

SAFEHOME (CONTINUED)

providing information, such as product details, and providing functionality, such as suggesting a security layout. I just think that I should have been involved.

Team leader: Okay—I accept that. So what would you suggest now in terms of the overall structure and how it looks in the lower levels of the site? Does it result in anything different from our overall interface design?

Information architect: Well, if we go back to the earlier analysis, we identified this list of content objects [pulls out a sheet of paper (see page 55)]. This maps quite well into the structure that we already have. At the top level we have a functional hierarchy,

but then once we go down a level, it gets a little more complex. Maybe something like this . . .

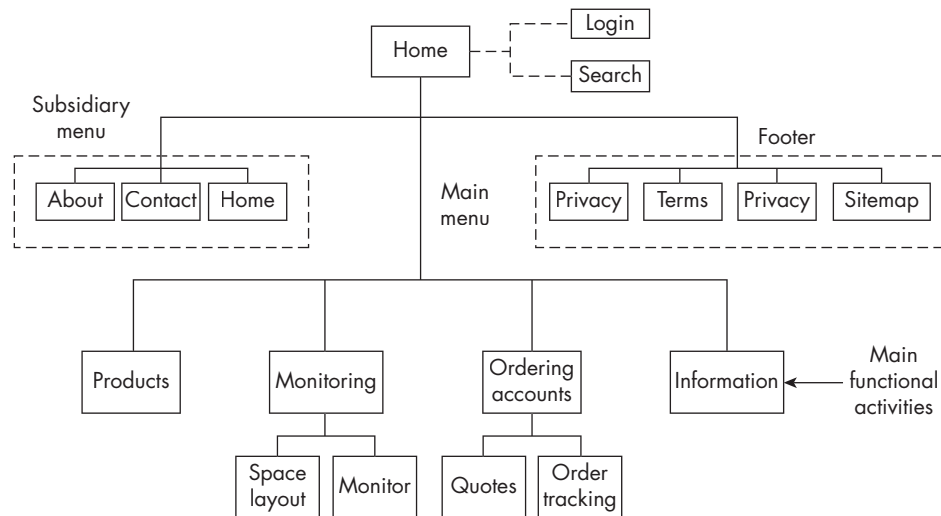
[The information architect sketches out on paper the diagram shown in Figure 10.3.]

Information architect (continuing): Most of it is fairly simple, except for the two subsections on home security and monitoring services. For both of these two, there will be a hierarchy of information, but also a set of workflows or processes associated with the functional steps.

Team leader: Yep—that all seems great. Obviously, it will need to be fleshed out a little more as a blueprint and then reviewed, but in principle it's good.

FIGURE 10.3

Example preliminary information structure sketch for **SafeHome-Assured.com**.



What Makes a Good Structure?

We'll answer this question with an emphasis on hierarchical structures. In general, a good structure meets the information needs of the users and is easy to navigate.

For hierarchical structures, the breadth and depth of the information structure can have a strong impact on how much effort it takes a user to navigate to information that is needed. Two quite different hierarchical structures for the same content are shown in Figure 10.4. A structure that is narrow but deep (Figure 10.4a) is likely to make navigational choices simpler (since from any given page there are fewer links from which to choose), but the navigation paths are much longer. A structure