Strategic Trends in Government Websites

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April 3, 2018

Agenda

1. Introductions and terminology
2. Data-driven website design
3. Viewing your website as a brand
4. Content (strategy) matters
5. Bringing it all together

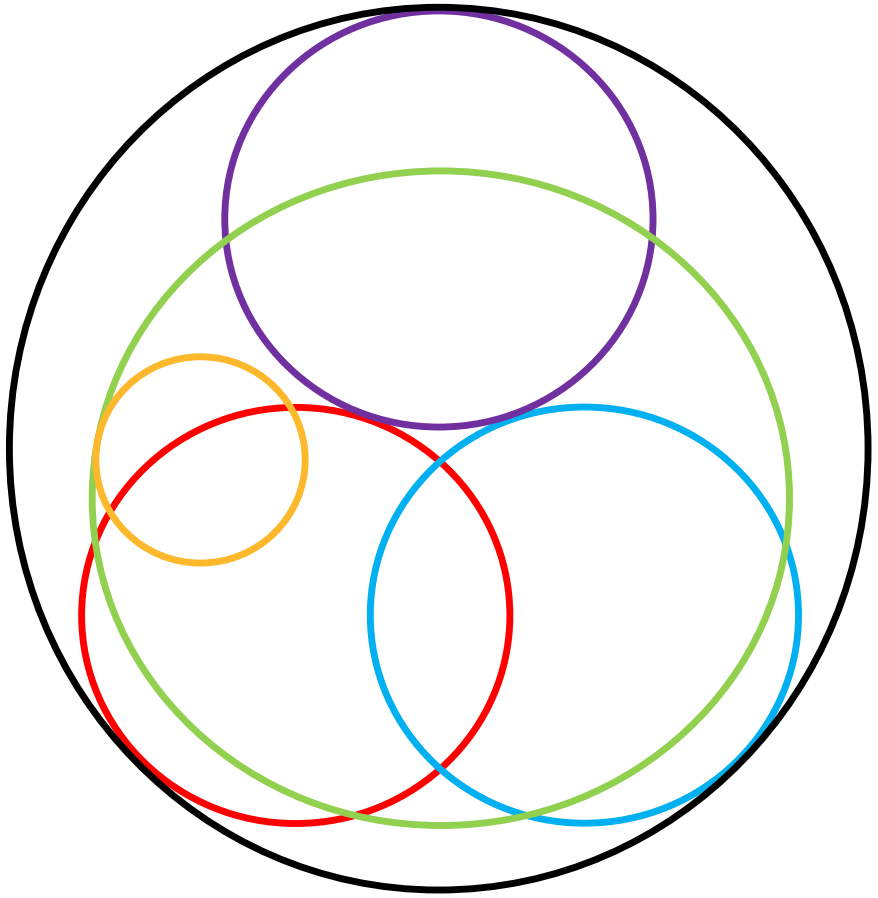
Introductions & Terminology

About Vision

- For 20 years, Vision has been a recognized leader in local government website development and content management system software
- Developer of more than 800 state and local websites for agencies across North America
- Unique services include content strategy and web accessibility consultations
- Recently became part of the Granicus family
- Martin runs services and partnerships at Vision
    - 25 years in technology, including 15 years in government technology and consulting

Terminology: “Customers”

Your website serves many different types of visitors, each with a different purpose:



- **Residents (current, potential)**
- **Businesses (current, potential)**
- **Tourists**
- **Employees (current, potential)**
- **Citizens**
- **Customers**

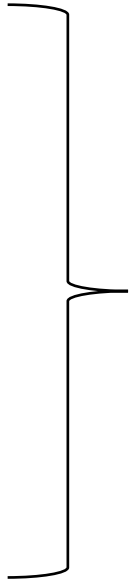
Terminology: “Tasks”

Find information

Get answers

Complete actions

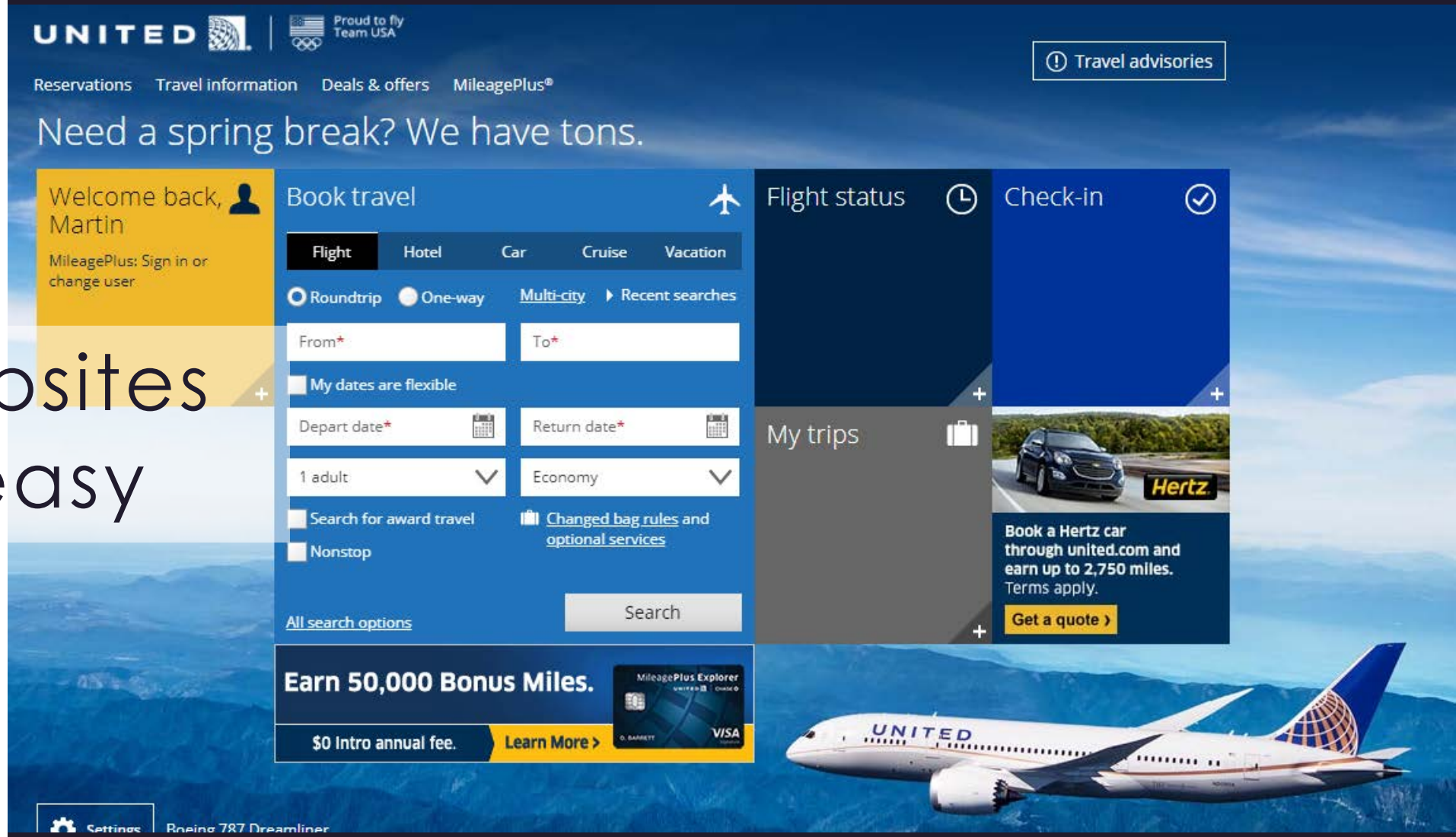
Share and socialize information



“tasks”

Data-Driven Website Design

Airline websites have it easy



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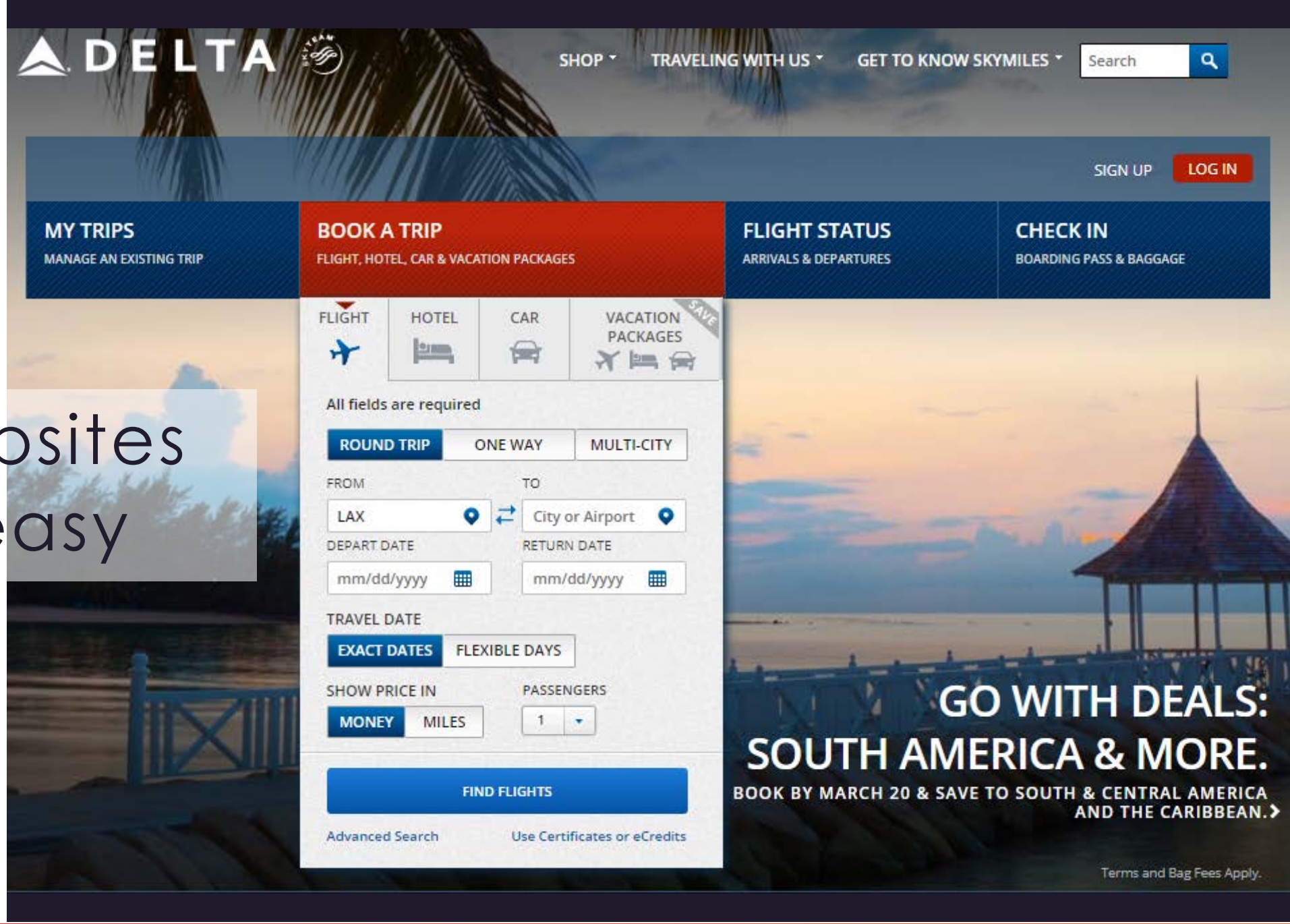

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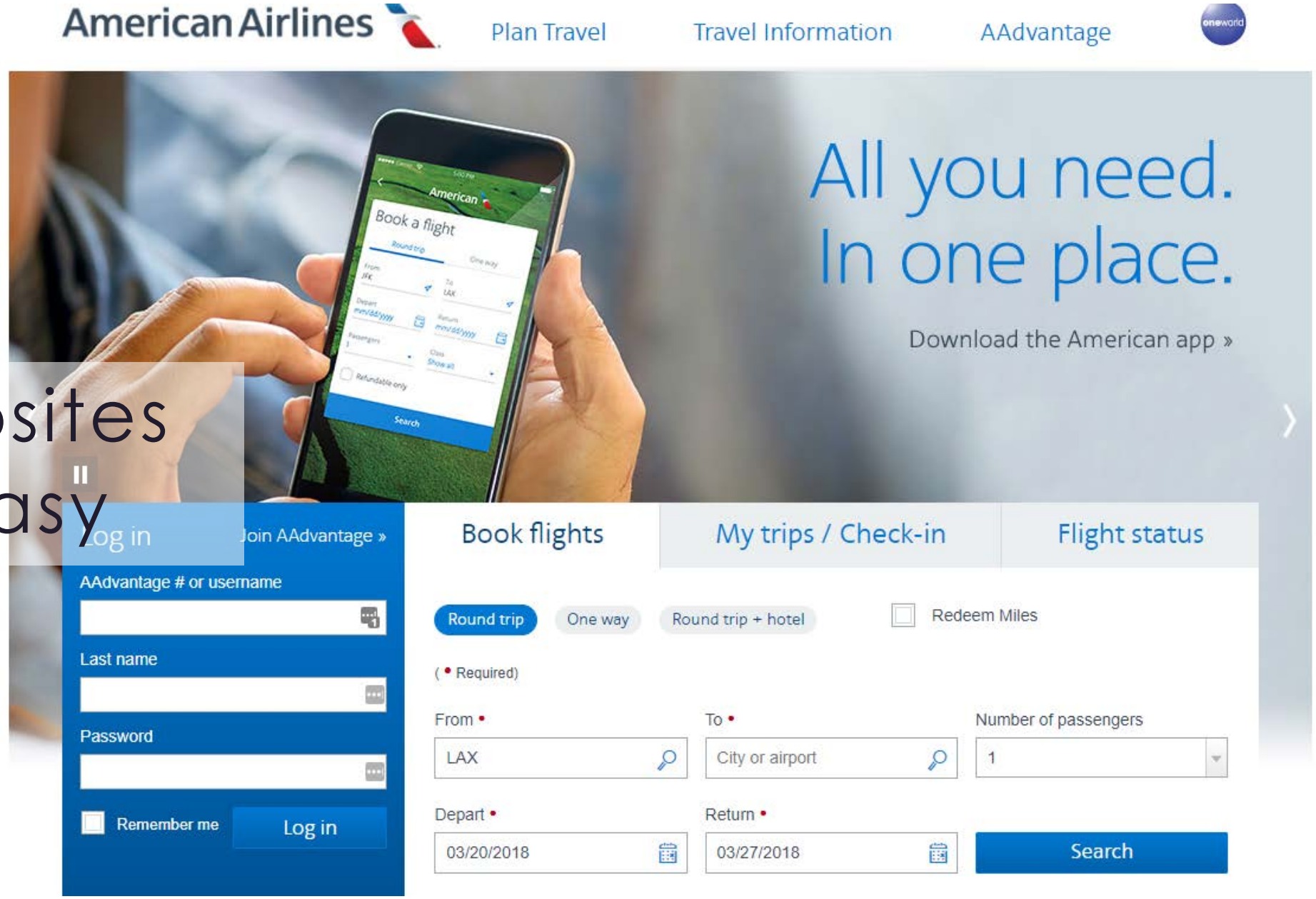

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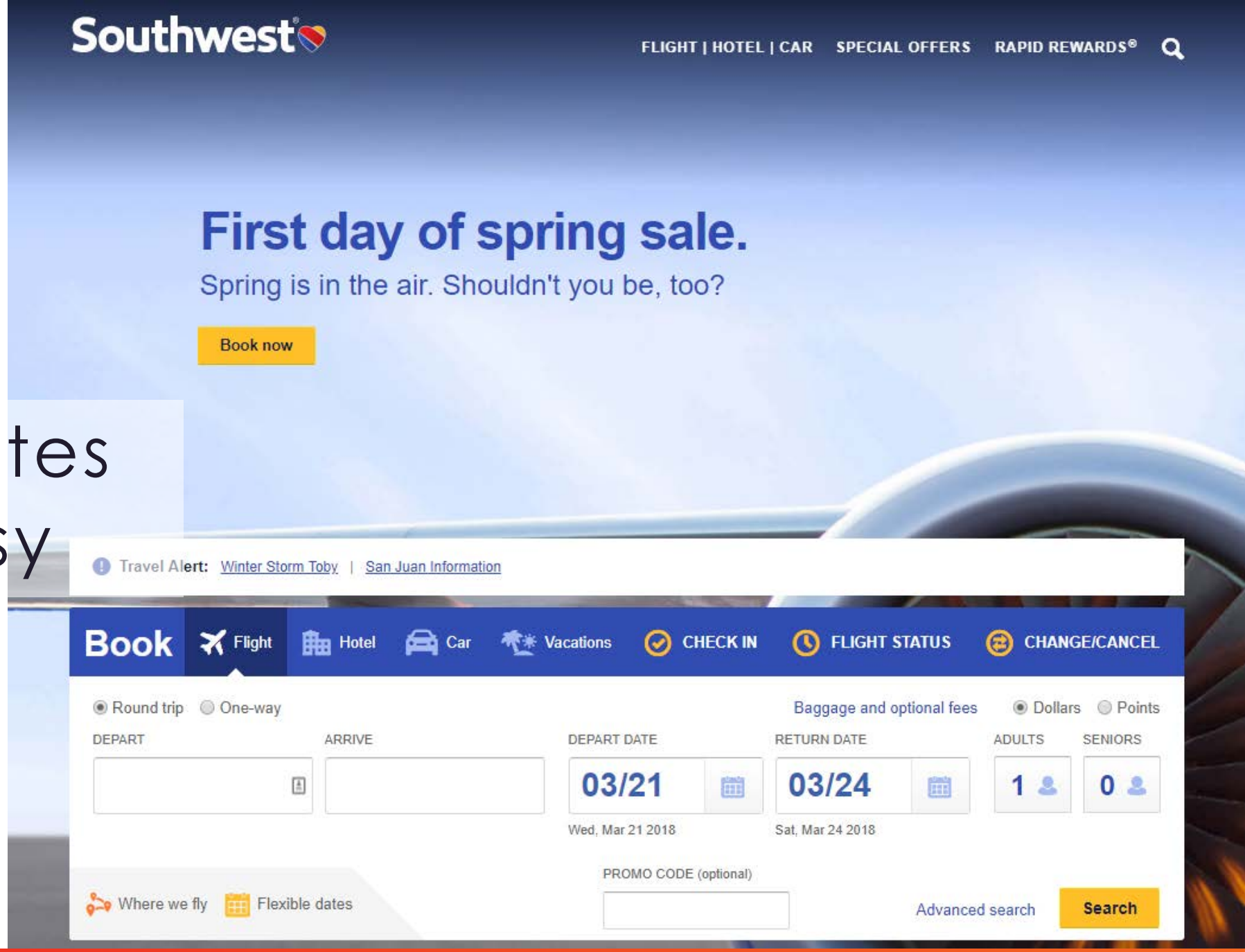
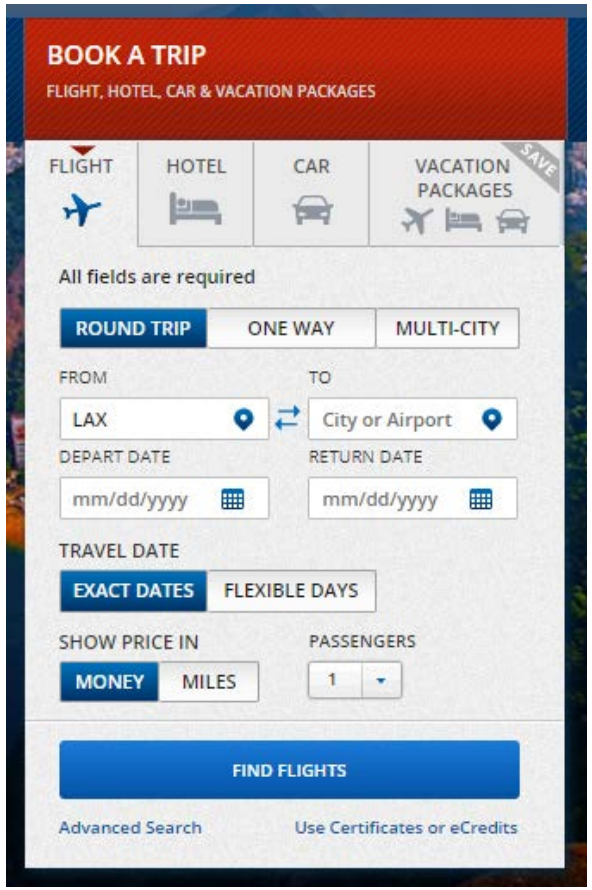
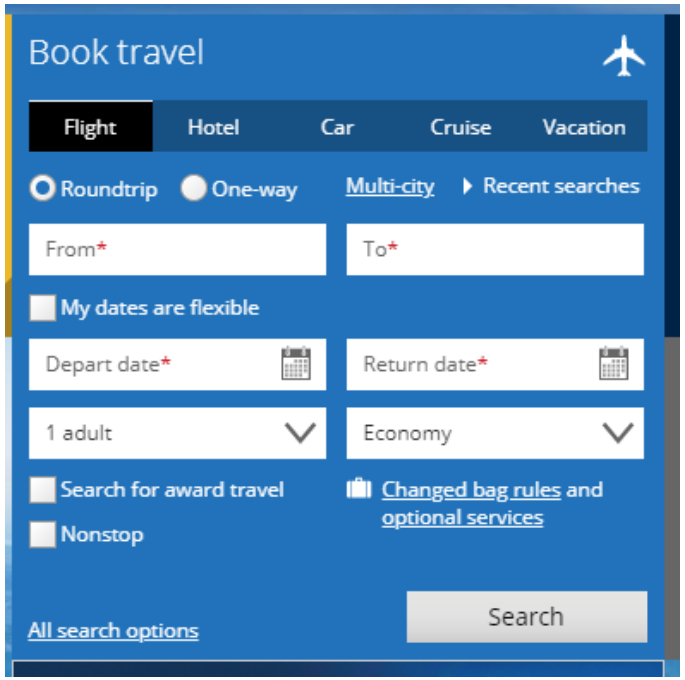
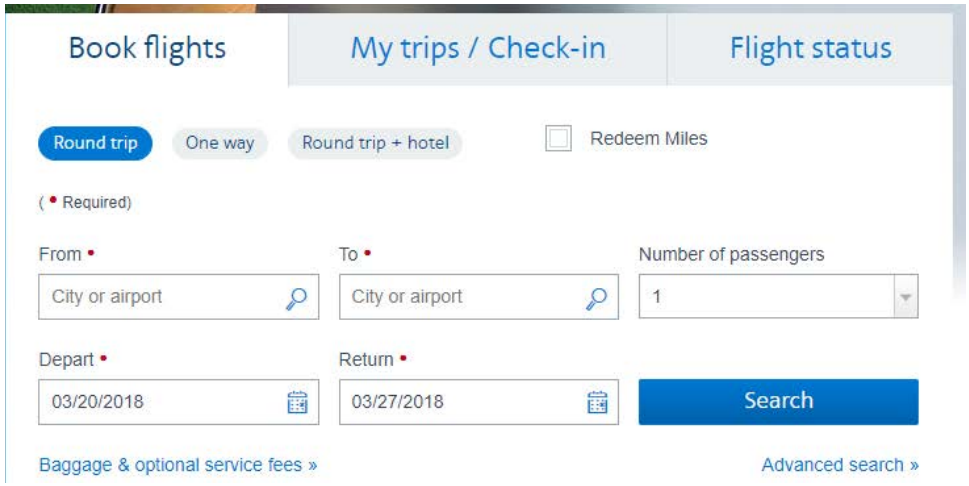
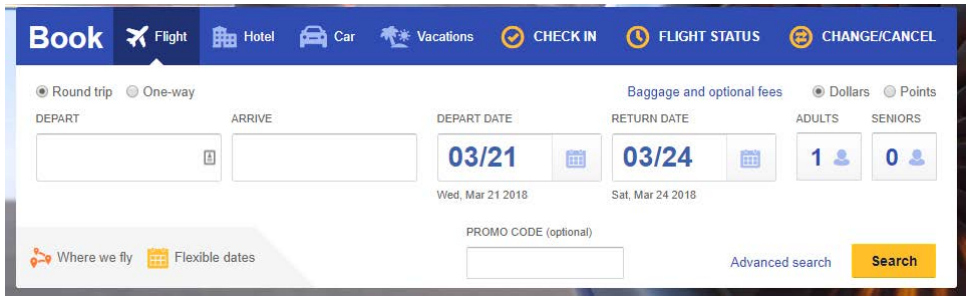


Why do they all have this in common?

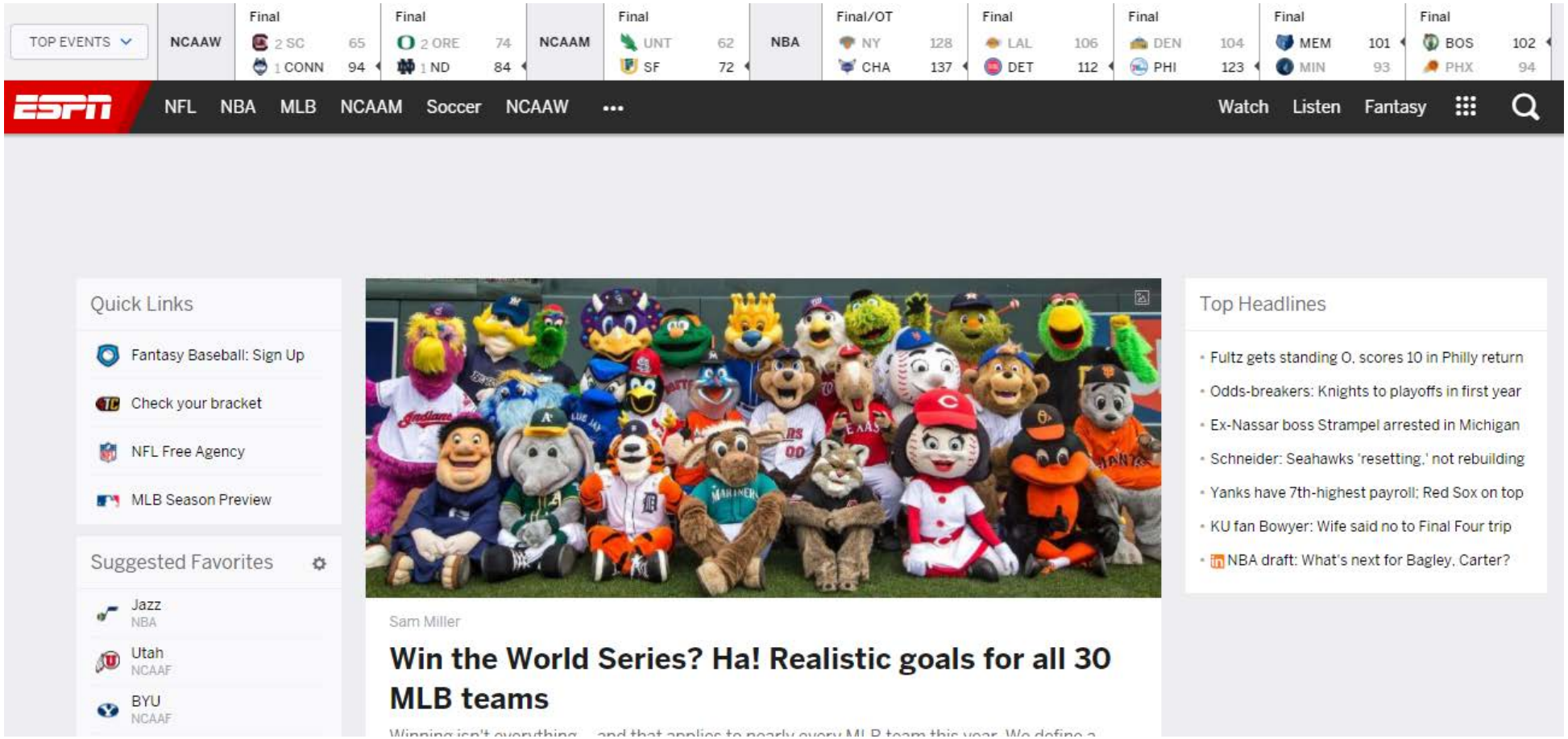








Other popular sites that are singularly focused



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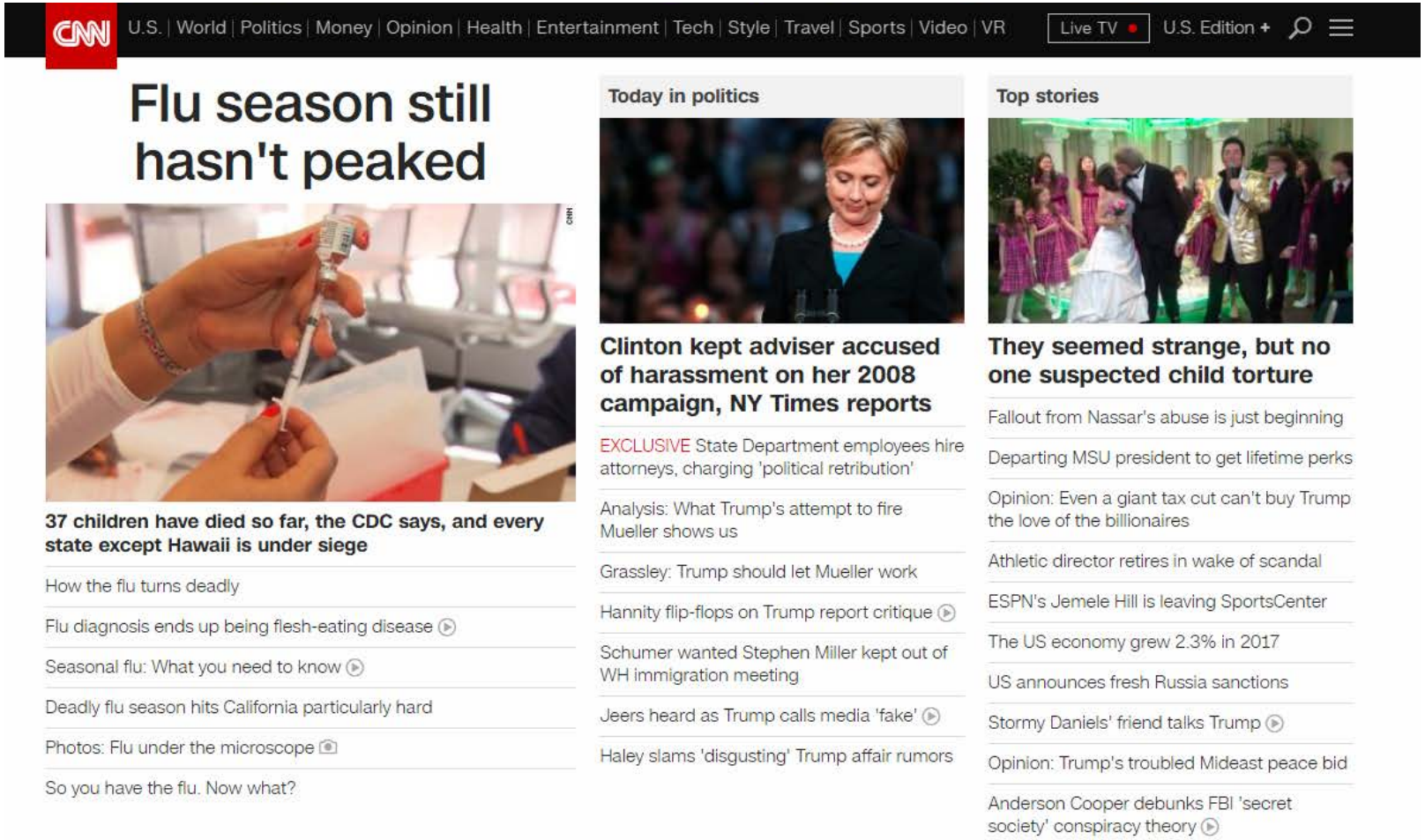
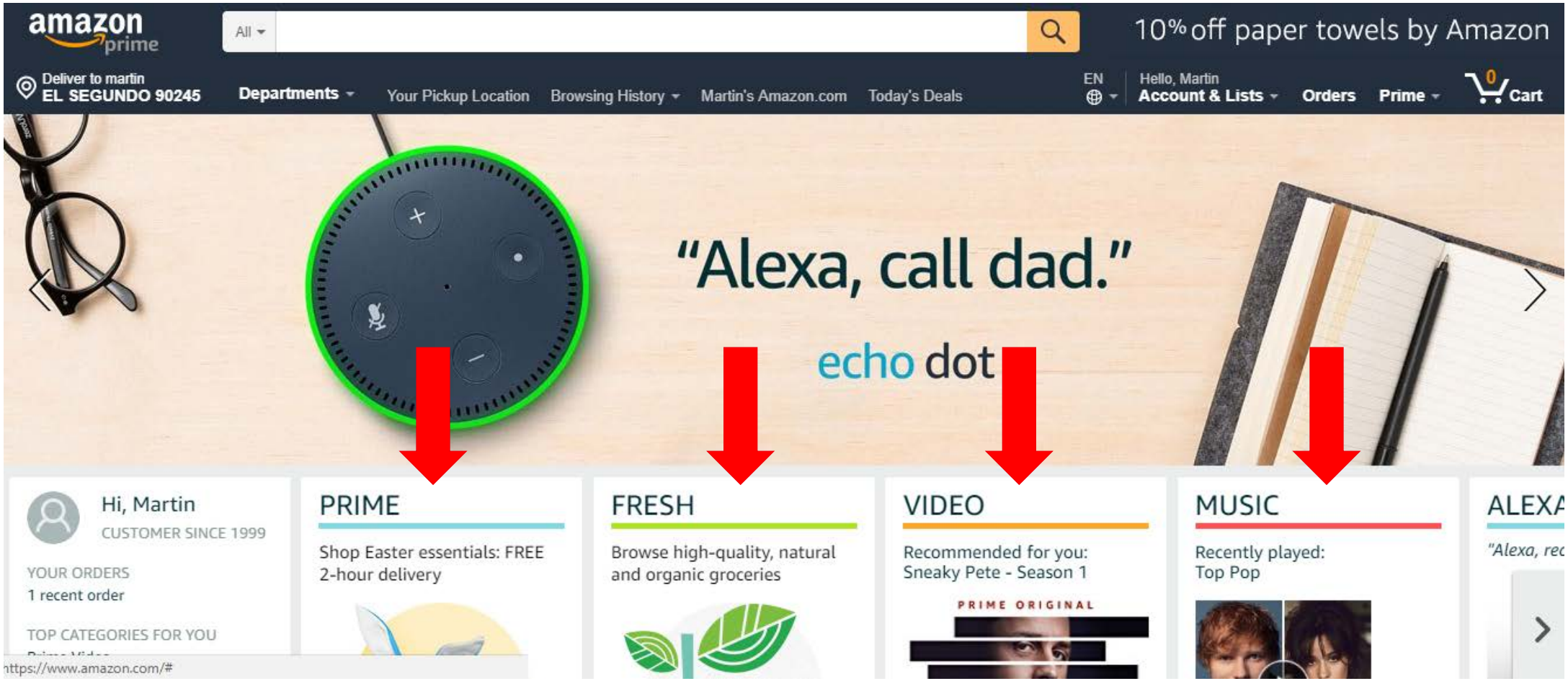


...and Amazon *used to* be



So, how do you know what to put on your website?

"Your opinion, while interesting, is irrelevant." – Pragmatic Marketing

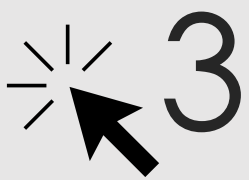
There's no way to know without doing the research

- Web analytics
- Surveys – internal and external
- Heat mapping
- User testing, including eye tracking

But the one thing we DO know about your website is...

...few of your customers want to go there or hang out there

Commonly believed MYTHS about web design



All webpages must be accessible in three clicks

If you don't make the user think about the clicks, they won't mind a few extra clicks ("Constant scent of information")

People don't scroll down webpages

And the GREATEST MYTH of all

Our customers come to our website primarily to find our mission statement and to see photos of our leadership

Welcome to Jakob's Law

"Users spend most of their time on other sites. This means that users prefer your site to work the same way as all the other sites they already know."

Jakob Nielsen
UX expert and co-founder of
Nielsen Norman Group

Sources: Laws of UX; NN/g

You're better off following Jakob's Law

- The main navigation menu is ***on the top*** of every page
- "About Us" is a link on the bottom of the page, and that will lead to the organization's ***mission statement*** and ***photos of leadership***
- You ***don't*** need to welcome people to your website
- Your agency's ***logo is hyperlinked*** to the site's homepage
- "Search" is in the ***upper right***, unless it's a search-centric homepage
- Underlines are ***hyperlinks*** and hyperlinks are ***underlined*** (or a different color text, but watch for accessibility issues)
- All caps ***IS SHOUTING*** (and sometimes an accessibility issue)
- Things that look like buttons ***are*** buttons and should be hyperlinked
- Windows that pop up ***on their own*** are annoying and will be instantly closed
- ***Keep it short*** and put the important stuff at the top: process first, then purpose

Government website design trends

Top task

Search-centric

Service-centric

Video-centric

Before

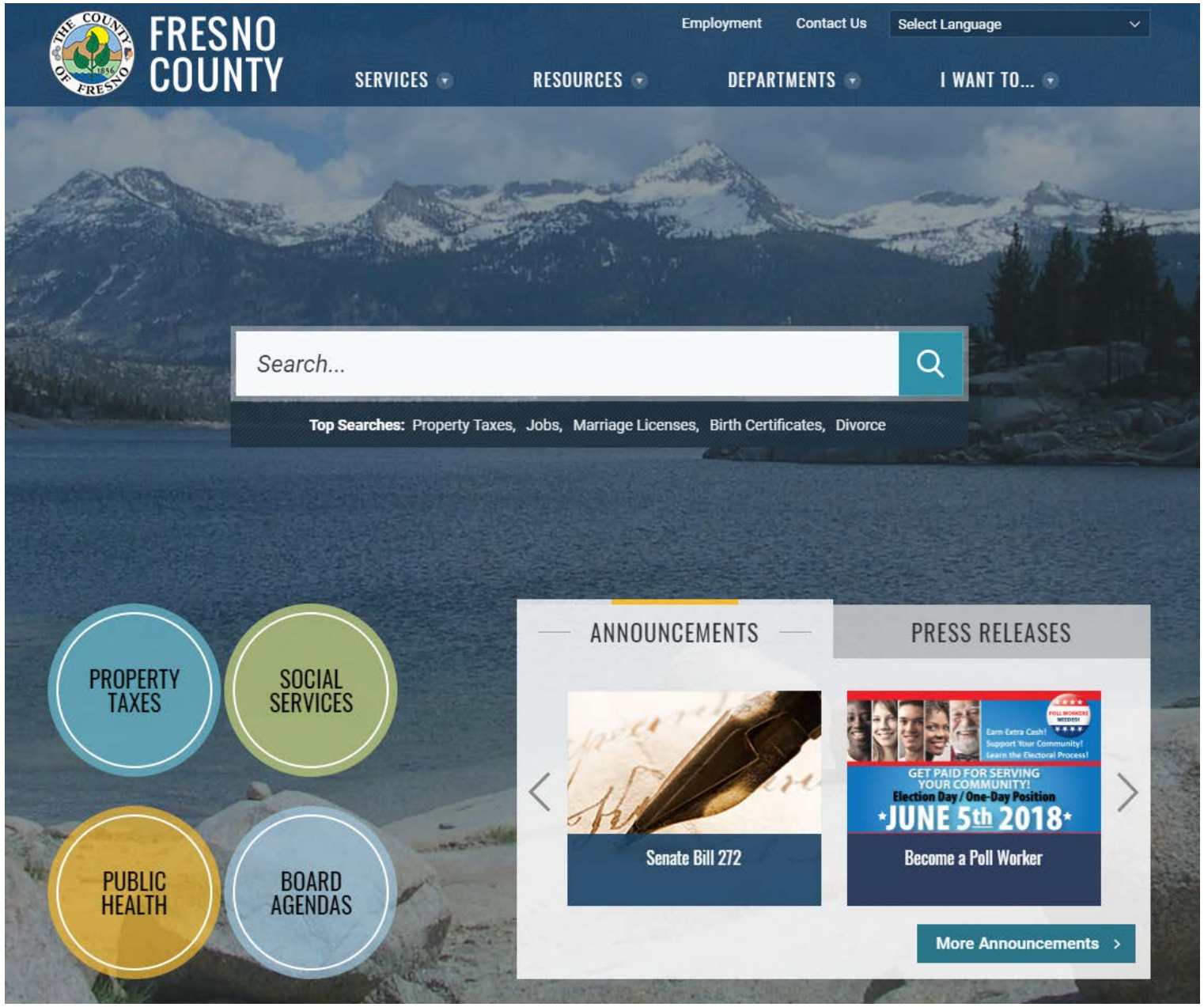
"Let's put everything on the home page!"

After:
Top Task

Search-Centric

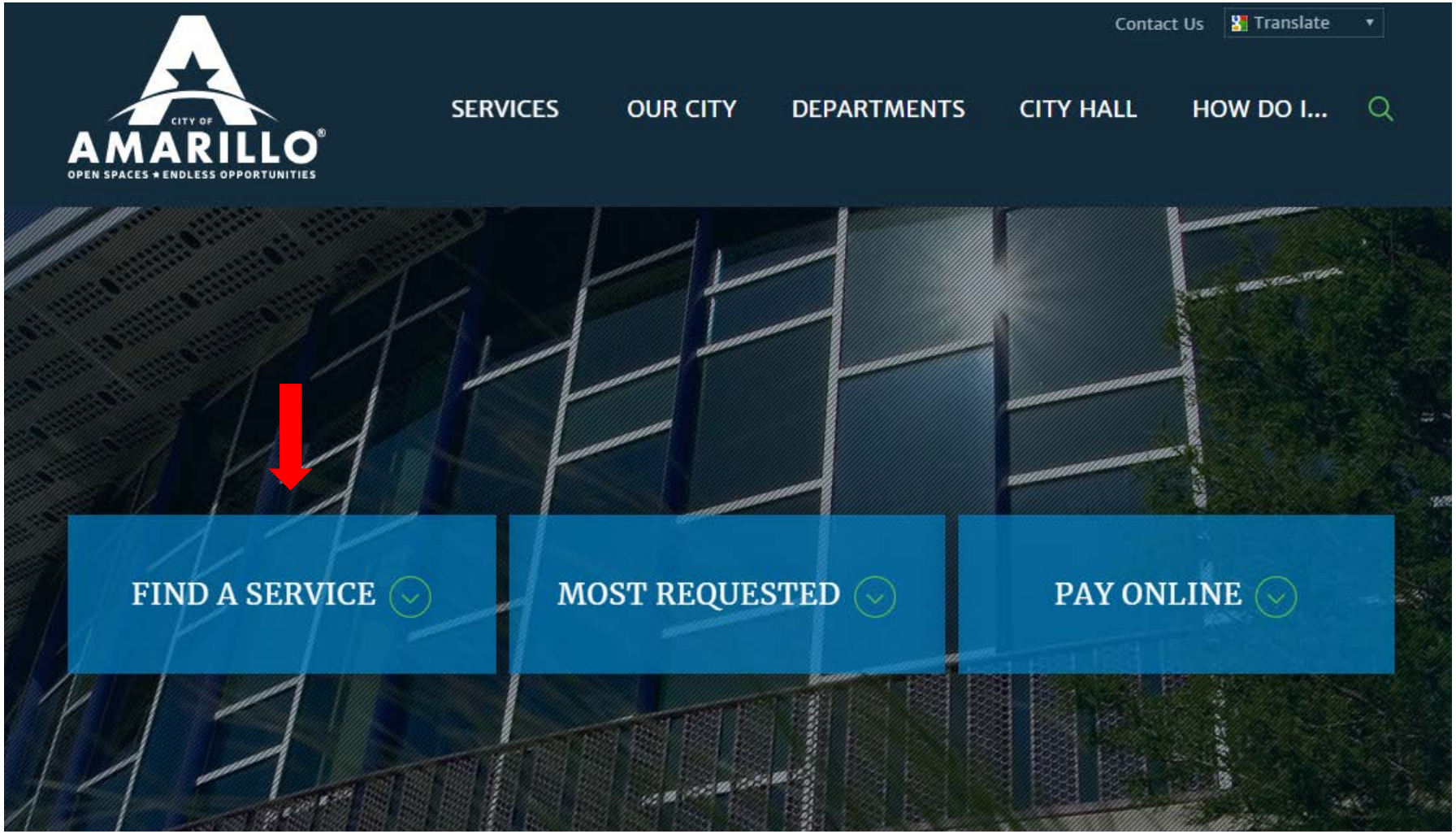
The Google problem:

- too much that doesn't fit as buttons
- too many tasks are close in priority



Service-Centric

Good for large agencies providing too many services to provide as buttons



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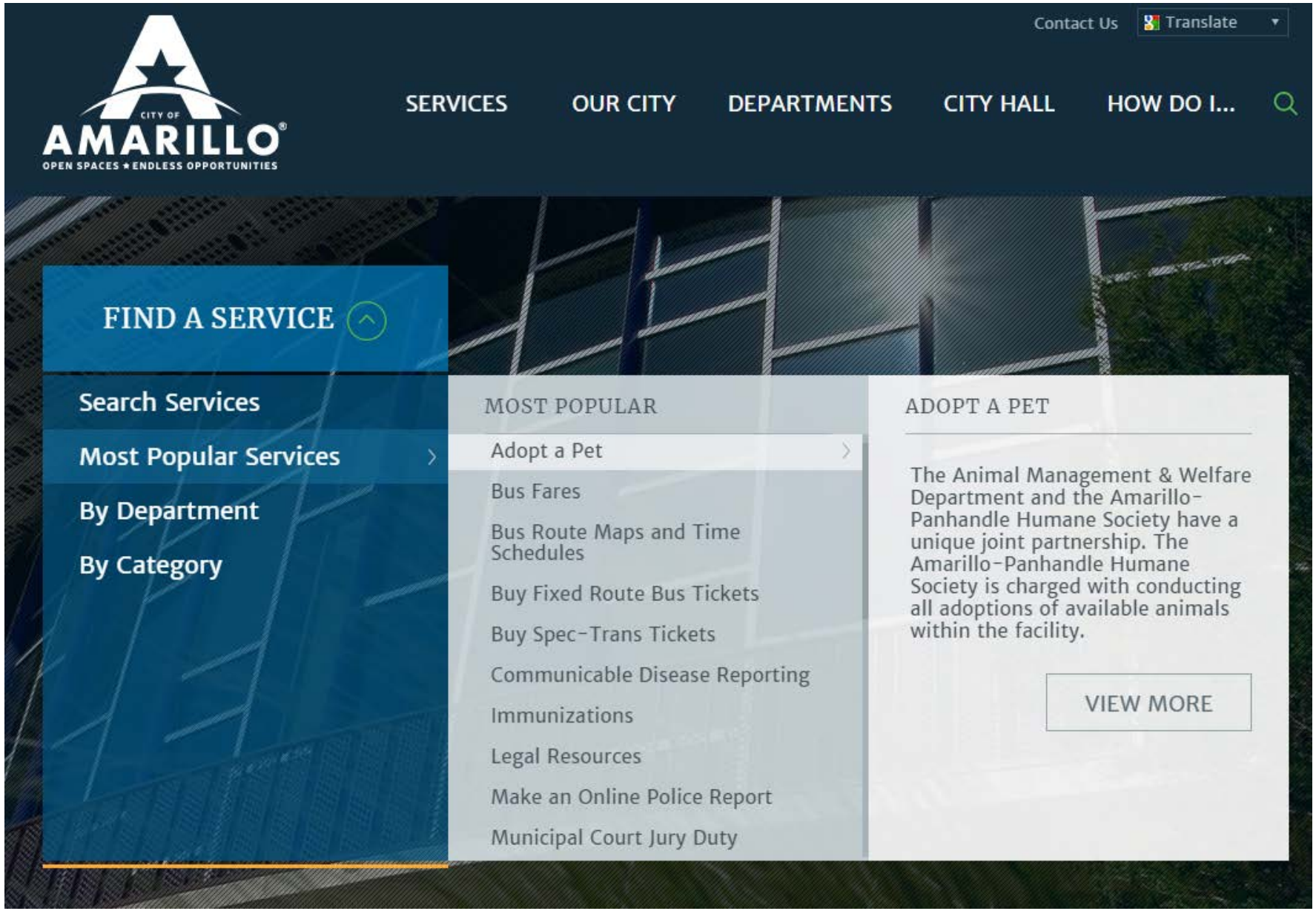
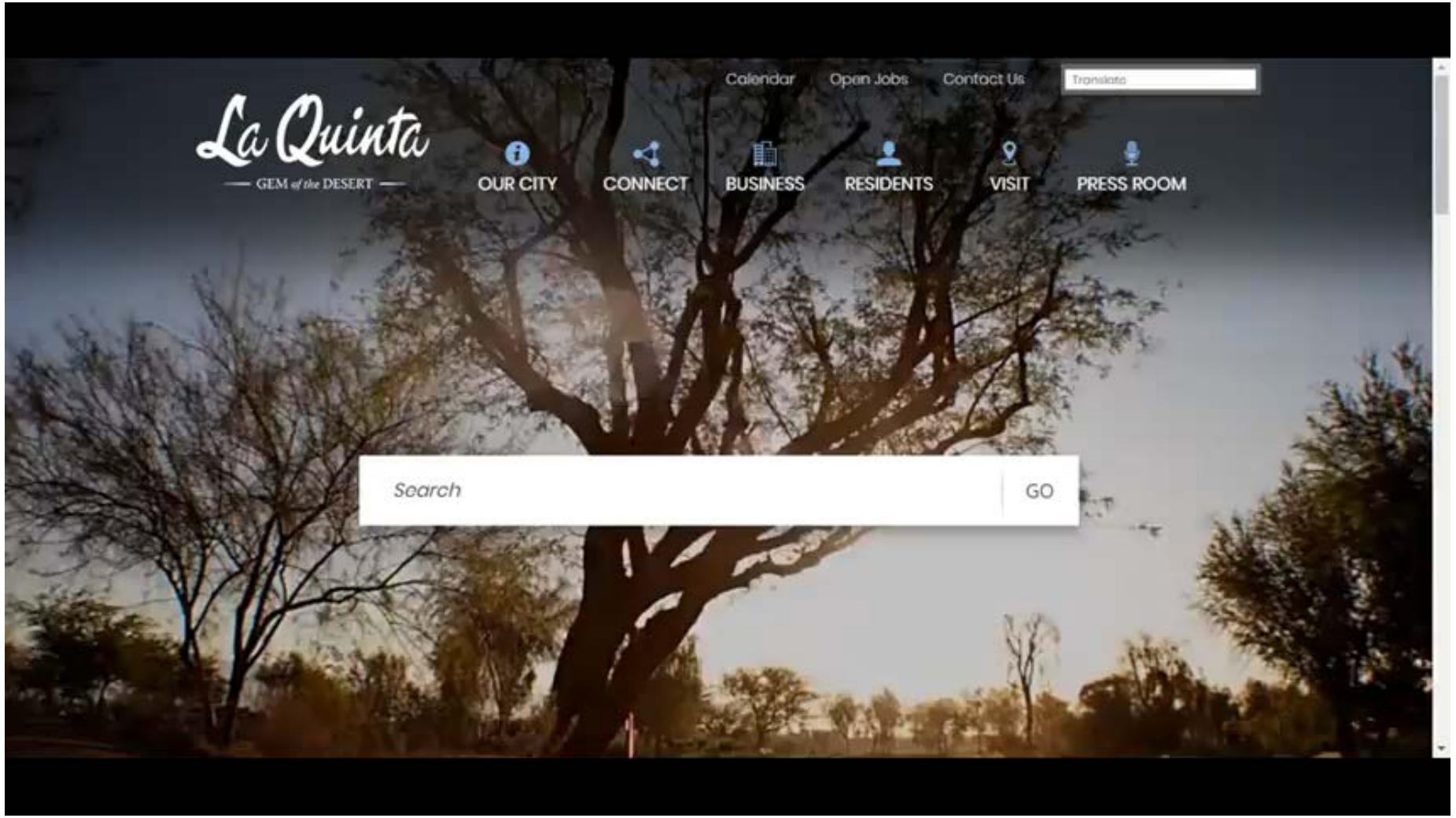


Video-Centric

Allows agencies to give people a feel of what the community has to offer



Don't forget mobile design

About 40% of your web visits will come from cell phone and tablet users

How does your site look on a phone?

Like a desktop?

Or responsive like mobile web?

Your Website as a Brand

What do you do when...

...you hear about a new vendor your agency is considering using?

...deciding between two hotels for your vacation?

...helping your high schooler decide between two far away colleges?

Image: Freepik

You go to their website!

...and if the website is awful, does that influence your opinion?

Your customers are no different

For local governments, ***your website is your brand*** and ***first impressions count***

You are no longer the only thing on the Web

How did your customers know of your brand before the Internet?

Photos: Fandom, Wikipedia, DeviantArt, Carnegie Library

That was then...

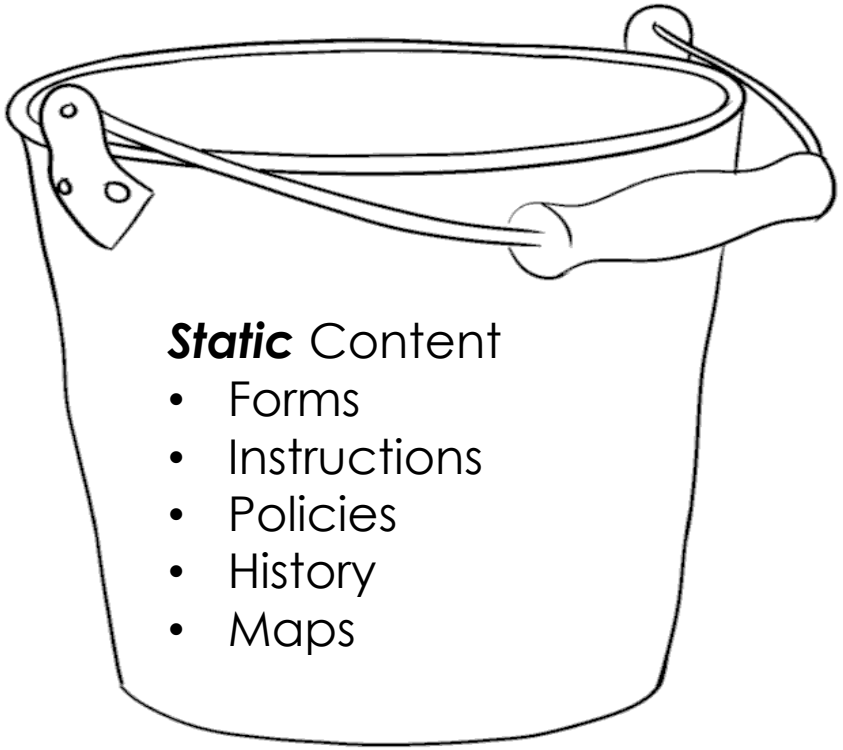
Today your customers mostly interact with you on your website, so your website ***IS*** your brand

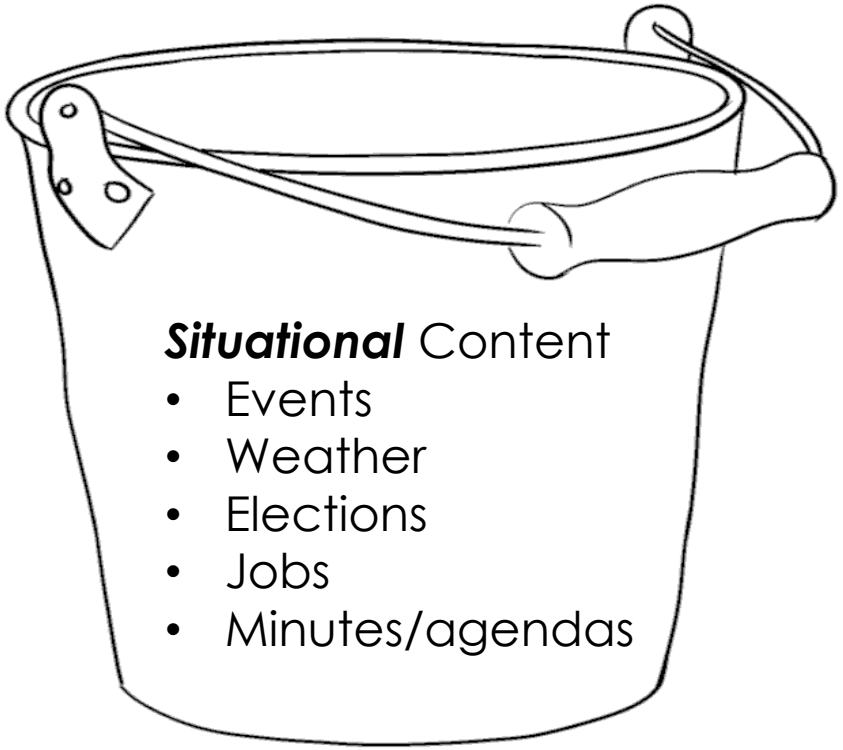
You're deciding between two nearby towns to locate your Quiznos franchise

You're deciding between two nearby towns to loc[illegible]nchise

Content (Strategy) Matters

Content: the text, video and audio stuff on your website





Following content strategy best practices allows your customers to..

Find what they need

Understand what they find

Act in the time and effort that ***they think*** worthy

The *strategy* in "content strategy"

- View your website as a conversation
- Plan everything you put on your site
- Create information architecture that focuses on site users instead of your organizational structure
- Review and test frequently

Website analytics should be supplemented with your community's Census data

Census estimates (2010 - 2016):

- Population under 5 years old in US: 7%
- Population 65 years old and older in US: 13%
- ***Under*** 65 years old and with a disability in US: 9%
- Foreign born in US: 13%
- People speaking other than English at home in US: 21%
- Living in a different house than a year ago in US: 15%
- Older than 25 years without a high school degree in US: 13%
- Population in poverty in US: 13%
- Average travel time to work in US: 26 minutes
    - Average travel time to work in Los Angeles County: 30 minutes

TLDR

Dilbert 4/2/17

Avoid TLDR with the inverted pyramid

1. Main point first with a short and clear statement
2. Supporting content
3. History and legalese at the bottom of the page, if required

Bringing it all together

You are not alone on the Internet

Your customers go to other sites more than yours

Make design decisions based on user research and website analytics

Your website is greatest manifestation of your brand

Design is important, but the quality of the content on your site will drive its success

Questions?

Thank you!

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