

# 3 Steps to a Great Website

## How to Bring Your Brand and Site to Life

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Our clients choose Mission Minded as a partner for developing their web presence because of our expertise in bringing their brands to life online.

If you're like most nonprofit professionals, your website probably contains some surprising facts and figures about the field in which you work. Maybe you have a detailed explanation of your mission and program areas right on the homepage. Your website might even have a collection of downloadable resources, like white papers or presentations. But beware: all your information—even if it's well articulated and expertly researched—will be lost on your audiences if it doesn't fit into your **brand story**.

Your website is part of a larger narrative, and the experience a user has on your site must fit into that brand narrative. Because of that challenge, a web solution that works for one organization likely won't work for another. Rather than adopt a one-size-fits-all approach to your web site, you must think deeply and strategically about how to bring the right experience to life on the web. Here's how we help you do just that.

## Step 1: Do the Right Research and Set the Right Strategy

### Project Kick-off

We begin website strategy by leading a kick-off work session to determine your goals including those you may have for design, project specifics, and desired user experience. We lead a robust discussion about your audiences—who you need to engage, why each potential user would come to your website, what problems your website helps each audience solve—to develop a thorough understanding of everything your new site must accomplish. This discussion allows us to build a user experience tailored to reflect your brand, and a site structured to help you achieve your goals.

### User Research

Mission Minded conducts interviews with potential users of your site. We delve into their psychographic profiles and ask important questions about likes and dislikes, how, when, and where they search for information, other sites they use, how they might enter your site (oftentimes it isn't through your homepage), and why they might use your site.

The answers are frequently surprising. A user's expectation for a retail site might shed light on how a policy organization's site should feel, or a the donor working late at night from her bed on her iPhone might be more typical than the user sitting in front of a desk in an office.

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“The entire process has been extremely well-organized, professional and just ‘easy.’ From the project management to the vast web experience to the graphic design, your team is top notch and so enjoyable to work with.”

**Amy Skinner**, Director of Communications,  
Education Commission of the States

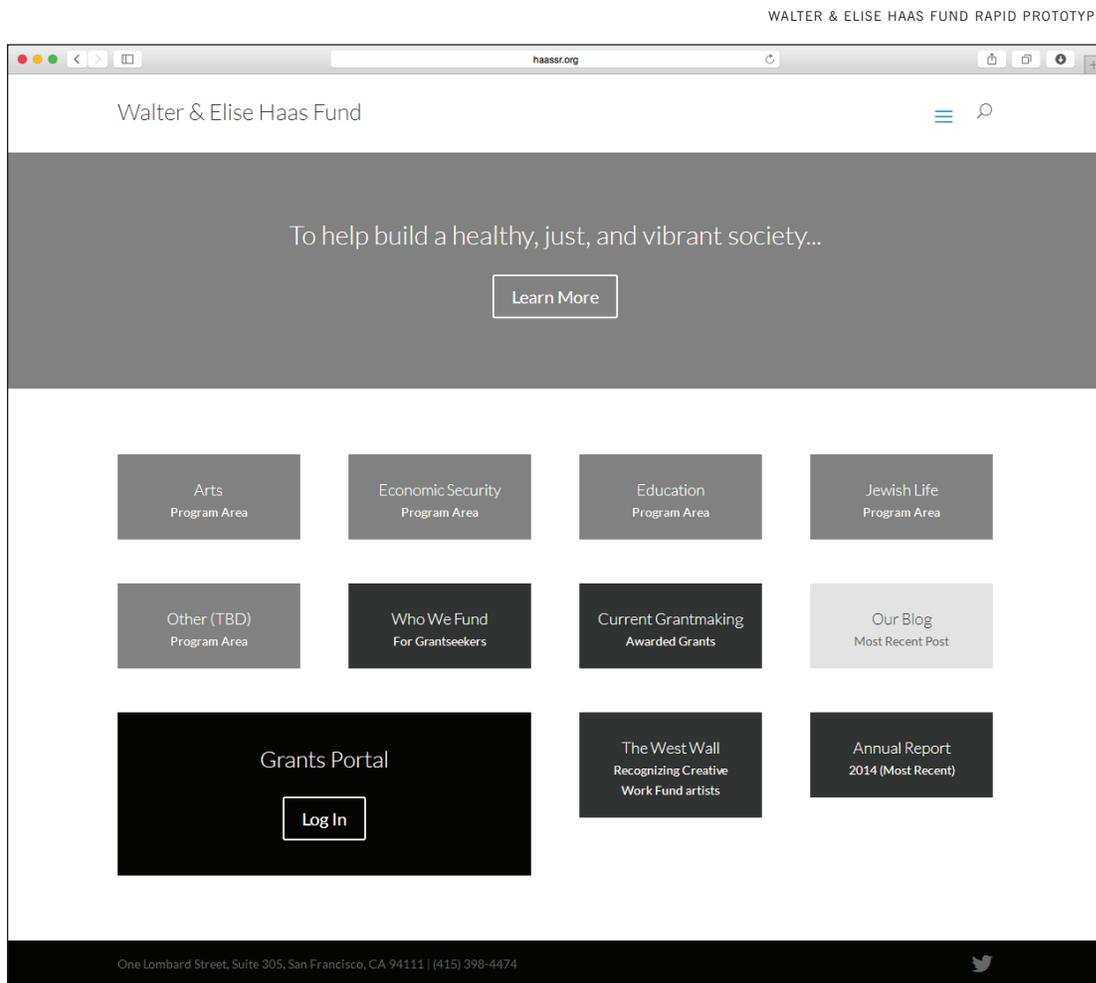
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### Recommendations

We draft a recommendations document that explores the best options for making your site a powerful, easily updated, user-friendly tool. The recommendations included in this document will highlight key functional requirements of your site, including recommendations on analytics, SEO, languages, hosting, mobile device and browser compatibility, and staff responsibilities for maintaining and updating the site. We also look at the successes and failures of comparison sites to determine what you may want to emulate—and avoid.

## Architecture & Wireframes

We develop your site's architecture and wireframes in a functional, live prototype. This allows your team to see how navigation will work in a real web environment, while also allowing for faster development of the site. A website's architecture can be thought of as a flowchart, emphasizing both the connections between content sections and certain pages. Wireframes are the individual page and template layouts needed on the site and the required elements for each page—i.e. levels of navigation, functionalities, types of text, etc. Our prototype demonstrates page organization and shows where various kinds of information will be positioned on key pages within the site.



## Step 2: Website Design

Mission Minded strongly values usability and functionality. We create a design that allows users to intuitively find and connect with the information they seek. We are well versed in ADA usability requirements and keep the needs of different users in mind.

### **Round One: Design Concepts**

Mission Minded first explores conceptual designs for your website and presents a minimum of three design concepts for your review. Each concept includes an application of your visual identity to portray how the visual concepts may come to life on the web. You then select one concept for further refinement and development.

### **Round Two: Design Layout Exploration**

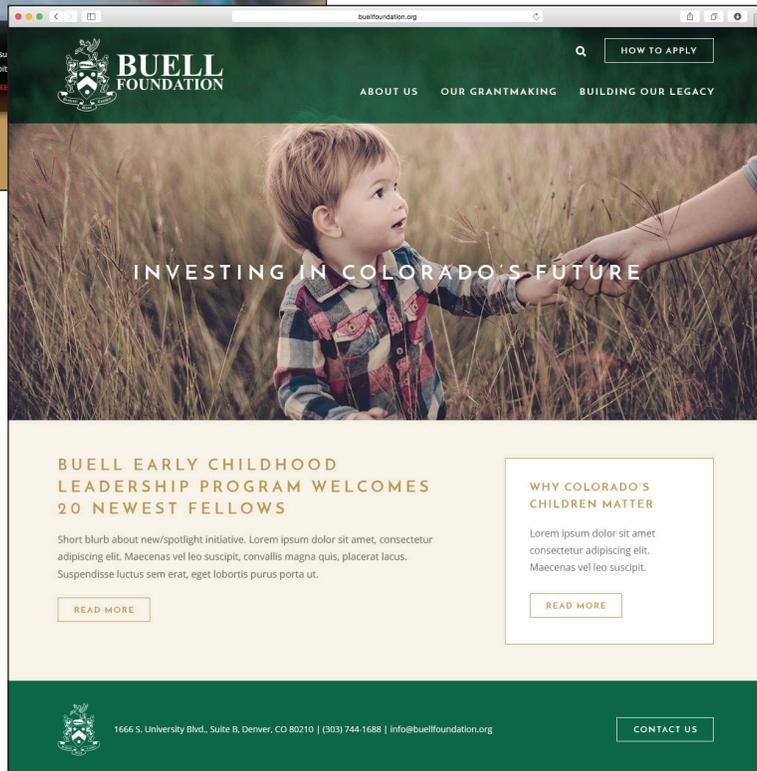
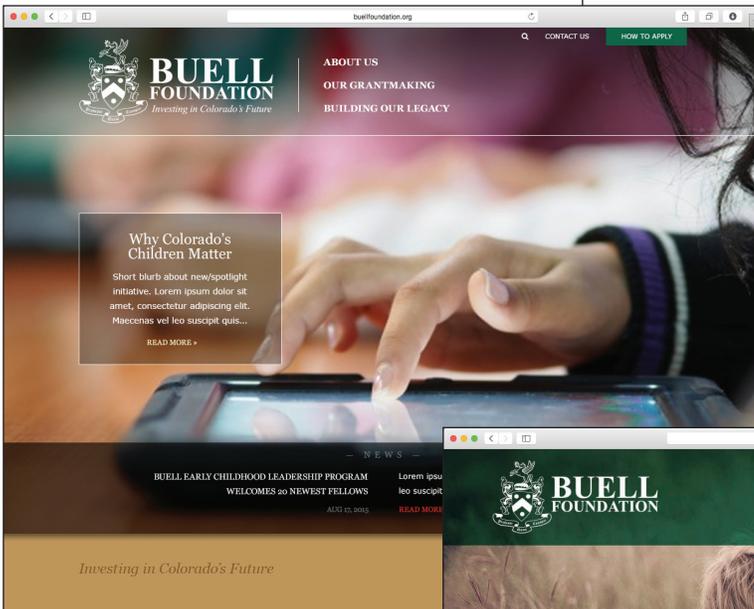
With the visual aesthetic of the site set, the second round of design explores a variety of highly differentiated design directions for page layout (i.e. scrolling sites vs. interactive maps vs. video-centric). Keeping user experience and web traffic patterns in mind, Mission Minded designs three homepage and secondary-page directions for your consideration. You choose one option for further refinement in two additional design rounds. These two pages provide the design layout direction for the site build out.

### **Round Three: Design Specifics & Refinement**

The third round of design focuses on refinement of the selected web direction. At this stage, we examine the anticipated entry points of your site and review your action pages to ensure that they are expertly positioned in a way that will drive participation and interaction with other pages of your site. We will incorporate the findings from our usability testing to further refine the site. At this time the overall design direction is close to finalized and the changes now tend to focus on nuances of specific elements. Following submission of final designs, your team approves the design.



BUELL FOUNDATION DESIGN LAYOUT EXPLORATION



## Step 3: Website Development

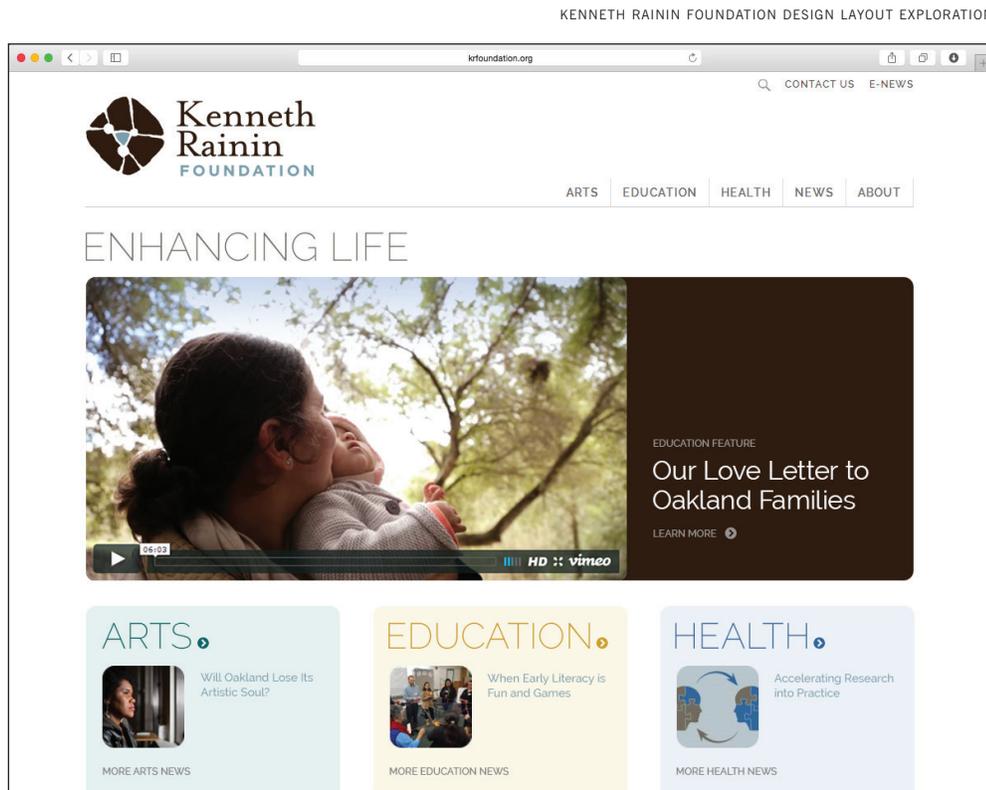
Mission Minded employs an agile web development process and continuously seeks your collaboration to prioritize your most important web goals.

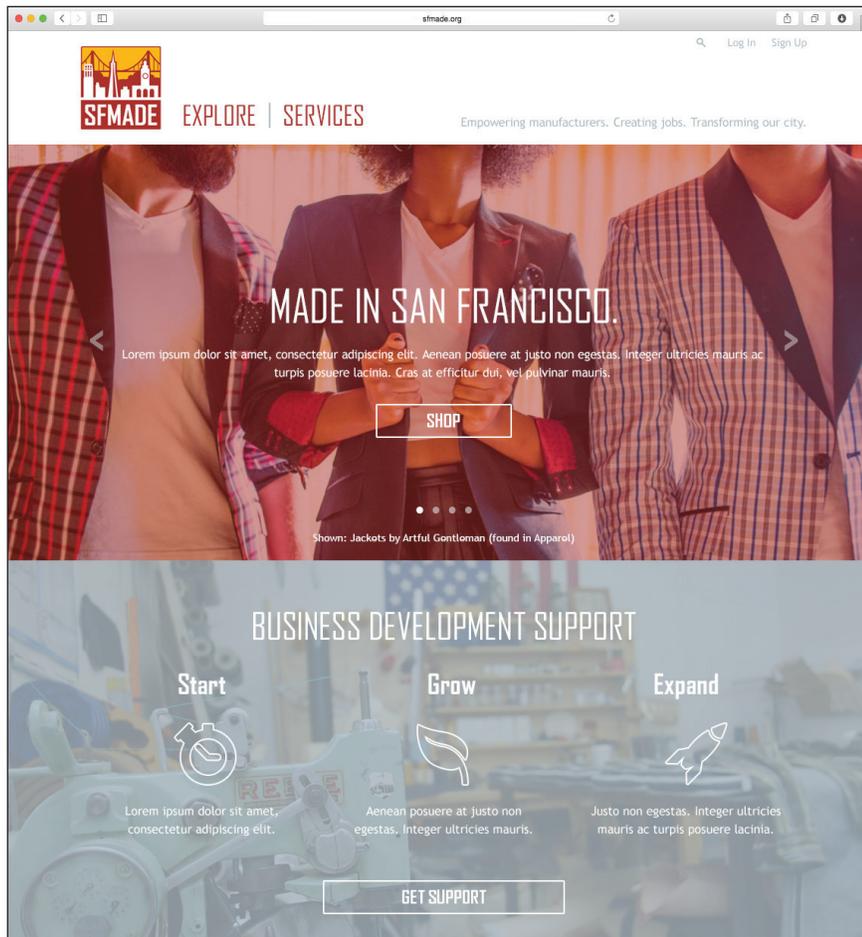
### Web Development

Mission Minded works with you to continually improve the site as we move forward. We leave room for feedback and collaboration as the site is built.

We are proud to implement free and proven open-source content management systems. We work in a variety of open source content management systems, including WordPress, Drupal, and Joomla, as well as custom platforms built for specific needs, such as schools, membership organizations, and campaigns. We provide the training needed to make sure that even your least tech savvy staff member can update content on the site.

Our team also works with you to identify and implement integrations with other systems like Salesforce, Raiser's Edge, and video and social media tools. This makes it easier to present a personalized user experience, while also being able to rely on tools you've already grown to trust.





SFMADE DESIGN LAYOUT EXPLORATION

## Quality Assurance

Mission Minded reviews all updated and redesigned pages before your website's launch. In tandem with your staff, we conduct quality assurance tests to ensure the site is ready for launch.

## Website Launch

Mission Minded works with you to launch your new site. We examine what media may be useful to your team as you seek to promote your site. We work with you to develop a plan and announcement to create excitement and energy amongst supporters when launching your site.

## Ongoing Maintenance & Post-Project Support

After the site has launched, Mission Minded can provide support for website updates and maintenance. Mission Minded remains available on an hourly basis for any required updates, support, or changes that are needed in the future. Maintenance and support is billed hourly; the majority of our clients require 5 hours or less per month.

## 4 Important Questions to Consider Before You Get Started

### 1. What is your goal?

Your website shouldn't just make you visible online or inspire warm feelings about your organization. Challenge yourself and your colleagues to be specific about what your website will accomplish.

### 2. Who is your audience?

Get into the heads of the people who will browse your site. What are they looking for? What's important to them? Once you understand their priorities, speak to those priorities—not your own. This knowledge of your audience will help you set an appropriate tone for your story.

When you understand your audiences, you can speak right to them. Take the time to imagine why someone came to your site and what might be on his mind. What matters to him? How can you address it?

### 3. What are your calls to action?

What action do you want people to take? Just having a good feeling about you isn't enough. Do you want them to call you? Make a donation? Sign a petition? Tell their friends about you?

Getting very clear about what you want them to do will help you create a site that

encourages them to do it. Sounds simple, right? Yet so many nonprofits think their website should be organized by program area or department.

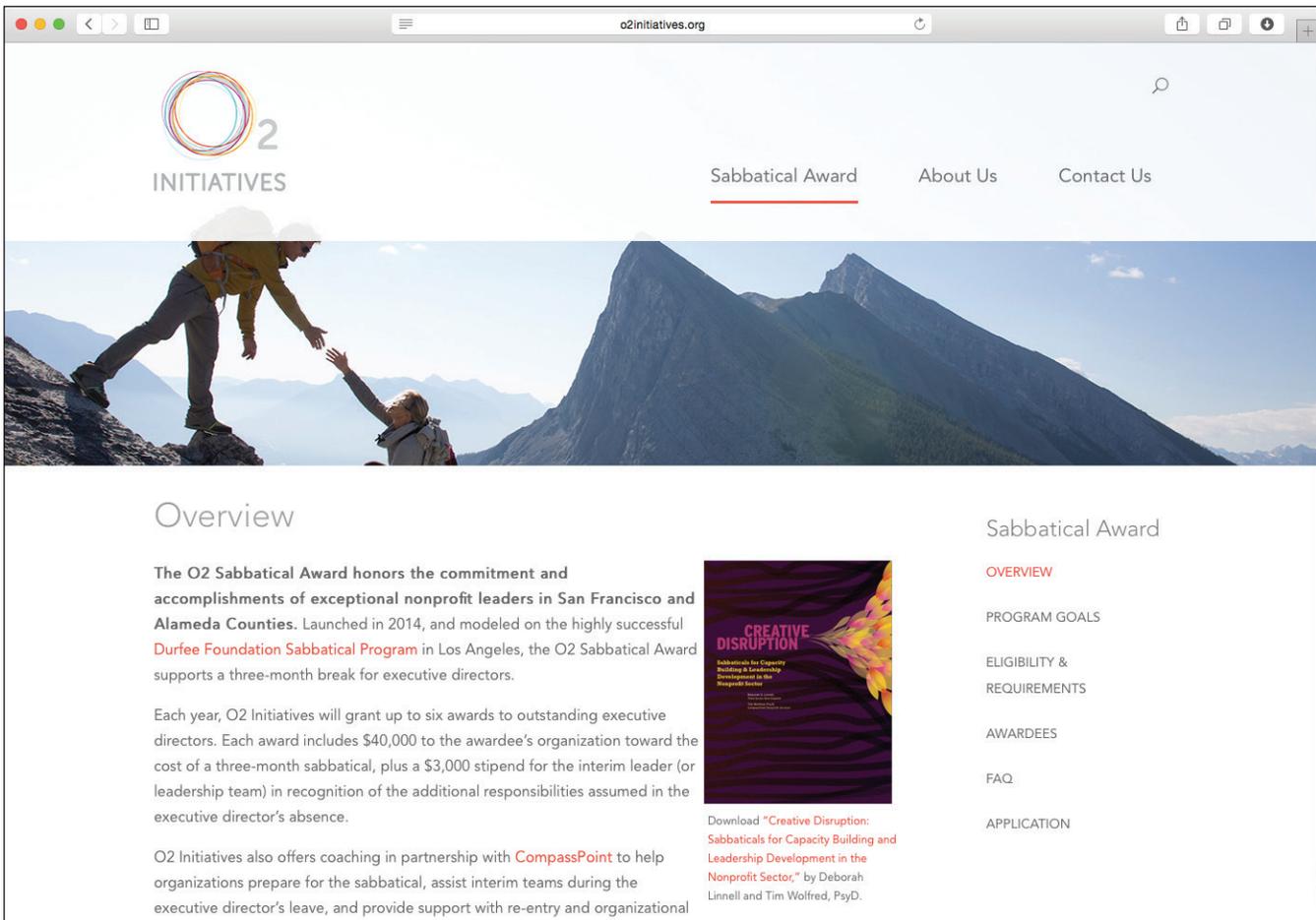
Don't just list your programs and statistics about their success. Instead, clearly state the problem, the solution and how the visitor can take action to be part of that solution.

Think like a visitor to your site. She probably doesn't care about your internal organization or anything that affects only employees. She wants to know why your organization matters and how she can get involved. Make it easy for her to find out with as few clicks as possible.

### 4. What's your brand?

If a new or updated website doesn't powerfully reinforce the big promise you're making, the site is working against you—not for you. The signals your website sends about your organization's character come through strongly.

That means your website should be in step with your organization's values and personality. And it should proudly convey the unique value and promise you offer to the world.



O2 INITIATIVES WEBSITE

“This is a beautiful website with a compelling and thoughtful message, and it powerfully reflects a tremendous amount of careful work on your part over several years to understand and serve the nonprofit community by supporting it’s leadership. You’ve clearly put into place many best practices in the field, while developing innovations as well.”

User, in response to the launch of the O2 Initiatives Site

## Content Management

Developing content for your web site can be one of the most difficult challenges. Who's responsible for what? How do you ensure consistent tone and style throughout the site? How can your copy drive your users to take the actions you want them to take?

We'll work with you throughout this process to make content management as painless as possible. Whether we are writing content for you or simply helping you manage the process of getting everything together, Mission Minded serves as your partner throughout the process.

## What Will it Cost?

Every project is different, as are the fees associated with them. Here are some estimates to give you a sense of what you might invest:

- Website Research and Strategy Development \$15,000-25,000
- Web Design \$10,000–20,000
- Web Development \$150-200/hour
- Copywriting \$150/hour

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Mission Minded is a branding firm that works exclusively with nonprofits.

We believe that nonprofits, foundations, and independent schools only reach their highest potential if people understand the importance of their work—not just what they do, but why it matters.

Every day we partner with clients like San Francisco Opera, Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, and the Denver Art Museum to help them determine the brand—or reputation—for which they want to be known. Then we help them bring that brand to life through key messages, logo design, web design, and more. As a result, our clients successfully raise more money and attract the support they need to reach their goals.

Have a question? We'd love to hear from you. Write to Jennie Winton at [jennie@mission-minded.com](mailto:jennie@mission-minded.com), or give Jennie a call at 415.990.9360