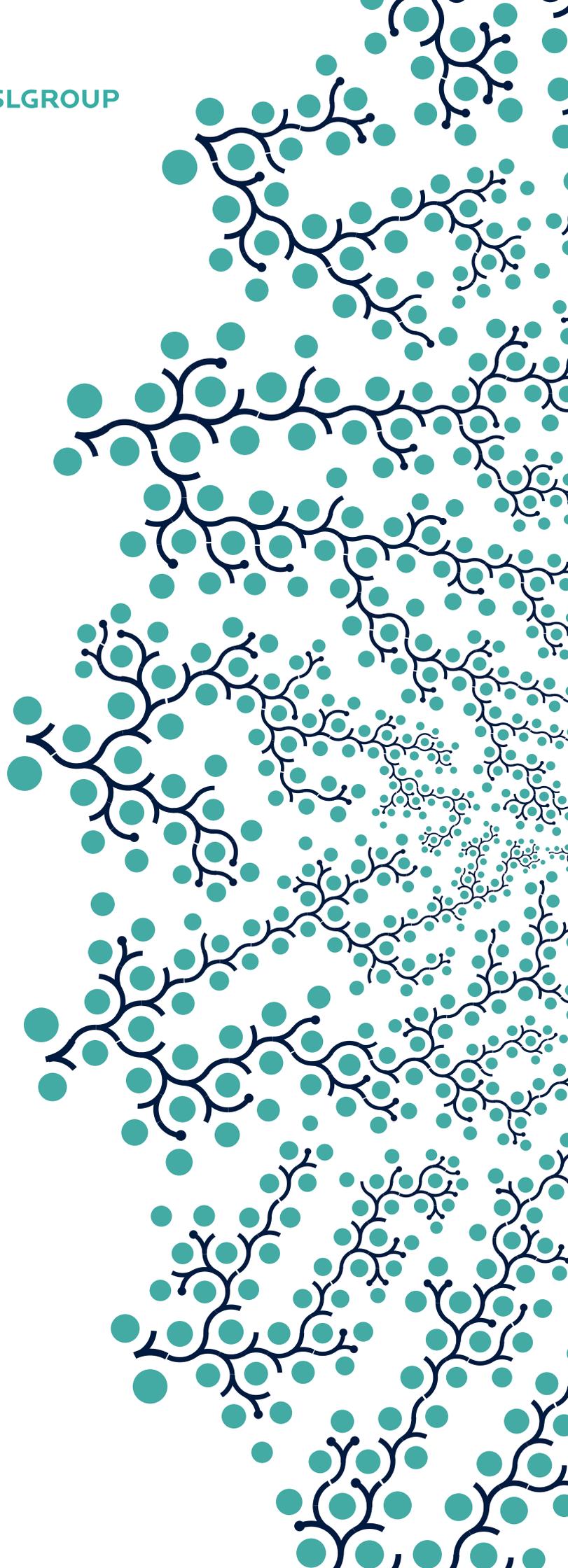


# Put your corporate website centre stage

An MSLGROUP guide to why you need to create a best in class corporate website that sits at the heart of a high impact digital communications ecosystem. And how you go about building one.

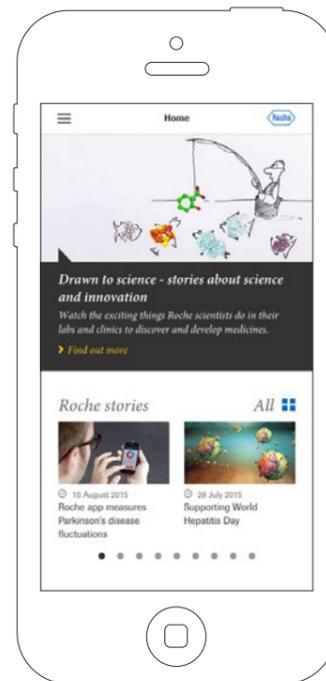


# Put your corporate website centre stage

Pretty much every PLC in the world still has one, the biggest ones are visited by millions of people annually and their use is increasing year on year. A corporate website is the most powerful weapon in an organisation's communications arsenal. It's the channel with most reach, greatest potential impact and the only one they can control, entirely.

## Recent best practice trends in corporate websites

The best corporate websites illustrate a fresh approach to the world of online corporate communications and highlight some common trends that should be considered when redeveloping a site.

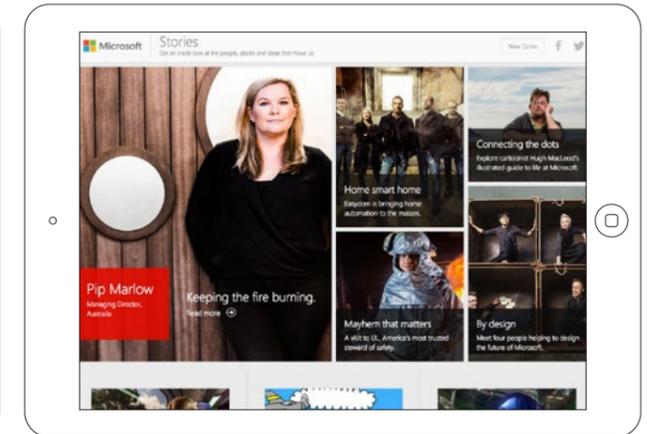
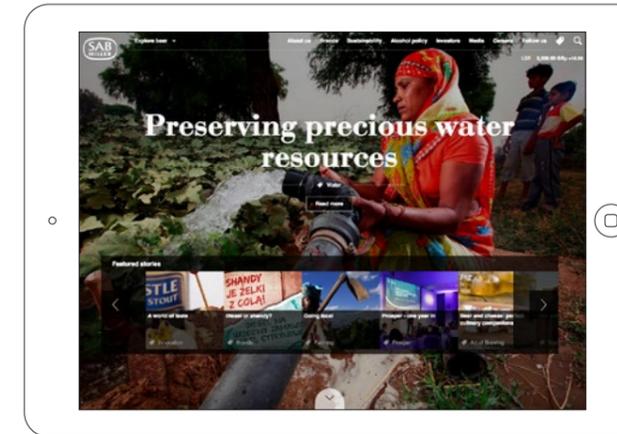


## Simple design

We are beginning to see simpler design systems being used within corporate websites. This is partly being driven by the need for these experiences to work on mobile devices and partly by a more editorial approach to the way content is presented.

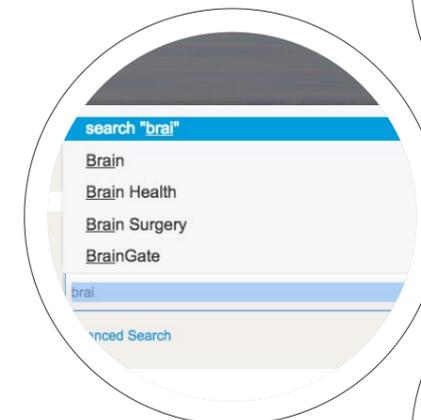
## Storytelling hubs

Lots of corporate websites are now leading with storytelling and create hubs for stories at the front of their sites. This is a result of a trend towards corporate websites becoming part of a wider strategy centred on influencing audiences and building brand reputation through sustained conversations across multiple channels – without the need to solely rely on traditional media sources.



## Useful tools to improve the user experience

There is an increased focus on useful search and navigation devices that help people to get to the content they are looking for quicker and enhance their journeys through a site.



## Site content

Site content optimised for search and promotion: We are finally beginning to see some evidence of search optimisation and paid promotion being used to improve the visibility of corporate website content in search results.

# Why should you spend significant time and money worrying about your corporate website?

Your website is the digital manifestation of your brand, the place where you can explain what you do, how you do it and why, without it being diluted or disrupted by external factors. It's a home for all the fascinating stories your organisation has to tell and an informative destination for anyone questioning your role in their world. It's the perfect platform to create and sustain an emotional connection with your audiences.

But what are the benefits of a high performing corporate website?



## Improve your reputation

The corporate website is the first place most key stakeholders will go to find out more about the journey of your business to date and its prospects for the future. As such it delivers huge strategic value as a clearly navigable source of information. Tone of voice and design impact can also work wonders in terms of shifting perceptions and demonstrating intent.

### 27%

Our corporate website development for NATS resulted in an increase in positive sentiment towards the organisation from 4% to 27%



## Articulate your role in the world

Corporate websites are particularly effective as storytelling hubs, places where you can shine a light on the points that bring your corporate ambitions to life. These stories are powerful articulations of how your business operates, your values, staff, philosophy and role in the audience's world.

### 619%

Our work with SABMiller has resulted in a 619% increase in views to the most popular stories versus their previous site

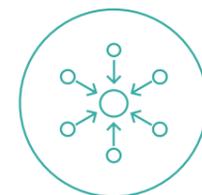


## Build relationships and increase visibility

The corporate website is no longer an online brochure – those days are long gone – but very few organisations use their sites effectively to build and maintain relationships with key stakeholder audiences. Providing opportunities to interact with your business via your website ensures that critical relationships are either established or strengthened. The site must be designed as the central asset within an interrelated 'ecosystem' of other appropriate channels.

### 7%

SABMiller's use of web content on and off-site has seen a 7% increase in referrals to the business from LinkedIn



## Catalyse better internal integration

Building an effective, best in class website requires the entire organisation to collaborate in order to effectively and optimally represent the entirety of your business. We have developed tools, techniques and protocols that are designed to ensure all necessary elements of your organisation contribute to the creation of the site. This integration can help many other internal initiatives, not least employee engagement around site launch.

### 400%

Through effective use of digital content via social channels, our work with EY has seen a 400% increase in levels of engagement with content

# How do you go about creating a highly effective corporate website?

It's extremely important to have a website that works hard on your behalf. Yet very few communications departments assign sufficient commitment to excellence in website performance.

Often, an organisation's web presence is tightly controlled, with limitations and restrictions on what can and cannot be done. Also, sites are often administered by someone from a technical rather than communications background, people who are most likely to be more interested in site stability than catching an audience's attention.

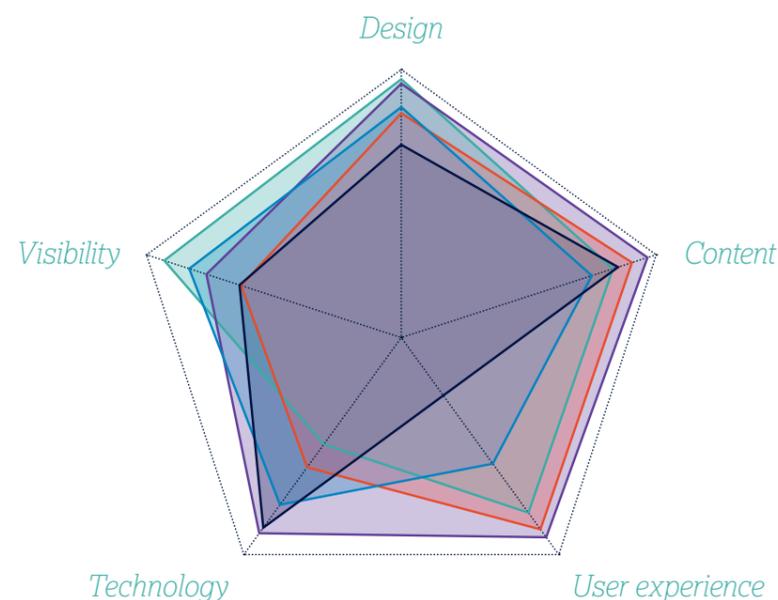
So how do you assume the necessary degree of control over this critical communications vehicle?



## Follow a simple, holistic framework for success

At MSLGROUP we like to consider the five core elements of successful site creation: user experience, design, content, technology and visibility & promotion. We used these parameters to quickly judge the effectiveness of several corporate websites through our Benchmarkdotcom methodology.

Ask yourself how well your current corporate website matches up against them. As custodian of your organisation's reputation and relationships, it's your job to ensure the website operates at the top of its game against each of these criteria.



### Benchmarkdotcom

Benchmarkdotcom is MSLGROUP's methodology for benchmarking corporate websites. It consists of the following five key elements that contribute to website effectiveness.

## 01

### Design

- Does the design have a distinctive style that represents the uniqueness of your organisation?
- Does the design enhance the content and the way people can use it?
- How good is the overall quality of visual assets (typography, colour, photography, video, graphics)?

## 02

### Content

- How good is the overall quality of messaging?
- How well does the site serve the specific informational needs of: customers, investors, NGO's, the media and job seekers?

## 03

### User experience

- How easy/intuitive is the navigation?
- How good is the functionality and how interactive is the site?
- How easy is it to search and filter the site?
- How responsive is the site across different devices?

## 04

### Visibility & promotion

- Is there evidence of an SEO keyword strategy?
- Is there evidence of a sitemap, metadata and schema mark-up to improve search indexing and display?
- Is social sharing available?
- Is there evidence of paid promotion?
- How well do the owned social channels support the brand narrative and identifiable campaigns?

## 05

### Technology

- Coding standards: how well has the site been developed to work across different browsers and devices, including mobiles and tablets?
- Performance standards: how optimal is the site performance, how secure is it and how resilient?



### Get the basics right

Surprisingly, the corporate websites of some of the biggest companies in the world sometimes suffer from fairly basic flaws. Follow these simple guidelines to avoid the same mistakes...

1. Ensure consistency and distinctiveness across the design of content, pages and sites that make up the whole corporate web estate
2. Use conventional navigation paradigms that do not cause anxiety for audiences - avoid 'creative labelling' for key navigation items
3. Effectively link together related content elements in order to improve user journeys across the site
4. Focus on implementing simple but effective image and video libraries, site and job search functions
5. Impose proper editorial control over all content across the site – implement workflows and checkpoints to ensure quality and consistency
6. Spend time clearly articulating the purpose and strategy of the organisation and use editorial techniques to help explain and bring them to life
7. Implement focused SEO, social and paid promotion strategies to support the communications around corporate 'hot topics'
8. Avoid 'heavy' designs that negatively impact technical performance and spend time optimising the site's code and assets

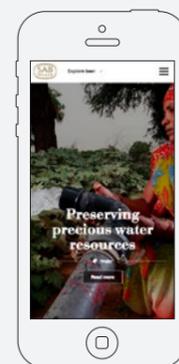


### Avoid the big mistakes

Our ongoing analysis of corporate websites uncovers a world that is littered with examples of poor practice, even from some of the biggest companies in the world.

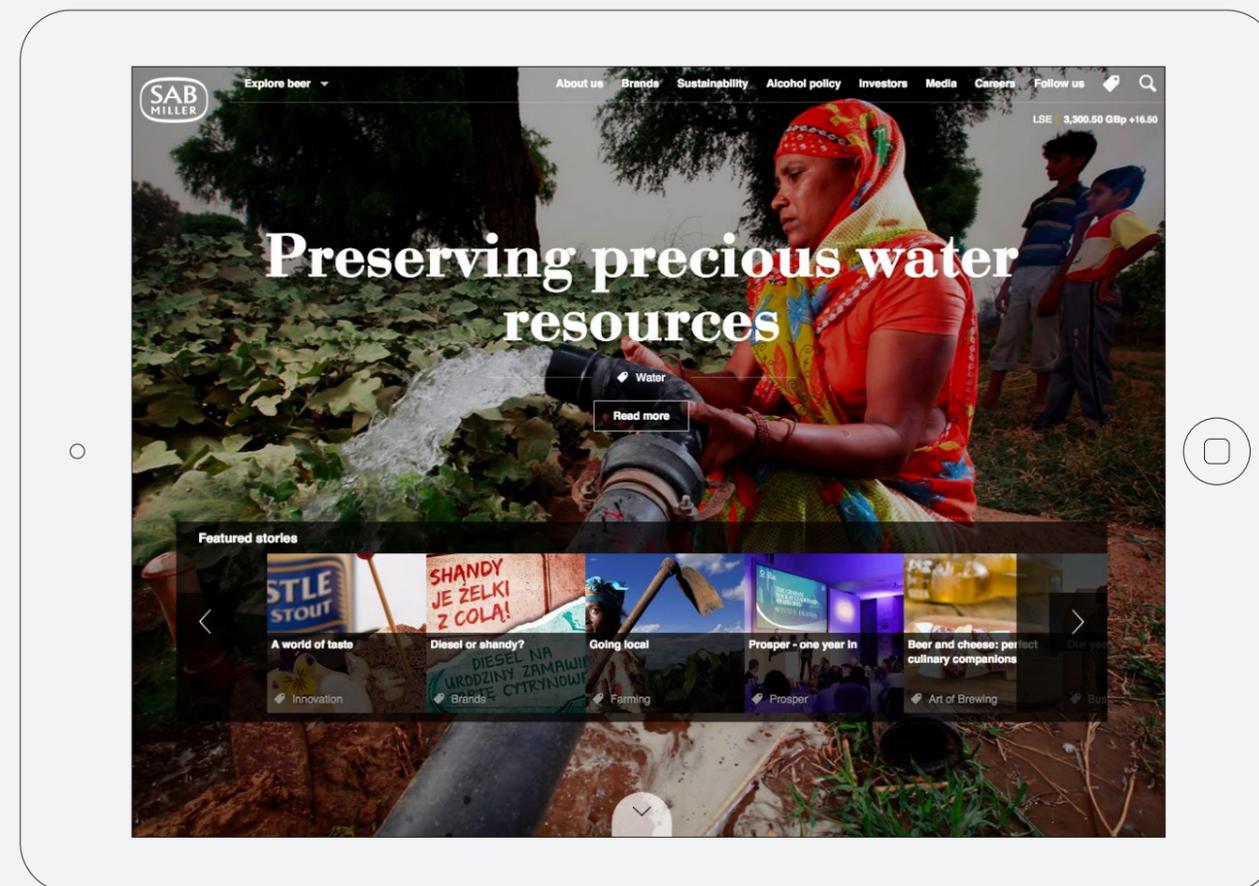
1. *Not understanding both sides of the coin* – Right now, it's more vital than ever to cater for both the functional demands of website audiences as well as the softer side of influencing and building relationships through storytelling. Corporate websites are used day-to-day as a simple library of information about a business. It's easy to get carried away by rich media and emotive stories, but equally important are the needs of a journalist on a deadline who wants to know how much CO<sub>2</sub> you emitted last year.
2. *Getting the balance wrong* – There's a danger of either ignoring conventions (especially in relation to navigation) which can cause anxiety for many audiences, or not being innovative enough and creating a bland site that doesn't excite anyone.
3. *Prioritising looks over function* – Some of the problems we encounter are related to designers and consultants not working alongside other digital experts, resulting in sites that may look beautiful but don't perform very well from a technical or promotional perspective.
4. *Leaving the editorial process to chance* – One of the biggest headaches for corporate communications directors is finding a steady stream of story ideas from different parts of the business, and then being able to properly manage the content that supports them. The answer is setting up a cross functional editorial team to manage the process.
5. *Not bothering with guidelines* – Many sites suffer when, after a new corporate website has been launched, different internal teams go off and create their own online presence without following best practice guidelines relating to the design, content or user experience that has been embedded through the corporate website project. This often leads to a disjointed and ineffective experience.

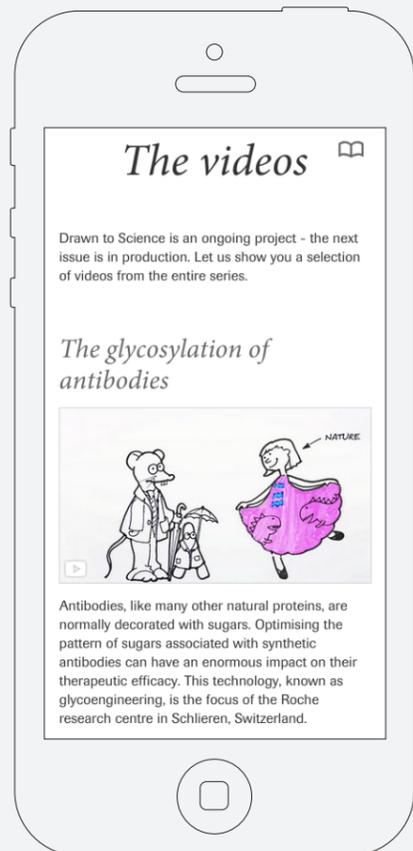
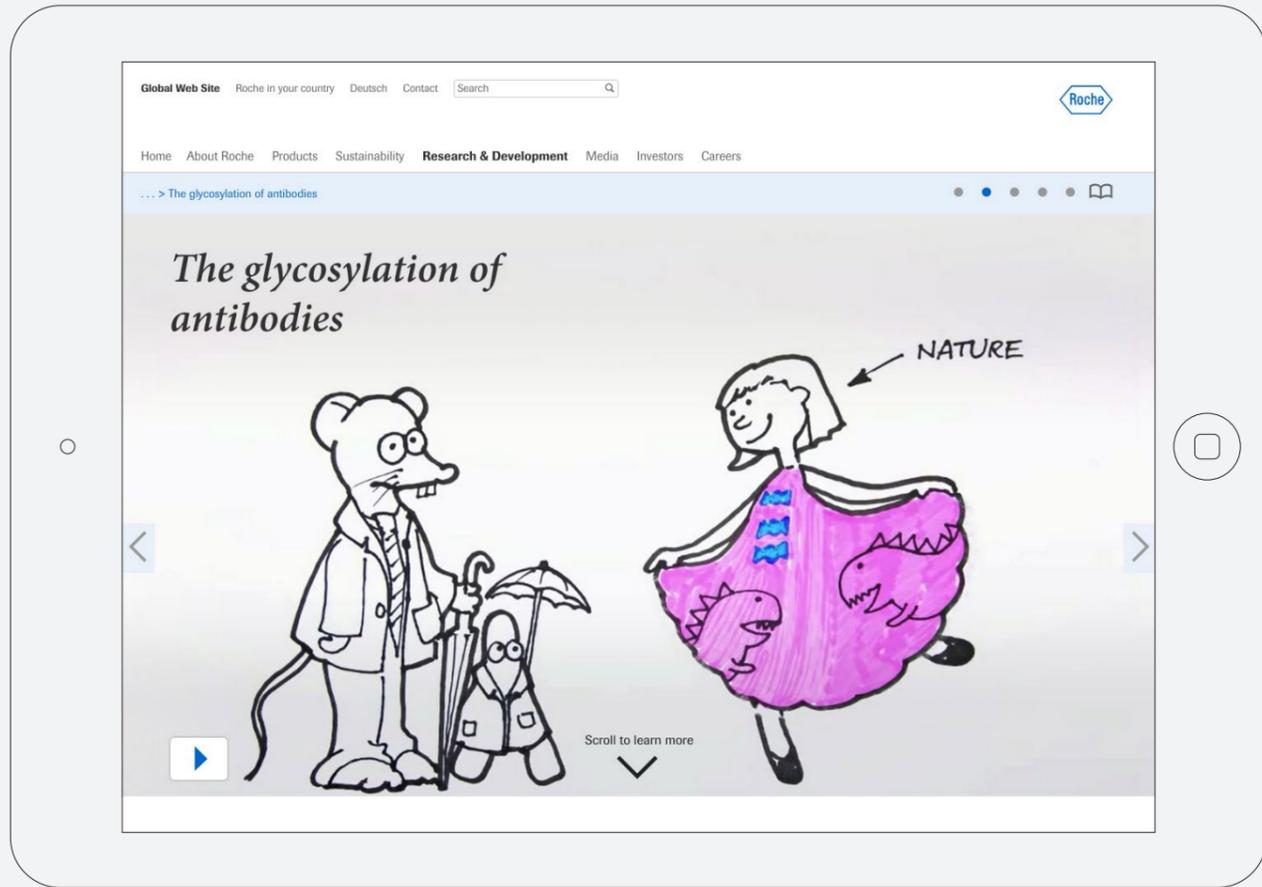
# Corporate websites that do it well



[sabmiller.com](http://sabmiller.com)

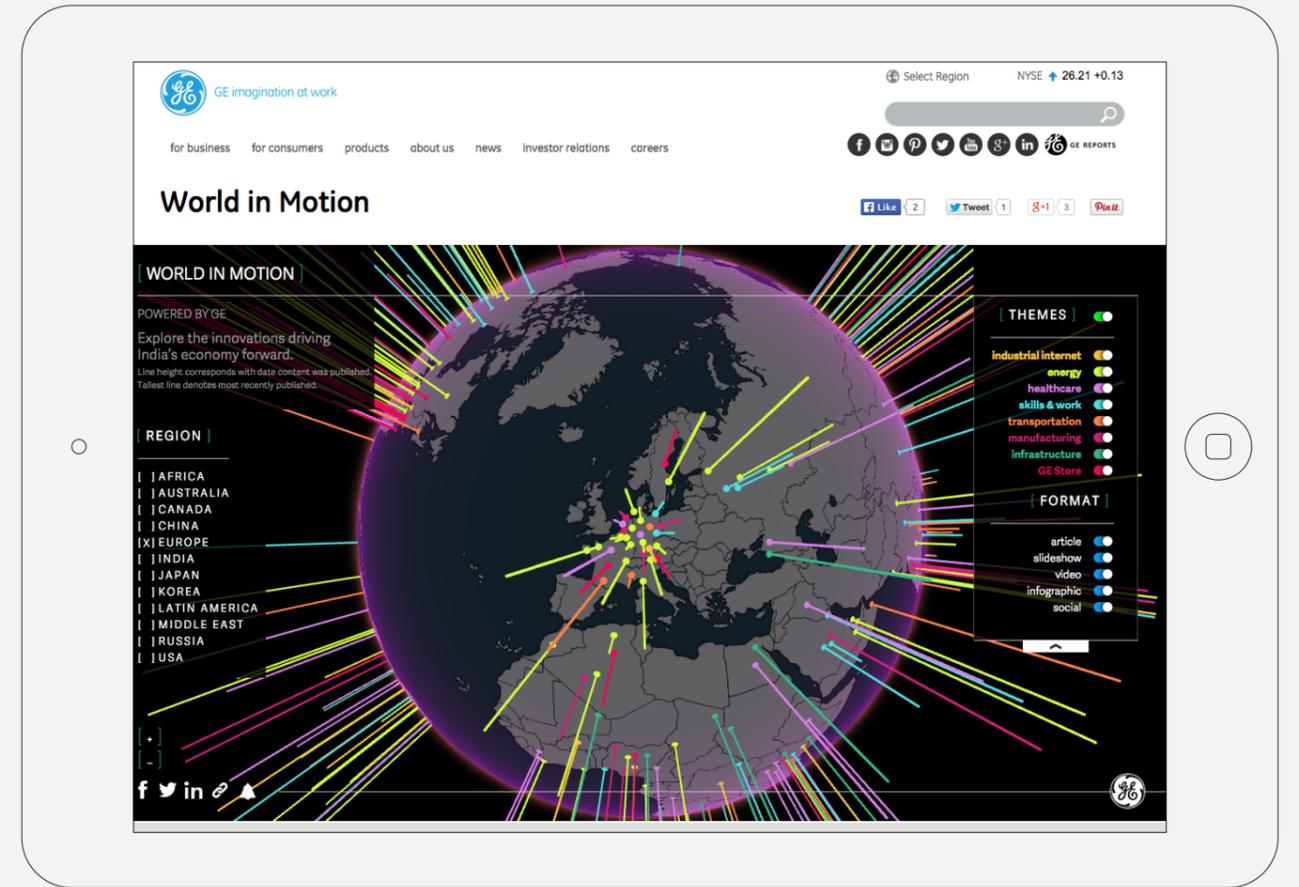
A best in class responsive corporate website that uses its homepage as a hub for a steady-stream of high quality, authentic and emotional stories that bring the personality of their business and world of beer to life – acting as a springboard to more 'liquid and linked' content and conversations in the social sphere. Beyond the storytelling approach, the new site also makes Ad blockit incredibly straightforward for investors, journalists, NGOs, governments, partners and job seekers to find the information they are looking for.





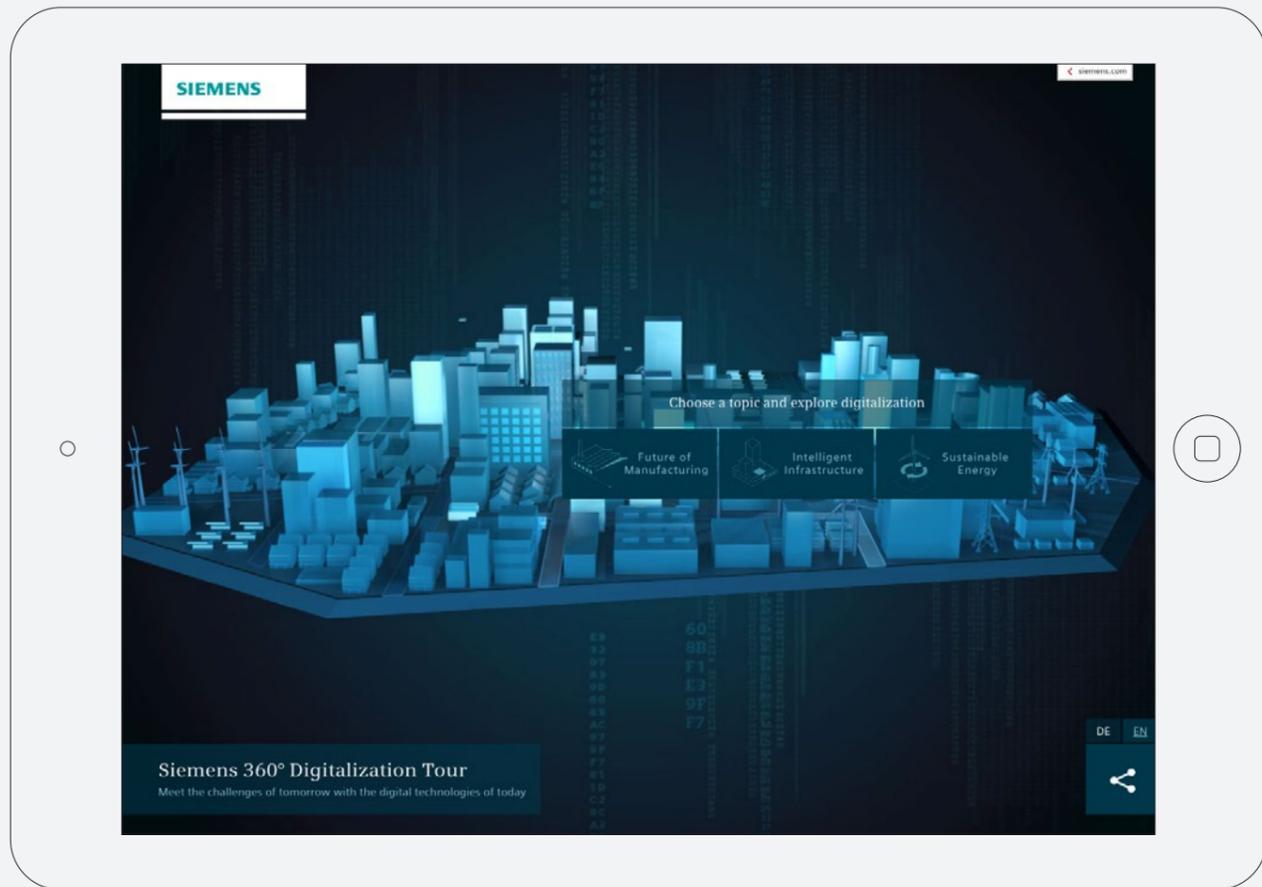
## roche.com

A beautifully simple site that strikes the perfect balance between form and function. It excels across all parameters but is particularly noteworthy for the way it uses modest layouts filled with great writing, photography, video and infographics in order to tell powerful stories about their business and its role in the world. It has also been designed in such a way that it facilitates quick and easy navigation throughout – always encouraging seamless user journeys through the site.



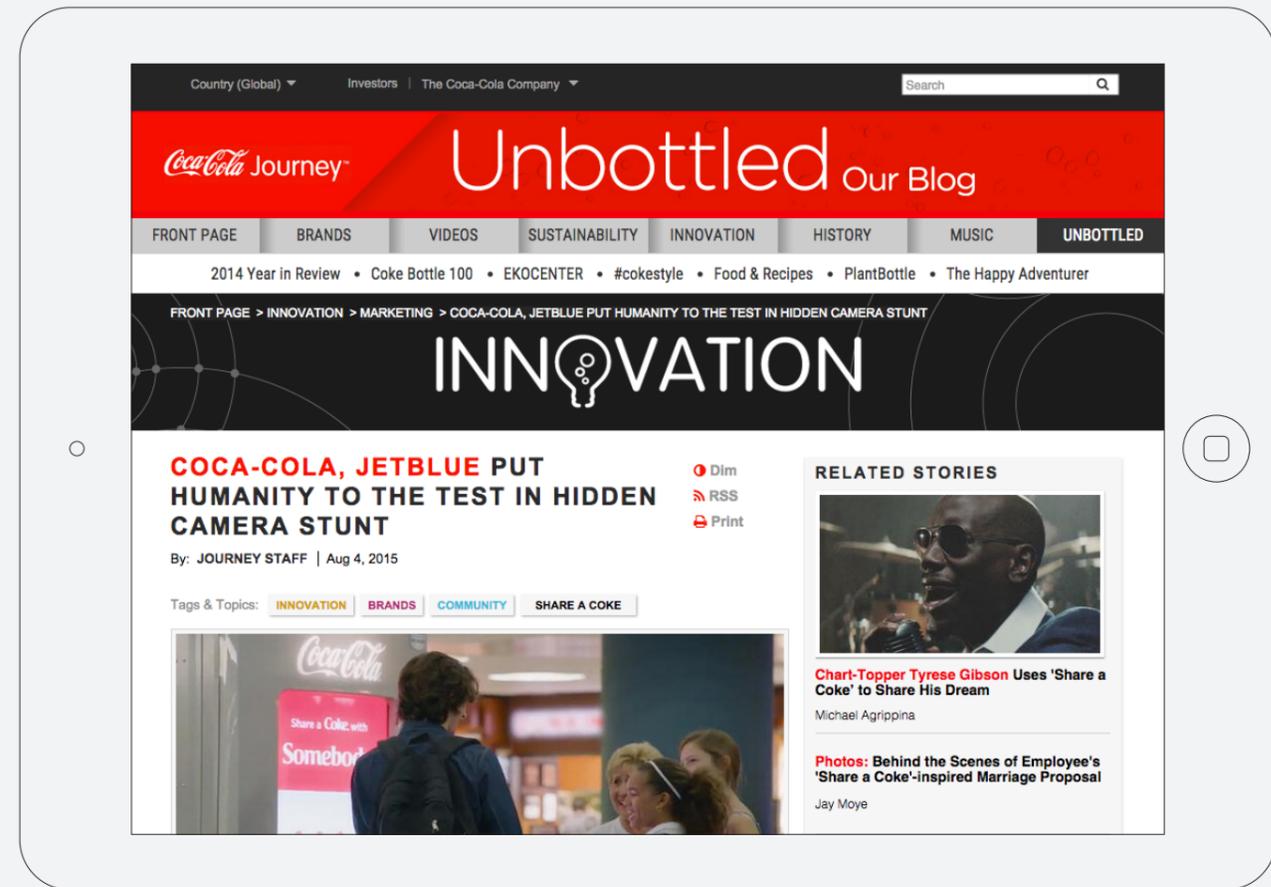
## ge.com

A stunning and distinctive site that performs well across all parameters but particularly stands out for its design and promotion strategy. Ge.com makes the most of some wonderful assets to tell stories that bring its core proposition to life – including video, social feeds, photography and interactive features. The site also does a good job of serving the needs of job seekers and journalists.



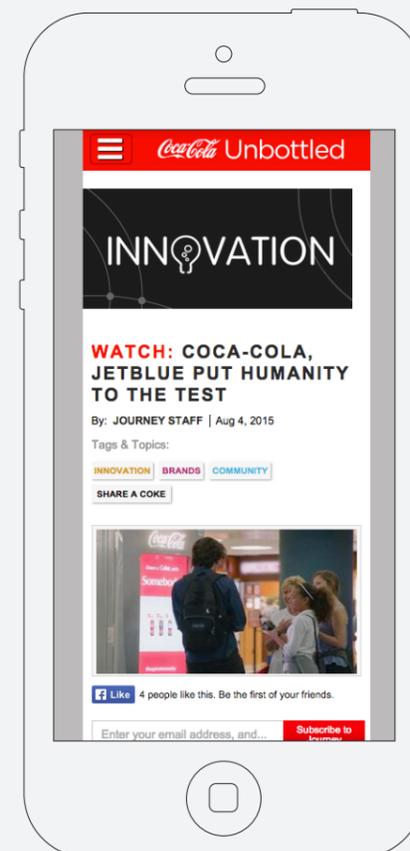
siemens.com

A more traditional corporate website that does a fantastic job of meeting the functional needs of traditional corporate website audiences (investors, journalists and job seekers), but where video also plays a star role in bringing their corporate narrative to life. Interactive features like 360-degree virtual tours create engaging experiences and social media is well integrated with the site and its content.



coca-colacompany.com

An 'all guns blazing' online magazine called 'Journey' dominates this site and does a fantastic job of immersing different audiences, including consumers, into the world of Coca-Cola. It uses a constant stream of interesting stories and user-generated content related to their business initiatives, history, innovation, brands and jobs. This is all supported by a clear promotion strategy and powerful use of supporting social channels.



# It takes a holistic approach to perform well

**Our experience in developing highly effective corporate websites shows us that there isn't one thing that creates a great corporate website, and that you have to take a holistic approach to perform well.**

Your website should be a beautifully designed and engineered publishing platform capable of showcasing the very best of your organisation; presenting your people, products and perspectives in an engaging, compelling and impactful way; delivered with a consistent tone of voice. It must be adaptable, so it addresses your communications priorities as they change over time, and it must work on different devices and deliver information efficiently to diverse stakeholder audiences.

And finally, in today's hyper-connected world, it's particularly important to remember that no website operates in isolation. Your site must co-exist within an ecosystem of other paid, owned and earned platforms and channels, acting as the nucleus around which all other digital communications activity rotates: the ultimate destination for anyone seeking a better understanding of what you do.

## About MSLGROUP

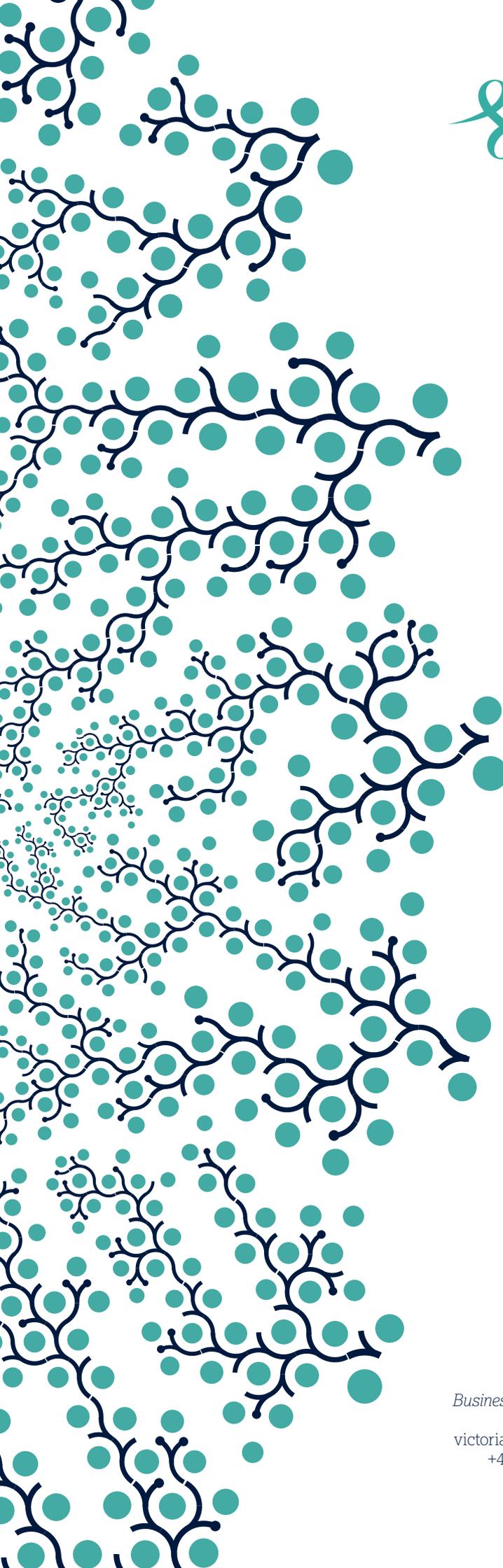
We are MSLGROUP in the UK.

We're a communications agency with digital, insight and creativity at its heart. We help organisations to build and maintain their reputations and relationships. We combine great user experience, design, stories and content with targeted, sustained activity to ensure what we've created reaches the right people at the right time. It's part art, part science.

Influencing conversations, building relationships and managing reputations online takes a big team with diverse skills. Our strategists, user experience architects, programmers, search, PR and social experts provide the insights and expertise. The creatives, writers, technologists and film-makers provide the magic.

As part of the global MSLGROUP network we have more than 3,500 colleagues worldwide. MSLGROUP is Publicis Groupe's strategic communications and engagement business, advising clients on all aspects of their multi stakeholder communications.

To hear more about our digital work please contact Victoria Sugg, Business Development Director at [victoria.sugg@mslgroup.com](mailto:victoria.sugg@mslgroup.com)



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