



cms

Content Management System



Using Homepage Content Channels

Webinar October 2010

Summary

- **The Home Page is generally the first impression a visitor has of a website. Learn to use available content channels to make optimize the content on your Home Page and make a good first impression.**

Objectives

- **Learn how to use content channels on the Home page**
 - Full or Single Column Slideshow
 - Utilizing Polls & Quizzes
 - Using America.gov Widgets
 - Using RSS feeds to keep content up-to-date
 - Carousels – when and how to use them
 - Tabbed Section
 - Embedded Video
 - Social Media Feeds

General Homepage Guidelines

- **Provide a clear starting point for the main tasks users come to your website to do with the highest priority items at the top.** The most critical page elements should be visible "above the fold" (in the first screen of content, without scrolling)
- **Group like items together and provide a clear, concise headline.** - Grouping helps users differentiate among similar or related categories and see the breadth of products or content you offer. It also keeps users from getting lost or confused.
- **Start each link title with an action word** - Keep links as specific and brief as possible. Don't include obvious or redundant information in every link. Also: Don't use generic links, such as "More..." at the end of a list of items. Instead, tell users specifically what they will get more of, such as "More Speeches" or "Archived Speeches." Generic "More..." links are especially problematic when the page has several of them, since users can't easily differentiate between them when scanning the page.

General Guidelines – cont.

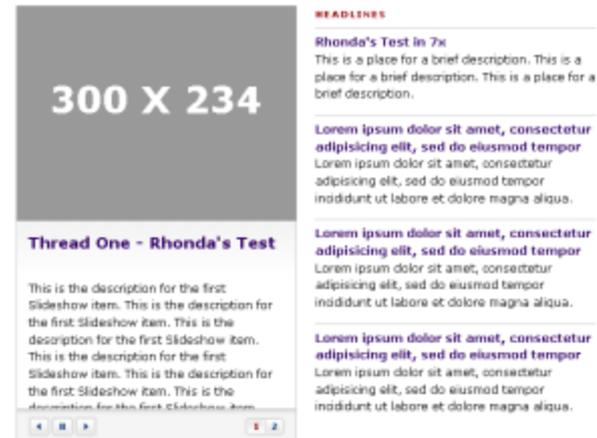
- **Don't use generic instructions, such as "Click Here" as a link name** - Use meaningful text in the link names to tell users what they'll get when they click. This helps users quickly differentiate between links when they are scanning through them. For example, instead of linking "Click Here" for Press Releases, just say "Press Releases"
- **Use bullet points to organize content** – Internet users are scanners. They don't "read" a website, they scan it for bits of relevant information.
- **Use meaningful graphics, and don't overdo it.** - Images are powerful communicators, but will backfire if they seem frivolous or irrelevant. Use images sparingly and make sure they tell a story.
- **Limit font styles and other text formatting**, such as sizes, colors, and so forth on the page because over-designed text can actually detract from the meaning of the words. If text elements look too much like graphics, users tend to overlook them, mistaking them for ads. Follow the CMS publishing standards for font to best showcase your content.

General Guidelines – cont.

- **Avoid redundancy** - Repeating identical items, such as categories or links, on the homepage in order to emphasize their importance actually reduces their impact. Redundant items also clutter the page; all items lose impact because they are competing with so many elements. In order to feature something prominently, feature it clearly in one place.
- **If a link does anything other than go to another web page, such as linking to a PDF file or launching an audio or video player, email message, or another application, make sure the link explicitly indicates what will happen.**
- **Be picky** – Don't overcrowd the homepage. Provide only what is most important, instead of providing a link to everything. The page should not scroll past two page lengths. Keep columns evenly distributed.

Full or Single-Column Slideshow

- Determine the amount of content you have to feature
 - Use the single column slideshow if you have a lot of news items that refresh every day and are top priority to post
 - Use the full slideshow if you have very few top news stories to feature and want to make a bold statement.
 - Nothing loses a user faster than out-of-date content. A full slideshow can feature older, or more evergreen content without dating the content. It also draws a user's attention to key content without distracting them with old, outdated content.



Utilizing Polls & Quizzes

LAUNCH POLL

What do you think about the design of our new website?

1. Excellent

2. Good

3. Fair

4. Needs Improvement

VOTE ▶ This is not a scientific poll

Polls:

- Allow posts to take an informal survey of visitors.
- Ask questions that will provides you with valuable insight into your users, or keep it light by asking a fun question based on your content.

❖ Due to its dynamic nature, this content must be added by the CMS Team.

Quizzes:

- Capture the user's attention
- Involve readers in the action

❖ For a fun quiz, ask questions a reader may have learned through reading embassy news articles

WEBSITE USABILITY QUIZ

An important first step in designing a Web site is to:

Choose site colors

Identify target user groups

Prototype the home page

Develop form filling requirements

Determine widgets/controls

Question 1 of 3

Using America.gov Widgets

- **Widgets from America.gov may be used in CMS sites to supplement existing content or to provide a method of delivering new content to site visitors.**
- **Select from Spotlights, Features, Top Ten, eJournals and Books**
 - Visit: <http://www.america.gov/widgets/landing.html>
 - Pick what content you want, select “Share” and copy code
 - Create a Widget on your homepage, paste in the code.

Using RSS feeds

- RSS feeds from America.gov can be used freely throughout your site.
- You can also create an RSS feed from your own content (example: Press Releases) and use that feed on other parts of your site. (only available on a listing page)
- America.gov RSS Feed URLs are available at:
<http://www.america.gov/service/s/rss-feeds.html>.

NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

[Obama Says Iranians Taking Risks to Have Their Voices Be Heard](#)

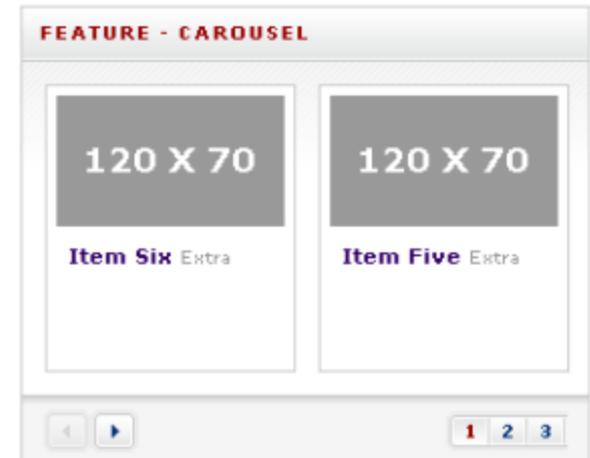
President Obama says Iranians are continuing to participate in peaceful demonstrations at "great risk to themselves" after being warned by Iranian officials, and says the world is watching their government's response, which will be a "pretty clear signal ... about ..."

[Obama Says U.S. Prepared for Any North Korean Threat](#)

The United States is prepared if North Korea launches a long-range ballistic missile in the direction of Hawaii near the July 4 weekend, President Obama says. "This administration, and our military, is fully prepared for any contingencies," Obama says in ...

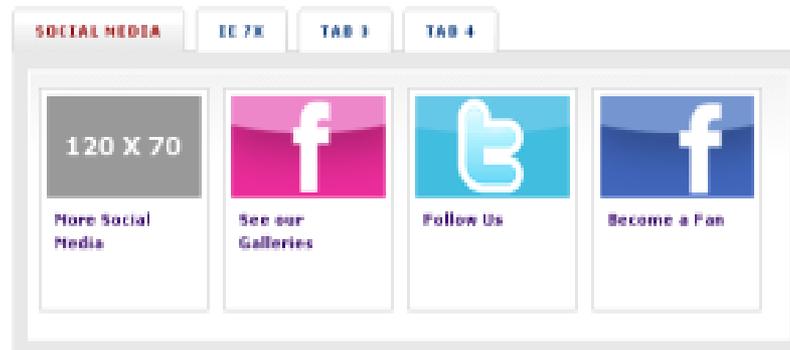
Carousels

- Group like content together in a carousel.
- Use an even number of items 2, 4 or 6.
- Do not mix content, it will confuse the user.
- Position a single-column carousel near the top if it contains important information.
- Single-column carousel best used for narrowly focused groups like Video, Photo Galleries, Podcasts or a specific topic.
- The middle carousel is prime real estate and should be used wisely. Groups can be more broad, such as Multimedia or Publications



Tabbed Section

- This content channel has room for a total of sixteen (16) images/links with four (4) available on each tab.
- Tabs should be labeled descriptively and the items displayed for each tab should “fit” within the stated category. “Partners”, “Programs”, “Social Media”, “Education”, etc. are all acceptable tab titles.
- Since this is a difficult content channel to create, we recommend hiding instead of deleting when not in use, so it can be used again when required.



Embedded Video

- Pull video straight from America.gov
- Provides an interactive experience for the user, improving the chances they will stay longer and return to the site
- Find videos here: <http://www.america.gov/multimedia/video.html>

Note: If you are placing Embedded Video in the Right Bucket of the home page, the width should be changed to 298, and the height should be changed to 249.



Social Media

- Social Media links can be added to a carousel, the tabbed section or a feature box.
- Twitter and Blog RSS feeds are approved for use on the homepage.
- Find approved Twitter and Blog links here <http://www.america.gov/widgets/landing.html>, or use your own.
- For more information about displaying Twitter feeds, check out the sample site: <http://sample.usembassy.gov/news/twitter-test.html>

LATEST @AMERICAGOV  RSS Feed

- ▶ americagov: #SecClinton's remarks at the U.S.-Northern #Ireland Economic Conference <http://ow.ly/2W2F1>
VIDEO: <http://ow.ly/2W2Gj>
- ▶ americagov: #SecClinton on #typhoon damage in northern #Philippines <http://ow.ly/2W2CL>
- ▶ americagov: Economists: U.S.-EU Economic Cooperation Must Continue <http://ow.ly/2VzdG>
- ▶ americagov: Statement on #INPEX's Decision to Withdraw from #Iran <http://ow.ly/2VsvA>