



Lesson #11

Tackling The Featured Content Area Part 1

By

Lynette Chandler
Tech Based Training

<http://TechBasedTraining.com/>

**NOTICE: You Do NOT Have the Right
to Reprint or Resell this Report!**

You Also MAY NOT Give Away,
Sell or Share the Content Herein

If you obtained this report from anywhere other than **Tech Based Training.com** , you have a pirated copy.

Help stop internet piracy by letting me know. Send email to
customerservice@techbasedsupport.com

© 2010 Copyright Lynette Chandler

Legal Disclaimer: Keeping things simple here, I have to say that I cannot promise you success. I can give you direction and advice based on my experiences and good internet marketing practices. What you do with this information is up to you. As a Tech Based Training member you agree to not hold me responsible for your results.

About Design

Welcome back. I'm glad you're still with me. You have come a long way. Have you given yourself a big pat on the back yet? You should. We've learned a quite a bit about the beginnings of programming logic in the past weeks. We've also learned about WordPress tags. If you've worked with WordPress before, you probably had more than one light bulb moment.

Either way, you might have noticed by now that this is far from rocket science. As a matter of fact, what we've really been doing is simply replacing static HTML code with WordPress tags. Just copy and paste.

As much as I would like to assure you building WordPress themes is simple, it sometimes is not straight forward. It depend on what skills you come into the game with. The real challenge is not so much in converting the theme – that part is time consuming.

No, the challenge is knowing what you want to do when you look at a design, how you want to split the theme up, whether you should have special template files for parts of the design or not and finally, your experience with cascading style sheets. These are not skills specific to WordPress, rather web development. The good news if you are new. You will get better over time. Practice is key.

Different clients require different things and complexities. One thing you should keep in mind is – be creative and think logically. In this lesson, we are going to exercise some of that creative and logical thinking. Yes, technical work can be creative – who would have thought – but it's creative not in the artsy way, rather, in a problem solving way.

Before that, let me back up a bit about cascading style sheets. I know you want to ask what good courses or books on cascading style sheets (CSS) I would recommend. Well, there are tons of books and free online resources, but I cannot recommend much because I've personally never purchased a book or course about CSS.

It's all self taught and a lot of determination. However, the good news is, I can point you to the resources I visit often. These are not laid out step-by-step like you would find in Blog Evangelists. But rather they help by showing you how to do specific things. With the assistance of these sites, a lot of trial and error plus practice, I've got where I am now and continue to learn. It's never ending.

Of course, you don't have to subject yourself to trial and error if you do not wish to. You can certainly get yourself a book or a course. I would imagine any "Teach Yourself ... In 24 Hours" or "The Missing Manual" series will be pretty good.

My personal CSS resource library:

- [Dynamic Drive CSS Layouts](#)
- [Most Used CSS Tricks](#)
- [Listamatic](#) – this is probably the one site I visit more than any other. It shows you how to build wonderful things using lists with CSS. I found this very helpful in my early days of working with WordPress because WordPress uses lists a lot. Especially unordered lists.
- [Visibone](#) – they sell printed cheat sheets for PHP, MySQL, CSS, HTML, Javascript even color charts. You can get free online tools as well. I personally ordered the Browser Book years ago. Not a week goes by without me referring to me it several times. Highly recommended. An in-hand cheat sheet is much more convenient than an online resource sometimes especially when you have limited screen space.

And with that, let's jump into this week's lesson.

Taking A Good Look At The Design

In the previous section, I mentioned that we need to at some point sit back, pull ourselves away from the code, look at the big picture to ask ourselves some questions.

- What should a visitor see when they land on the home page?
- When they click through to an archive (category, archive, tag) page?
- A post?
- A Page?
- Should the sign up box be on all posts, Pages and archives?
- Should the featured content area if any be on all posts, Pages and archives?
- Should there be different elements on posts, Pages and archives?

Here are some real world answer scenarios based on my experience.

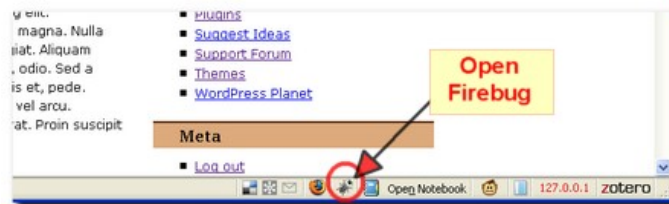
- Typically, the archive pages will have a heading on the top to indicate the archive they are viewing.
- Post pages usually have more information like filed under, dates, author, social network buttons, comments, comment boxes
- Pages should not have dates nor author name because they are supposed to be 'static', evergreen content. This will vary depending how you use each Page but that can be later further fine tuned using individual Page Templates.
- Featured content and sign up boxes may not always be on all pages and posts. In fact, featured content area if any, are almost always found on the home page only. Not all designs have a featured content area.
- For SEO purposes, some clients do not want full posts to appear on archive pages, only excerpts. Sometimes they also do not want dates and category links to appear here.

When we are building our own theme for distribution, these answers are usually easy because we are 100% in control. But if you are converting a template for a client, you need to ask your clients ahead of time.

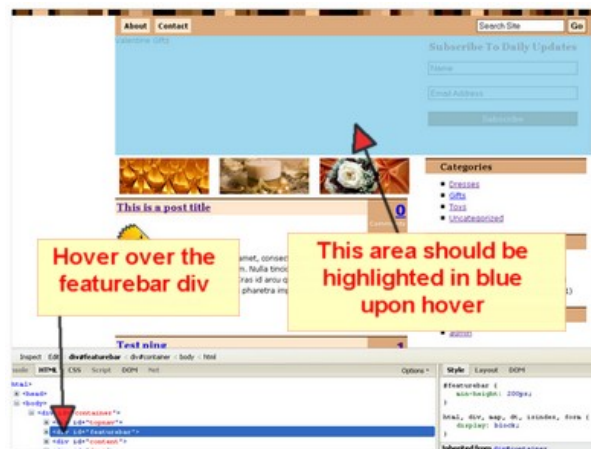
If they are not Internet Marketing or Internet savvy for that matter, they will not be able to tell you what they want. In those cases, make decisions for them following the most common requests – as listed out above. Then present the design and tell them what can be tweaked. Don't be afraid to recommend ways of doing things based on your own proven Internet Marketing experience.

So let's look at our Blog Theme Bootcamp theme design

Open up Firefox, navigate to your Sandbox blog. Use Firebug to check out how this section is laid out in the code. Open Firebug by clicking on the bug icon on the bottom left of Firefox. You can also open it by going to Tools >> Firebug >> Open Firebug



On the left panel of Firebug, you'll see the HTML code of this page. Hover over the featurebar div. If you don't see the featurebar div, click the plus sign next to the container div to expand the code under it. You should see the top row – the image space and the subscribe box being highlighted in blue.



In fact, hover your mouse over all the other div's in the html code. You should see each of these areas being highlighted in blue as you move over them. Here are some more screen shots of what happens when I hover over the different areas.



This is why Firebug is so valuable a tool. Because it gives you 'x-ray' vision to help you visually connect the code with the layout on the screen. If you are familiar with HTML you pretty much have an idea. Firebug takes out the guess work.

What does this tell us?

That the code between `<div id="featurebar"></div>` runs across the whole top area of the page. This means, this whole block is one section. Consider it for a moment. What could we do with this section since it is one block?

- We could drop the subscribe box to make that whole area one big image.
- We could add more HTML code to split the area up into 3 boxes to feature 3 'steps' or 3 different product categories.
- We could use a plugin or gallery to make a carousel of rotating pictures to highlight the clients offerings or content.
- We could keep things as they are right now.

The possibilities are only limited to your creativity, what you think will be most beneficial for your client and your client's needs and wants. Regardless what we do in this section, for the bootcamp, we are going to leave the design as is but we are going to move that section into a separate template file.

Why? Because if you sit back to consider the design once more. What do you want visitors to see when they visit the home page versus the post, Page and archive pages?

For this theme, I've decided it is best that they see the featured content area only on the home page. This way, they have something to draw their eye and invite them to do something – whatever that is in the feature area.

When they click through to a post, archives or other pages, the featured content and images should be 'gone' because I want them to focus on the content and not get distracted with the feature. We will also move the 3 smaller images into their own template file for the same reasons.

These are decisions you too will have to make when you build your own theme or convert a clients' existing template. There are no right or wrong ways. In fact, we don't need to split the theme up. We can make the home page and other pages different by using PHP conditional tags. However, that may be somewhat confusing at this point. So we will reserve conditional tags for later advanced lessons when we have a better grip of things.

Conclusion

If you have been looking only at the code so far, this lesson is to remind you to step back. Theme development is not only code but about design, a little SEO and web site usability. Usually, after developing the basic files (sidebar.php, index.php, header.php and footer.php), you should start putting yourselves in the visitors shoes and think about what makes sense as they click from one area to the next.

Keep that in mind too as we work the other pages because sometimes you will notice things you don't right now.

Next Lesson...

We'll be digging back into coding next lesson. Using skills we learned previously – PHP includes – we will selectively cut out the feature and images section then put them back into the index page.

Lynette Chandler

Lynette Chandler

Tech Based Training