

10 Ways to Improve Your Web Content

— *Scott Dasse & Annie Laurie Sanchez*

Terms we will not use today

~~Usability~~

~~Information Architecture~~

~~User Experience~~

~~Human Factors~~

~~Personas~~

~~Microcopy~~

~~WordPress~~

1 Know your users

1 Know your users

- Why do people visit your pages?
- What are they hoping to *learn*?
- What are they hoping to *do*?



information



transactions

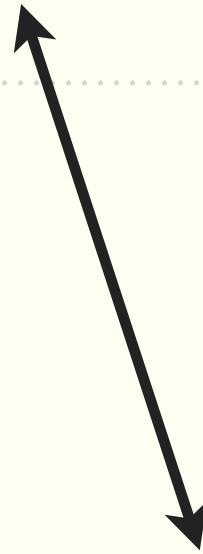
1

Know your users

Provide **useful**
information based on
your users' goals.

1

Know your **users**



Provide **useful**
information based on
your users' needs.

2 Be concise

2

Be concise



my attention span

What can I absorb
in about **3 seconds**?

2 Be concise

- Make it skimmable
- Provide simple labels
- Avoid jargon
- Get to the point quickly
- Avoid filler and formality

2

Be concise

BNSF RAILWAY

ABOUT BNSF | PROSPECTIVE CUSTOMER | MARKETS & SERVICES | CUSTOMER TOOLS | INVESTORS | MEDIA | SUPPLIERS | COMMUNITIES | EMPLOYEES & RETIREES | CAREERS

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Vision & Values

Delivering What's Important

Our vision is to realize the tremendous potential of The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway by providing transportation services that consistently meet our customers' expectations.

A vision statement is only as good as the people who work to bring it to life each day. To live the vision, the diverse group of more than 38,000 professionals who comprise the BNSF community embrace a set of shared values:

- Listening to customers and doing what it takes to meet their expectations
- Empowering one another, showing concern for our colleagues' well-being and respect for their talents and achievements
- Continuously improving by striving to do the right thing safely and efficiently
- Celebrating our rich heritage and building on our success as we shape our promising future

Success in living our vision and values is evident when we fulfill the highest expectations of our four key stakeholder groups:

- Our customers find it easy to do business with us, receive 100% on time, damage-free service, accurate and timely information regarding their shipment, and the best transportation value
- Our employees work in a safe and secure environment, are focused on continuous improvement, share in the opportunity for personal and professional growth available to all team members, and take pride in their association with BNSF
- Our owners earn financial returns that exceed other railroads and the general market as a result of BNSF's superior revenue growth, an operating ratio in the low 70s, and a return on invested capital that is greater than our cost of capital
- The communities we serve benefit from our sensitivity to their interests and to the environment in general, our adherence to the highest legal and ethical standards, and the participation of our company and our employees in community activities

To report an emergency on the railroad, call BNSF at 800.832.6452

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Findings from Nielsen Norman Group's usability studies using eye tracking technology. From useit.com.

3 Organize intuitively

3

Organize intuitively

Group items together
into logical categories.

3

Organize intuitively

Cherries

Apples

Eggs

Chicken

Rice

Grapefruit

Nuts

Tofu

Pasta

Bread

Bananas

3 Organize intuitively

Fruits

Apples

Bananas

Cherries

Grapefruit

Grains

Bread

Rice

Pasta

Protein

Chicken

Eggs

Tofu

Nuts

3 Organize intuitively

Backup & Restore

Directory Services

BU Linux

Wired Network

Wireless Network

Computer Labs

Purchasing

IT Help Center

Repair Services

VirusScan

BU Login

E-mail Accounts

Working Remotely

Using BU (802.1x)

BU Google Apps

(This list is hard.)

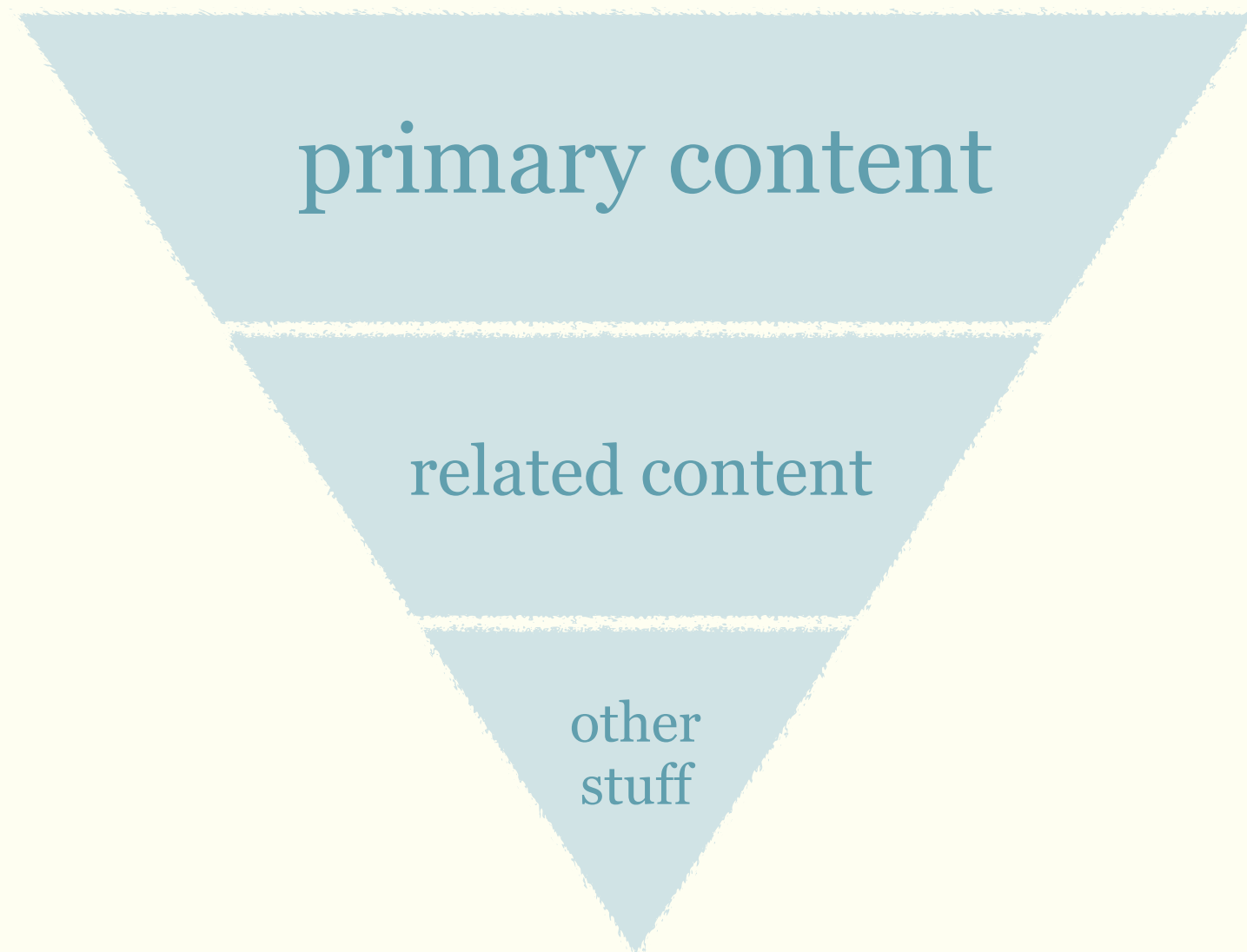
3

Organize intuitively

Prioritize content
based on your
audiences' goals.

3

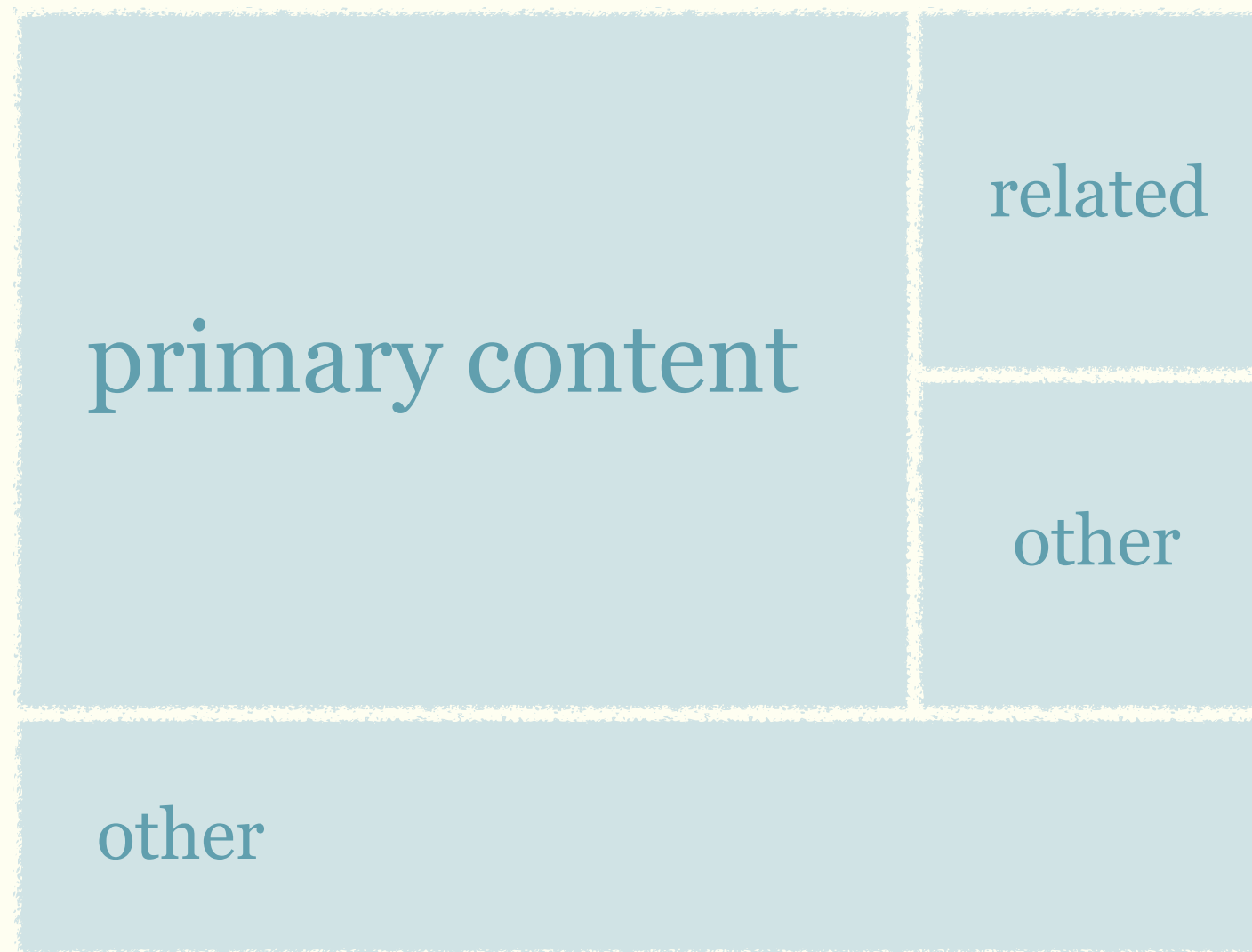
Organize intuitively



The content hierarchy

3

Organize intuitively



The content hierarchy on a web page

4 Emphasize keywords

4

Emphasize keywords



Click here to win a
million dollars.

4

Emphasize keywords

Find out how to
win a million dollars.

The Massachusetts State Lottery was established by the legislature in 1971 in response to the need for revenues for the 351 cities and towns of the commonwealth. Find out how to [win a million dollars](#) or more by playing one of the nation's largest lotteries.

5

Format like a designer

- Use headings h1–h3
- Use bulleted and numbered lists
- Apply tables (if appropriate)
- Allow for extra space



adds structure



semantic

6 Build on substance

6 Build on substance

Don't just say you're great. **Prove it.**

“The word *excellence*
is like perfume.”

— *Robert A. Brown*

7

Write with style

7 Write with style

- Be conversational
- Use an active tone and actionable words
- Use the correct terminology
- Check BU's editorial style guide



BU's brand voice



www.bu.edu/brand



Use meaningful visuals

8

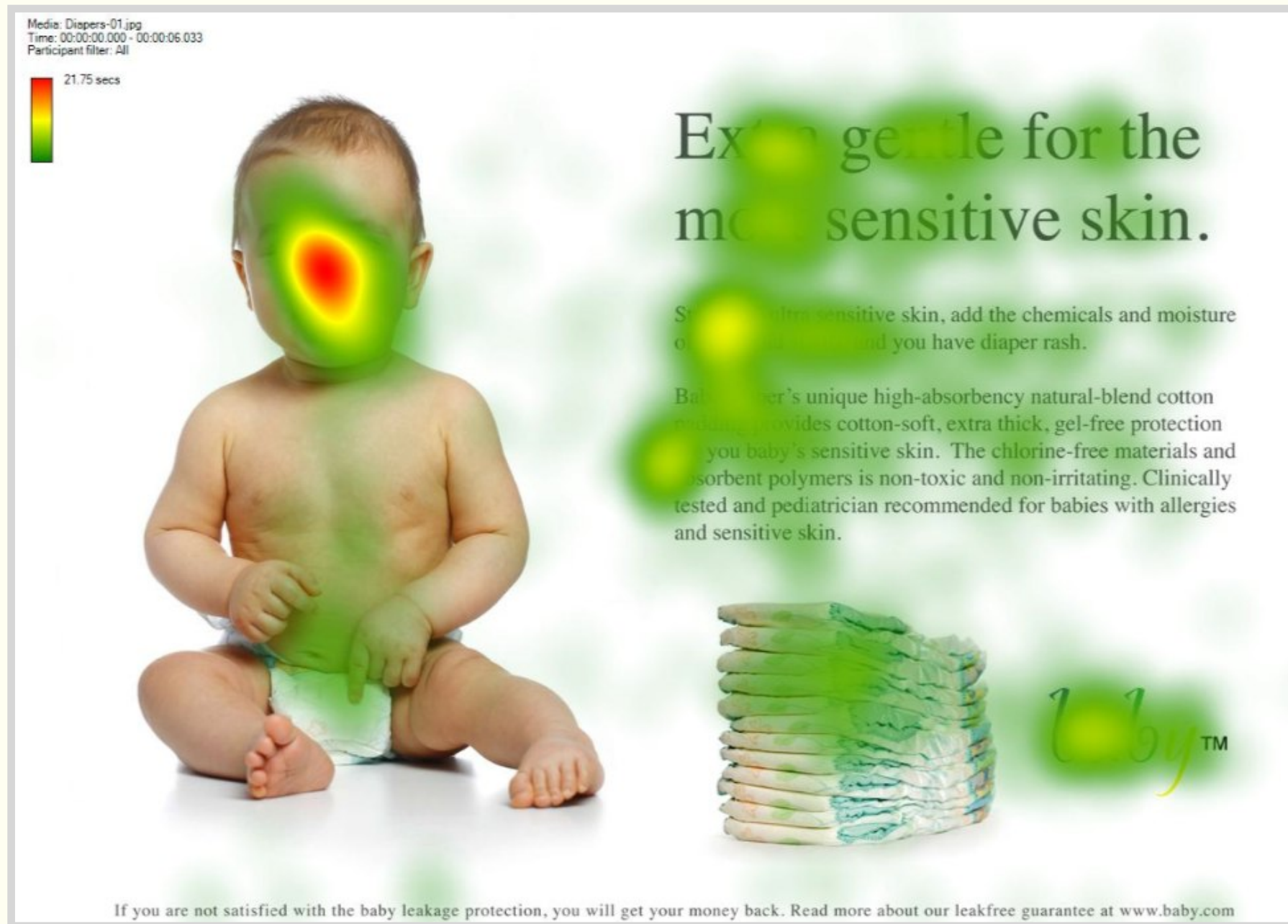
Use meaningful visuals

Users pay close attention to **relevant** photos and images.



useful

Use meaningful visuals



Eye-tracking heat map of a baby looking directly at us. From the UsableWorld study.

8

Use meaningful visuals

Users ignore photos
merely included as
decorative artwork.

Use meaningful visuals



Images must directly support textual content.

9 Embrace scrolling

9 Embrace scrolling

- The fold is dead (sort of)
- Combine short pages to make a longer, content rich page

9 Embrace scrolling

Without scrolling, I should see:

- Page title
- Navigation to main sections
- Search field
- Value proposition — what's here for me?

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Bulletin

value proposition

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College of Arts & Sciences

The largest college at BU—with 24 departments—CAS is where you'll find undergraduate programs in the humanities, natural and computational sciences, and social sciences.

Overview	Programs
Departments	Faculty
Courses	Policies



Graduate School of Arts & Sciences

With nearly 40 areas of humanities, natural and computational sciences, and social sciences to choose from, GRS is home to approximately 1,800 graduate degree candidates and faculty from many schools and colleges at BU.

Overview	Programs
Departments	Faculty
Courses	Policies



College of Communication

From Mass Communication, Advertising & Public Relations, to Journalism, to Film & Television, COM's departments offer graduate and undergraduate programs dedicated to training well-rounded professional communicators.

Overview	Programs
Departments	Faculty
Courses	Policies



College of Engineering

Overview	Programs
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10 Keep it up

Estimate how long it
will take to develop
your content.
(Then triple it.)

10 Keep it up

- Don't let news or events feeds go stale
- Social media destinations should be active
- Avoid using language that will appear dated almost instantly

10 Keep it up

Evaluate, and re-evaluate.

- Is it useful information?
- Is it easy to skim?
- Is it pleasant to read?

- 1 Know your users
- 2 Be concise
- 3 Organize intuitively
- 4 Emphasize keywords
- 5 Format like a designer
- 6 Build on substance
- 7 Write with style
- 8 Use meaningful visuals
- 9 Embrace scrolling
- 10 Keep it up