# BIG MEDIUM 2
## THE COMPLETE GUIDE

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# Micro-Content: Announcements & Tips

The *page* is Big Medium's favored unit of currency. Nearly all activities in the Big Medium control panel are focused on adding and editing page content, or on formatting the display and organization of your site's pages. But sites commonly need many pages to share snippets of text or images. When this shared content goes beyond being part of the site's static design and needs to be active, editable content, we call it *micro-content*.

Micro-content is web content that does not itself have its own web page but is instead displayed as part of one or more pages. Some examples of micro-content:

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| Product promotions | *This week only! Acme-brand widgets only $9.95! Click here for more info.* |
| Tips | *Can't get that stain out? Try using a widget, dish soap and a little elbow grease.* |
| Customer testimonials | *"Thanks to your company, I never have to go without my beloved Acme-brand widgets again. I love you guys." — Joe, Cincinnati* |
| Affiliate links | *Read up on widgets with these books from Amazon: "Widgets the Acme Way," "The Widget Habit" and "The Lost Years: My Decade Without Widgets"* |
| Favorite quotes | *"Let them eat widgets!" — Marie Antoinette* |
| Factoids | *Seventy-eight percent of American males between the ages of 18-24 say they use widgets more frequently than mouthwash or potato chips.* |
| Site announcements | *AcmeWidgets.com will be unavailable on Saturday from 2am to 6am for scheduled site maintenance.* |

| Content from external sites | Many sites offer content feeds (often called, coincidentally enough, *widgets* or *gadgets*) in the form of cut-and-paste JavaScript to display on your site: weather forecasts, news links, photos, etc. |

Big Medium offers two content types to help you manage and display this micro-content on your site: *Announcements* and *tips*. You can edit announcements and tips much like you edit pages. You browse the micro-content from the edit menu and edit the content in an edit screen with many of the same features and elements as the page edit screen.

# Announcements

Announcements are typically used as a kind of news flash, an ephemeral content element that you can use for calls to action, special offers, new site features, product highlights or affiliate links that are specific to certain sections of the site. The `<%announcements%>` widget is used to display a section's announcements, and it displays *all* announcements assigned to the section. As a result, too many announcements can quickly become unwieldy. For that reason, it's good practice to use just a few announcements and to focus them on topics that are immediate and timely.

To create a new announcement, click "New Announcement" in the edit menu page or from the "New Page" menu in the control panel.

Announcements consist of a title/headline, the body text and, optionally, the same types of media (images, documents and audio/video) that you can assign to pages. Like pages, announcements can be assigned a workflow status and are not published to the live site until they hit the "published" status. When a page is published, it becomes immediately available on the live site.

By default, announcements are displayed in order of priority (highest first) and for announcements with the same priority, by publication date (most recent first), but this sort order can be changed in the site's HTML preferences.

# Tips

Tips are very similar to announcements but tend to be most useful for *collections of similar content*. For example: exercise tips, product tips, customer testimonials, favorite quotes, etc. This is because, unlike announcements, each section's tips have a permanent home on their own *summary page,* which lists all of the site's tips. The `<%tips%>` widget is used to display a handful of tips on other pages (or a single tip at random), followed by a link to the summary page where visitors can view all of the section's tips.

For example, a marketing site might have a collection of customer testimonials, each one entered as a tip. The `<%tips%>` widget could then be configured to display one tip at random, followed by a "More happy customers" link that takes visitors to the page that

displays all customer testimonials. (The display options for tips are described in the reference entry for the `<%tips%>` widget in *Chapter 10: Widgets*.)

In a nutshell, tips work much better than announcements as a way to manage micro-content collections of more than a handful of items. They let you expose just a few items to your customers with the option to explore more if they're interested.

Like announcements, tips consist of a title/headline, the body text and optional images, documents and audio/video. Published tips, like all published content, are updated immediately on the live site when you save changes.

## How announcements and tips are displayed

When you create announcements and tips, you assign them to sections of the site just as you would with pages. By default, the content is then displayed on all pages of that section, plus any parent sections. This means that the homepage (effectively the parent section of the entire site) displays all tips and announcements from the entire site; a main section page meanwhile displays all tips and announcements assigned to that section and any subsections; and a subsection displays only the tips and announcements assigned to that subsection.

If you prefer to avoid this display inheritance and instead have micro-content display only on sections to which it is specifically assigned, accounts with webmaster or administrator privileges can change this behavior. Unchecking the "show inherited content" option in the "Tips and Announcements" screen of the site's HTML preferences ("Settings>HTML Preferences") will give you what you're looking for.

Tips and announcements are displayed only on pages whose design templates include the `<%tips%>` and `<%announcements%>` widgets, respectively. (If you're not yet sure what a widget or template is, never fear; we'll cover that in a later chapter).

## Advertisements

Big Medium does not include a built-in ad management system to manage and track an inventory of advertisements and associated click-throughs. If your needs are not particularly demanding, you can use tips or announcements to display banners or ad text in your pages. This approach will not, however, give you much data about ad impressions and click-throughs.

A better approach is to pair Big Medium with a software package that's specifically designed to manage ad serving and reporting.[1] These packages typically provide snippets of JavaScript or HTML markup to include in pages, and that code communicates with the ad software behind the scenes to select, display and track the ad banners. You can add this code to your Big Medium-powered site by pasting it into your site's design templates or by pasting it into

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[1] OpenX [http://www.openx.org/], previously known as OpenAds and phpAdsNew, is a popular open-source ad manager and is frequently used with Big Medium.

an announcement or tip. For the latter, create a new announcement or tip, and then paste the code into the "Markdown" or "Raw HTML" tab of the "Item Content" panel in the edit screen.

This approach also works well with hosted ad networks like Google AdSense[2]; paste the AdSense code directly into your page templates or into an announcement or tip.

# Third-party "badges," "widgets" and "gadgets"

A growing number of sites and web services offer ways to add their content to your own pages by adding a snippet of JavaScript or HTML to your pages. These are sometimes called "badges," "widgets" or "gadgets."[3]

Adding this type of mini-content to your pages is similar to the process described above for advertisements. You can paste the provided code directly into your page templates or into the "Markdown" or "Raw HTML" tab of the content of an announcement or tip.

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[2] https://www.google.com/adsense/

[3] Just a small handful of examples: calendar of events from Google calendar [http://www.google.com/googlecalendar/event_publisher_guide.html], local weather [http://stickers.weatherbug.com/], del.icio.us bookmarks [http://del.icio.us/help/linkrolls], Google search [http://code.google.com/apis/ajaxsearch/], photos from flickr [http://www.flickr.com/badge_new.gne], Rollyo custom web searches [http://rollyo.com/searchbox.html], and YouTube videos. [http://www.youtube.com/sharing]