

COOLTECH CHALLENGE '10

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Welcome to CoolTech Challenge 2010: the High School website design contest for area students presented by NEOSA.

This is your chance to release your web creativity and win college scholarship money, gift cards for tech gadgets, a cool NEOSA t-shirt and even Chipotle burritos!

Contest rules and requirements are noted below.

Challenge: Participants are asked to create a website that provides information and entertainment to its visitors.

Websites offering an array of features are some of the most popular on the internet. CoolTech Challenge 2010 is about designing a creative, absorbing website that will invite users to return again and again. The focus should be on humorous or informative news, interactive features, downloadable music, streaming video, online gaming (not gambling), and flash animation.

The options are limitless, but there is one goal: design a website that keeps a user's attention by providing original and interactive content. Most importantly, the websites should be informative and entertaining!

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COOLTECH CHALLENGE: AWARDS AND CRITERIA

AWARDS

Best Websites

One to three (1-3) Best Website Winners will be selected along with one to two (1-2) finalist websites, depending on the quality of the sites submitted. Winners and Finalists will be selected based on point totals from the group of judges. The judges will evaluate each site on all judging criteria. The decisions of the judges are final.

JUDGING CRITERIA

Content Quality

The winning website entertains users while demonstrating an original concept and/or idea. All required website elements are included in a manner consistent with CoolTech Challenge rules.

Design Quality

The winning website has graphic design that creates visual logic, seeking optimal balance between visual sensation and graphic information. The winning design clarifies the content structure of the website and increases usability.

Information Architecture

The winning website is well-organized, demonstrating knowledge of current usability practices and technical programming expertise.

HOW TO WIN

Websites must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. E.S.T. on Friday April 23, 2010 (contest deadline) in order to be considered for judging.

The CoolTech Challenge Judging Committee will review and evaluate all contest entries, awarding points based on compliance and excellence in the three (3) categories of Information Architecture, Design Quality, and Content Quality. The maximum points awarded for each of these categories is 30 points. Combined, teams may be awarded up to ninety (90) points.

An additional thirty (30) points may be awarded for mobile device supported sites (see below)

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TWO OPTIONS FOR SITES

This year, the Challenge will again have two (2) components: traditional web browsers and mobile devices.

All submitted websites must function properly on traditional browsers:

- All sites will be tested on Internet Explorer 7 or 8, Safari, and /or Firefox and Chrome

Participants may also build their sites to function on a mobile device

- All sites will be tested on a mobile device (e.g. Blackberry, iPhone, iPod Touch, Droid, etc.)

A maximum of ninety (90) points will be awarded based on testing on traditional browsers.

Up to an additional thirty (30) points will be awarded based on testing on mobile devices.

See *Mobile Device* in the *Technical* section for additional, general information.

BASIC INFORMATION

The web site designed can be for one of the following:

- Existing Organization or Company In NEO
 - Their School
 - Not for Profit Organization
 - Fictional Organization created for the purpose of the Challenge
- Marketing for the Organization
- Providing Social Networking/Interaction between Site and Intended Audience
- Portal or collection of like information and web content
- Mashup of Web Data from Two or More Sources
 - Create new collection of Data and present it in an easy to search/user interface
 - North East Ohio Specific reference preferred

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INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE

"Information Architecture is the last refuge of people who are too articulate for their own good." -
Andrew Hinton, Forum Moderator

Information Architecture (IA) is the process of organizing and presenting data in an easily accessible interface. A site with good IA will have functional and intuitive navigational paths, delivering the user specific information with great ease. IA is the foundation of all great websites.

NAVIGATION AND USER-INTERFACE

The website has clear and consistent navigation:

- Buttons and bars are easy to understand and use.
- Visitor understands their location within the website at all times.
- Design and content clearly imply the demographic of the intended audience

USABILITY

The website is cross-platform and cross-browser compatible:

- The website functions properly in both Windows and Mac operating systems using any of the following browsers: Internet Explorer 7/8 and FireFox, Safari or Chrome
- Media features are easy to use and understand.
- Media features utilize ubiquitous technologies (nothing proprietary)

ORGANIZATION

- Content is organized logically and intuitively for benefit of users visiting the site.
- At the homepage, is the purpose of the website clearly stated?
- Format is consistent and appropriate.
- (Sub)Headers are properly located and clearly designate sections.

FUNCTIONALITY

- Site features should have a functional purpose.

INTERACTIVITY

Site uses innovative technology tools and enhancements effectively such as:

- streaming video/audio,
- flash,
- Java script / AJAX
- other current technologies

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DESIGN

"If you ask why something works and you push back far enough, eventually everything seems to be based on contrast: the ability to distinguish one thing from another. Composition, sequencing, even legibility all rely on devices that affect the contrast between things." - *Chris Pulman, The Education of a Graphic Designer*

GRAPHICS

Graphic design shows creativity, originality, and supports the website's theme:

- Web-safe colors are not required.
- An original logo for your website is **suggested but not required**. Plagiarized logos will result in immediate disqualification of website. Logo usually appears in the header portion of the design and is a hyperlink back to the home page.
- Graphics should be optimized for web.

LAYOUT

The website layout has been optimized for maximum usability - layout supports navigation and enhances the content structure.

- Screen Width: minimum 800 to maximum 1400. Beware that wide screens will be judged on PCs with different monitor sizes and you may get penalized for horizontal scrolling.

CONSISTENCY

- Consistency in the design
- Consistency in the navigation
- Consistency in the text style.
- Creating a professional appearance is vital.

ORIGINALITY

- Be creative. Does your idea set your design apart from the others?
- Any instance of plagiarism will result in immediate disqualification from CoolTech Challenge.

CONTENT

"Now that digital lifestyle devices, tablets, wireless phones, and other Internet appliances are beginning to come of age, we need to worry about presenting our content to these devices so that it is optimized for their display capabilities." - *Mike Davidson, Amazon.com*

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COPY

Copy is effective - establishes and supports the website's theme.

- No blank pages
- Each page copy should be appropriate for that page.
- Proper use is made of grammar, spelling, and punctuation in all copy.

Hate speech, profanity, pornography or other such objectionable content will not be tolerated.

TECHNICAL

Copyright laws have been followed. Permissions are cited clearly on the website.

Optional: Third party javascript libraries are used to provide at least one function on the site

- Use of a javascript framework, such as: jQuery – <http://jquery.com/>, Prototype – <http://www.prototypejs.org/>, MooTools – <http://mootools.net>, YUI – <http://developer.yahoo.com/yui/>
- Be conscious of standard search engine optimization strategies.

Additionally, all participant websites must include all of the following elements in order to be considered complete entries:

- CSS version 2.1
- Run CSS through on-line validation: W3C CSS Validation Service – <http://jigsaw.w3.org/css-validator/>
- CSS used to specify background color
- CSS used to format text (no font tags)
- HTML version 4.0.1 Strict or XHTML 1.0 Strict
- Run HTML through on-line validation service: W3C HTML validation Service – <http://validator.w3.org/>
- Inclusion of a logically ordered site map with relative links to all pages
- Third-party javascript libraries are permissible.
 - Additional **Technical** points will be awarded for teams using third party scripts
- Copyright information must be provided:
 - Year (20--)
 - School Name, City, State

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Mobile Device

- Mobile site must be optimized to display in a clear and usable format on a screen size of 320 x 480 pixels.
- Size and responsiveness of command areas is key
- Speed of launch and visual aspects are important points
 - Maximize the content area vs. navigation links
 - Image management – full resolutions images may put unnecessary strain on the cpu and battery life of the mobile device

TEAMS AND FACULTY ADVISOR

Participants can register either as a team or as an individual. **All participants MUST have a faculty advisor.**

- Advisor Should be a Faculty/Staff Member of the applicant's or team's school
- For Home School Students the advisor must be responsible for their educational experience
- Advisor will help guide teams in project management or help guide teams with technical issues. The advisor will not provide solutions or code for the project.
- Advisor's Contact information must appear on the application. These include:
 - Name
 - Position in school/Responsibility to Home School Environment
 - Email Address
 - Phone Number
- Advisors are invited to participate in the Award Ceremonies for all winning projects

QUALIFICATIONS

- Participants must be a High School student, enrolled full-time at a High School located in northeast Ohio or be home-schooled with the principle residence located in northeast Ohio.
- All participants MUST be registered for the Challenge:
 - NEOSA website: <http://www.neosa.org/cool-tech-challenge/index.aspx>
 - CoolTech Challenge website: <http://www.cooltechchallenge.org>

SITE SUBMISSIONS

- Sites may be submitted in either of two (2) ways:
 - Files may be uploaded to NEOSA (instructions to be provided)
 - Site URLs may be provided for teams who secure their own hosting arrangements
 - Teams wishing to submit a URL must notify NEOSA via email (bnellis@neosa.org) at least seven (7) days in advance of the contest deadline
 - Advisers will be asked to provide a written confirmation that the site was in fact developed by their team

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AWARDING OF PRIZES

- CoolTech Challenge will award winners with scholarship funds, amount to be determined. Scholarships will be presented at the NEOSA Best of Tech Awards on May 19, 2010.
 - Winners families and the team's faculty advisor will be invited to attend
 - All winners will be notified in advance
 - Winners **will be required** to complete and return a W-9 form for tax purposes
- Winners and finalists will also be awarded Best Buy gift cards (amount to be determined).
- All teams submitting a site will receive a Chipotle Burrito Bucks card for each team member.
- All registered teams will receive a CoolTech Challenge t-shirt for each team member.
- Except for scholarship funds, all prizes will be delivered via U.S. Mail to the team's school (to the attention of the advisor) on or before May 31, 2010.