

Module Navigation

Accordion Panel

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Problem

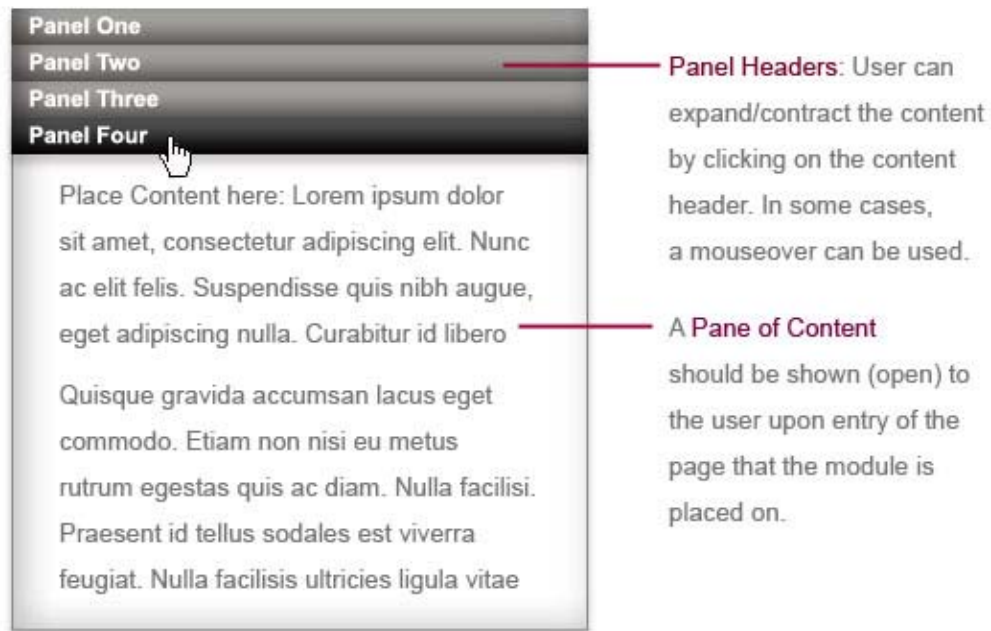
Users need to access to a large amount of information in a limited space.

Use When

- There's too much information to present all at once on the page.
- The content can be divided into clearly named sections.
- The number of panels is small (less than 10).
- The user only needs access to **one pane** of information **at a time**. Use a *navigation tree* or *closable panels* if the user needs access to more than one panel of information at a time.
- This is an alternative method to tabs or a navigation tree -- it's a space-saving device that depends on a user clicking on something to activate/get access to the panes.

Solution

Stack panels vertically or horizontally and open panels (through a user action), one at the time. Opening one panel triggers the collapse of currently open panels.



How

- Organize the content into sections that reflect the users' needs.
- Give each section a short, descriptive title.
- Put content into panels that expand when the user clicks on the header of each content pane.
- Panes can be placed horizontally or vertically, but only one panel is open at a time.
- As a rule/guideline:
 - Use vertical opening panels are to display sub-menu items
 - Use horizontal opening panels for large content areas.

- Make sure the accordion supports the AutoSize of None. This allows for the accordion to grow and/or shrink without restriction. Keep in mind that this will cause other elements on the page to move up and down as it grows/shrinks.

Animation

- Animate the opening of panels so that users get feedback about what is happening. The animation should be subtle which means that it should last no more than 250ms
- Highlight the current panel so the user can distinguish open panel headers from closed panel headers

Rationale

- An accordion is useful for compressing many elements in a compact space. The elements can be properties, questions or simply navigation items.
- Panels reduce screen clutter and help organize the information into digestible chunks for the user.
- You would use this in many of the same places you might use a [Card Stack](#) -- it's a space-saving device that depends on user interaction. Accordion Panels have the same benefits of a Closable Panel – they give you a little more flexibility:
 - It can contain sections of **wildly differing sizes**. If you used a Card Stack, the smaller sections would have large areas of white space.
 - It makes for a more interesting user experience.

Accessibility

- Allow navigation using the keyboard up and down keys

Examples

Adobe.com

The image shows a dark-themed navigation menu for Adobe.com. At the top, it says "Products and solutions". Below this is a "Products" section with a list of software products, each with a small icon and text: Acrobat, Acrobat Connect Pro, After Effects, AIR, ColdFusion, Design Premium, Dreamweaver, Flash Professional, Flex, Illustrator, InDesign, LiveCycle Enterprise Suite, Photoshop, and Photoshop Elements. At the bottom of the products list is a link that says "See all products >". Below the products section are two more menu items: "Solutions" and "Industries".

<http://www.pixellab.co.uk/>

The image shows a "LATEST NEWS" widget with a yellow header. It features a list of news items, each with a small icon and text. The first item is "Computer Hire South West". The second item is "Threenine", which is expanded to show a preview: "Threenine design has asked us to design and build a website for selling canvases and prints... Read more >>>". The third item is "Sheppards Solicitors".

Top TV Shows on iTunes

Top Movies on iTunes

Top Music on iTunes

Featured on iTunes



slumdog millionaire
New Release Movie and More



FLO RIDA
New Album



FAMILY GUY
Star Trek: The Next Generation Cast Guest Stars



MLB.com
At Bat
2009

<http://danielrichards.biz/our-company.php>

Daniel Richards uses an accordion for it's main navigation. Animation is not as smooth – but it works because this is a “trendy” site.

The screenshot shows the Daniel Richards website. At the top left is the logo 'daniel*richards'. To the right are navigation links: 'Directions', 'Contact', and 'Mailing List'. A vertical blue bar on the left contains the word 'Home'. A vertical green bar on the right contains the words 'Our Products', 'Our Company', and 'Our Reps'. The main content area is titled 'Our Company' and contains the following text:

daniel*richards represents a mix of quality, upscale manufacturers that complement each other and make a great "story" in your store. We represent the best lines that retail at store level and are leaders in the following categories: Baby, Home Décor, Personal Care, Novelty Gift, and Stationery.

We have showrooms in Atlanta and Chicago and a sales force that covers 25 states and Washington DC. Our office is located in the Atlanta Gift Mart and is open daily from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm.

History

daniel*richards is the collaboration of partners Dan Collier and Richard Pfeiffer. The showroom opened in January 2002. A second showroom, dedicated to gift, opened in July 2005. In July 2007, daniel*richards expanded into the Midwest market and opened a showroom on the 13th floor of the Chicago Merchandise Mart. In January 2008, we moved our showroom to the 16th floor, all in one large showroom.

Dan is the principal. The idea to open a showroom was the natural progression of his years of sales experience and his love for gift and stationery. Dan is the creative force behind the showroom. He is also a mentor to the sales team.

Richard is the technology and operations manager. His experience in technical support, software knowledge and training skills create a strong foundation for the operations of the business.

Dale Pugh is our showroom manager. He does commission entry and can be found in the Atlanta showroom Mon–Fri 9–5.

Alabama	Minnesota
Arkansas	Mississippi
Delaware	Missouri
Florida	Oklahoma
Georgia	Pennsylvania
Ohio	North Carolina
Illinois	South Carolina
Indiana	Tennessee
Iowa	Texas
Kentucky	Virginia
Louisiana	Washington DC
Maryland	Wisconsin
Michigan	

<http://www.carbonhouse.com/default.asp?id=8>

Resources

Jennifer Tidwell, [Designing Interfaces](#)

UI Patterns and Techniques, http://www.time-tripper.com/uipatterns/Card_Stack

Weylie.com, [Accordion](#)

http://www.usabilityfirst.com/glossary/term_964.txt

Cross-Reference/Links

Accordion panel (The difference between accordion panels and multiple collapsible panels - is the interrelatedness of an accordion panel – opening one panel closes another panel- in an accordion control).