Tableless HTML and CSS Layout

Tableless HTML is a web design philosophy that eschews the use of HTML tables for page layout control purposes. Instead of HTML tables, style sheet languages such as CSS (Cascading Style Sheets) are used to arrange elements and text on a web page, providing a much more stylized page in accordance with your needs, not to mention the amount of time you will save using CSS.

Before CSS, you were forced to use tables, and we both know the headaches it caused to more demanding coders:

source code mixing with your presentational data, visual consistency would be next to impossible to maintain throughout the entire site, redesigning the site would be almost as convenient as building a new from ground zero and, most importantly, the accessibility for some disabled users or for people browsing your site with a PDA device or something in the likes would just be horrible.

CSS is designed primarily to enable the separation of document content (written in HTML or a similar markup language) from document presentation, including elements such as the layout, colors, and fonts. This separation can improve the content's accessibility, provide more flexibility and control in the specification of presentation characteristics, enable multiple pages to share formatting, and reduce complexity and repetition in the structural content (such as allowing for tableless web design).

CSS can also allow the same markup page to be presented in different styles for different rendering methods. It can also be used to allow the web page to display differently depending on the screen size or device on which it is being viewed. While the author of a document typically links that document to a CSS style sheet, readers can use a different style sheet, perhaps one on their own computer, to override the one the author has specified. It specifies a priority scheme to determine which style rules apply if more than one rule matches against a particular element. In this so-called *cascade*, priorities or *weights* are calculated and assigned to rules, so that the results are predictable.

There are of course limitations, like in vertical control (if horizontal placement is simple and intuitive to control, vertical control is basically impossible). You can't name the rules, as it's outright impossible; you can't include styles from a rule into another (thus more maintenance + more testing = more time = more money); there's a blatant absence of

expressions, that would be valuable in many cases to simplify and even enhance the full power of this application. The list goes on.

On the other hand, the advantages are very valuable and coveted, like page reformatting (that will save you bundles of time and will also make the age you're working on much more accessible), site consistency (as the cascading and inheritance effects will simplify it, saving on maintenance, time and money) and, above all, ACCESSIBILITY, which is what we're talking about here when we use CSS, as there's no need any more to use HTML tables when using CSS.

Tableless HTML and CSS Layout basically helps sharpen your site visually and code-wise as well, making it much more uniform and clean in both senses. All in all, CSS will make the layout of your web site more attractive and accessible, more flexible and faster and (and this is the heart of it) more functional and supportive.