

# Stiff Portfolio

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## **Our Agency**

Stiff is a full-service strategic communications and design agency. We create written, visual, digital and motion content for business leaders, educational institutions, government departments and not-for-profits. Our team consists of brand strategists, writers, graphic designers, illustrators, animators, videographers, social media experts and project managers.

## **Our Process**

We challenge tradition. We have a strict no BS policy. We value honesty and are entirely rigorous in our approach. We question everything. It is the only way to uncover opportunity. Our best work comes from ambition that is matched in equal measure by the clients with whom we partner. Our resolute, highly responsive nature quickly builds trust at the most senior levels across all of our clients, locally and internationally. We really care about what we do. As a result, we consistently find new ways to help our clients attract the best talent, launch desirable products and services, and improve brand reputation. Our work enables organizations to communicate value directly, effectively and consistently. Our services include:

- Strategic communications
- Board and executive communications
- Brand development
- Social media strategy
- Videography and motion design
- Employee engagement
- Graphic design and layout
- Print and digital advertising
- Writing training
- Corporate and technical writing
- Animation and illustration
- Website and digital development
- Speech and script writing

## **Our Methodology**

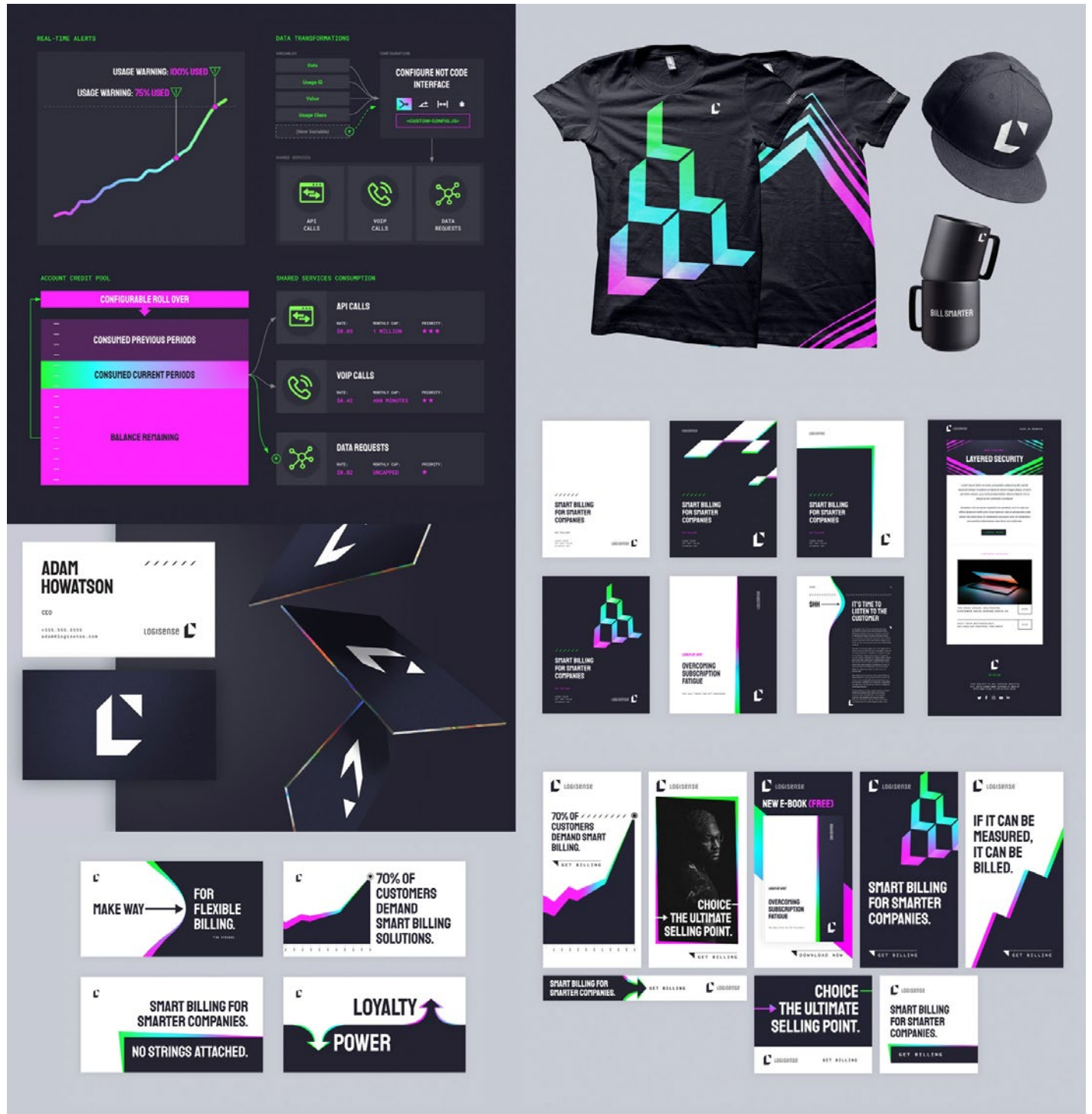
We approach each and every project with vigour and purpose. Nothing is a one-off; there is no such thing as a quick fix. We know that everything we deliver must support an organization's purpose, vision, brand values, business objectives and audience preferences.

Our processes are based on specificity, metrics and iteration to ensure consistent connection with fickle and elusive audiences. Our proprietary writing and editing system, Backdraft, is the foundation of Stiff's quality control process. We're obsessed with the most appropriate and accurate use of language in everything we produce.



## LogiSense (Branding)

LogiSense is a cloud-based subscription and usage-based billing platform that leads its industry in capability and performance. Its company's previous brand was at odds with its ingenuity and market position. We developed a new aesthetic that makes a bold statement to highlight how the brand is changing billing for good.



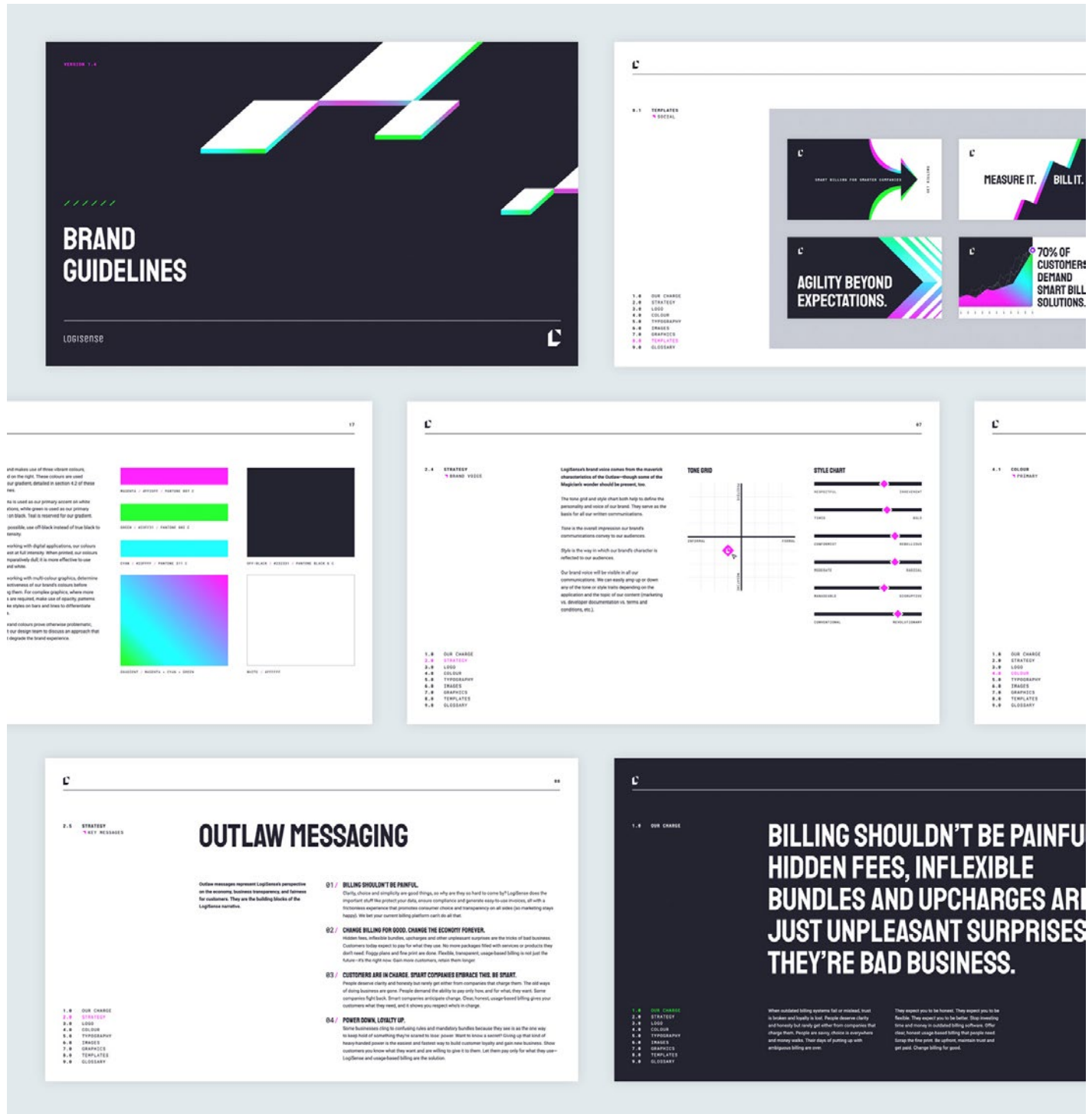
# LogiSense (Website)

LogiSense has several unique buyer personas, from finance to product to IT. We updated the user journey on the site to help all prospective customers find information and proof points. We implemented a hub-and-spoke content structure to aid in SEO and rewrote all web copy to align with the new brand and key messages.



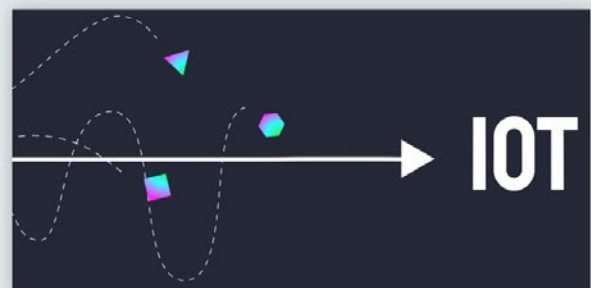
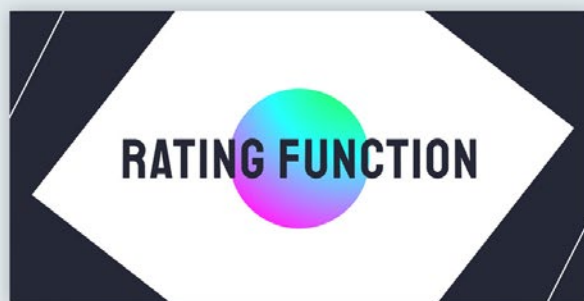
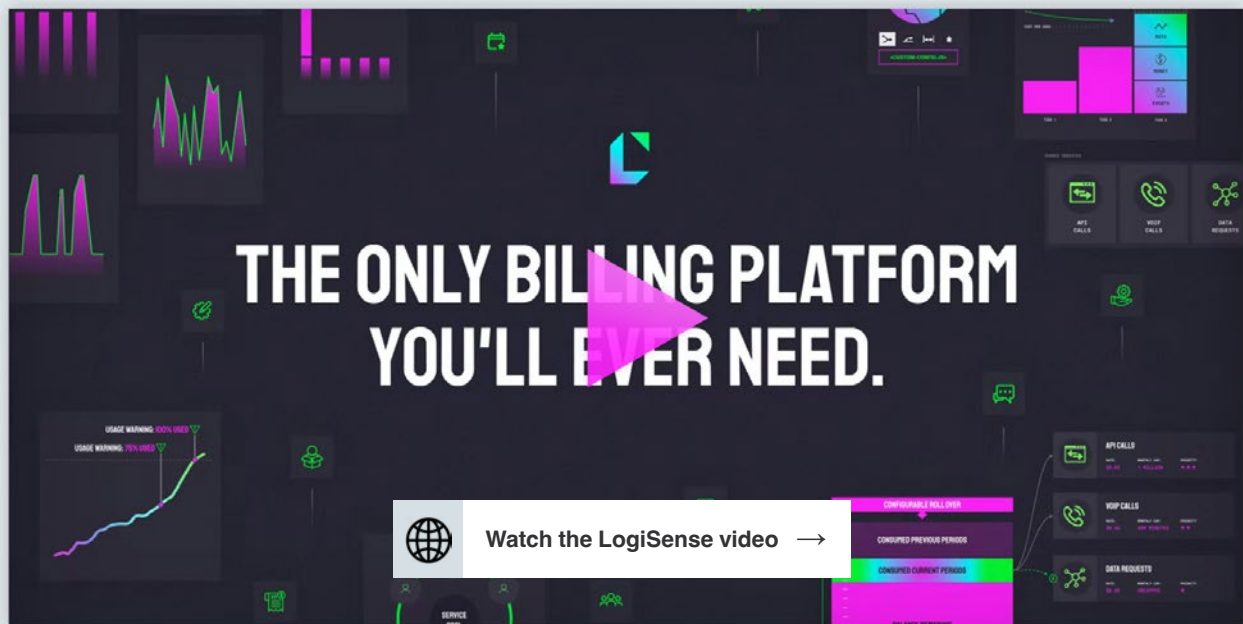
# LogiSense (Brand Guidelines)

We created strong brand guidelines to ensure everyone can deploy and communicate the new LogiSense brand. The guidelines also describe the Outlaw and Magician archetypes, upon which we built LogiSense's new identity, and show how to use the company's key messages in the market.



## *LogiSense (Promotional Video)*

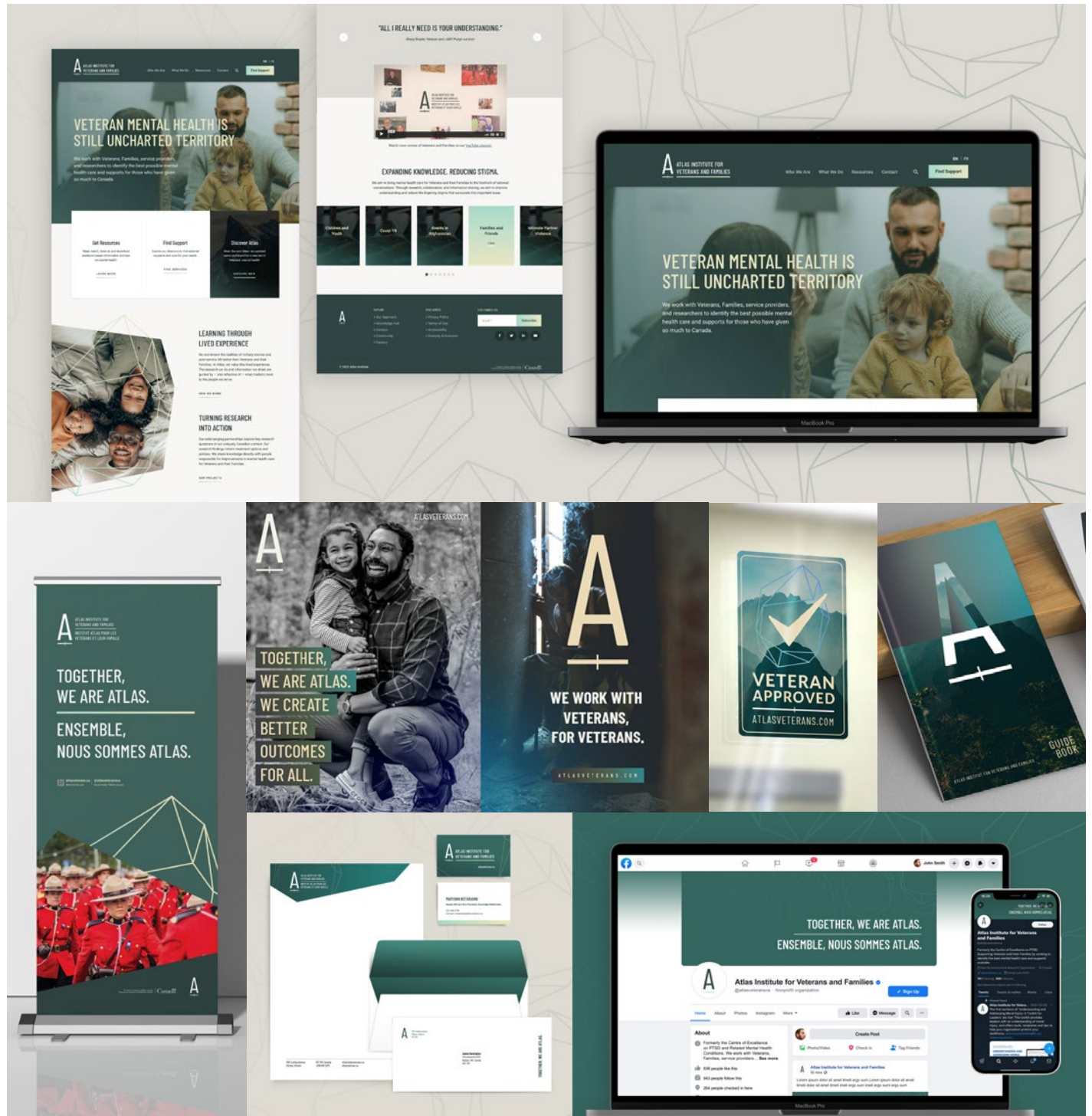
LogiSense had a hard time communicating its value proposition. We wrote a narrative that swiftly and succinctly outlines not only the brand's product features, but also its values and outlook on billing in general. This video acts as a companion to the LogiSense narrative we dubbed 'Our Charge,' which calls on companies to change billing for good.






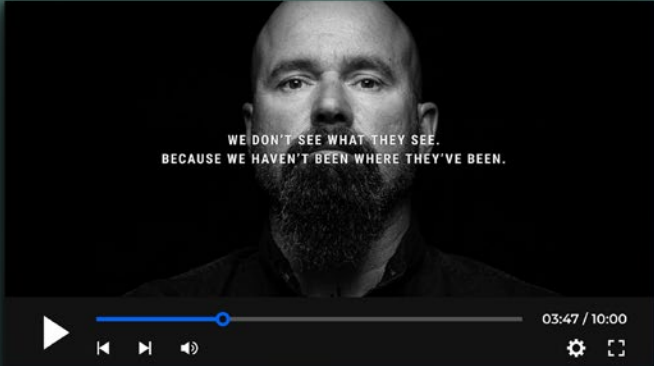
## Atlas (Branding)


Atlas bridges the divide between research and practice to help veterans and their families get the best possible mental health care. The visual ethos of the brand ties to the mythic hero who carries the weight of the world, and to the reference volumes that help us find our way around the globe.






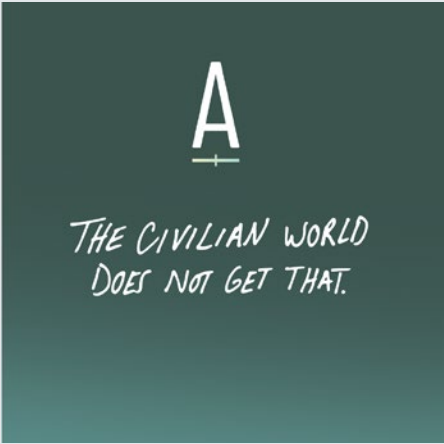
## Atlas (Campaign)

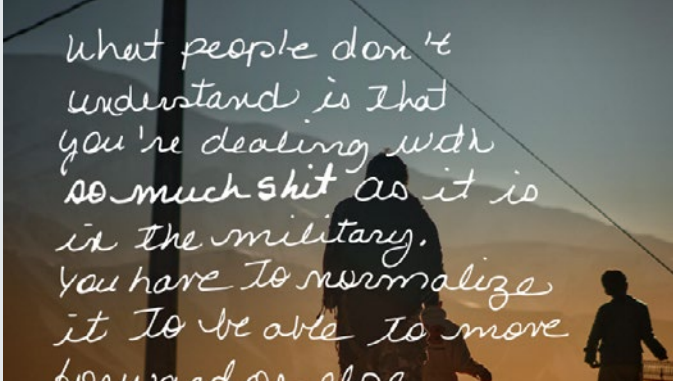

Our support for the Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families continued our work with a veteran community fatigued by the failed promises of public and private institutions. They feel unseen and unheard. Our “We don’t see what they see” campaign helped bring national awareness to veteran trauma and mental well-being.



 Watch the video (EN) →

 Watch the video (FR) →







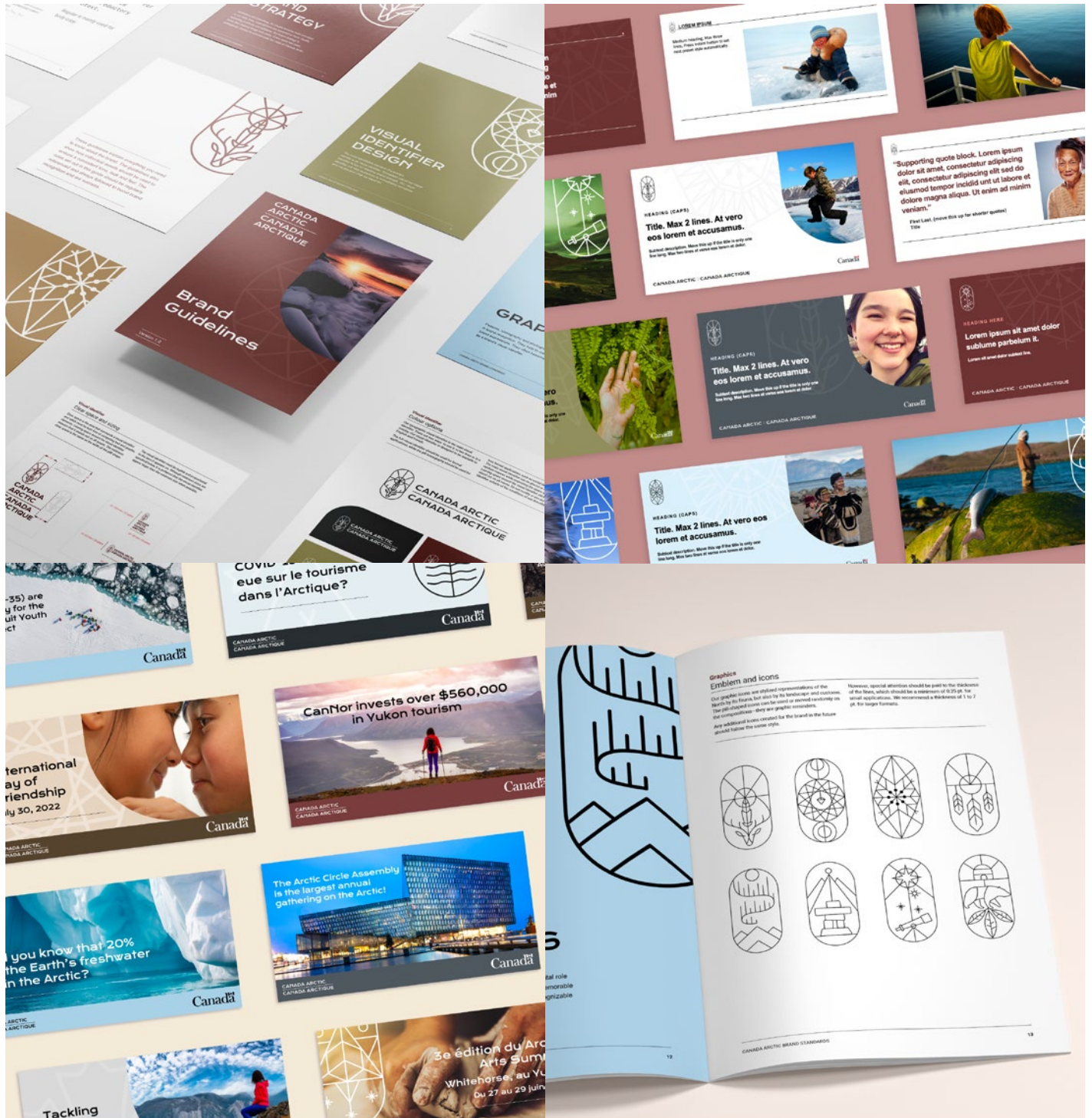
## Canadian International Arctic Centre (Branding)

CIAC coordinates Canada's international Arctic engagement on issues such as climate change. Our work with CIAC captures the 'living North'—a rich and diverse landscape for social storytelling. We set out to connect the land, its seasons and shifting environment, to the cultural side of the North—its people and their art.



## Canadian International Arctic Centre (Visual System)

To further embrace the idea of a living North, we created a visual system that reflects the diverse and evolving nature of the region, through stylized lines that illustrate the fauna, landscape and customs. The system uses an upright pill shape, which balances with its inner elements while symbolizing the North's ecosystem.





# NSIRA (Annual Report & Branding)

The National Security and Intelligence Review Agency is Canada's independent expert review body. Our branding emphasizes the precise nature of NSIRA's work and highlights the agency's reliability and professionalism. Visuals explore natural and man-made patterns—the underlying organization in all things. Red was used sparingly to draw the eye.





# Women and Gender Equality Canada (Storytelling)

WAGE came to us looking to improve the reach and value of their Impact stories series. We retold these stories, empowering and connect audiences with the day-to-day impact equality has on communities. Outputs included written stories, social media posts, newsletter, ministerial speeches and a set of designed key messages.



## SEED Winnipeg Inc. (Branding)

SEED delivers financial empowerment programs and services to build strong communities and increase opportunities for people. In support of SEED's new marketing and communications plan, we called on intersecting shapes and colours to suggest growth and connection—and the possibilities that flow from them for the benefit of community and inclusion.





## Cuso International (Layout)

Cuso works with local partners around the world to improve economic opportunities, empower women and girls and advance gender equality. Our layout and design decisions showcase authentic stories, putting them center-stage through use of compelling imagery, bold colours and clean layout.





## *Freedom Online Coalition (Branding)*

The FOC is a group of 34 governments committed to supporting Internet freedom. Our brand support captures the idea of digital freedom through overlapping quadrants that share and embrace new perspectives. Through a central star, we showcase unseen talent, while parallel lines stand for equality and act as the pathway to inclusion and connectivity.



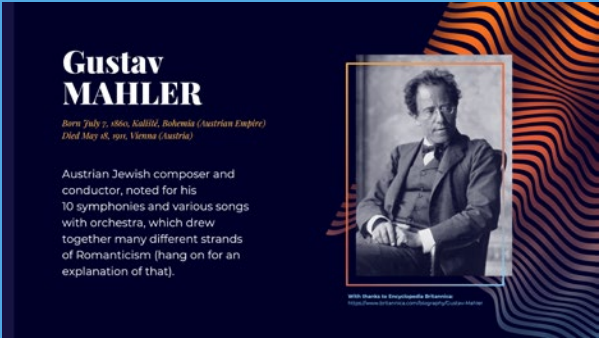
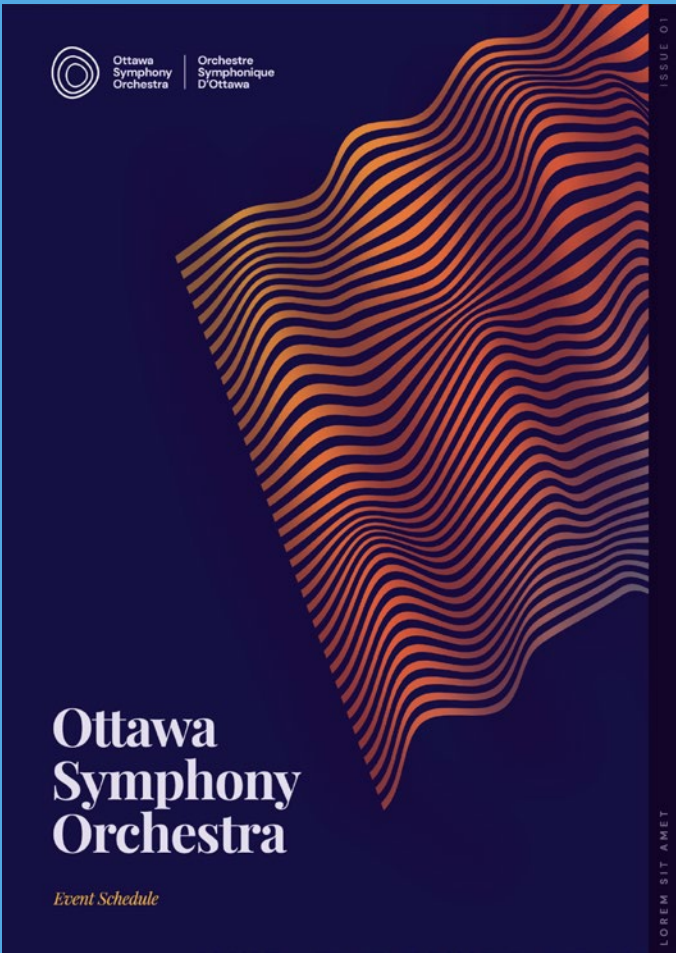
## Melissa Sarakinis (Branding)

We worked with Melissa Sarakinis, a health coach and holistic nutritionist, to develop a brand that supports her suite of well-being services. We drew inspiration from nature and jewel tones to design an identity that conveys the luxurious and healing experiences that Melissa provides her clients.



# OSO (Branding)

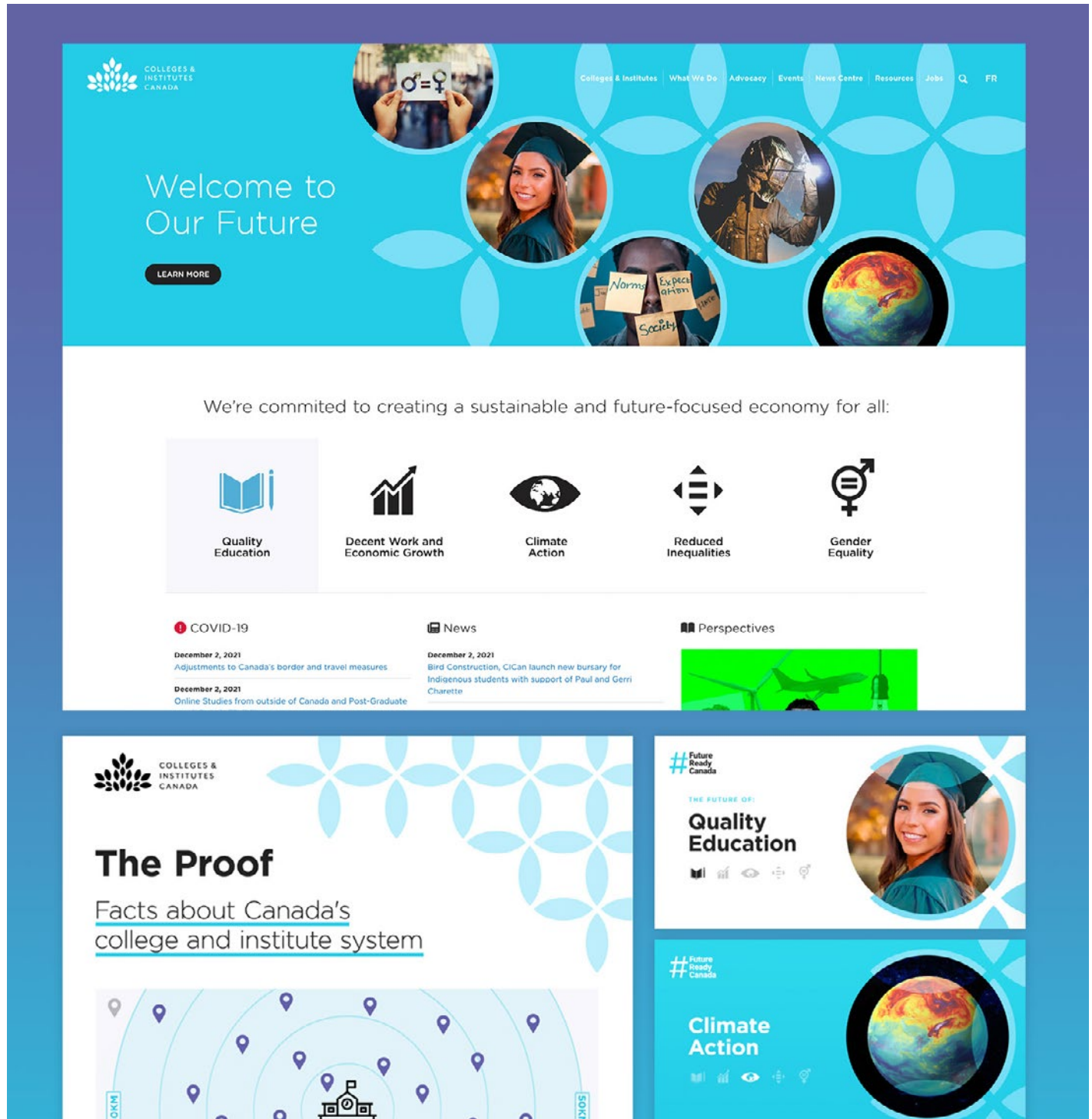
We worked with OSO to make classical music more visible in Ottawa by broadening the symphony orchestra’s reach, diversifying its programming and supporting the next generation of musicians. We created a brand and messaging platform that would broaden their reach while dispelling myths about orchestras and classical music.





## Colleges & Institutes Canada (Campaign)

CICan is the national and international voice of Canada's publicly supported colleges, institutes of technology, and cégeps. We consulted, explored positioning, crafted narratives and key messages. Our aim was to shift decades of misperceptions about Canada's college system by refocusing CICan around their ability to 'Future-proof' people.



## *Veterans Affairs Canada (Videos)*

VAC was having difficulty connecting with the veterans it serves. To relate with the target audience, as well as increase public awareness of the contributions made by those in service, we filmed a series of stories with eight Canadian veterans. These videos highlighted the veterans' unique military and post-service experiences.





# Veterans Affairs Canada (Salute! Magazine)

VAC prints an annual magazine in both official languages that details its services for veterans and their families. As part of the VAC brand project, we redesigned the publication and filled its pages with stories written by veterans themselves.





## *Veterans Affairs Canada (Faces of Freedom Exhibit)*

This temporary exhibit, displayed at VIMY Ridge, was created to recognize military service across Canada's history, including Second World War and Afghanistan anniversaries in 2019 and 2020. The exhibit displayed the human faces of war through portraits of those who served, along with short biographical and historical context.



## *Veterans Affairs Canada (Brand Guidelines)*

VAC needed to ensure its brand could appear on multiple applications across the country. We composed comprehensive brand guidelines to establish a consistent visual aesthetic and narrative voice as part of the veteran-centric approach.





## *Veterans Affairs Canada (Social Graphics)*

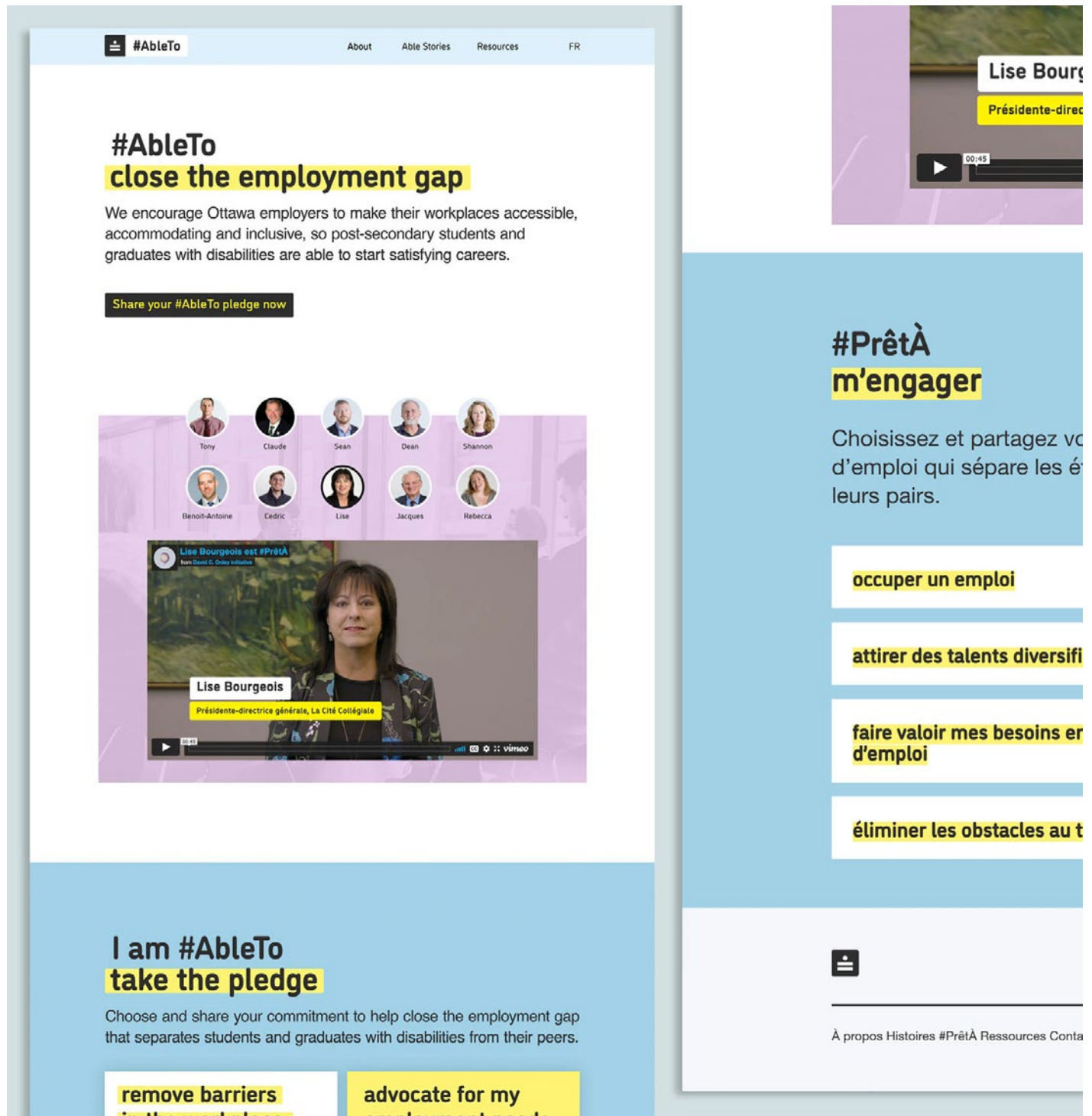
VAC's work with women veterans included support for the Women's Veteran Forum in 2019, and for conferences by the Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research (CIMVHR). Stiff personnel attended to gather valuable research findings from these events. We produced videos, social media content and supporting collateral.





## AbleTo (Website)


AbleTo is part of the David C. Onley Initiative (DCOI), a project with a mission to close the employment gap for students and graduates with disabilities. To spread DCOI's message, we developed an accessible website that allows the community to show its support of the campaign using one of eight social media pledge cards.



## AbleTo (Posters & Documents)


DCOI needed unique resources to highlight the employment gap among not only employers but also students at Ottawa's four largest post-secondary institutions. We designed posters and fact sheets to be distributed on campuses, in workplaces, and at conferences and presentations.

**#AbleTo**  
**bust myths and find meaningful work.**




63 percent of Ottawa's businesses say finding and keeping talent is a pressing problem. Students and graduates with disabilities can solve it. Yet they may hesitate to join the workforce because of common myths. Here are the facts.

Myths	Facts
1 Employers will not offer me the same accommodations that I get in school.	Ontario law gives you the right to receive accommodation for your disability at work.
2 I'll need more training than employees with disabilities.	Disability and training are not related. Employees without disabilities need just as much training as employees with disabilities.
3 I must disclose my disability to my employer.	You have no obligation to disclose your disability to your employer; and Ontario law prevents your employer from forcing you to reveal your disability.
4 I'll be overlooked for promotions because my employer will believe I should be grateful to have a job.	Businesses reward performers whether they have disabilities or not.
5 I'm going to have to undergo an interview to get any decent job.	Most employers offer several flexible interview formats. One of their options might be just right for you.
6 I'll never be confident enough to put my skills to use in the workforce.	Gain confidence by interning, volunteering, job shadowing or taking part in a co-op placement.

**AbleTo.ca** |  Ontario  
A READ Initiative

**L'inclusion est bonne pour les affaires**

Plus de 20 pour cent de la population actuelle du Canada se dit être en situation de handicap. Le Conference Board du Canada prédit que d'ici 2020, le Canada fera face à une pénurie d'un million de travailleurs.



**20% VIVRA AVEC UN HANDICAP**  
**1M PÉNURIE DE TRAVAILLEURS**

**63% ENTREPRISES D'OTTAWA** Soixante-trois pour cent des entreprises d'Ottawa affirment que le recrutement et la rétention d'employés représentent un défi. En recrutant et en embauchant des personnes en situation de handicap, ces entreprises peuvent prospérer malgré la pénurie de talents.

**APPROUVÉ CANADIEN** Soixante-dix-huit pour cent des Canadiens sont plus enclins à acheter un produit ou un service d'une entreprise qui embauche des personnes en situation de handicap.

**NOTES DE RENDEMENT**  
Le taux de rétention est de 72% plus élevé chez les personnes en situation de handicap.  
Quatre-vingt-huit pour cent des travailleurs en situation de handicap obtiennent des notes de rendement allant de bon à excellent.

**DU MARCHÉ** Les personnes en situation de handicap et les membres de leurs familles constituent 53% du marché.

**ASSISTÉE** Quatre-vingt-cinq pour cent des employés en situation de handicap ont un taux de présence moyen ou supérieur à la moyenne.

**72%**  
**56%**  
**75%**

Plus de la moitié, soit cinquante-six pour cent des personnes en situation de handicap en âge de travailler ont fait des études postsecondaires.  
Soixante-quinze pour cent des propriétaires de petites entreprises qui ont embauché des personnes en situation de handicap affirment que ces employés satisfont aux attentes ou les dépassent.


**READ Initiative** **LA CITÉ** **ALGONQUIN** **uOttawa** **Ontario** **PrêtÀ.ca**

**#AbleTo**  
**be employed.**

**You're working hard to gain the skills employers crave.**

Visit the Employment Support Centre (3rd floor, Student Commons) to find out about career opportunities that match your employment needs.

**AbleTo.ca**



**READ Initiative** **LA CITÉ** **ALGONQUIN** **uOttawa** **Ontario**

**#AbleTo**  
**attract diverse talent.**

A hiring strategy that pays particular attention to students and graduates with disabilities will enable your business to attract skilled employees, grow its brand, and even boost its bottom line.

Here are five pieces of practical advice to make your post-secondary recruitment efforts more inclusive:

- 1 Develop a company accessibility plan to create a workplace that meets the needs of all your employees. The Government of Ontario's Accessible Workplaces is a great starting point.
- 2 Write job descriptions that cover only those skills and responsibilities that are actually required for each role.
- 3 Talk openly with prospective employees about how your business can accommodate them so they can do their best work.
- 4 Identify post-secondary institutions that support students with disabilities and work with career offices on these campuses to create employment pathways that fit your organization.
- 5 Designate a champion or group of champions in your business responsible for and equipped to support new employees.

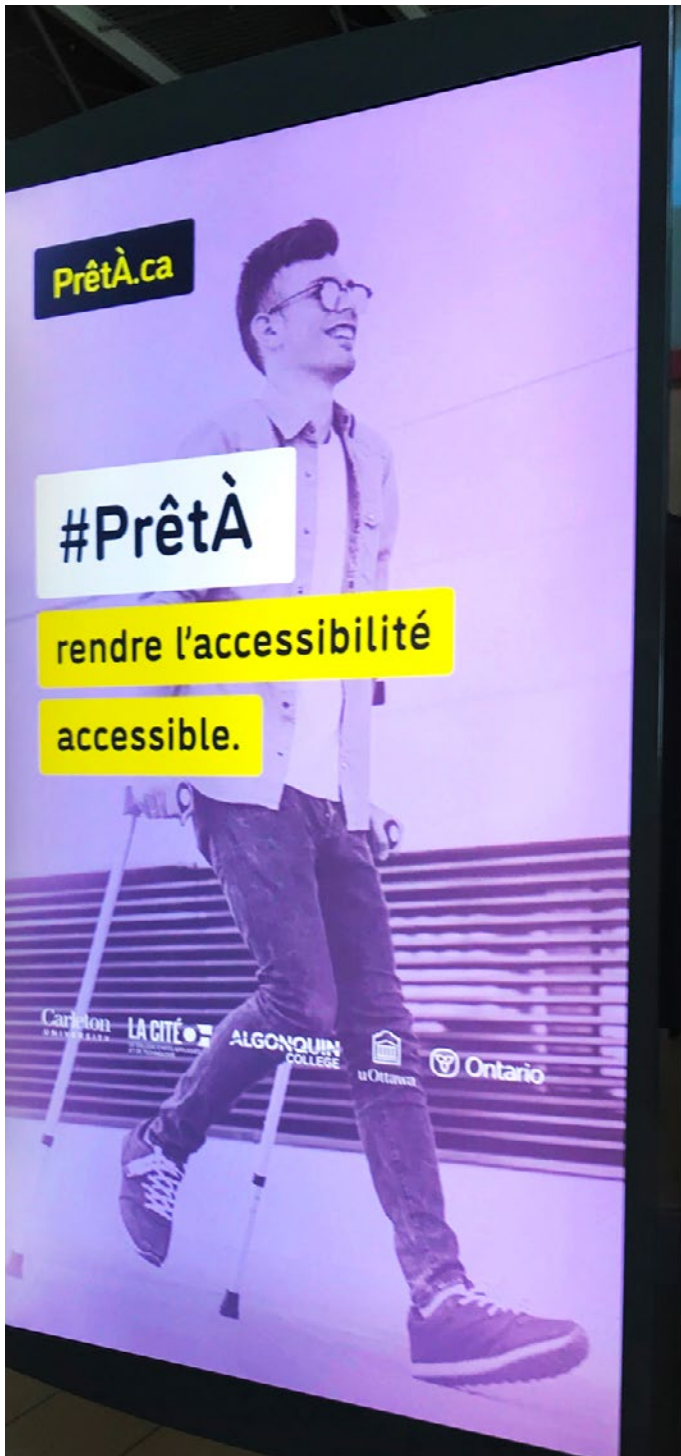
Visit **AbleTo.ca** to learn more and for helpful tools, documents and other resources you can use to recruit and retain skilled employees.

**READ Initiative** **LA CITÉ** **ALGONQUIN** **uOttawa** **Ontario** **AbleTo.ca**

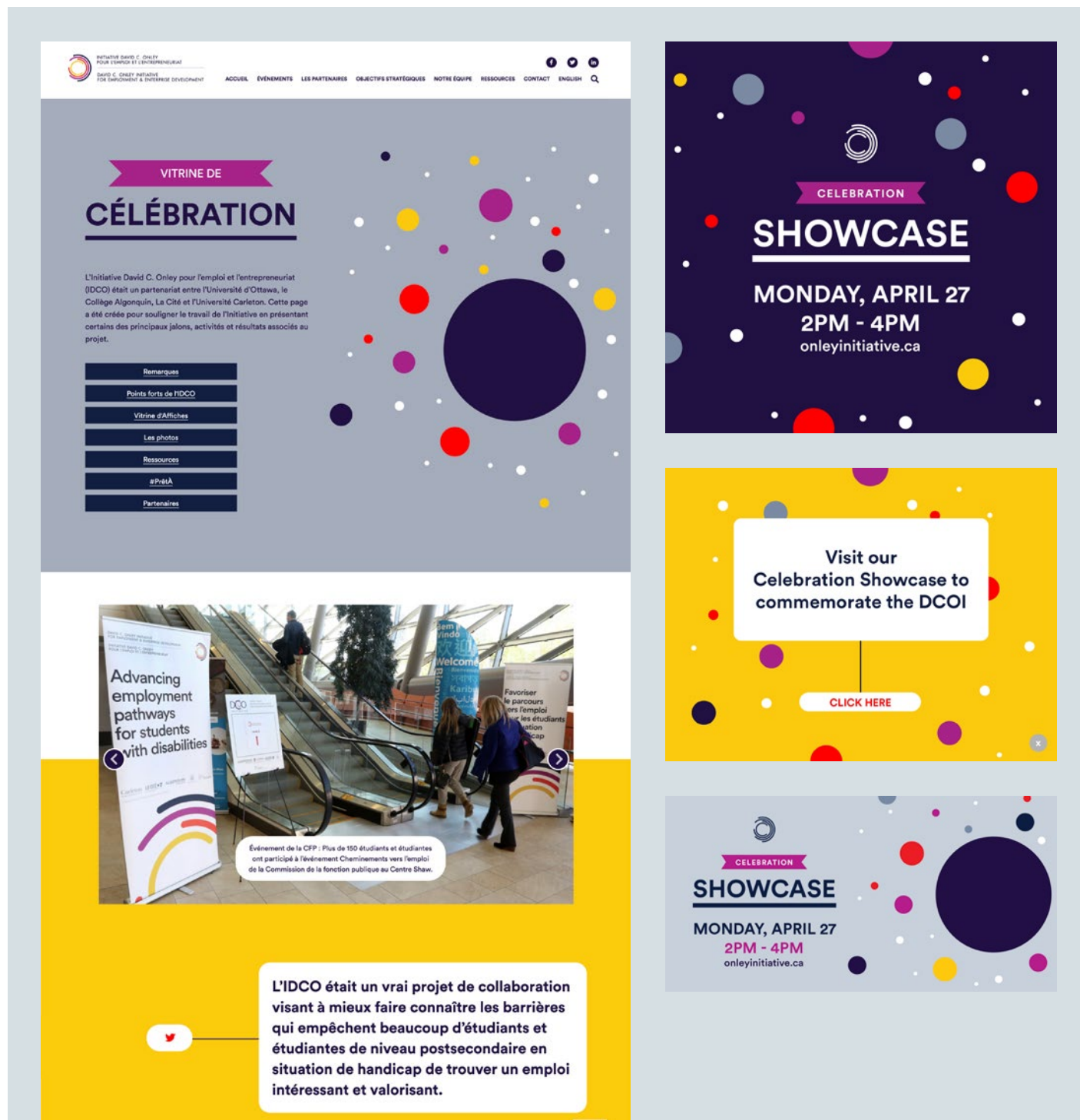


## *AbleTo (Print & Digital Advertisement)*

Bilingual print and digital ads improved public perception about the capabilities of students and graduates with disabilities. Our media buy targeted high-traffic transit routes in Ottawa for maximum exposure and brand recall.



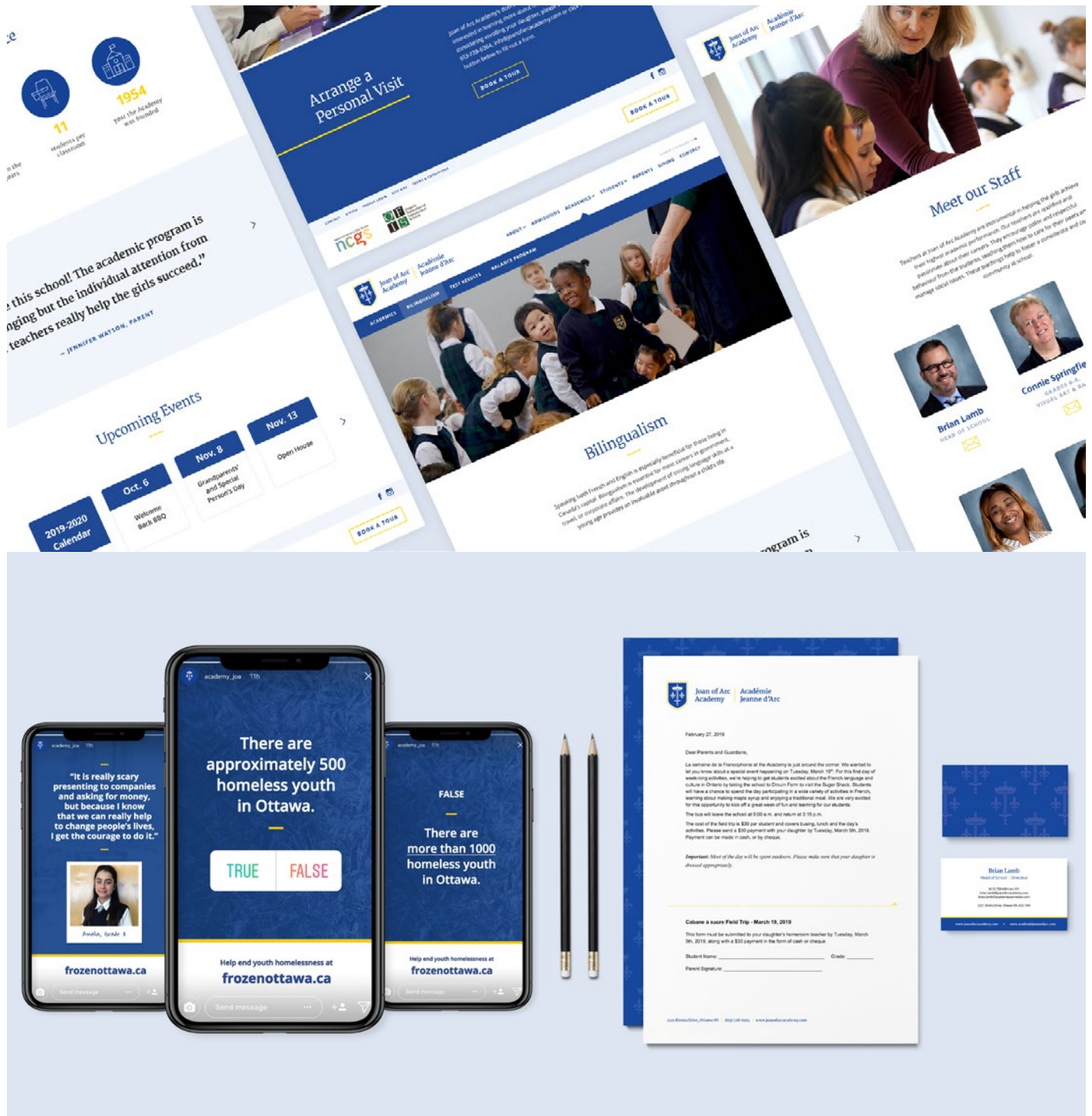
Stiff worked with the DCOI to take its end-of-Initiative celebration online. Launched in tandem with a virtual event, this innovative and nimble approach enhanced our attendees' abilities to celebrate the DCOI's achievements from their own homes.





## Joan of Arc Academy (Website & Branding)

Joan of Arc Academy is a private, fully-bilingual all-girls school located in Ottawa. The school struggled with its enrolment and needed to rebrand in order to attract new families. We refreshed Joan of Arc's existing brand, completely redesigned its website and provided stationery and social media assets.



# Argo Group (Social Media Guide & Graphics)

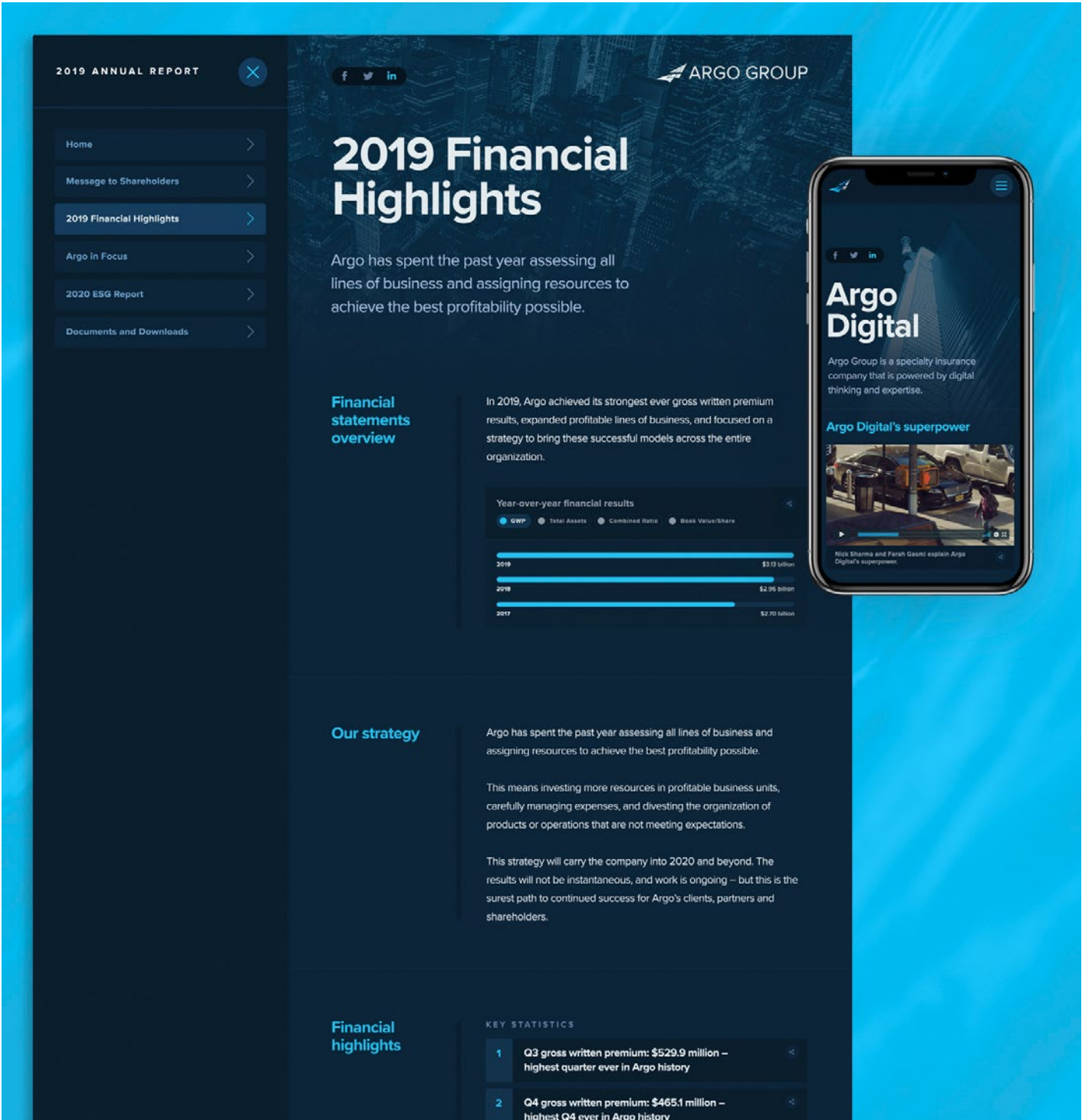
All social platforms are different, each with their own nuances and ideals. We crafted thorough guidelines to advise Argo on how to elevate its social platforms with relevant and interesting content. We also leveraged custom graphics and bold copy to highlight the influence the insurance industry has on the world around us.





# Argo Group (2019 Annual Report Website)

Argo Group’s annual report is rooted in the company’s advanced products and specialty lines. To reflect its positioning in the market, we built a responsive microsite with interactive elements. Functionality included the ability to share any part of the report—from a sentence to a full video—and graphs and data that adjust to users’ inputs.



# CARE Canada (Layout)

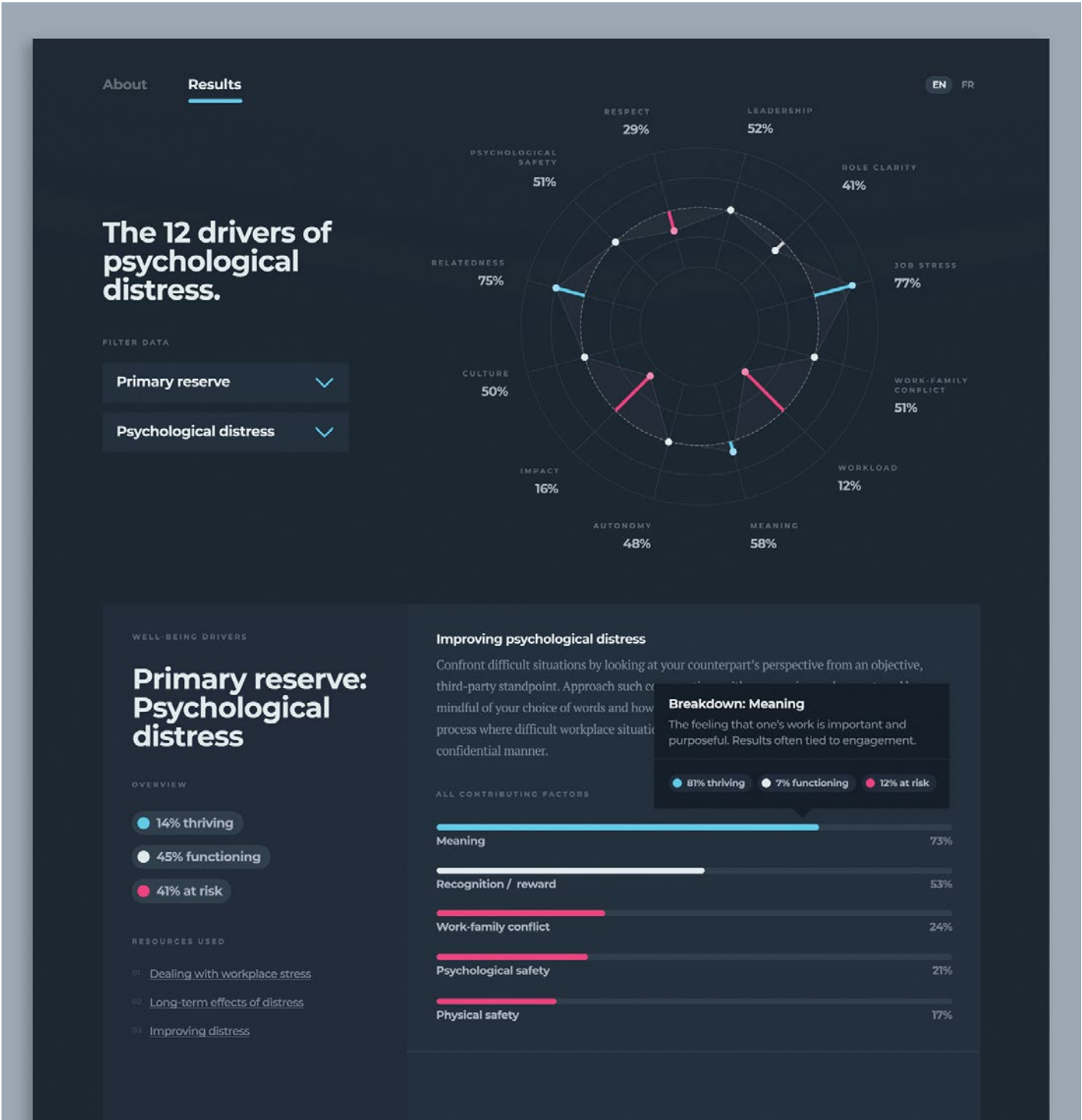
We overhauled out-dated assets including infographics and reports to promote the international importance of maternal, newborn and child health. We told the stories of mothers' to showcase CARE's work and the lasting change it delivered in an emotionally meaningful way.





# Department of National Defence (Website)

Department of National Defence required a sophisticated solution to relay complex information. Our solution was a design that organizes large amounts of data into an infographic-based, multi-page website. Senior-level team members used the site to efficiently review and analyze data to make informed decisions.



# CBOC (Writing Training)

Conference Board of Canada (CBOC) is Canada's leading research institution. The organization required a model to learn how to translate its research into digestible and relatable content. Through expert analysis, we created training modules with instructional documents. We also laid the foundations for a style guide for the CBOC.

**The Conference Board of Canada**  
Writing training  
August 2019

### 01. Write for digital. (continued)

Writing differs depending on the media, each has its nuances and purpose. For example, social media posts are by nature short and actively promotional, using calls to action to drive readers to deeper and denser levels of information online. Reports are all about detail. We must adapt our messages to the occasion, audience and medium.

The way we put medium and message into practice is through a particular style. Style is the set of choices related to the degrees of conviction and depth of content. What we produce can be more or less opinionated depending on the information we are presenting, and more or less detailed depending on how much the audience needs to know.

### 06. Structure reports to be read.

At CBOC, we aim to communicate intelligently. Our writing must be informed, thoughtful and, as a result, likely to present sound conclusions that are rooted in reason and evidence rather than emotion and conjecture. Our writing should use simple structures, concise and material content, and well-managed generality and specificity.

**Build a simple structure**  
The basic structure of all written content:  
Situation > Problem > Analysis > Recommendations > Conclusion

### 03. Purge jargon.

Jargon is words and phrases that mean something to one group of people but not to another. One of the easiest ways to strengthen a sentence is to translate jargon into plain English.

Your first targets should be buzzwords – trendy words and phrases that mask clear meaning with catchy, general terms. Buzzwords are generalizations by their nature, and thus make meaning vague. Writers most often use them in two instances: when they don't know precisely the idea they wish to communicate, and when they hope to be accepted by a specific group of readers by proving to that group that they are in the know.

A complete list of buzzwords does not exist, but a few of our favourites appear below. These terms appear and disappear from common use continually. Keep a keen eye open for them, and replace them with words that are precise and meaningful.

Action <sup>11</sup>	Buy in <sup>11</sup>	Disconnect <sup>11</sup>
Action items <sup>11</sup>	Calculus <sup>11</sup>	Disrupt <sup>11</sup>
Alignment <sup>11</sup>	Capacity <sup>11</sup>	Disruption <sup>11</sup>
Automatically <sup>11</sup>	Catalyst <sup>11</sup>	Downsize <sup>11</sup>
Back-end <sup>11</sup>	Challenges <sup>11</sup>	Empowerment <sup>11</sup>
Balloon <sup>11</sup>	Channel noise <sup>11</sup>	Enterprise-wide <sup>11</sup>
Balloon figure <sup>11</sup>	Checked out <sup>11</sup>	Evangelist <sup>11</sup>
Bandwidth <sup>11</sup>	Cherry pick <sup>11</sup>	Event horizon <sup>11</sup>
Barrier to entry <sup>11</sup>	Clockthrough <sup>11</sup>	Favour of the month <sup>11</sup>
Battle <sup>11</sup>	Client-centric <sup>11</sup>	Forward-looking <sup>11</sup>
Benchmark <sup>11</sup>	Convergence <sup>11</sup>	Frontlines <sup>11</sup>
Best of breed <sup>11</sup>	Core competency <sup>11</sup>	Fulfillment issue <sup>11</sup>
Best practice <sup>11</sup>	Critical path <sup>11</sup>	Gamesmanship <sup>11</sup>
Bleeding-edge <sup>11</sup>	Cross-platform <sup>11</sup>	Go-forward basic <sup>11</sup>
Blue sky <sup>11</sup>	Customer-centric <sup>11</sup>	Going forward <sup>11</sup>
Blueprint <sup>11</sup>	Customer-experience <sup>11</sup>	Grow the business <sup>11</sup>
Brick-and-mortar <sup>11</sup>	Customer-facing <sup>11</sup>	Guestimate <sup>11</sup>
	Dialogue <sup>11</sup>	High-quality <sup>11</sup>

### 05. Be brief. (continued)

As a result of using space wasters, each of the phrases below directs readers away from the main focus of the sentence, and emphasizes a less important element. In this exercise, convert each sentence into a powerful and concise statement. First, identify where the writer misplaced the emphasis. Second, determine the focus – where the writer should have directed the reader's attention. Third, indicate the weakness in play. Fourth, rewrite the sentence to reflect what the writer intended the focus to be.

Humors	Positives	Negatives	Weakings
Shades of meaning	Impassioned actions	Exposing the opposite	Words without tone
Verbiage	Pronouncements	Explanations	Abstractions
Words with phrases	Pronouns as subjects	There is, there are, it is	Dulled meaning

- What all their efforts were directed to was simply the reduction of expenses.  

The focus	The weakness	The problem
Rewrite the sentence:		
- By February, we can expect to have been named among the group of Canada's Top 100 Employers.  

The focus	The weakness	The problem
Rewrite the sentence:		

### 04. Use Anglo-Saxon words.

Some writers think long words are impressive. Needlessly difficult terms, however, can make writing vague and hard to follow. Short, clear, active words communicate your meaning plainly and quickly. Employ them whenever possible. Choosing shorter words with Anglo-Saxon roots over longer ones with Latin or Greek roots is a simple way of making your writing more reader-friendly. Try to use the shorter form whenever possible.

Latin	Anglo-Saxon	Latin	Anglo-Saxon
adequate	enough	adequate	fair
articles	things	fabricate	made
articulate	say	frustrate	end
attempt	try	gratitude	thanks
authority	leader	initiate	begin
comparison	friend	investigate	look
corporation	firm	objective	goal
deficiency	lack	protect	guard
determine	find	require	need
educate	teach	transform	change
elude	raise	undertake	do

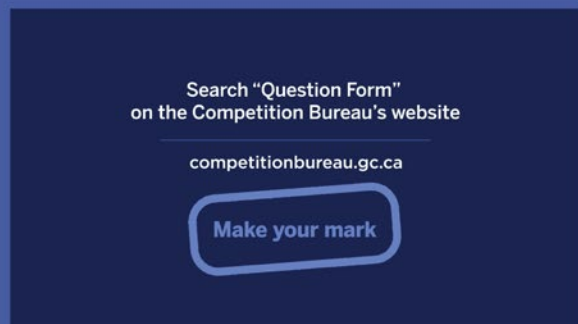
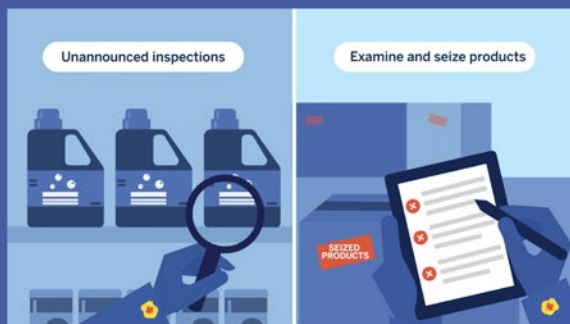
**Rewrite the next paragraph, changing as many Latin-based words to Anglo-Saxon ones as you can. You may need to alter the sentence structure.**

To facilitate learning and maximize the efficient utilization of existing institutional intelligence, researchers are consistently encouraged to extend their understanding of, and appreciation for, pedagogical excellence. Henceforth, regular involvement in our innovative seminar series will be mandatory at our institution. Employees should endeavor to participate in numerous sessions, undertake a commitment to supplemental reading, and collaborate in the scholarship of others.



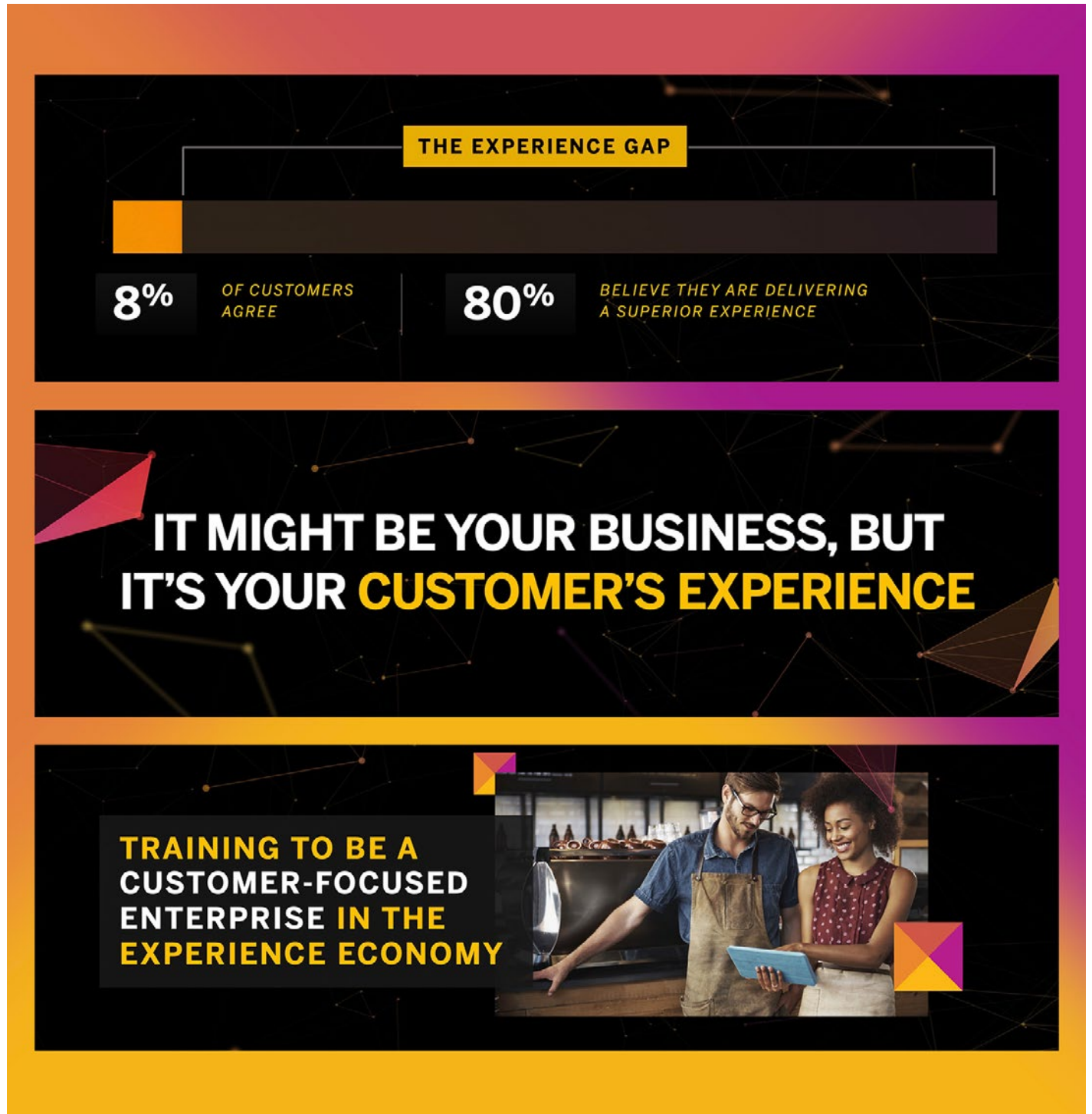
## Competition Bureau (Video Series)

Canada's Competition Bureau is an independent law enforcement agency that protects and promotes competition for the benefit of Canadian consumers and businesses. We designed, scripted and animated a true crime series titled *Compliance Case Files*. The video details in plain language the practical steps to maintain a compliant business.



## *SAP Customer Experience LIVE (Presentation)*

For SAP Customer Experience LIVE, we designed a fully animated event presentation for Alex Atzberger, President of SAP Customer Experience. This graphic demonstration dives into details surrounding the key ingredients required to fill the experience gap for businesses.





## *SAP Customer Experience LIVE (Photography & Branding)*

Our design team elevated SAP Customer Experience LIVE through cohesive branding touchpoints, which we then documented through event photography. The photos captured the faces of attendees engaged in the experience—captivated by the immersive surroundings.





## *SAP Customer Experience LIVE (Virtual Event Design)*

Stiff was SAP's partner in putting together its 2019 multi-day in-person event in Orlando, Florida. But in 2020 the world was in COVID lockdown, so SAP turned to Stiff for a virtual solution. SAP had an audience of almost 20,000 to invite, 120 speakers to promote, and a virtual meeting space to build from the ground up.





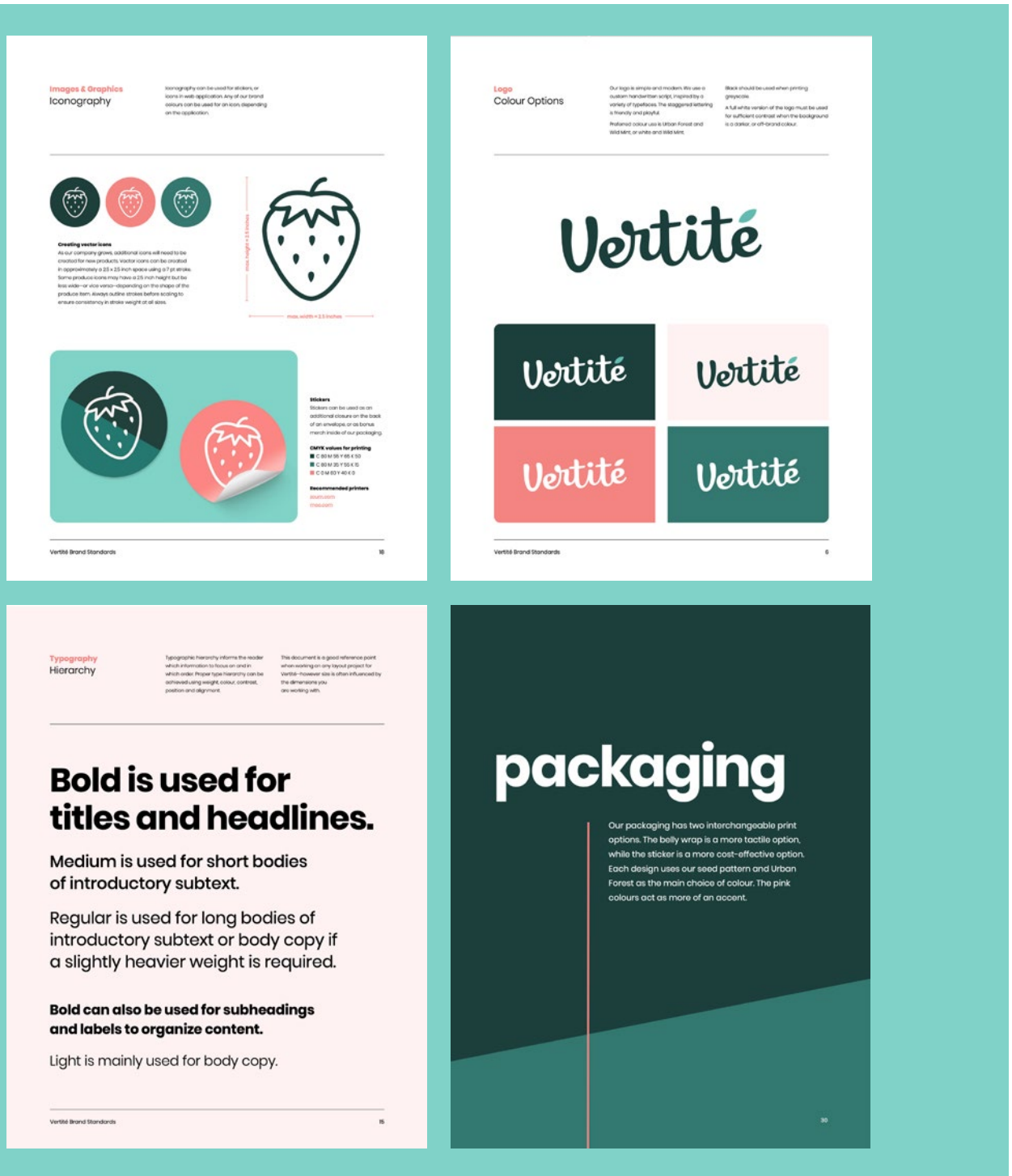
## Vertité (Branding)

Vertité is an up-and-coming company specializing in hydroponically grown produce. We created its entire brand including a logo, a custom icon, typeface, taglines, key messages, stationery and social media assets.



# Vertité (Brand Guidelines)

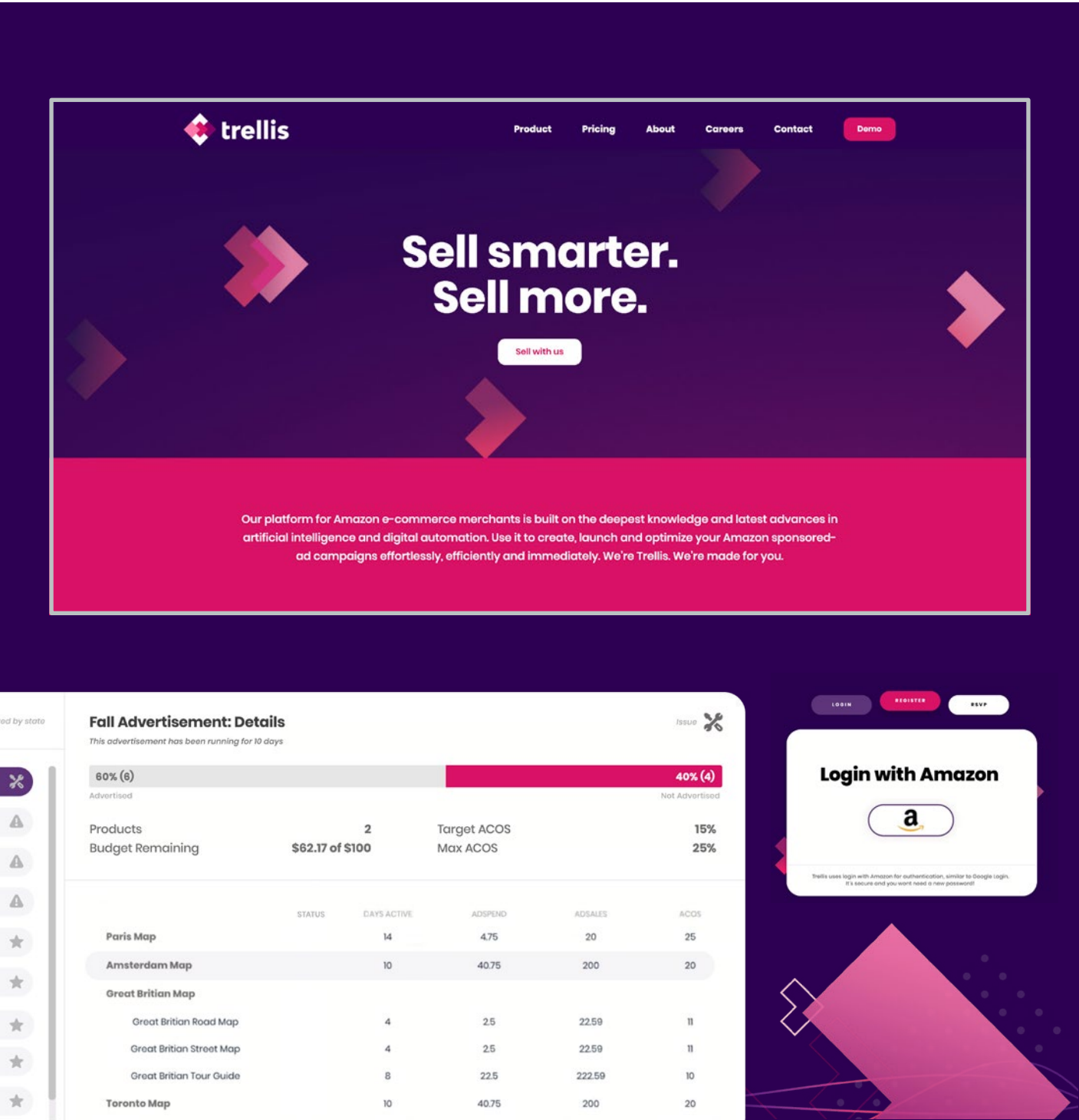
Vertité's design guidelines needed to be thorough and outline each element of the current brand. But we also had to be forward-thinking. The document we created also outlined considerations for future growth and product development.





# Trellis (Website & App)

As the world continues to shift online, smaller, more traditional retailers find themselves competing against giants. We helped Trellis, a newcomer to the sponsored-ad space, tell a story that resonated with its audience. The name, brand and position we developed made them instantly competitive.



# Trellis (Brand Guidelines)

Each aspect of the Trellis brand identity is rooted in research. The guidelines explain how each visual we created conveys the heart of the company. They also ensure that elements of the brand are simple but still differentiate Trellis from its competitors.

