

Virginia Dere, LLC

Executive Summary

Community Partner

Gabrielle Haywood

Student Consulting Team

Jonathan Fischer

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Background

Virginia Dere, LLC is a startup created by founder and Creative Visionary Officer (CVO) Gabrielle Haywood. Virginia Dere strives to design and produce fashionable, modest, and vibrant clothing for women of color. Virginia Dere's mission statement is to *enable women of color to feel empowered to swim through fashionable modest swimwear to ultimately look how they feel*. Haywood created Virginia Dere's main product, the KneeKini, after finding herself and other women wanting a more modest, but still fashionable swimsuit in swimming lessons. To this end, Haywood aims to provide modest swimsuits tailored to the needs of those who want to wear colorful swimsuits that fit their style. Going forward, Haywood hopes to design and produce additional modest clothing products, such as dresses and activewear.

Project Description

Project Opportunity

Virginia Dere is at the early stages of development and is facing several opportunities for future growth. In particular, Virginia Dere's web presence could be expanded to better promote the business and cause. Haywood partnered with the Carnegie Mellon University Information Systems Program and our project team. We collaborated to devise a plan to improve the Virginia Dere technology infrastructure and management, particularly the design and structure of her current websites: the KneeKini product website and the Virginia Dere corporate website.

Project Vision

Our project vision consisted of three main goals: (1) improve the KneeKini website, (2) design and develop a website for Virginia Dere, LLC, and (3) create resources and documentation about the websites. Haywood and her future website staff will be able to edit the websites to add information about new products, styles, and vendors, or to add additional functionality to the websites. We transitioned the website with supporting resources so Haywood is able to make updates as needed and upload future fashion products on the websites.

Outcomes

The key outcomes of this project were: (1) the visually and functionally improved KneeKini website previously published and stored in Wix, (2) a brand-new, launch-ready Virginia Dere website on Wix, and (3) design and feature documentation for the team's choices and accomplishments stored in an online Google Drive folder.

At a higher level, we facilitated the people and process aspects of the client's business by establishing a Slack channel for centralized communication, collaborating with the client on our technical decisions, and transitioning valuable resources such as documentation and tutorials to support Haywood's ability to update the website with changes to the business.

Project Deliverables

The three major deliverables were: (1) the redesigned and relunched KneeKini website, (2) the ready-to-launch Virginia Dere website, and (3) design and technical documentation.

Recommendations

For immediate actions, we recommend that Haywood enable the hidden "Shop" page, the shopping cart, and user log-in page once KneeKini is ready to purchase. We also recommend that Haywood launch the live-ready Virginia Dere website once she feels that her business is ready for a corporate appearance online.

We recommend that Haywood and future technical administrators take the time to absorb and use the documentation to develop and maintain the websites. We also recommend that Haywood keep building on the current documentation by adding more content relevant to the evolving Virginia Dere company. Haywood can hire or partner with a technical administrator who has knowledge of using Wix to build the technology capacity of the company. For future Information Systems Program partnerships, we recommend the teams revisit our abundant documentation on design decisions and achievements to onboard quickly and keep building Virginia Dere's capacities.

Student Consulting Team

Jonathan Fischer served as the design and quality assurance lead. He is a third-year student majoring in Information Systems with a minor in Game Design and Sonic Arts. He is looking toward a career in game development or design.

Phil Huang served as the technical lead and chief writer. He is a third-year student majoring in Information Systems with a minor in Statistics. He is looking toward a career in software engineering and technical program management.

Andey Ng served as project manager. She is a third-year student majoring in Information Systems and pursuing the Masters in Engineering and Public Policy, with a minor in Machine Learning and Human Computer Interaction. She is seeking a career in product management.