

**Engauge Website 2.0
Competitive Benchmarking,
& Recommendations Summary 1.0**

July 18, 2008



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Executive Summary

On a strictly egalitarian scale, it's safe to assume that these web sites were each designed by professional in the online field. The sites each focus some high level of their contextual attention on promoting its portfolio and convincing the visitor that their company has the credentials and know-how to be leaders in their field.

But in comparing so large a group (18 competitors!), it's interesting to note just how widely their approaches – which in themselves are difficult to do without being at least *somewhat* subjective – ranged. Analyzing the metrics (summarized in the *Overall Benchmarks* section) you could easily separate the majority of competitors based on those who “took a visual or experiential path” vs those who “relied on longevity or breadth of client portfolio” to sell themselves.

In most cases, the approach was strictly one route or the other. Cumulatively, those majority scores puddle into the “ok” range simply because they did a great job at contextual execution (but only so-so on the experiential components) or did great experiential executions (but without regard to memorable contexts).

A small number of competitors did very badly. Some didn't make the cut because they tried so hard to be “hip,” that the site was difficult to navigate or weak on context. Others were [much] too verbose. The two weakest site's had no context or visual appeal at all.

Four sites, however, made solid use of *all* seven of our overarching heuristic design principles:

- AKQK.com
- Boodbysilberstein.com
- Organic.com
- Rappcollins.com

and one site (Goodby, Silverstein & Partners) won highest merits across the board (with Organic and/or Rapp Collins subjectively coming in ahead if given a different review team).

Introduction

Purpose and Scope of this Heuristic Review

The purpose of this document is to:

- **Rate the Current State** of Engauge Competitor Websites:
 1. AKQK (www.AKQA.com)
 2. Allant Group (www.allantgroup.com)
 3. Avenue A | Razorfish (www.avenuea-razorfish.com)
 4. Chiat Day (www.tbwa.com)
 5. Crispin Porter + Bogusky (www.cpbgroup.com)
 6. Digitas (www.digitas.com)
 7. Goodby, Silverstein & Partners (www.goobysilverstein.com)
 8. Harte-Hanks (www.harte-hanks.com)
 9. IMC² (www.imc2.com)
 10. Kirshenbaum Bond (www.kb.com)
 11. Merkle (www.merkleinc.com)
 12. Mobius Grey (www.mobiusgrey.com)
 13. Organic (www.organic.com)
 14. Rapp Collins (www.rappcollins.com)
 15. RGA (www.rga.com)
 16. Targetbase (www.targetbase.com)
 17. Taxi NYC (www.taxi-nyc.com)
 18. Wieden Kennedy (www.wk.com)
- **Highlight and Assess Significant Experience Differentiators** (Both Positive and Negative)
- **Make Recommendations For Leapfrogging the Competition** such that we enhance the visitor experience of the Engauge website to:
 - **Showcase Engauge talents and offerings**
 - **Create a viral and [possibly] sticky experience** that reflects and builds on the strengths of the Engauge Brand

Summary of Opportunities & Considerations

Analyzing a range of experience offerings from Engauge' competitor sites helps us identify key opportunities and considerations for advancing beyond the reach of the pack.

Based on research-driven best practices and international design standards, we indentify several common areas of Web design components. To support our findings, we've analyzed the following seven categories of site design:

- **Navigation**
- **Organization**
- **Taxonomy**
- **Content**
- **Features and Functionality**
- **Calls to Action**
- **Look and Feel**

Method of evaluation

Due to the large size of the competitive pool and the absence of a baseline, the most efficient means to evaluate the above sites/categories will be to provide a simple score-based evaluation. To minimize subjectivity of findings, we've subdivided the categories and provided a point-by-point rating system for each sub-category question based on the following 4-point scale (in which an arbitrary baseline of 80% is the norm):

0. **Never**
("No," "Less than 20% of the time," "*Only* as an Exception," or "Absolutely Without Regard")
1. **Less than Consistently**
("Probably Not" or "20-to-79% of the time")
2. **Consistently**
("Probably," "80-95% of the time" or "Acceptably Average")
3. **Always**
("Yes," "More than 95% of the time," "Without [*or Nearly Without*] Exception," or "Above Reproach")

1. Navigation

If a visitor is unable to successfully navigate a website, they may give up before they find what they're looking for. We evaluate to ensure that there aren't any closed roads or detours that slow a visitor's progress or prevent them from accomplishing important tasks.

In respect to Web navigation, visitors assess a site (both consciously and subconsciously) based on their perception of its hierarchical offerings and values. The navigation tells the visitor whether they're likely to find (and find value in) information that the site promises to present them.

The conscious assessments are often derived from desires and expectations: “I’m specifically looking for *X* and I expect that this site will provide that information.” The sub-conscious assessments are often more subjective: “I’m looking for *Y* and this site *appears* to offer that information.”

Assessment Principles

If a visitor can’t understand the navigation, he’s more likely to abandon before finding what he’s looking for. It’s important that each navigational structure offer the visitor – at minimum – the following information:

- 1.1 Navigation as an experiential compass
- 1.2 A specific and unique purpose for the use of a navigation structure
- 1.3 An “apples-to-apples” format to titles within the structure
- 1.4 A logical sequence to the titles on the navigation structure
- 1.5 Enough information to ensure the visitor finds items that the site wishes them to reach – NO MORE, NO LESS.

Consider the practices of outlining and card sorting. In a literary outline strategy, the goal is to develop new contexts such that you’re arranging them based on similarities of purpose: “apples to apples.” As a reverse exercise, card sorting allows you to take pre-developed contexts and sort them into appropriate “buckets” of similarities *then* define those buckets using a similar context structure.

Literary Outline

- I. Introduction
- II. Main Point
 - a. Sub Point
 - b. Sub Point
- III. Main Point
 - a. Sub Point
 - b. Sub Point
- IV. Conclusion

Card Sorting

1. Persons
 - a. Person a
 - b. Person b
 - c. Person c
2. Places
 - a. Place 1
 - b. Place 2
 - c. Place 3
3. Things
 - a. Item red

- b. Item blue
- c. Item orange

1.1 Navigation as an Experiential Compass

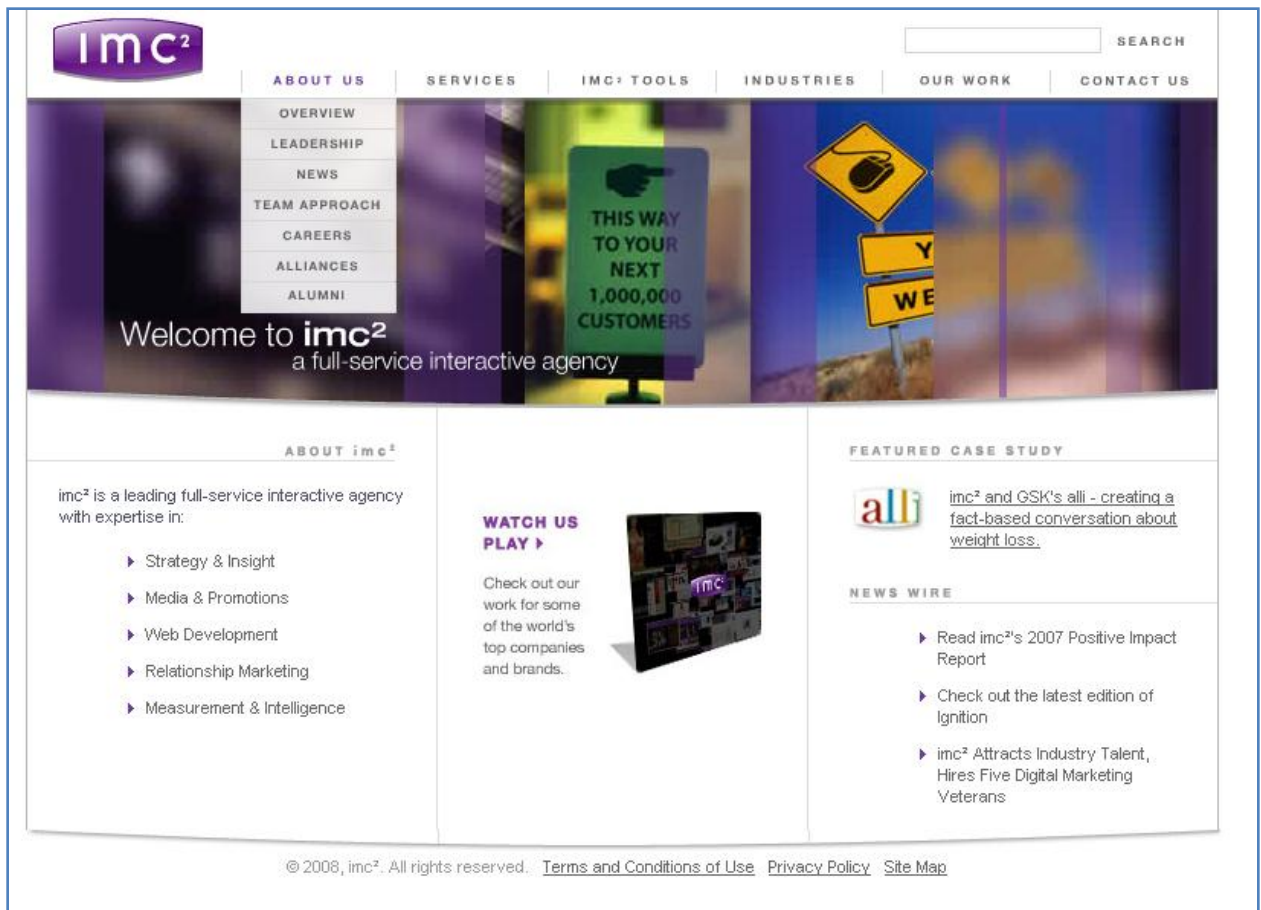
(Does the navigation support/enhance the theme and visual design of the site and its Brand?)



Rapp Collins was visually exquisite, but took too long to set up each screen.

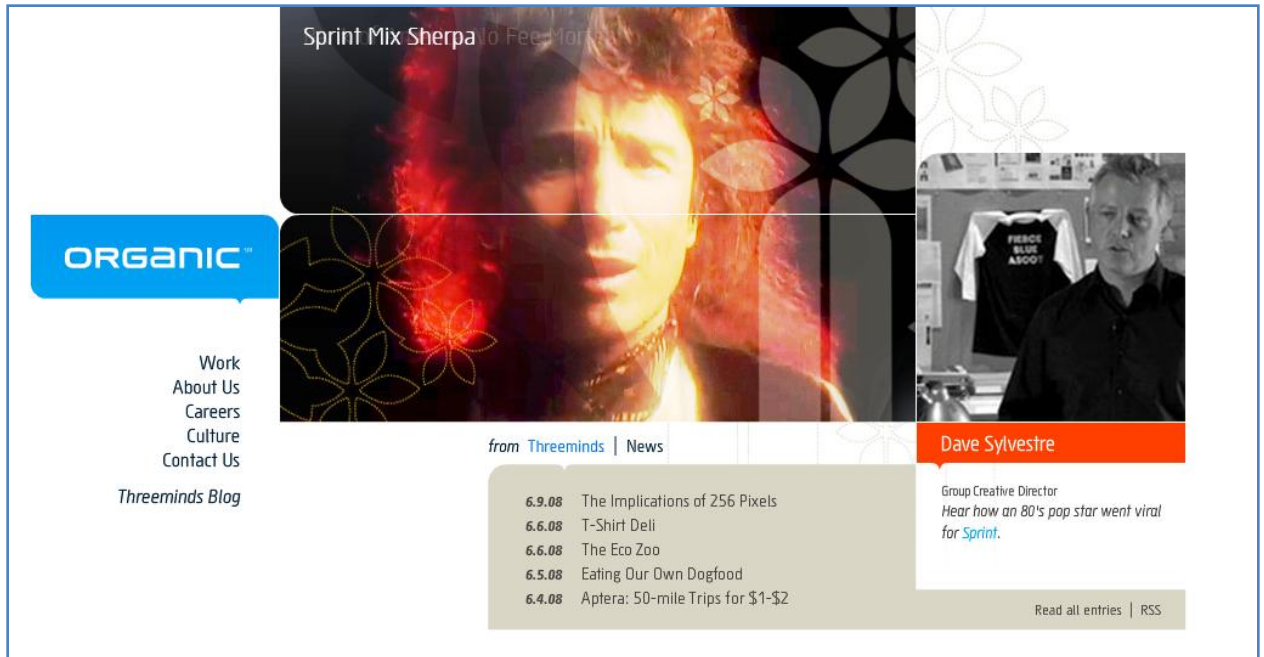
1.2 Navigational Clarity and Sense of Purpose

(Does the navigation properly dissect the desired story?)



IMC2 had the most straightforward and organized (albeit less-inspiring) navigation among the pool.

1.3 An “apples-to-apples” comparison among titles within the structure (Do all items in the navigation match in contextual convention?)



Organic's navigation was clean and uncluttered – but with a deep “scent” where necessary.

1.4 A Logical Sequence to the Titles on the Navigation Structure

(Is it easy to locate the right item from among the selections?)



We make it happen.


Home
International | Site Map | Search

About Us
Direct Marketing
Shoppers Publications
Contact Us



	Information	Opportunity	Insight	Engagement	Interaction
Search by Keyword Industry Solutions Please select: ▼ Case Studies Please select: ▼ Acquire and Grow Customers Find out more: ▼	- Customer Data Management - Data Solutions - Data Quality	- Collaboration Management - Database Marketing Solutions - Operational Enablement - Organizational Data Adoption	- Aberdeen Group - Campaign Execution Services - Customer Analysis - Digital Analytics - Marketplace Analysis - Market Research - Modeling - Results Analysis	- Traditional Direct Marketing - Digital Marketing - Contact Centers - Integrated Marketing Solutions	- Digital Interaction - Direct Mail Interaction - Contact Center Interaction - Response Management

Too many options with similar titles overwhelm the visitor. Which should you choose?

1.5 Enough Information to Ensure the Visitor Find Items that the Site Wishes Them to Reach – NO MORE, NO LESS.

(Does each page of the site offer the proper level of “scent”?)



Merkle's navigation was clear at the primary level, but quickly fell into overkill at the secondary one.

1.6 Visitor Location

(Is "Breadcrumbing" or other location-orientation device adequately and appropriately displayed?)

1.7 Navigation Benchmarks

0 ----- 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 -----
Never Sometimes Consistently Always

Site	Benchmark	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.6	Overall (18)
1	AKQK (www.AKQA.com)	3	3	3	3	2	3	17
2	Allant Group (www.allantgroup.com)	2	3	2	3	1	3	14
3	Avenue A Razorfish (www.avenuea-razorfish.com)	3	2	2	3	3	2	15
4	Chiat Day (www.tbwa.com)	3	1	1	1	2	3	11
5	Crispin Porter + Bogusky (www.cpbgroup.com)	3	0	2	1	1	0	7
6	Digitas (www.digitas.com)	2	1	3	1	3	0	10
7	Goodby, Silverstein & Partners (www.goodbysilverstein.com)	3	2	3	3	3	3	17
8	Harte-Hanks (www.harte-hanks.com)	2	1	1	0	2	3	9
9	IMC ² (www.imc2.com)	3	3	3	3	3	3	18
10	Kirshenbaum Bond (www.kb.com)	2	1	3	1	1	1	9
11	Merkle (www.merkleinc.com)	2	2	2	2	1	3	12
12	Mobius Grey (www.mobiusgrey.com)	2	1	3	0	1	0	7
13	Organic (www.organic.com)	3	3	2	3	2	3	17
14	Rapp Collins (www.rappcollins.com)	3	2	3	1	2	3	14
15	RGA (www.rga.com)	3	1	1	2	2	2	11
16	Targetbase (www.targetbase.com)	3	3	2	2	3	2	15
17	Taxi NYC (www.taxi-nyc.com)	3	2	3	2	3	3	16
18	Wieden Kennedy (www.wk.com)	3	1	3	1	2	1	11
	Benchmark Totals Avg./Total Avg.	2.66	1.77	2.33	1.77	2.05	2.44	247 2.28/13.72

1.8 Navigation Recommendations

- Less is more – in both amount and verbiage. While it might be a great idea to display a wide range of capabilities and clients, allow the interested visitor to navigate into these deeper areas by drilling farther down into the depths.
- Keep the navigation active in voice.
- Keep the navigation quick in response.
- Think of the site as though you're presenting to a client: Wow 'em with the proper execution *not* with your "ability to demonstrate execution." Several sites lost points by making the visitor wait to get requested content while the developer displayed a slow, artsy execution.
- Keep the clever titles in context. Better yet, keep them in the body copy.



Chiate Day lost points because their navigation was just too clever to be useful.

2. Organization

A well organized site:

- Leads the visitor to a desired state, transaction or call to action
- Provides visitor a clear understating of the steps required to accomplish his desired action

- *Appropriately* arranges additional elements that the site wants to introduce to the visitor
- Excludes unnecessary screen clutter that inhibits the visitor from achieving their (or the company's) desired interaction
- Follows a contextual and visual consistency such that each like-subjected page is set up and delivered in the same format.

Assessment Principles

Beyond the navigation, does the site (as a whole) have a complete and well structured purpose?

- 2.1 Consistent Use of Templates
- 2.2 A specific and unique purpose for the use of a navigation structure
- 2.3 An “apples-to-apples” format to titles within the structure
- 2.4 A logical sequence to the titles on the navigation structure

2.1 Consistent use of Template Principles

(Does the site organize the on-screen elements and stages in a harmonious fashion?)

Even once a visitor “buys in” to the experience of an exciting or challenging story treatment, they make decisions based on rational understandings they’ve learned through the current (or previous) processes of manipulation.



AKQA would have scored higher if its homepage didn't "overshadow" its client materials.

2.2 Intuitive Order/Sequence of Selections

(Does the template organization support a desire for consistent treatments and stages?)

The screens and treatments that build the experience should not depart from an established theme unless there's a rational explanation that the visitor supports or understands.



Goodby's site illustrated that they had a good grasp on visual and contextual organization skills that would easily translate to offline channels.

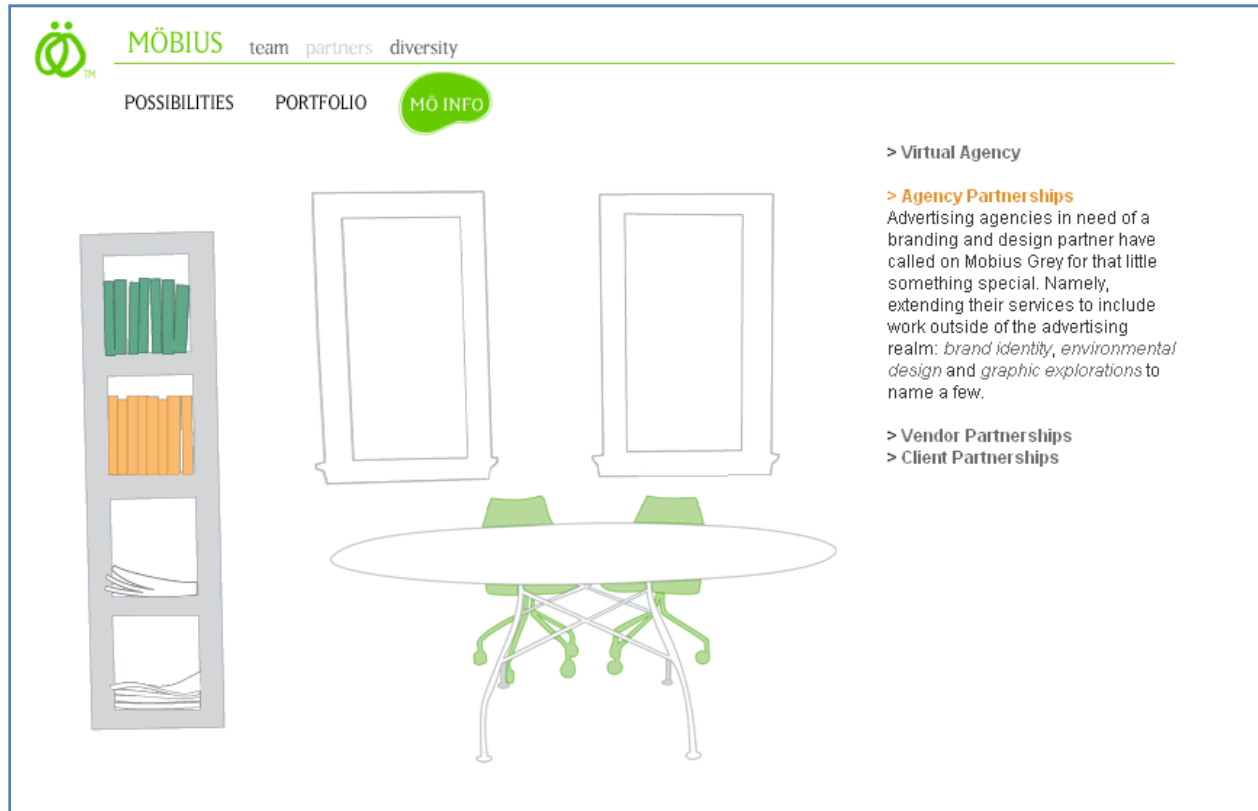
2.3 In-Page Copy

(Does the body copy support a consistent treatment of headings and content structures?)

Within and among sections, the format of the primary body copy (headings, sentence structures, page lengths, in-copy placement of call outs and call to action) should suggest organizational structure that maps to a cadent appropriate to the subject matter.

2.4 Navigational Labels

(Are all headings and navigations properly and consistently nested?)



Möbius was a cute site to explore – but I’d hate to have to perform a sitemap to illustrate its organization.

2.5 Organization Benchmarks

0 ----- 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 -----
 Never Sometimes More Consistently Always

Site	Benchmark	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	Overall (12)
1	AKQK (www.AKQA.com)	3	3	3	3	12
2	Allant Group (www.allantgroup.com)	3	3	3	3	12
3	Avenue A Razorfish (www.avenuea-razorfish.com)	3	3	3	3	12
4	Chiat Day (www.tbwa.com)	3	0	1	2	6
5	Crispin Porter + Bogusky (www.cpbgroup.com)	3	1	1	0	5
6	Digitas (www.digitas.com)	2	1	3	2	8
7	Goodby, Silverstein & Partners (www.goodbysilverstein.com)	3	3	3	3	12
8	Harte-Hanks (www.harte-hanks.com)	1	1	2	1	5
9	IMC ² (www.imc2.com)	3	3	3	3	12
10	Kirshenbaum Bond (www.kb.com)	3	0	0	0	3
11	Merkle (www.merkleinc.com)	2	2	2	2	8
12	Mobius Grey (www.mobiusgrey.com)	3	3	0	2	8
13	Organic (www.organic.com)	3	3	3	3	12
14	Rapp Collins (www.rappcollins.com)	3	2	2	2	9
15	RGA (www.rga.com)	2	3	3	3	11
16	Targetbase (www.targetbase.com)	3	3	2	2	10
17	Taxi NYC (www.taxi-nyc.com)	3	2	2	2	9
18	Wieden Kennedy (www.wk.com)	3	2	2	2	9
	Benchmark Totals Avg./Total Avg.	2.72	2.11	2.11	2.11	¹⁶³ 2.26/9.05

2.6 Organization Recommendations

- Use the reverse pyramid effect to keep the visitor moving in the right direction (if that is where they want to go).
- Keep a constant cadence to the subject matter.

3. Taxonomy

Taxonomy defines the words and icons used to represent and organize the categories of the website into appropriate classifications of information data.

Proper taxonomy is designed to be both contextual and visual (iconic) in nature.

The contextual components ensure that selections are named and grouped in accord with a visitor's expectations and mindset based on hierarchical classifications. The visual taxonomy is related to the "look and feel" of the site, but must also allow the visitor to easily discern an elements priority and value within the overall page design and larger site scope.

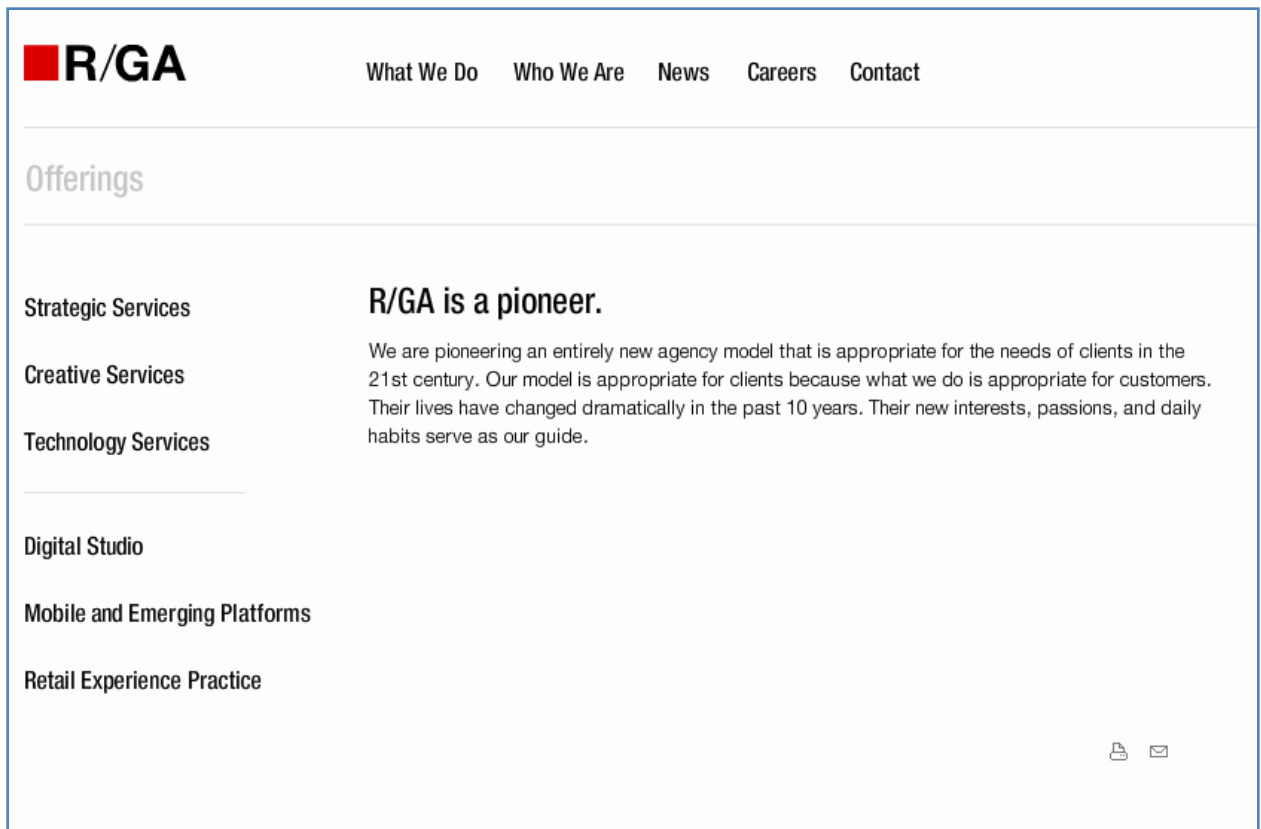
Assessment Principles

We evaluate the following classifications, naming conventions, and groupings of site products, services and contexts

- 3.1 Audience-Appropriate Verbiage
- 3.2 Navigational Naming Conventions
- 3.3 Hierarchies of Classifications
- 3.4 A logical grouping to the items in lists and structures

3.1 Audience-Appropriate Verbiage

(Does the site use words that the audience would use?)



R/GA used appropriate brevity in the all its screens and navigational conventions.

3.2 Navigational Naming Conventions

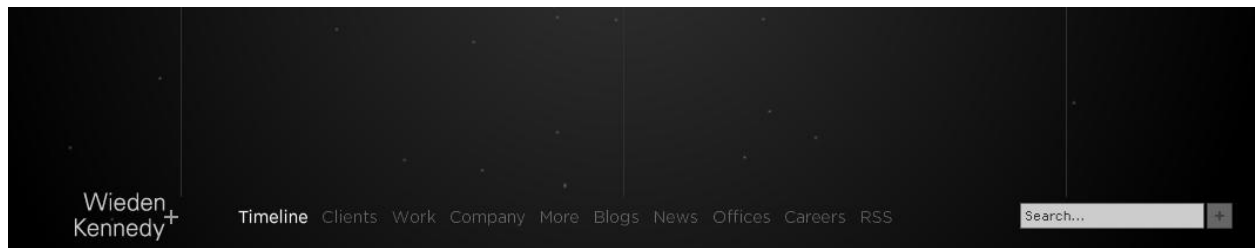
(Are navigations sufficiently unique and appropriate in their labels?)

3.3 Hierarchy of Classifications

(Do the steps, sequences, and sub-sequences of items and tasks appear in proper order and placement?)



Some of Taxi's hierarchies were confusing. I wouldn't look under "who we are" to find the client list.



I hope not to [often] find the word "More" embedded in a navigation structure such as on Wieden+Kennedy's site.

3.4 A Logical grouping to the items in lists and structures

(Are similar items and tasks appropriately grouped or separated according to the need/desires of the site visitor?)

3.5 Taxonomy Benchmarks

0 ----- 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 -----
Never Sometimes More Consistently Always

Site	Benchmark	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4	Overall (12)
1	AKQK (www.AKQA.com)	3	2	3	2	10

2	Allant Group (www.allantgroup.com)	2	2	3	1	8
3	Avenue A Razorfish (www.avenuea-razorfish.com)	3	3	2	1	9
4	Chiat Day (www.tbwa.com)	1	1	2	2	6
5	Crispin Porter + Bogusky (www.cpbgroup.com)	3	3	1	1	8
6	Digitas (www.digitas.com)	3	3	3	3	12
7	Goodby, Silverstein & Partners (www.goodbysilverstein.com)	3	3	3	3	12
8	Harte-Hanks (www.harte-hanks.com)	2	2	1	3	8
9	IMC ² (www.imc2.com)	3	2	2	3	10
10	Kirshenbaum Bond (www.kb.com)	1	3	2	3	9
11	Merkle (www.merkleinc.com)	2	1	1	2	6
12	Mobius Grey (www.mobiusgrey.com)	1	2	1	3	7
13	Organic (www.organic.com)	3	3	3	3	12
14	Rapp Collins (www.rappcollins.com)	3	3	3	3	12
15	RGA (www.rga.com)	2	3	3	3	11
16	Targetbase (www.targetbase.com)	2	2	3	3	10
17	Taxi NYC (www.taxi-nyc.com)	2	1	3	3	9
18	Wieden Kennedy (www.wk.com)	3	3	3	2	11
	Benchmark Totals Avg./Total Avg.	2.33	2.33	2.33	2.44	170 2.36/9.44

3.6 Taxonomy Recommendations

- Keep the content fresh and VERY short (at first).
- Leave the clever titles to the kickers and in-body copy.
- Time effects to the length of the navigational titles (ie, don't make reader read lots of navigation copy AND wait for cool treatments to "bloom").

4. Content

It's important a site clearly organize – and present – its contextual breadth so that the visitor immediately understands there will be value in proceeding – that they can find information and complete tasks as promised.

Conversely, it's important not to over-extend the site *beyond* your Brand promise. Too often, a strong Brand will get lost or “watered down” by attempting to be all things to all people.

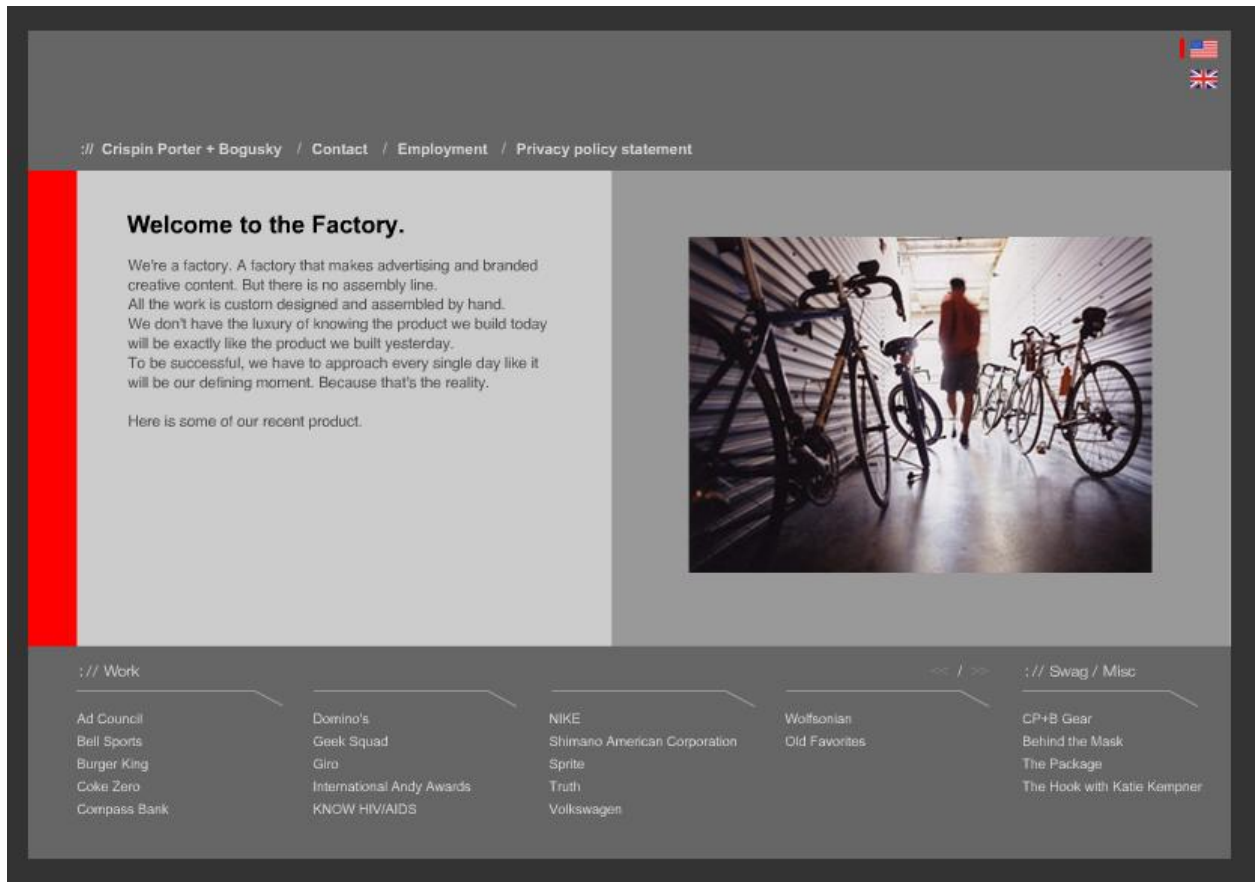
Assessment Principles

We evaluate the following context and contextual issues, styles and standards:

- 4.1 Audience-Appropriateness
- 4.2 Channel -Appropriateness
- 4.3 Editing, Proof Reading, and Fact Checking
- 4.4 Discernable Main Focus
- 4.5 Action-Oriented Content
- 4.6 Unique and Necessary Content
- 4.7 Style Guide
- 4.8 Consistent Adherence to the Central Theme

4.1 ***Audience-Appropriateness***

(Is the content written at a reading level and in a format best suited to the intended reader?)



Not certain that the potential visitor would find the “Factory” reference something to highlight. And so much product.

4.2 Channel-Appropriateness

(Is the content appropriate for the online channel?)

4.3 Editing, Proof Reading, and Fact Checking

(Is the content grammatically correct?)

4.4 Discernable Main Focus

(Is the “meat” of the context easy to locate and surmise?)



Digitas is right to put its mission statement on the homepage – but it's a little ambiguous to be of much value.

4.5 **Action-Oriented Content**

(Does the content appropriately entice the visitor?)

4.6 **Unique and Necessary Content**

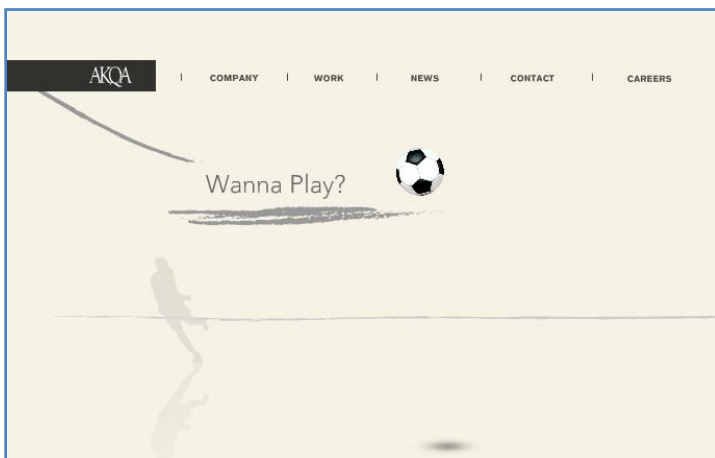
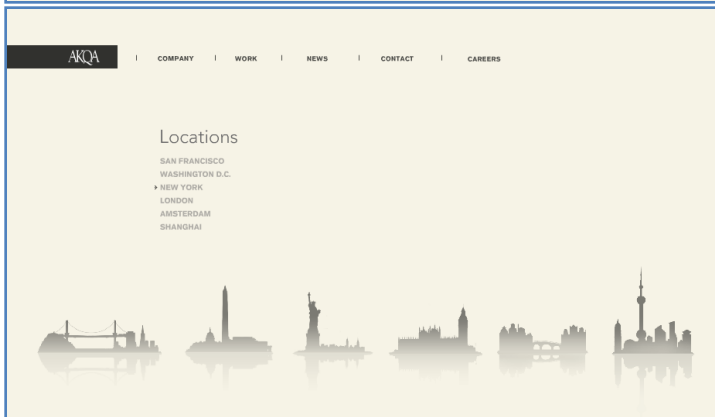
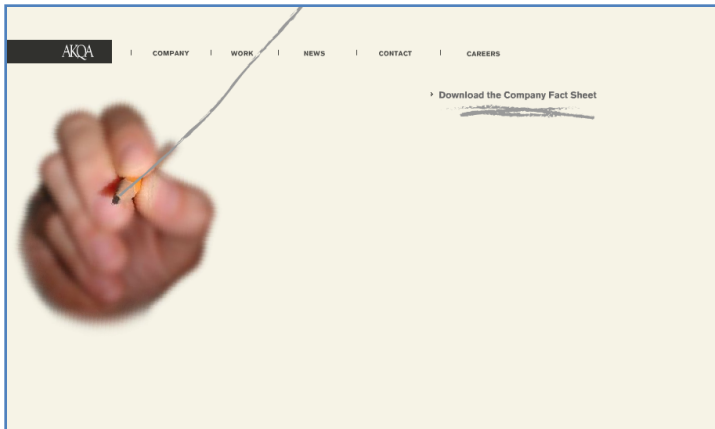
(Is the content free of redundancy and provide/support an actionable value?)

4.7 **Style Guide**

(Is there evidence that the content follows grammatical style norms and consistencies?)

4.8 **Consistent Adherence to the Central Theme**

(Does the content support the site "experience?")



AKQA had several cool themes but might have been stronger if they focused on just one.

4.9 Content Benchmarks

0 ----- 1 -----

Never

Sometimes

2 -----

More Consistently

3 -----

Always

Site	Benchmark	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5	4.6	4.7	4.8	Overall (24)
1	AKQK (www.AKQA.com)	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	21
2	Allant Group (www.allantgroup.com)	2	3	2	3	2	1	3	2	18
3	Avenue A Razorfish (www.avenuea-razorfish.com)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	17
4	Chiat Day(www.tbwa.com)	1	1	3	2	2	1	2	3	15
5	Crispin Porter + Bogusky (www.cpbgroup.com)	1	2	2	2	1	1	3	3	15
6	Digitas (www.digitas.com)	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	15
7	Goodby, Silverstein & Partners (www.goodbysilverstein.com)	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	23
8	Harte-Hanks (www.harte-hanks.com)	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	12
9	IMC ² (www.imc2.com)	3	0	1	2	2	1	3	2	14
10	Kirshenbaum Bond (www.kb.com)	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	11
11	Merkle (www.merkleinc.com)	3	1	1	2	2	1	3	1	14
12	Mobius Grey (www.mobiusgrey.com)	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	22
13	Organic (www.organic.com)	2	1	2	1	1	1	3	3	14
14	Rapp Collins (www.rappcollins.com)	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	24
15	RGA (www.rga.com)	3	2	3	3	2	1	3	2	19
16	Targetbase (www.targetbase.com)	2	2	1	2	1	1	3	2	15
17	Taxi NYC (www.taxi-nyc.com)	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	3	15
18	Wieden Kennedy (www.wk.com)	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	17
	Benchmark Totals Avg./Total Avg.	2.22	2.0	2.22	2.05	1.88	1.55	2.55	2.44	301 2.09/16.72

4.10 Content Recommendations

- Reverse pyramid, active voice newspaper style content needs to be used on the site.
- Use the *Chicago Manual of Style* or *AP Style Guide*.
- More in-context links to help move the visitor deeper into the experience presented in the copy. (Bonus: Establish a standard format that the visitor can get used to and they will begin to consider the site as their “go to source”)
- Make sure every piece of copy follows a consistent format and uses the same copy fonts.
- Don’t allow your advertisers to use your fonts/styles on the site. This will help strengthen your Brand while building continuity.
- Give the visitor some Web “scent” to follow within the copy and page layout. Dave Chaffer (an acknowledged specialist in eMarketing) defines *Web scent* as the practice of inserting cues such as text and image hyperlinks and page labels that web browsers follow to find content or services when navigating a site.
- Hire a copywriter who is accustomed to working with advertising contexts.

5. Features and Functionality

In evaluation, we assess existing site features and functionality to determine they compliment the visitor’s experience and are in keeping with the Brand Promise or central “theme” of the site.

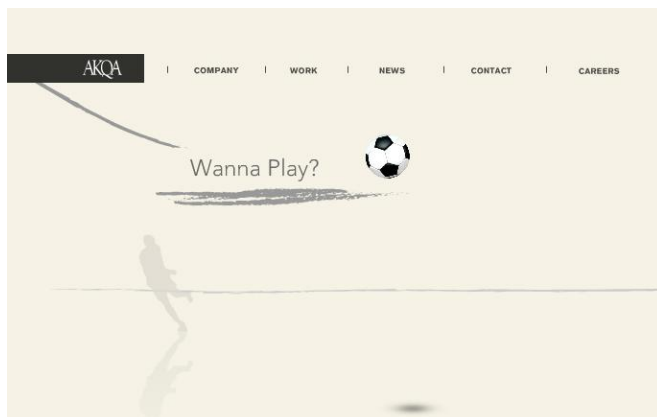
Assessment Principles

We evaluate the following Features and Functions:

- 5.1 Appropriate Features to Support the Brand/Site
- 5.2 Expected Channel Functions
- 5.3 Mechanical Quality of Features and Functions
- 5.4 Architecture of Functions is Appropriate
- 5.5 Unique Implementation and Execution
- 5.6 Visitor Value
- 5.7 Viral Draw

5.1 Appropriate Features to Support the Brand/Site

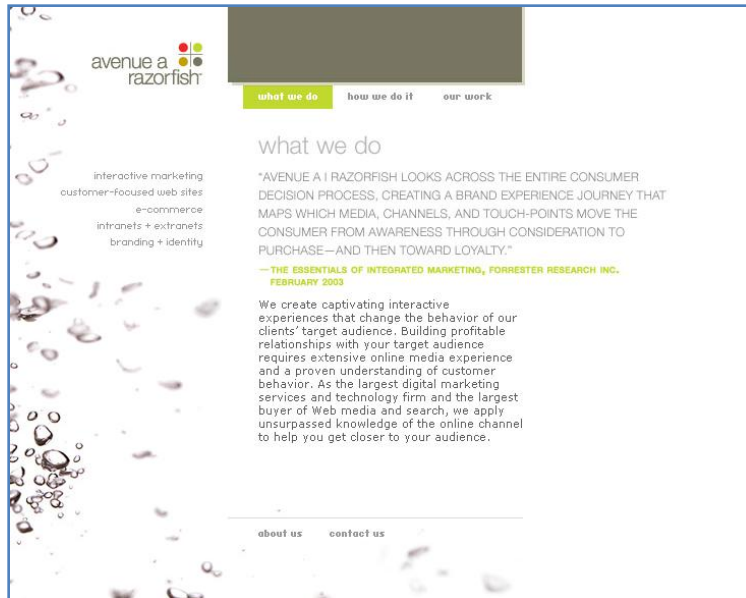
(Does the Brand/Site provide and benefit from expected interactives?)



The AQKA site had a lovely, quick experience on most pages.



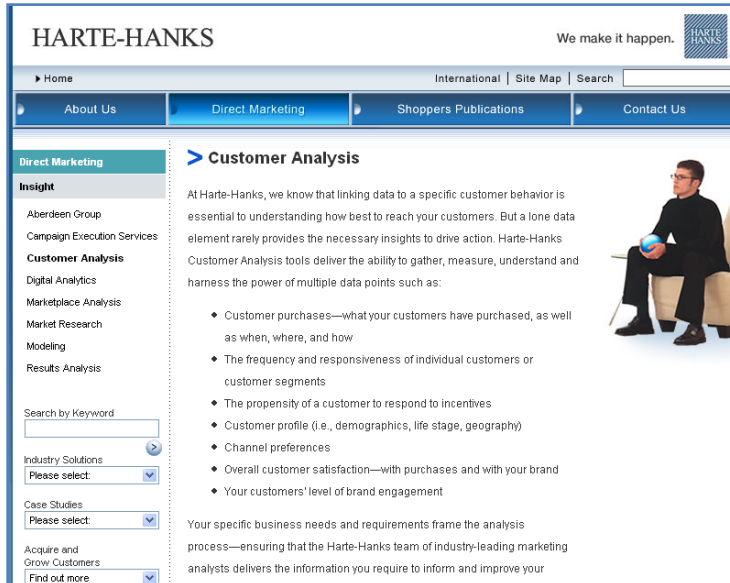
Rapp Collins Experience was fresh and innovative – but took a little too long between sequences.



Razorfish suffers from “cobbler’s children” syndrome. Maybe they don’t have time to really care about their site.

5.2 Expected Channel Functions

(Do the features contain all the functional characteristics – search, login help, browser plugin support, etc – that a typical visitor would require for the experience?)



Most of the sites didn’t need a “search” engine. The one’s that used it were an indication that the site was too big for its audience’ needs.

5.3 *Mechanical Quality of Features and Functions*

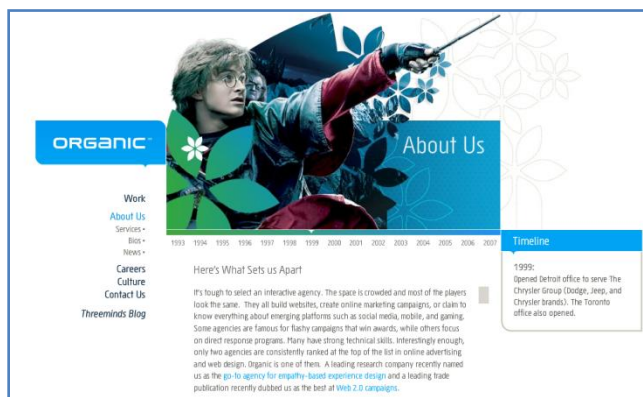
(Do the features and functions perform as promised/expected?)

5.4 *Architecture of Functions is Appropriate*

(Can the visitor intuitively locate and discern fields, controls, and required interactions?)



Wieden + Kennedy site was fun to manipulate, but too much work if I really had to really on it for information.



Organic Site was quick and functional. They did a terrific job incorporating their navigations into the “experience” of the site design.

5.5 Unique Implementation and Execution

(Do the features and functions offer something that have not been as elegantly and interestingly achieved elsewhere on the Web?)



Targetbase was dated and boring.

5.6 Visitor Value

(Would the visitor's experience be significantly reduced if the features/functions were not available?)

5.7 Viral Draw

(Do the features/functions elicit a level of excitement or utility that would cause the visitor to campaign on the site's behalf?)

5.8 Features/Functions Benchmarks

0 ----- 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- Never Sometimes More Consistently Always									
Site	Benchmark	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4	5.5	5.6	5.7	Overall (21)
1	AKQK (www.AKQA.com)	3	2	3	3	1	1	1	14
2	Allant Group (www.allantgroup.com)	0	2	3	2	0	0	0	7
3	Avenue A Razorfish (www.avenuea-razorfish.com)	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	6
4	Chiat Day (www.tbwa.com)	1	2	2	3	1	0	0	9
5	Crispin Porter + Bogusky (www.cpbgroup.com)	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	5
6	Digitas (www.digitas.com)	0	1	3	3	0	0	0	7
7	Goodby, Silverstein & Partners (www.goodbysilverstein.com)	3	3	3	3	1	2	1	16
8	Harte-Hanks (www.harte-hanks.com)	0	3	3	3	0	0	0	9
9	IMC ² (www.imc2.com)	1	3	3	3	0	0	1	11
10	Kirshenbaum Bond (www.kb.com)	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	4
11	Merkle (www.merkleinc.com)	0	1	2	3	0	0	0	6
12	Mobius Grey (www.mobiusgrey.com)	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	3
13	Organic (www.organic.com)	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	20
14	Rapp Collins (www.rappcollins.com)	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	19
15	RGA (www.rga.com)	2	1	3	3	1	1	0	11
16	Targetbase (www.targetbase.com)	1	1	3	3	1	1	0	10
17	Taxi NYC (www.taxi-nyc.com)	1	2	3	1	1	1	0	9
18	Wieden Kennedy (www.wk.com)	2	3	3	2	2	3	2	17
	Benchmark Totals	1.16	1.61	2.55	2.55	0.77	0.83	0.66	183
	Avg./Total Avg.								1.45/10.16

5.9 Features and Functions Recommendations

- Don't use functions just to illustrate that you can. Establish a format for the features and let the portfolio pieces do the heavy lifting.
- Do keep the portfolio small and special. There is no bonus for having "lots."

6. Calls to Action

"Call to Action" (C2A) refers to how the site **communicates, entices, and successfully completes hand-off** of a visitor to a next (or preferred) stage in the experience. The successful C2A is the ultimate goal of any website. However, the C2A doesn't have to be presented such that the visitor can complete *every* transaction online. Regardless, the site should provide adequate information so that the visitor is allowed [better: *WISHES*] to proceed to the next stage of a desired task – even if that task is delivered via an offline channel.

Example:

Wrong: For more information, call us.
Right: For more information, contact [Engauge Digital](#) now!
1-(800)-555-1234 (Monday –Friday, 8am to 7pm, EST).

Assessment Principles

We evaluate the following Features and Functions:

- 6.1 State Value. Provide Value. Restate Value. Lead the Visitor to the Next Value.
- 6.2 Motivational Cue
- 6.3 Immediateness of Impact
- 6.4 Instructionally Upfront
- 6.5 Free of Irrelevant Hoops and Red Tape

6.1 State Value. Provide Value. Restate Value. Lead the Visitor to the Next Value.

(Does the C2A alert and remind the visitor of its benefits?)



Some of Alliant's C2A only made the site seem more daunting.

6.2 Motivational Cue

(Does the C2A make sense and consistently appear in a given location?)

6.3 Immediateness of Impact

(Is there an element of instant gratification?)

6.4 Instructionally Upfront

(Are there no surprises in the C2A format?)

Goodby, Silverstein & Partners

ABOUT PORTFOLIO CLIENT LIST CASE STUDIES CONTACT
INTERACTIVE < 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 > PRINT DESIGN OUTDOOR TV INNOVATIVE MEDIA



Not easy to see here, but Goodby's rollovers were well executed, and the C2As were quite consistent.

6.5 Free of Irrelevant Hoops and Red Tape

(is the visitor's "reward" within appropriate reach without an ever-dangling carrot or unnecessary bottleneck?)

The screenshot shows a registration form titled 'CREATIVE PHILOSOPHY / CLIENTS'. The form includes fields for Email Address, Confirm Email, First Name, Last Name, Phone Number, Address, City, State, and ZIP. A 'SUBMIT' button is at the bottom. The form is set against a background featuring a computer monitor, a printer, and some decorative elements. A 'CLOSE ME' button is in the top right corner.

Why did Rapp ruin the experience by making the visitor sign in just to view the portfolio? This surprise hoop was not a good use of upfront instruction.

6.6 “Call To Action” Organization Benchmarks

0 ----- 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 -----
 Never Sometimes More Consistently Always

Site	Benchmark	6.1	6.2	6.3	6.4	6.5	Overall (12)
1	AKQK (www.AKQA.com)	NA	3	1	3	2	9
2	Allant Group (www.allantgroup.com)	NA	2	3	3	1	9
3	Avenue A Razorfish (www.avenuea-razorfish.com)	NA	2	2	2	1	7
4	Chiat Day (www.tbwa.com)	NA	0	1	1	0	2
5	Crispin Porter + Bogusky (www.cpbgroup.com)	NA	3	2	3	2	10
6	Digitas (www.digitas.com)	NA	2	2	2	1	7
7	Goodby, Silverstein & Partners (www.goodbysilverstein.com)	NA	3	2	3	2	10
8	Harte-Hanks (www.harte-hanks.com)	NA	1	1	2	2	6
9	IMC ² (www.imc2.com)	NA	0	1	0	2	3
10	Kirshenbaum Bond (www.kb.com)	NA	1	2	2	2	7
11	Merkle (www.merkleinc.com)	NA	1	1	2	2	6
12	Mobius Grey (www.mobiusgrey.com)	NA	0	0	1	1	2
13	Organic (www.organic.com)	NA	1	2	1	2	6
14	Rapp Collins (www.rappcollins.com)	NA	0	1	0	1	2
15	RGA (www.rga.com)	NA	2	2	2	2	8
16	Targetbase (www.targetbase.com)	NA	0	0	1	1	2
17	Taxi NYC (www.taxi-nyc.com)	NA	1	2	1	1	5
18	Wieden Kennedy (www.wk.com)	NA	1	0	0	0	1
	Benchmark Totals Avg./Total Avg.	0	1.33	1.38	1.61	1.38	102 1.13./5.66

6.7 “Call To Action” Recommendations

- Use them. On every page. At every turn.
- Don’t make me jump through hoops that I *know* are a benefit to only YOU – not to ME.
- Don’t drop the experience just because I’m filling out a form (worse: don’t make me fill out a form to continue the experience).
- Keep the momentum/theme up right to the exit screen.

7. Look and Feel

A visitor’s first impression of a website often sets the tone for their confidence in a company and the scope/quality of its products and services.

To retain the trust of your target audience and customers, it’s important for a site’s look and feel to align with your Brand promise.

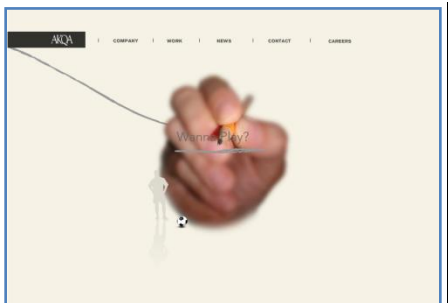
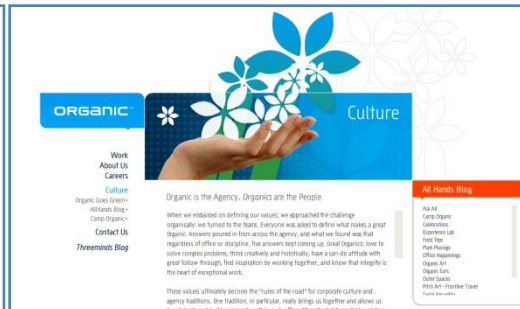
Assessment Principles

We evaluate the following Look and Feel issues:

- 7.1 Visual Attractiveness
- 7.2 Message-Appropriate Execution of Color and Imagery
- 7.3 Brand-Appropriate Execution of Experience
- 7.4 Audience-Appropriate Execution of Media
- 7.5 Channel-Appropriate Execution of Media
- 7.6 ADA Compliances

7.1 Visual Attractiveness

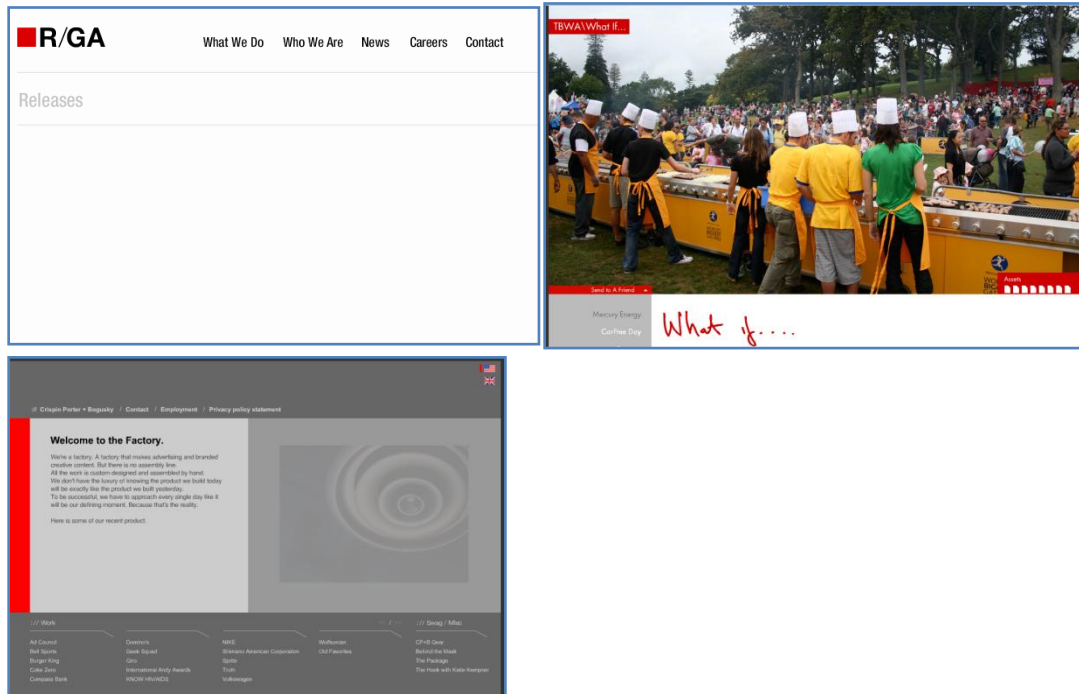
(Does the overall site look pleasing to the visitor?)



These sites were exquisite to look at AND informative: Rapp Collins, Organic, AQKA, Taxi.



These sites were [only] good looking: Mobius, Targetbase, Razorfish,



These sites were dated: R/GA, Chiate, Goodby, Crispin Porter, Allant.

7.2 Message-Appropriate Execution of Color and Imagery

(Are colors and images in keeping with the subject matter?)

7.3 Brand-Appropriate Execution of Experience

(Does the experience enhance or support a “holistic” Brand experience?)

[such that the site experience can be assumed to be part of a larger Brand experience]

7.4 Audience-Appropriate Execution of Media

(Does the site look like one that the intended visitor would want to visit?)

7.5 Channel-Appropriate Execution of Media

(Do the colors, images, sounds, videos, etc. work in this channel?)

7.6 *Innovation and Creativity*

(Does the site have a uniquely inspiring approach that sets it as a trend setting or memorable experience?)

7.7 *ADA Compliances*

(Is the site designed such that it does NOT alienate or exclude any of its intended audience due to a person's disability?)

7.7 Look/Feel Benchmarks

Site	Benchmark	7.1	7.2	7.3	7.4	7.5	7.6	7.7	Overall (21)
1	AKQK (www.AKQA.com)	2	2	1	2	2	0	0	9
2	Allant Group (www.allantgroup.com)	1	1	3	2	1	0	3	11
3	Avenue A Razorfish (www.avenuea-razorfish.com)	2	1	3	2	3	0	2	13
4	Chiat Day (www.tbwa.com)	2	3	3	3	3	1	1	16
5	Crispin Porter + Bogusky (www.cpbgroup.com)	2	1	3	1	3	0	0	10
6	Digitas (www.digitas.com)	2	1	3	2	3	0	3	14
7	Goodby, Silverstein & Partners (www.goodbysilverstein.com)	3	3	3	2	3	1	0	15
8	Harte-Hanks (www.harte-hanks.com)	1	1	3	1	1	0	2	9
9	IMC ² (www.imc2.com)	3	2	2	2	3	1	1	14
10	Kirshenbaum Bond (www.kb.com)	0	1	3	2	1	0	1	8
11	Merkle (www.merkleinc.com)	2	3	3	2	3	0	3	16
12	Mobius Grey (www.mobiusgrey.com)	2	3	3	1	2	0	0	11
13	Organic (www.organic.com)	3	3	3	3	3	2	0	17
14	Rapp Collins (www.rappcollins.com)	3	2	3	3	2	3	0	16
15	RGA (www.rga.com)	3	3	3	3	3	0	1	16
16	Targetbase (www.targetbase.com)	1	1	3	1	1	0	1	8
17	Taxi NYC (www.taxi-nyc.com)	1	1	2	1	1	3	2	11
18	Wieden Kennedy (www.wk.com)	3	2	3	1	2	3	0	14
	Benchmark Avg./Total Avg.	2	1.88	2.77	1.88	2.22	0.77	1.11	228 12.66/1.80

7.8 Look/Feel Recommendations

- Favorite Websites From this selection of websites: **Goodby, Silverstein & Partners, RGA & Organic**. These sites do the best job of cleanly showcasing the work, easy to navigate, incorporate some sort of innovative design element, and are most appealing in terms of crisp, high end contemporary design.
- Highest Overall Points: **Organic Won the most points**. It has a very colorful, interesting layout, innovative usage of the main callout (flip), and fast and easy to navigate.
- Lowest Points Overall: **Targetbase the design is outdated, bland and lacked innovation and visual appeal**.

7.1 Visual Attractiveness

7.2 Message-Appropriate Execution of Color and Imagery

7.3 Brand-Appropriate Execution of Experience

7.4 Audience-Appropriate Execution of Media

7.5 Channel-Appropriate Execution of Media

7.6 ADA Compliances

- Indicate cutting edge technology and vision in a non-trendy, accessible and classic wrapper.
- Dress to impress. Design the site so that you won't be embarrassed by it or have to answer the question "what were you thinking!?" in ANY context (especially if you find yourself presenting it to a key client).
- The look and feel should set a standard for the high level of execution we expect of ourselves and promise to our clients.
- The site isn't only our shingle, it's our résumé. It should provide a visually accurate representation of our Brand Promise, our integrity, our sense of style, and our abilities as a cutting edge agency.





He: "This résumé is pink."

She: "It's scented too! I think it gives it that little something extra, don't you?"

Overall Benchmarks

Based on the seven categories, our overview analysis suggests the following grades:

Site	Benchmark Category (Max)	1 Nav (18)	2 Org (12)	3 Tax (12)	4 Con (24)	5 F/F (21)	6 C2A (12)	7 L/F (21)	Overall 120 (40 items)
4	AKQK (www.AKQA.com)	17	(12)	10	21	14	9	9	92 (2.3)
10	Allant Group (www.allantgroup.com)	14	(12)	8	12	7	9	11	73 (1.82)
8	Avenue A Razorfish (www.avenuea-razorfish.com)	15	(12)	9	17	6	7	13	79 (1.95)
13	Chiat Day (www.tbwa.com)	11	6	6	15	9	2	16	65 (1.65)
14	Crispin Porter + Bogusky (www.cpbgroup.com)	7	5	8	15	5	10	10	60 (1.50)
10	Digitas (www.digitas.com)	10	8	(12)	15	7	7	14	73 (1.82)
1	Goodby, Silverstein & Partners (www.goodbysilverstein.com)	17	(12)	(12)	23	16	10	15	105 (2.65)
15	Harte-Hanks (www.harte-hanks.com)	9	5	8	12	9	6	9	58 (1.45)
6	IMC ² (www.imc2.com)	(18)	(12)	10	14	11	3	14	82 (2.05)
16	Kirshenbaum Bond (www.kb.com)	9	3	9	11	4	7	8	51 (1.27)
12	Merkle (www.merkleinc.com)	12	8	6	14	6	6	16	68 (1.70)
14	Mobius Grey (www.mobiusgrey.com)	7	8	7	22	3	2	11	60 (1.50)
2	Organic (www.organic.com)	17	(12)	(12)	14	20	6	17	98 (2.45)
3	Rapp Collins (www.rappcollins.com)	14	9	(12)	(24)	19	2	16	96 (2.4)
5	RGA (www.rga.com)	11	11	11	19	11	8	16	87 (2.17)
11	Targetbase (www.targetbase.com)	15	10	10	15	10	2	8	70 (1.75)
9	Taxi NYC (www.taxi-nyc.com)	16	9	9	15	9	5	11	74 (1.85)
7	Wieden Kennedy (www.wk.com)	11	9	11	17	17	1	14	80 (2.00)
	Benchmark Avg.	12.77	8.38	8.33	15.22	10.22	5.66	12.66	76.22

Overall Observations

- 80-20 rule seems to be very apparent in these site designs. 80% of the sites did OK. Only 5% did great. 15% did lousy.
- Powerful visuals alone (Mobius, Wieden, Taxi, AKQA...) were not enough to take the experience to the top.

Overall Recommendations

- Consider the scores of the top four sites and allow us to further dissect the elements that make them special.
- Pay special attention to those areas where the other 14 sites score highly. These are just as important.
- Don't subjectively conclude that we believe the Goodby site is the BEST site to mimic. There are elements and lessons to be learned from each of these sites.
- Don't focus solely on visual/functional aspects of the experience. The bottom line is going to be in demonstrating that how these treatments moved the needle for our clients.
- Select a copywriter with advertising experience and have that person (or team) present contextual treatments just as we would have our visual designers present a visual one.

Several factors and principles should be considered in the development of recommendations for Websites. Consider the following areas.

Design for Decision Making and Information Gathering

While making a decision about augmenting the visitor's experience on the site, remember the "cobbler's children" principle and treat our site like a prized client.

Design for Nomadic Behavior

Visitors are not 100% task focused. They often wander during the experience -- both physically and mentally. Encourage their focus by rewarding them with on-subject data that is positioned to build the excitement. *Don't encourage* them to wander away from your information by inserting superfluous information and visuals. And don't *discourage* them by making the right information hard to find or placed out of logical order.

Leverage Positive Reinforcement: Our site IS our portfolio.

Web visitors often need motivation to get through an experience. Positive reinforcement is a powerful motivator. With positive reinforcement, humans increase particular behaviors when

these behaviors are paired with something they desire. In the case of selecting a vendor, visitors want to believe we're innovative and resourceful – but with a purpose.

Visitor-Centered Communication Best Practices

A key function of the Website is to provide information, so it should follow best practices in information design and writing. Customers need complete, correct, credible, persuasive information available in layers and in an easy-to-scan formats.

Include the Right *Information Types*

From the customer's perspective, most information serves one of four purposes. Website information pages will use a majority of the purposes listed below.

Property	What is	An explanation of something, such as a fact, concept, or structure
Principle	What should be done	Rules, laws, guidelines
Procedure	What you have to do	A set of steps or tasks to achieve a result
Process	What happens	A series of events occurring over time, usually the "big picture"

Emphasize the Right *Information Topics* to Support Decision Making

Customers are interested in a variety of information to make a decision to continue, become members, return to the site, etc. Rely on Frequently Asked Question content only as a last resort – when the primer information just gets too detailed to keep the momentum up and the visitor ontrack.

Include the Right Persuasive Appeals to Influence Decision Making

Getting a visitor to do *anything* online involves a level of persuasion. The information and writing should not only be clear and complete, it should also be convincing and credible. One way to add persuasive punch is to include these three appeals:

Logos	Rational appeal	Include quantitative evidence such as statistics, rate comparison, feature comparison, etc.
Pathos	Emotional appeal	Feature qualitative evidence such as case studies, customer reviews, testimonials, quotes; imbue language and images with the appropriate tone.
Ethos	Credibility appeal	Note years of experience, sources or references, affiliation with other credible brands; ensure copy is



| error-free; use high-quality images, etc.

Write for the Web

Layer Information from Basics to Details

Thinking of your information as layers will help you avoid overwhelming your audiences with information on a single web page. Layers also allow your customers to choose the amount of information they want.

Organize Text into Short Sections with Labels

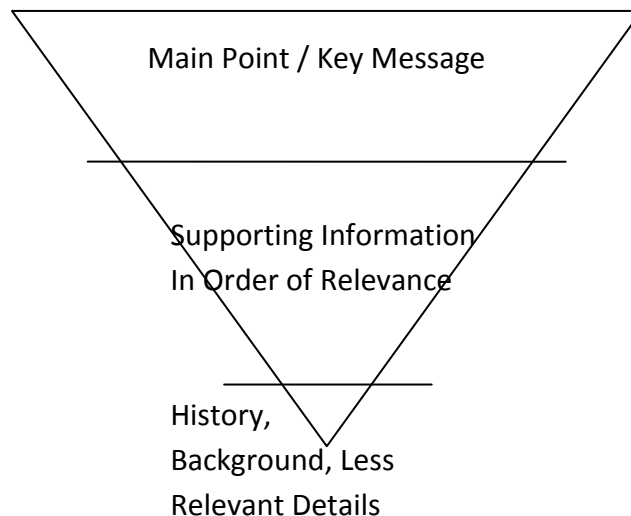
Your customers will not read your web pages like they read a novel. They will scan instead, focusing on headings, summaries, and labels until they find the information they want. Only then will they read the details.

Chunk your writing into small, logical sections.

Label them clearly and descriptively. Think about helping the customers decide whether to read the section.

Organize Text Using the Inverted Pyramid Writing Style

Used in journalism and mass media, the inverted pyramid writing style puts your key message first, then supporting information in the order it is relevant to readers.



Use Short Words and Sentences and Active Voice Sentence Construction

Less is more when it comes to words and the web. Even highly educated audiences understand web writing more quickly when it uses short words and sentences. A few techniques to try: Stick to words with no more than three syllables.

Avoid modifiers that don't add meaning (e.g. really, basically, generally).



- Use active voice.

Passive: The client **was happy with** our team approach. (The subject receives the action.)

Active: Our team **WOWS** our clients. (The subject does the action.)

- **Use Our Visitor's Words**

Use words that your visitors are likely to use, especially for navigation, headings, and key labels. These words make information on your website easier for your audience to

- Find through search engines.
- Find once they're on your site.
- Understand quickly.

Use a Personable, Appropriate Tone

Use a personable tone and words appropriate for your brand's major attributes, the product, and the customer's situation.

Use a Polished Style That Customers Enjoy Reading

Polished writing is more enjoyable to read than basic writing because it's easier to read, it's more clear, and it is more interesting. The more a customer reads, the greater the opportunity to persuade the customer. A few techniques for a polished style include

Rhythm: For a prose section, use a mix of short and long sentences to keep the pace interesting.

Balance: Use parallel structure for headings, list items, or sentences with a similar relationship. Parallel structure clarifies ideas, makes text easier to scan, and enhances rhythm.

Simile, Metaphor, Analogy: These techniques involve comparison, a powerful way to explain abstract concepts or services and new or complex information. For instance, Prudential compares its stability to a rock with the metaphor in its tagline "Rock Solid. Market Wise."

Summary of Tactical Recommendations

While recommendations have been woven throughout this document, the list below is a recap/inclusion of some of the most strategic suggestions to consider when building out the Website prototype.

Technical/Structural Recommendations

- Make all microsites open in a separate window.
- Separate microsites from the navigation via banner placement.
- Remove the clever titles from the navigation. These can be used as “kicker titles” on the actual pages, but won’t be as easy to recall or locate out of context.

Call to Action Recommendations

- Increase visual emphasis of Calls to Action – specifically buttons – and place them independently in prominent and consistent locations as opposed to within other graphics.
- Clearly call out the various options for “Learn More”, “Sign Up” and “View...” to avoid any confusion for actions.
- Call the visitor to action by making it clear that said action offers an immediate benefit.

Content/Organizational Recommendations

The main page should include sufficient information to set the stage for the excitement and the experience that we’re trying to sell.

- Reduce the amount of copy in each paragraph so that it becomes one line of text where possible. Text should supplement or compliment the text presented in site imagery and headings.
- If paragraph information cannot be scaled down – perhaps for legal reasons – consider bulleting some of the text to make content more readable and scannable by the user.
- A welcoming statement will help assure the user that they are in the right place and help them understand what they can do next.
- On the main page, bring the Main information presented into the center of the screen so that it excites action and a sense of “being there.”