

Webcomics Central App Configuration Branding Guide

Overview:

“Central” is the app engine used for all apps in the Webcomics Central App service. This app allows the content creator to connect with fans by consolidating all of their content update notifications in one place. The app utilizes a connection to the internet to read in XML and RSS feeds from compatible websites and display the content to the user. At this point the user may simply read the content of these feeds, or “Read More” by loading the actual website page to see the full view of your content.

The app allows for a large range of customization on how feeds are presented, as well as how many entries are displayed. These options will be outlined in this guide as well as the requirements for assets needed to brand the app to your individual site/content.

Things To Consider First:

Before your app is created you need to consider the following information.

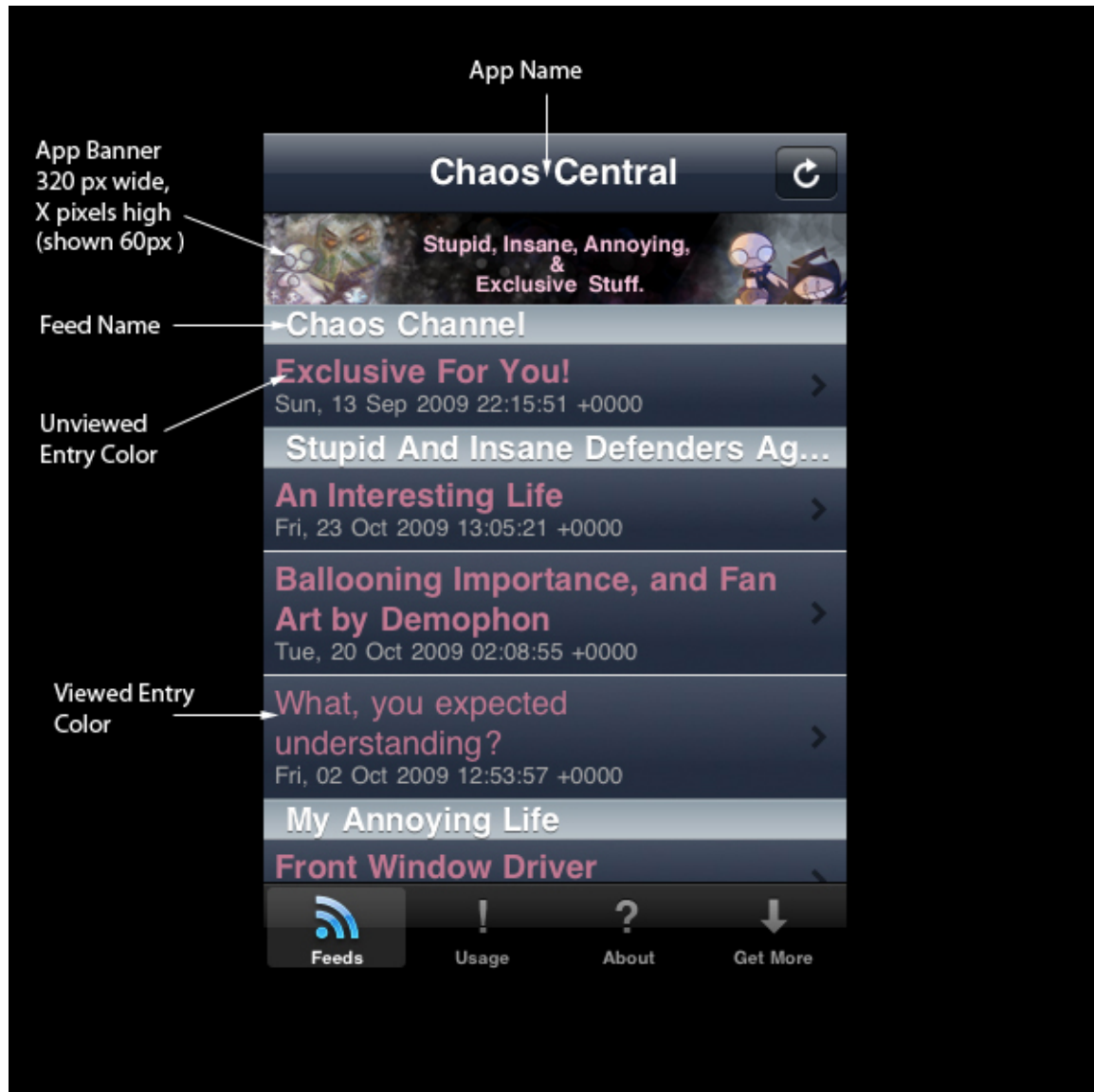
- 1) What do you want to call your app? While it’s not required we strongly suggest using the “Central” term as part of the name. An example is “Chaos Central” which we used for our own app.
- 2) Keep in mind that the iPhone can only display a certain number of characters on it’s screen under an app, so very long names will get truncated with “... “ within it’s name if it’s too long. Short and sweet is the best idea. One other point to note is the name of the app in the iTunes store and displayed within the app can be different than the name shown on the phone itself. An example of this is our app is officially called “Chaos Central” in the store and the app, but the app displays the name “ChaosCentral” on the phone itself.
- 3) Compile a list of “feeds” you want to have available in the app. Most CMS systems (like WordPress) have a wide range of feeds they can output. You can (and should) consider making your feeds as specific to different types of content as possible. If you can do a feed directly to your comic as well as a feed to other types of posts you do that are separate from the comic, it’s best to make those 2 different feeds instead of combining them in an overall feed. Other feed examples would be Youtube, Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, Assetbar (notification of premium content update feed), or any other service you might use other than your own site.

Overview of App Features:

The following screenshots go through the parts of the app and highlight some of the configurable options that are available to the content creator.

The first page of the app is called the “Feeds” page. This page displays the list of feeds the user can view as well as the entries that are available for each feed. It also displays the main branding header image of the app.

Figure 1: Feeds Page View



The app banner is 320 pixels wide and can be any height, but the taller the banner the less space is available to view the list of feeds. It's suggested you keep the height to around 60 pixels like the one in the pictured app.

The feed entry title links can be changed to a different color if desired.

The number of entries displayed for each feed is configurable individually. Generally 1 - 10 entries per feed is the range that most should be set. Keep in mind that more entries per feed, with many feeds, will make the user scroll a long time to see all of the available entries. It's best to keep the number of entries per feed to a small number. If your comic updates 3 times a week then 3 or 6 might be good ideas for that feed. Feeds like Twitter, especially if you do it a lot, might be better to set to a higher amount like 10 (Twitter supports up to a max of 20 by RSS). Also keep in mind that these numbers really are designed to limit your feed source entries. You can't have more entries display than your original feed supports (so in WordPress's case it's normally set to output 10 max, so you couldn't set the app to display 12).

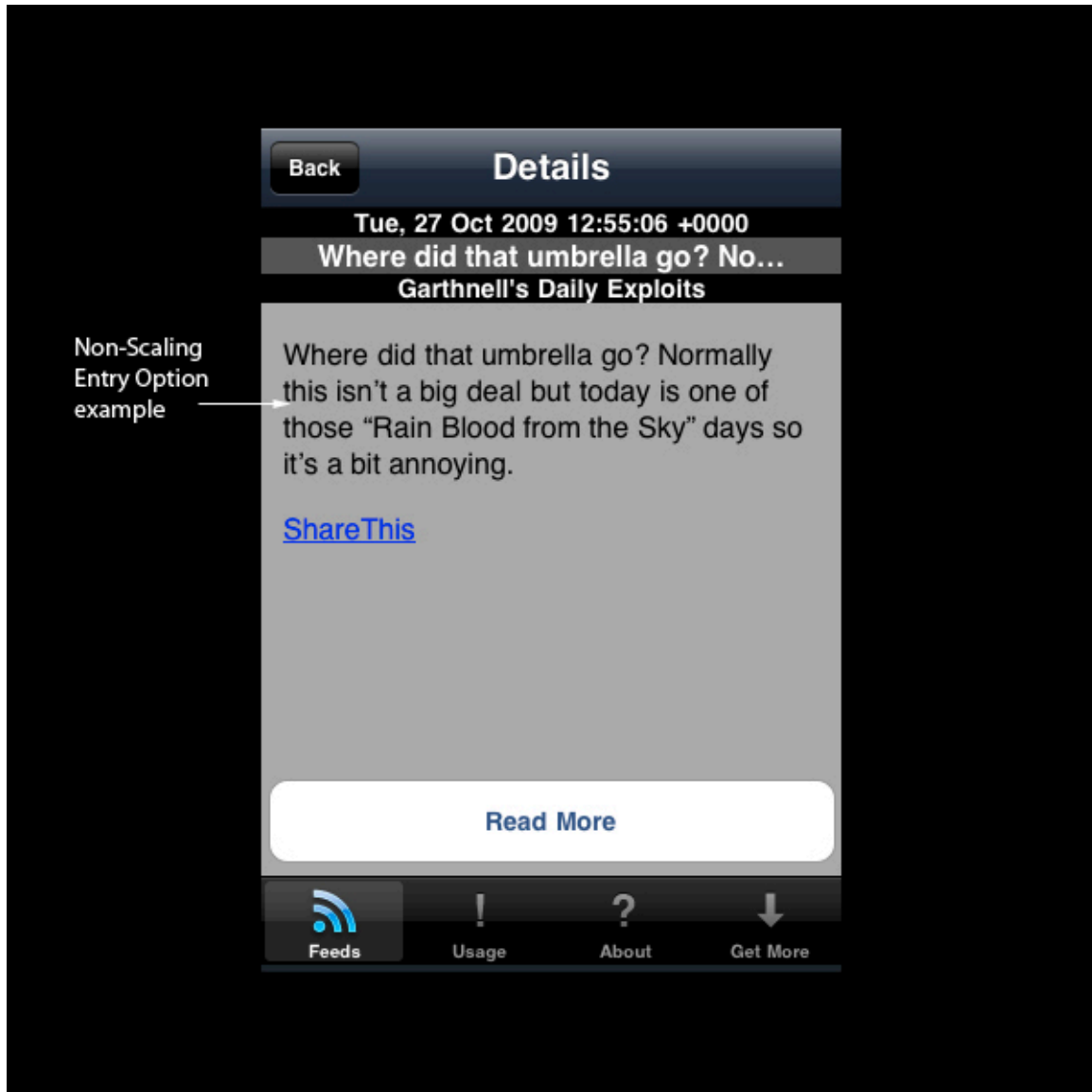
[NOTE: This description of feed entry limits is for version 1.0.0, we plan on adding in a user selectable control to let the user decide how many entries they would like to have display per feed in a future release of the app)

Figure 2 Feed Detail View, Scaling



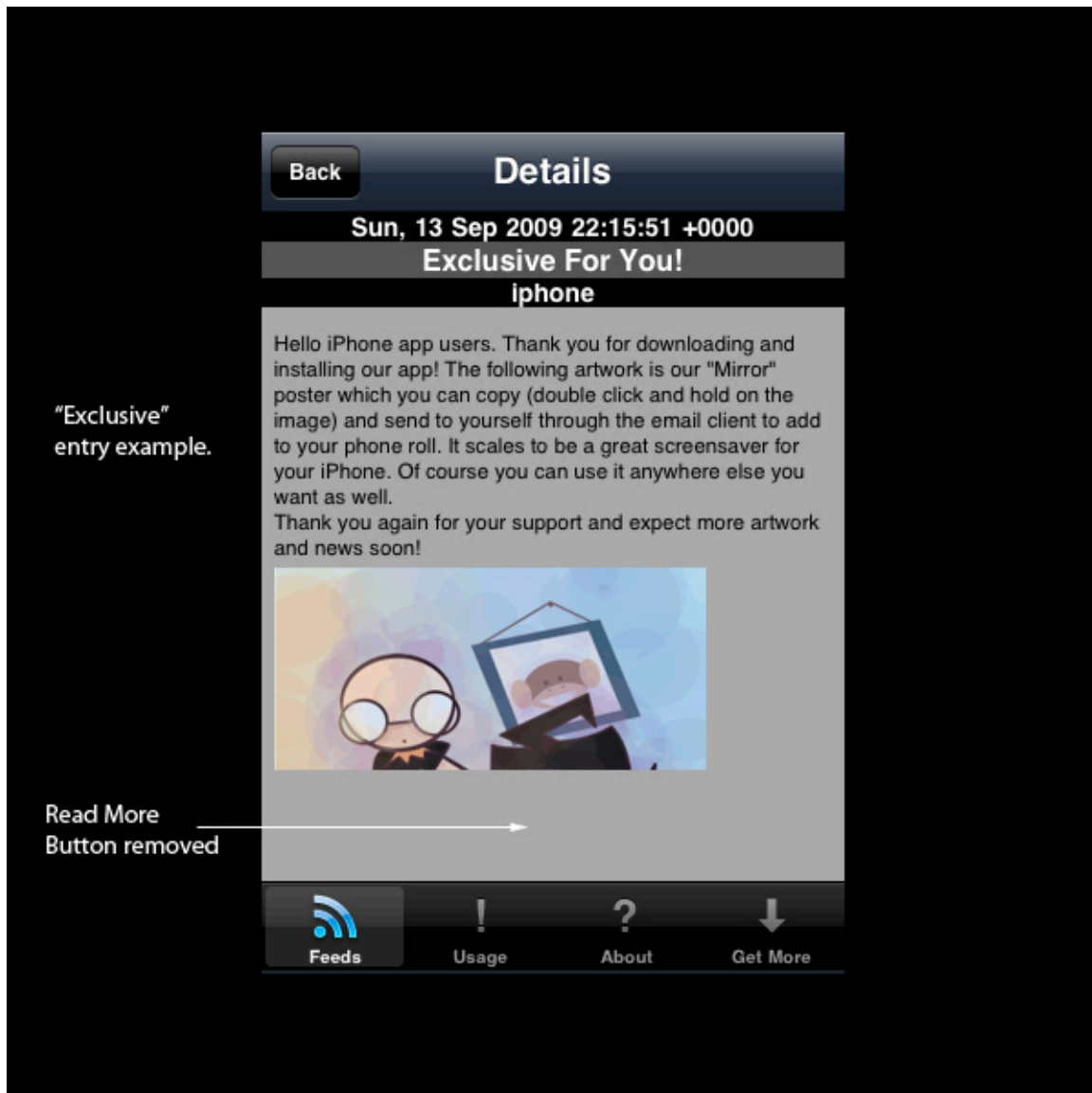
Once a feed entry is selected the user is presented with the Feed Detail view. The presentation within this feed is one of the most configurable elements of the app. Depending on what type of content you want displayed you can allow the user to "scale" the view (i.e. use the iPhone multi-touch zoom features to expand and contract images and text as well as copy items from the view) or have the view fixed (which is best for feeds that will primarily be text like Twitter).

Figure 3 Feed Detail View, Non-Scaling



Additionally you can choose to allow the user to "Read More" by clicking a button to load the full webpage that the feed is pulling from, or you can disable this button so that the content stands on it's own (which is good for serving "exclusive" content to the app and obfuscates the original location of the feed).

Figure 4 Feed Detail View, No Read More Button

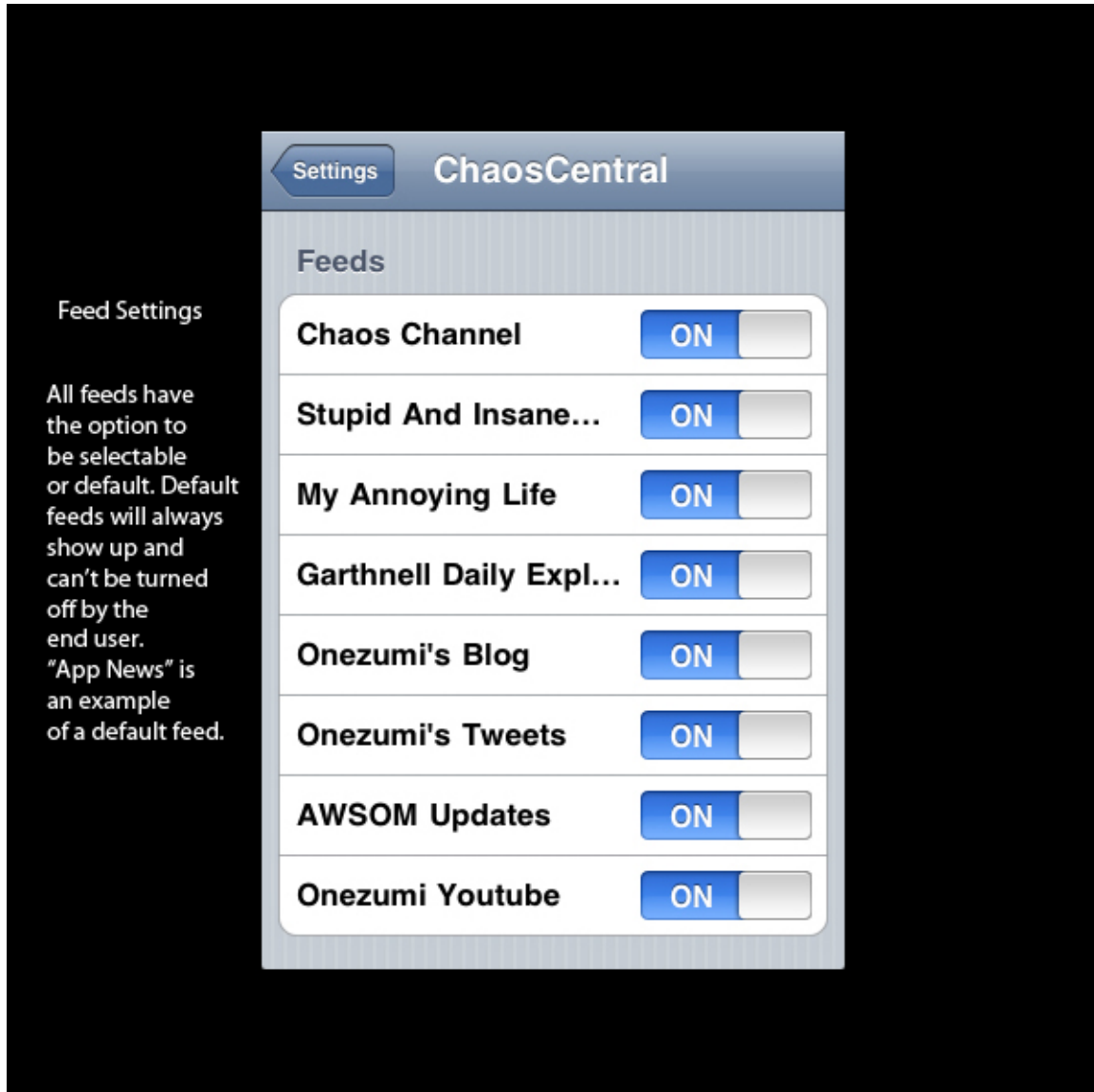


The Feed Detail View also can be set to pull from the RSS feed "Description" field or it's "Content:Encoded" field. Not all RSS feeds support the second type of field, but those that do allow for a much greater level of interactivity for the user. In many RSS feeds the Description field is sanitized of links, images, or embeds (this is especially true for WordPress). The Content:Encoded field is not restricted and will usually display all images, movie files, and links as they would appear on your website. A few notable feeds that do not support Content:Encoded are Twitter and Youtube—but they present a good entry through their Description field.

Configuring the exact best set of options for a feed can be tricky, but we've come up with generic settings for many sites and can set this up for you. The following is the full list of how each feed is configured:

Feed Name, feed url, max number of entries of the feed displayed to user, display "more button" yes/no, selectable for on/off in settings, Scaling view yes/no, Content field used(description or content:encoded)

Figure 5 Feed Settings Page



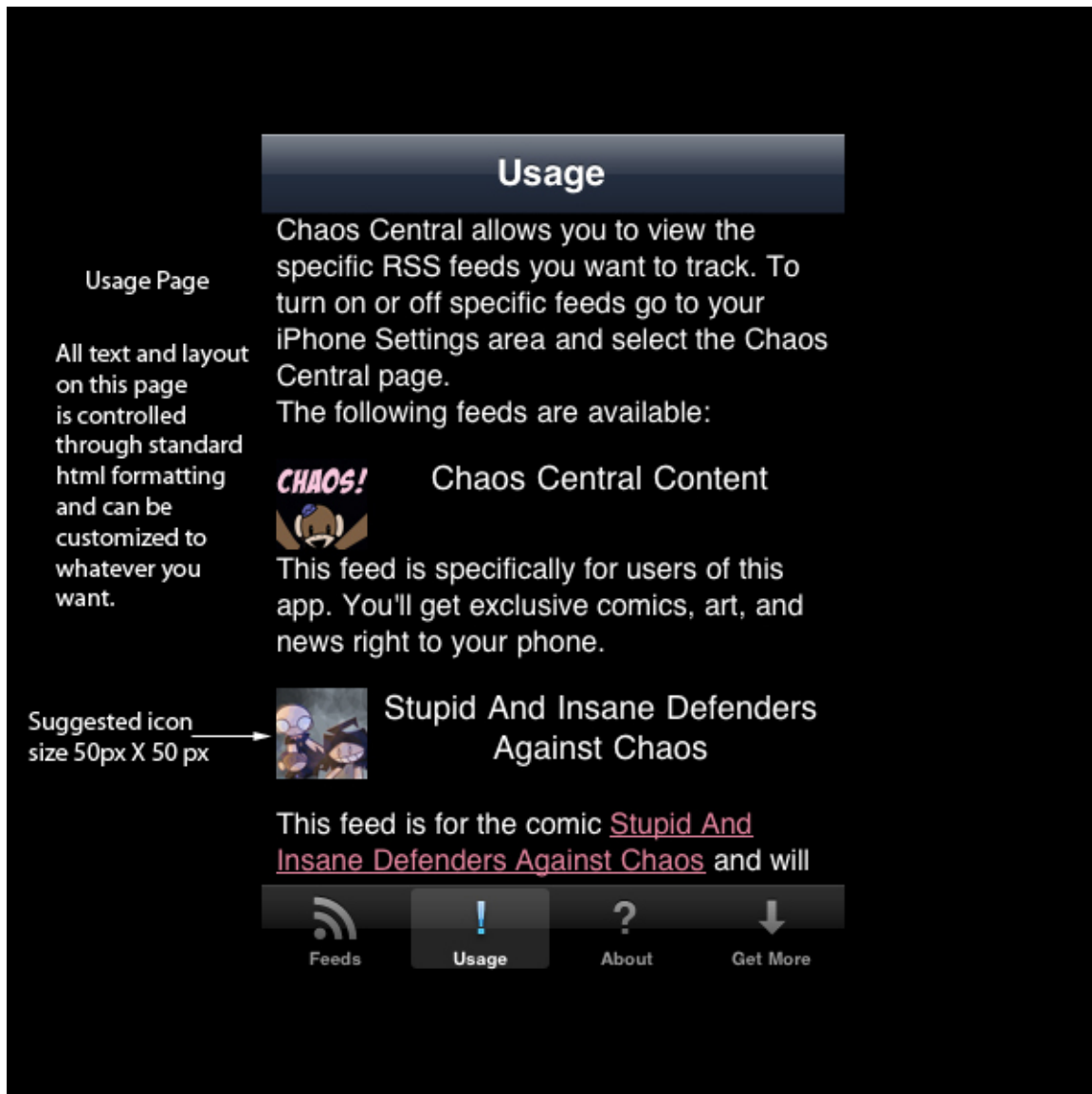
The "Selectable" config option refers to the ability for a user to turn on or off the display of a particular feed on the Feed View page. In most cases you will probably want to let the user decide which of your content they want to have displayed within the app. The user is then able to go to the iPhone settings page for your app and to turn on/off each feed.

Please note that “App News”, which will display Webcomics Central news to all app users across all apps, is not a selectable feed and is included by default in all apps.

Explaining Your Feeds to Your Users

Once you have your feeds set up you’ll want to explain what they are to your app users. To do this we’ve created a page within the app that allows you to do this easily. This is the “Usage” view.

Figure 6 Usage View



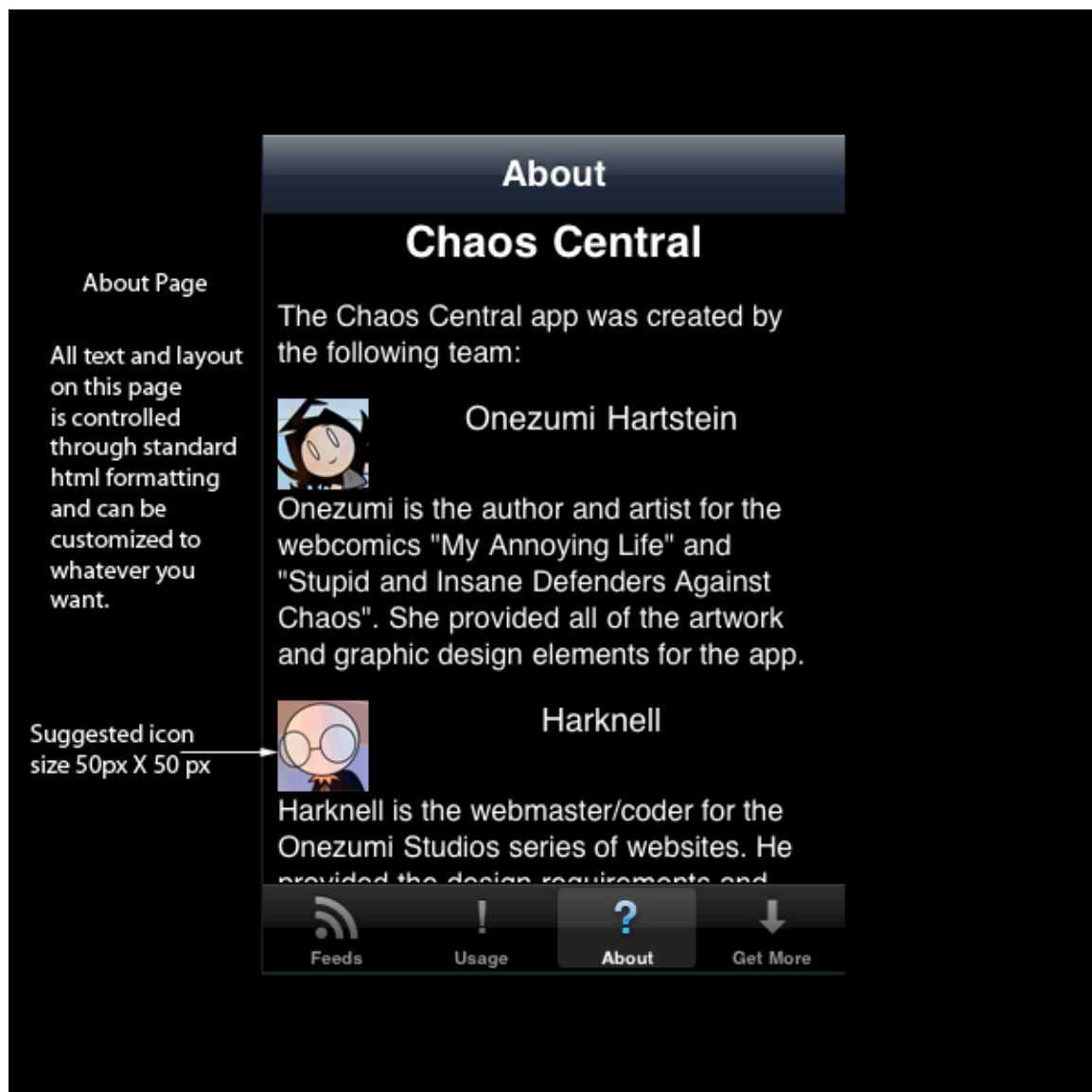
The Usage View page is actually a standard HTML page that is displayed within the app using the iPhone web viewer component. As such you can use most of the

common HTML standard markup language to display the content of this page. Images added to this page should be done using "relative" linking as if they reside in the same folder level as the html file (i.e. `img src="example.jpg"`). We've found that icons 50 X 50 pixels are a good size to represent your feeds, but you can do whatever you want. Any links added to this page will launch the Mobile Safari browser on the phone if clicked by the user and leave your app. We can provide example HTML files for you to base your own on if you would like.

Introducing Yourself

The next way you can connect with your fans is to give them some bio information. As the Webcomic Central program expands many people may discover your app without already knowing about your comic.

Figure 7 About View



Much like the "Usage" View this view is also based on HTML and works the same way. Your info will be placed at the top of the page, with the other credits (ours and the other source engine developers) at the bottom.

Non Configurable Elements:

"Get More" is a preset page within the app that is not configurable.

Quick List for App Development

The following information is a quick checklist for you so you are sure you've made/compiled the necessary information to submit to us for your app.

What you will need to give us:

1. **App Name, optional iphone app name** (what will be viewed on phone).
2. **App icon for iPhone: 57px X 57 px , 72ppi 24 bit png** (this is what users click to start your app)
3. **App banner image** (your comic header on the feed view page). **At least 57px tall (can be taller) X 320px wide (must be this wide). 72ppi 24 bit png**
4. **Large Store icon**, (should be similar to your App icon, but can have more detail and really sell the app): **512px X 512px 72ppi JPG or Tiff (No PNG!)**
5. **150 X 150 icon for the Webcomics Central app link matrix** (can be in any format: gif, jpg, or png) **and URL link you'd like to have it go to.**
6. **Any other images you'd like to use in your HTML Usage/about page files. Formatted the same as the app banner for file type.**

Please use the following format to submit your feed to us:

Feed Name, feed url, max number of entries of the feed displayed to user, display "more button" (yes/no), selectable for on/off in settings (yes/no), Scaling view (yes/no), Content field used(description or content:encoded)

Example:

My Annoying Life, <http://www.onezumi.com/category/my-annoying-life-comic/feed/>, max entries: 3, button: yes, selectable: yes, scaling: yes, content field: content: encoded

If you aren't sure about a particular feed we can probably set the settings correctly for you.

Optional Information:

The following are optional elements for your app. We suggest you submit them, but we can use generic info if needed.

1. iTunes store description. This is what people read when they look at your app in the iTunes store or on their iPhone. The text should **not** be in HTML format. It's just a text listing that can use basic formatting (look at other store entries to get ideas on this. We can substitute our own generic description if needed. This can also be updated later.
2. iTunes keywords: These are optional but sort of important. You get 100 characters total (including commas to divide keywords). Once this is set it isn't easy to make changes, so think hard on this. This is how people can find your app (other than by name) and is used by the iTunes search.
3. Hi res artwork for store promotion: Apple may contact us about a particular app in order to promote it in their store. In this case they'd like higher sized images so they can place it in their store banner or a special section of their page. They don't give good guidelines on this, but we would suggest having a few banners or other artwork that are much larger ready for this.
4. Link Color for feeds. We can make the feed entry links any color. In our app they are a shade of pink. To customize this color please let us know using the standard web color format of 6 digit hex color (example: white is #ffffff) this can be found using Photoshop or any other image program.

Future Updates

The following are some features we are working on adding to the "central" engine. We can't guarantee a timeframe for any of them (or if they will actually ever make it into the app engine), but we wanted to let you know about possible future things for the app. We also appreciate feedback from you on what you'd like to see.

Sound: We are working on adding a start up chime as well as a possible background music loop. Both would be optional for any app (you could enable it or ask us to not include it) and also have a settings page toggle for users to allow or disallow either from occurring. The chime and loop could be generic (what we create) or you could supply to us either one (with proper copyright clearances if using music other than your own creation).

Saved Entries: a new bottom panel link will appear called "My Saved Entries" which would display a new page similar to the main feeds view, but would only be populated by entries the user specifically saved for later viewing. On the regular view page detail view would be a new button called "Save this entry" which would allow the user to save an entry to this new saved page. On the detail page in the saved page would be a button to "delete this entry" which would allow users to

remove entries. A new button would appear in their settings page for your app called "Delete all saved entries" which would allow the page to be reset if too many entries needed to be deleted.

Connect/Support Page: A new bottom panel link will appear called "Connect" and will open a page with many options allowing the user to "connect" with you. A dedicated email link (to open their local email client with a pre-populated email with your contact email), a listing of your upcoming con appearances (might require specific software running on your server to get this info, still in development on this), social networking submission tools/links (to reddit, dig, etc.), and possibly other elements. This page would be optional (you could have it appear or not), with each sub element optional to appear as well.