

ATTENTION-DRIVEN DESIGN:

23 VISUAL PRINCIPLES
FOR DESIGNING
MORE PERSUASIVE
LANDING PAGES



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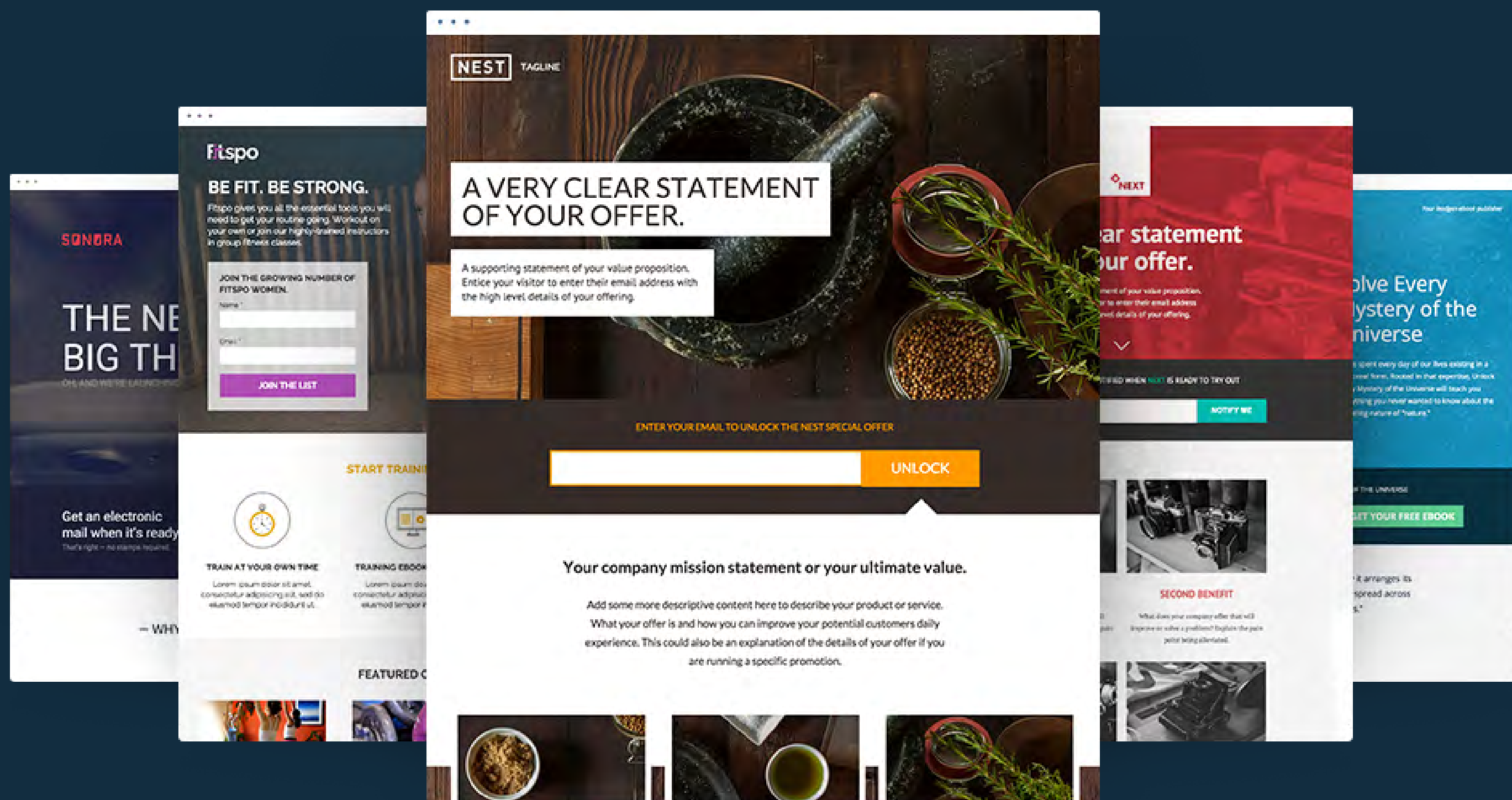
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BEAUTIFUL LANDING PAGE TEMPLATES DESIGNED FOR CONVERSION



The design principles in this ebook are meant to be tested on your own landing pages. But you don't have to start from scratch.

Unbounce's landing page builder includes a vast selection of high-converting mobile responsive landing page templates in a drag and drop interface. Unlike other platforms where the templates are fixed and rigid, Unbounce lets you customize everything.

We've got beautiful, flexible templates for every kind of marketing campaign, including:

- *Lead generation*
- *Health and wellness*
- *Travel and tourism*
- *Ebooks and webinars*
- *Retail and ecommerce*
- *SaaS products*
- *Agencies and consultancies*
- *Real estate*
- *Mobile apps*

**CHECK OUT UNBOUNCE'S
FREE TEMPLATES**

PART 1

PLEASE PAY ATTENTION

Screw you, BuzzFeed. You're sucking the life out of the internet and turning life online into a puddle of excessive mediocrity. Actually, not true. You're just very good at interrupting my concentration with your excellent headlines.

What BuzzFeed – and other sites like Upworthy – do better than anyone else is capture people's attention. And that's a nice skill to have in a society where attention is more precious than 14 ways to make diamonds with a 3D printer.

The bad part of this type of success is that it gets copied and replicated by other publishers and brands who just aren't as good at it. The net result being that everyone keeps upping the ante over and over again. Sadly for readers, the substance of some of these sites isn't as good as the headlines we're clicking.

That's why BuzzFeed et al are successful.

It's not a bait and switch; there *is* some substance there. If it were pure trickery, nobody would return or continue to click the bait and they'd have a retention problem. The best of these sites are mindful about maintaining their reader's attention throughout the experience. I applaud them for that because their consistency breeds loyalty.

When it comes to marketing, there are three aspects of attention that we need to focus on:

1. Capturing/grabbing attention

that's the job of your ad or post headline

2. Maintaining/holding attention

your landing page headline does this by confirming the promise of the ad

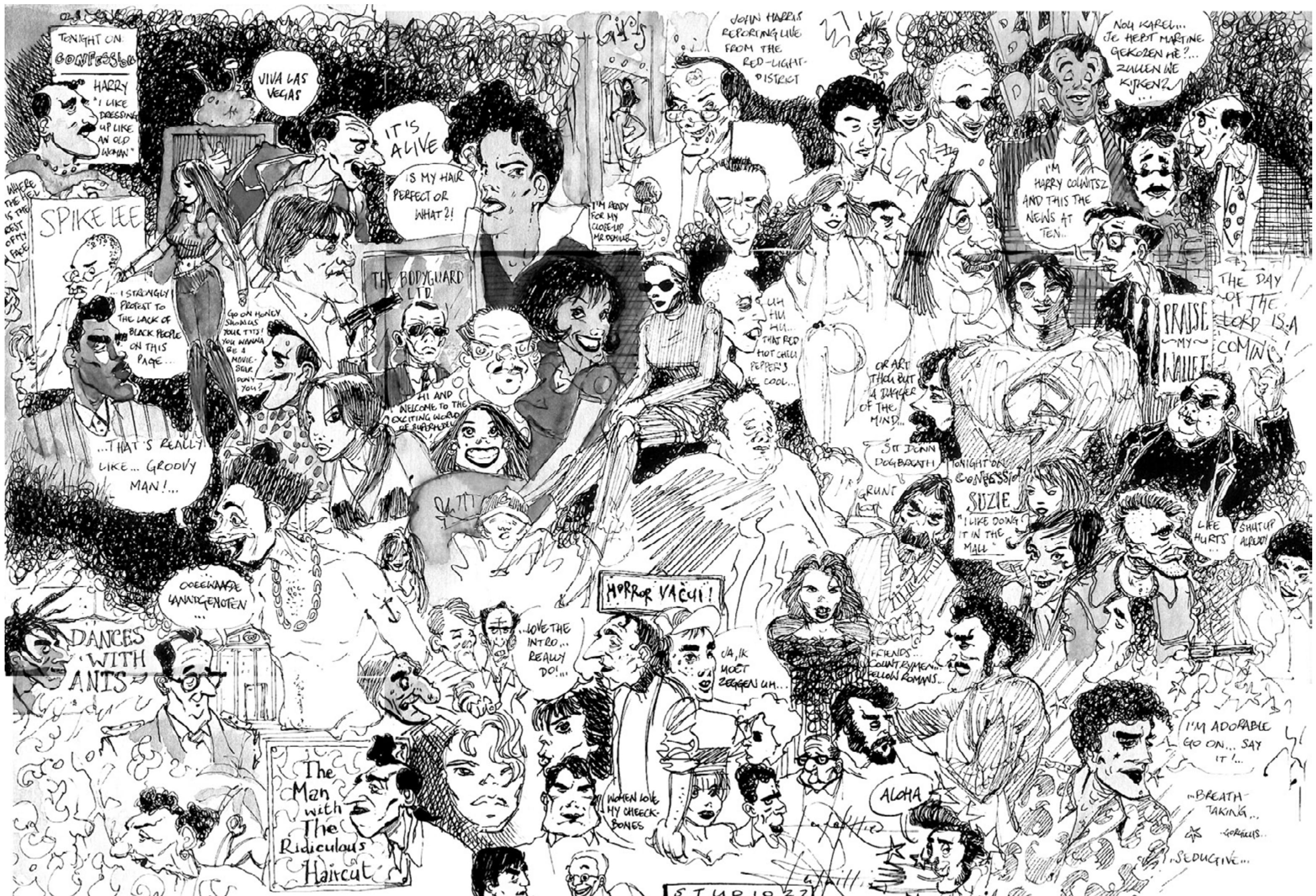
3. Focusing attention

the job of your landing page design, and the purpose of this book



**I FOUND A HOLE AND PLUGGED IT.
THE REACTION WAS UNIMAGINABLE.**

There's a poisonous trait plaguing the marketing community, and the designers we engage to deliver marketing experiences to customers. It's called **Horror Vacui**, and when it comes to conversion, it's genuinely terrifying.



Jurgen Verfaillie

Horror Vacui is Latin for a fear of empty space. This leads to an obsessive desire to fill every speck of nothing, with something.

SIGNAL FOUGHT NOISE AND YOU WON'T BELIEVE WHO WON

Horror Vacui is a curse that impacts homepages everywhere. Because your homepage is such a high-traffic location, every department and product stakeholder wants a piece, which leads to a very noisy experience that waters down the impact of all involved.

And amidst the chaos of such poorly orchestrated marketing experiences, there is always an under-valued **campaign goal**, screaming for its share of attention, battling the bureaucracy of design-by-committee to have a voice at the proverbial table.

Combine this with people's short attention spans online and you create a serious lack of focus.

ATTENTION IS A LIMITED MENTAL RESOURCE

Your reserves of mental energy are depleted every time you have to make a decision, no matter how small. Every time you throw an extra link or banner on the page, you risk depleting this precious repository of decision-making potential – known as our **cognitive load** – which over time reduces our ability to make rational decisions.

COGNITIVE LOAD AND DECISION MAKING

It's been shown through experimentation that people have a limited amount of mental energy to devote to the decision making process. The more decisions one has to make in a day, the less likely they are to be able to make smart decisions later on. This is because they start to suffer from **decision fatigue**.

President Obama knows this and has developed methods of reducing decision fatigue to free up his capacity to make the important calls he's faced with every day. He only has two suit colors, making the first activity of the day – dressing – a simple one. When a proposal lands on his desk, there are three check boxes at the bottom: "Yes," "no" and "let's discuss."



Decision fatigue has also been demonstrated to play a role in parole hearings. Researchers who analyzed more than 1,100 decisions made by a parole board over the course of a year discovered a pattern in the parole board's decisions, but it wasn't related to the convicts' ethnic backgrounds, crimes or sentences. It was all about timing.

Judges approved parole in about a third of the cases, but the probability of being paroled fluctuated wildly throughout the day. Prisoners who appeared in court early in the morning were paroled close to 70% of the time, while those who appeared later in the day received parole less than 10% of the time.

The same thing applies to your landing page. If the headline is in any way vague or confusing, if the feature descriptions aren't useful, or if it's not apparent what your actual offer is, you're forcing your visitor to do extra work to validate the purpose of the page. This depletes their energy and can make them give up and leave.

CONGRATULATIONS!

If you want your business Facebook post to squeeze through the filters and rise to the top of your fan's feeds, including the word "Congratulations!" can make Facebook's algorithms think it's connected to a life event such as a birth, wedding or anniversary, humanizing the event and giving it prominence.

Attention achieved. Congratulations!

Funny? Absolutely. Does it work? Yup, for now. Should you do it? No! It's a bullshit marketing tactic rooted in deception.

That's *not* what this book is about.

This book is about a different kind of attention. Actual real proven proper fundamental principles of design that you can use to create marketing experiences that will maximize the amount of attention your campaign conversion goal receives.



PART 2

ATTENTION RATIO

Now that we understand the principles of attention, we need to understand it in terms of our website and landing pages. But first let's talk about squirrels for a moment.

Squirrels are jerks. They are bad for conversion. They're the bright shiny objects that make dogs run in the wrong direction, and made me write this wholly unimportant extra sentence that you're reading right now.

This is what's happening to you right now. >> You're experiencing diversion, or misdirection. My rambling has diminished your ability to comprehend what my point is and as a result, you're increasingly likely to stop reading and bugger off to a place that's less demanding of your head cells.z

"Gaaaaaa, stop making me think!" — Everyone, circa now.

This is the impact that a poor **Attention Ratio** has on your landing page's performance.

"What's Attention Ratio?" you ask. Gooooood question my friend. And here's the answer:

Attention Ratio is the ratio of the number of things you **can** do on a given page, to the number of things you **should** be doing. When talking about marketing campaigns, you should only have a single goal (or you're doing it wrong), and thus the Attention Ratio should be 1:1.

Your homepage could have an Attention Ratio of 10:1, or 20:1 or 150:1. The worst I've seen was 183:1 and I wanted to take a long walk off a short pier when I saw it.

Here's a simple visual representation of good and bad Attention Ratio.

HOMEPAGE ATTENTION RATIO 57:1

The wireframe below is based on the Virgin Mobile USA homepage and it has 57 links. If the campaign you're promoting is "Promo 2" (highlighted in red) then not only will it be hard to find amidst all the clutter (the Attention Ratio is 57:1), there are so many competing elements that your prospect will either hit the back button or click on another of your promos. Both of which results in a failed campaign.



What's wrong with them clicking another promo? Surely a sale is a sale. NO. If they don't interact with the campaign you're promoting, your AdWords statistics will reflect a failure as "Promo 2" wasn't the one that converted.

LANDING PAGE ATTENTION RATIO 1:1

Next, take a look at the landing page below. It's very clear that there is only one thing to do here, so the Attention Ratio is a perfect 1:1 and the purpose of the page is much clearer.



CASE STUDY - UNBOUNCE EBOOK DOWNLOAD LANDING PAGE

The following example is a very simple A/B test that showcases the impact of Attention Ratio on your landing page conversion rate.

(A)



(B)



Variant A has a series of links to related content, and some social share buttons (that nobody will click at this juncture – a much better location for them would be the confirmation page).

Variant B has these links removed.

The Attention Ratio test is 10:1 vs. 1:1. The result?

Variant B resulted in **31% more ebook downloads.**

(B)
▲ 31%



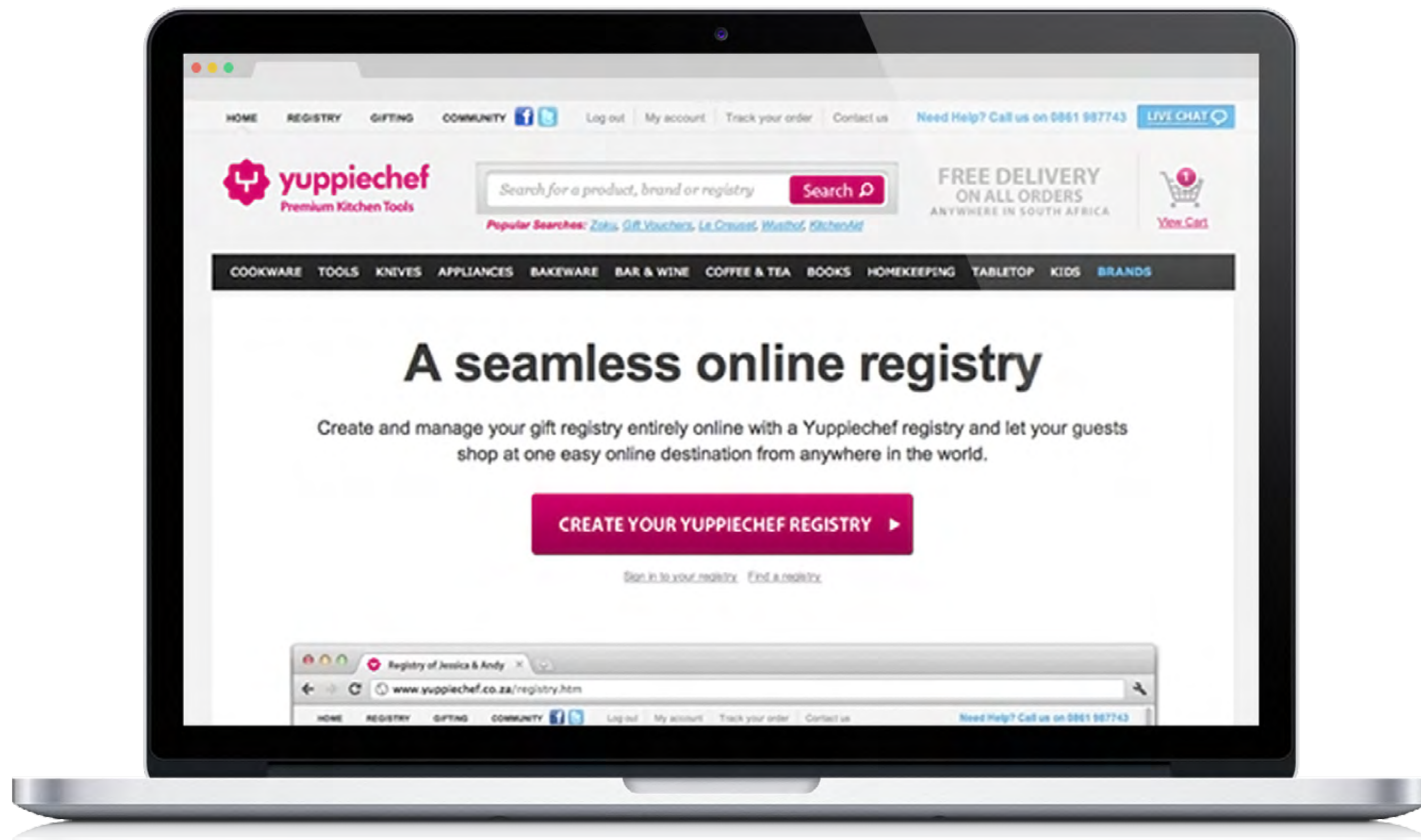
"When Attention Ratio goes down, conversions go up."

 **TWEET THIS QUOTE**

CASE STUDY - REMOVING PAGE NAVIGATION

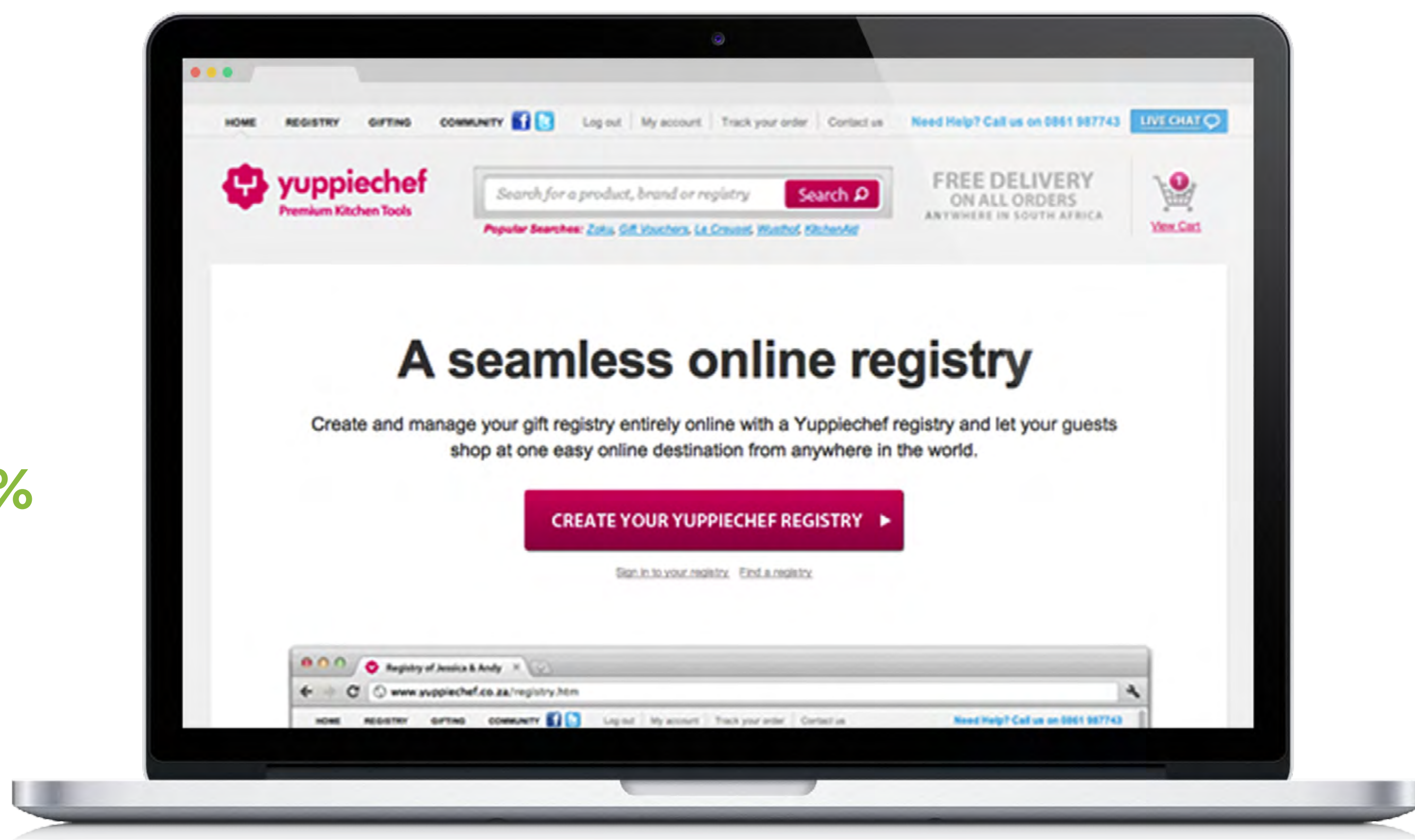
In a case study from the [VWO blog](#), a homepage with navigation was tested against a landing page with no navigation. The Attention Ratio dropped from 15:1 to 3:1 and the result was a **100% increase in conversions**.

(A)



(B)

▲ 100%



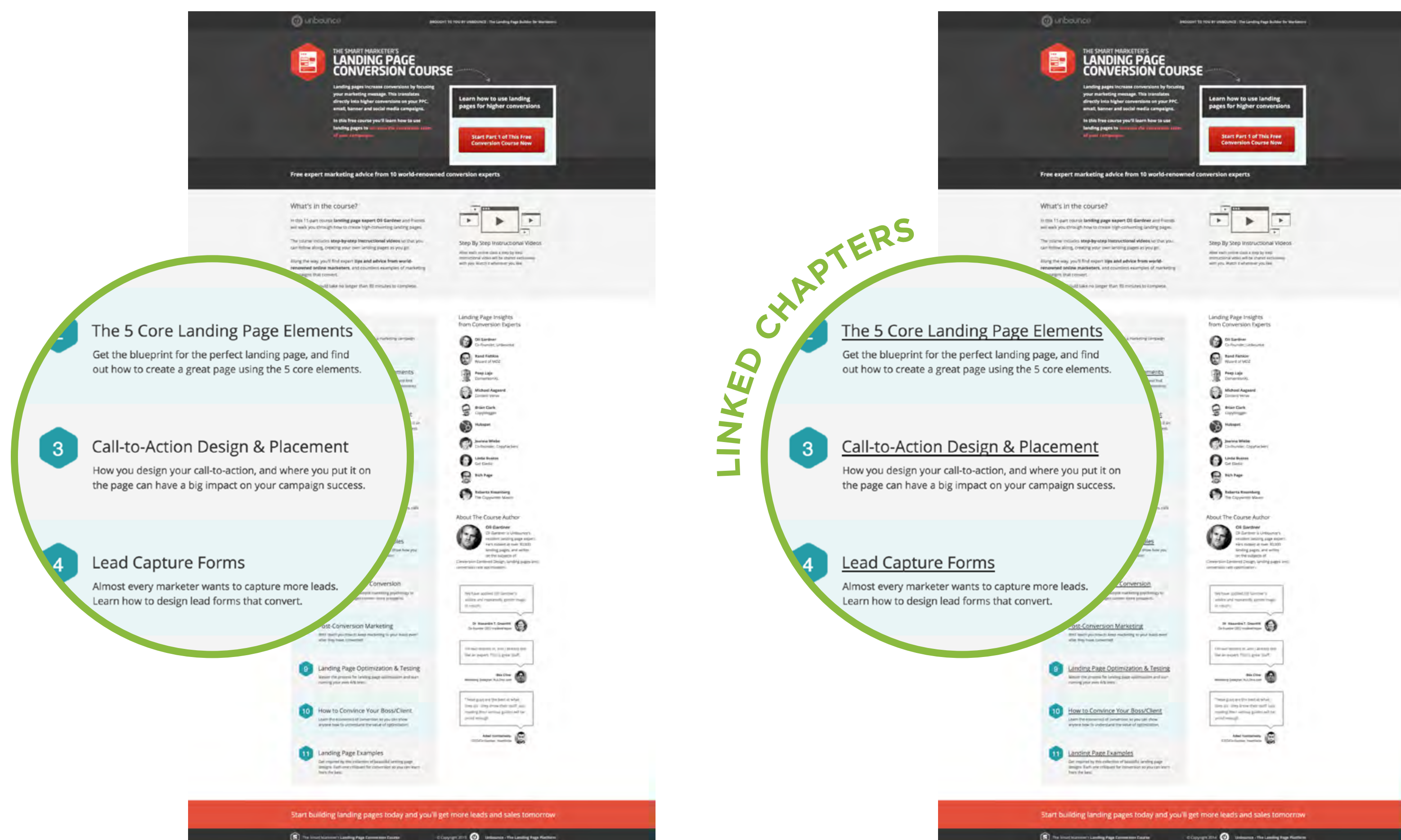
THE EXCEPTIONS TO A 1:1 ATTENTION RATIO

A common question when discussing Attention Ratio is if there are exceptions where you can actually benefit from a higher ratio. The answer is yes. There are two exceptions.

1. Multiple links/buttons with the same goal

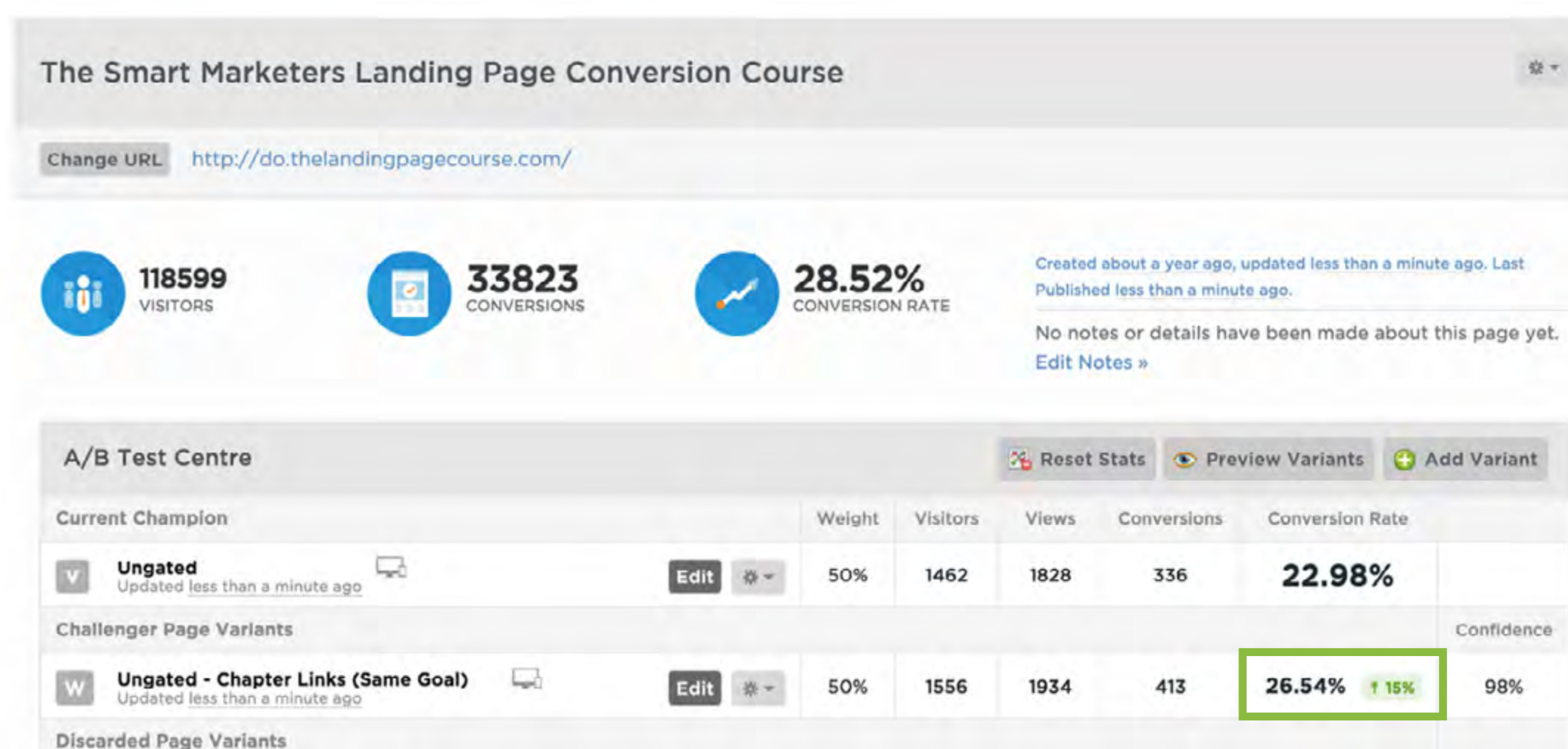
On long landing pages, you should repeat your call to action throughout the page so it's there to trigger action based on the different content being read. You can even use different CTA copy on each button to see which encourages the click. This is okay as long as each button has the exact same campaign goal.

Check out the example from my [Landing Page Conversion Course](#):



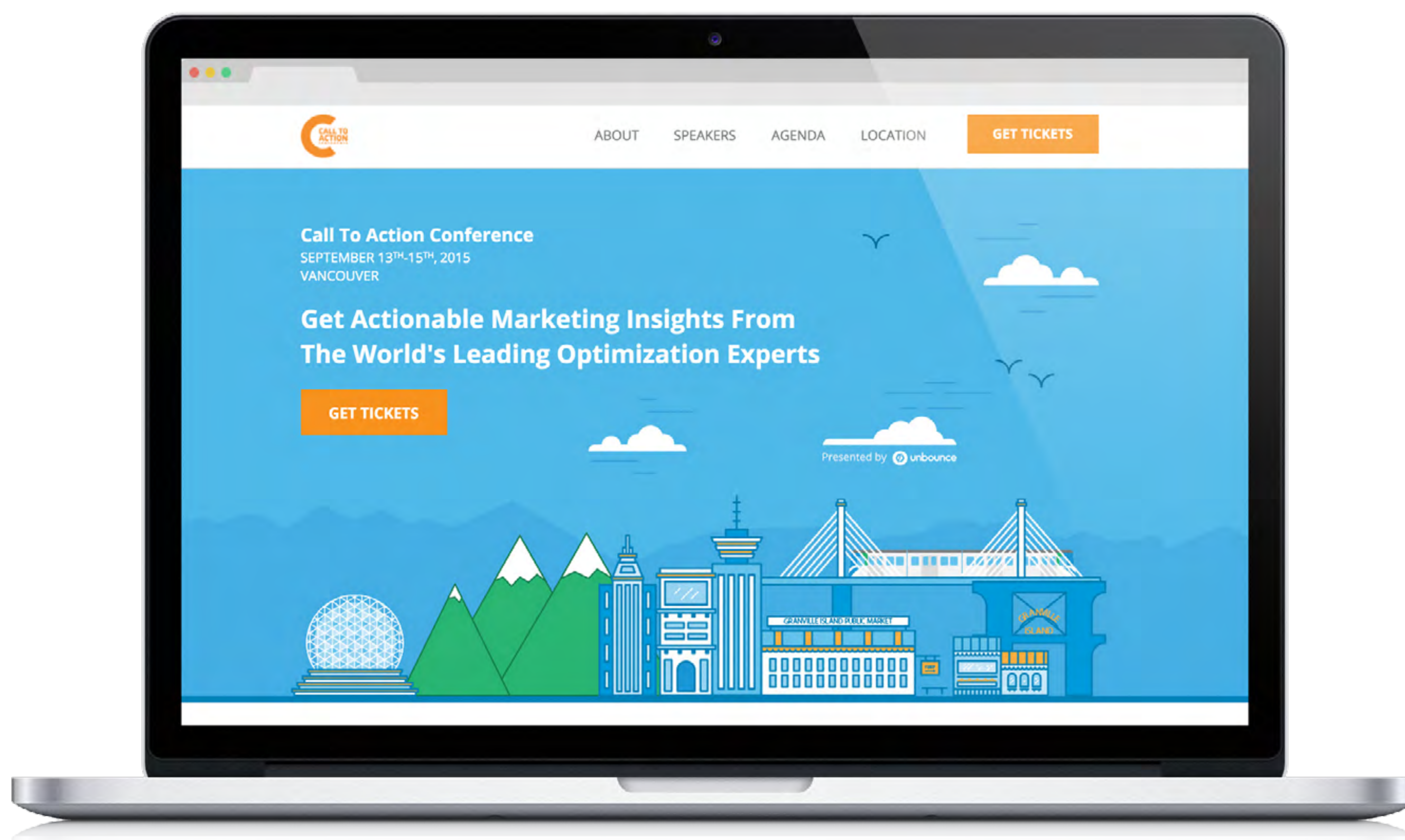
The first page has an Attention Ratio of 1:1. By simply making the chapter titles links, the test variant has increased its Attention Ratio to 12:1, while

maintaining the single goal of moving people into the course. The new version outperformed the original by 15%, as shown in the test results below.



2. When using anchor links in navigation

Consider Unbounce's **Call to Action Conference** landing page:



Notice how there is a nav bar at the top of the page with six links (an Attention Ratio of 7:1)? Surely that breaks the Attention Ratio principle? Not in this instance because each link simply scrolls you down to the appropriate section of the page. They aren't "leaks" that take you elsewhere.

HOBSON'S +1 CHOICE EFFECT

Apparently humans like you and me actually enjoy making choices – under certain circumstances. If we make a successful decision, we feel good about how clever we are. By limiting available options to one, we remove the opportunity to get that hit of satisfaction.

To balance this dilemma, a secondary link can be placed in close proximity to your CTA. The thought being that if we add an option that people don't want to take, they'll be more inclined to take the other one than if the secondary option weren't present.

Clear as mud?

Take a look at this example from Bart Schutz's [Wheel of Persuasion blog](#). I love the opening (unattributed) quote:

"One option is not really an option"

A **Hobson's choice** is a choice with one option that you can choose to take, or not. So if you offer a customer a product, he has a Hobson's choice: "buy the product, or don't buy it."

This is by definition, a situation that has an attention ratio of 1:1. Bart explains it like this:

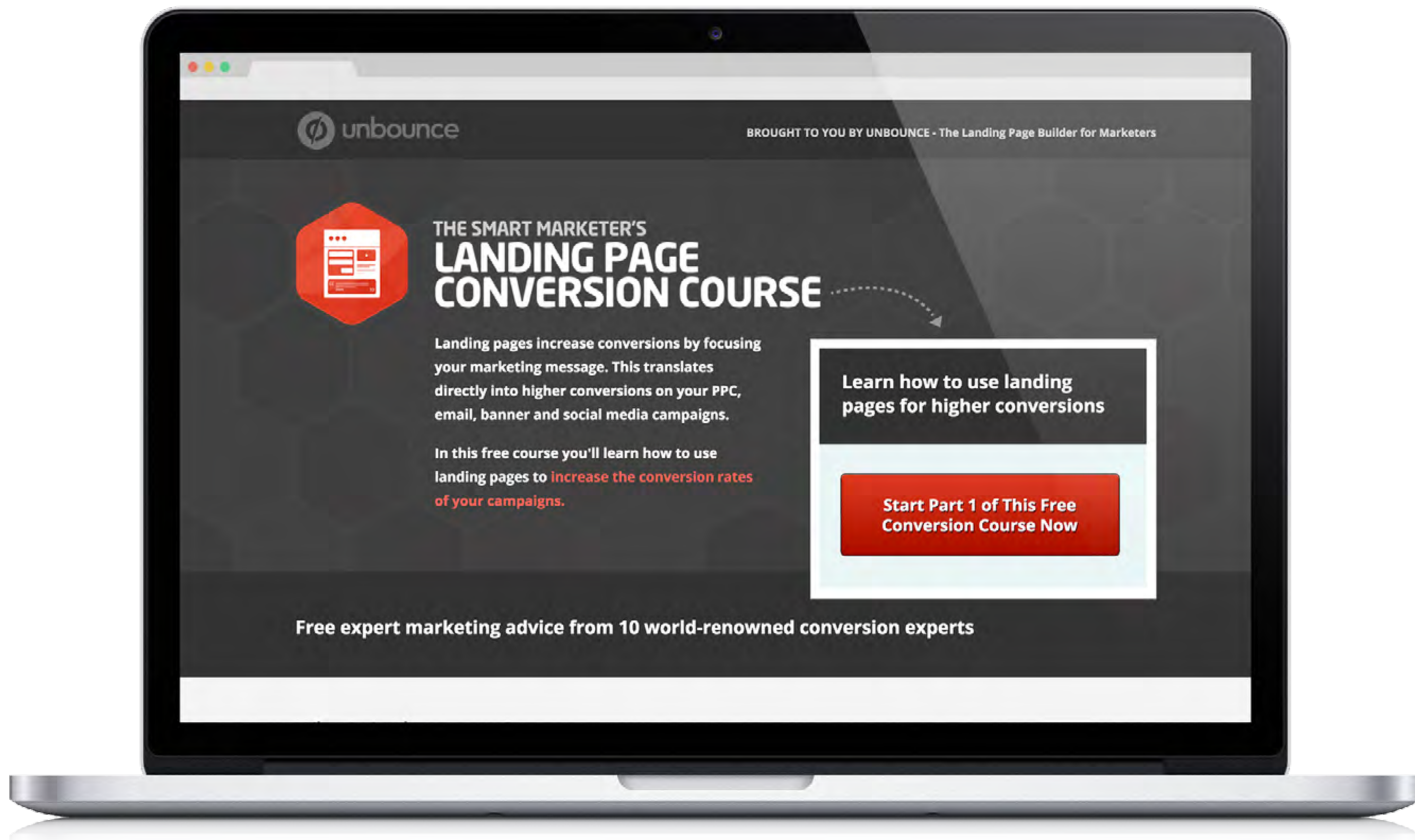
When you offer a Hobson's choice like 'buy product X', a brain will use its mental energy to choose between the options of a) buying the product and b) not buying it. But when you offer a Hobson's + 1 choice like 'buy product X – or – tweet this', a brain will use its scarce mental energy for a) buying the product, b) tweeting about it, and... c) not doing anything at all. By the time the 3rd option is dealt with, the brain's mental energy is more depleted than in the Hobson's 'buy or don't' case. Therefore chances rise that the brain will go for buying the product (since tweeting is probably not really an option).

However, as with any case study example, this tactic shouldn't be blindly implemented without testing to see if it's relevant to your customer's situation. Otherwise known as the plague of the case study – or the curse of the best practice.

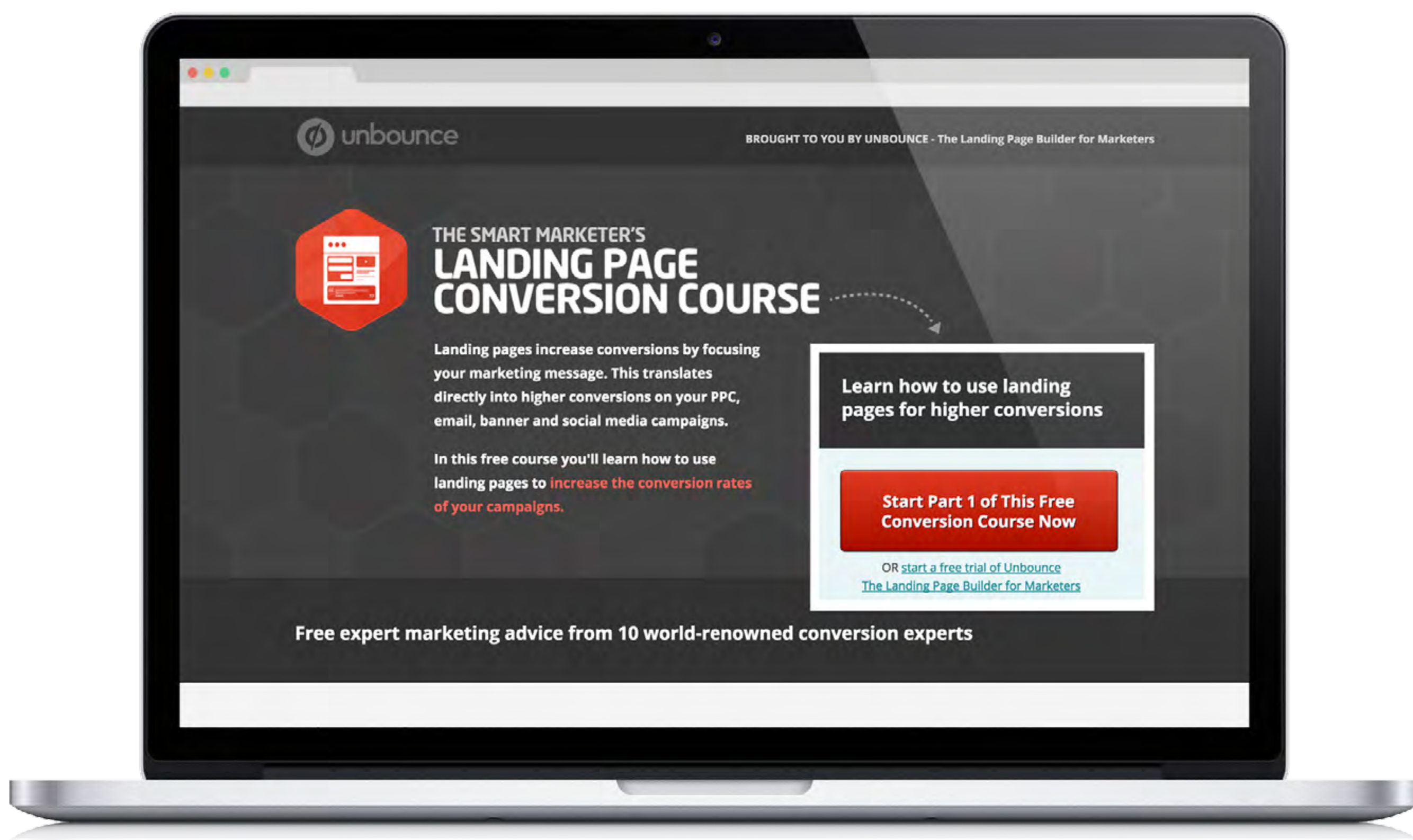


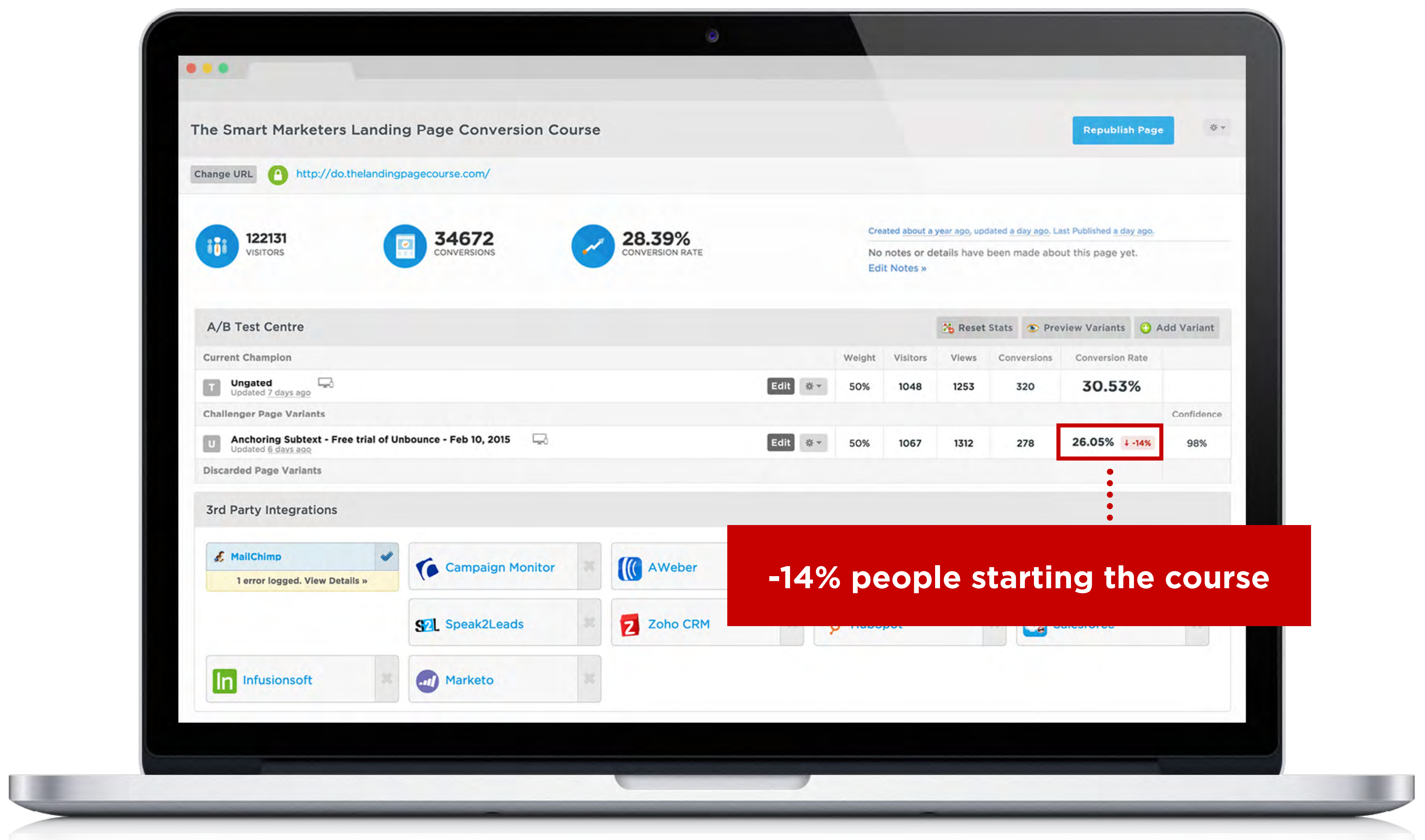
I was fascinated by this concept so I tried it in a test of my own.

For the +1 choice, my choice of “thing you won’t want to do” is an aggressive ask for a software trial start – a much larger commitment than a free course.



Remember, that by adding this link the Attention Ratio is doubled to 2:1.





Clearly if I'd succumbed to the case study fallacy and simply implemented Bart's tactic I'd have severely impacted the performance of the course.

The lessons here are:

- a) You must always test your assumptions, and
- b) In this case, increasing the Attention Ratio had a negative impact on my landing page's conversion rate.

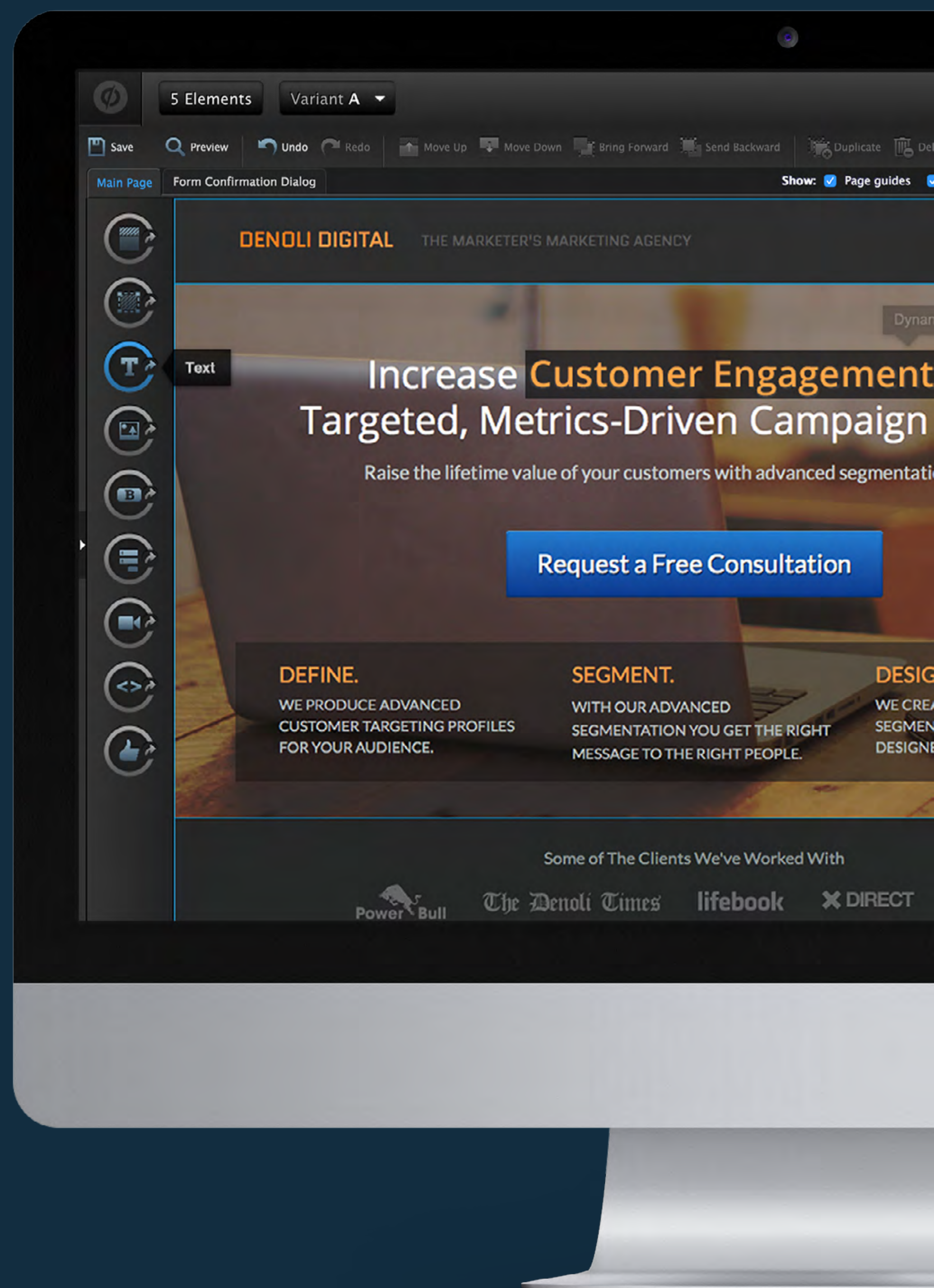
STOP SENDING CAMPAIGN TRAFFIC TO YOUR HOMEPAGE

If you're still sending conversion-ready traffic to your main website, you're leaving money on the table.

Unbounce enables you to design a dedicated landing experience for every marketing campaign and channel, whether your traffic is coming from social, search or email **so that your Attention Ratio is always 1:1.**

With Unbounce, you can...

- *Build, publish and test landing pages without relying on developers.*
- *Optimize your campaigns for mobile by using responsive templates or starting from scratch.*
- *Dynamically replace your landing page copy to match your ads.*



**TRY UNBOUNCE FREE
FOR 30 DAYS**

PART 3

THE 23 PRINCIPLES OF ATTENTION-DRIVEN DESIGN



If a shallow attention span is the enemy, then Attention-Driven Design is the hero of our story, battling against a sea of bright shiny objects.

Attention-Driven Design is a disciplined adherence to visual design principles in order to reduce visual complexity and enhance the ease of comprehension.

In this section I'm going to walk you through a series of no less than 23 visual design principles. "Holy cow dude! Now *you're* giving *us* too many options!" Fair point. Fortunately *I* made the point myself, so I'm also going to dismiss it and count myself lucky that I'm about to learn something awesome (re-learn in my case because I already knew this or I wouldn't be writing about it).

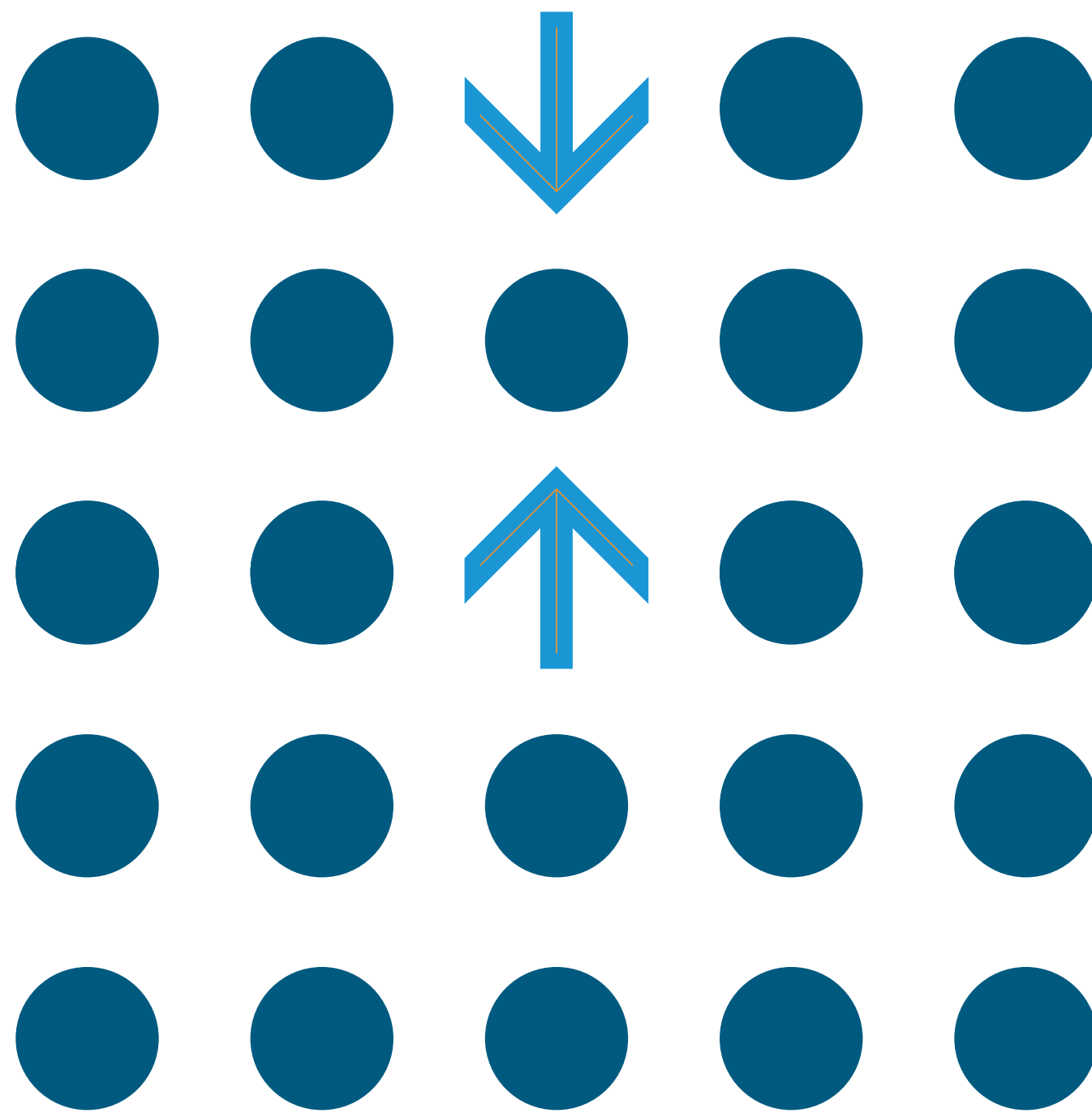
^^ blathering. What principle is that?

Each of the 23 principles can teach us something about how to approach and communicate our messaging in a visual sense.

In no particular order...

1. DIRECTION

Just as a film director expertly guides us through a movie experience, the principle of Direction can be used to guide our wandering visitors to the conversion goal of our landing pages. It's probably the least subtle of all 23 principles, so if directness is your bag o' chisels, it won't hurt to point out the obvious.



There are many real world examples of direction:

- The colored lines on the floor in the emergency department of your local hospital that you are told to follow in your concussed haze while bleeding profusely.
- The “You are here” arrow on an airport map. When you get through security, you need to know where you are in relation (proximity) to the gate you need to get to. If you can be shown quickly on a map, you know where you need to go and can relax and do some shopping and drinking before your flight.
- The wayfinding signs in a shopping mall (bathrooms this way >>).
- The in/out signs for a parking lot.



This signage makes it clear who should be where.

Despite the meta obviousness of directional cues, it still blows my mind how unobvious most experiences are (both online and in real life).

2. MOTION

Whether or not it gives you sickness, noticing Motion is one of our most primitive reactive qualities, designed to help us avoid attack from nefarious wandering beasts.

As a landing page technique, it's seeing rapid adoption as a tactic for drawing attention to page elements as the page loads and scrolls.

Sadly, this is currently being implemented by a hoard of masturbatory designers whose main challenge is getting as many fads on the page as possible.

Motion does have an important place in our design arsenal, it'll just take a lot of testing to figure out how best to use it.



3. AFFORDANCE

Here's how *Don't Make Me Think* author Steve Krug explains this principle:

"Affordances are visual clues in an object's design that suggest how we can use it. For instance, the three-dimensional style of some buttons makes it clear they're meant to be clicked."

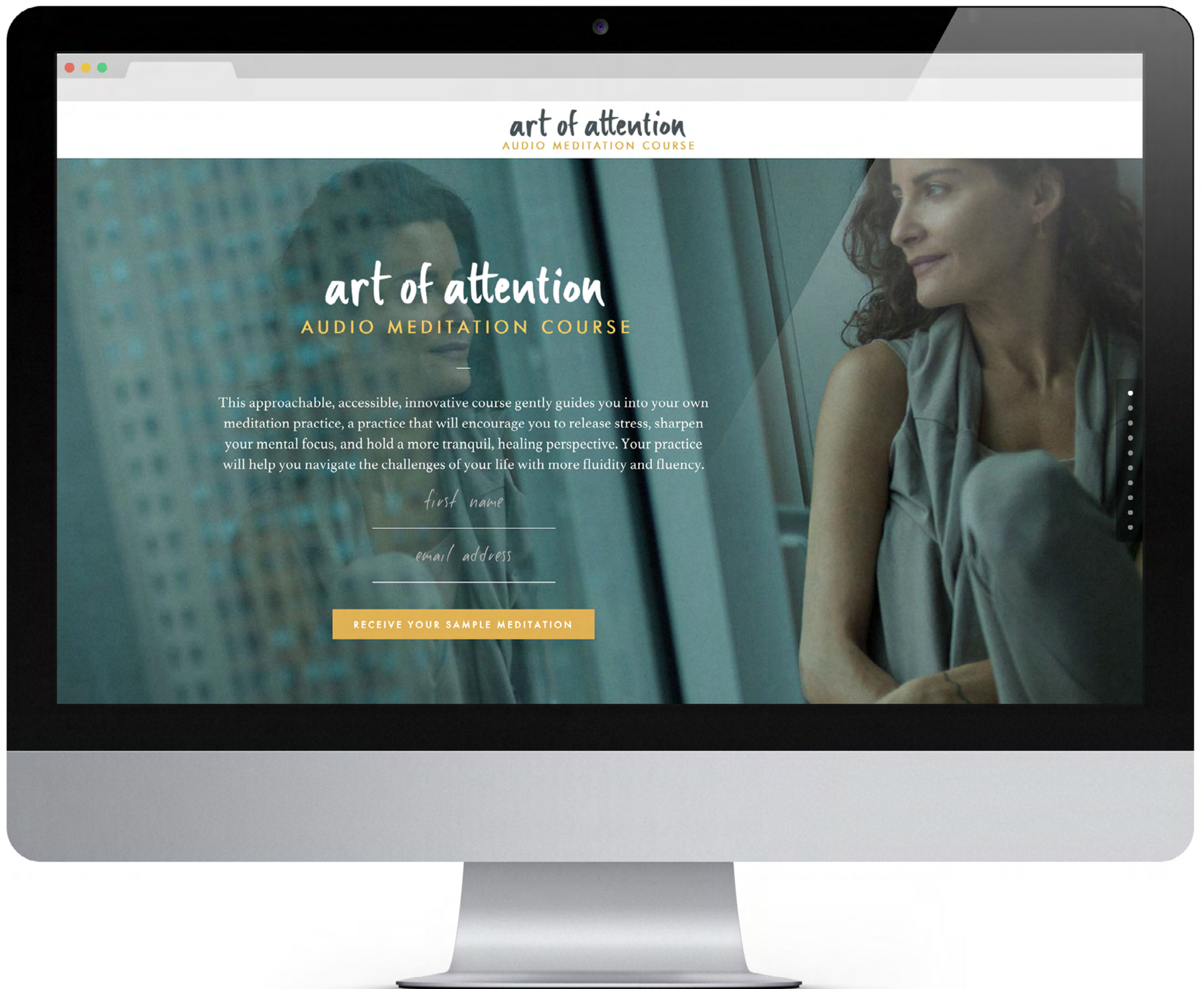
And here's a diagram that illustrates this point (adapted from Steve's example):



As you can see, the first button has a shadow to create a 3D effect. The second is flat but rounded, making it still resemble a button. The third example looks more like a box (the now ubiquitous "ghost button") and the fourth example is just text that doesn't look clickable in any way.

Proximity plays a part in comprehension here. If links or ghost buttons are located at the top of the page, **their nearness may give them implied affordance.**

A lack of Affordance is sometimes seen in forms when visual design tries to create a softer treatment, as in this next landing page example.



As you can see (or not see), the form fields are simple underlined elements that blend into the background. The lack of a full outline means that you might not even know it's a form and think it's simply a click-through page (that was my first reaction), only to discover that it's a form when you click the call to action and receive an error message.

4. CONTRAST

The red button worked better than the green button! Amazing! What an insight.

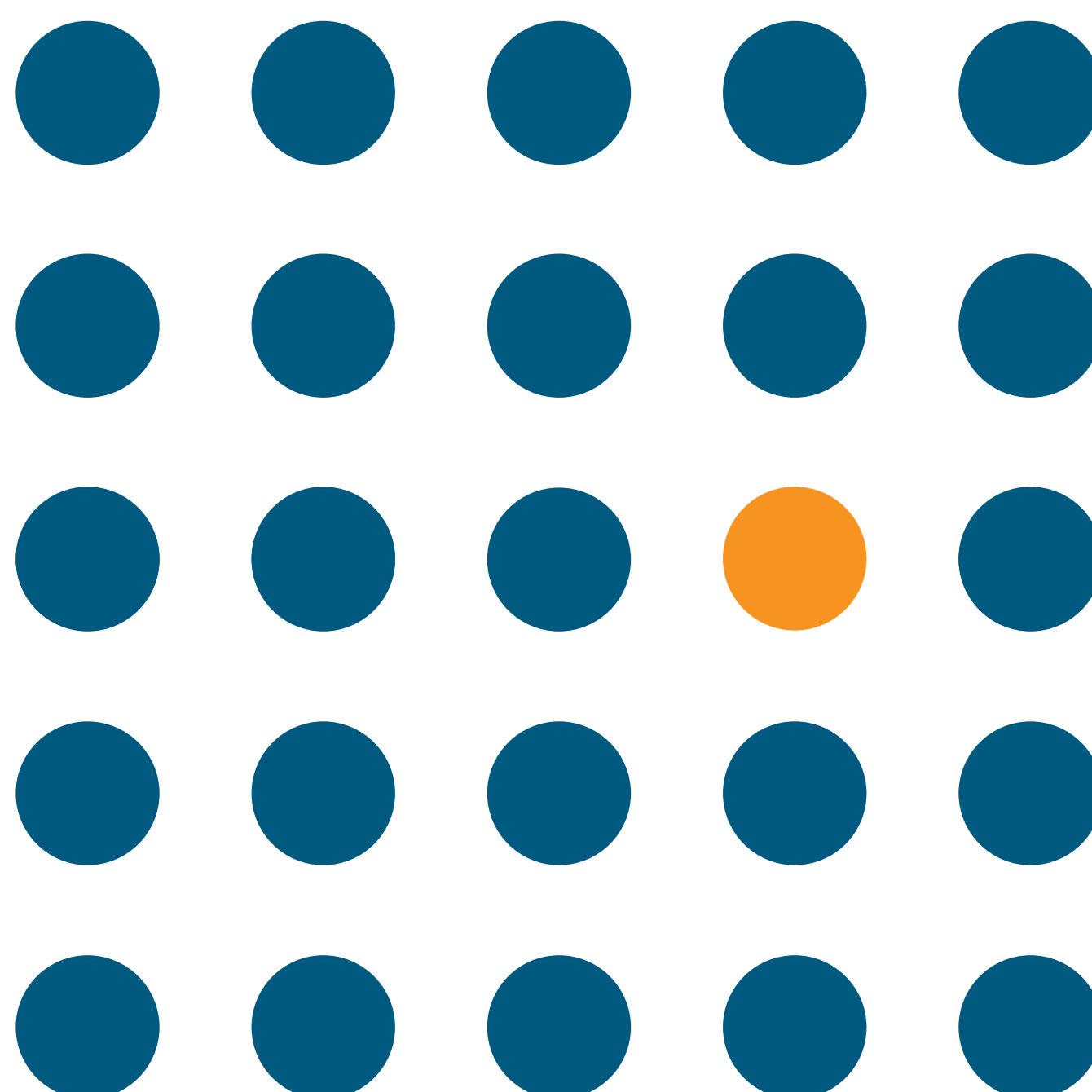
Blahaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaar. << imagine a very loud foghorn sound.

That's not an insight. It's an instance of the case study fallacy phenomenon I mentioned earlier.

The simple fact that a button color change worked for someone else is at best interesting and at worst, very very dangerous in the hands of the easily influenced (let's call them management). Not only is this "learning" not transferable, it's wholly inaccurate and fundamentally flawed.

The reason the button color won the experiment was because it stood in stark contrast to its surroundings. That's it. It's that simple. It wasn't an emotional reaction, it was a reaction based on a higher percentage chance of the button being noticed amidst a page design that engulfed the original button.

Look at the diagram below. The page has a dominant blue hue to it (because every element is blue, genius #talkingtomyself). If the orange circle was colored blue, would it stand out? No, of course not.



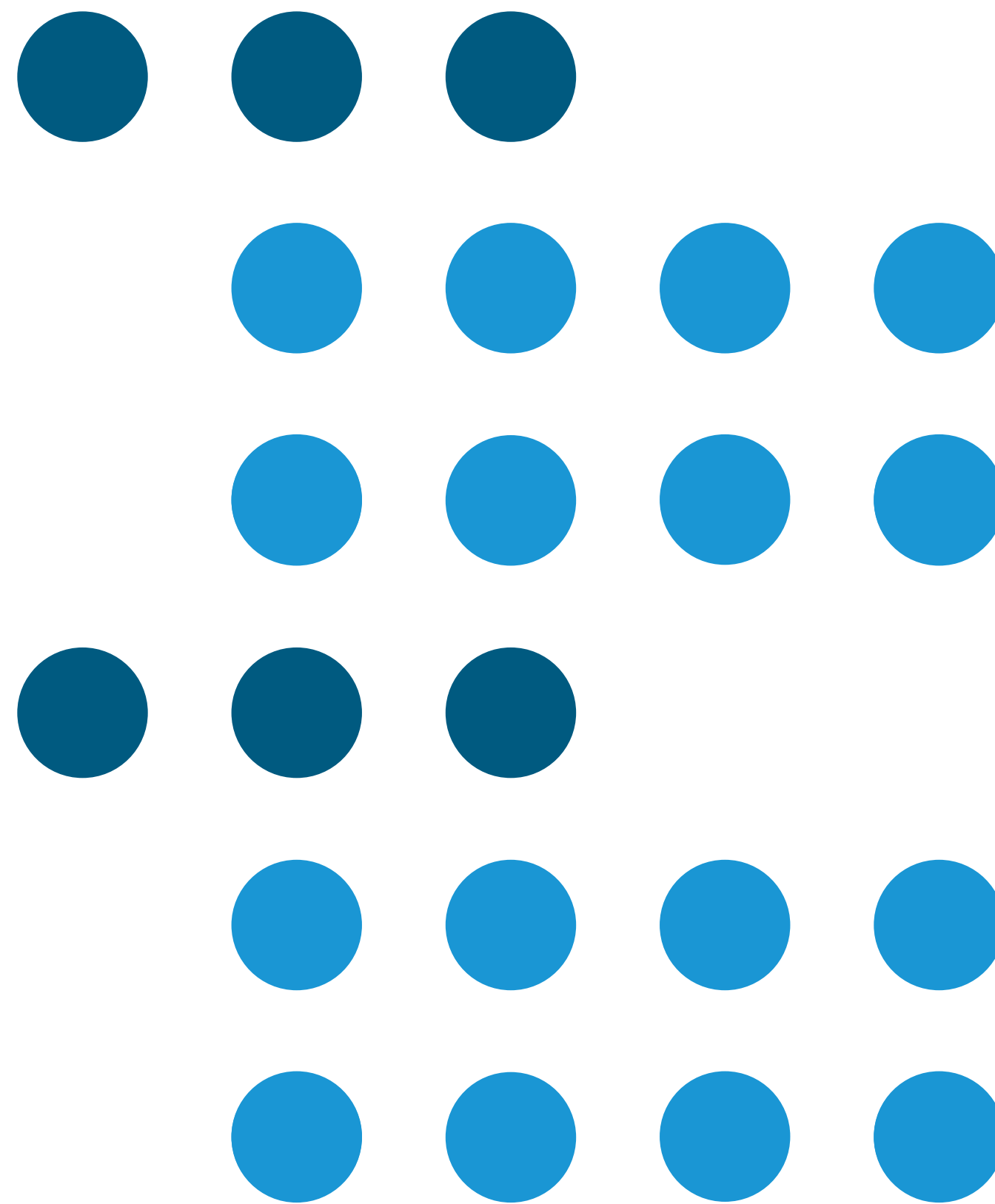
And that's why the orange button won the race.

It's also important to note that 8% of men are color blind, at which point the contrast of the color in relation to the rest of the page becomes more important than the color itself.



5. NESTING

This is a principle that most folks are familiar with from formatting bullet lists in documents. It bears discussion though, especially if you have a long list of benefits and features on your pages.



You can add some clarity, reduce comprehension time and apply emphasis through interruption by adding some hierarchy by way of indentation. This also has the effect of enhancing the relationship of different points. The Proximity effect comes back here to show that the indented elements are related to – and subordinates of – the master element.

It's easier to scan an indented list and to stop and drill deeper when needed.

6. HIGHLIGHTING

Sales letters. Yellow highlighters. Pretty cheezy stuff, but it's done for a reason. It works. Sharpie would be out of business if it didn't. However, it's not for everyone.



Highlighting is an example of selective attention, developed as an exercise by **Robert Solso**, whereby readers are able to eliminate or ignore the surrounding text and just focus on the “highlighted” words.

In terms of effective implementation, research by Martin Maguire in the International Journal of Man-Machine Studies (1982, vol. 16(3), p. 237-261) found that the upper limit of bolding or Highlighting one should use to be effective, is roughly 10% of the text.

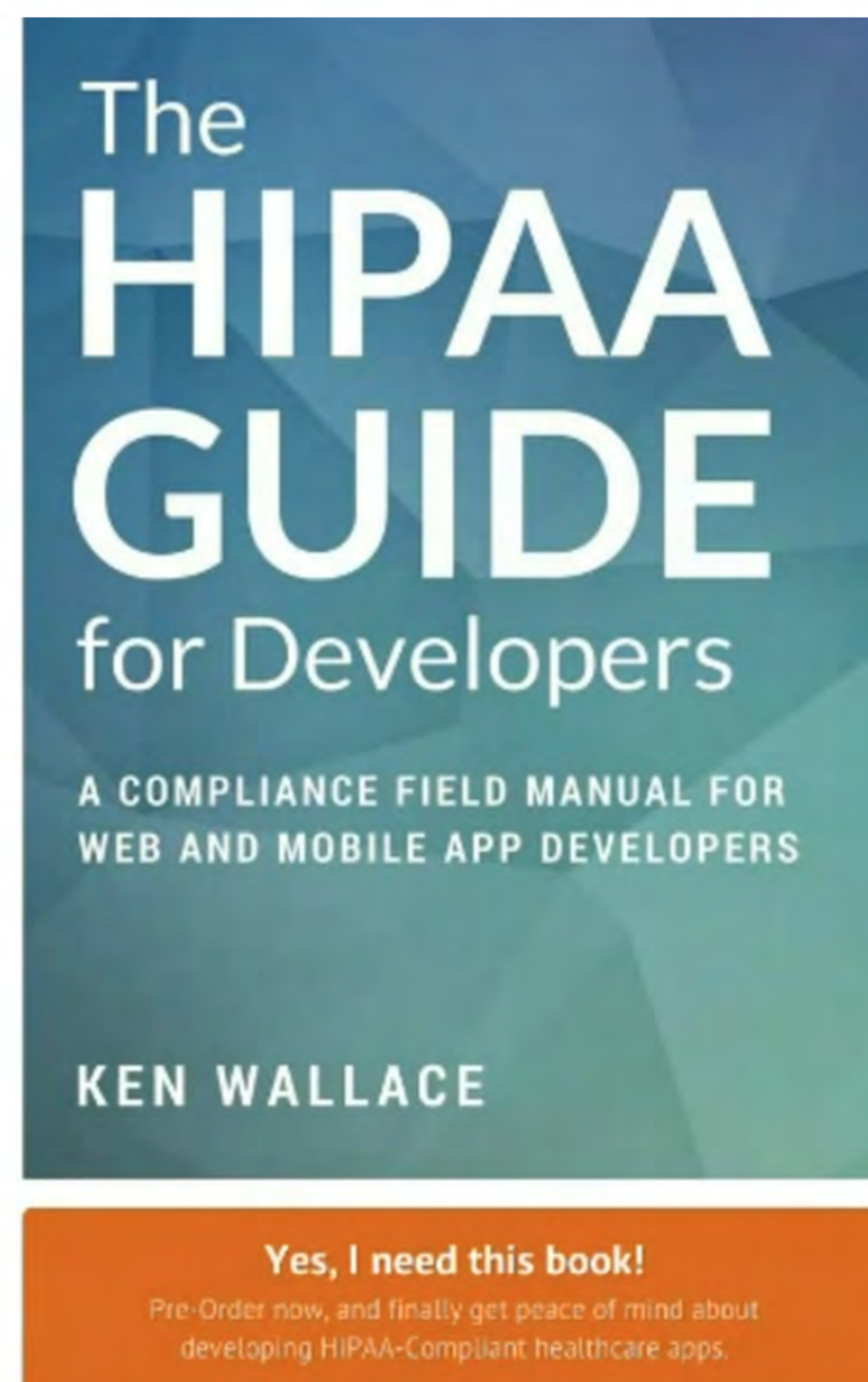
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You can **consider bolding as being related to this type of emphasis.**

The example below shows a very long list that tries to use bolding to add emphasis. If you consider the 10% rule, it's very cluttered. Here it's so heavily bolded that it's moved past the point of peak performance of visual clarity.

Discover...

- ✓ What specifically is **Protected Health Information (PHI)**
- ✓ How **PHI differs from PII** (yes, it does!)
- ✓ **Who needs to worry** about HIPAA-HITECH compliance
- ✓ How to **perform a detailed HIPAA Risk Analysis** on your server environment, source code, and databases.
- ✓ What HIPAA compliance means for **server administration** and sysops activities.
- ✓ How HIPAA compliance **changes the way you code and QA**, and **changes how you interact** with your database.
- ✓ Discover how to **prepare or retrofit your apps** for HIPAA compliance.
- ✓ **How to prepare** your server environment, source code, databases, and development team for an audit.
- ✓ How to **compile a Book of Evidence** and keep it current.
- ✓ How to **train your development team** and keep them current in the latest HIPAA-compliant best practices.



If instead of so much bolding, some Nesting had been used to collect related points and group them together, it would be a much easier read.

“ If you’re bolding more than 10% of the text on your landing page, you’re not really emphasizing anything at all. ”

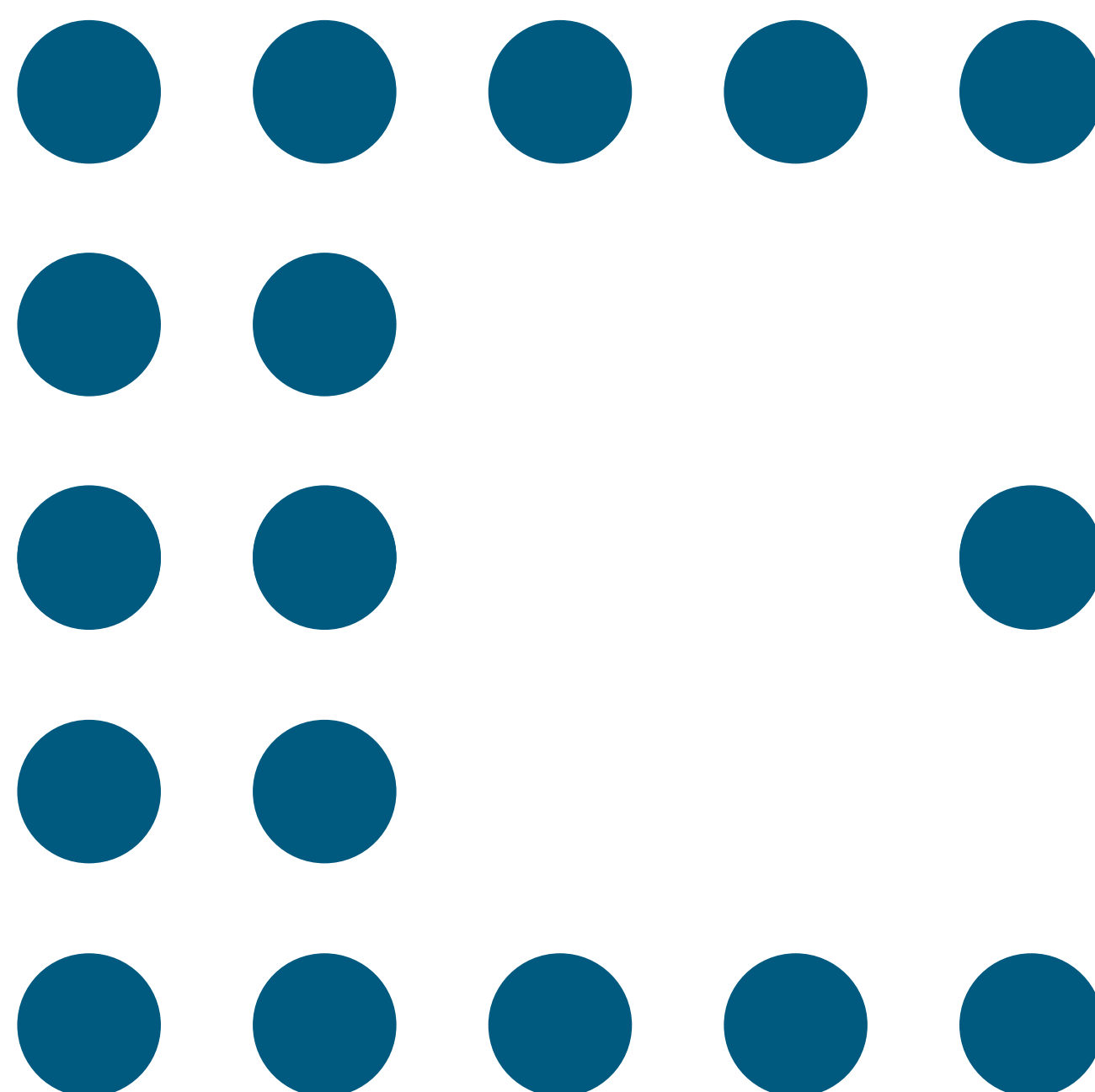


TWEET THIS QUOTE

7. WHITESPACE

Remember Horror Vacui? Its the absolute antithesis of the concept of Whitespace, or blank space if you want to get persnickety about the yellow background on your website.

Space lets your page elements breathe. It makes your landing page easy to read, and can have a calming effect for visitors. I find that bringing your Attention Ratio down to 1:1 almost always creates enough extra space to make the design more relaxed. Picture your homepage, and then picture it with all but one link removed (without changing anything else).



If you want to draw attention to something, you can do that by adding space all around it. The natural reaction to this is, "Why is *that* thing the only thing in that part of the page? It must be important!"

Isolation can be a good thing where design is concerned.

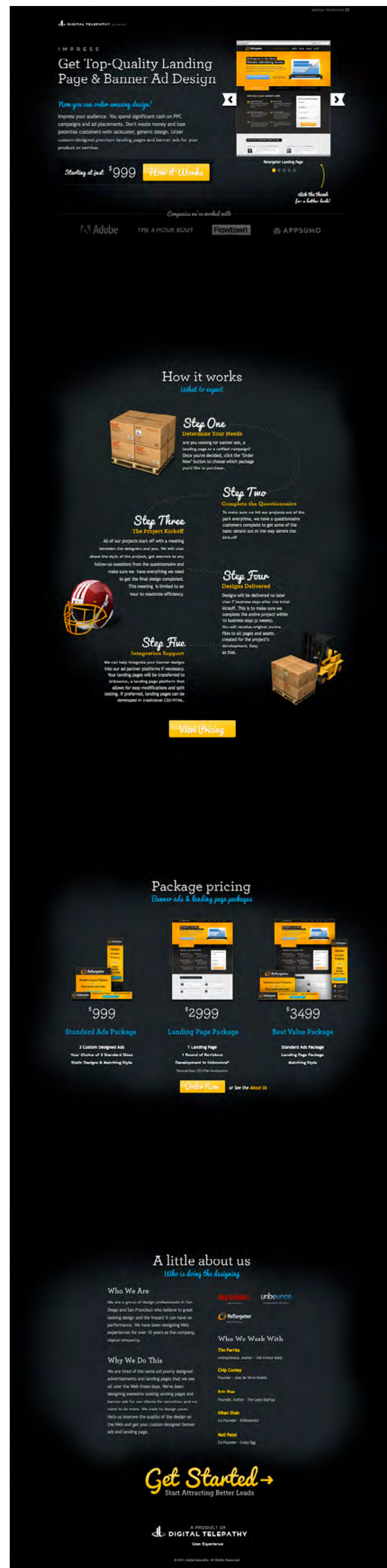
Take a look at the landing page to the right, from Digital Telepathy.

Note how each section is separated by a significant section of Whitespace (or in this case black space).

It lets you separate each unit into something distinct, to be consumed in isolation from the others.

Also note how each section has its own information and visual hierarchy. As if each were a landing page in and of itself, with a headline, subhead, features/benefits and a call to action.

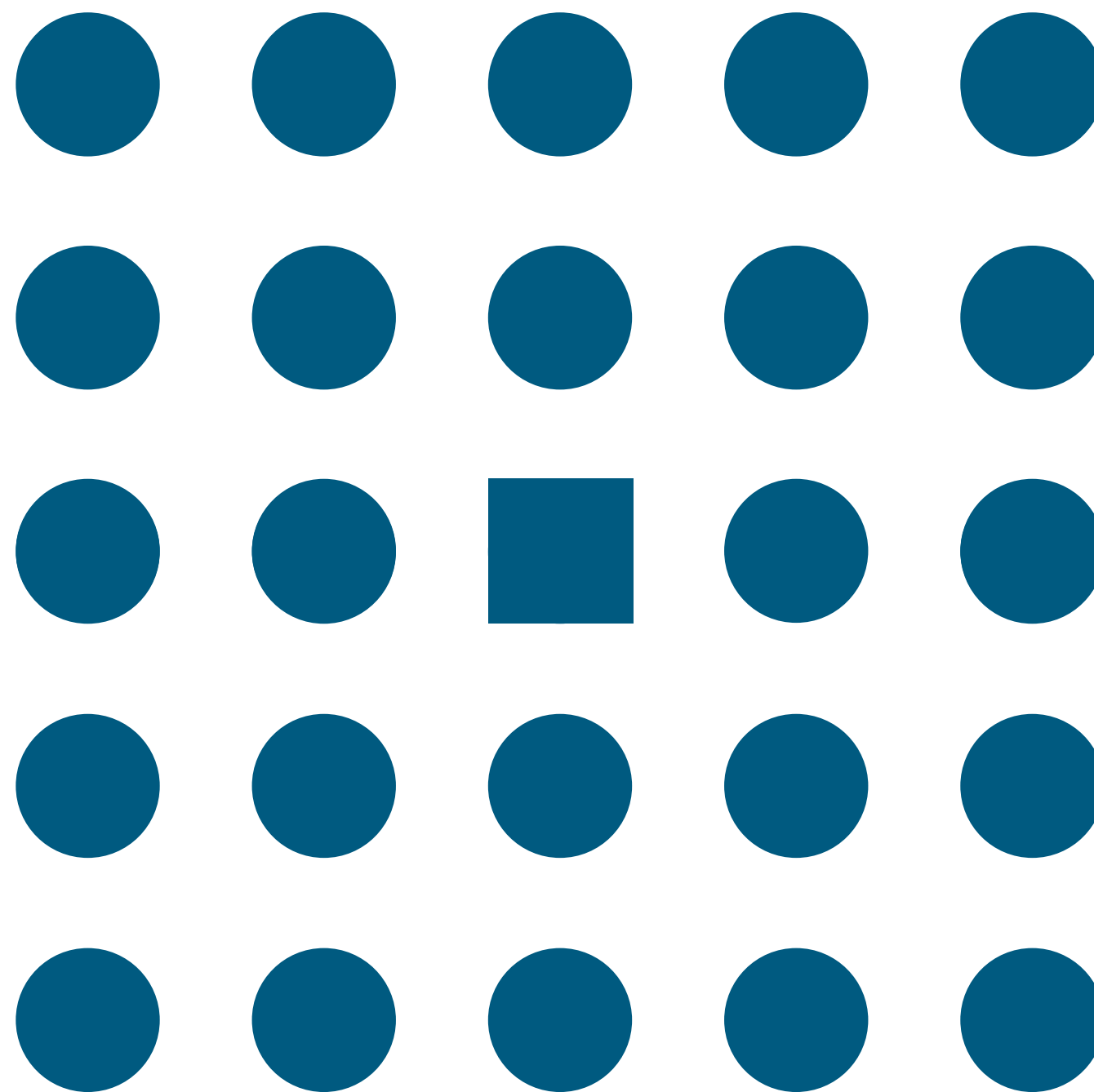
Very well done.



8. ANOMALY

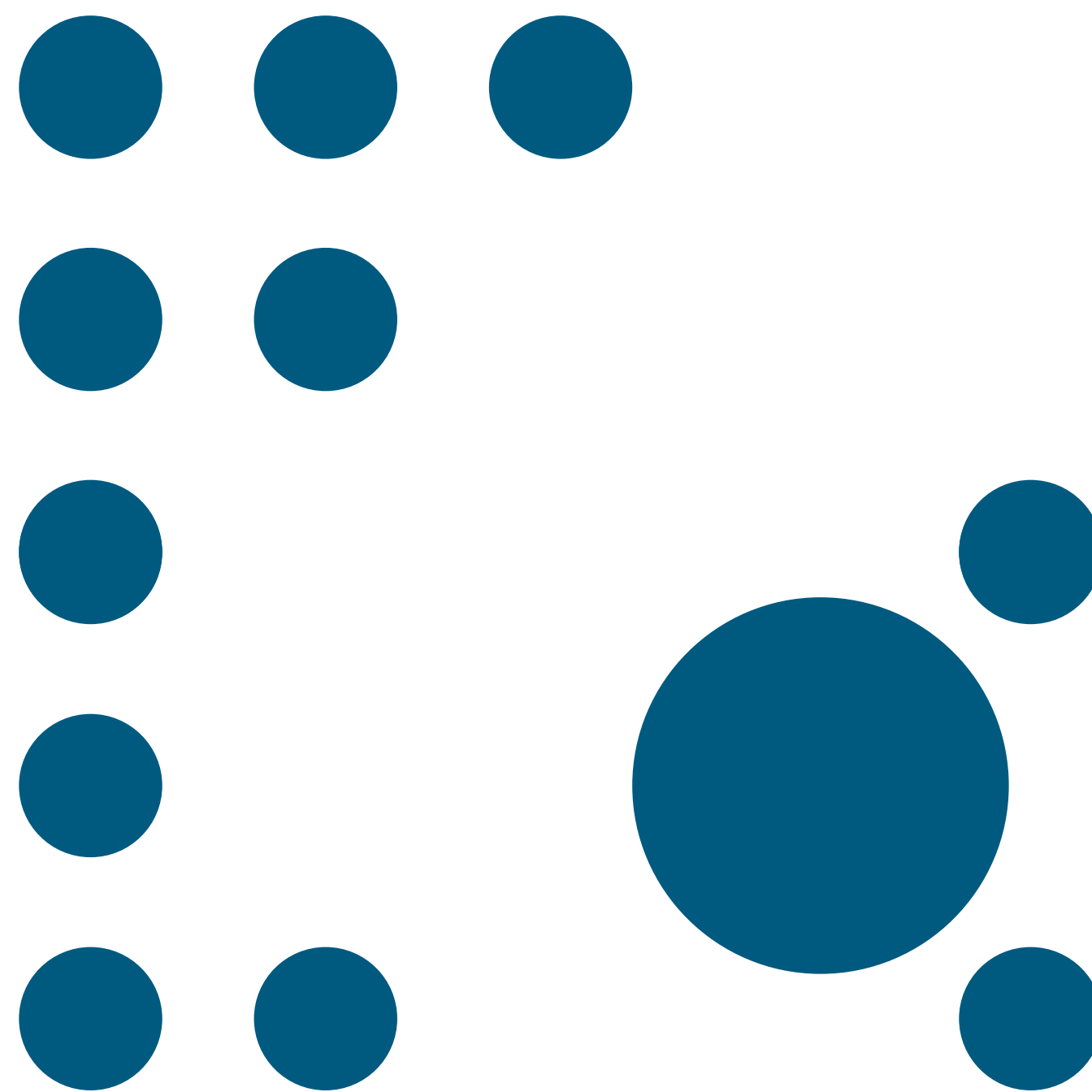
If you have a keynote speaker at your conference, do you need to place them at the top of the list for maximum impact? Perhaps. But there's an alternative method that may be more impactful. Consider the square in the field of circles below. Its beauty is in its difference. It immediately creates a central power that brings your gaze to the middle of the arrangement.

All because you painted the keynote speaker as a square.



9. PROXIMITY

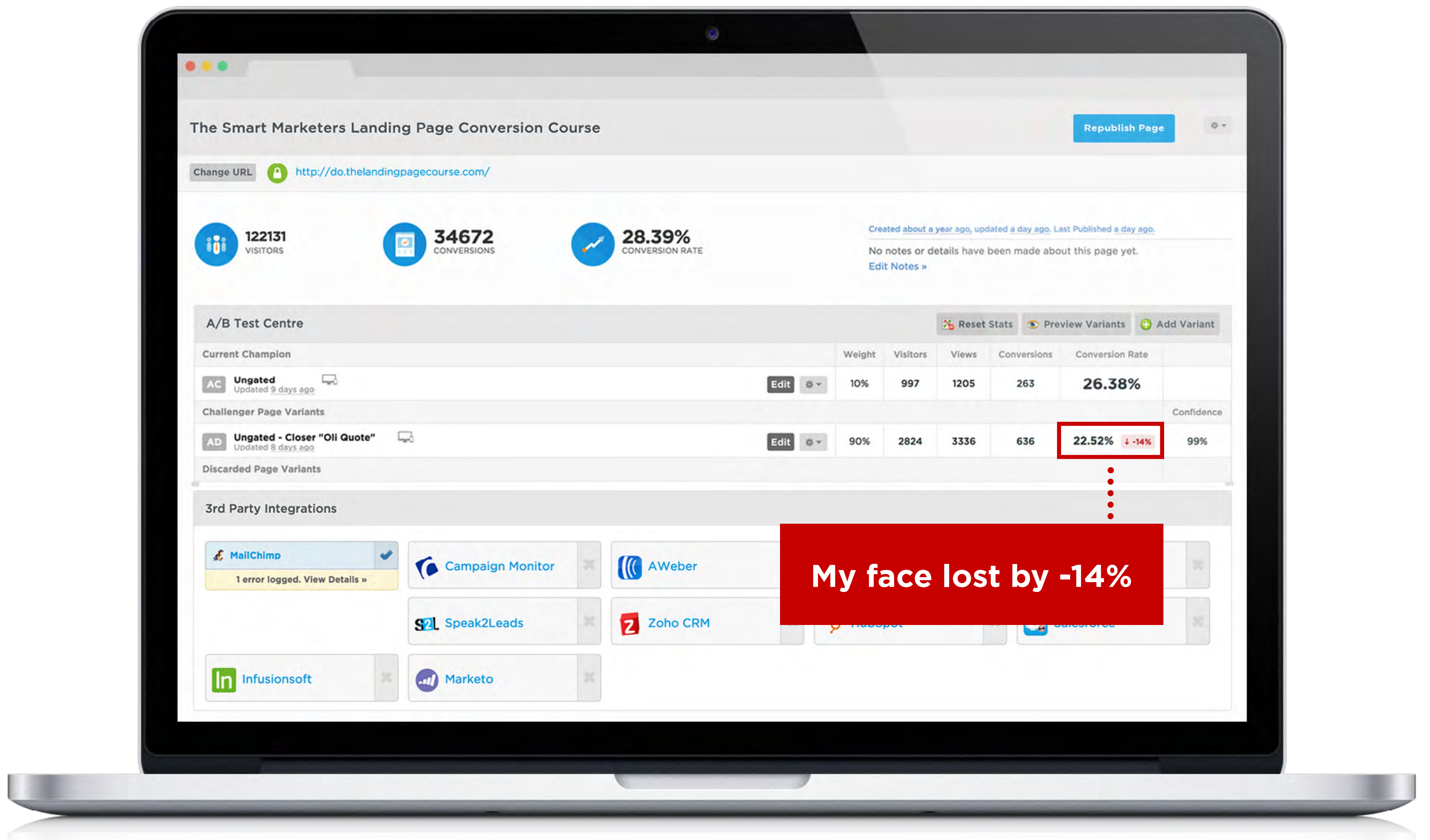
Elements that are close together are perceived to be more related than elements that are farther apart. It makes perfect sense and shines a light on the importance Proximity plays in the positioning of positive and negative conversion influencers around your call to action.



Consider the example on the right. If my photo and sign-off were somewhere else on the page, it would be related to its surroundings and not the CTA. However, its position directly beneath the CTA increases the likelihood that it will be read at the time when someone is considering clicking the button.



When tested, this page variant lost by 14% to the one that didn't have this CTA addendum. An example of a real vanity metric :)

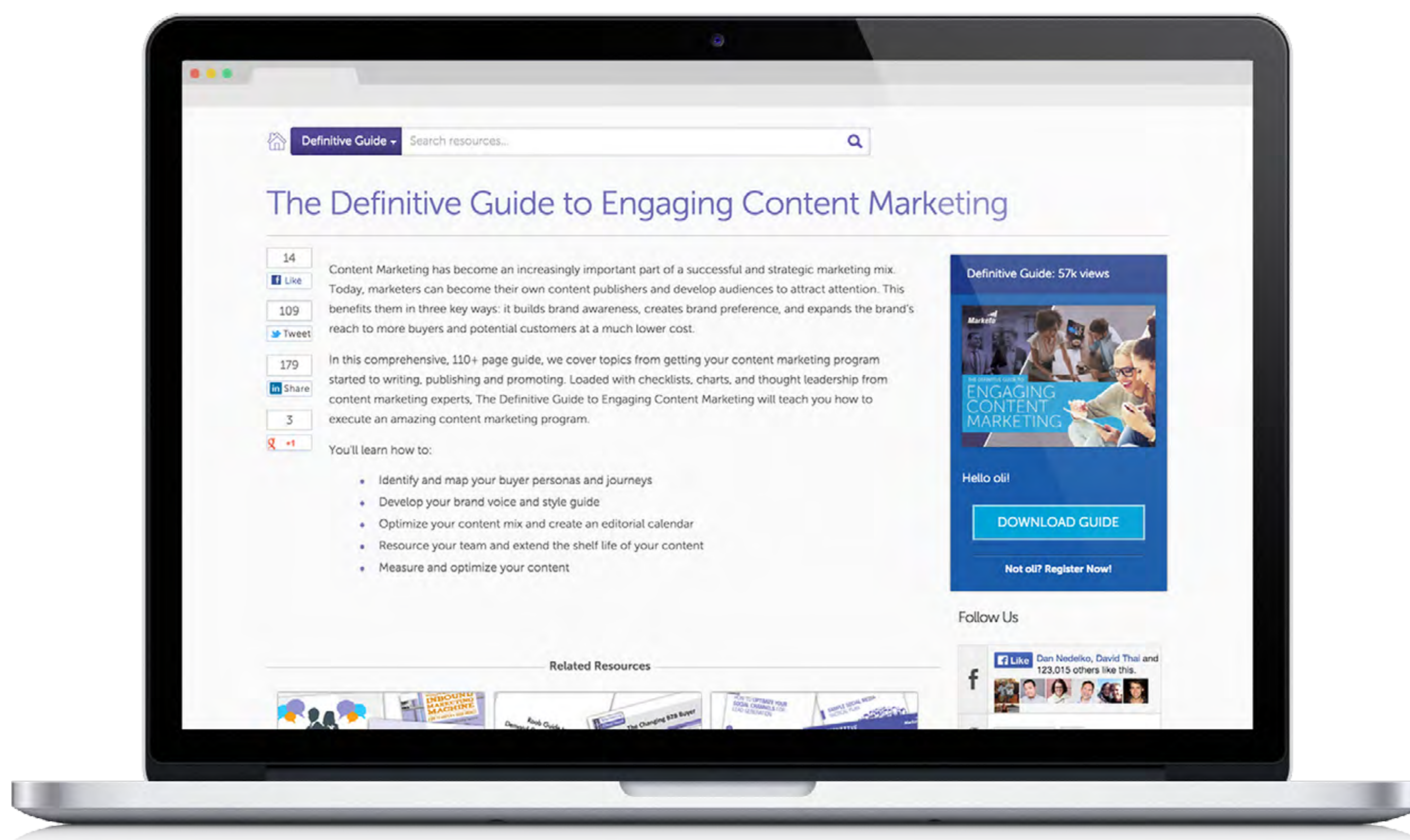


I put it there as a positive influencer, but it had the opposite effect. My point here is that we need to closely consider the impact that one element has on its neighbors.

Another example would be a graph with a legend. The closer the legend is to the graph (overlaid is good) the easier it is to attribute the meaning of the different graph elements. When not in close proximity, the extra effort in eye panning makes interpretation a bigger drag on your cognitive load reserves.

INCORRECT PLACEMENT OF A CTA

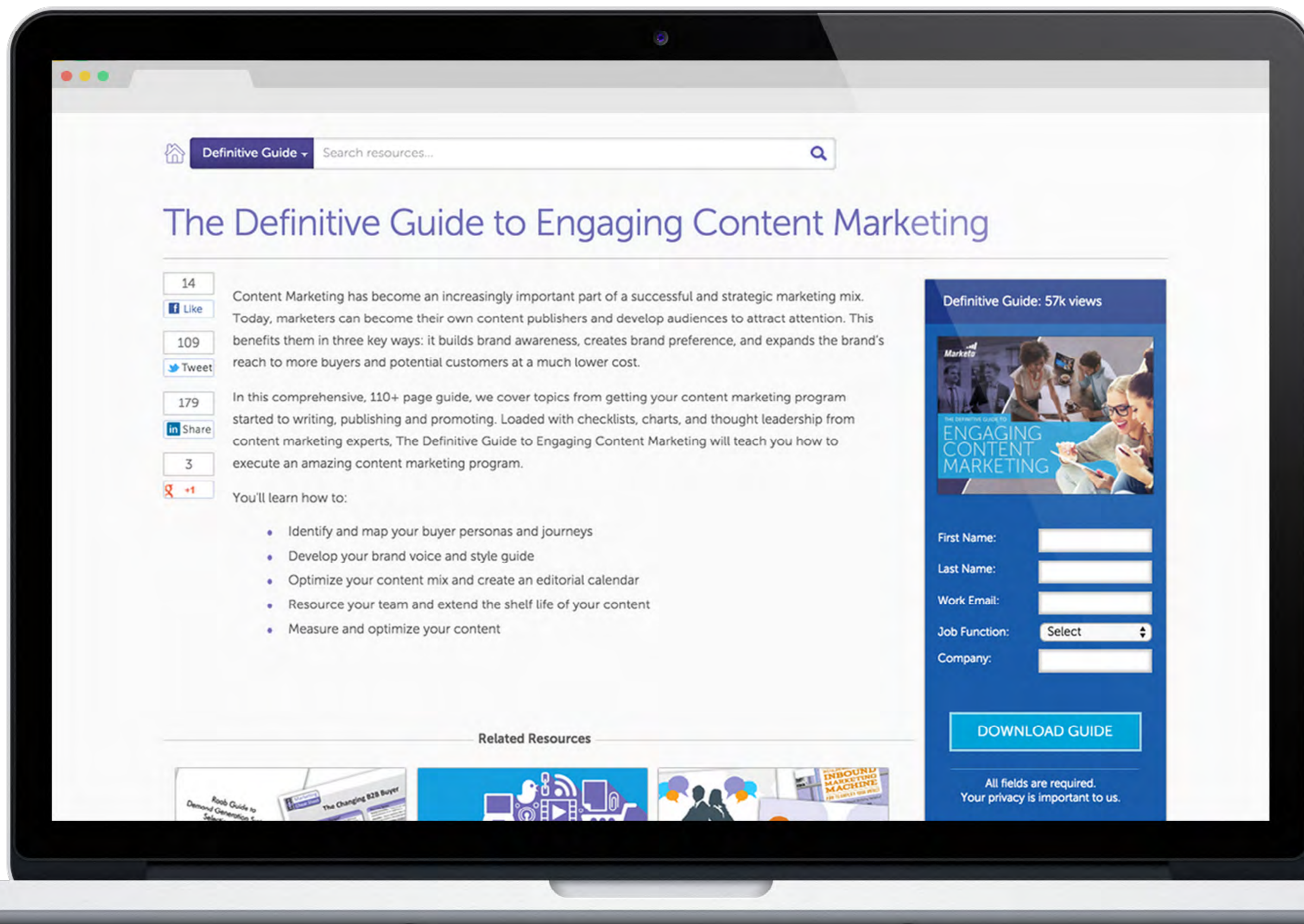
In the example below, the call to action is presented in the sidebar. It looks like a banner ad, which can cause people to overlook it. There is no CTA in the actual blog post, which leads the visitor to believe that it's either absent (a bug) or the links/related content at the end of the post is the CTA, which it's not.



A more appropriate location for the sidebar banner would be a more proximal position within or at the end of the blog post. A test link should also be present within the blog post text, using Contrast to stand out.

Note that there are two states for this page. If you have interacted with Marketo in the past, you will get this ungated version (no form). This is the version that is hard to interpret. Another improvement tactic would be to use Contrast for the CTA. Blue on blue is not a good idea.

If you *haven't* supplied your email to Marketo before you will get an a gated (lead form) version that is slightly better as the form stands out:

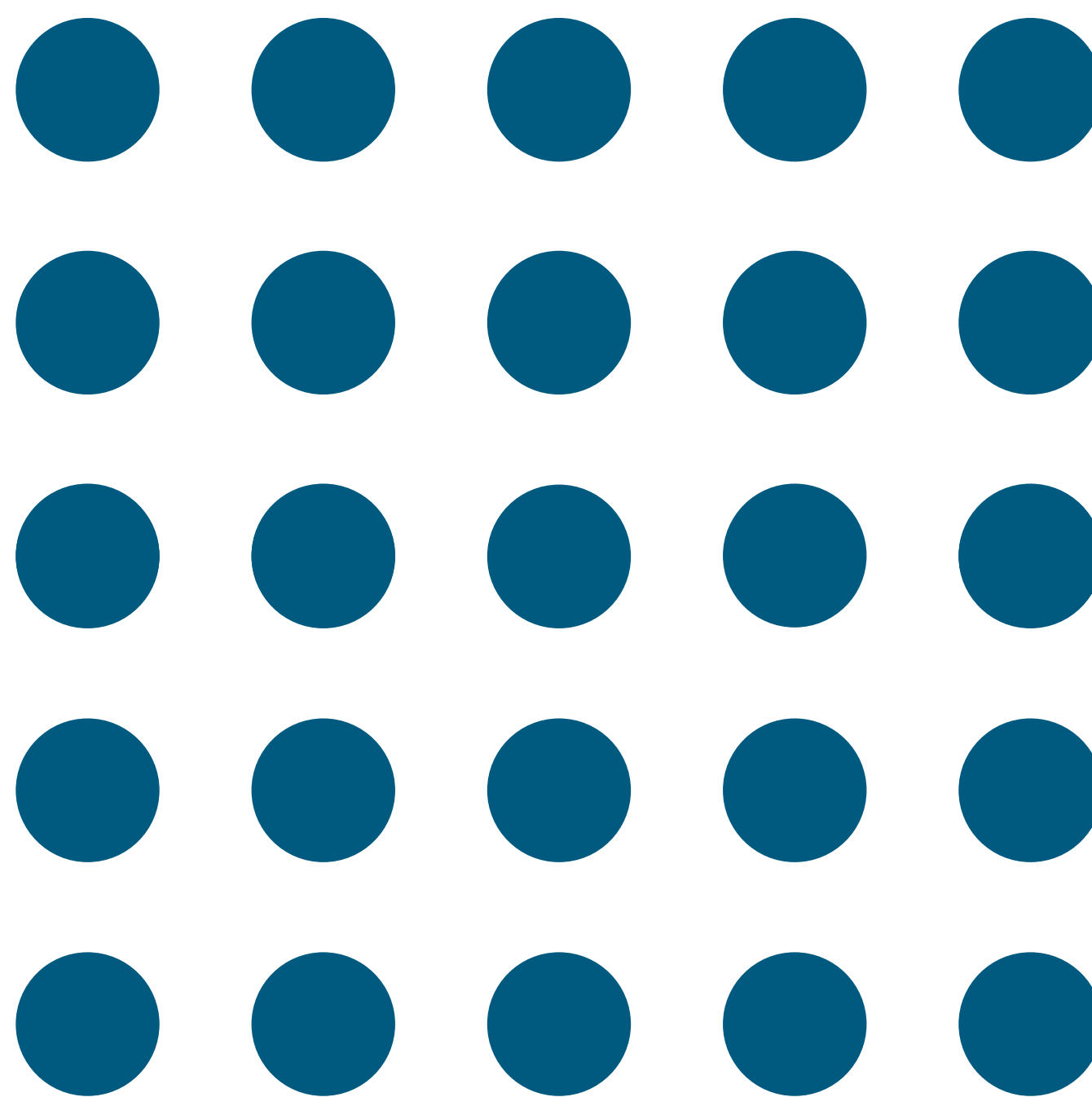


10. DISTRACTION

This one's easy. Spend a moment staring at the diagram below and email me at oli@unbounce.com if you can figure out which one you should be paying attention to.

Do you know which one would you click? Didn't think so. Attention Ratio, anybody?

Distraction is analogous to the detriment created by a high Attention Ratio. If there are too many things happening on your page, the chances of your visitors seeing what you want them to see is diminished in direct proportion to the number of distractions.



Consider the following simple *example* where removing the navigation **increased the click-through rate by 105%.**

(A)



(B)

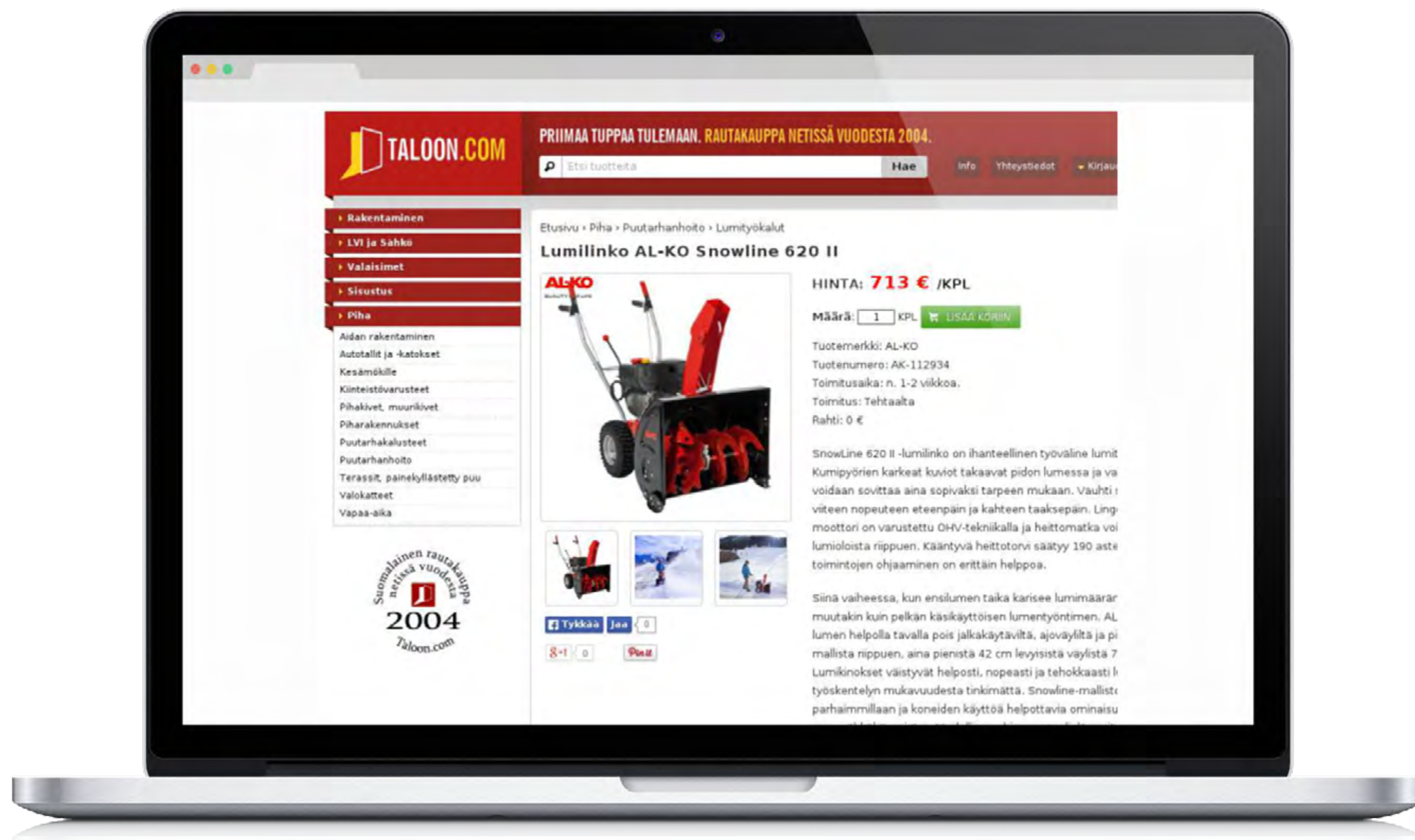
▲ 105%



REMOVING SOCIAL SHARE BUTTONS

Another example. This time, the extra interaction points are social share buttons and removing them increased conversions by 11.9%.

(A)



(B)

▲ 11.9%



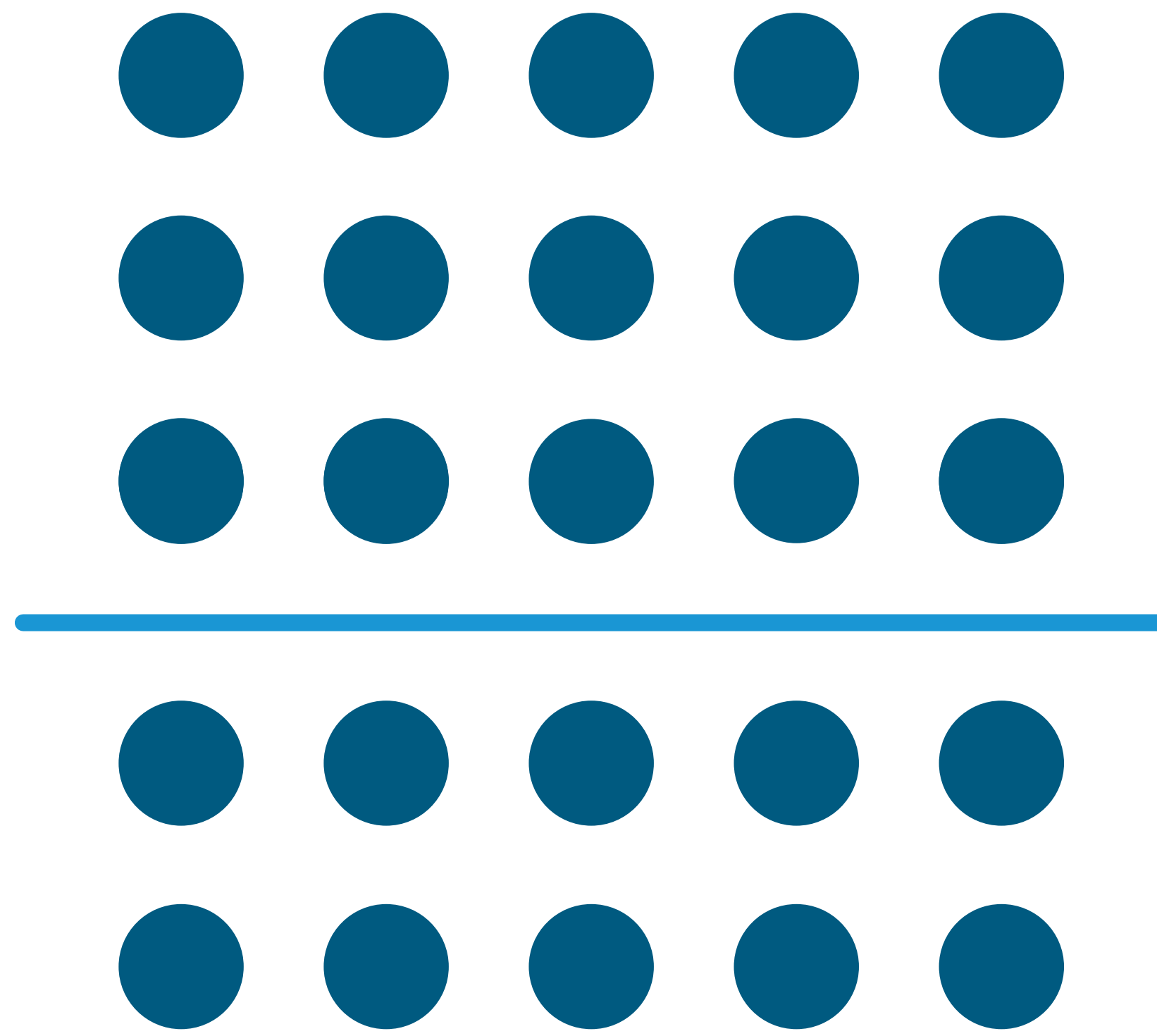
Now, there are two reasons why this might have happened:

- 1. The added distractions made the page cluttered.***
- 2. The negative social proof of low social shares acted as a deterrent to inferring quality.***

An important lesson here is that regardless of the reason for the impact, adhering to a low Attention Ratio and minimizing Distraction led to amazing results.

11. INTERRUPTION

Interruption marketing has a bad rap, as it should. But that's not what I'm talking about. Interruptive *design* is using a break to cause thought.



Using an interruptive visual break makes people stop momentarily. Imagine a list of 15 bullet points. Perhaps they are all important in some measure. Perhaps you are designing for multiple **buyer modalities**. The impulsive type probably wants/needs at most three bullet points to summarize the purpose and benefit of purchasing this item, whereas the methodical buyer wants to pore over the details.

There are three main points that have relevance when someone reads your list of bullets:

- 1. The primacy effect: The first bullet is most likely to be the item that's most easily recalled in subsequent moments after reading.**
- 2. The recency effect: The last bullet is top of mind for a short time after reading. However, it doesn't take long for the primacy effect to take control and reassert the first item as being dominant.*

3. *The interruption effect: Because you decided to call out an item midway through a list, you are giving it even greater dominance than the first or last. Consider the bullet list below as an illustration:*

- ***This is the first and most important feature of the product***
- *Lorem ipsum other content to fill in the list of bullets*
- *Lorem ipsum other content to fill in the list of bullets*
- *Lorem ipsum other content to fill in the list of bullets*
- ✓ ***This element has interruption emphasis applied to it***
- *Lorem ipsum other content to fill in the list of bullets*
- *Lorem ipsum other content to fill in the list of bullets*
- ***This is the last element in the list and gets a lot of weight by virtue of being the closing argument, and being presented with an open ended visual stop.***

At a glance, that large list of bullet points has only three dominant and thus important elements.

You can also interrupt the lines of your interface or design to create a break that focuses attention, as in the following example from *Fast Company*. Here the grid disruption slows you down while also giving an otherwise large wall of text some much needed relief.

Whether the magazine realizes it or not, these two hallmarks—engaging stories and symmetrical monotony—might not be as unconnected as they appear. New research suggests that textual symmetry can help people pay closer attention to the message in front of them. For a publication intent on conveying information, rather than on simply conveying visual entertainment, symmetrical design might serve as a sort of intellectual lubricant.

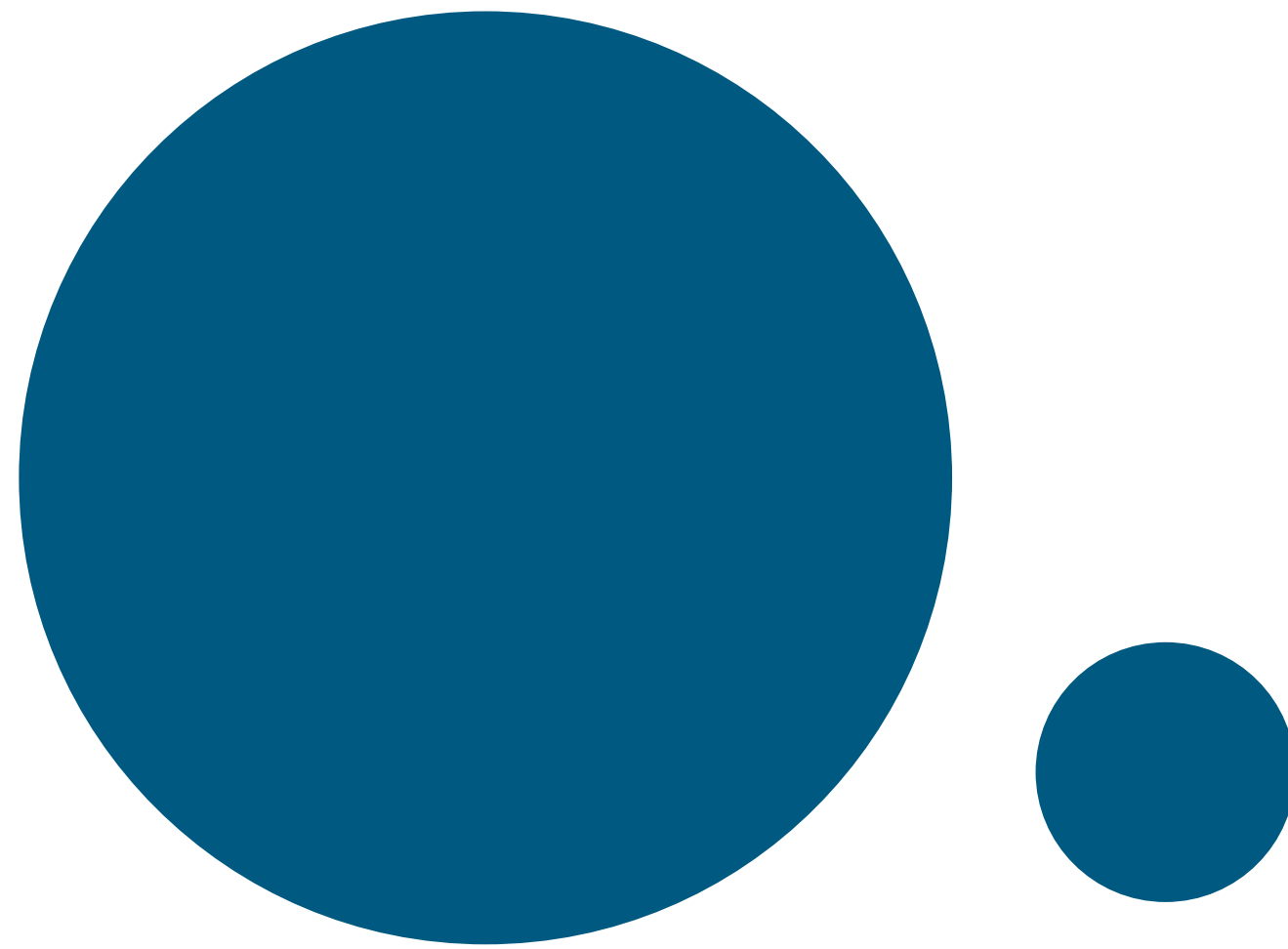
"TEXTUAL SYMMETRY
CAN HELP PEOPLE PAY
CLOSER ATTENTION TO
THE MESSAGE IN FRONT
OF THEM."

"In terms of reading a text and processing it intently, the *New Yorker* layout would definitely encourage that to a greater extent, based on my work, than more visually interesting kinds of layouts," psychologist Karen Gasper of Penn State University tells Co.Design.

Recently, Gasper and her graduate-assistant collaborator Brianna Middlewood ran a series of tests to determine whether a symmetrical layout influenced the way people processed certain texts. In the experiments, they showed participants different text designs—one symmetrical, one asymmetrical (below). Each time, participants responded the same way: They rated the symmetrical layouts as more appealing.

12. DOMINANCE

There's a subtle but important difference between the principles of Size and Dominance. Size influences Dominance, but it needs to be combined with Proximity to really establish a personal relationship with another element.



A common use of Dominance is the visual representation of progress buttons in a multi-step process.

(A)

PREV

NEXT

(B)

<< PREV

NEXT >>

(C)

<< PREV

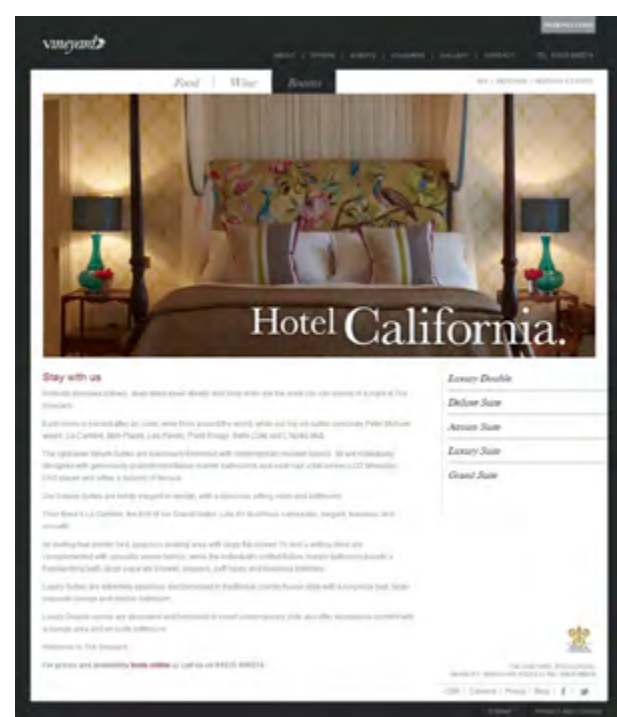
NEXT >>

In the first instance, neither button is presented as being more important.

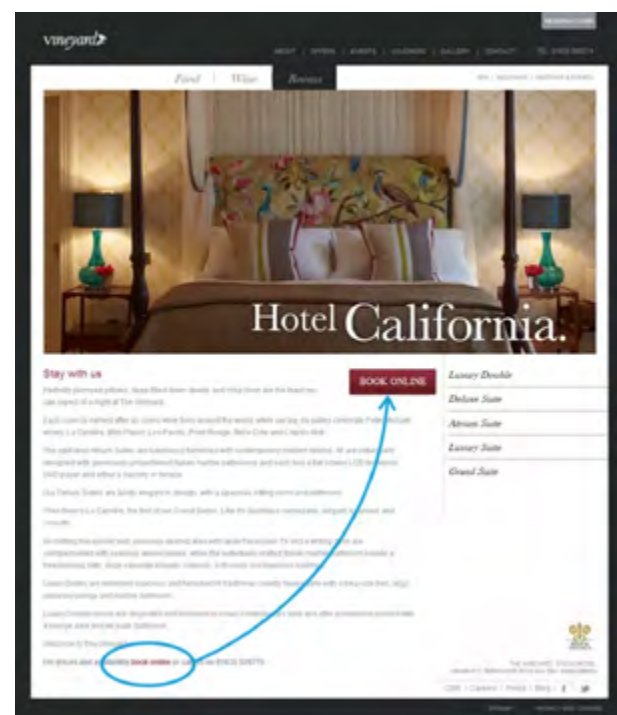
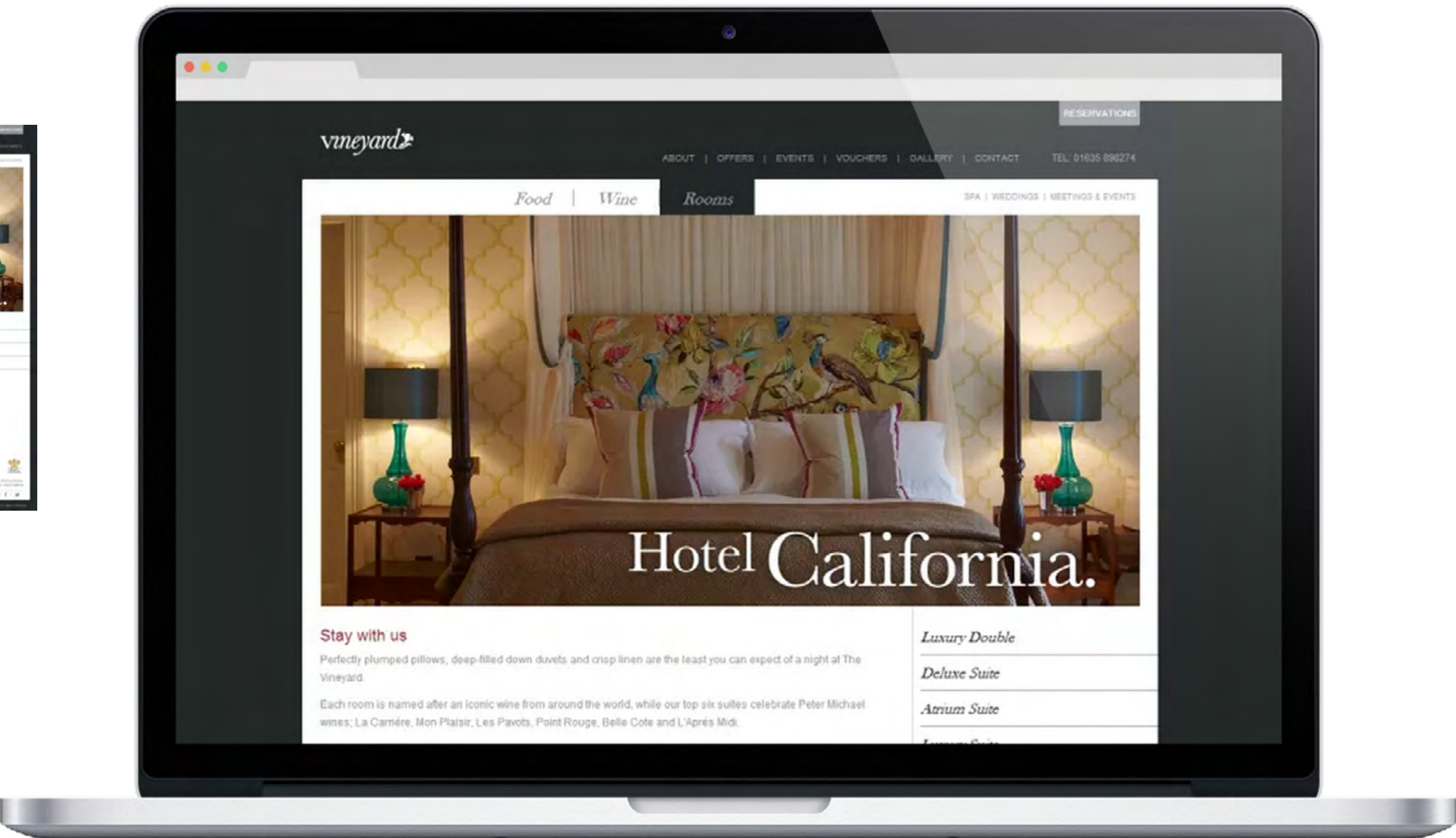
In the second, the same problem exists, but directional cues are used to add clarity to the purpose of the buttons.

Finally, in the third example, the << prev interaction is presented as a simple link to make it less important than the next progress button. This creates a visual hierarchy using dominance.

The following **example** uses Dominance, Contrast and Proximity to create a more effective experience which **increased the click-through rate by 31%**.

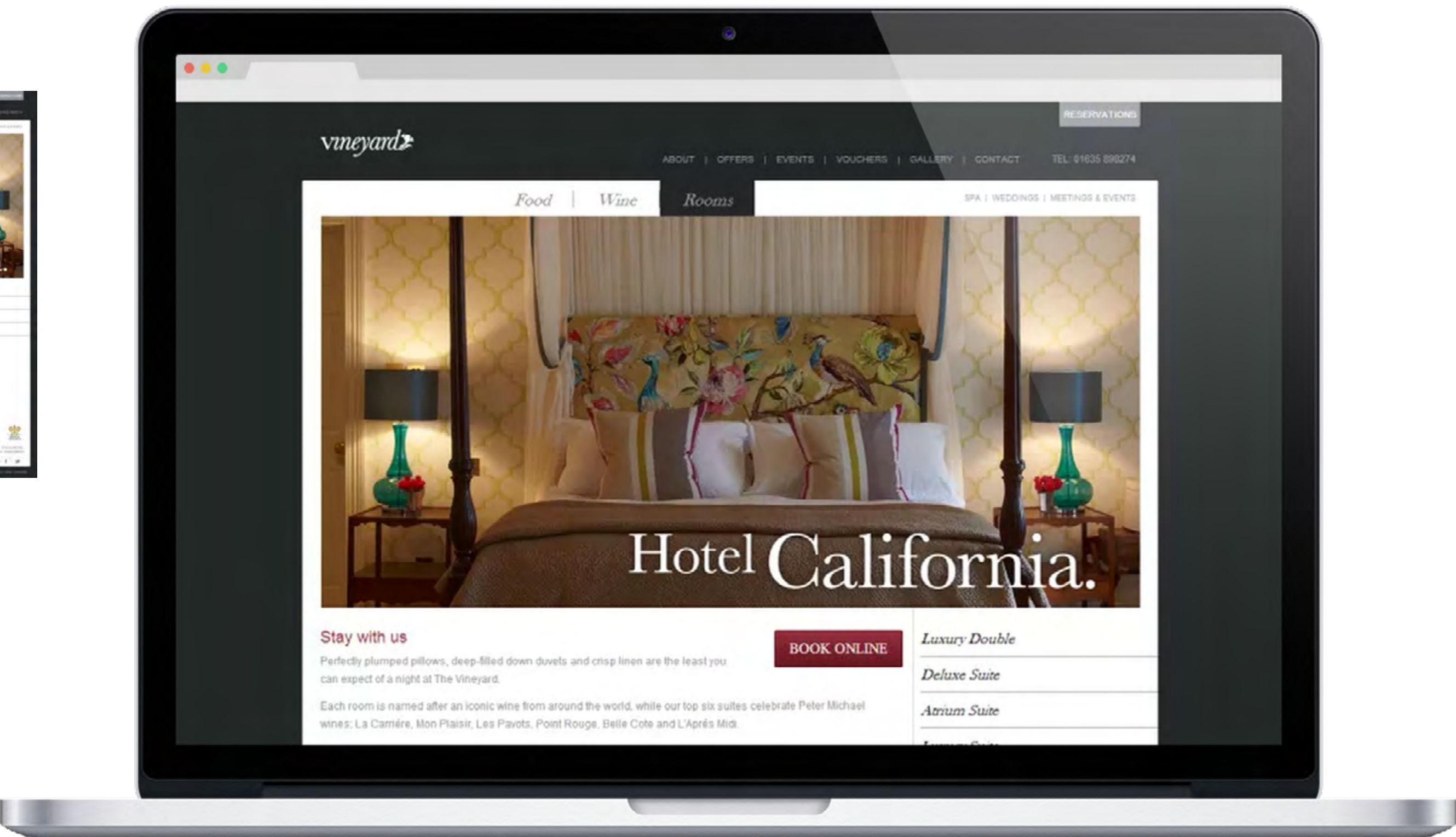


(A)



(B)

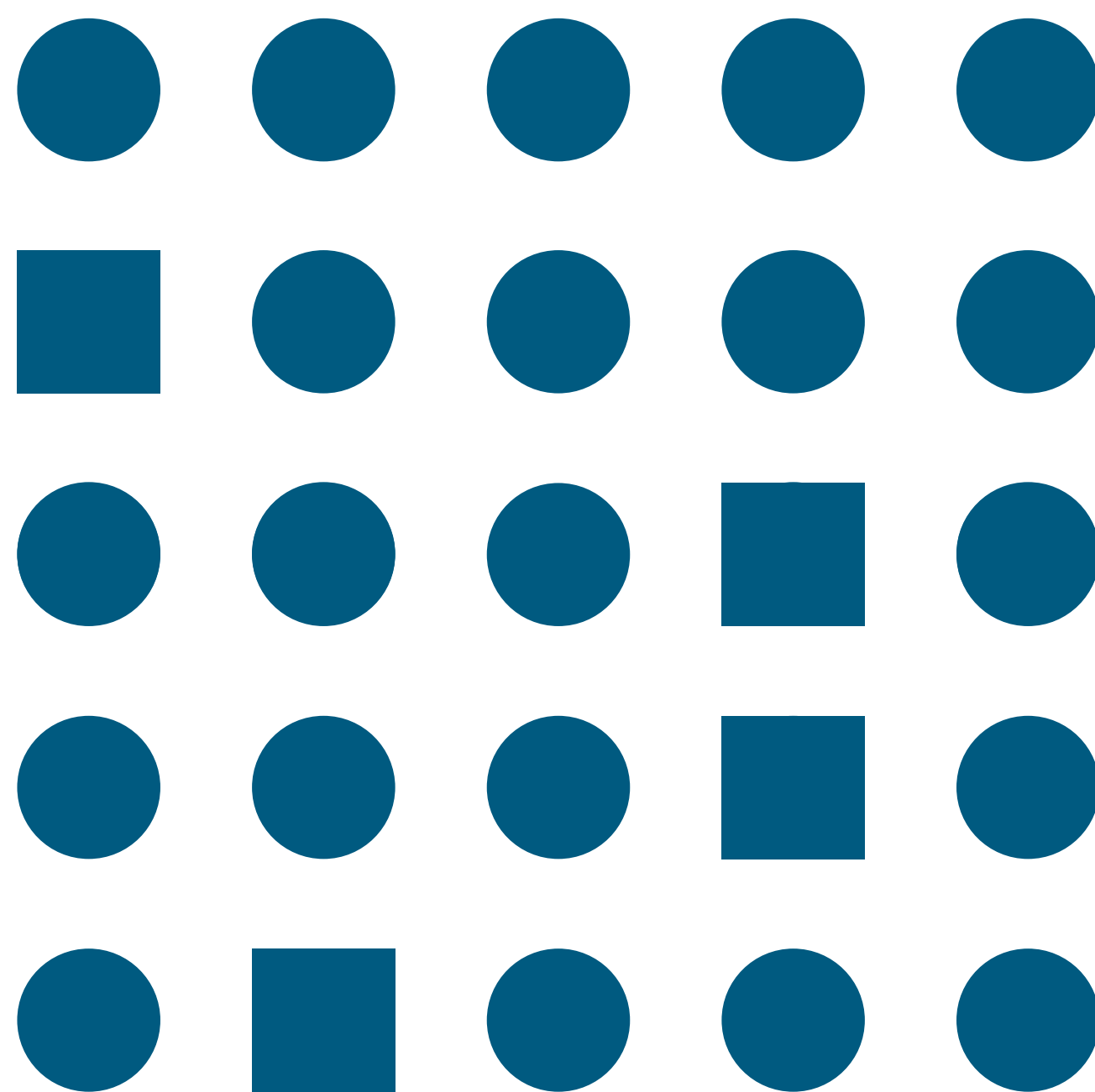
▲ 31%



13. CONSISTENCY

Consistency can make order out of chaos. Stare at the diagram below for five seconds.

It doesn't take long for your brain to separate the squares from the circles. Now imagine if there was absolutely no correlation between the similar objects. Circles aren't related to other circles and squares don't know what the other squares are doing. Actual chaos.



But if every square represents the same thing, and every circle means the same thing, chaos turns to order. That's the power of Consistency.

Consistency is an essential part of branding.

When we define and further the familiar, we breed understanding and context. Every time {company x} does/says/expresses A, it feels like the last time they did/said/expressed A.

Consistency reduces comprehension time and the impact of visual design on cognitive load.

14. REPETITION

Alliteration is one of my favourite writing techniques. The repetition of fricatives or rhymes or beats is magnetic. The easiest way to explain what I mean is to listen to 10 seconds of Taylor Swift's "Never Getting Back Together." Yeah yeah, I know, Taylor Swift. She's actually pretty badass despite me being a bit of a metalhead.

Pay close attention as she sings the chorus at 0:42.

There are two examples of alliteration.

The first is the repetition of the words **"never ever ever."** where the emphasis is on the end sound of "ever," but then even stronger is the next part where the drums and sharp vocals hit repeatedly on the word "talk.

"You go **talk** to your friends, **talk** to my friends, **talk** to me."

Listen to it and you'll see what I mean. It creates a really strong focal element in the song due to the repetition of words and the **emphasis** given to them as they are sung.

You're probably wondering what that has to do with visual design. Fair point.

" Repetition can help draw attention to important landing page elements and copy. Just ask Taylor Swift. "

 **TWEET THIS QUOTE**

The most obvious example of Repetition on a landing page is a group of bullet points. That's easy, and if you use the Interruption technique of Nesting and Grouping (explored further below), you'll make them effective.

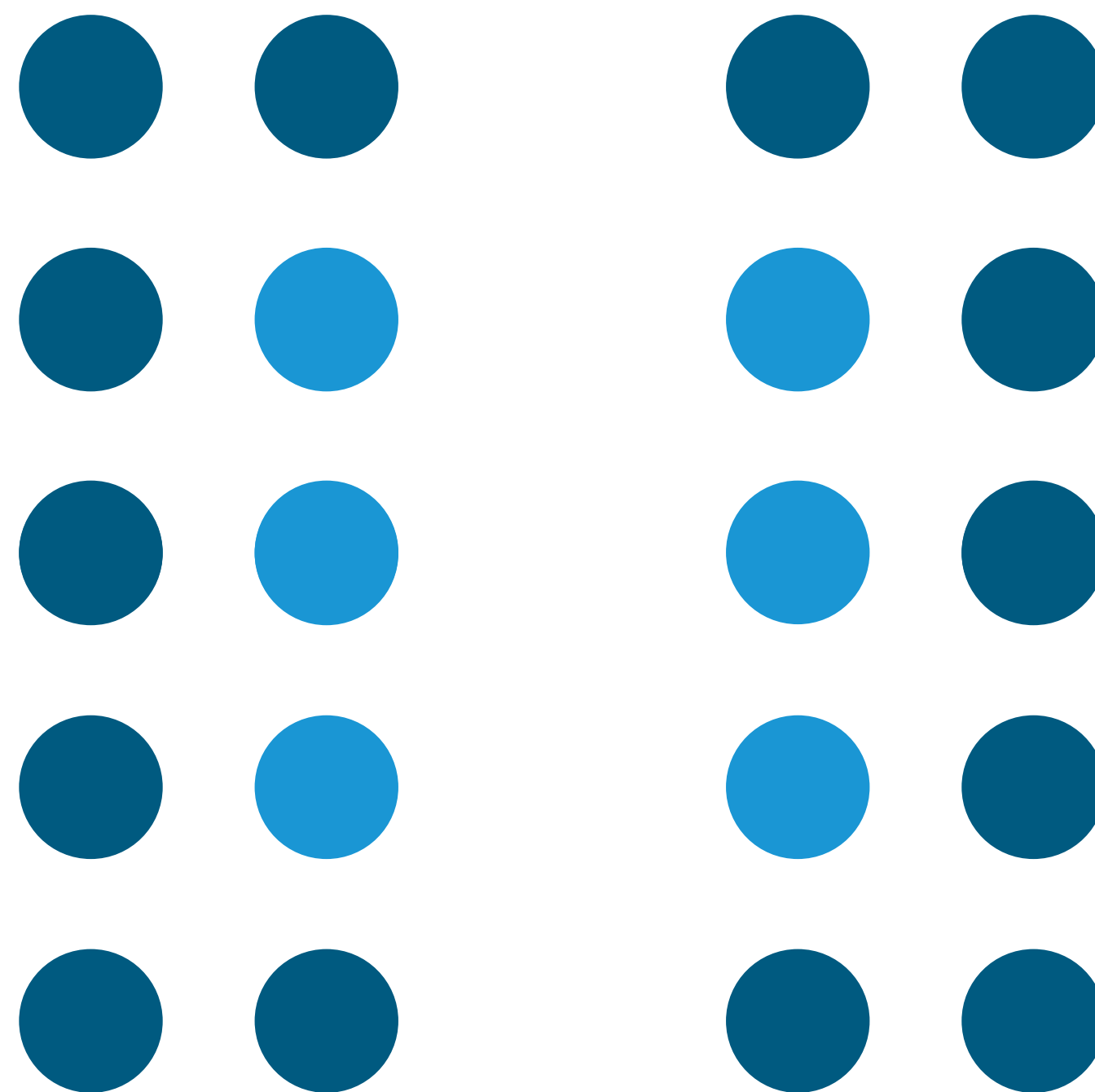


I'd like to zoom out a bit to more of a macro level. Think about a long landing page that uses bullet lists three times throughout the page. All of a sudden, while looking at the bigger picture, those three elements become a sharper image as you notice the pattern the page is showing you.

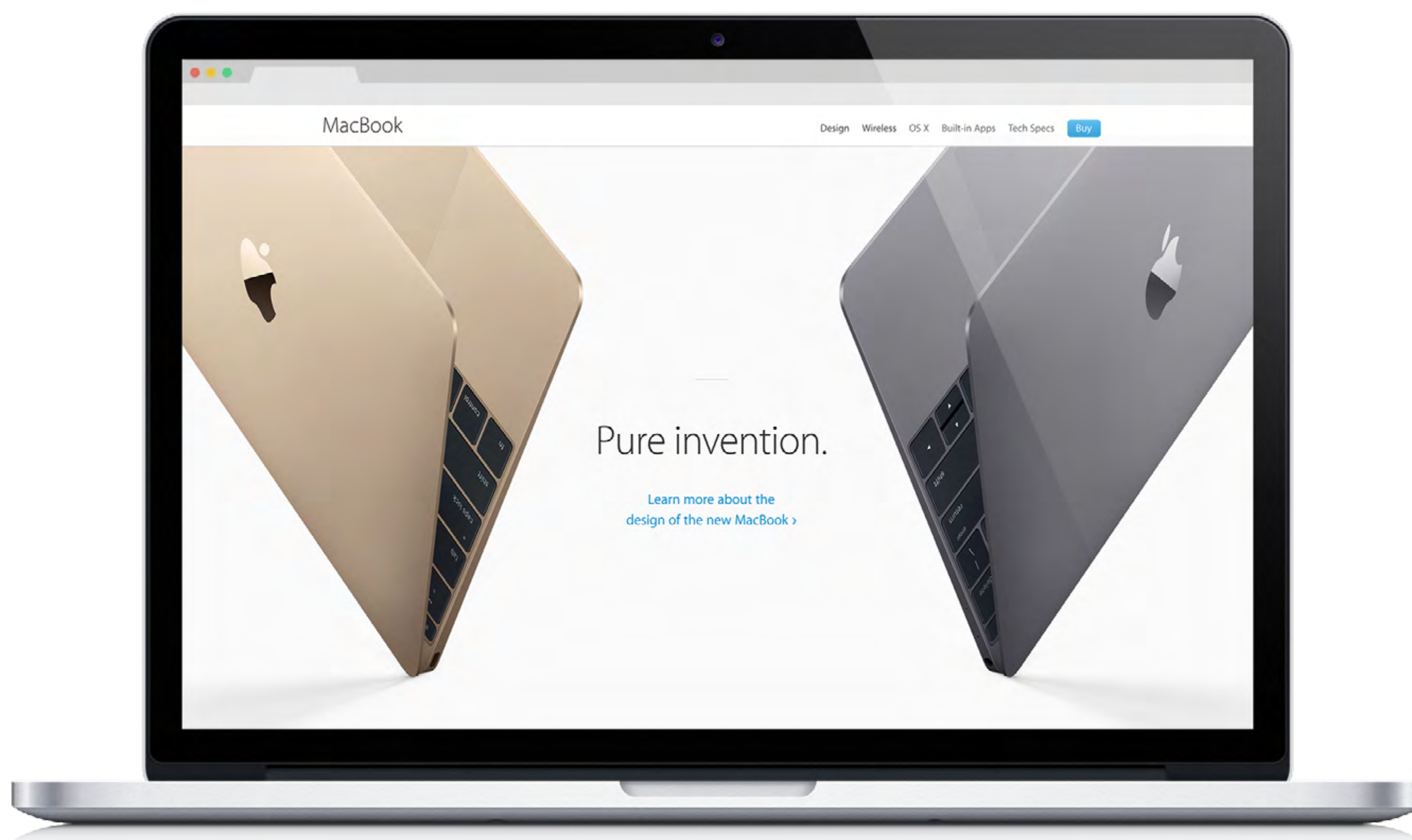
Heavily connected to consistency, Repetition can bring about feelings of familiarity in your designs that aid comprehension and brand cohesion.

15. SYMMETRY

Symmetry is strongly correlated with beauty. We perceive symmetrical features as being more attractive – perhaps because it allows our gaze to rest easy and not interpolate the differences in a facial construction.



Apple takes advantage of this principle on the MacBook product page:



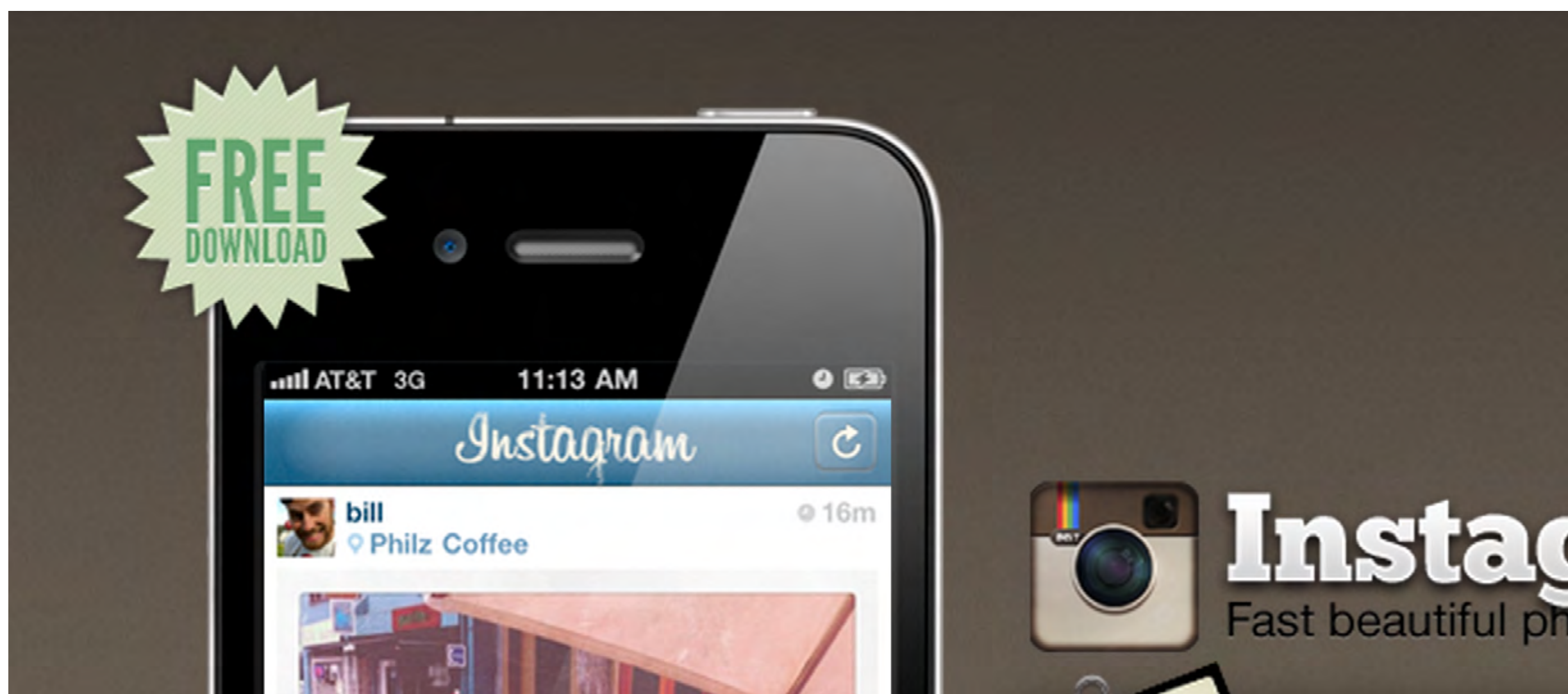
16. OVERLAPPING

Closely related to Proximity, overlapping can be used to connect one element to another. In terms of marketing, this is most commonly used for price-related information (like pricing event starbursts) and graphical highlighting (zooming in on a product screenshot).

In terms of design, it is effective because it breaks the boundaries of the image it's attached to.

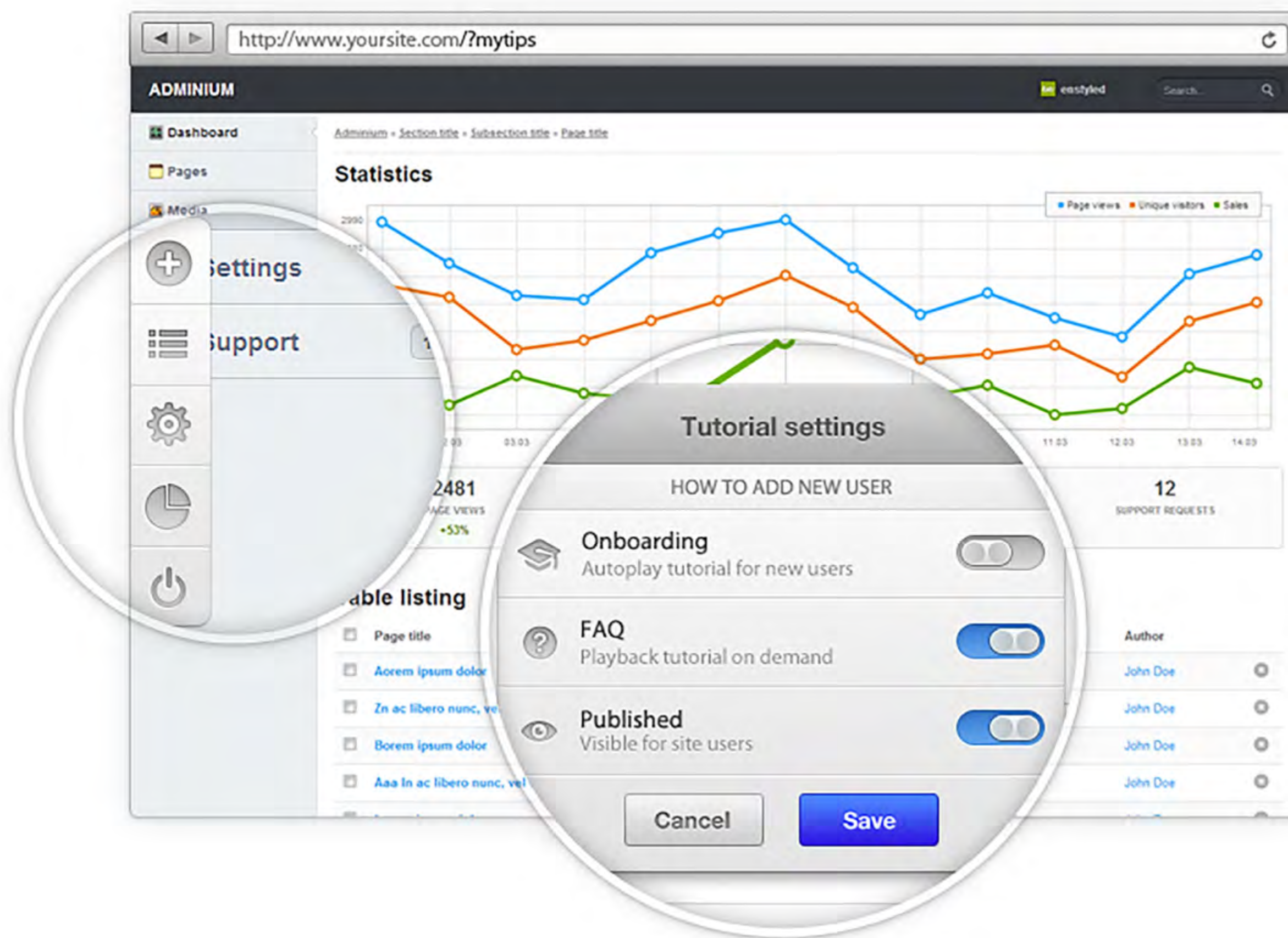


In the first example, Overlapping lets you know that this is an annotation and not an artifact of the product.

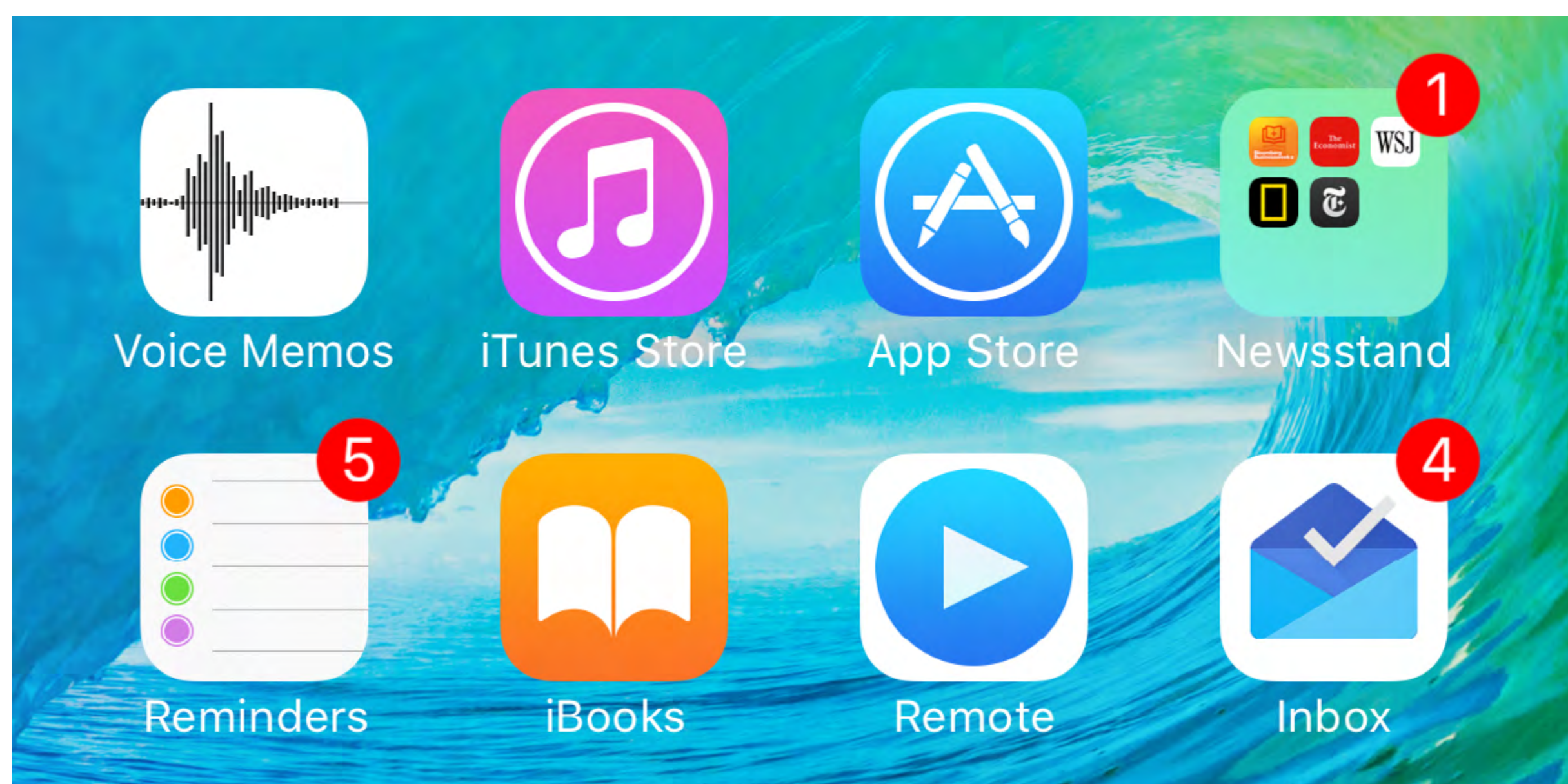


In the second example, from mytips.co, allowing the magnifying glass to overlap the boundaries of the screenshot creates greater emphasis. Without this, the visual would be more cluttered and wouldn't be communicating as clearly.

The benefit of this technique is that it very quickly illustrates that there are two things for you to inspect and there are two breaks in the plain of the product screenshot.



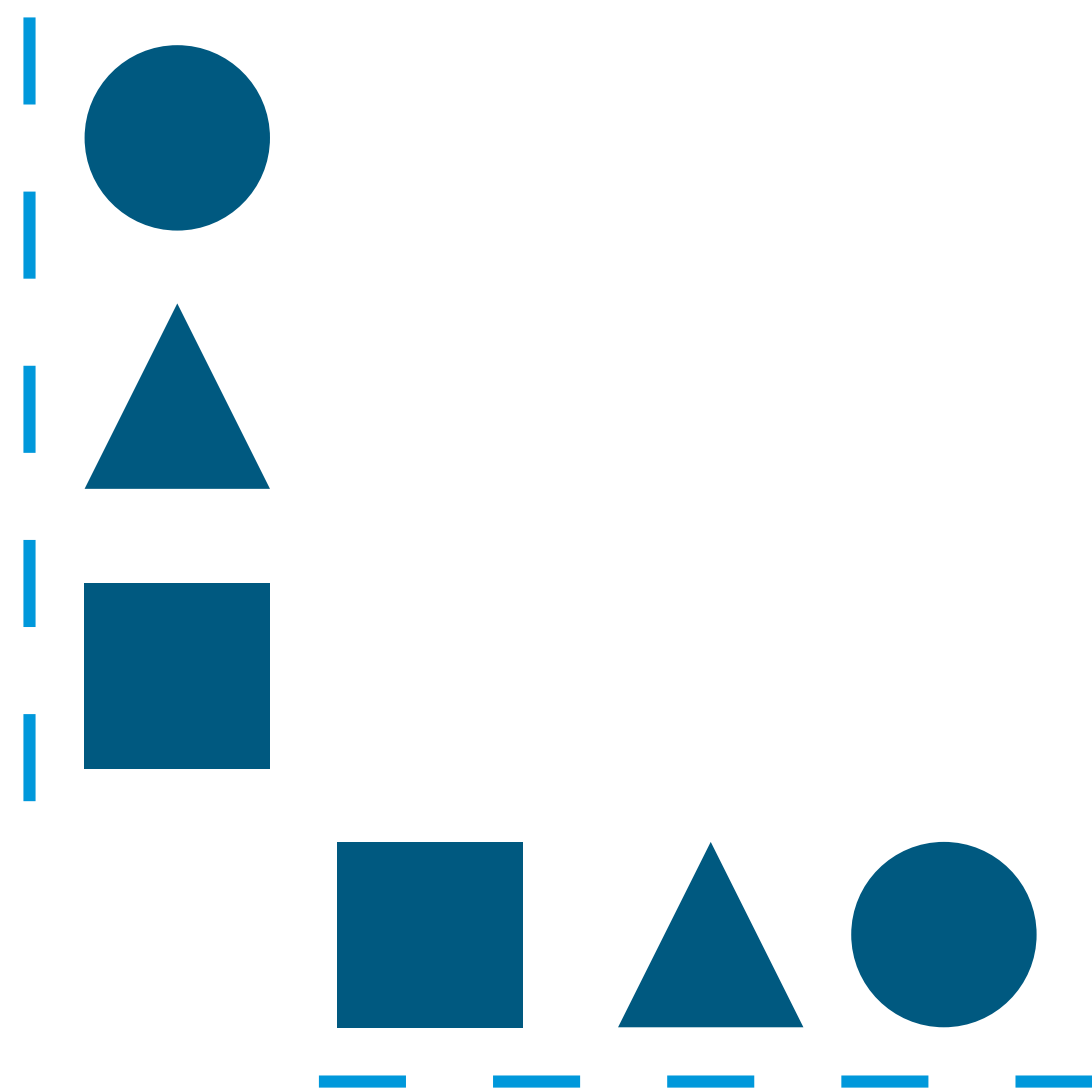
As a final example, consider your smartphone and the notifications it sends to you to get your attention. The way a notification stands out among your other apps is via the overlapping numerical change alert, as shown below:



17. ALIGNMENT

Alignment can be seen in two ways. First, as an overarching conceptual principle that seeks to make a landing page more congruent by **connecting elements together** with a single goal.

Second is the purely visual aspect of Alignment.

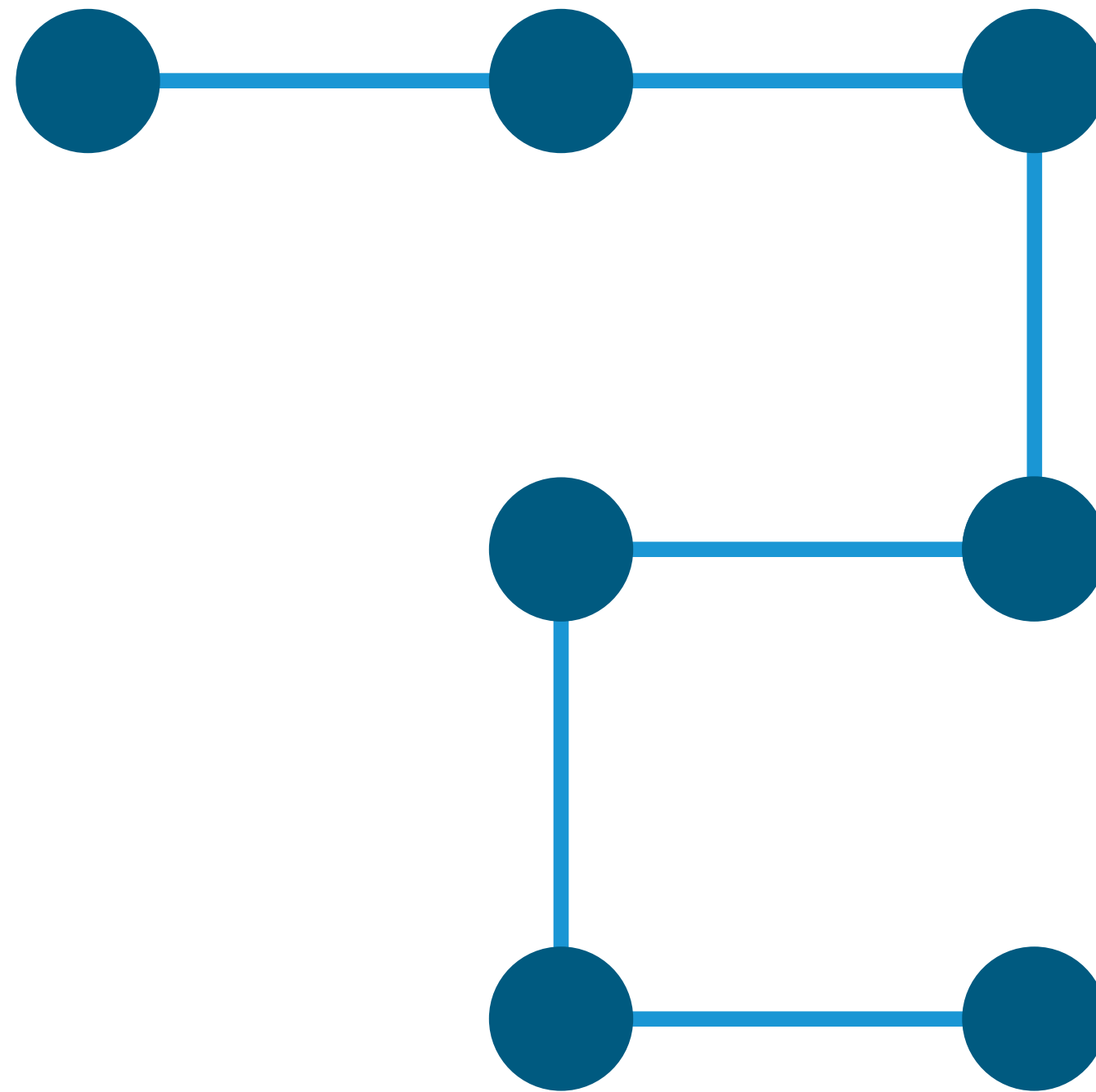


There is a reason that graphical user interfaces such as Photoshop (and **Unbounce**) use guides. It's because design requires order to be effective. If every element on your page was five pixels removed from the next (in terms of their top, left or right alignment), the experience would quickly descend into chaos.

Alignment is the simplest and quickest way to turn a busy design into an organized one, while adding visual clarity and an enhanced sense of well-being. That probably sounds a bit yoga'y, but it's true. When contrasting a messy design with an organized one, I've seen and felt a visceral reaction to both ends of the spectrum.

18. CONTINUATION

Storytelling, and effective marketing communication, is about sequencing. Saying the right things in the right order.



This is the essence of information hierarchy, and it can be greatly aided by visual design cues.

If you look at the landing page on the following page, you're left with no doubt as to the order in which you should consume the content. But if you removed the directional cues at any point, you'd open up the order to interpretation, which is why Continuation is so powerful. It's persistent.

" Does your landing page say the right things in the right order? Visual design cues help with information hierarchy. "



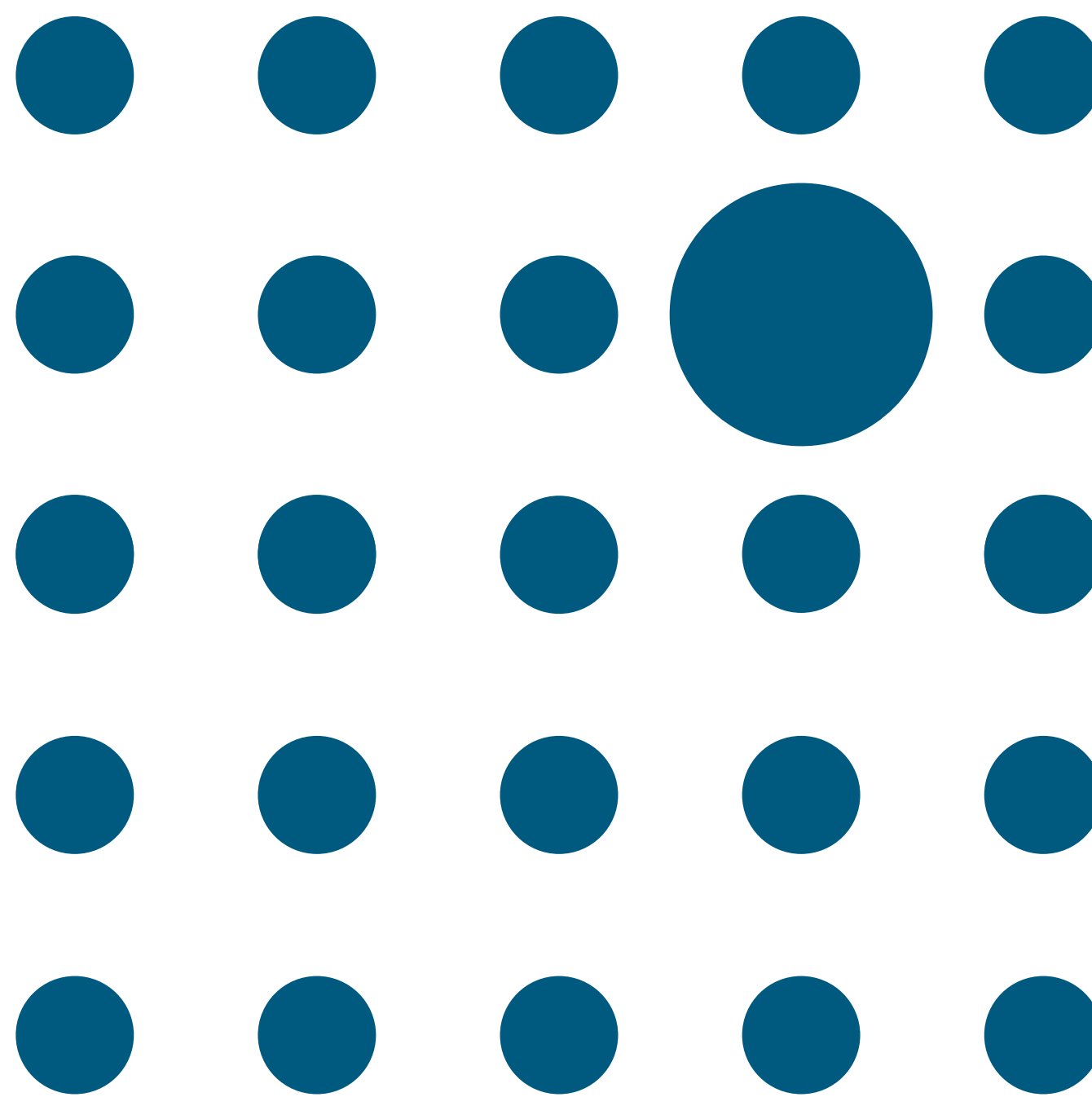
TWEET THIS QUOTE



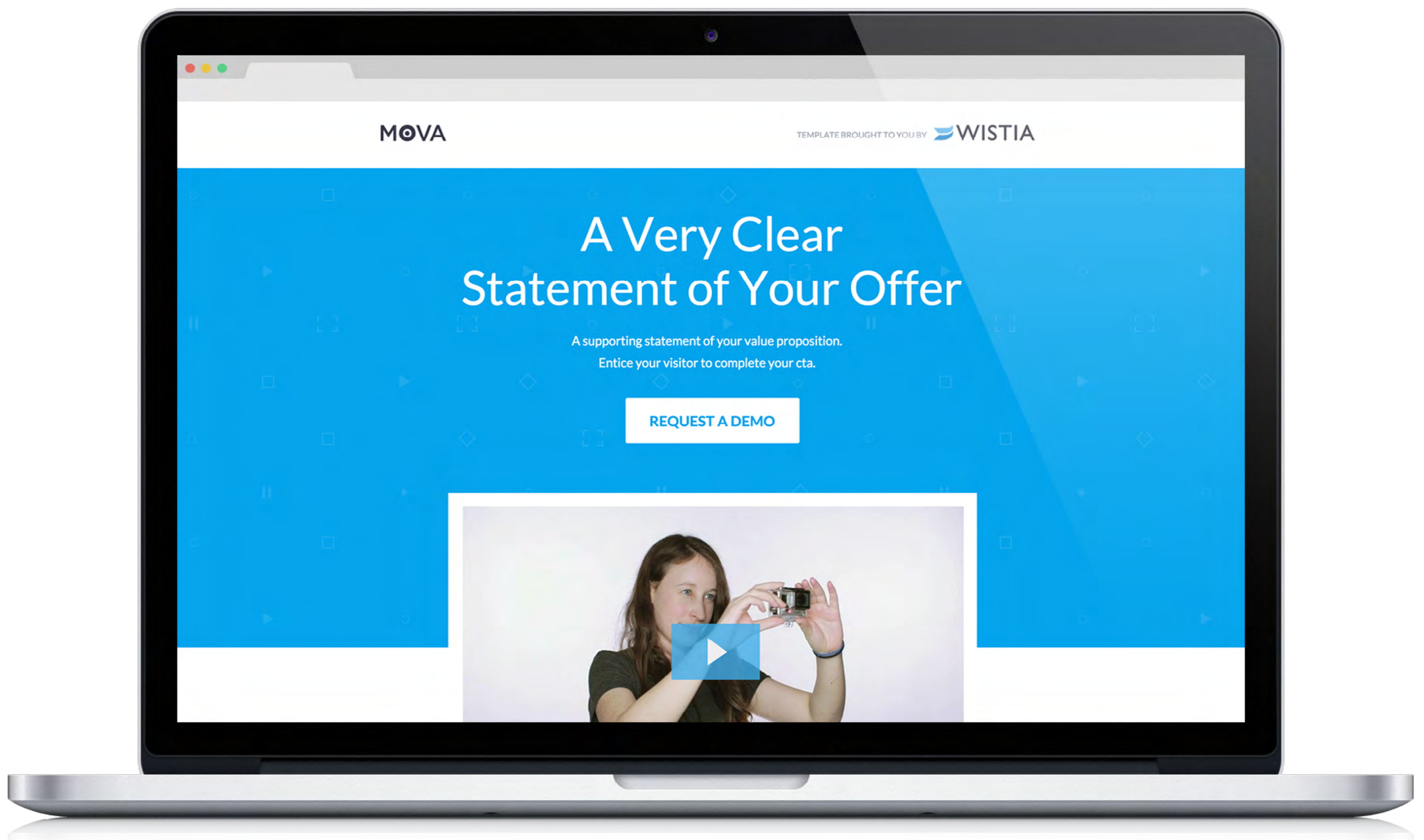
19. SIZE

Simply stated: The bigger something is, the more noticeable it is.

Size is related to Dominance, but the difference is that Size is relative to everything on the page – or page section, as opposed to its proximal relatives. Hence, the largest thing on the page can be perceived as the most important.



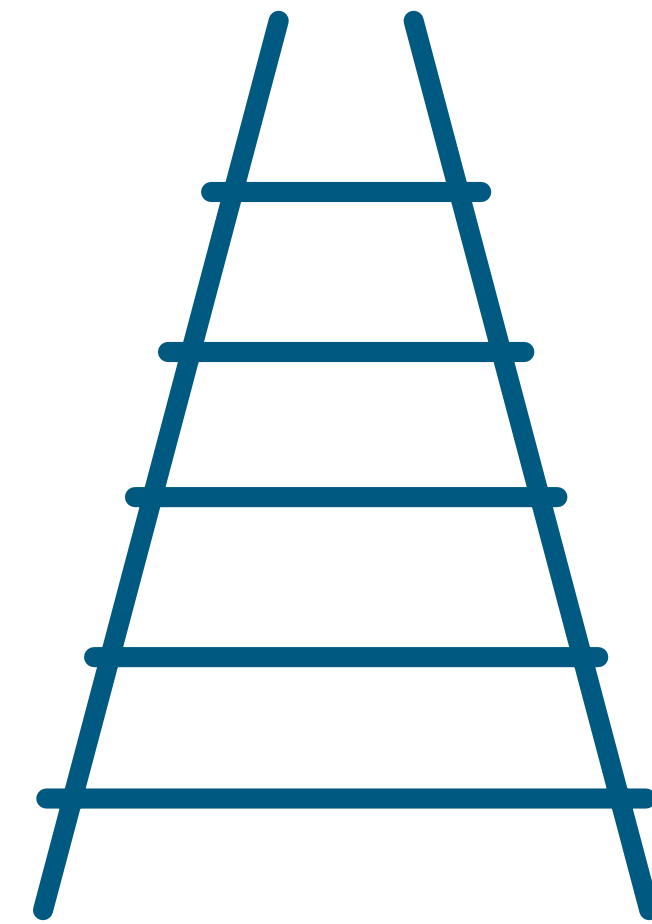
In this landing page template we created with our friends at Wistia, attention is clearly being driven toward the product demo video, which dominates the top of the page:



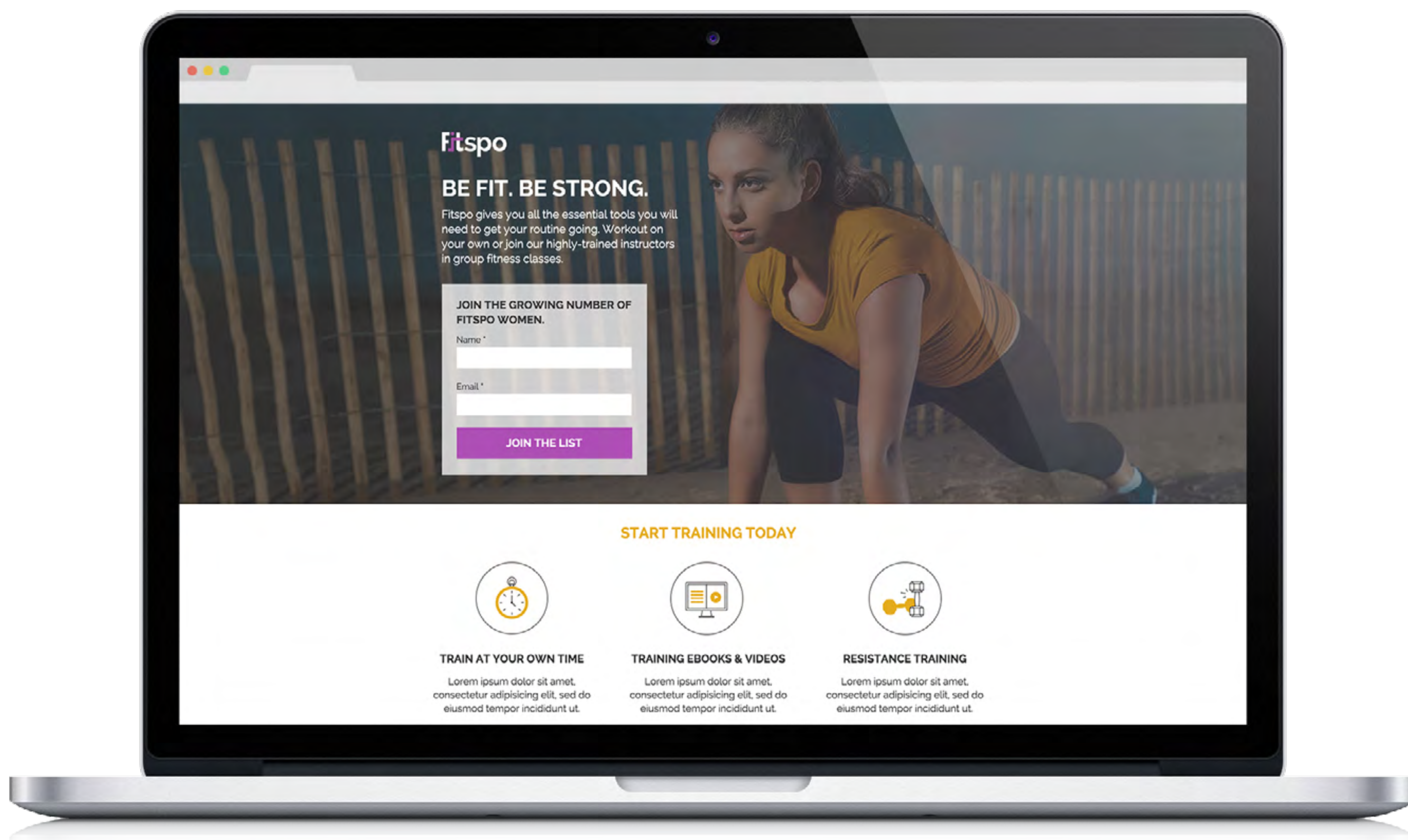
20. PERSPECTIVE

Perspective is a strange word. It's very meta in that you're developing a perspective of something just by considering its perspective. That's a rabbit hole I don't want to go down. #inception

Visual perspective has a time aspect to it. By delineating distance, you imply the travel from the distant background to the present foreground.



It's an excellent way to create ambience while applying Dominance to the hero of your scene. Essentially, Perspective is a differentiator. It separates the front from the back in a more meaningful way than just a layer order or z-index.

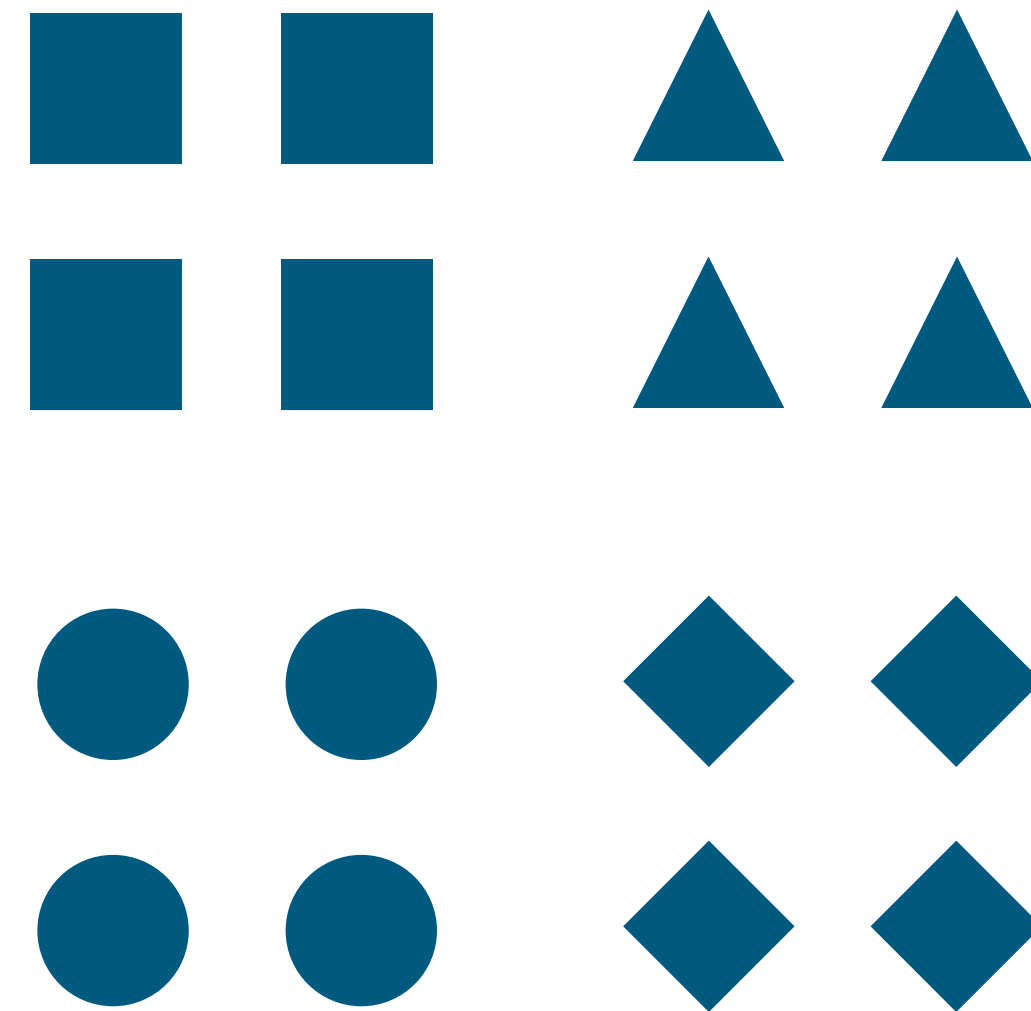


In this Unbounce landing page template for driving gym memberships, Perspective is used – along with a human directional cue – to direct attention toward the call to action. I hope that's not too much of a stretch << See what I did there? :P

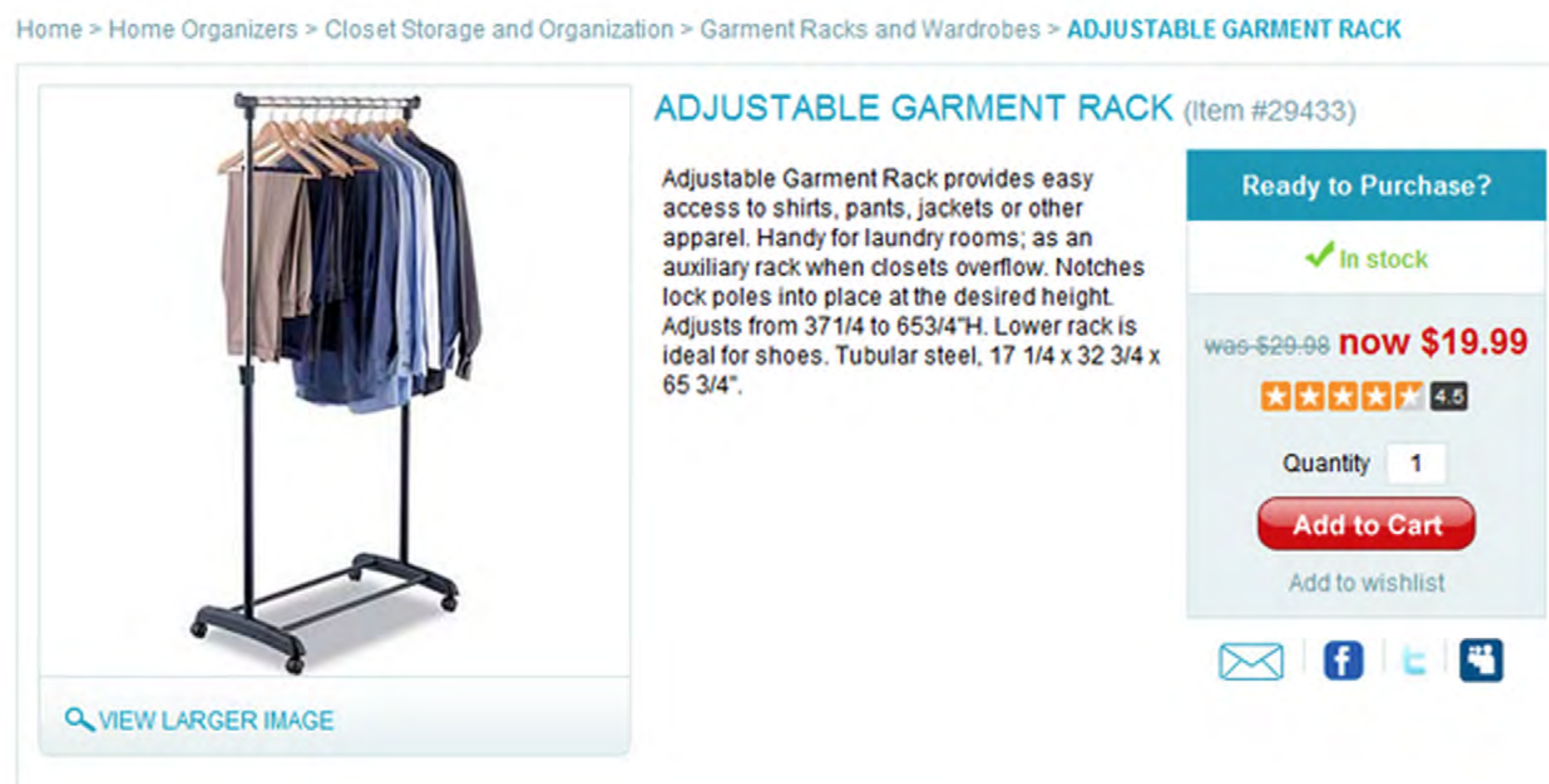
21. GROUPING

Related to Consistency and Proximity, Grouping is about creating simplicity by placing like elements together to reduce cognitive load.

These can be elements that have a related intent or communication goal, or elements that should be represented the same visually.



This is an example that shows how you can group content according to its informational relatedness:



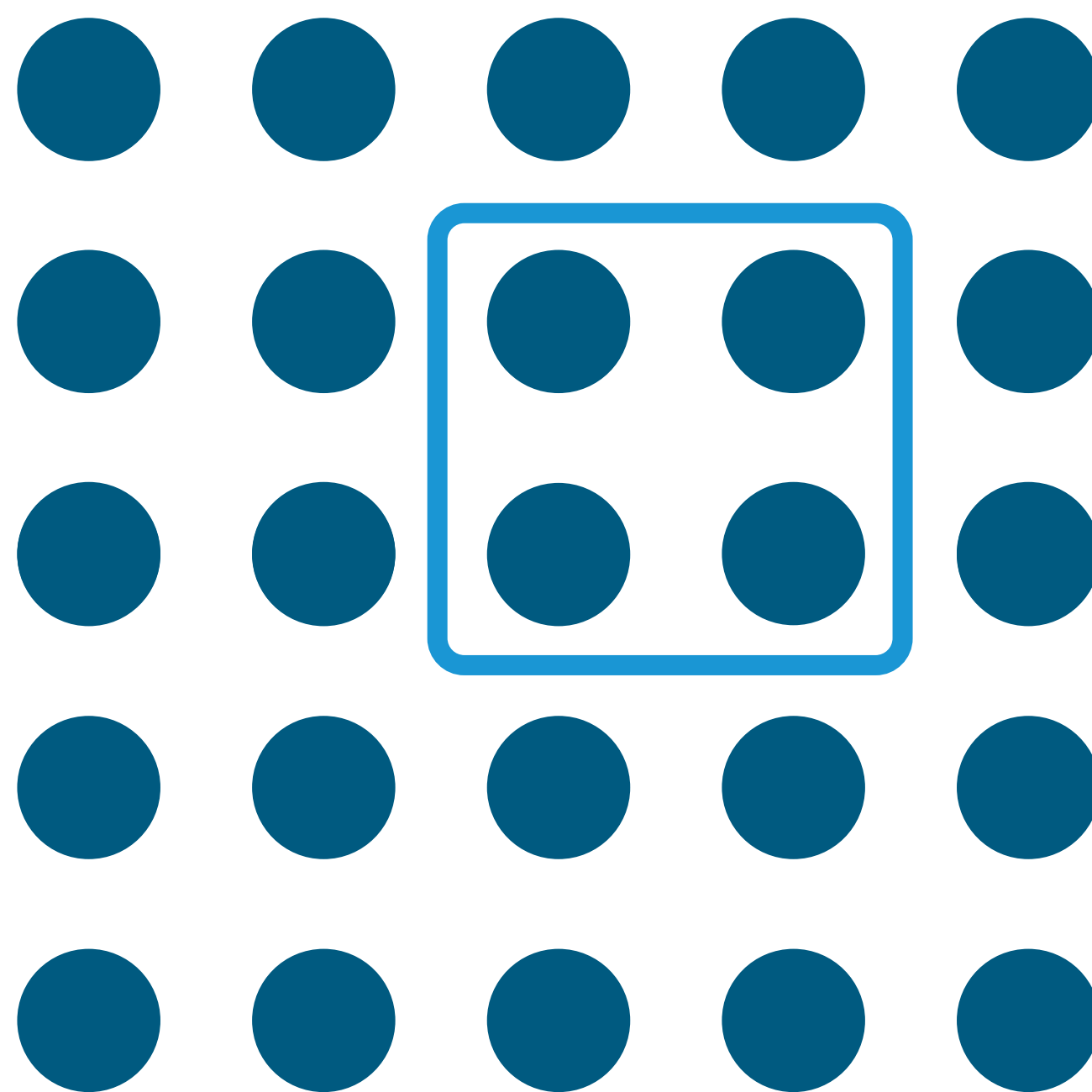
By separating the description from the numerical details, it's easier to focus on one task at a time. Read about the product, then purchase the product.

22. ENCAPSULATION

Is this the bondage principle? Perhaps. Or you can think about it as the elastic band that holds together a bundle of asparagus. Either way, Encapsulation provides instant separation – and isolation – of a group of elements from their surrounding compatriots. When used to group multiple elements, as in this diagram, the sense of protection is akin to a ring of villagers protecting the children from an angry horde of encroaching marauders.

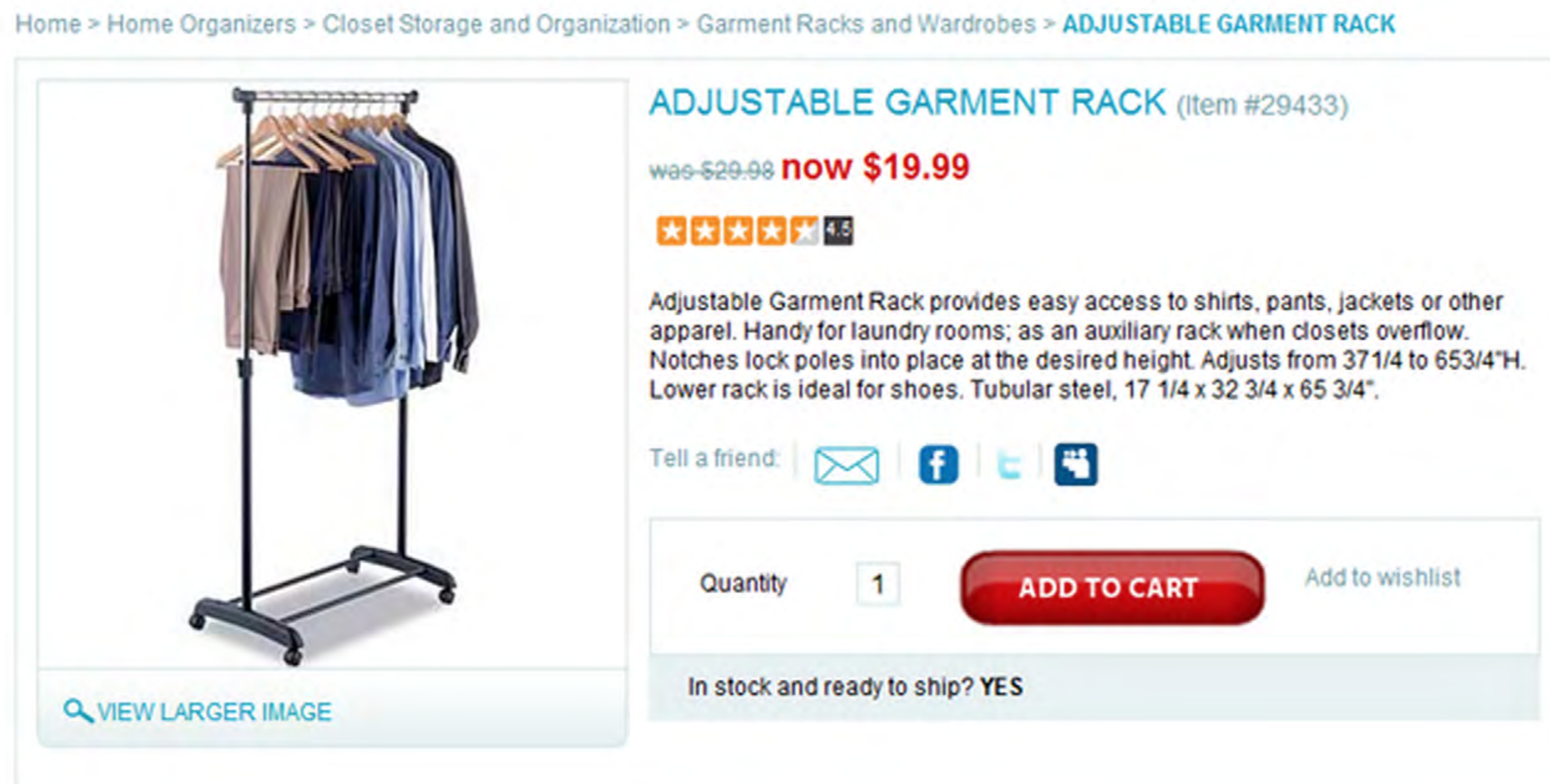
Yes I'm being very dramatic. But try staring at it for a few moments and maybe you'll see what I mean. #ImagineItPulsing

When it comes to landing page elements, Encapsulation creates an immediate sense of importance. You know that this area was wrapped up for a reason and you should heed its visual welcome to participate.

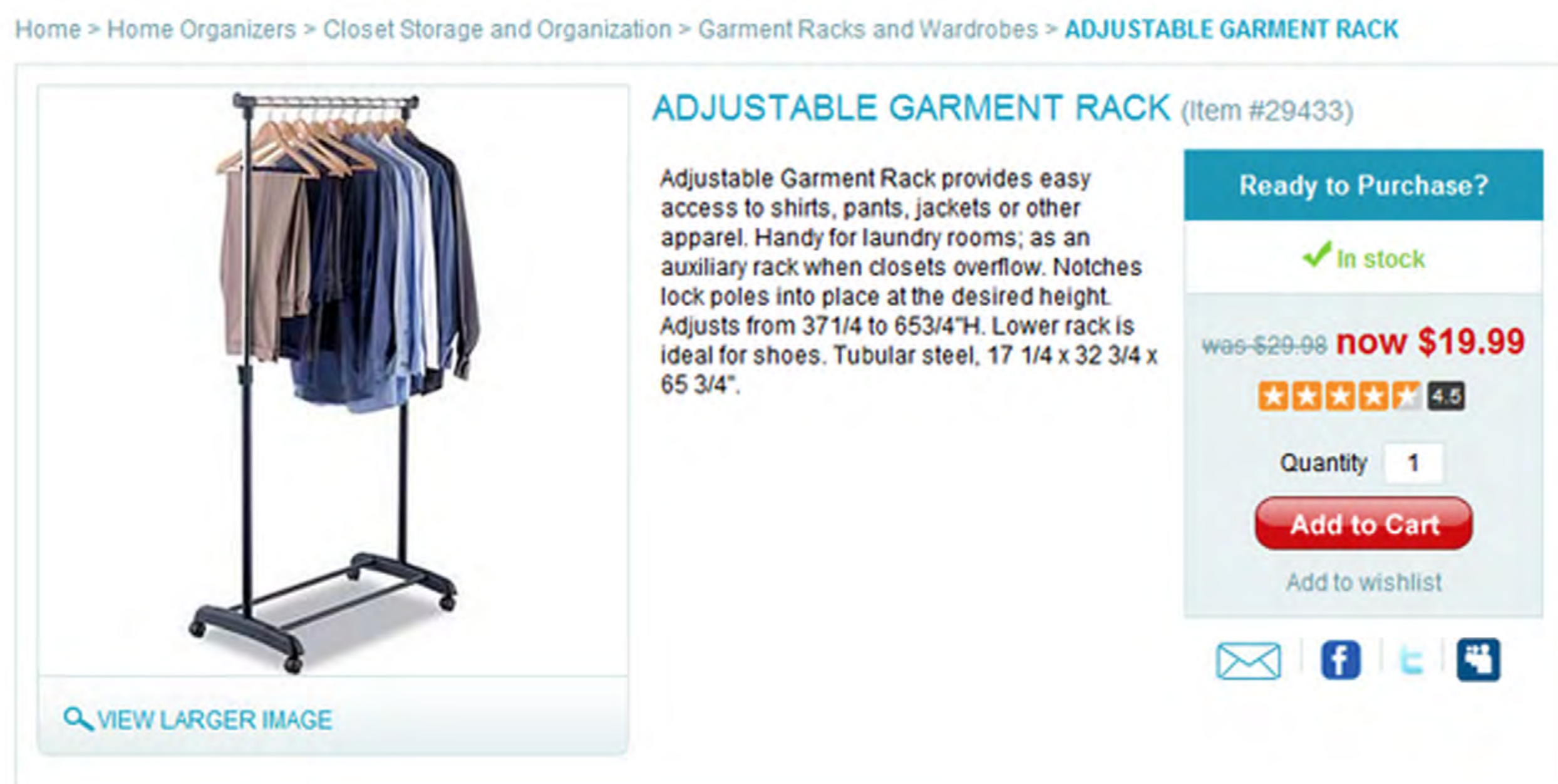


Let's go back to that ecommerce example from the previous page. It was part of an ecommerce **test** that took disparate information and grouped it together inside a bounding box:

(A)



(B)



This produced a nice visual separation between the product description and the finer details you need to know in order to act on your desire to purchase.

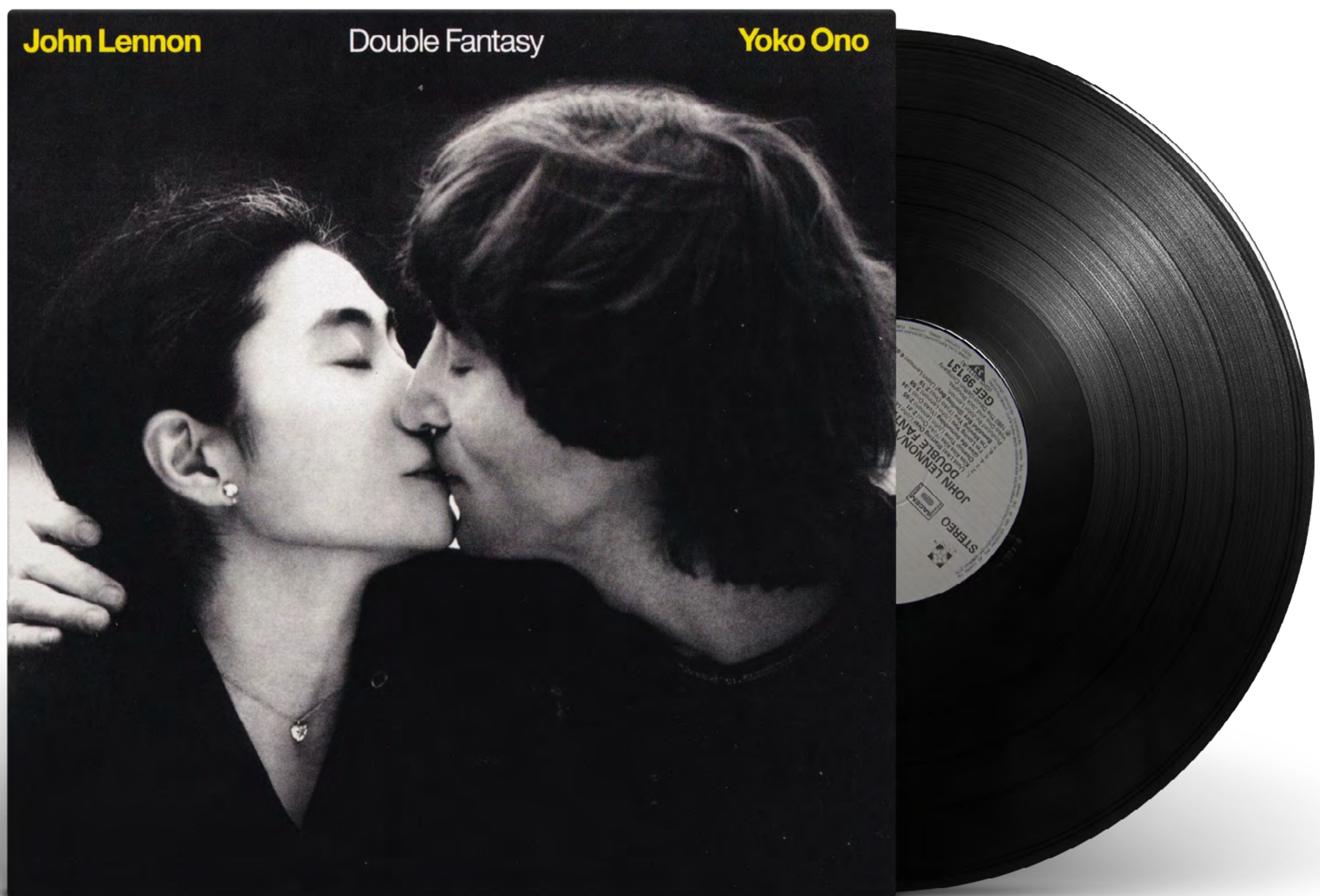
It demonstrates good use of three principles: **Encapsulation, Grouping, and Proximity**. First, Grouping is used to create an informational relationship established between the in stock status, price, rating, quantity and so forth. Then the call to action is brought in close Proximity to these elements to help inspire a purchase, and finally they are encapsulated in a box.

23. CONTACT

The final principle draws its power from its ability to not only generate attention, but to create a point – or a moment – of interest. If you look at the graphic below, you'll see that despite the presence of the other objects, your attention is drawn to the point of contact between the circle and rectangle.



There is significant power created at this point as it suggests an impact, and a joining of otherwise separate items. The cover of John and Yoko's album Double Fantasy illustrates this perfectly:



I think that's a really nice way to round out the 23 principles. With a reminder that it's important for us to use design to draw attention not only to the price of our products, and the ever-precious call to action, but also to moments that have the power to impact our visitor's emotional experience.

And by that I mean that you should have photos of people kissing your CTA.

READY TO DESIGN?

As we've seen from the case studies in the previous chapter, it's common to combine a series of Attention-Driven Design principles to create an experience that converts better.

Combinations are the key to implementing Attention-Driven Design. When you combine Proximity with Dominance and Contrast and Encapsulation (or any of an infinite number of combinations), you're on the road to success.

Visual design shouldn't be about making things look pretty, it should be about a ruthless and consistent obedience of fundamental design principles, that when used correctly allow you to design in a more thoughtful and considered manner.

Now go forth and be a principled and attention-driven designer.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

OLI GARDNER

Unbounce Co-Founder Oli Gardner has seen more landing pages than anyone on the planet, a passion that he draws from his healthy disdain for marketers who send campaign traffic to their homepage. A prolific webinar guest and writer, he speaks internationally about the four corners of conversion: the intersection of copy, design, interaction and psychology.

He created this new ebook on Attention-Driven Design to fill a content void about the role design plays in conversion.

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