

Beginners' Workshop

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> Design Makeover

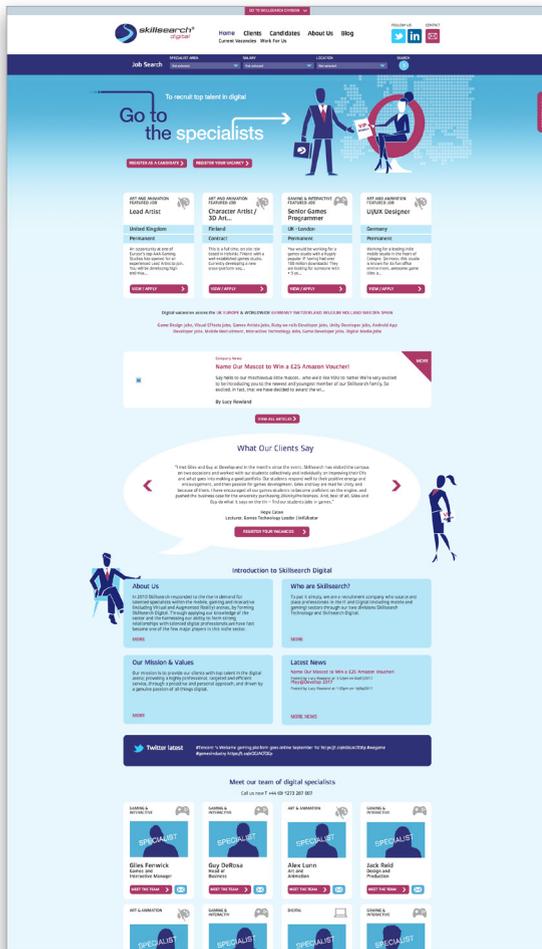
CLIENT
Skillsearch
skillsearch.com

image search

[before]



Original logo



Original website

▶ Skillsearch, based in Brighton, England, is a recruiter and job search site for high-tech employers and job seekers. Since its founding in 1990, the company has placed more than 7,500 candidates into permanent, fixed-term, and contract positions worldwide.

“We’ve always been a niche tech recruiter, mainly around HR and finance,” says Managing Director Richard Fisher. “We still do that, but over the past five years we’ve transformed into being a games recruiter as well.”

As the business became more game-oriented, Skillsearch’s website was beginning to show its age, even though it was only about four and a half years old. “We first developed it with a really strong idea of what we wanted to do,” says Fisher. “The theme was very much like 1960s movie-style graphics, like the intro to the movie *Catch Me If You Can*. It was like a secret agent being given a brief.”

To reflect its evolution, though, Skillsearch needed a site that would tell game developers at a glance that they were in the right place, “but still manages to tick a box for the existing technology business,” Fisher continues. “I was trying to find that balance, but as the game industry is much more social than the slightly stuffy tech space we otherwise work in, I wanted to make it slightly more in favor of the games industry.”

Finding someone to redesign the site was fairly easy. “Where we work, in Brighton, it’s a creative hub,” recalls Fisher. “A guy that does a lot of the code bits of the website gave us an introduction.”

The introduction was to Nick Carter, owner of Studio Gallant in Brighton. “I was introduced to the founder of Skillsearch, Stuart Gillespie, via a mutual contact at The Brighton Farm, a local networking event,” says Carter. “I have worked with their sister brand, G2Legal, since 2010, and now with Skillsearch for the past three years.”

makeover submissions

We’re looking for real-world makeovers for future installments of the “Design Makeover,” so let us know if you recently had a branding makeover or if you did a branding makeover for a client that you’d like us to consider. We cover everything from product packaging or labels, print advertisements, websites, logos, and magazine covers that are currently in the marketplace. So if you’d like to be considered, send us an email at letters@photoshopper.com.

CLIENT

Skillsearch
skillsearch.com

[the project]

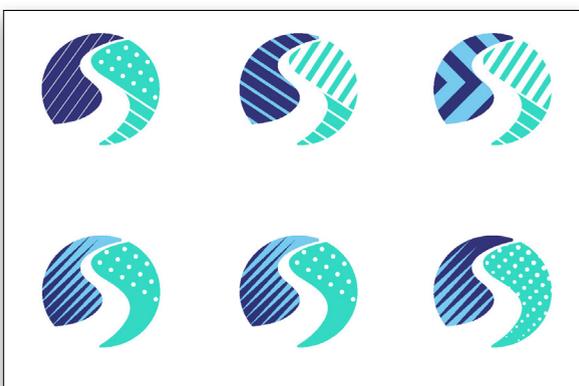
- ▶ For the new website design, Fisher wanted something that would set Skillsearch apart. “If you look at recruitment websites in the UK, they all look the same,” he says. “They all look lovely and slick, but the majority come from the same templates, and I wanted something that was uniquely us. I wanted something that felt maybe a little bit like a game, something that was reflective of our market but also pretty simple.”

Fisher also wanted site visitors to have a slightly different experience every time they land—again, something that would recall playing a game. And since Skillsearch now works with companies in the virtual and augmented reality fields too, he wanted the redesign to reflect that as well.

Skillsearch also told Carter about some issues with the site’s functionality. For one, the site offered three different points of entry—skillsearch.com, skillsearch.com/technology, and skillsearch.com/digital—which made for a confusing user journey. In addition, the job search tool was clunky.

Those were all general guidelines, though. Fisher didn’t bother to give Carter much in the way of specific directions. “My basic view is, if you’re the MD of a recruiting business, you’re good at recruitment,” Fisher says. “If you’re a creative technologist, you’re a creative, so there was no point in my giving Nick creative advice. I just gave him the headlines.”

To help focus the project, Carter held a series of workshop meetings with Skillsearch to discuss how they’d redefine the user journey of the website and what that would mean in practice. “We also discussed a new approach to the brand language and overall desired tone for the use of all marketing materials,” Carter recalls. Carter set out to “refresh the brand through evolution rather than revolution, incorporating all-new brand assets, tone of voice, and colorways,” he says.



Variations of the logo throughout the design process

about the client

For more than 25 years, **Skillsearch**’s mission has been to source top talent in niche sectors: technology, games, and interactive. They call their approach the “iceberg” methodology, because most of the work goes unseen. They appreciate that finding the right job can take months or more, and they engage with their candidates to make sure they know their exact needs around company type, location, and career ambitions.

Similarly, they ask to spend time with their clients, ideally face to face if practical, to get a full understanding of everything from company culture and staff roles to how workers get to their offices. All this background work means that when a client asks for a referral or when a job goes live, much of the sourcing is already taken care of. That lets Skillsearch provide candidates more accurately and usually quicker than other recruitment firms.

DESIGNER

Studio Gallant
studiogallant.com

[the process]



Pyxel, the brand mascot

▶ Among the new brand assets are a series of character avatars, seven in all, representing a cross-section of key Skillsearch employees as well as the gremlin-like brand mascot, Pyxel. In addition, Carter produced variations on each character wearing AR and VR headsets—Google Glass, Microsoft HoloLens, and Oculus Rift. The various models are in random circulation on the Skillsearch front page so that every time someone revisits the site, they're greeted by a different pair of avatars.

Carter produced the avatars by drawing them as vectors in Adobe Illustrator with a faux 3D effect. He then took the drawings into Photoshop to add texture and color grading and for final file composition.

Revision of the logo was also part of the branding development package (see previous page). "We set out to make the brand more relevant to its audience and stand out as an industry innovator," Carter says, "and the evolution of the logo marque was central to this." The old logo used two colors of blue to create an S shape that also suggested a curving road, paired with the company name in a dated "hi-tech" font. Carter experimented with different colors and patterns on either side of the S, and with versions that only suggested the letter, and with a few different sans-serif fonts. In the end he settled on a version that was more refreshed than transformed, and set the company name in a custom font.

The brand colors are an evolution of their existing palette, "with a brighter, more vibrant approach," says Carter. He also used a color system to help differentiate between the Enterprise jobs section and the Games & Interactive section. "Color-coding a system for the number of job categories and presenting it in a way that was intuitive and structured was by far the greatest hurdle during the web design process," he says.

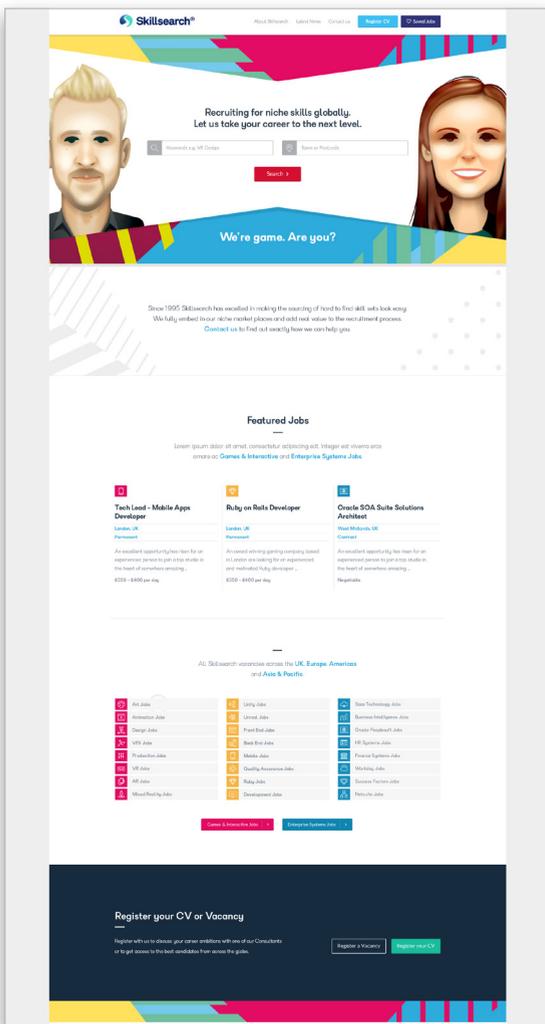


Final logo

DESIGNER

Studio Gallant
studiogallant.com

[the result]



Final website

► For the rollout of the site across different devices, Carter also produced a series of responsive templates. When asked what he thinks of the way the whole project came out, he’s cautiously positive. “I am always my worst critic,” he says. “I’m satisfied that we achieved what we set out to do, and Skillsearch certainly stands out in a very crowded industry.” But, he says, it hasn’t been that long since the revised site was launched, so he won’t know for a while how well the redesign has been received by its intended audience.

Fisher is less guarded. “The internal reaction’s been really good,” he says. “The feedback externally has been really good too.” The site’s performance echoes that: “The core thing for me is that we’ve seen maybe an eightfold increase in the number of candidates looking at the site and registering for opportunities,” he says. “There’s been a massive increase in people applying through the site compared to where we were before.”

All in all, Fisher concludes, “I could not be happier with it.

about the designer

Nick Carter is the owner of **Studio Gallant**, a creative communications agency based in Brighton, England. He has more than 18 years in the creative industry and has worked with leading brands internationally. He also calls on a network of talented designers and developers as needed to make sure a project gets completed efficiently and with reliability.

Studio Gallant is devoted to helping its clients stand out from the crowd. They also promise a clear and transparent service that lets clients know what to expect every step of the way. Realizing that client relationships should be long-lasting and meaningful, they focus on the things that clients value the most, including the little touches they didn’t even know they needed. Their website reads, “From an exquisite site which lets the design do the talking, to mind-boggling complex arrangements with bells and whistles, crafted to impress, we create with one thing in mind: You.” ■