



Portions of a presentation given by Ed Roach focusing on the need to treat learners as consumers and how this perspective impacts the design of digital learning experiences. There is an accompanying video on the use of color also available on this website. It is recommended you click on the links embedded in this presentation to view the other websites referred to throughout this document.



As presented August 5, 2014
Northern Illinois University, Naperville
<http://chicagoelearningshowcase.com/>

This annual event features speakers invited to present innovative approaches to the development of online learning solutions.

Brought to You By

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At the 2014 conference, Ed Roach gave this presentation during the afternoon drawing the largest crowd of the three concurrent sessions that day.

Why Curb Appeal?

- What is it?
- Why does it matter?
- How can we create it?

The term “curb appeal” refers to the initial immediate impression a potential home-buyer gets when viewing a house from the street. We should treat the learner as a consumer and realize they have choices in which courses they choose to take (or buy) and what mindset each learner has when beginning to engage in a digital learning experience. We should take steps to make them want to stop and come inside our courses.

Curb Appeal Defined

- Inviting, appealing and approachable
- Exciting yet comfortable
- Value is clear (WIFM)

This presentation explores three concepts: making courses inviting, appealing, and approachable. In this way the learner perceives something valuable and exciting that is also enticing, safe, and easy to access. If we truly treat the learner as consumer, we must also be conscious of what is in it for each learner.



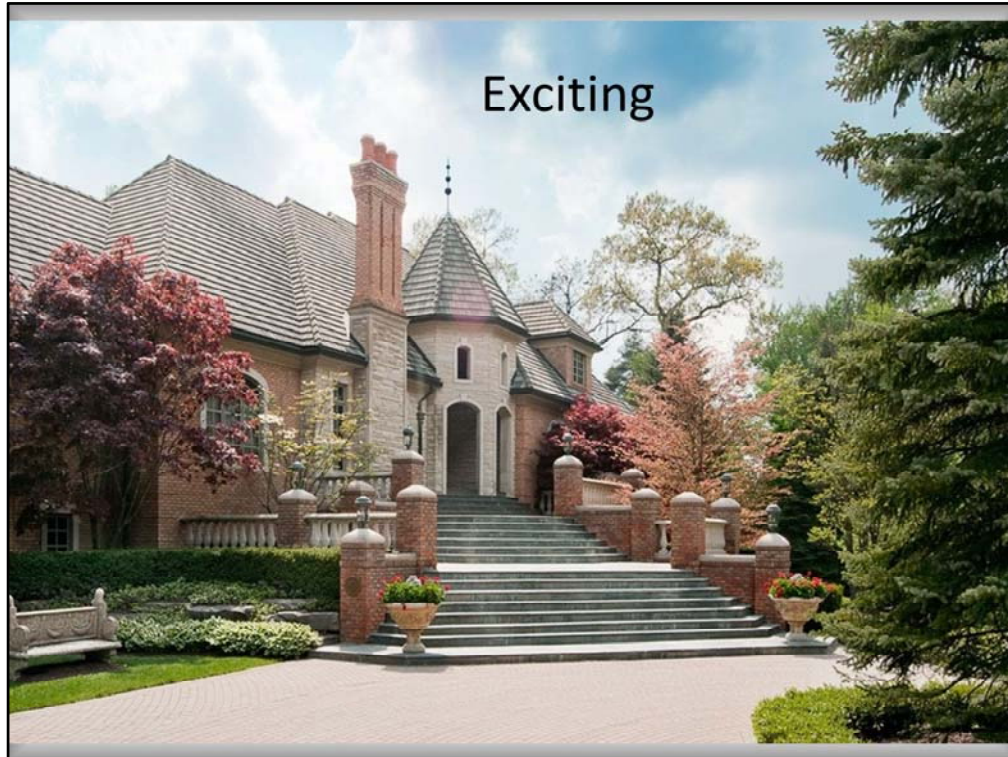
Online courses should be **appealing** in that they offer potential learners something they feel that they want or understand that they need. It is important to make the connection between what is in the course and what they learners will know, or be able to do, after completing the course that they could not do before the completing the digital learning experience.



Online courses should be **inviting** in that they entice potential learners to enter without fear or hesitation. The point here is to offer an inviting experience which appears to the learner to be safe, comfortable, easy, and with low risk. One example of this would be to emphasize the modules are short and no commitment is required to finish. This is different from the previous concept of appealing to the wants and needs of the learners. This house is probably less grand and smaller and less valuable than the previous image which was so appealing. This house invites you to come in and relax in a place you will be comfortable. Even though there is no sidewalk visible in this image, you get the feeling you want to approach. This brings us to the next concept.



Now that we have tried to make the course appealing and inviting, the learner should also feel the course is **approachable** in that there is a short and straightforward path to getting started. This concept is similar to the previous point about making courses inviting. The difference here is that the learner sees an easy way to engage and enter the course...the path is clear, wide, level, and free of hazards. In practical terms, this means a streamlined launch process, a minimal amount of personal data required to be entered by the learner, and, if possible, little or no cost to start learning.



Something **exciting** goes beyond appealing by offering the potential for even more than we were seeking. This house has a type of curb appeal that is different from those that came before. With a large circular drive, manicured grounds, grand entrance, and impressive roofline it could become your castle! It makes you think about what might be inside such as a circular stairway under the turret, or a Great room, or multiple large fireplaces to explain the enormous chimney. Perhaps there is a tennis court or Creekside view in the back. Curb appeal can promise excitement. For a learner, excitement might be in the form of a celebrity narrator, a meaningful certification, big career impact, or executive-level relevance.



Curb appeal does not mean that everything you add to the course adds value.



Sometimes when we live with a problem for a long time we stop seeing it the way a first-time visitor does. Do we have elements in our courses that we have put up with for so long we don't see them anymore? This could be in the form of low resolution graphics, lack of audio, outdated terminology, confusing interfaces, etc.

Don't overlook the obvious ways to improve your curb appeal



In many cases we can generate curb appeal without having to look very far for ideas. We should not overlook the obvious because the first time visitor (new learner) will probably not overlook them either.



The concept of “curb appeal” applies to things other than houses. It is part of effective consumer marketing. You have to catch the consumer’s eye before they will even slow down long enough to look into the details of your product. By treating the learner as consumer we recognize this need. Before a potential buyer looks into the details and takes a test drive, the product must first catch their eye, like a shiny red sports car.



The concept of curb appeal can be seen in food. Design, color, presentation all come into play. Our eyes feast before we taste.



Curb appeal can apply to low-cost items too. The smell of freshly baked bread, or the color and texture can attract a consumer.

Curb Appeal in eLearning

- Use of color, contrast, layout and style
- Navigation feels logical and intuitive
- Benefit to the learner is clear
- Exciting but comfortable

These points explain ways to improve the curb appeal of your digital learning experiences. The following slides go into more detail on a few of these.

Color

Click [here](#) to watch a brief video about this important design principle

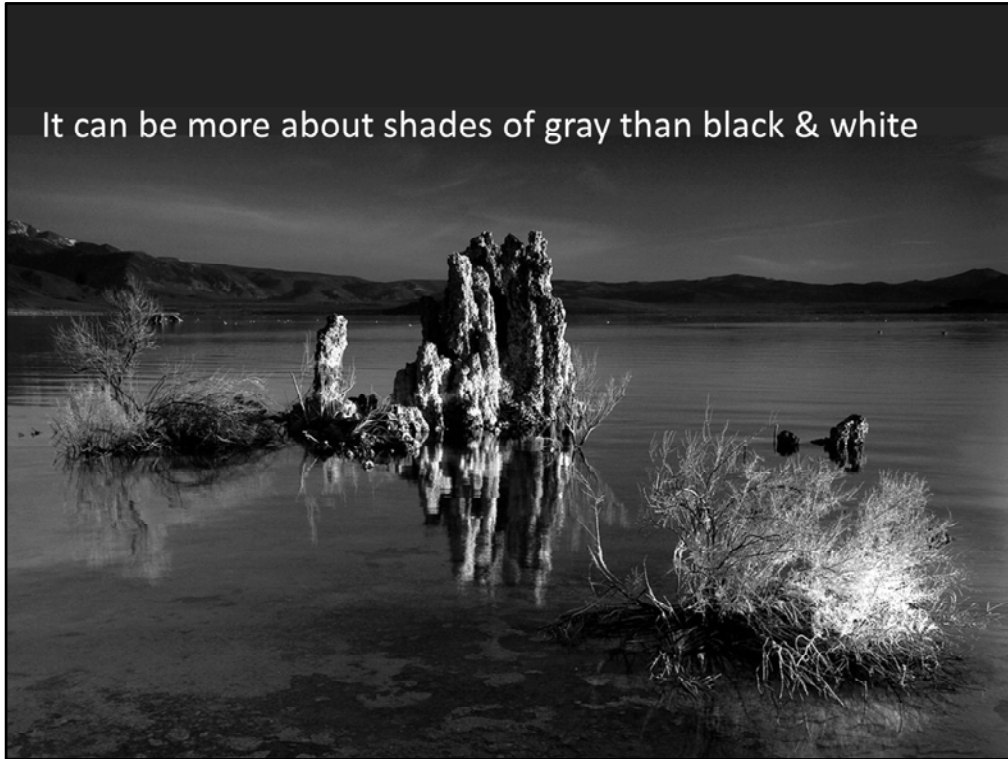
Color is an obvious way to add curb appeal. Watch the accompanying video.

Contrast

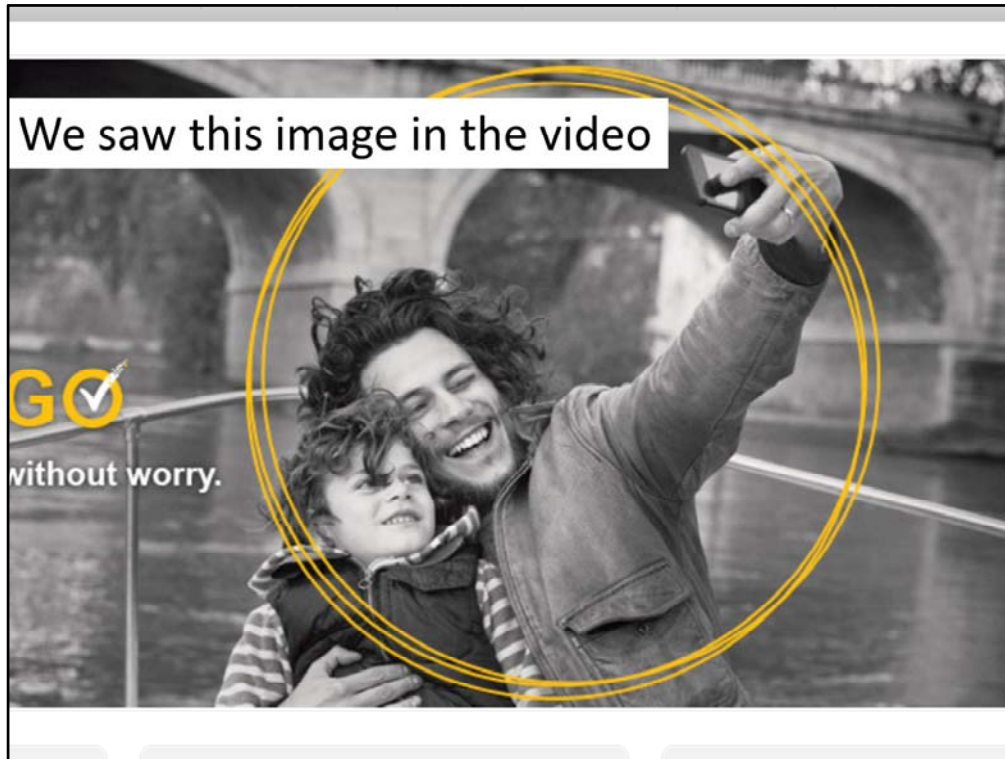


At first it looks as simple as
black and white, but

Contrast is different from color but important to catch the learner's eye.

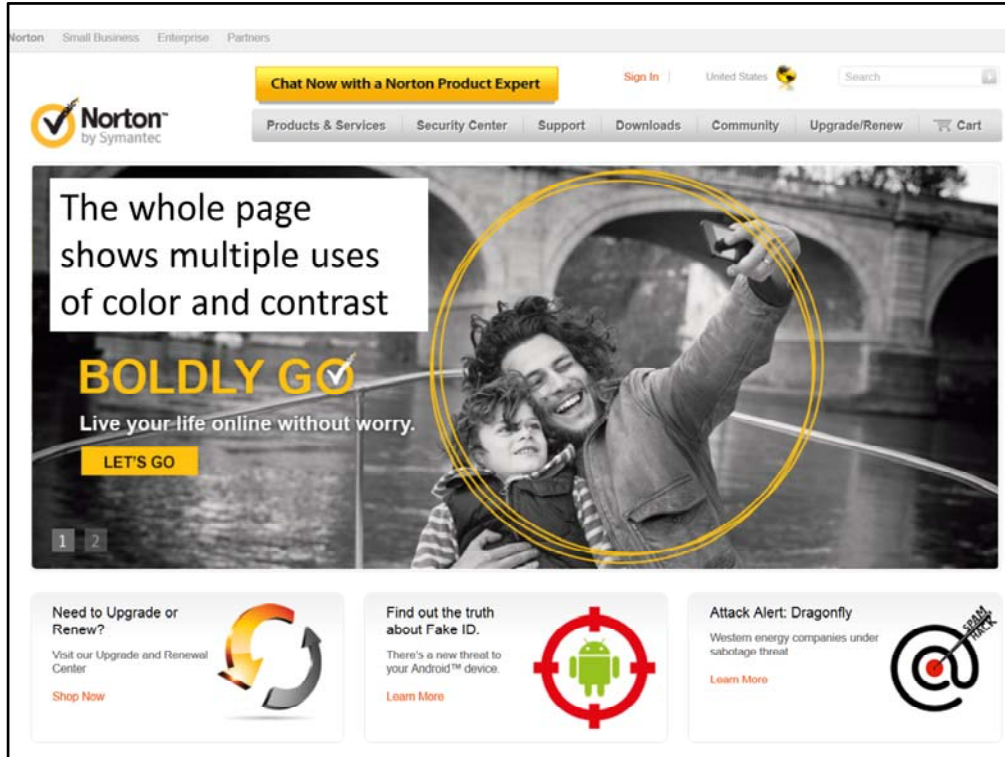


In fact, contrast exists even when there are no colors.



This example shows the use of a single color applied in four ways:

1. part of the logo/brand in upper left
2. Circling the people's faces to focus they eye
3. Used in the text (along with all caps and larger font) to convey the imperative
4. And as background shading to clarify where to click to move ahead



Looking at that entire website shows multiple uses of color and contrast and design.

Norton Small Business Enterprise Partners

Chat Now with a Norton Product Expert Sign In United States Search

Norton by Symantec Products & Services Security Center Support Downloads Community Upgrade/Renew Cart

And layout and organization by grouping like items

BOLDLY GO ✓
Live your life online without worry.
LET'S GO

1 2

Need to Upgrade or Renew?
Visit our Upgrade and Renewal Center
[Shop Now](#)

Find out the truth about Fake ID.
There's a new threat to your Android™ device.
[Learn More](#)

Attack Alert: Dragonfly
Western energy companies under sabotage threat
[Learn More](#)

Samples from the web

The following examples from the public domain serve to inform you while showing an intuitive user experience and the effective use of color, contrast, and layout. Not solid instructional design but these examples illustrate the importance of curb appeal.

The Scale of the Universe 2



Use the scroll bar
to zoom in and out.



Click on objects
to learn more.

By Cary Huang

Technical support by Michael Huang

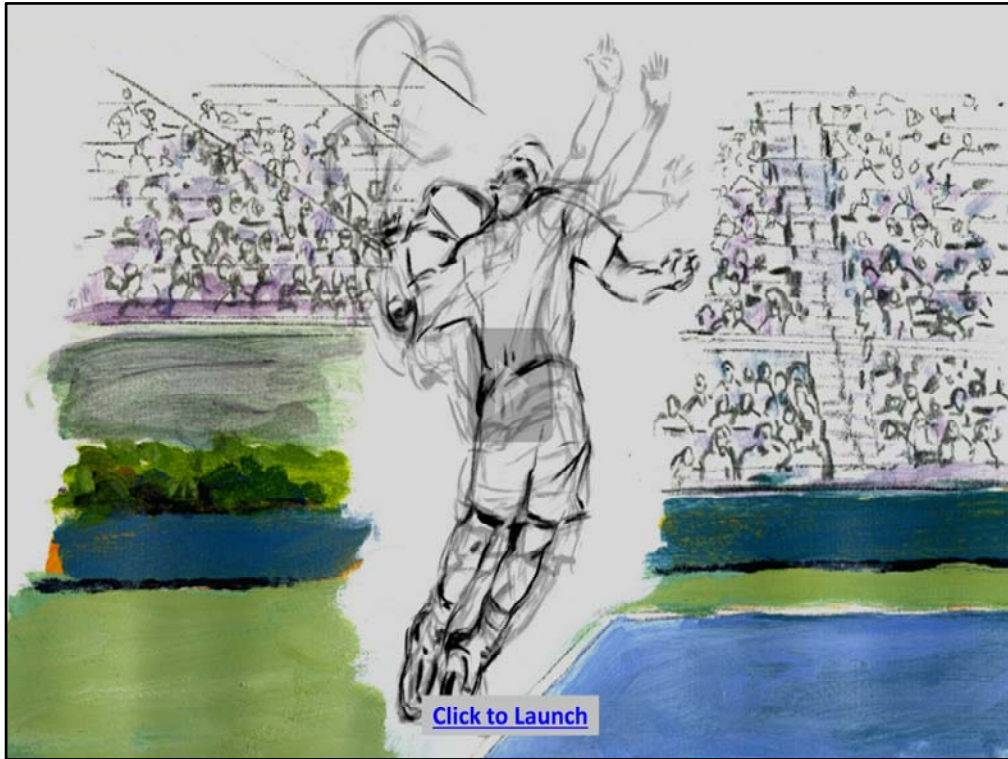
Copyright © 2012 Cary and Michael Huang (<http://htwins.net>)

Music - "Frozen Star" by Kevin MacLeod (<http://incompetech.com>)

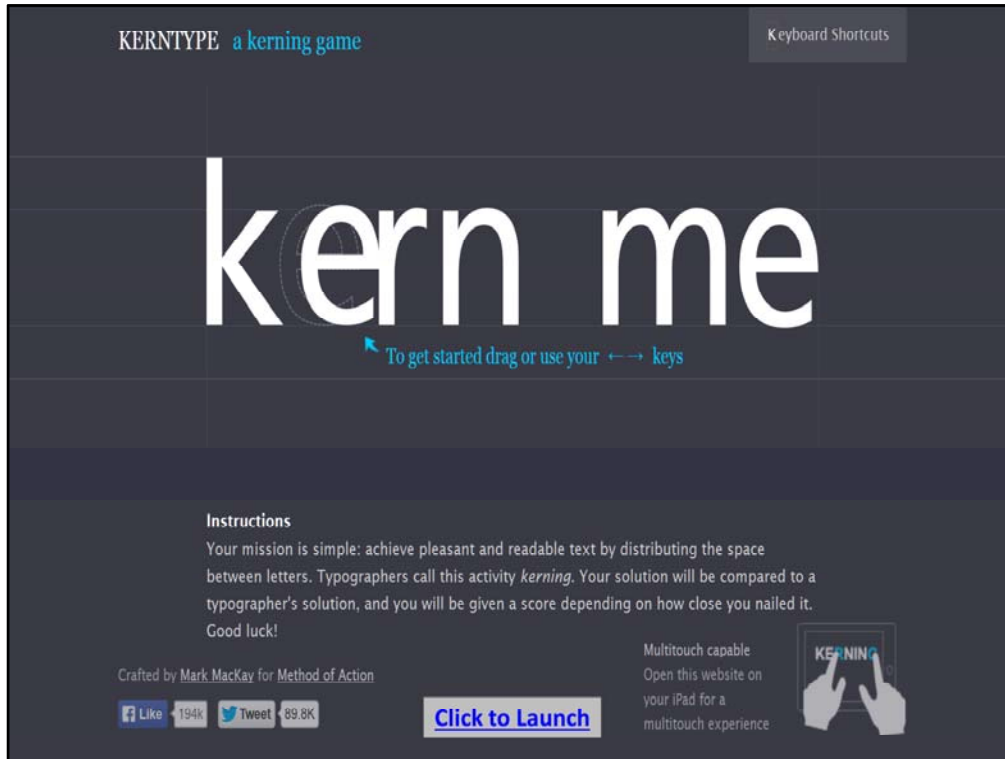
Loading

[Click to Launch](#)

The website is located here <http://htwins.net/scale2/> and demonstrates curb appeal.



The website is located here
<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2011/08/28/sports/tennis/the-serve-creating-racket-speed.html> and demonstrates curb appeal.



The website is located here <http://type.method.ac/> and demonstrates curb appeal.

Why Care About Curb Appeal in eLearning?

- Can't learn from courses not begun
- Better engagement yields better learning
- Improved image of your training team
- Better "consumer" evaluations
- Expand the vision for eLearning
- Be different, be better, build a brand

How can you add curb appeal?

- Think Like a web designer not just an ISD
 - Visual elements are critical
 - User Experience must be positive
- Look at eLearning from a marketing POV
 - View the learner as a consumer
 - Clarify WIFM for the learner

The Learner as Consumer

- Awareness -> attraction -> engagement
- Perceived value is created through WIFM
- Balance excitement with comfort
- Provide an intuitive user experience
- Put the learner is in control

What Will I Need?

- Recognize that good design takes time and that refining the UX takes time
- Hire and train the right skills
- Invest in tools and training to use them

Build Your Business Case

- Low or no curb appeal = fewer learners
- Business impact depends on engagement
- Principles of web design offer proof
- Treat the learner as consumer
- Marketing perspective is respected
- Expand the vision for eLearning

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