

Austin Ashley

Senior Project Statement

<http://plantbasedstrengthshop.com>

Throughout my career in web design and development I found myself to become increasingly interested in the business side of web development. Questions of how a client's business started and how they handle shipping and selling products became a strong passion of mine. I strive to take myself out of my comfort zone and try something new and challenging. For me, designing a site is the easy part. The difficult aspect is creating a site with features involving shipping orders, taking payments, tracking orders and getting customers. So why not take a shot at doing everything myself.

Plant Based Strength is a concept I created, designed and developed all on my own. I'm passionate about this project because Plant Based Strength is a statement about being a strong person without the use of animal products. Weightlifting and Boxing are two things I love to do and I never get tired of. But abstaining from animal products places a stigma of being weak, compassion for animals is another big facet of my life. This project is a statement and is something personal to me. You can be compassionate and caring towards animals and live your life strong and to the fullest that is what this website and shirts represent. This project and development is representative of my time at UT and my evolution as a web designer and developer. From the concept I began the next phase of the project, which involved a large amount of research and planning.

Throughout my career in web design and UT I have had a lot of experience in design but I always had an interest in the business side of design. I started my work as a web designer my freshman year at UT, I worked full time around my school schedule and gained experience in design, but as the years wen by I found myself increasingly interested in the business side of web development. For this project I began researching and exploring the best platform for e-commerce websites run through Wordpress. I eventually decided on Woocommerce for it's shipping zones and tax calculation for orders. I then planned out the aspect I was more comfortable with, the design and feel of the products and website. I planned and wrote out what I wanted the shirt designs to represent and look like, what imagery I wanted to portray on the site and I explored color palettes for the web design.

I designed four shirts for the brand that represent my interests and what I feel is missing from the sports I am interested in. I have met power lifters, boxers, MMA fighters and people who are interested in general fitness that followed a plant based diet and lifestyle but did not relate to the vegan shirts out there today. These designs focus on strength, power and progression rather than a preachy message. I designed the shirts in Photoshop and Illustrator and created shirt mockups for the site using free use templates. Once the shirts were ready for the website, I began the development. I designed and developed the site using a new visual builder I have become interested in that allows the user to build their own theme while being able to easily preview changes. I began developing and designing a site that is both simple yet complex in the back end of the site. When it

comes to web design I have learned over the years less is more. The more convoluted and muddy the design gets, the less user friendly it becomes.

The complex backend development was the last step in my process, I learned and built the Woocommerce store from the ground up. Using documentation and tutorials I setup the store to have custom shipping classes, disallow non U.S. shipping, allow for a checkout icon in the header, a checkout redirect, variable pricing and a custom store page. Another aspect I really wanted to include was email marketing, I researched email marketing software and eventually chose to build a Mailchimp account, I setup the API key and integrated the Woocommerce store with the Mailchimp account to allow pop up opt in windows and integrated the site with a email subscription service that allows the users to be added to a specific contact list. The Woocommerce product checkout orders also connect with the email list and create new contacts for email campaigns to be created in the future. I setup and created the info@plantbasedstrengthshop.com email account and tested the email subscriptions. Lastly I did an entire mobile audit of all of the site's features and functions on various devices.

Plant Based Strength was a challenging but really enjoyable project where I got to explore the topics in web development I had missed and design something I wanted to create with a positive message. I learned about the business of e-commerce websites and how to overcome things I don't understand by diving head first into them. There were many things that seemed to daunting to even try. But this project taught me about

professionalism and represents all of the work that has led me to this point from UT and my career in the web development field.