

*and bad*

# **Best Strategies for Financial Firm Websites**

An Analysis of the Top 100 Financial  
Services Firm Websites



## OVERVIEW

# What do the top financial service companies put on their websites?

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We set out to find the answer to this question by analyzing the websites of the top 100 financial service providers specializing in private equity and investment management.

The objective of the research was to examine the specific attributes and elements that are (or are not) featured on the websites.

The pages that follow feature our findings regarding six specific website tactics and offer insights to help you present a compelling story and increase your conversion rates.



# Key Findings

**53%**

of financial services websites have descriptive homepage headlines.

**70%**

of financial services websites don't use descriptive navigation labels.

**26%**

of financial services websites deliver supporting evidence on their homepage.

**32%**

of financial services homepages use slideshows or carousels.

**32%**

of financial services websites use specific calls to action.

**28%**

of financial services websites show their team up front.



# A Page from Google's Lead Generation Playbook

In the UX Playbook for Lead Gen, a collection of best practices to win over potential customers, Google makes ten recommendations. We made a point to examine several in our study and present them here.

You can find the complete [UX Playbook for Lead Gen](#) here.

Lead Gen playbook at a glance

Proprietary + Confidential

1. Home/Landing Page

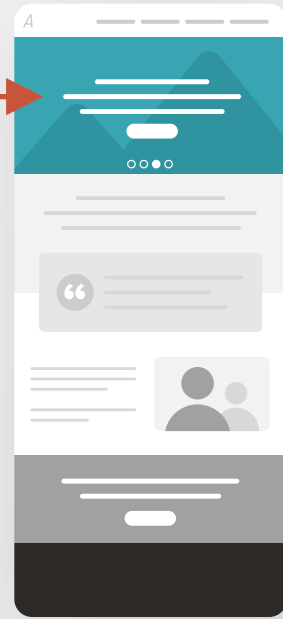
- Clear CTA above the fold
- Have descriptive CTAs
- If calls are important, include click-to-call at the top of every page
- Clear benefit-oriented value prop above the fold
- Don't use full page interstitials
- Remove automatic carousels
- Use legible font sizes
- Use social proof
- Provide answers to questions users might have before they'd feel comfortable filling out a form
- Add urgency

2. Form Optimization

- Mark required fields with an asterisk
- Use inline validation
- Use autofill
- Reduce number of fields (remove optional fields, use full name instead of first/last, hide company and address line 2 by default, hide billing by default)
- Use correct keypads
- Don't use dropdowns for inputs with < 4 options, instead opt for buttons
- Use steppers, sliders, or open field input for numerical entry rather than large dropdowns
- Use pagination or a progress bar if more than 2 steps in conversion flow

Google

# Homepage Headline



## Does your homepage headline describe your services or products?

Let's begin by examining the most important line of copy atop the most important page of your website. If you were to place a bet on what was to be the most-read message you provide first-time visitors, you'd better put your money on your homepage's first headline.

Your homepage headline's job is to ensure your visitors understand what you do.

Based on our research, nearly half of financial services, 47%, fail the homepage headline test.

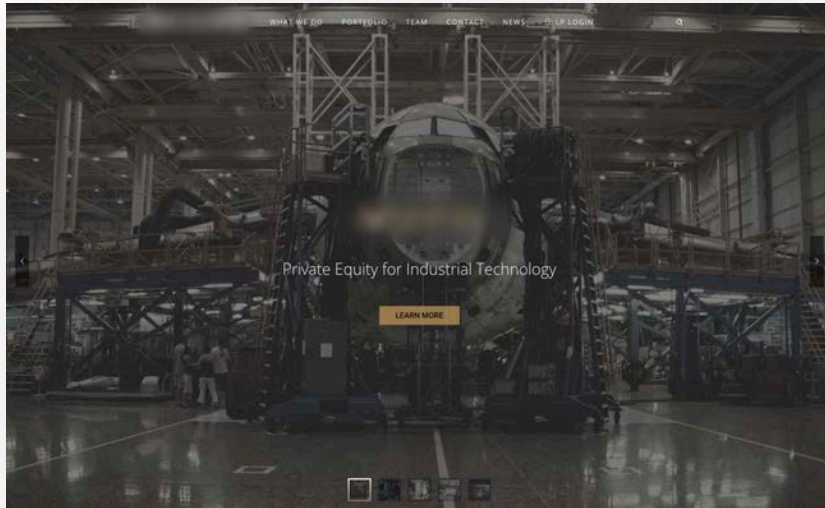


**47% of financial services failed the homepage headline test.**

### Headline Checklist

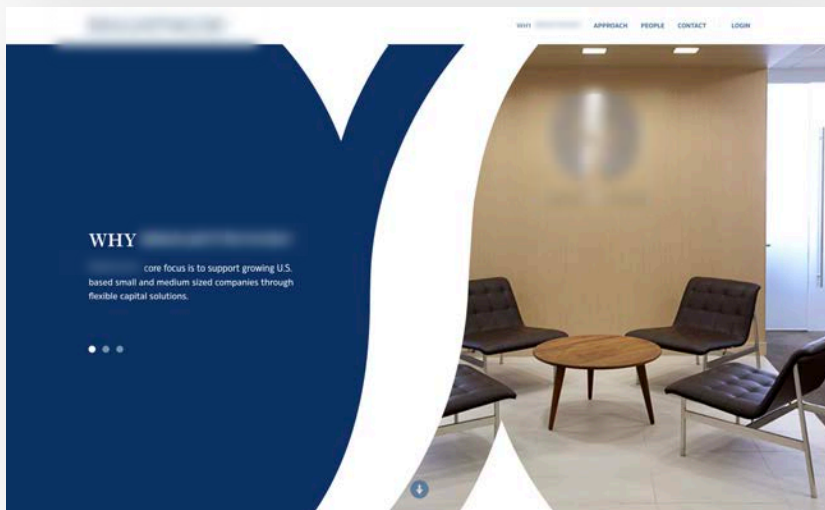
- ✓ Describe it.
- ✓ Don't assume all your visitors are familiar with your brand.
- ✓ Don't get cute or overly creative.
- ✓ Be clear.

# What works? What doesn't?



## This works.

This company probably doesn't need to present its brand name above the headline, but the headline, "Private Equity for Industrial Technology," is succinct and clear. If you have an industrial technology and seek private equity, it would appear you've landed on a potential financial services partner.



## This doesn't work.

The company's name appears five times above the fold. We can check the name recognition (or repetition) box, but it's going to take more reading, scrolling or clicking for the visitor of this homepage to get clarity. Look closely and you'll see the smaller line of copy that follows is descriptive. Journalists call such a thing "burying the lead."

# Tips for improving your homepage headline (and copy)

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## Conduct the five-second test.

Test your homepage headline by exposing it to a group of people for five seconds. Then ask them to tell you what the company does.



## Evaluate visual prominence.

Examine your homepage and ask yourself, “Is the most informative thing also the most visually prominent?”



## Don't be dense.

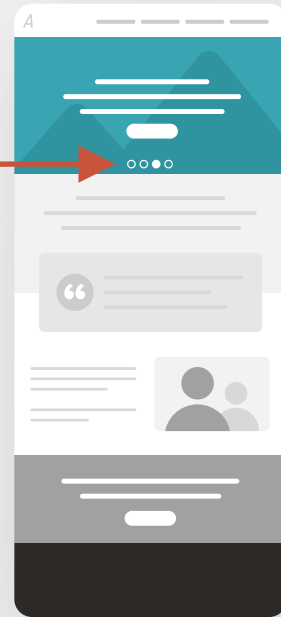
- Feature subheadings
- Feature lists where appropriate
- Use more whitespace
- Keep your paragraphs brief (we recommend three lines or less)



According to Nielsen Norman Group, only 28% of the words on a typical website get read.



# Slideshows & Carousels



## Are you presenting slideshows and carousels on your website?

32% of the financial services websites we surveyed continue to use slideshows or carousels, which are generally ineffective.

Those that are set to automatically advance through the images create the need for you to predict how much time the viewer will need to read each slide. The assumption is the reader will patiently stay fixated on the carousel to take-in subsequent slides. That's not a good assumption.

The carousel that presents next buttons or dots to indicate additional slides will perform even worse. We did a test that revealed only 5.7% interact with a self-guided carousel.



**32% of financial services continue to use slideshows or carousels.**

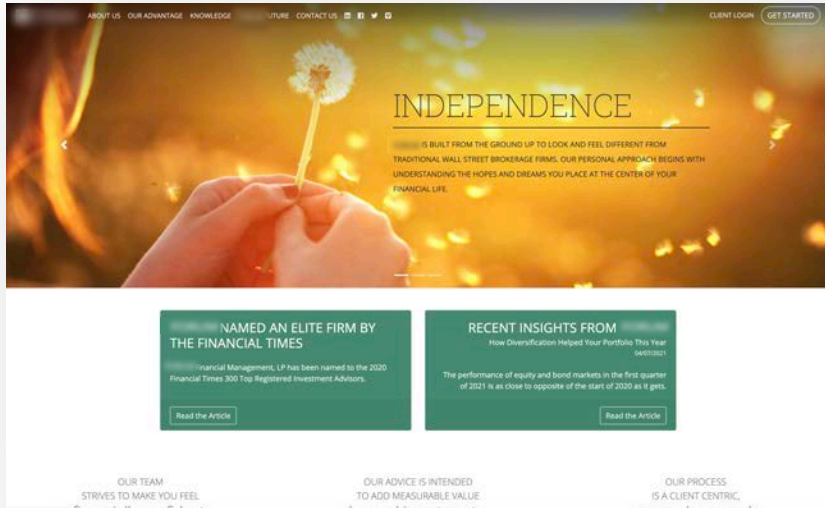


**Only 5.7% of website visitors interact with carousels.**



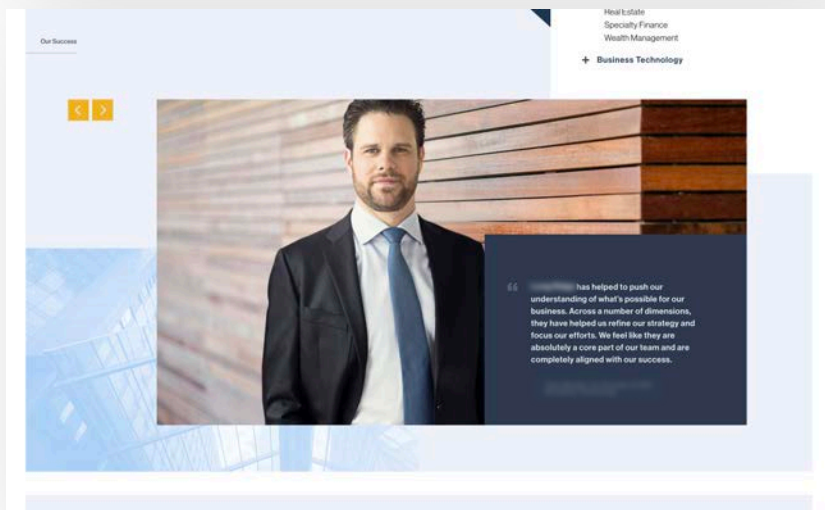


# What works? What doesn't?



## This works.

Got horizontal space? Use it wisely with side-by-side testimonials. Thinking about the mobile viewer? Your strategy should be to stack the content. Users are immensely more inclined to scroll than advance slides.



## This doesn't work.

The brand behind this website would be wise to carefully select which client testimonial leads off the carousel because over 90% of the viewers won't be clicking the "next" arrow.



# Tips for creating user-centric design

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## Avoid carousels.

Content revealed only when a user advances a carousel is seldom seen. If you have important content to present, present it. Consider stacking the messages you deem important or presenting it side-by-side.

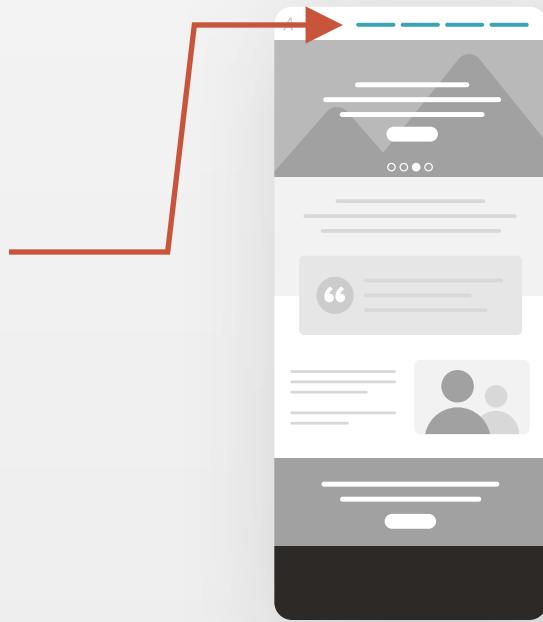


## Be careful with elements in motion.

Also, if you insist on using automated slideshows, consider its impact on the eye. Moving elements are bound to dominate the visitor's attention, so be careful to:

- Use the tactic only for important content
- Beware of animated elements clashing with each other.

# Navigation Labels



## NAVIGATION LABELS

# Are the items in your navigation bar descriptive?

70% of the financial services websites we surveyed don't use descriptive navigation (menu) labels.

A typical navigation bar features words such as "Home," "About," "Services," and "Contact." These labels may broadly describe the page (or section) but don't tell the visitor anything about the company.

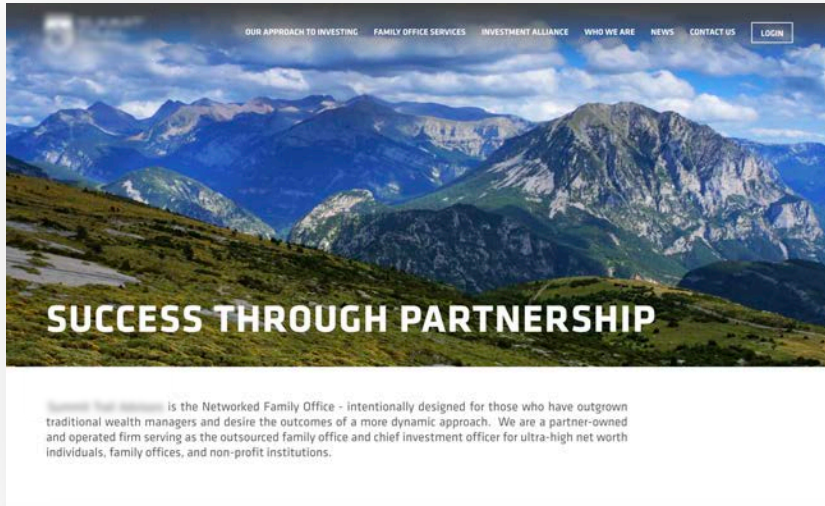
That's an opportunity lost. And it's easy to rectify. Simply add more meaningful words that help differentiate your business.



**70% of financial services don't use descriptive navigation labels.**

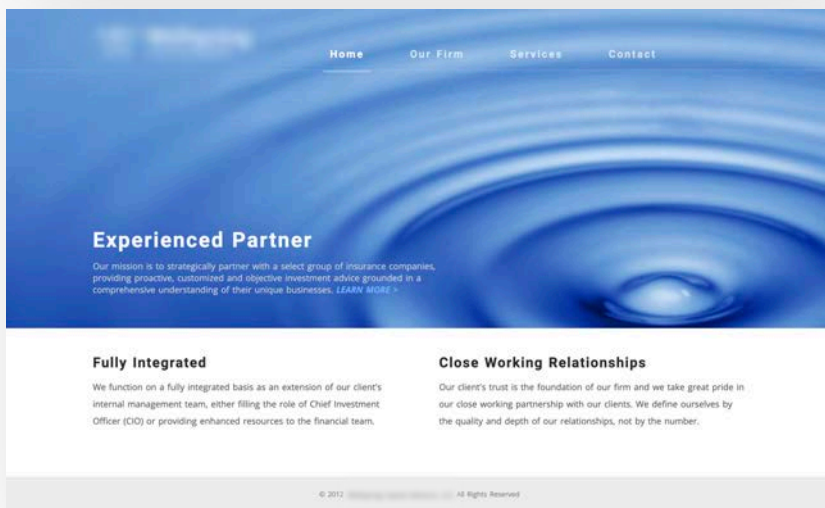


# What works? What doesn't?



## This works.

The navigation bar is specific. The company takes advantage of its labels to communicate to the reader—and the search engines—valuable information that helps position the company. Note the use of the word “Investing” and the phrase “Family Office.”



## This doesn't work.

The navigation bar is generic. The labels offered atop this page miss the opportunity to position the company and describe its services.

# Tips for improving your website's navigation

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## Be careful with drop-down menus

Usability studies reveal drop-down menus that feature a few items perform poorly. The visual friction (cost) of the dropdown appearing generally outweighs the offer of options (benefit).

“Mega” drop-down menus, however, show many options and columns of links. These test very well in usability studies. The options outweigh the friction.



## Analyze how your navigation performs

Use the “Navigation Summary” tab in your Google analytics to examine users’ paths on your homepage (or any page). The report reveals the percentage of entrances, percentage of exits, and detailed data regarding previous pages and next pages clicked.

The data answers important questions about how visitors behave on the page and often delivers insights to help you optimize your navigation options. For example, you can examine navigation summaries to learn:

- Are any big buttons getting missed?
- Are your calls to action effective?
- What gets clicked the most in your main navigation?
- Are there navigation choices that rarely get clicked?

# People



## Does your website showcase people?

“About us” pages are almost always one of the highest visited pages on a company website. Visitors want to know who you are, where you are, and what your values are.

However, only 28% of financial services websites show their team up-front. Most go the easy route and feature stock photos that might appear on hundreds of other websites.

Sharing photos and information about your employees is your opportunity to make a personal connection.

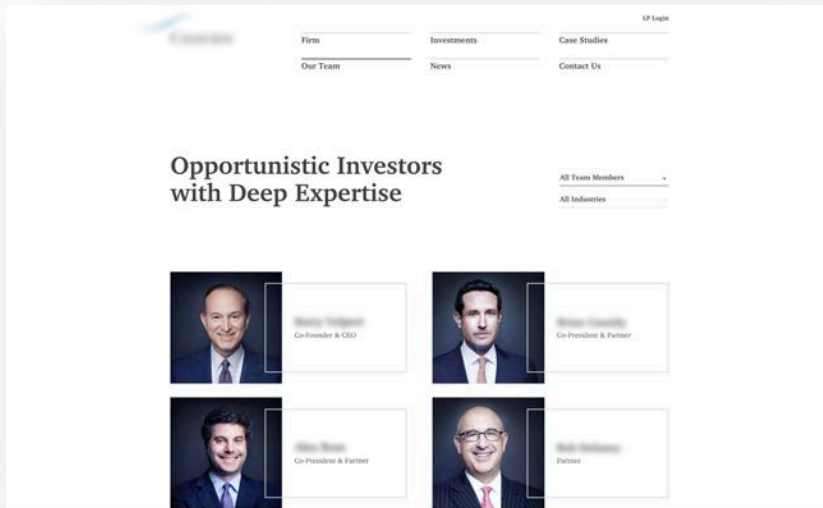


**Only 28% of financial services show their team.**



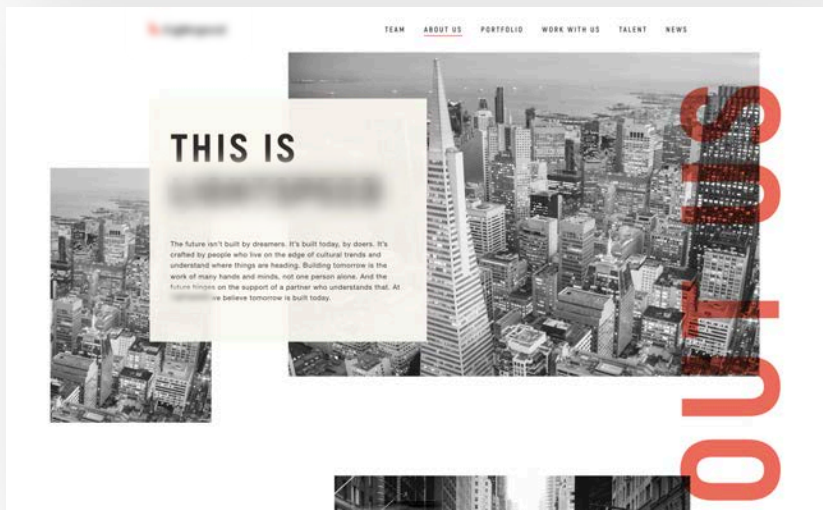
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# What works? What doesn't?



## This works.

Create an about page that only your company can. Your people make you unique. This website showcases their people throughout the site, starting on the homepage. The “Firm” page introduces the founders and the “Our Team” page offers photos and bios of a sizable cast of “Investors with Deep Experience.”



## This doesn't work.

This About Us page starts off with a stock cityscape image, accompanied by a dull, generic headline and paragraph. As you scroll down the page, you find even more generic elements and stock photos. There's no story. No characters. There's nothing for the visitor to feel connected to. There's no reason to even have this page.

# A tip for optimizing your website with people pages

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## Make a page for every key employee.

Say an investment advisor named Amy Louise Booker calls on a potential client and leaves a message that interests the prospect. What will they do after hearing the message? It's likely they'll do a search for Amy by name.

What will they find? If Amy's firm has chosen not to create a page to introduce her, the search will probably produce one or more social media profiles. That's not ideal for the firm. Instead, create a great page about that person. It's easy and a very effective SEO strategy.



# Supportive Evidence



## Does your homepage present social proof?

Only 26% of financial services websites deliver supporting evidence on their homepage.

Marketers call it “social proof,” that is, content that helps assure prospects they’re looking at the website of a company with satisfied customers. The most common examples include client testimonials, case studies, objective industry reports, logos of clients served, and statistics.

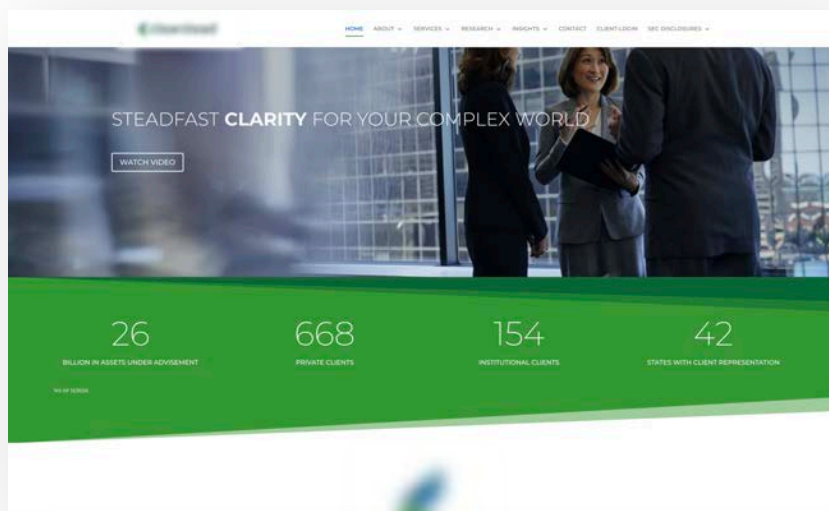


**Only 26% of financial services websites deliver supporting evidence on their homepage**



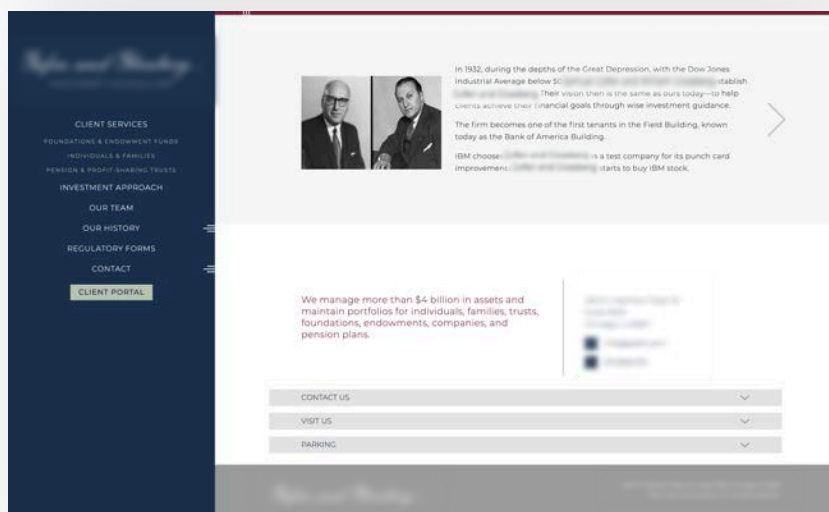
## SUPPORTIVE EVIDENCE

# What works? What doesn't?



### This works.

The company presents impressive numbers—real evidence of the dollars of assets under advisement, the number of clients, and more.



### This doesn't work.

It's easy to find unspecific information high on the homepage of this financial service provider's website, but the page is not entirely devoid of social proof. Scroll to the bottom of the page and you'll find they manage \$4 billion in assets. It's surprising such an impressive message is buried deep on the homepage where a small percentage of visitors will see it.

# Tips for presenting convincing testimonials

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## Put all the pieces in place.

Each and every testimonial you want to present should be 100% authentic, but onsite testimonials often fail to come across as authentic. Include the following six elements to make your customer testimonials as credible as possible.

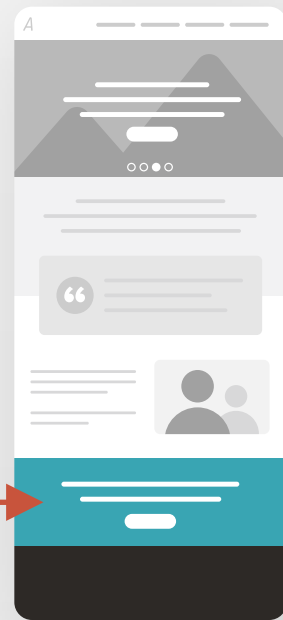
- The person's full name
- A photo of the person endorsing your company
- The person's title
- The company they work for and/or company logo
- A brief headline that highlights the testimonial's most impressive passage



## Bonus tip

If you can, use testimonials that include keyword phrases relevant to your website.

# Calls to Action



## Are your calls to action specific?

Only 32% of financial services websites use specific calls to action.

From the navigation bar to the footer and all places in-between, the website that provides its visitors clear—and specific—directions is far more likely to produce higher conversion rates.

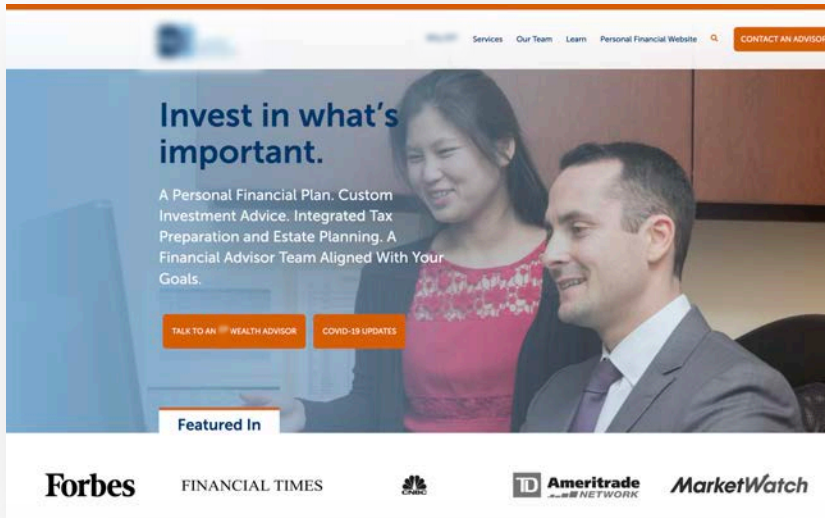


**32% of financial services  
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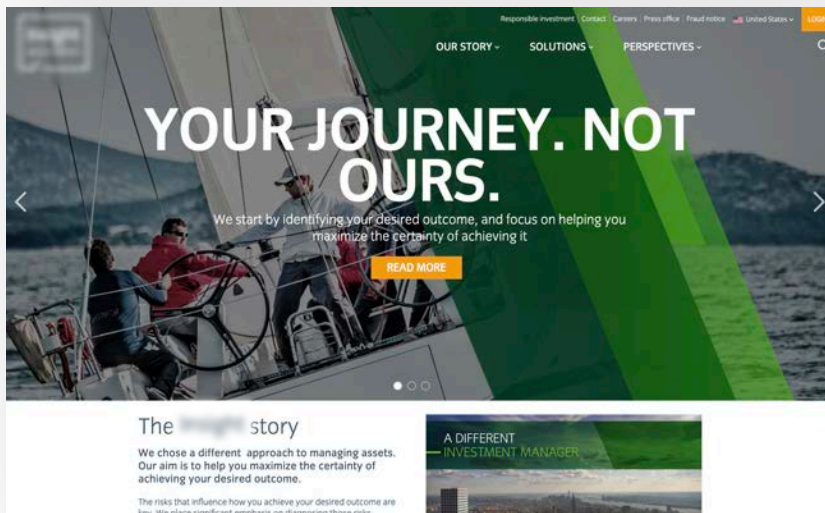
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# What works? What doesn't?



## This works.

The first button on this homepage features a strong call to action, "Talk to a wealth advisor." It's a smart tactic because it asks for a specific action while not demanding a commitment on the part of the visitor.



## This doesn't work.

The hero shot of this homepage features a photo of a sailing crew. There's no real reason why. But worse, the call to action, which reads, "Read more," connects to a page titled, "Our story." It's ambiguous and self-serving. Assuming the company can offer the visitor something of value, this would be the place to state what that is and why you should click.

# Tips for improving your calls to action

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## Use meaningful verbs.

While most calls to action begin with a verb, some are far stronger than others. Avoid dull verbs such as “submit” or “read” when you can increase the perceived value of taking action with words like “talk to” or “schedule.”



## Show faces.

If your call to action is a directive to speak to (or email) a member of your team, add a photo of the person. If you put a face near your call to action, you may see a higher click-through rate because it will increase the visual prominence of that part of the page.



Orbit Media Studios

# Experts in web design, development, and optimization

Orbit Media is an award-winning web design and development company that launches 50 to 60 robust websites each year. We specialize in search-optimized and conversion-optimized website that make it easy to track visitors from search and other sources and measure conversion.

We have worked with companies in the financial services industry and have 20 years of expertise in web design and development.

- Research & competitive analysis
- UX & content strategy
- Website content writing & migration
- SEO & analytics
- Design & visual storytelling
- Website development & hosting
- Conversion optimization



Chat with Chris or Stephanie to get started

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