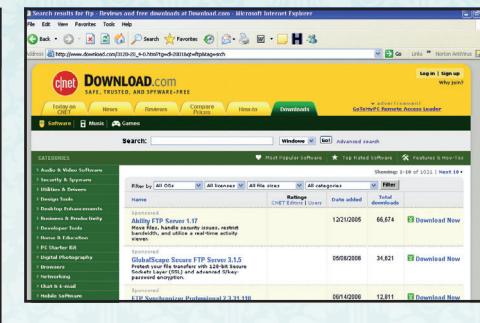
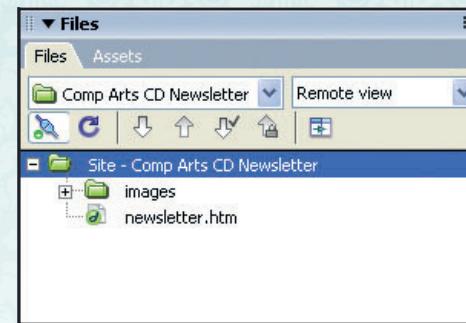
1 Start this section with the completed Photoshop file you created in Part 1 of this tutorial.



2 We're not going to cover the actual HTML mark-up process here, but one point we will stress is to keep all CSS in line. This ensures that the styles you use will render in most email packages.



3 Make sure your code is well optimised and formatted. To do this in Dreamweaver, go to Commands>Apply Source Formatting. You might also want to check it online to make sure it validates at: <http://validator.w3.org>.



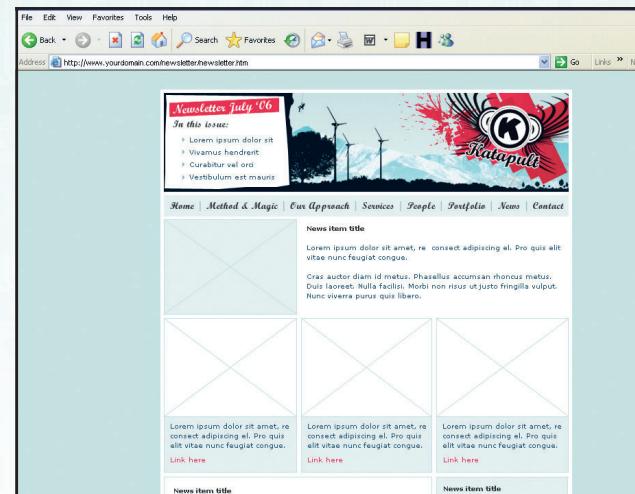
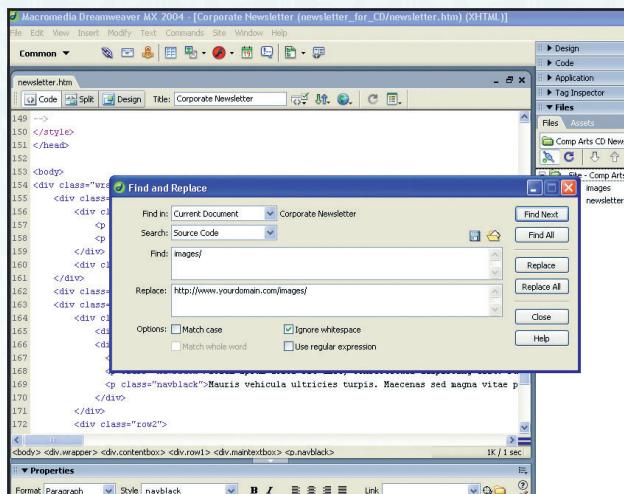
4 Save your HTML document and call it something logical, preferably including the date in the file name (for example, newsletter_july06.html). Remember that files used over the web should not contain any spaces (replace these with an underscore) or reserved characters, such as %, & and *.

5 FTP your page and graphics to a server. When you send the mail, you don't actually send the images used. Instead, these are loaded from the server in the same way as images on a web page are.

6 If you're using Dreamweaver, you can use the 'build in FTP' facility. Alternatively, you can use one of the many free FTP applications found at www.download.com. Make sure that you create a specific directory for your newsletter (for example, /public_html/newsletter/).

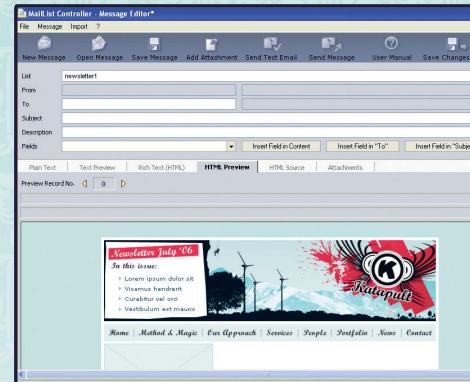
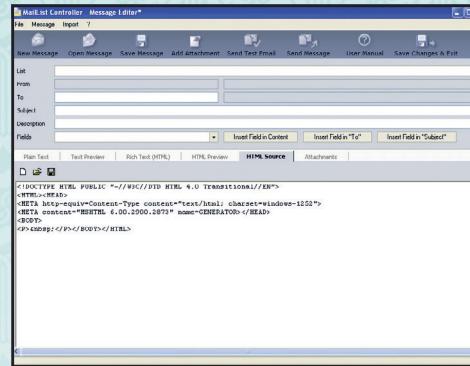
Specify image locations

If you've used CSS to specify the use of background images, make sure they are called from the server and not from your computer. Run a global 'find and replace' to replace image locations in both HTML and CSS. For example, `background-image: url(images/background.gif);` would be changed to `background-image: url(http://www.mydomain.com/images/background.gif);`



7 Once the images are on your web server you'll need to change the image paths within your html. So, change `images/logo.gif` to `http://www.mydomain.com/images/logo.gif`. The best way of doing this is to use the 'find and replace' function.

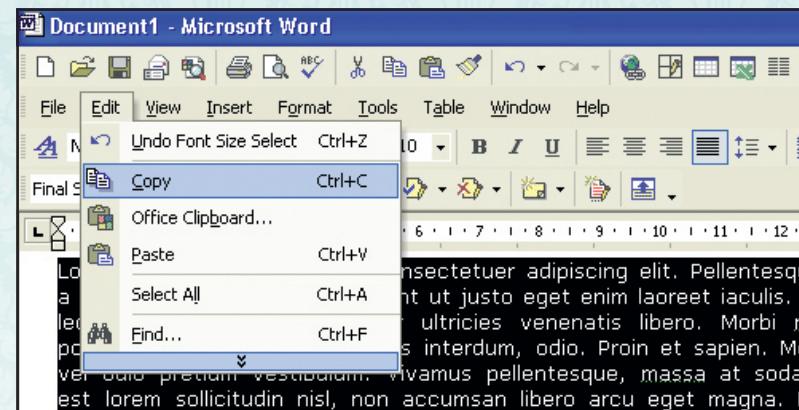
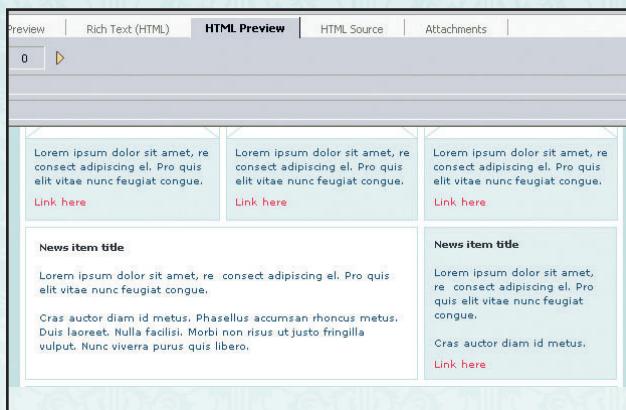
8 Upload the HTML file to the server once more. Check all the images are showing and finalise all the details. When you're happy with the newsletter, open *MailList Controller* (or *Email Merge 2.3.5* for the Mac) from CD87.



9 The first time you open *MailList Controller*, you'll be prompted to input specific information. Follow the on-screen prompts and you won't go far wrong. Care should be taken when adding your mailserver details.

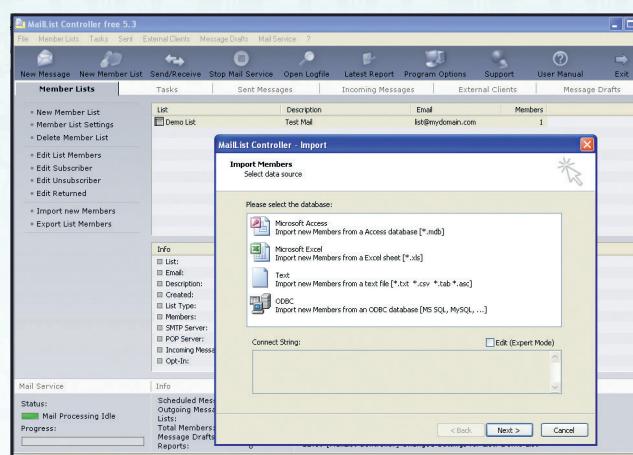
10 Click on the HTML Source tab, open the page you're going to use in a text editor (anything from *Notepad* to *Dreamweaver* will do), as long as you can see the code. Copy and paste it into the HTML Source pane.

11 Check how the mail looks by clicking on the 'Preview HTML' tab. You must have selected a list to use before this function is available.



12 If you want to make any changes, go back to the HTML Source pane and edit the code. If you've created the page in an external editor such as *Dreamweaver*, you may want to make changes to the original file then paste in the new code.

13 Now it's time to add your copy. Make sure you've proofread it thoroughly – there's nothing worse than a typo on a newsletter. Write it in *Word* then copy and paste it into the defined area of your email. Make sure you use a system font for all text areas.

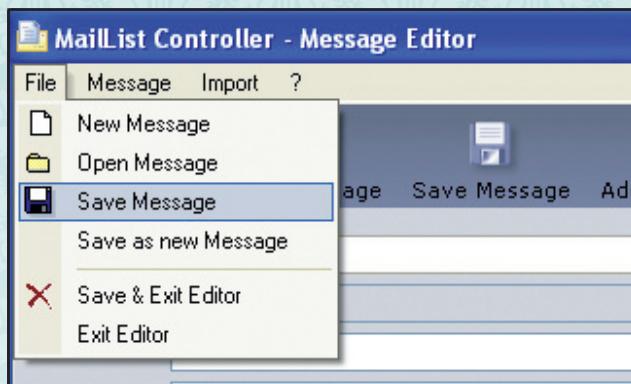


14 Remember to add links wherever possible. The email should give appropriate calls to action to drive the type of response required – for example, 'Visit our website to find out more'. You should also make sure you have the standard info on the page, such as web address, email and unsubscribe link.

16 Now click on the Test Mail tab, send it to yourself and check what you receive. Make sure the test mail goes to as many account types as you have access to. We normally test all our newsletters on Hotmail, Yahoo and some corporate accounts.

15 Import the list of users you'd like the mail to use. You may have done this when initially filling in all your details but if not, go to the main Controller pane, select the list you wish to add members to then click on the 'Import New Members' link.

Creating an email newsletter continued...



17 Once you've tested your newsletter in various different types of email accounts, you can save your message and send it out for real.

18 Next time you want to create a newsletter in *MailList Controller* or *Email Merge*, you can simply use this email as the basis for a new mailshot.

Part 3: Using sitemaps

Create an XML sitemap the easy way, by using Google Sitemaps...

1 Creating a sitemap means that you can get Google to index your site quickly – what's more, it's now really simple to do. Sign up for Google Sitemaps at the following address: www.google.com/webmasters/sitemaps/login.

2 We have created an online sitemap generator for you to use. Visit <http://google.katapult-studios.com> and fill in the details of your domain and then click Generate.

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<urlset xmlns="http://www.google.com/schemas/sitemap/0.84" xmlns:xsi="http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema-instance" xsi:schemaLocation="http://www.google.com/schemas/sitemap/0.84 http://www.google.com/schemas/sitemap/0.84.xsd">
<url>
<loc>http://www.katapult-studios.com/</loc>
<priority>0.5</priority>
<lastmod>2006-06-13T13:20:54+00:00</lastmod>
<changefreq>daily</changefreq>
</url>
<url>
<loc>http://www.katapult-studios.com/people.htm</loc>
<priority>0.5</priority>
<lastmod>2006-06-13T13:20:54+00:00</lastmod>
<changefreq>daily</changefreq>
</url>
<url>
<loc>http://www.katapult-studios.com/method_and_magic.htm</loc>
<priority>0.5</priority>
<lastmod>2006-06-13T13:20:54+00:00</lastmod>
<changefreq>daily</changefreq>
</url>
<url>
<loc>http://www.katapult-studios.com/portfolio.htm</loc>
<priority>0.5</priority>
<lastmod>2006-06-13T13:20:54+00:00</lastmod>
<changefreq>daily</changefreq>
</url>
```

3 You will now need to save the file to your computer. Then upload the XML file into the root directory of your server (usually public_html or htdocs).

4 Log in to your Google account and click on the Sitemaps tab. If you want to add a new site, click the Add Sitemap link. Fill in the fields on screen and click Add Website Map.

5 You now need to check that it's set to be submitted/updated. This process can take some time. We generally submit files one day and then check that they have been updated the following morning.



6 Your sitemap can be amended and resubmitted any time the site structure or page content has been updated. At the time of writing, we were getting updated page listings recognised in Google in a matter of days rather than weeks.

Expert profile: Katapult

Katapult is a brand communications agency with a wealth of experience in branding on the web...

The website features a header with 'my eye'candy' and a navigation menu. Below is a section titled 'Meet the team' showing seven people in various poses. A 'Derby Studio' section includes a photo and a link to find out more. A 'Staff Profiles' section lists Jason Charity, Liz Young, Maria McCabe, and Sally Sargent. At the bottom are links to Home, About, Promises, The Studio, Prices, Careers, People, News, Contact, and a login for 'My Eye'Candy'.

BACKGROUND:

Founded in 1999 by five friends who met at the University of Derby, Katapult has developed from a start-up based in an attic to an established brand communications agency. With a team consisting of account handlers, brand strategists, creatives, designers, digital media specialists and producers, the agency provides strategic and creative communications services including branding, advertising and design, as well as technical expertise in website development, online marketing and video production.

"We have recently rebranded Katapult, unveiling a new identity that uses the values and beliefs behind the company as its inspiration and which reinforces our strategic and creative credentials," says Katapult. "Using input from the whole team, we created a multi-dimensional 'landscape' that references aspects of our influences, experience and also communicates what clients are buying into when they choose Katapult as an agency. These include personal, as well as professional experiences such as music, travel and art."

The branding system is also flexible, providing a platform for communications that are interesting and thought-

provoking – communications that will positively differentiate the Katapult brand. Just as Katapult does for its clients, the aim is to develop a brand that will make connections and build equity among clients, suppliers and employees.

YEARS PRACTISING AS A CREATIVE:

Seven years.

CLIENTS:

The Prince's Trust, Heartwood Homes, Derwent Financial, CIN, University of Derby, Design Factory, Fat Cat Group, The Derbyshire, BBC Radio Arts Council and more.

MISSION STATEMENT:

"'Method and Magic' are the cornerstones of the Katapult approach to building brands. Method represents the strategic, technical and commercial aspects – the planning, research, project management and results focus. This is complemented by the Magic – the insights, imagination, invention and inspiration that fuel great ideas for creative communications," enthuses a spokesperson from Katapult.

WEBSITE:

www.katapult-studios.com

The page has a blue background with a large heart icon. It features a cartoon character with blonde hair and the text 'my HAIR'. Below is a section titled 'CHOOSE YOUR HAIR STYLE' showing four different hairstyle options. At the bottom left is a 'back' button.

Above and left: Katapult developed the eye'candy name and brand identity for a new chain of luxury hair salons (www.eyecandyhair.co.uk). As part of a recent marketing campaign built around the concept of 'Love My Hair', Katapult developed an online game to entertain and inform clients and prospects. Katapult has also just revamped the website in preparation for the exclusive clients area 'My Eye'Candy' which is currently under development.

The website for Creative Industries Network (CIN) features a yellow header with 'cin' and a search bar. The main content area includes sections for 'In the News', 'Creative Business', 'CIN Events', 'CIN News', 'CIN Members', and 'Join CIN'. There are also links for 'View members', 'Buy Creative Services', and 'Find a Creative'.

Left: CIN is a market leader in the provision of networking services to companies and freelancers working within the creative industries sector. Katapult developed the network's website, which incorporates a full content management system and an extranet that allows members to showcase their portfolio, post vacancies and share industry information. (www.creative-cin.co.uk)

The website for Coles Shirts features a dark header with 'EST. 1878' and 'Coles'. The main menu includes 'HOME', 'ABOUT', 'MADE TO ORDER', 'THE PERFECT SHIRT', and 'Q&A'. The 'SHOP' section shows categories like 'Mens', 'Ladies', 'Ties', 'Cufflinks', and 'Eveningwear'. The 'THE PERFECT SHIRT' section features a woman in a light blue shirt. Below are sections for 'Heritage', 'Latest product', and 'Special offer'.

Above: Established in 1878, Coles is one of the country's leading shirnmakers (www.coles-shirtmakers.com). Katapult worked closely with Coles in the design and development of its website. One of the key challenges was to deliver a look and feel that brought the brand to life online without diluting the brand's heritage and core values. This was achieved in part by the development of 'The Perfect Shirt', a flash animation focusing on 15 aspects of Coles shirts that reinforce the product quality and attention to detail behind the brand.