KURTOSYS

25



of

The Best Asset Management Websites

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KURTOSYS

Asset managers' website designs have moved on dramatically in the five years since Kurtosys last reviewed the best-designed asset manager websites, in November 2015. More has happened in website design than many of us could have anticipated. Many websites have improved significantly but some have found it hard to keep up.

In 2015, several trends drove good web design. These included large custom photography, hidden menus, parallax scrolling, and card designs to aid responsiveness. Another driver was differentiation through brand, mission and values. This tended to represent itself through positive lifestyle, sustainability or environmental imagery.

Fast forward to now, what are the primary drivers and how are they affecting site design?

Key trends being seen across website design include;

DATA LEADS THE WAY

The biggest change in five years and the most important trend today is that the world is much more data driven. Whether your organization is or not yet, your website design should be. This should include data-driven consideration of user journeys and how your site makes those as frictionless as possible. It should also be apparent in your homepage design.

THE NEED FOR SPEED

The next trend is speed. The fastest site does not always win the race, but it does help retention. The connections between speed of access to site information - such as the dreaded fund data loaders - and abandonment rates are significant. The best sites find ways to manage and improve this.

TEXT ONLY HEROS

Scrolling is faster than clicking and it is not always about having all your most important content immediately visible 'above the fold'. One trend that aims to catch the attention of users who are bombarded by web pages every day is to remove the typical background image in the hero section and replace it with eye-catching typography. A bold, unique font with relevant content can get a user's attention quickly.

DATA VISUALIZATION

Communicating information in an engaging way via data visualization is hard work. But it's worth it because humans are visual creatures. One of the fundamental UX / design principles that has never really changed is 'show me, don't tell me', as such using infographics and graphs are some of the most popular ways to bring data to life. With the explosion of ESG relevance and new SFDR regulations, the importance of communicating data in a clear and easy to understand visual ways is higher than ever.

So, with that in mind here is our slice of the top 25 Asset Management websites (in alphabetical order) out there at the moment.



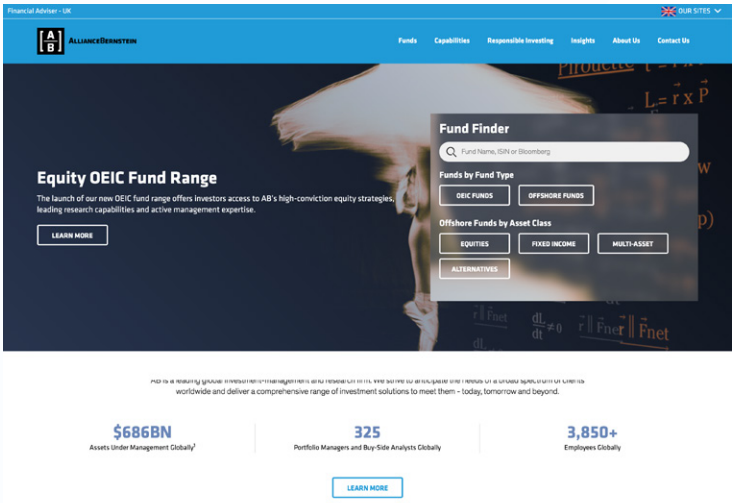
ABERDEEN STANDARD

Color is the name of the game here, with umbrellas, flags, crayons and even colorful robotics. As with Carmignac, there are some clear primary calls to action (CTAs) to active equities and responsible investing. The simplicity of the user's first view shows clear direction.

The vibrancy of the colors continues as you scroll. Balanced typography allows the user to understand what is in front of them, without too much thought. Other areas of the site have a more conventional menu structure, but much of the vibrancy of the homepage is continued with a clear and modular approach. This is a great site to dig deeper into.

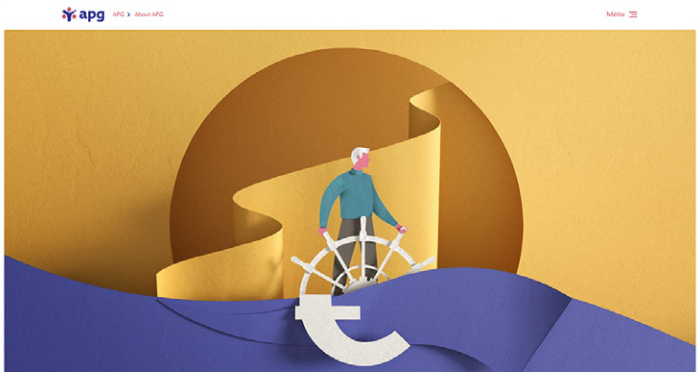
ALLIANCE BERNSTEIN

Since 2015, the main navigation has been reduced and anchored with a transparent background to allow for convenient navigation to core content. There's a stylish semi-transparent Fund Finder overlaying the hero image and allowing the user to search by name, ISIN or Bloomberg and sort by Fund Type or Asset Class.



The rest of the homepage content divides into a clear module and well-spaced column layout, with easy to absorb content dedicated to insights, funds in focus, related articles and press releases. AB's branding and color palette has also received an update giving it more fresh feeling.

The site does not push too many creative industry boundaries, but it does simplicity impressively and flows well, small touches like an additional fund search midway down the page shows an attention to detail to help users reduce friction to their destination.



APG ASSET MANAGEMENT

Perhaps more than any other, this site bucks typical trends for asset management websites. It uses its own illustration style across the hero theme and through navigation, giving a relaxed but classy feel. On most sites, a permanently compressed three-line 'hamburger' menu on a desktop would be a no-no as some might see it as self-indulgent

from a design perspective. But it works well here.

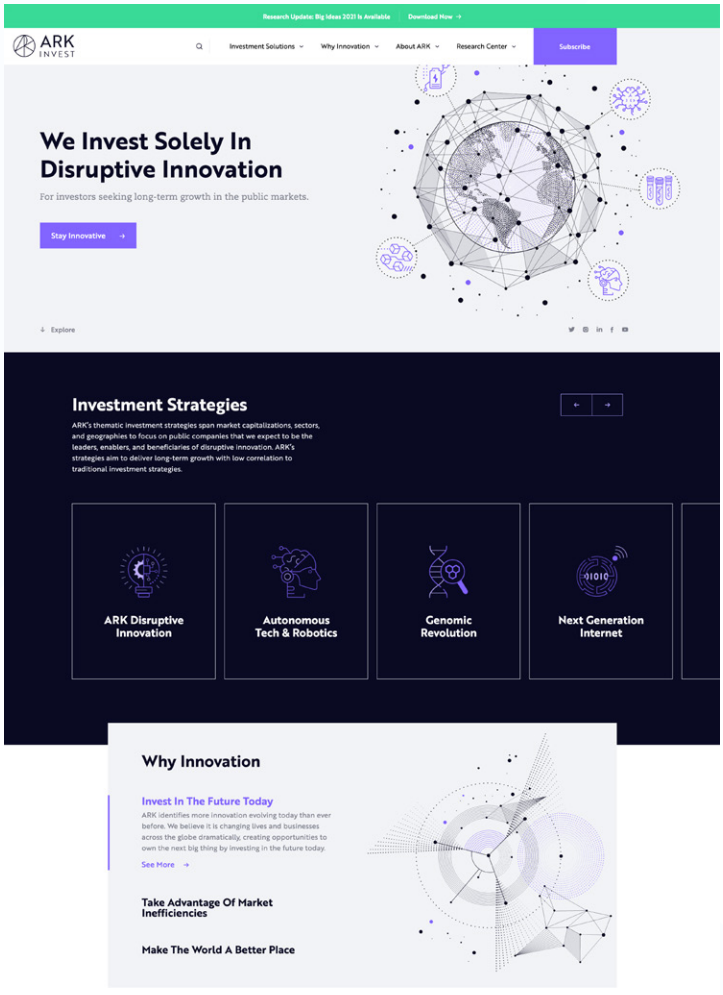
Sometimes, when a site is near 100% illustration, you can run the risk that it feels a little too relaxed and unprofessional. But this is certainly not the case here, the site does not lack the sophistication you would expect from an investment manager.

The visual effectiveness of the homepage relies heavily on the user's scroll. In some sites, this can appear clunky or confusing, but APG has executed this well. The layering resonates with its paper cut out style of brand imagery.

Some of the less popular menu items are enclosed in the hamburger menu, which requires the user to expand it manually. This is rewarded with more visual delight as it reveals the brand colors folding out with a brief animation. CTAs are clear and fun to engage. Great work differentiating in a sector known for its overly corporate and safe designs.

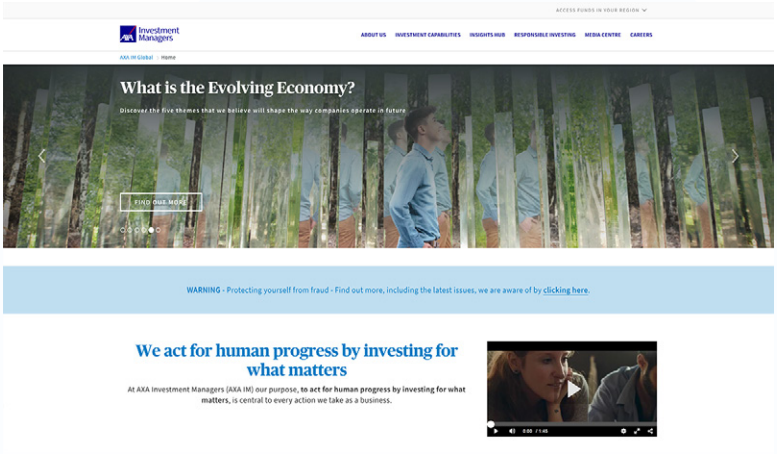
ARK INVEST

The cool kids have certainly come to play, along with the dimensional site, the ARK invest site is a standout on this list. First and foremost, it has the distinct feel that they have not looked at their Asset management neighbours back gardens and copied their designs, rather paved their own way. A very creative and bold design, with solid typography and richly contrasting block colours make up the foundation of the site. It feels like they have disregarded the B2B design rule book and very much focused on a H2H (Human to human) approach.



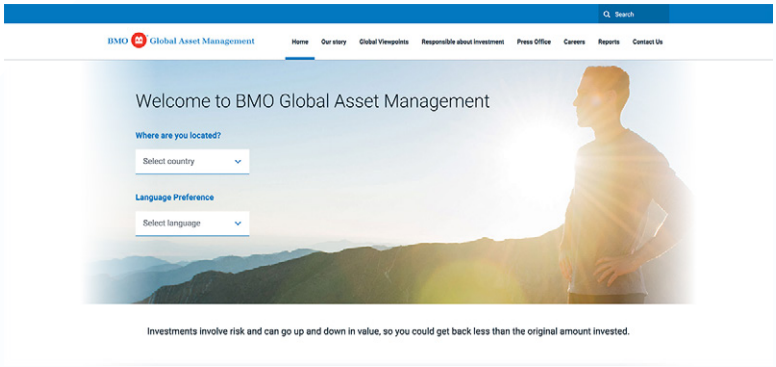
As you scroll it gets better and better, with well laid out, clear and creative interfaces giving you a really fantastic snapshot into the business through varied and (as is part of their mantra) innovative ways. With no ESG section 'bolted on' as a checkbox exercise, it's clear this is engrained in their DNA with core messaging and information embedded throughout, sustainability and making the world a better place is front and centre. A dedicated 'swag' store where you can buy Ark merchandise with 100% of the profits going to charitable organisations in line with the ARK CSR is also a great addition.

AXA INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT



The Axa site is testament to how well a no-nonsense approach, with simple module structures and clear consistent layouts, can work. The bold typography is not just for the hero imagery, it spans all subsections and insight modules as you scroll.

A neat label system for insights helps delineate between article types and the News section is just that - no distracting imagery, just pure content. We love the simplicity and clean, fresh layout.

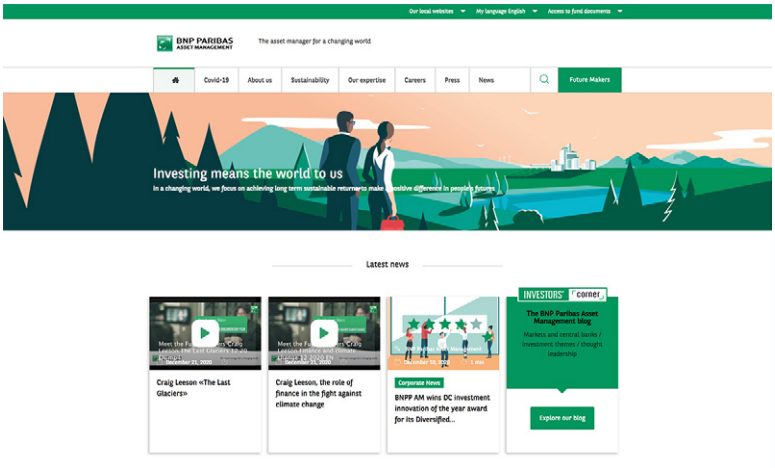


BMO GLOBAL ASSET MANAGEMENT

There's a lot of choice on the BMO homepage, but the information is structured in clear and easy to disseminate modules with a no-nonsense nomenclature that gives the viewer a clear idea of the sections the user would navigate to, rather than a view on the internal naming conventions for products and services. Which is a trap that many Asset Managers still fall into today.

The hero image does utilise a carousel with relatively fast transitions, but crucially the site and usability of the homepage does not rely on interaction with this to make sense. As the site scrolls, more of same is surfaced; well worded and thoughtfully laid out content appears in an order that suggests the data is being listened to. Consistent modules, with well tagged and titled content is made even better with the "4 min read" tags giving the user an idea of the scale / detail within before they navigate away which is a lovely addition.

BNP PARIBAS



The use of illustrations and colors make this site instantly interesting. A no-nonsense, comprehensive main menu balances the creative imagery to ensure you don't lose the professional feel.

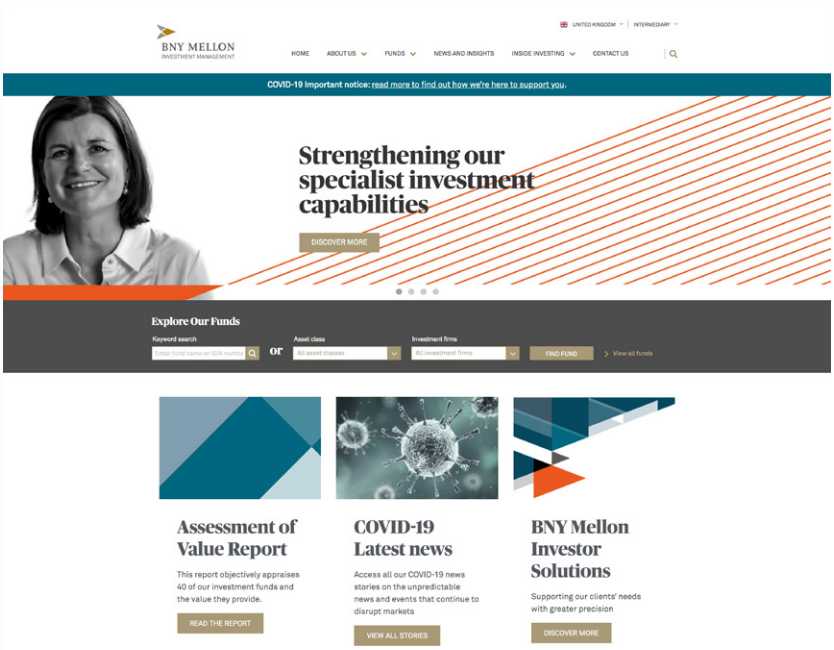
As you start to scroll, embedded video, block colors and more illustrations make the site engaging. CTAs are solid and consistent, and the shades of green

mean it's not a single hue washout.

So often on asset manager sites, you could be on any one of a thousand competitors' homepages once you scroll down a few pixels. But there is never any doubt whose site this is thanks to BNP Paribas' bold illustrative style and use of greens.

This site is not a one-trick pony with a slick homepage. Its approach to illustrations, diagrams and infographics as you navigate across is fantastic. Good work BNP Paribas!

BNY MELLON



No 'inspiring' lifestyle photography distracts from the core purpose here - just a super clean design. BNY Mellon uses imagery to enhance the experience rather than overpower or distract the user.

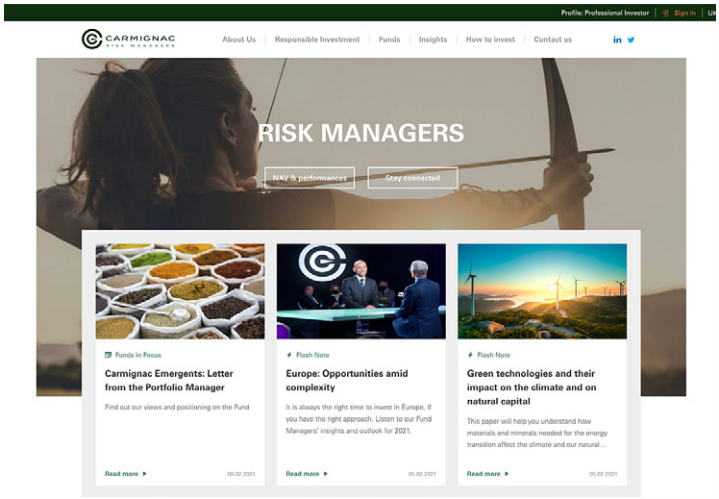
It surfaces a useful and engaging content at first glance. Using bold and centered typography to focus the eye.

We love how this site scrolls with relevant, topical information across an easily digestible layout with a simple and uncluttered global navigation, embracing white space gives a seamless transition between sections too.

The uncluttered approach guides viewers down the page and makes the scrolling action feel more visually pleasing compared to others who use horizontal shapes or block colors in a way that can interrupt observation.

BNY has also managed to further add to the sophisticated feel by embracing a more subtle, less overt approach to highlighting CTAs, means there is no need to force or distract the viewer's attention – it will not make your product more attractive.

BNY is also more conscious of selecting imagery and illustrations that complement its new color scheme, something other creative teams could learn from.



CARMIGNAC

Five years ago, this site featured large abstract photography (an image of half a knife and half a feather). Today there is a continuation of the large lifestyle imagery theme. But that's where the similarity ends.

Single clicks to NAV and Performance sections and a CTA for staying in touch are front and center. The hero is also hidden behind some secondary calls to action with a nice balance of funds, relevant information and quarterly communications.

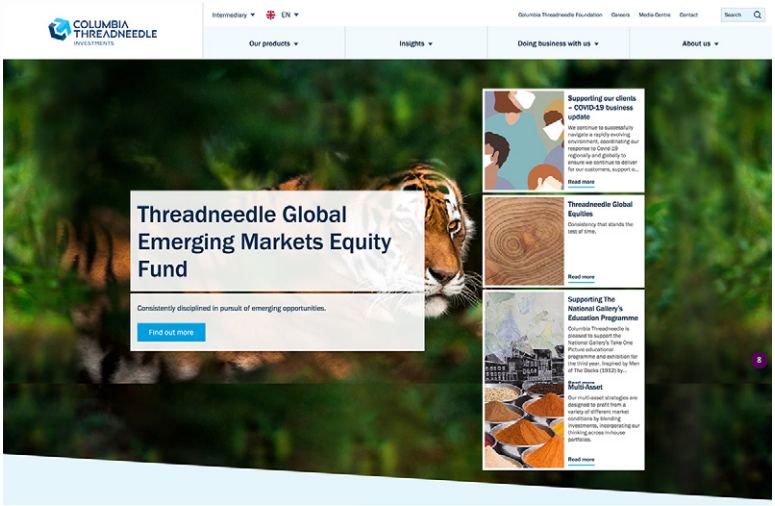
As you scroll down, there is a consistent feel to the navigation. But just as you start to think the site may be a little dull, some more color and additional layouts focus your attention on awards and contact sections.

There appears to be purpose and thought in the hierarchy of information as the site scales down through the responsive resolutions to mobile rather than just making it smaller and narrower. This is pleasing when alternating between sizes.

We haven't tested all sites for this, but the site's simplicity responds well to controlling with a keyboard rather than a mouse, which is often overlooked in accessibility and usability tests. Overall a significant step forward from the 2015 site. Great work Carmignac!

COLUMBIA THREADNEEDLE

The first thing that strikes you here is the smart combination of photography and illustrations. These complement the modular layout, which gives access to key focus funds, topic updates and a clear global navigation, giving the user a clear route to areas of the site that really excel such as the fund center.

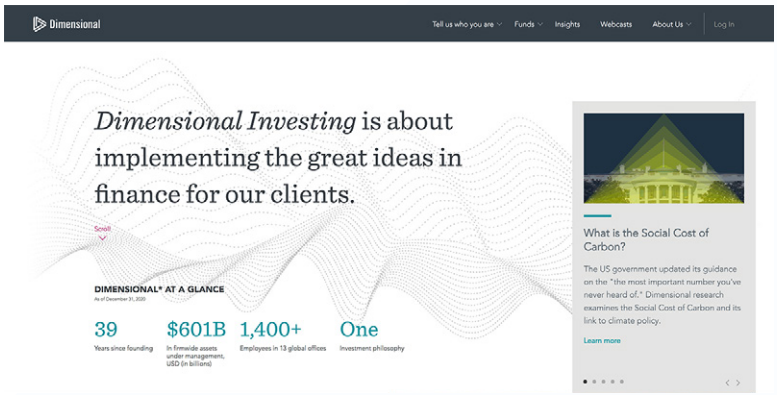


This is a great progression from five years ago. Columbia Threadneedle has reduced its main navigation header by using a more proportionally scaled logo. It has also resized the font sizes and menu items within the horizontal bar.

The manager has distinguished the menu sections by highlighting the site navigation against a slight blue background, which works well. The site now also has a prominent search feature that was not previously available. While its previous hero imagery appeared to be selected

to complement its brand's primary blue tones, they've clearly departed from such images, which may have been limiting.

Columbia Threadneedle has also moved the blogs and articles into the hero section, and they read more like traditional blog pages, there is a great balance of relevant and engaging content.



DIMENSIONAL FUND ADVISORS

Dimensional takes the 'being different' theme to a new level, starting with an on-point hero section. The dotted wave motif behind the serif font works extremely well. The hero section features key company figures and articles that span the right column unobtrusively.

The homepage features a short video about Dimensional's origins, delivered in documentary fashion. It is an excellent way of engaging the viewer, gaining trust, and creating a sense of pride. Further down, we see the theme continuing with smart and clever visualizations of timelines, graphs and podcasts.

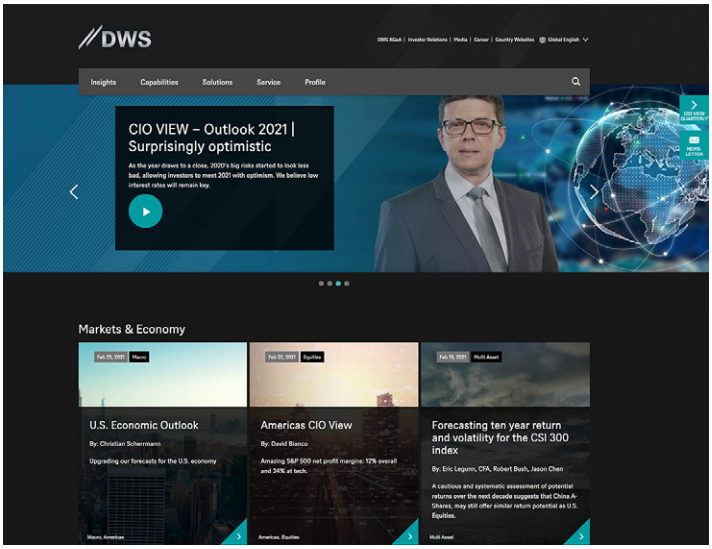
The interactive 'breakthroughs in modern finance' timeline is particularly cool. It runs horizontally across the page, each section expanding and revealing a summary. After this, the viewer can play a short audio clip from Dimensional Director and Nobel Prize winner Eugene Fama.

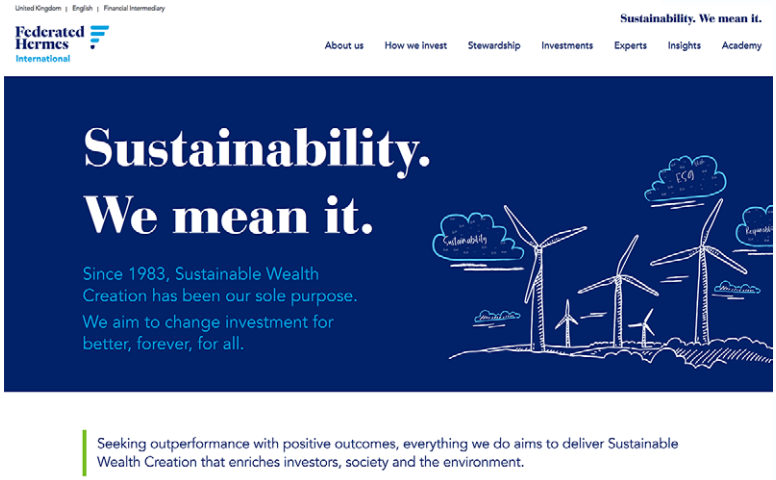
Dimensional's site makes a great effort to engage the senses fully with multimedia and interactive objects. It also uses geolocation well to determine the area from which the user is browsing. Overall, this is a stand-out site in the industry.

DWS

The most visually striking feature of this site is its dark theme. Dark sites are uncommon in the industry. Designers tend to avoid them as they are visually more complex than a traditional white canvas.

DWS has managed to balance the dark greys and accents on its homepage tastefully. Menu items and CTAs are very clear. The search icon expands to a large dropdown field, with useful popular search phrases underneath. DWS' quarterly overview and newsletter sign-up CTAs are a permanent right-sidebar fixture, which is also helpful and draws your eye.





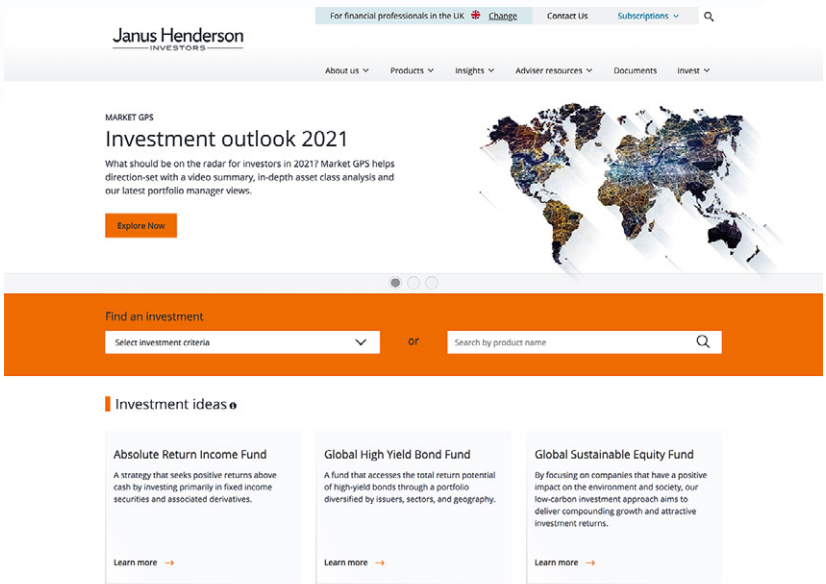
FEDERATED HERMES - SUSTAINABILITY HOMEPAGE

This is not technically Federated Hermes' corporate asset management homepage, but its sustainability site is so much more than a creative application for a campaign, so we're including it here.

Bold typography and block colorways remove any doubt as to the purpose here. This forgoes stereotypical environmental and lifestyle photography in favour of simple illustrations that complement rather than overpower.

Including video in the navigation dropdowns piques user interest and emphasizes this site's purpose and aim of provoking interaction. As you scroll down, there is more of the same with large, unashamedly bold CTAs, smart illustrations and even bolder figures that hit home for the user.

We love that no single band on this site is the same. Clear, well-chosen illustrations and solid block colorways complement a traditional 'meet your experts' sections. This brings some balance and stops the site feeling too casual.

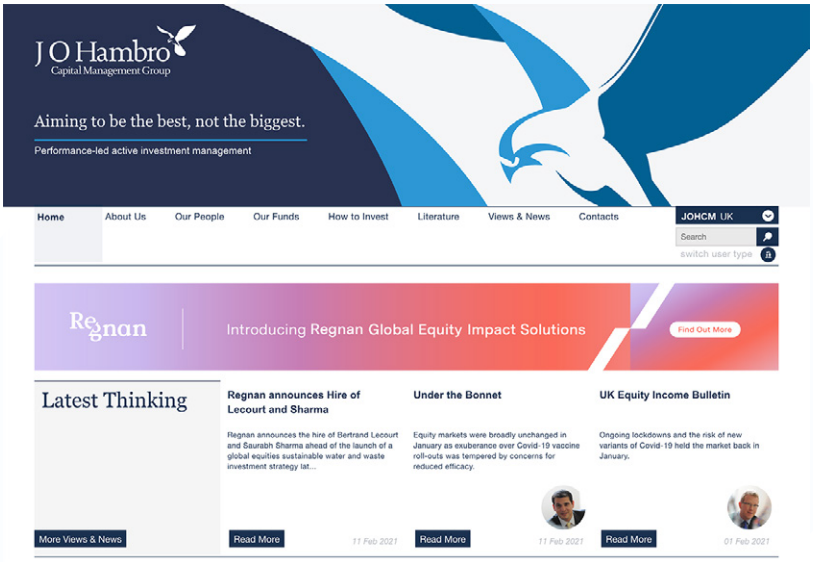


JANUS HENDERSON

We are big fans of the term 'don't be afraid of white space'. But sticking to it is difficult when you reveal a new website design across stakeholder groups and teams try to wedge more content into a site to make it more 'valuable', which typically has the reverse effect.

Janus has nailed it here with a great, clean mix of imagery and illustration. The site reacts well through responsive scaling and the proportion of space given to images and content means it is always clear which information is prioritized and how to find it.

JO HAMBRO



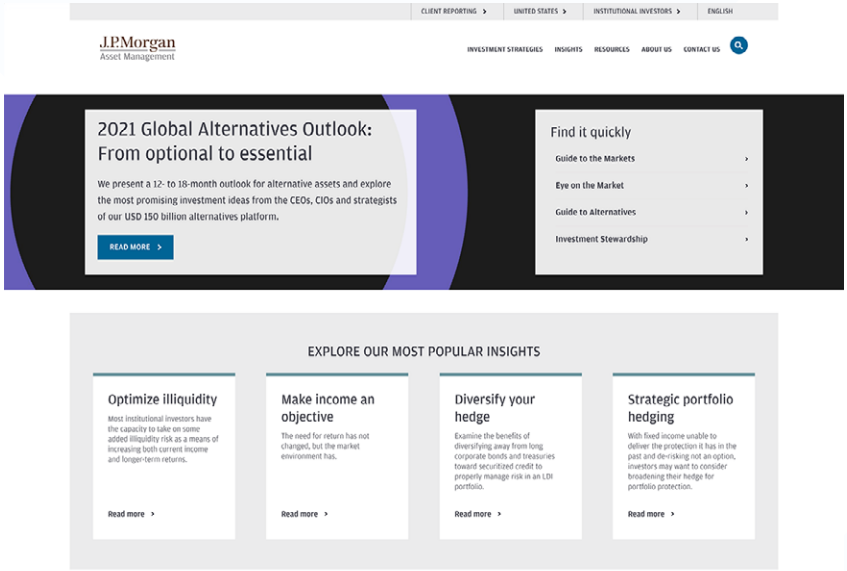
JOH seems to have opted for a more traditional investment management website look and feel than it had before.

As before, this site features an expansive top section dedicated to the logo and brand colors. A large graphic of the brand emblem fills the space behind the logo. The menu is positioned almost in the vertical middle, at eye level.

The selection area of the menu items is very large, due in part to the stacked investor's menu and search feature on the right.

The CTAs are well-defined and less visually obstructed than before. Underneath the main menu, an image link to its Regnan Global Equity Impact Solutions is displayed in the style of a typical Google banner ad.

Further down, the 'Daily Prices' block within the featured section crossfades between exchange rates, allowing the user to see key exchange rates without having to leave the home page. JOH has taken a much lighter approach in representing brand colors on its site. It has a new, more generic serif font for its headers and body.



JP MORGAN

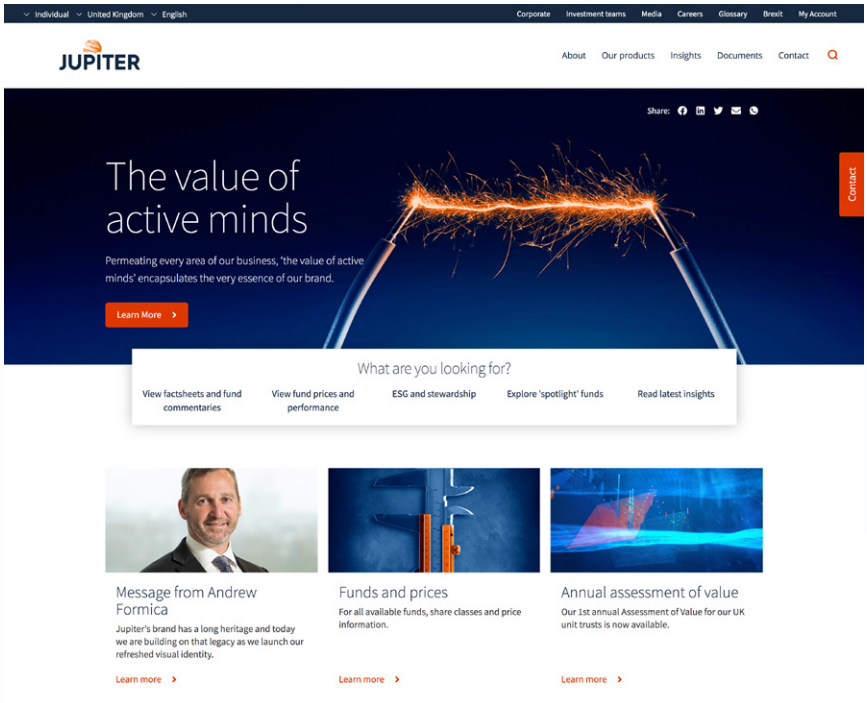
JP Morgan has developed a series of scalable and functional country sites that provide the content users are searching for as quickly as possible in the user journey.

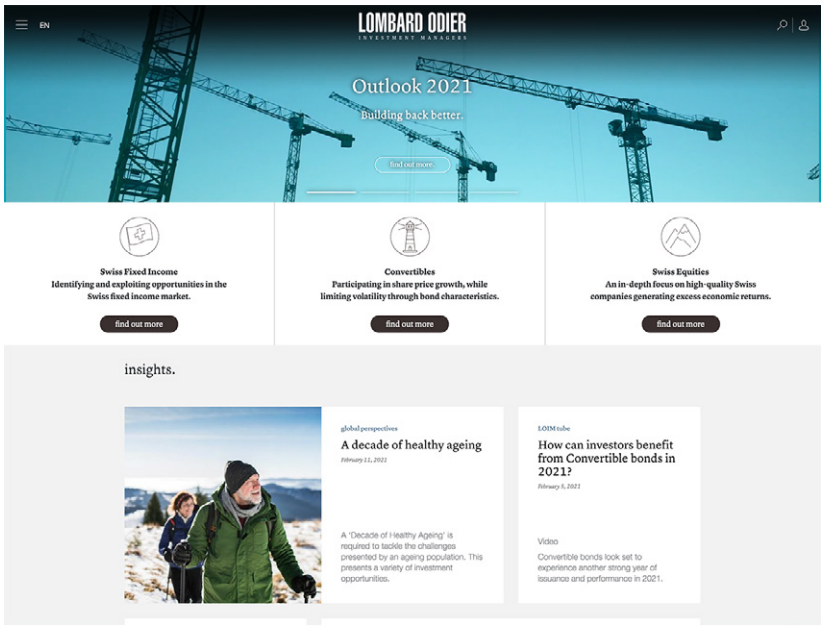
With photography almost completely removed, the site puts content first with fund search, market insights and fund 'quick links' all accessible at initial glance. It is also one of the few sites with low use of FULL CAPS for headers and titles. It only uses them in the main section titles, which helps users reading sections of copy.

JUPITER

Bold imagery on the site complements the subject matter well. Large font with super-clear, contrasting CTAs also give a natural feel to the options.

With smart use of a secondary navigation under this, the user can still make quick decisions about where they need to go. This makes it one of the neatest initial layouts of any site on our list. Consistent CTA colorways and permanent Contact buttons continue through the site and enhance the feeling that you always know where to go and what to click.





LOMBARD ODIER

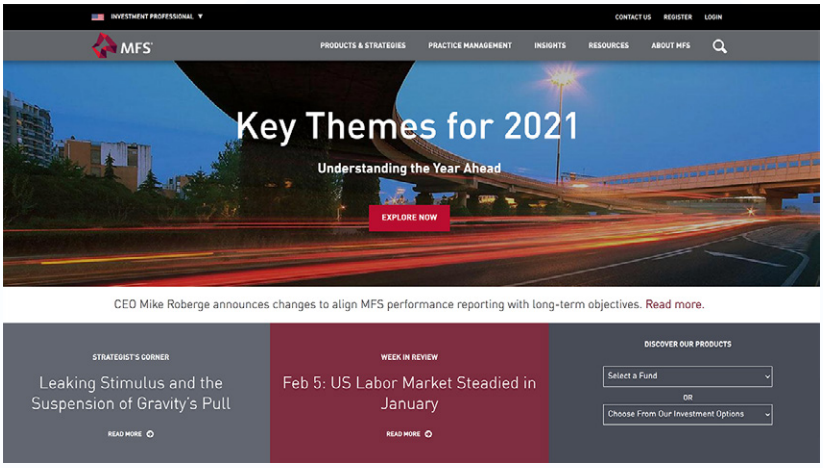
This site uses well-crafted hero imagery with plenty of motion throughout the carousel. Across the homepage, this has four views covering topical areas. It looks fantastic when scrolling through.

Further down, there is a very clean approach, albeit with a return to traditional asset manager design layouts, but it just feels easier. We like the flow and the no-nonsense layout, which is a victory for any user experience team. Semi-permanent sticky menus and the option to discover more around insights and sustainability, rather than pushing vast amounts of content at first view, is also a great touch.

Take special notice around the initial attestation when entering the asset management site – its super-clear, well-designed layout does not disrupt or frustrate as many others do.

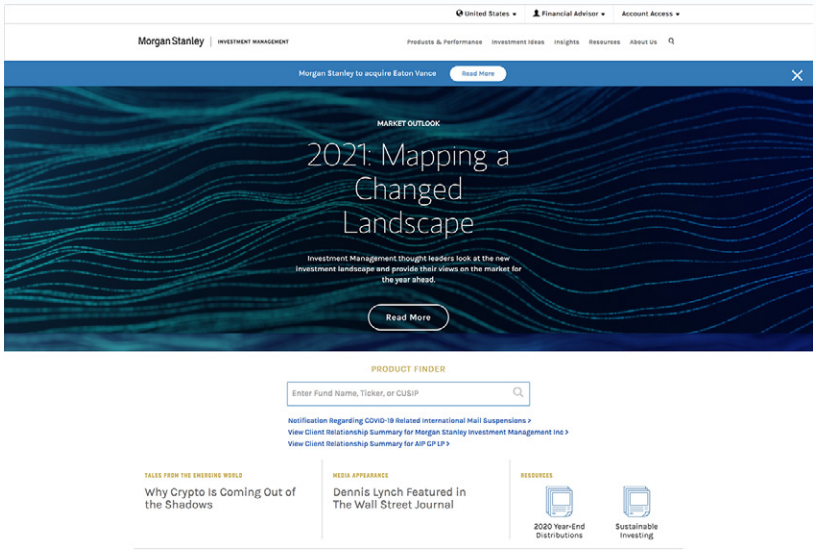
MFS

Once through the attestation, the user is struck instantly by the mix of very large, bold typeface and arresting color palette, which is on-trend across digital design.



As you scroll, there is no sense of this bold approach letting up, with a combination of two and three column modules; focused photography; and clear terminology across the headers and article titles.

It would be easy to create a jarring and unpleasant experience with poor image and color palette selection. But the team have done a fantastic job and the boldness pays off. This site is also one of the few with a smart 'jump back to top' button appearing once you have scrolled halfway down the page.



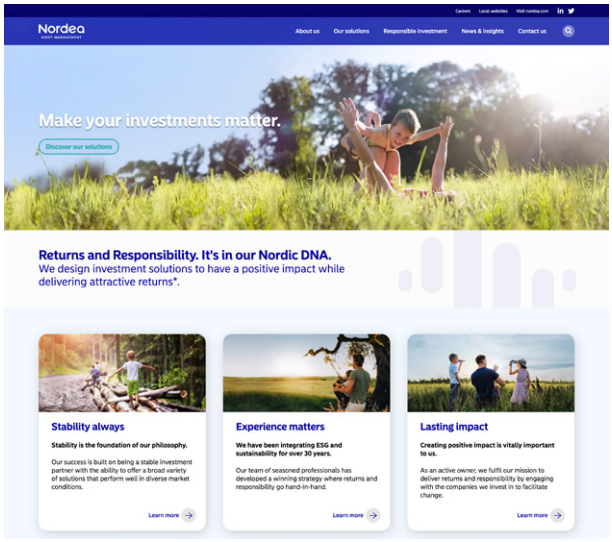
MORGAN STANLEY

Once you get past an interesting approach to attestation, with a creative invitation to select a role, you are faced with a fluid, rippling motion across the key hero imagery. Large fonts are more subtle than some others on this list, but this does not detract from their impact.

Scrolling to product and strategy finders is a unique approach with a subtle but very effective application. We would love to understand how this is working from a results perspective.

Moving down the site, there is another unique approach to related products, with Morningstar review links being semi-sticky next to relevant articles and insights for each fund.

Attaching relevant products to articles is a constant challenge for asset managers and something we have helped many with over the years. Kudos to the team at Morgan Stanley as they have nailed it here with a creative application.



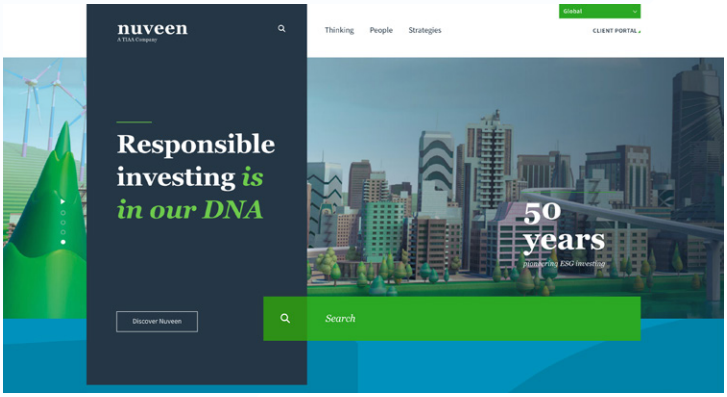
NORDEA

This is another clean, no-nonsense site with a simple modular layout that scales easily for responsive formats. It is easy to read and to find what you're looking for. The site embraces the homepage as a signpost to information without over-complicating or hiding information in favour of idealistic imagery.

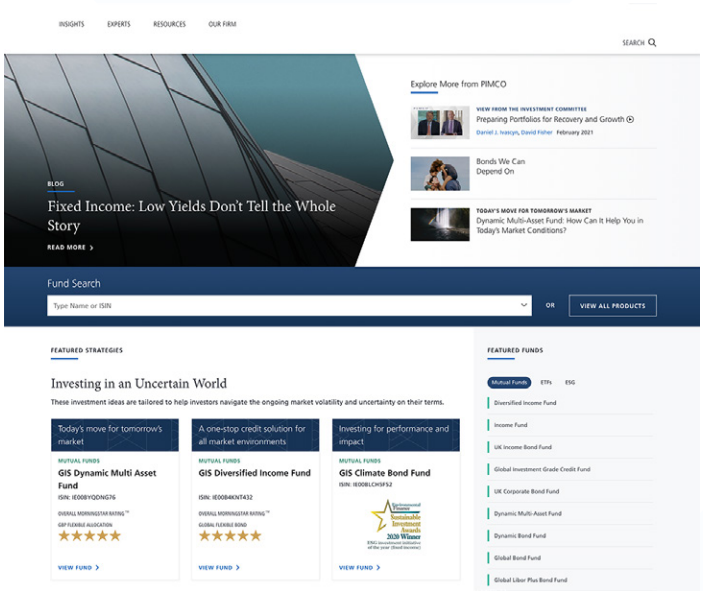
Consistent application of curved edges across CTA's, content modules and imagery along with bold colour contrasts really add to the Nordic feel of the site overall and it represents the brand exceptionally well.

NUVEEN

Nuveen sports an unconventional, playful layout with 'low poly' design cityscapes and wind turbines, hinting at sustainable investing. Brand colors are introduced in a bold display of overlapping rectangular shapes, aiding legibility of text within the hero. Navigations trigger stylish full-screen overlays.



The investment strategies menu runs horizontally across the screen, allowing enlarged, readable headers. The experience is visually and navigationally satisfying and memorable - it doesn't feel like a typical investment management site. Navigation and CTAs are stylish and easy on the eye. The use of 'fixed upon scroll' navigation, which means the menu is sticky as you scroll down, gets Nuveen extra points.

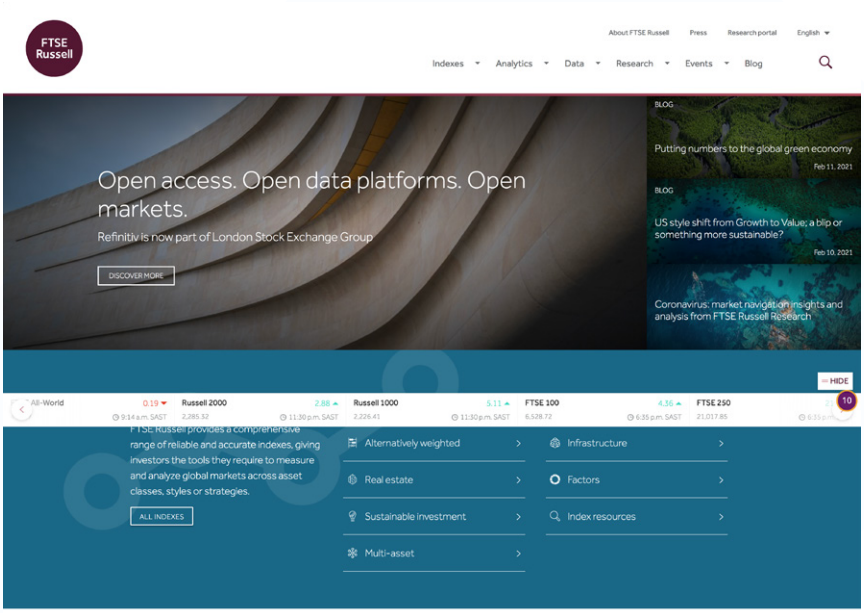


PIMCO

This site has a clear layout, with rich video content taking the primary calls to action. Across the top, it has clear and uncluttered dropdowns from primary navigation that work well on mouseover rather than needing an extra pesky click. This is a nice touch and surprisingly uncommon across many of the top 25.

Beyond the fold, this site's layout bucks the trend with plentiful, full-width articles in rectangular modules; and quick links to featured funds. It would be interesting to see if these are internally categorized as 'featured' or driven by user demand data.

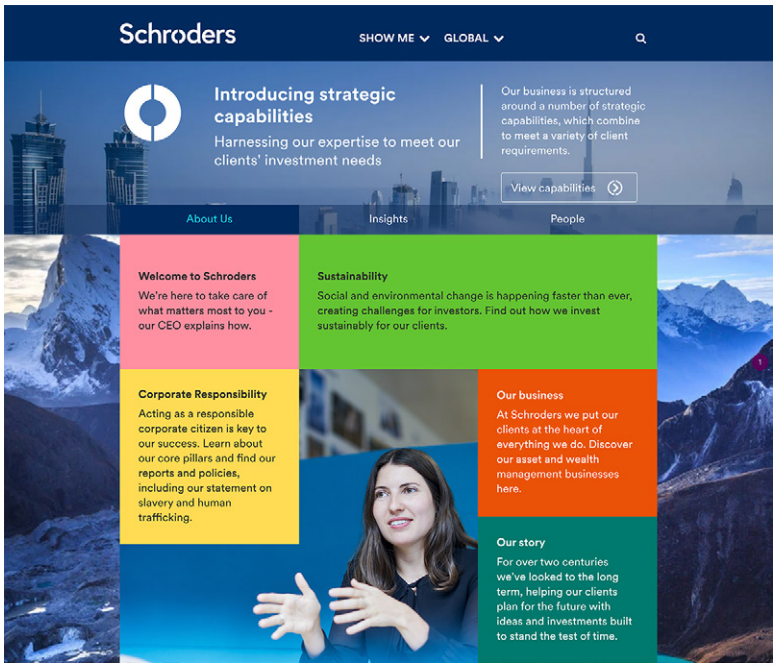
RUSSELL INVESTMENTS



This homepage has come a long way in five years. It has transitioned from a lifestyle image of the cyclist to a lovely dark and light contrast, with some more focused and relevant illustration and photography representing navigational choices.

The bright orange call to action for its global market outlook is the only CTA on the site. It makes it clear where it wants users to go. Is having this front and centre enough? We would love to know what the data says about this belt and braces approach to its primary CTA.

Although the scroll beyond the fold is vast, the variety of layouts is highly commendable, with a subtle design variation for the ESG section standing out from others. The combination of bright and subtle block colors, and photography and illustrations representing different areas, shows clear thought and purpose when mapping content and applying visual elements.



SCHRODERS

A fantastic blend of imagery and illustration adds color and vibrancy without confusing users or distracting from the purpose. A modular navigation pane supports visible fund search by name as you scroll down, giving a varied selection of articles and onward journeys.

Inconsistent positioning of headers and spotting the difference between an article, report and a further navigation pane makes it a little confusing. But the overall feel is fluid, and it doesn't disrupt the journey too much.

CONCLUSION

We have seen some fantastic examples of asset managers embracing creativity, and keeping up with modern web design principles and best practices across site usability. There are some brave souls out there pushing the boundaries of the industry in ways that are sure to surprise and delight customers, we feel they deserve credit and hope we have given them some here.

At Kurtosys, we are proud of our fast, scalable and easy to use technology. We also love solving problems with creativity. Not all these top 25 sites use Kurtosys technology, but we are proud to see some of our much-loved clients on the list.

If you are struggling to keep up with changing trends in web design; or need to automate difficult and costly processes; deliver critical data at pace or update your user interfaces and website design, get in touch today. Talk to our team and arrange a demonstration of how our tools can add value to your digital transformation.

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