How to talk about technical subjects and still have a brand personality

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Beware the smooth pebble



'If you’re constantly buffing yourself down, you might feel more smooth, but smooth isn’t interesting. Smooth is flat. Smooth is dull. Smooth is, for lack of a better word, NICE.'

- Ashley, The Middle Finger Project



How do we get ‘smooth pebbles’?

Here are the things we hear a lot

We want to sound professional

Expertise is not boring

It’s not a PhD thesis



The man in the mirror problem

Talk to the reader about their issues in their language, not your stuff in your jargon

Also, important to avoid projecting your biases and assumptions on your marketing (e.g. ‘all CIOs are male’)



Not technical enough

The Franklin Chang-Díaz experience

Ultimately, we work for the customer, not the client
Our purpose is to inform, connect and inspire



It’s too glib and jokey

Wit, metaphors, stories and arresting language are not bugs.

‘Make it sound like The Economist’



Why?

Laziness
Ignorance
Incompetence
Groupthink
HiPPO (highest paid person's opinion)
Fear
Weak core

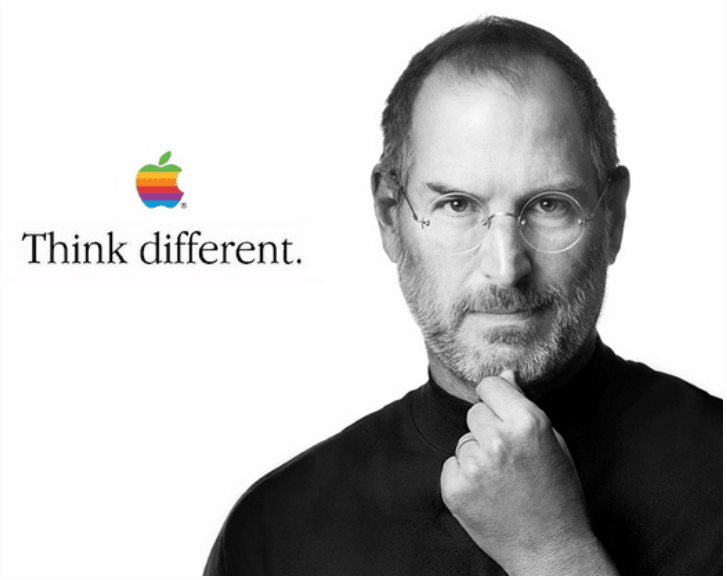


Is it really so bad to stand out?

Screen, keyboard, browser, apps

Laptops and phones are entirely commoditised

But all our clients admire Apple’s marketing




Think different.
Think different.
Think different.
Think different.
Think different.
Think different.
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Think different.
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Think different.
Think different.
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Think different.
COURAGEOUS



"I'd say that's got some shelf presence."

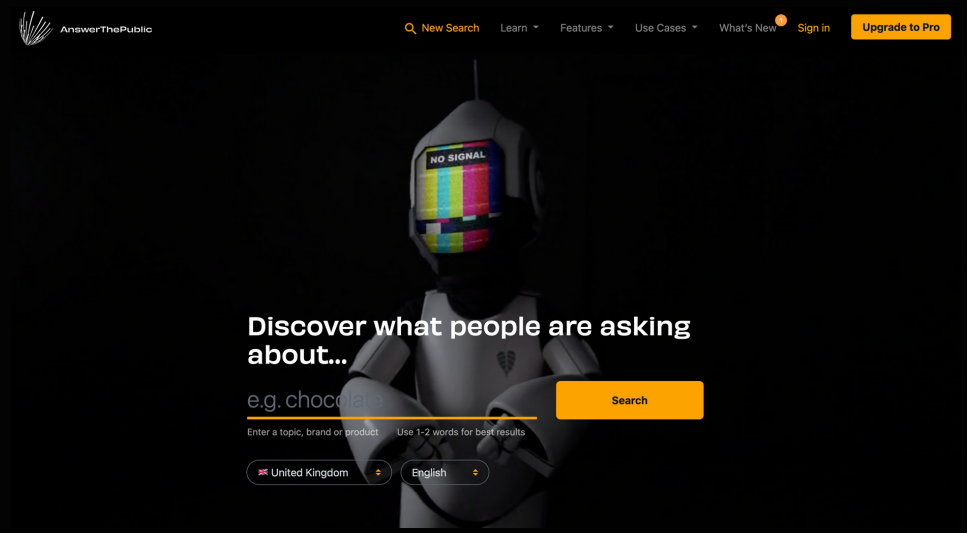
Answer The Public

Yet another SEO tool

But with a brand personality



Now with robots



Virgin Atlantic

Chutzpah and cheeky sex appeal

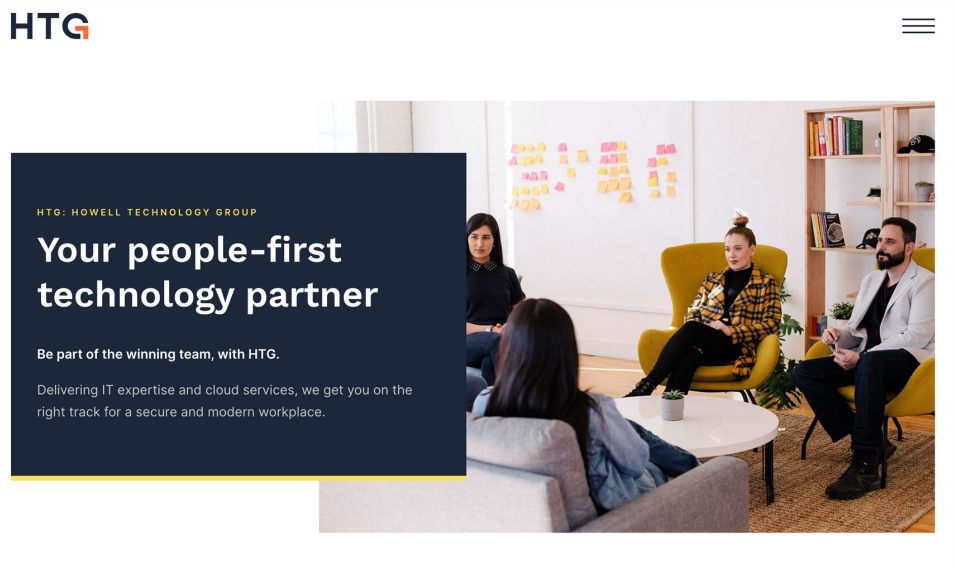
All airlines are alike. But some are more alike than others. The actual airline experience is highly commoditised and also very technical.



Zig when others zag

All MSPs talk about technology, except one

HTG talks about ‘people first technology partnership’



Who we are not what we do

There are lots of marketing agencies but only one Articulate Marketing

Culture

Culture eats strategy for breakfast

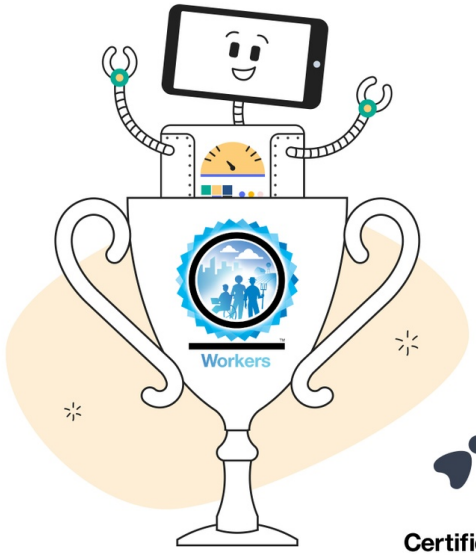
- Investors in People Certified
- Chief Happiness Officer (hello, Liz!)
- Remote working forever (not just the pandemic)
- Measure output, not hours (Points 2.0)
- Ring-fenced 12 days per person per year for training
- We build careers and promote from within
  - Apart from the founder (me), three-quarters of our senior leadership team first joined the company in junior roles



People and planet

Articulate as a force for good

- Certified B Corp since 2018
- In the top 5% of B Corps for workers (announced yesterday)
- Best for the World honoree in 2019 for workers and governance
- Carbon offsetting our output since 2019
- Commitment to Net Zero by 2025
- Living Wage Foundation (no unpaid interns, everybody at the London rate regardless of where they live)



Articulate

Certified B Corporation

Best for the World 2021

Certified B Corporation

This company meets the highest standards of social and environmental impact



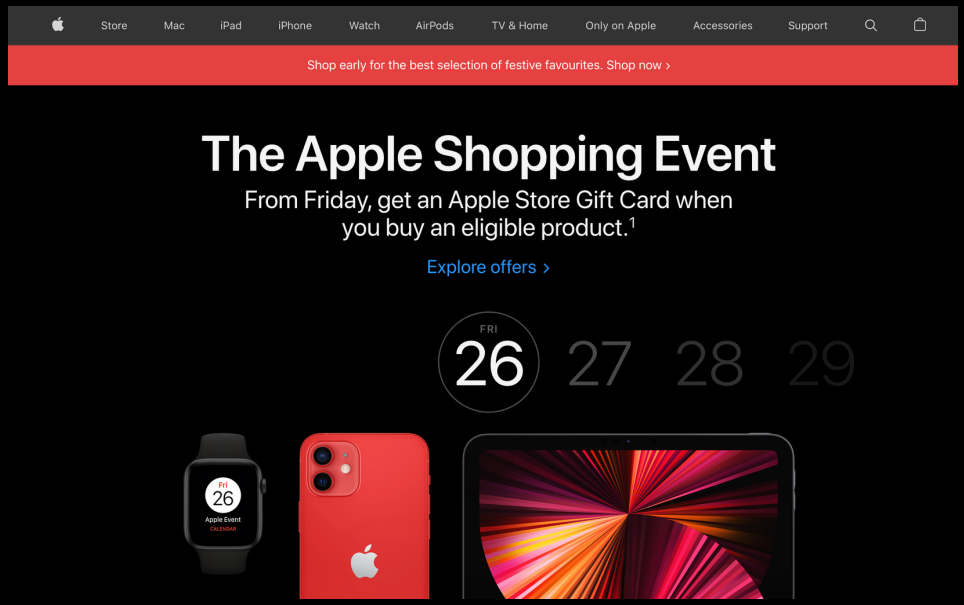
How to demonstrate technical expertise (without being boring)

Simplify and focus

Be a hedgehog not a fox

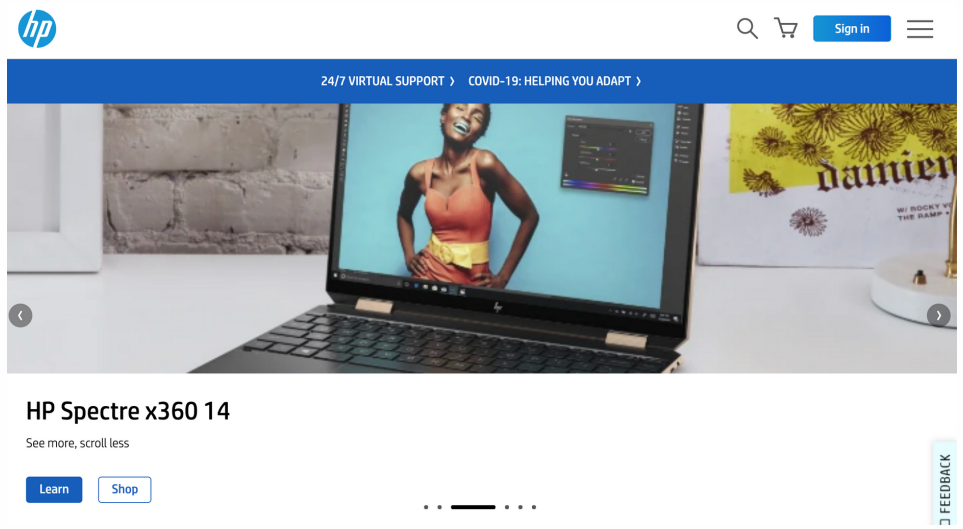
Carousels on home pages are a fox solution

‘Simplicate and add lightness’ – Kelly Johnson



C’mon HP!

Everyone knows how to vertically scroll
Nobody likes or uses horizontal scrolling
We’ve known this for 10+ years



Good writing

Evidence
Relevant stories
Metaphors
Strong, active sentences
Good examples
Readability
Clear structure
Good subheadings

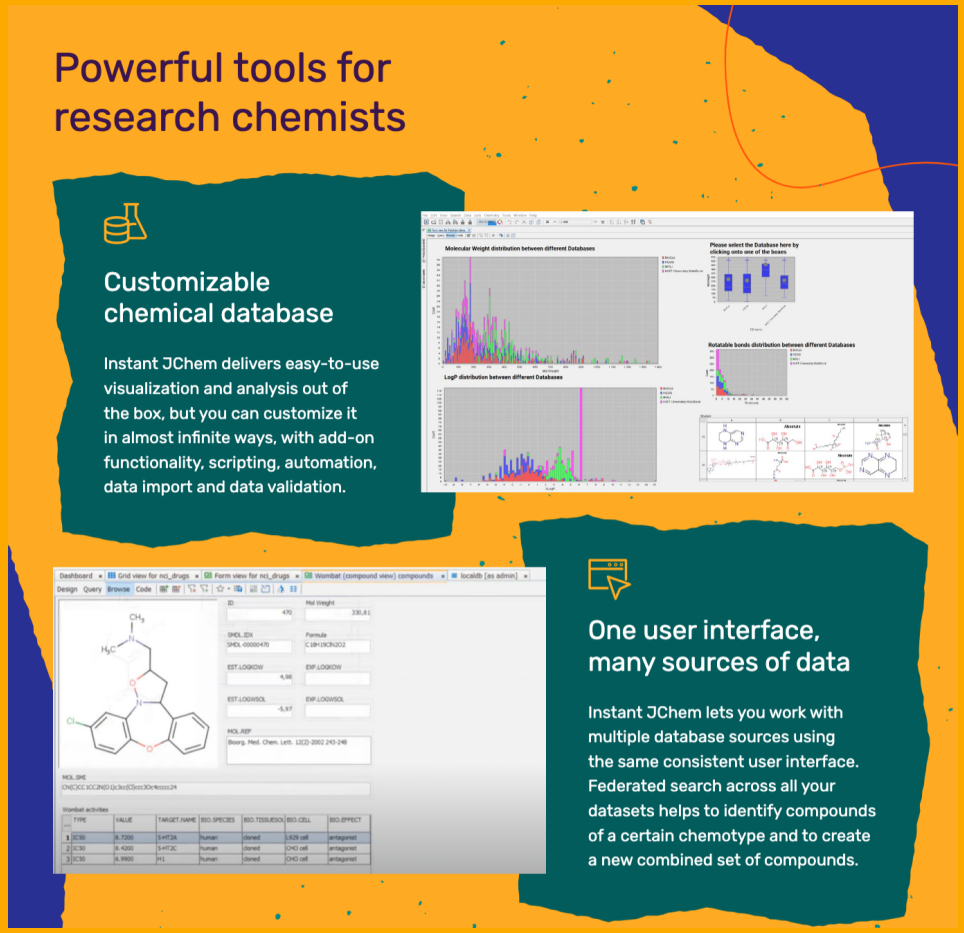


Design

ChemAxon is highly technical and very specialised

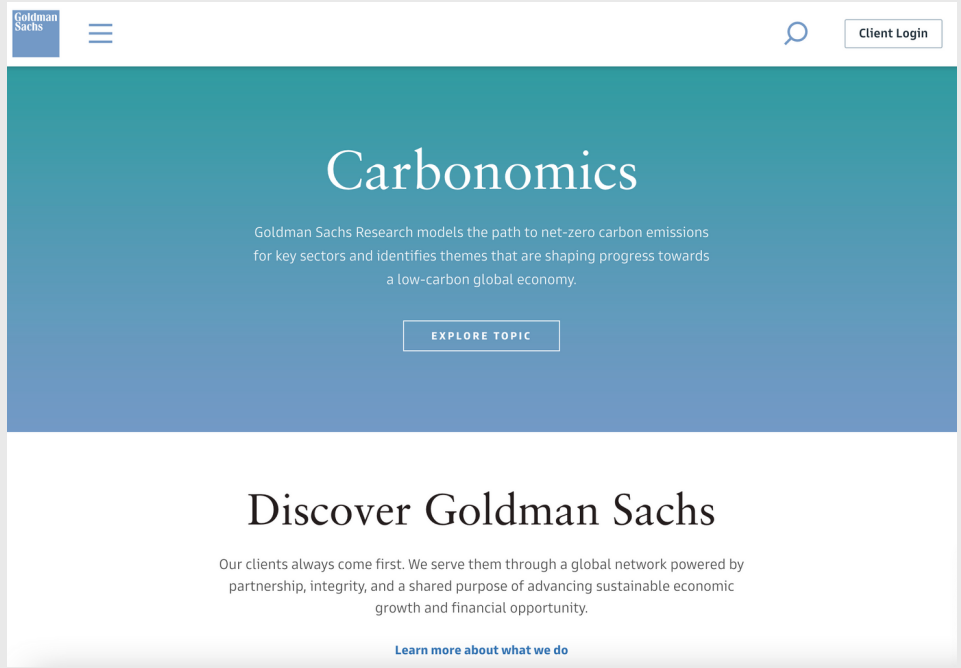
Enlivened by very ambitious ‘MAYA’ design aesthetic

And, ahem, an awesome marketing agency



MacGuffins

In fiction, a MacGuffin is an object, device, or event that is necessary to the plot and the motivation of the characters, but insignificant, unimportant, or irrelevant in itself.



Thought leadership

Hard to do well but highly valuable and differentiating

Provides evidence of professional expertise





Top tips for building trust in your brand

Minus One

Don’t be here

Hard to read

Jargon-heavy

All about you

Poorly designed

Zero

Necessary but not sufficient

Well-written

Well-sourced

Relevant, useful and interesting

Good design

Plus One

Aim high. Don’t be afraid.

Distinctive tone of voice

Coherent visual identity

Brand personality

Supported by tangible ‘reasons to believe’

And finally...





Let's talk

Video and slides appearing soon on articulatemarketing.com
Email me with questions at matthew@articulatemarketing.com
Book a call with me: www.articulatemarketing.com/meet