

What to Put On Your Homepage: 19 Elements to Consider

 orbitmedia.com/blog/what-to-put-on-your-homepage/

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By Barry Feldman

Are you floundering with what to put on your homepage? Second-guessing yourself until you're paralyzed?

I see it all the time—from all types of companies. Even experienced digital marketers struggle to nail their homepage content.

There's no perfect formula. Your options are many. After consulting with a slew of clients about their homepage strategies, I concluded a checklist would be helpful.

This post is in part a checklist, how-to, and planning tool. I can't tell you precisely what to put on your homepage, but I know if you understand your options you'll be better prepared to piece together a smart homepage with content conceived to achieve your goals.



Your Homepage Checklist:

1. Logo

The first thing your visitor should see is your logo. Place it on the top left. Resist urges to:

- **Get creative with placement.** Heat map testing tools consistently indicate top-left is a common hot spot on the page.
- **Crowd your logo with unnecessary visual elements.** Instead, surround your logo with ample negative space so it instantly stands out.
- **Animate the presentation of your logo.** It's not only passé, it can be problematic for the user experience.
- **Enlarge your logo into a billboard.** You may love your logo, but making it larger, won't increase the impression it makes on your visitor.

2. Site menu

Create a menu featuring the most important pages of your website allowing visitors to quickly navigate to the sections that interest them. Consider the following:

- **Less is more.** A menu overloaded with items will overwhelm and confuse visitors. Subsequent pages within your site can provide additional navigational elements.
- **Be descriptive.** You'll serve your viewers and optimize your website better by creating menu items that are simple, succinct and descriptive. Why label your menu item "Services" when you can use "Bail Bonds?"
- **Are hamburgers tasty?** The hamburger icon that is three horizontal lines has become a recognizable convention to invoke a website menu on mobile devices. It's gaining popularity for desktops too, however [research indicates discoverability is almost cut in half by hiding a website's navigation.](#)



If you choose to present an expandable menu on your desktop homepage, using a combination of the icon and word “menu” is a smart approach.

3. Special entry points

Does your site serve members or need to provide access to special features for a subset of your visitors? If so, devise an elegant way for these types of users to log in (as demonstrated in the screen shot above).

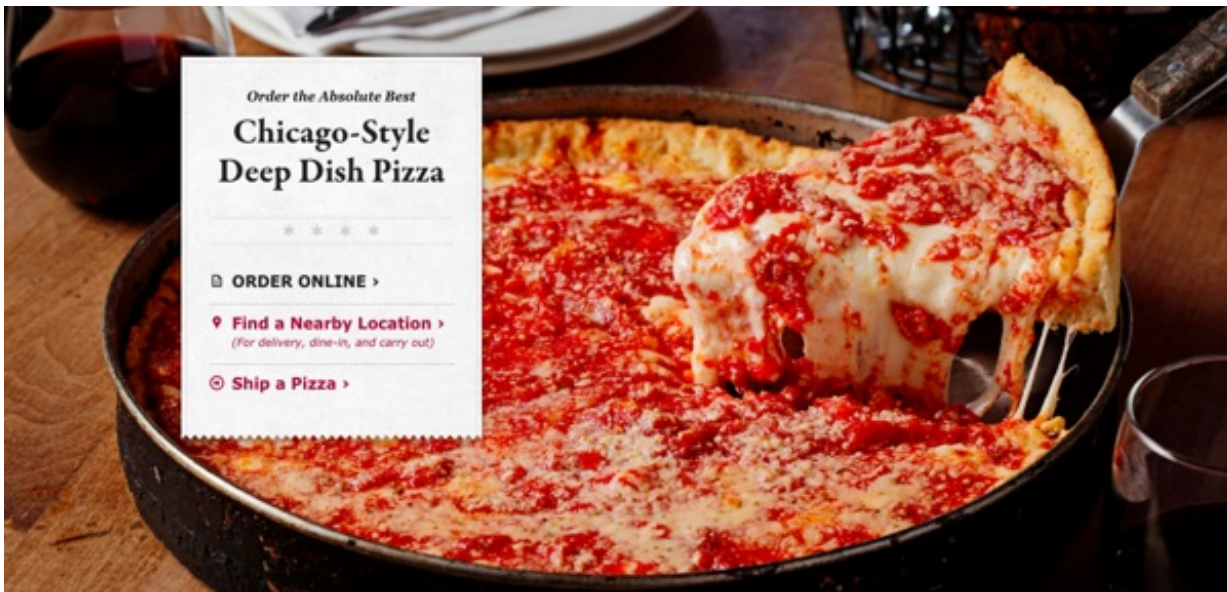
4. Hero shot

Hero shot is a web phrase meaning “main image.” Your hero shot is likely to be the largest, most prominent and most important element on your website’s homepage.

- **Blend it tastefully.** Your homepage hero shot should immediately follow the header elements atop your page we’ve covered thus far. Design it such that it blends gracefully with the logo and menu.
- **Give it a job to do.** The most meaningful hero shots perform a gatekeeper role. Through a combination of visual and verbal elements it should inspire the right visitors to interact further and the wrong visitors to exit. It’s your qualifier (and disqualifier).
- **Keep it simple.** You don’t want the focal point of your home page to be busy. Make it to focused, singular and easy to understand.
- **Keep it real.** Featuring a stock photo in your hero shot is dangerous. It’s not necessarily taboo, but select your image carefully. Present something relevant, trustworthy and authentic. A \$5 shot of two businesspersons shaking hands screams “marketing BS.”

Give your hero shot *squint and blink* tests. After creating your homepage, expose it to outsiders in two ways:

- **Squint**—Have your test subjects view your home page a few feet further away than normal. See if they get the idea.
- **Blink**—Expose some viewers to your home page for just a few seconds then ask them what they got from it. Confusion is not the answer you’re looking for. Clarity is.



From whatever distance you look at this homepage hero shot, you'll quickly understand what this website has to offer.

5. Headline

The most important passage on your website is the homepage headline.

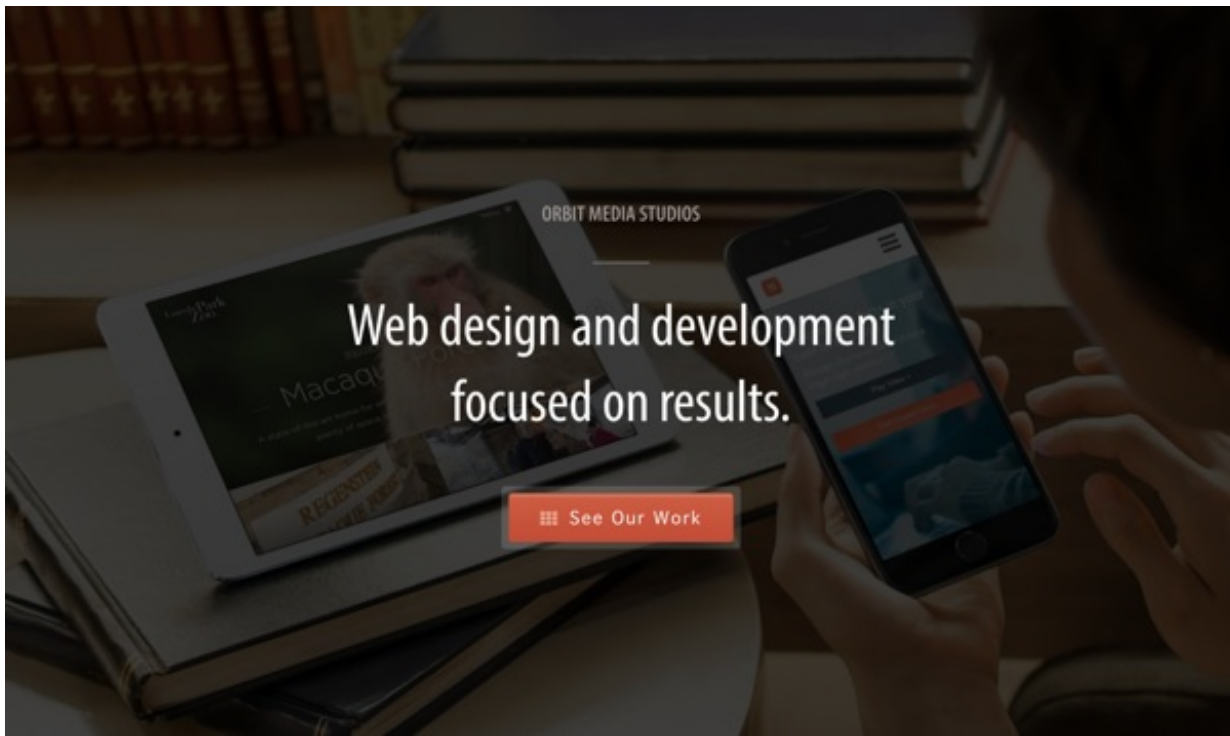
The headline might appear above, below or within the hero shot, usually the latter. My post [How to Write a Home Page Headline that Gets the Job Done](#) offers a complete lesson, but here are some key points you should find useful:

- **Invoke a sense of belonging.** No reader should have to work to figure out what your site has to offer. Tell them.
- **Think about click-through continuity.** Your homepage headline should offer continuity to the medium and message that lead visitors there. So if your offsite advertising, optimization, or any form of promotion, features a key idea—with keywords—restate them in your headline. Connect the dots.
- **Write about the reader.** Some headlines are self-serving. Some answer the question “What’s in it for me?” You can probably guess which are more compelling.
- **Be clear.** Picking up on a common theme here? After scratching their heads, the next thing confused visitors reach for is the back button.

Unless you're highly confident in your writing chops, you should hire a professional copywriter to write your homepage headline (as well as the rest of its copy). Cutting corners with your copy won't save you money; it'll have the opposite effect.

6. The can't-miss call to action

Your homepage is likely to have multiple calls-to-action (CTAs). Make one visually prominent by creating a button and building it into your hero shot or creating an unmistakable visual cue that leads right to it—preferably before scrolling is required.



There's no mistaking what action the Orbit Media site calls for first.

Consider the following techniques to create more effective CTAs:

- **Begin with action words.** Make the first word of your CTA a verb (other than “click”). It should read like a command.
- **Experiment with designs.** The color, shape, size and placement of your CTA can affect conversion, so run tests to optimize conversion rates.
- **Try a first person voice.** While a second person voice is the status quo, often first person CTAs deliver better results, e.g. “Show me...” or “Count me in.”
- **Highlight the value.** Your CTA could explicitly explain the value of acting, such as, “Create a free landing page now.”

[Get additional pointers and an infographic offering 25 power words for your CTAs here.](#) (You might note how the link you just read is a very explicit, value-focused CTA.)

7. Introduction

Your homepage is the place to begin a dialogue with your visitor. Introductory copy should generally be tight, benefit-oriented, informative and friendly. It's also the perfect place to include keywords and internal links.

8. Portfolio

Does your business deliver products or services that can be showcased via images, descriptions, and/or case studies? If so, your portfolio might be the thing your visitors most want to see.



Architecture is one of many industry types for which a portfolio is a powerful homepage asset.

9. Blog

The vast majority of online marketers are content marketers and therefore publishers of blogs and/or content hubs. By directing visitors who are cruising your homepage for the first time to your blog, you'll increase engagement, and hopefully, gain subscribers.

Use one or more of the following techniques to take advantage of the opportunities a blog or content hub afford you:

- **Launch into a story.** Showcase one or more recent posts with its headline and possibly, its lead, featured image, or a description. Then: *“Read more.”*
- **Create a grid of posts.** Your homepage can present links to popular posts, recent posts, or both—as a grid or list.
- **Feature your blog.** Many homepages are blogs first and websites second. In other words, the majority of the home page real estate presents posts in reverse chronological order. It's not a perfect approach for every company, but works for many.

The Convince and Convert Blog

Named the #1 Content Marketing Blog in the world by Content Marketing Institute

Digital Marketing
A B2B Marketer and a Data Management Platform Walk into a Bar

Social Media Case Studies
Why Birchbox Wants Fans to Call Them on Snapchat

Customer Experience
How to Strike the Right Tone With Live Chat

Influencer Marketing
3 Advanced Influencer Marketing Strategies for Noisy Markets

Digital Marketing
3 Augmented Reality Trends Marketers Should Watch

[Read More in the Blog](#)

Convince and Convert Podcasts

Content Pros Podcast
Hitting Subscriber Gold with Paid Advertising

Influence Pros Podcast
How to Use Data to Choose the Perfect Influencer

Social Pros Podcast
How to Use Social Media to Make Your Brand Fascinating

The Business of Story Podcast
The Secret to Developing a Thriving Business

Talk Digital to Me
Create an Experience Your Customers Can't Wait to Share Online

[Explore Other Podcasts Episodes](#)

The homepage of Convince and Convert dedicates the largest portion of its homepage to presenting articles and podcasts in the style of a content hub.

10. Pods or content blocks

Pods? I picked-up the expression up from a website designer. I suppose it means nothing more than “section” or “box.” Orbit Media’s design team calls them “content blocks.” They’re often presented 2, 3, or 4 across and tend to stack atop each other on smartphone screens.

Pods are worthy of inclusion in this checklist because you can use them to present whatever you believe your visitors will find valuable. Options include:

- Products and services
- A book or books
- Offers
- Awards
- Clients
- Personal profiles of team members or a link to a staff page
- News
- Events
- Locations

11. Social Proof

Psychologists, sales professionals and website creators are just a few of the professionals who understand the persuasive power of their own voice pales in comparison to the favorable opinions of others.

Content representing such opinions have come to be know as [social proof](#). Make a place to present social proof on your homepage in at least one of the following ways:

- Testimonials
- Client logos and/or customer stories
- Trust seals, such as certifications
- Awards and accolades
- Numbers (satisfied customers, rankings, subscribers, followers, etc.)
- Statistics
- Press mentions
- Reviews and ratings

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If this topic interests you, you're bound to like the following presentation:

12. Features and benefits

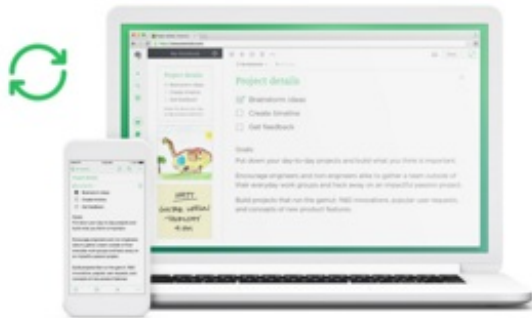
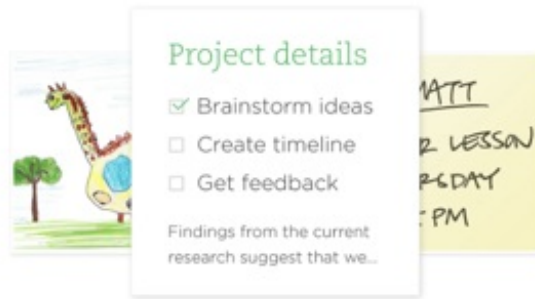
If your website's objective is to sell something, chances are you want to at least begin to communicate the features and benefits of your products on the homepage.

You can do so in a variety of ways by presenting:

- A list
- A features and/or benefits section of any shape or size
- Separate pods—maybe 2 or 3 across, maybe as a grid
- Rows—*See below*

Make a note of it

Create a project to-do list. Jot down a reminder. Or snap a picture of a sketch. A note can be anything you want it to be. And once you make a note, it's accessible wherever you go, forever.



Have it everywhere

Capture a note once, and it's instantly available on all your devices. Never worry about where you saved something because it's in Evernote, and Evernote is wherever you are.

Find anything fast

Whether it's text, images or documents, you keep things for a reason. That's why Evernote makes sure the notes you've saved are easy to find. You can even search for handwritten words buried deep within your notes.



Can't wait to look through these!

Share with anyone

Share what matters with the people who matter to you. Capture life's little moments and share them from wherever you happen to be. Or share big ideas by collaborating seamlessly with co-workers in a group notebook.

The current Evernote homepage (it's updated often) presents benefits in what I call a "ping pong" layout, made popular by Apple. It creates a great narrative for presenting benefits and is easy on the eyes.

13. Subscription

Thanks to plugins and third-party services, invitations to subscribe to newsletter or email updates now come in every conceivable fashion: popups, headers, footers, fly-ins, scroll or exit-induced windows, and more.

However, a static homepage section presented to entice visitors to subscribe to the content provided by a website host remains another popular option. It may appear as a row, sidebar, in the footer or even the hero shot.

If building an email list is one of the priorities of your digital marketing efforts, consider:

- Embedding a subscription form on your home page
- Creating a CTA that invokes a subscription form
- Creating a CTA that opens a landing page dedicated to collecting subscriber opt-ins

14. Offer

Another effective way to generate leads from your homepage is to feature an offer or “lead magnet.” Your options for doing so are nearly infinite.



Many homepages, especially those offering online services, offer free trials.

Grow your business through conversion optimization.

Get field-tested, data-driven advice for plugging money leaks and growing faster. ConversionXL is the in-depth growth & conversion optimization blog for advanced optimizers.

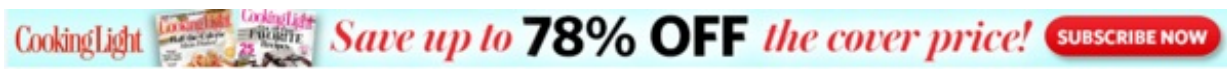


Get our book: Master the Essentials of Conversion Optimization

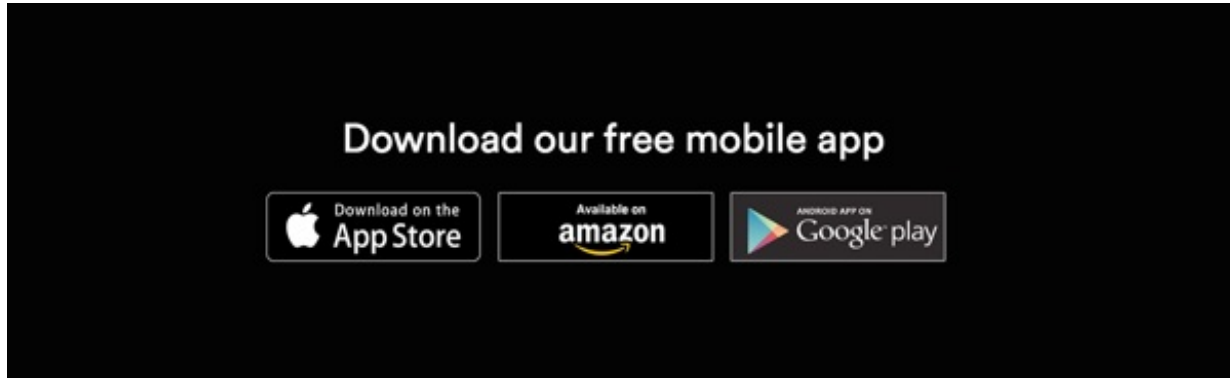
Conversion optimization is a process. Amateurs follow best practices and don't know where to begin. Experts follow frameworks and processes. Learn to tackle any conversion project on any website.

GET THE E-BOOK

Content marketers often offer a free eBook, guide or report of some sort.



A discount or coupon can be a very compelling offer.



The Mint.com homepage offers a free mobile app. Apps, calculators, assessments, templates, and all types of tools can be effective offers.

How might you feature your offer? Examples above include:

- A form built into your hero shot
- A row on your homepage
- A display ad (leading to a landing page and/or form)

Or you might consider presenting your offer:

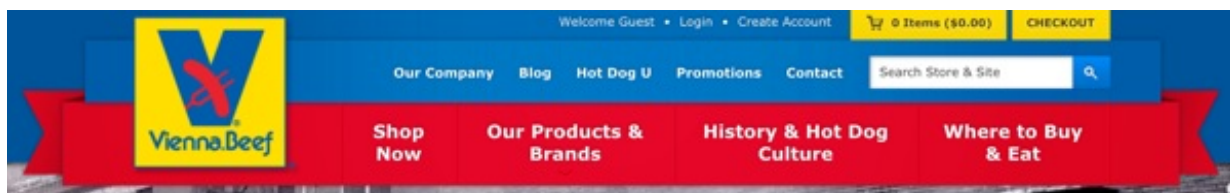
- As window in a sidebar
- Via a pop-up
- As part of your footer

15. Resources

You might want to offer resources—free or paid—including the offers discussed above, via a specific section of your website. If so, you'll attract attention to it and increase click-through by dedicating a section of your homepage to showcasing your resource library.

16. Search function

If your website has a large amount of pages, it's wise to offer a search function on your homepage. Your search function is a convenient shortcut for your visitors enabling them to quickly discover content without needing to navigate.



The homepage of an ecommerce site begs to have a search function to help visitors quickly find what they seek.

Make your search mechanism easy to find by conforming to the convention of offering it somewhere in the top-right area of your site, either in its header (as above) or atop your sidebar.

17. Additional calls to action

While your homepage should feature a “can’t miss CTA” designed to inspire the action you deem most important, subsequent sections of your homepage might also offer additional buttons and links to quickly satisfy your visitor’s information needs.

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On the TransTech homepage (an Orbit client), the section immediately below the hero shot offers three CTAs, each presented at the conclusion of a pod.

18. Keywords

Keywords give your homepage SEO juice. You won’t budget dedicated space to displaying keywords (a popular technique from days gone by), but you should budget planning time to select keywords and work them into your

homepage.

To optimize your homepage for search, place keywords:

- In your title tag
- In your headline
- In your menu items (where appropriate)
- Within the page's copy where it makes for natural language
- "Behind" your images (*as alt img tags*)
- In the meta description, which will be the snippet for your homepage

Our [Web Content Checklist post](#) offers additional information to publish better content and optimize it effectively.

19. Footer

Like your header, the footer of your homepage is likely to be a standard feature all across your website. You'll want to create a footer and carefully consider the elements it contains.

Leading contenders for inclusion in your footer include:

- Contact information
- Maps and/or locations
- Social media icons and widgets
- Email signup form
- Galleries
- Badges (remember social proof?)
- Blog post digests
- A final call to action

[Here's a comprehensive list of items your website footer might include.](#)

That's a hefty list of homepage ideas

Indeed. And it's probably not complete. Your homepage can feature whatever you want. However, it's more important to plan and parcel your page based on *what your visitors want*.

Do you know what that is? Put some effort into the discovery process by thinking through:

- Who will visit?
- Will visitors all have the same needs?
- What problems are they trying to solve?
- How does your product or service solve the problems?
- What content best articulates your solution and satisfies their needs?
- What are practical next steps?
- Will visitors want to receive email?

- How might visitors prefer to interact?

Go crazy answering these questions and any additional ones you believe to be relevant. Get your team together and plaster a whiteboard or mind map with your thoughts.

Then it's time to kill some of them. You may have seen this great quote before:

A designer knows he has achieved perfection not when there is nothing left to add, but when there is nothing left to take away. ~ Antoine de Saint-Exupery

Writers, designers and artisans of all sorts must master the fine art of subtraction. Creating a homepage provides the perfect example.

Put things on your homepage that inspire visitors to want more, not less.