**Best Practice**

★★★★★

IBM's Smarter Planet site is a real stunner that hits on all cylinders. It delivers a totally innovative, very high-impact page design, that is as engaging as it is usable. A visitor couldn't ask for more.

✦ IBM's Smarter Planet home page doesn't fit any other mold found on comparable B2B sites—or many B2C sites for that matter. The well-balanced, multi-feature design highlights every topic. Striking imagery draws the eye from one feature space to another. Video features fit in perfectly with static images and simple headlines. This site shows true innovation that is refreshing to see.

✦ Subsequent pages in the Smarter Planet click stream are equally as impressive. Naturally, the pages present more content as the visitor moves into the site, but the page layouts and imagery keeps the content crisp, fresh, and engaging.

✦ The subtle design approach used for the site's primary navigation menus make them unobtrusive when viewing the content on the page. However this doesn't make them hard to find. The tab-top navigation across the top of the page is intuitive to use [1]. The pop-up navigation menu for other Smarter Planet topics is not in a common location, but is colorful and sensitive enough for visitors to find fairly easily [2].

Best Practice
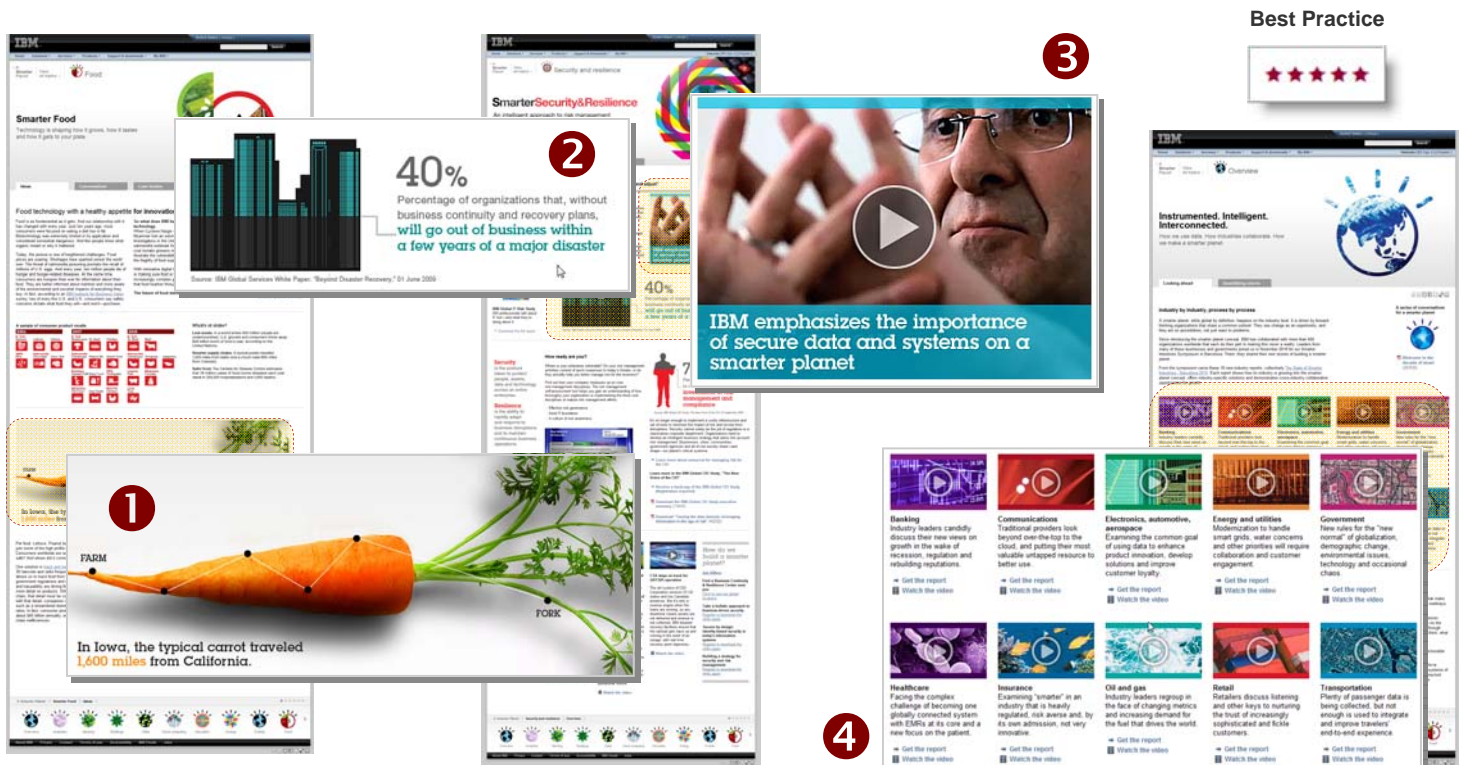
It is easy to say IBM's Smarter Planet site is innovative and easy on the eyes. But there is a lot more that makes this design work than just an interesting layout and pretty pictures.

✛ It is obvious that a great deal of thought and creativity goes into choosing and designing the images used on the site. Every picture tells an interesting and relevant story. Photos of nameless people shaking hands or smiling in front of a bank of computers are in short supply.

✛ The photos used are unique compared to those on other IT or B2B Websites. What visitor would expect a photo of a carrot on an IT Website [1]? Or that the a carrot would actually have something interesting to say?

✛ Data is depicted using more than just pie and bar charts. Images of buildings and people are shaded to the data points indicated in the text [2]. Icons are placed next to interesting factoids. Bold bubbles, wheels, and shapes depict comparisons, processes, and trends.

✛ Many images used for videos have a magazine quality—almost as if they were taken from the pages of *Forbes* or *BusinessWeek*. The most engaging photos capture the speaker displaying an interesting expression or gesture. Head shots of executives and employees are also published. But even these photos show a bit more character than the traditional, frozen-smile business portrait.

✛ Large banks of videos are shown using simple, vibrantly colored images that set each film apart [4]. This design approach makes it easy for visitors to scan the videos and remember the ones that interested them.

From "experience and react" to "anticipate and adjust"

Imagine if someone tried to break into your house. Now imagine it happening 60,000 times a day.

That's how many times the average company's IT infrastructure is attacked. There have been 354 million privacy breaches over the past five years in the United States alone. And in January 2009, one cybersecurity incident reportedly resulted in 130,000,000 credit cards being compromised.

But malicious attacks are just one type of risk faced by global enterprises. There are business-driven risks that include audits, new product rollouts, financial risk, fraud and even failure to comply with government standards. And event-driven risks such as natural disasters, regional power outages, acts of war and economic downturns. All of these can be minimized if you anticipate threats and plan accordingly.

IBM emphasizes the importance of secure data and systems on a smarter planet

The content on IBM's Smarter Planet site breaks the mold of dull, dense IT Website content. It is written by people, for people. It is as interesting as it is enjoyable to read. And it does an amazing job of connecting technology to real-world scenarios that even non-techies can understand.

Undressing in public: Harnessing the power of Web 2.0 to rebuild trust in banking
More customers are online than ever before. This IBM Institute for Business Value white paper spells out why banks should learn to use methods such as blogging and social networking to cost-effectively and efficiently reach an increasingly fragmented and dispersed customer base.

Read the paper

Food traceability framework

The challenge

Do you know where that's been?

Beef. Peanut butter. Pet food. These are just some of the high-profile recalls the world has seen recently. Consumers worldwide are concerned-and rightly so. Is their food safe? And where did it come from? IBM offers food traceability solutions that lead the industry, delivering unprecedented value for those who seek to ensure the safety of food products.

✛ The content on IBM's Smarter Planet site presents technology issues using a surprisingly conversational tone. And it works incredibly well. This content is written by living breathing humans to be read by other humans. It is well versed in its topics, and always has something interesting to say. But it also has personality and occasionally a sense of humor. Most importantly, it is engaging to read and makes the visitor want to learn more.

✛ The personality evident in IBM Smarter Planet's content extends to its titles. Many catch your eye with unexpected—even cheeky—headlines, such as "Do you know where that's been?" (in the Food industry section), and "Undressing in public: Harnessing the power of Web 2.0 to rebuild trust in banking" (in the Banking industry section).

✛ Site headlines and content often present intriguing data and factoids. Those used in titles or as graphical interest next to summaries effectively capture reader's attention. But the writers also expertly use these tid-bits as smooth introductions of IBM's products and solutions.

✛ The real key to what makes IBM Smarter Planet's content work is how it puts technology into a real-world context that anyone can understand. An IBM Smarter Planet visitor may not know—or have ever wanted to know—a whit about the cybersecurity challenges global enterprises face. But reading, "Imagine if someone tried to break into your house. Now imagine it happening 60,000 a day. That's how many times the average company's IT infrastructure is attacked". Now that's interesting.