

Blogs Redesign: UX Discovery Report

December 2022
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Web UX

splunk® > turn data into doing®



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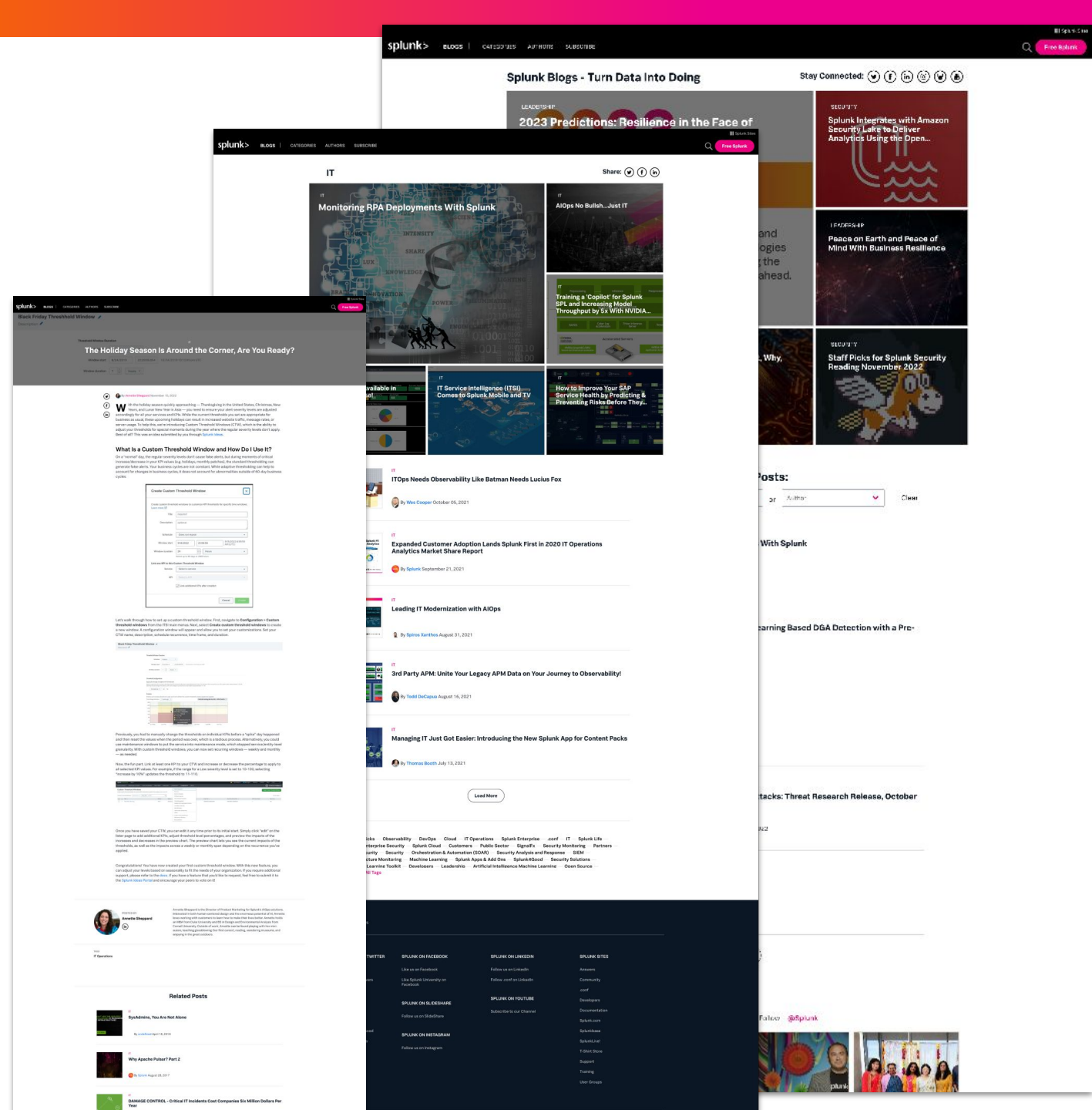
Current state heuristic

Current state heuristic: overall blogs experience

Web UX analyzed our current blogs to understand how they currently work and any opportunities to improve

We focused on many aspects of the blogs experience, to name a few:

- Navigation throughout the blogs experience
- Information architecture
- Blogs categorization and tagging
- Overall page design, look and feel



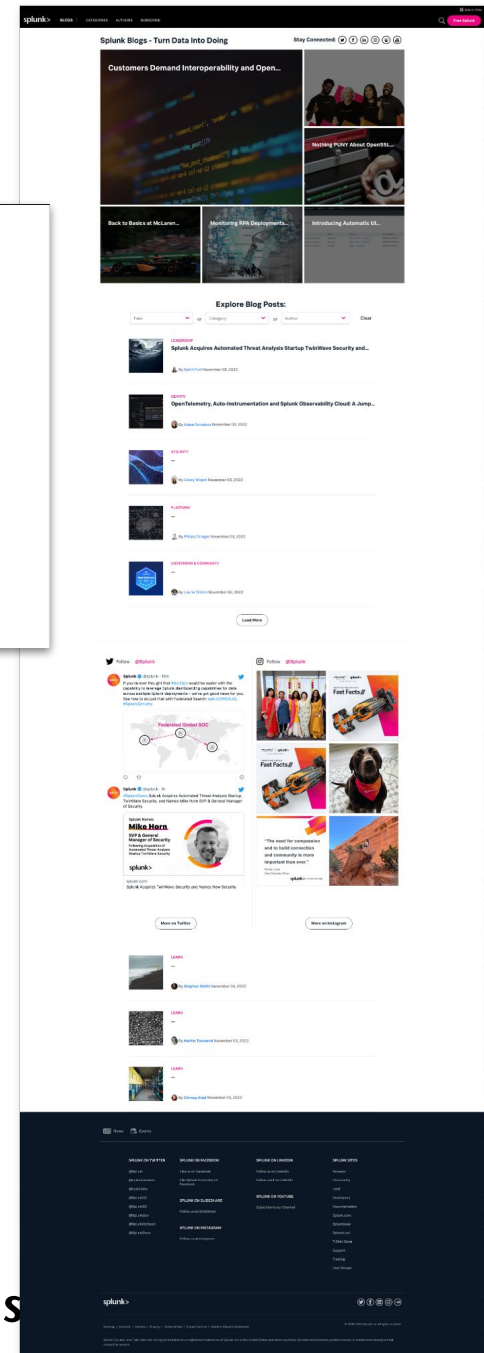
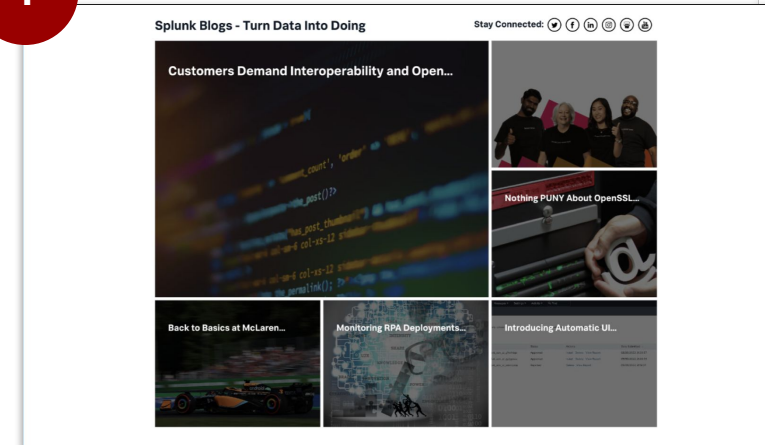
Homepage

https://www.splunk.com/en_us/blog

1. Header

- Headline is small and easy to miss. It's current copy ("Splunk Blogs - Turn Data Into Doing") is outdated and doesn't communicate value of the blogs very well.
- Cards are buggy, some don't show blog headline, others are truncated
- Has a feature section which seems to be reserved for the most relevant blog posts
- Displays 6 featured blog posts, with one large one being the spotlight post

1



Homepage - filters

https://www.splunk.com/en_us/blog

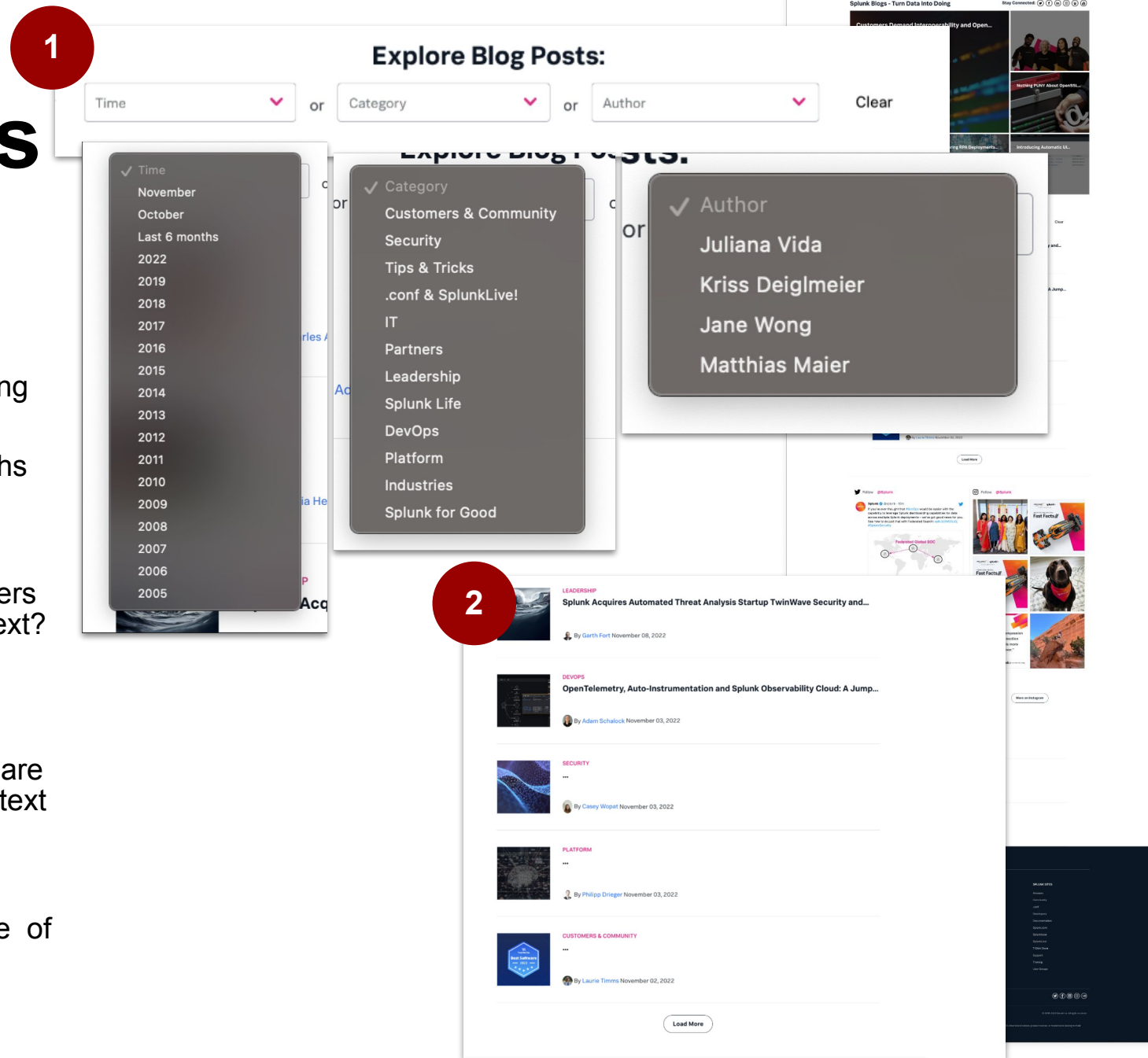
1. Filter*

- Top filters: time, category, author. Do these really align with how users would be searching through blogs?
- Time filter is missing certain years and months
- Category: we can align w/ new resources or Data Insider taxonomy
- Authors filter does not list all authors - do users really search for blogs by author in this context?

2. Filter Results

- Many blog titles not shown, just “...”
- Images not always very communicative and are quite small, especially for those that include text or dashboards
- Inconsistent styling of author headshots
- Splunk socials randomly placed in the middle of filter

*See Notes for recommendations



Homepage

https://www.splunk.com/en_us/blog

1. Social Share

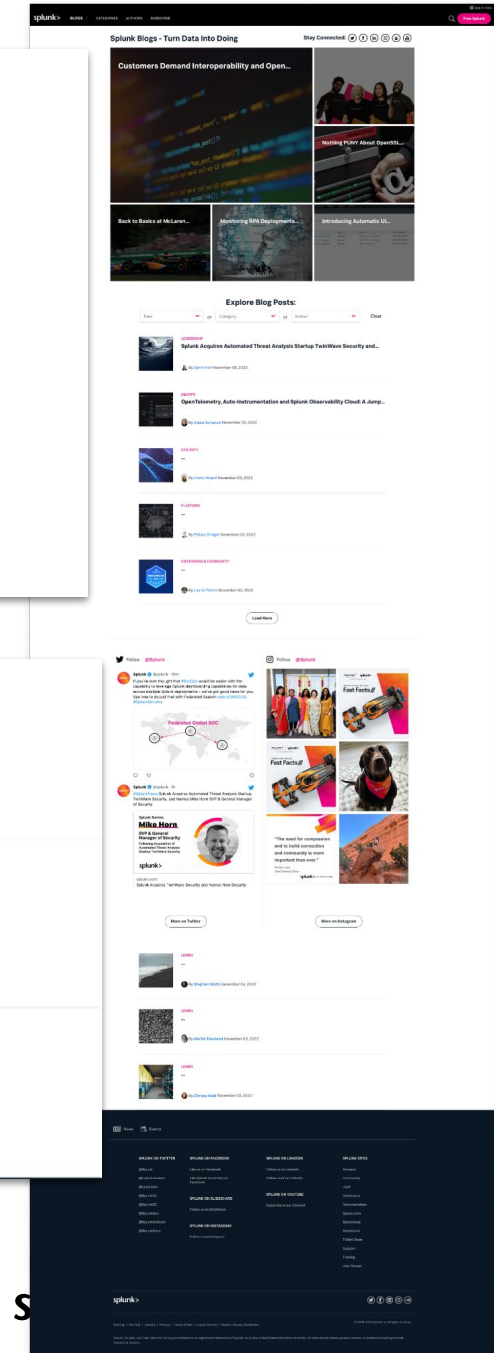
- Users are able to see most recent twitter and instagram post
- Links to our Twitter and Instagram accounts

2. Additional Blogs

- Many blog titles not shown, just “...”
- Images not always very communicative and are quite small, especially for those that include text or dashboards
- Feels out of place, why are we putting articles here?

1

4



Category Page

1. Header

- **Title**
 - Not aligned with featured cards
 - Small and can be easily missed
 - Seems like there is more spacing between the title and nav on the category homepage than the main home page
 - Social media call outs
- **Featured Cards**
 - Creates hierarchy using size of card
 - Cards contain Category(eyebrow) and Title of blog post

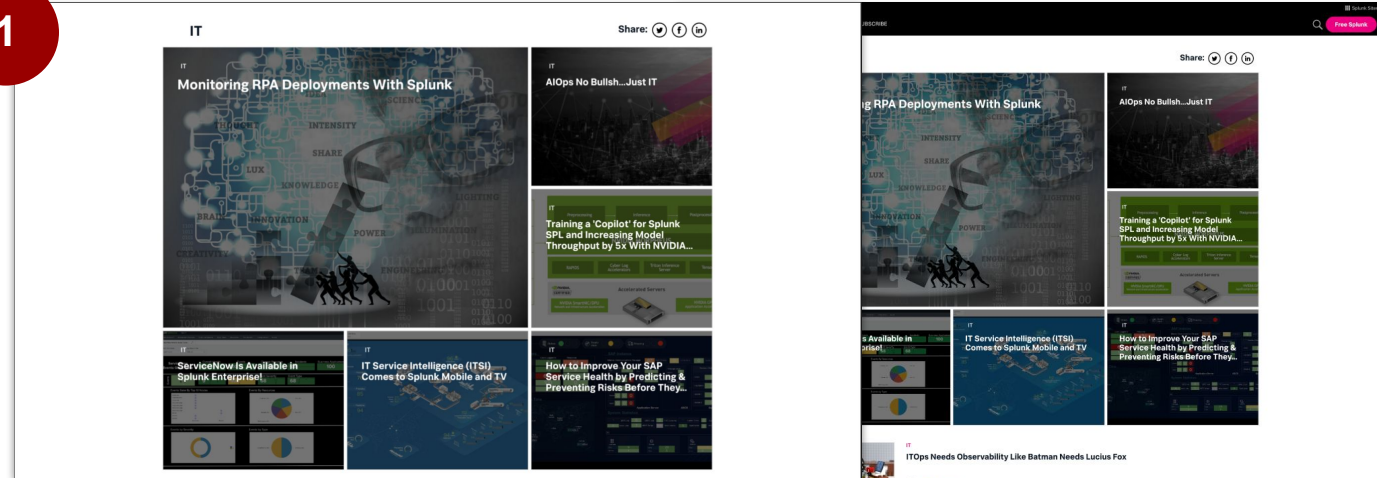
2. Blogs consist of:

- Link to category homepage
- Picture of Author (not always present)
- Author name
- Date
- Blogs appear to be order by most recent

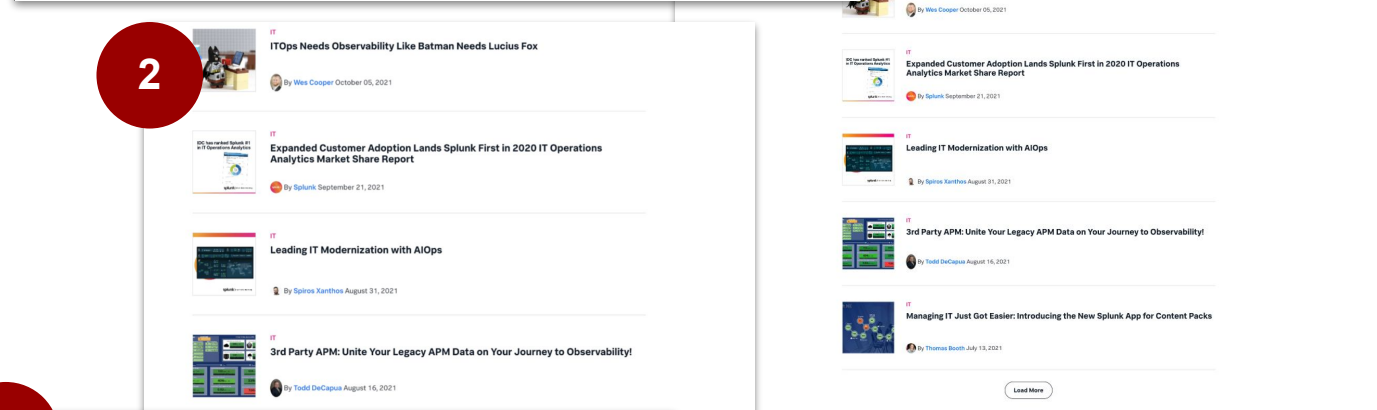
3. Tags

- There are a lot of tags
- Ability to expose more tags
- Tags get cut off

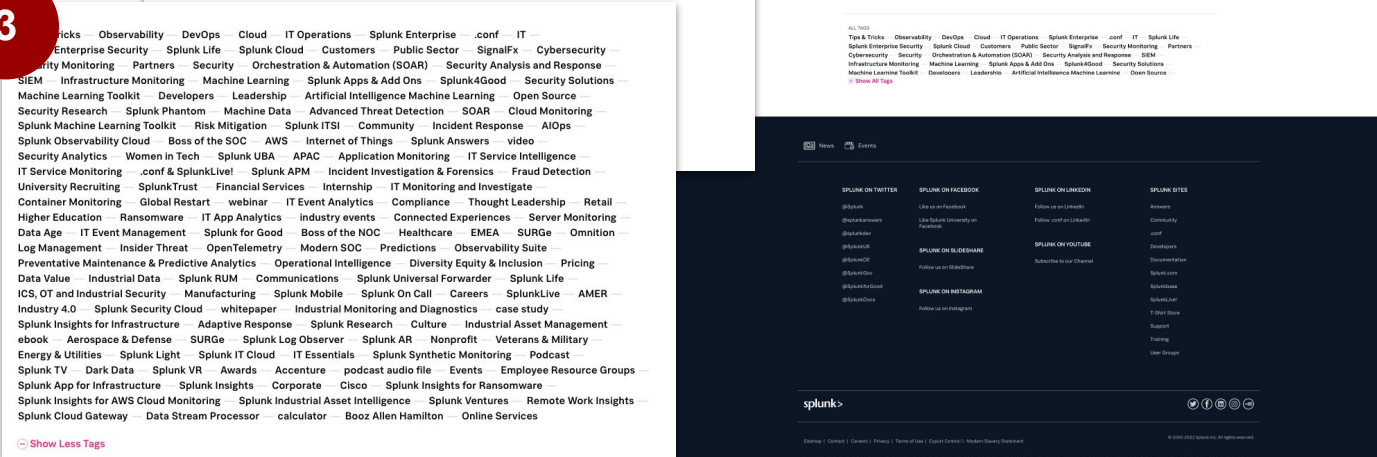
1



2



3



Blog Post

1. Header

- Title
 - Eyebrow text is extremely small and can be easily missed

2. Body

- Author title, image, and date
- Social media icons (same as the one found on category homepage and blog main home page)

3. Author Section

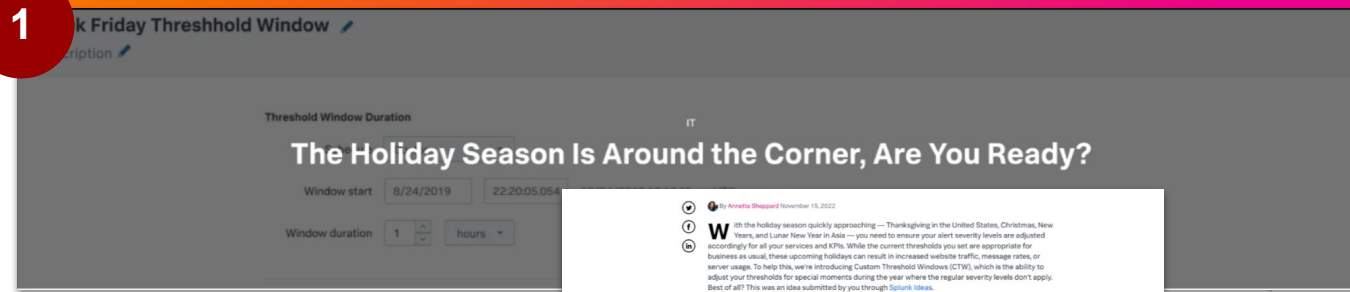
- Contains a bigger image of author
- Name and Social media
- Description about the author

4. Tags

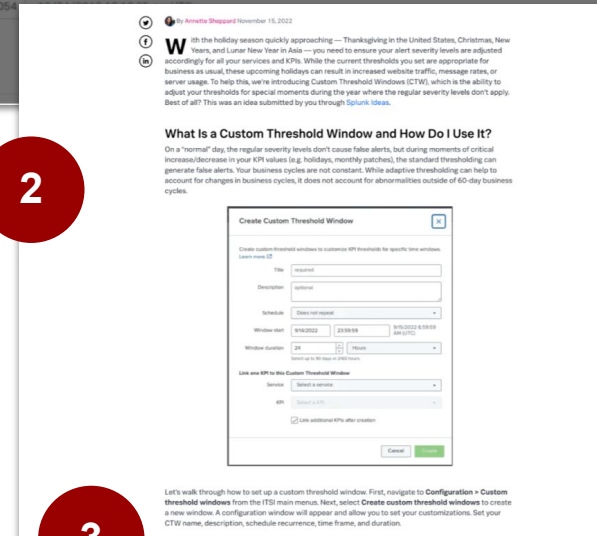
5. Related Post

- Number of related blogs is more than related blog main blog home page
- Some author images aren't showing
- Ordered from most recent to oldest

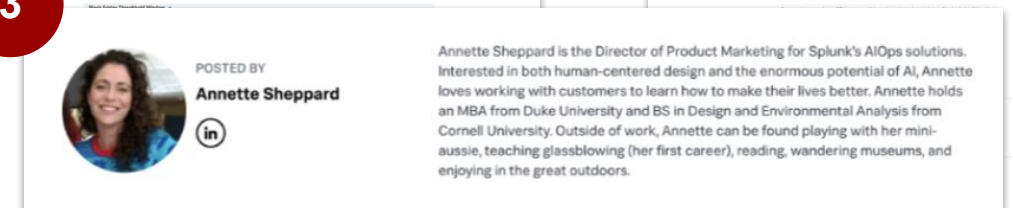
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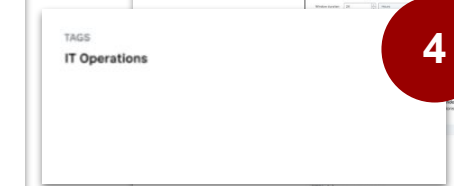
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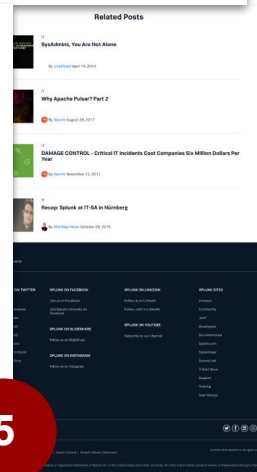
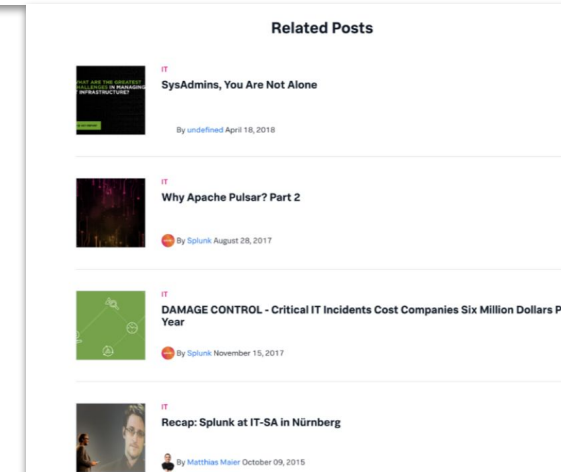
3



4



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Navigation

1. Footer

- Different from Splunk.com footer
- Link to newsroom and events page
- Social media for Splunk pages
- Links to other splunk sites

2. Navigation Bar

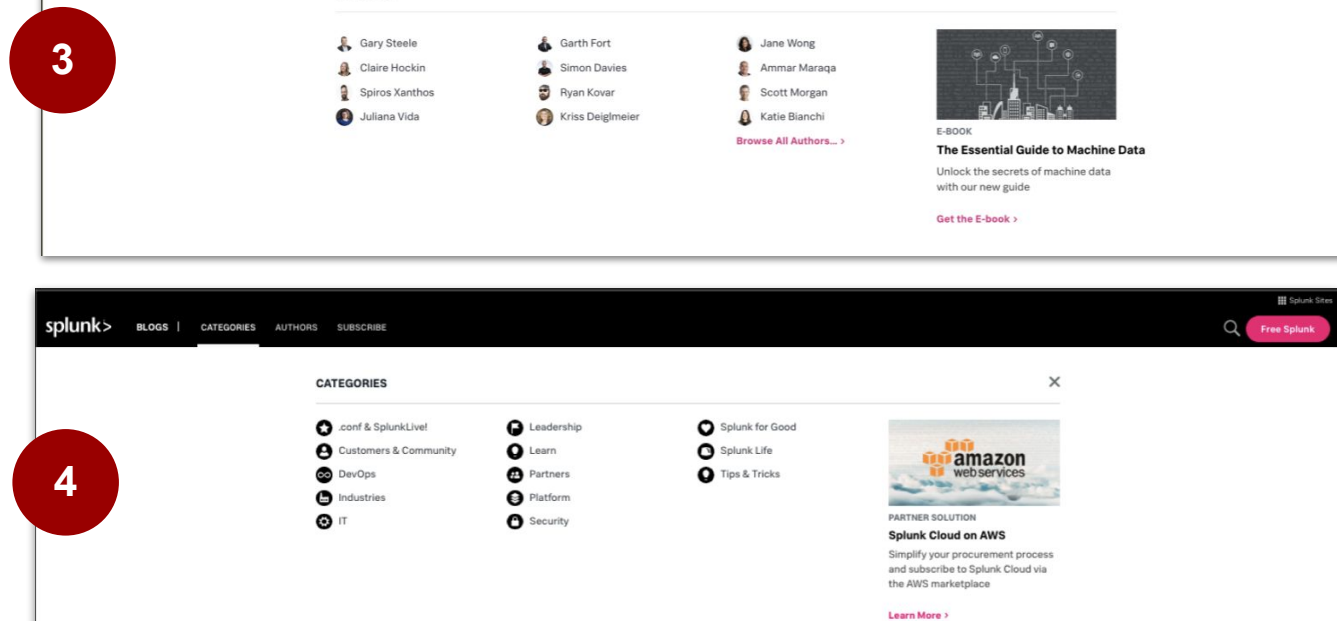
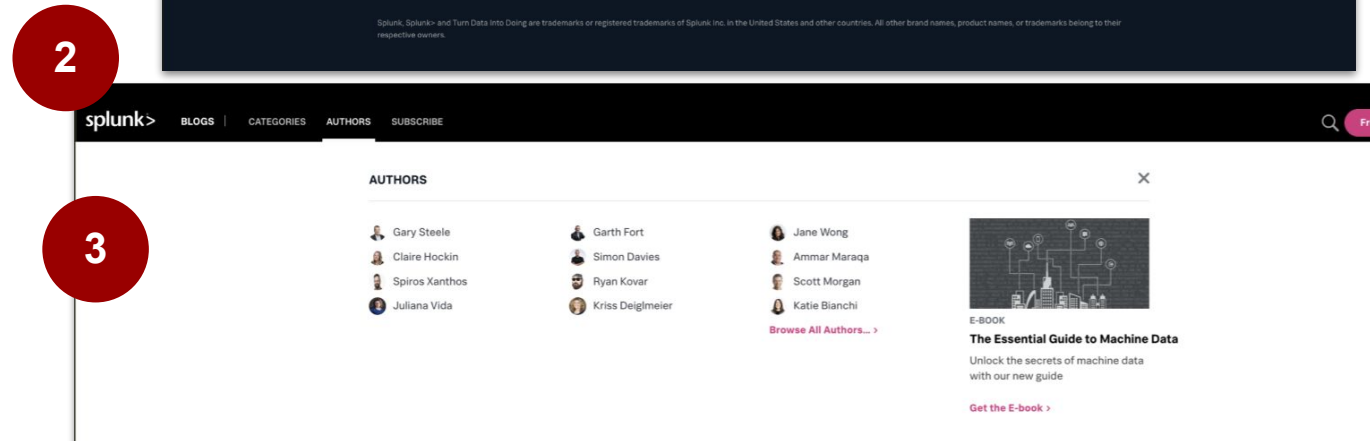
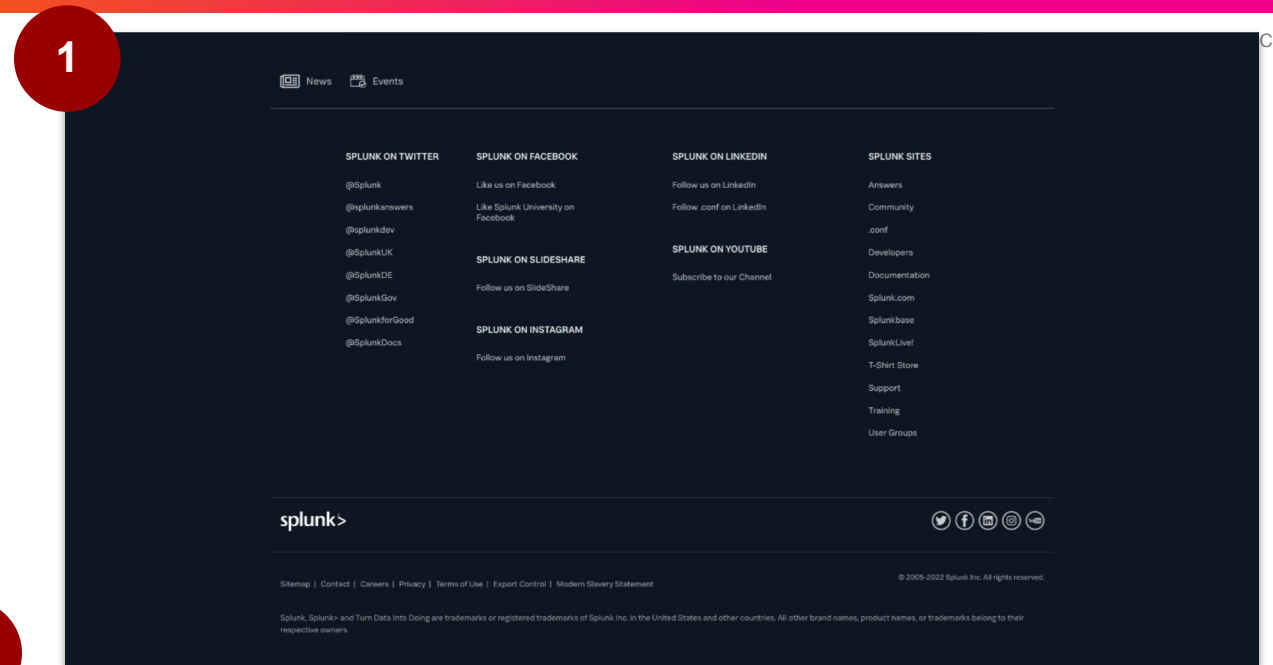
- Blogs nav design doesn't match splunk.com nav design
- Categories, authors are flyout menus, have to click on them to open. Subscribe is a link to a form page

3. Author Flyout

- List out some authors
- How are the authors in the flyouts chosen? C-suite?
- Contains a gated asset
- Link to all authors

4. Category Flyout

- Items are the same as the filter except "Learn"



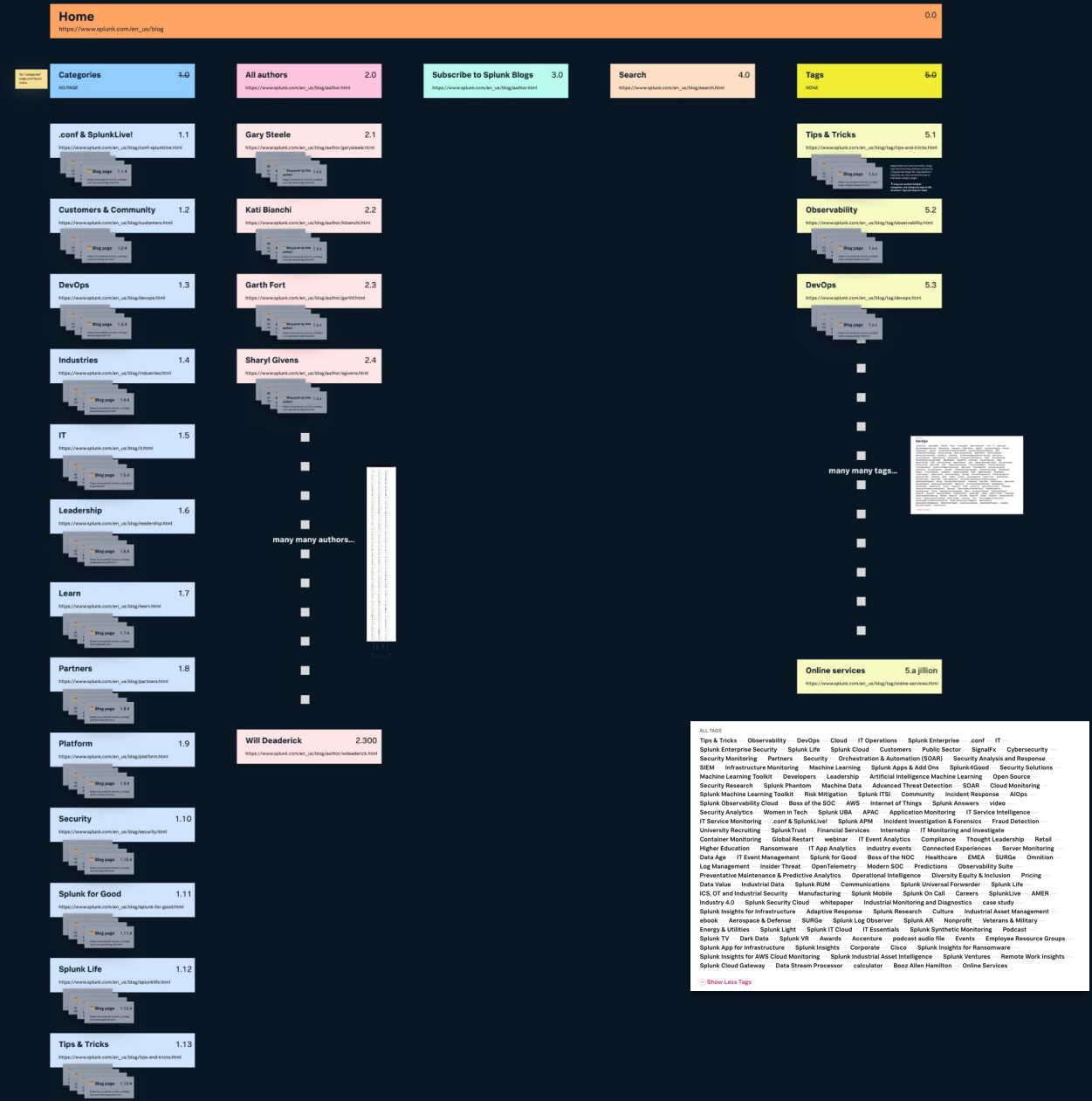
Current state sitemap

[Figma »](#)

There are 2 ways of organizing and collecting blog posts: categories, that map to URL structure and are accessible via top nav, and tags, which map to topics can are accessible at the bottom of blog posts, bottom of individual category pages, bottom of search page results, and bottom of individual author pages

To prevent more future maintenance and duplicate pages, we'd recommend exploring consolidating tags and categories into one single tagging system.

Sitemap (based off URL structure)



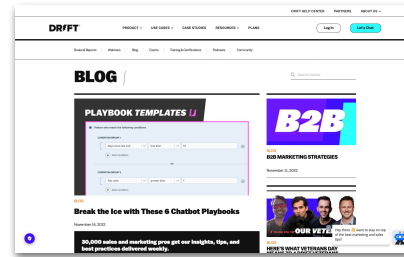
Competitive Heuristic

Competitive heuristic: overall blogs experience

Web UX analyzed several competitor blogs experiences and identified opportunities that we could potentially incorporate into the redesigned Splunk blogs experience.

We focused on many aspects of the blogs experience, to name a few:

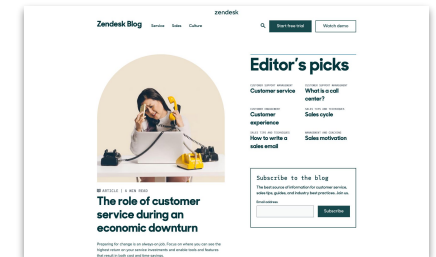
- Navigation throughout the blogs experience
- Information architecture
- Blogs categorization and tagging
- Overall page design, look and feel, and interactions



Drift



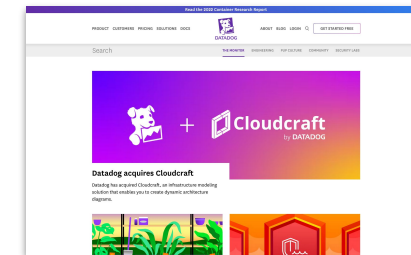
Dynatrace



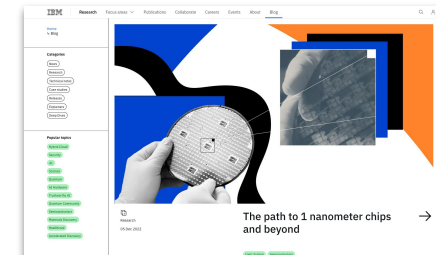
Zendesk



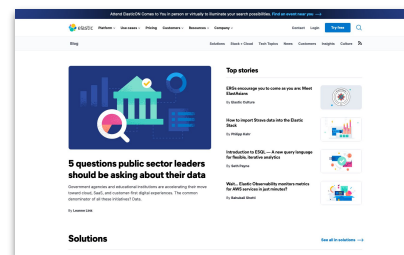
ContentKing
Academy



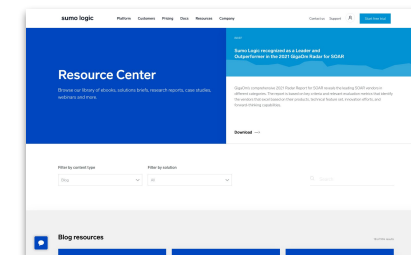
Datadog



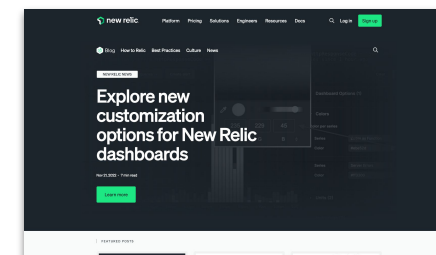
IBM Research



Elastic



Sumo Logic



New Relic

Summary and Recommendations*

For Splunk's blog

**These recommendations are moreso to frame further research and exploration. They can be morphed into hypotheses to be tested/validated in qualitative user testing.*

- Consolidate tagging and categories into one single tagging system. Audit existing categories and tags, identify which we want to keep, which we want to remove, and which are considered priority tags. Match tag taxonomy to splunk.com taxonomy as much as possible. Work with UX to create a hierarchy of tags (no more than 2 levels), and explore a mixture of filters, tag pages, and a blogs-specific IA to communicate this hierarchy and tagging system.
 - Who we thought did this best: [Zendesk](#), [New Relic](#)
- The homepage should be a dynamic, interactive, engaging, and fun editorial experience that speaks to our brand personality. It should showcase featured blogs and give an overview of our tagging system, communicating what topics are available.
 - Who we thought did this best: [Zendesk](#), [Elastic](#), [BMC](#), [IBM Research](#)
- Tag pages (or category pages) should be accessible via the blogs-specific navigation, clicking on one of its respective tags, or via any other in-page link on a relevant splunk.com page. These pages should have a short header (title and subhead), showcase a few featured blog posts, then present the full collection of blog posts for that tag.
 - Who we thought did this best: [Zendesk](#), [BMC](#), [Elastic](#)
- Not every tag page needs to be in the blogs-specific navigation. Design this navigation after fleshing out the tagging system/hierarchy.
- Blog posts should use a mixture of ways to break up the body content to make it more dynamic and easier to digest, preventing them from being a wall of text. Options include pull quotes, outlined or colored boxes, promo bands, images, etc.
 - Who we thought did this best: [ContentKing](#)
- Blog posts should utilize the left and right rails to provide a contextual experience that can present in-page anchor links, a guide to other hyper-related blog post, a gated promotion, or additional contextual information. **UX to further explore this area**
 - Who we thought did this best: [Zendesk](#), [BMC](#), [Datadog](#), [Dynatrace](#), [IBM Research](#)
- Allow link-sharing for each headline within a blog post's body, so users can easily share a section of a blog post. **UX to explore relationship between this potential sharing scheme and tweet this functionality**
 - Who we thought did this best: [ContentKing](#)
- Author pages should include a photo, short bio, relevant socials (LinkedIn, especially), and present blog posts written by that author. The short bio should also be included at the bottom of blog pages.
 - Who we thought did this best: [IBM Research](#)

Competitive heuristic: overall blogs experience

BMC

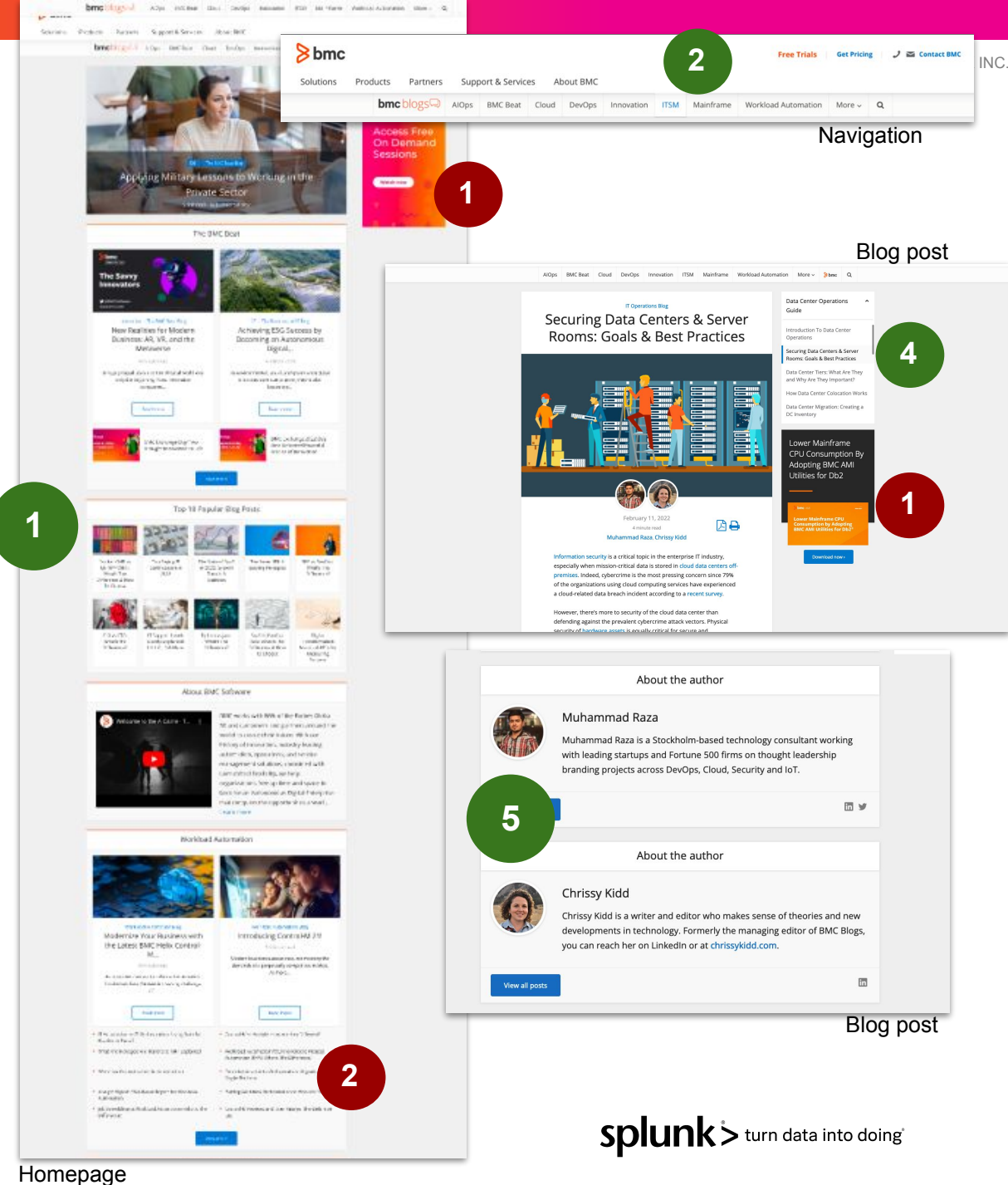
<https://www.bmc.com/blogs/>

Opportunities

1. Homepage presents a number of ways to browse blogs: by popularity, by category, editor's picks, and educational guides
2. Simple, one-dimensional blogs-specific sub-navigation that houses all categories. Uses a blogs-specific logo to add some brand personality
3. Simple [category pages](#) with a spotlight post, popular content section, and recent posts section
4. Many [blog posts](#) use the right rail to house a collapsible, sticky guide that links to hyper-related blog posts, adding a 2nd level of hierarchy specific to a small collection of posts (see Zendesk as well)
5. Blog posts can have multiple authors, reflected at the top of the post and in the "about the author(s)" section

Things to avoid

1. Promotions in side rails look like 3rd party ads rather than in-house promotions
2. Some blogs are presented in bullet lists under other blogs posts cards, making them easy to miss and not look like links to other blog posts



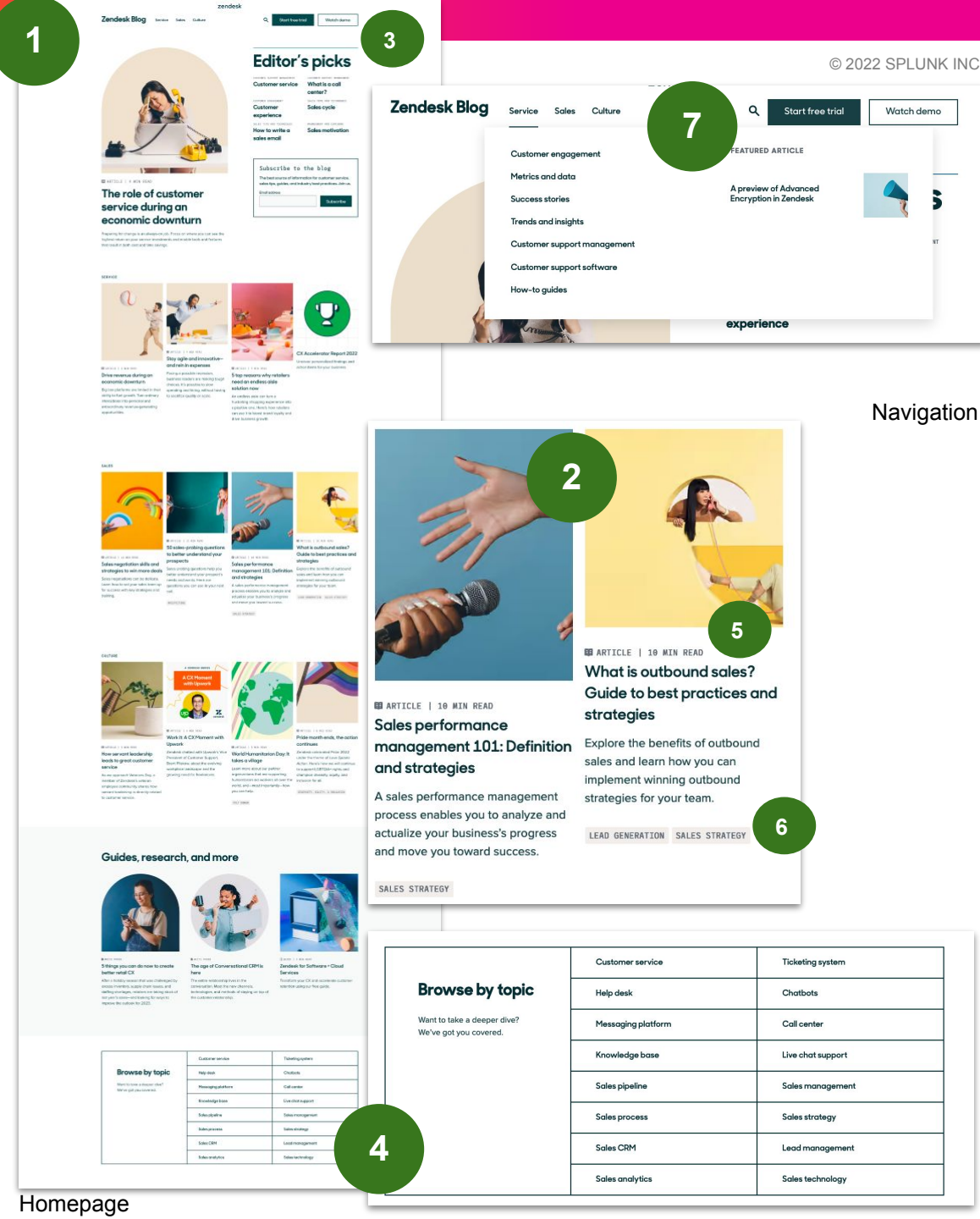
Competitive heuristic: overall blogs experience

Zendesk (homepage and IA)

<https://www.zendesk.com/blog/>

Opportunities

1. Dynamic blogs homepage that shows featured posts of their primary 3 categories
2. Vibrant, fun, playful photography that shows brand personality
3. "Editor's picks" section on the homepage makes for an editorial-like experience
4. "Browse by topic" section on the homepage that links to highly informational blog posts (data-insider-like posts)
5. Includes how long it takes to read a post in post information
6. Effective cross-tagging, allowing blog posts to be discoverable from multiple places and shows specifically what topics one blog posts is related to
7. Effective 2-level hierarchy of tags. Use of blog navigation flyout menus and breadcrumbs do an effective job of communicating tag hierarchy
 - Clicking on one of the blog nav options (service, sales, or culture) leads to a [level 1 tag page](#).
 - Clicking on one of the sub-options in a flyout menu leads to a [level 2 tag page](#). Same design as a level 1 page.



Homepage

Competitive heuristic: overall blogs experience

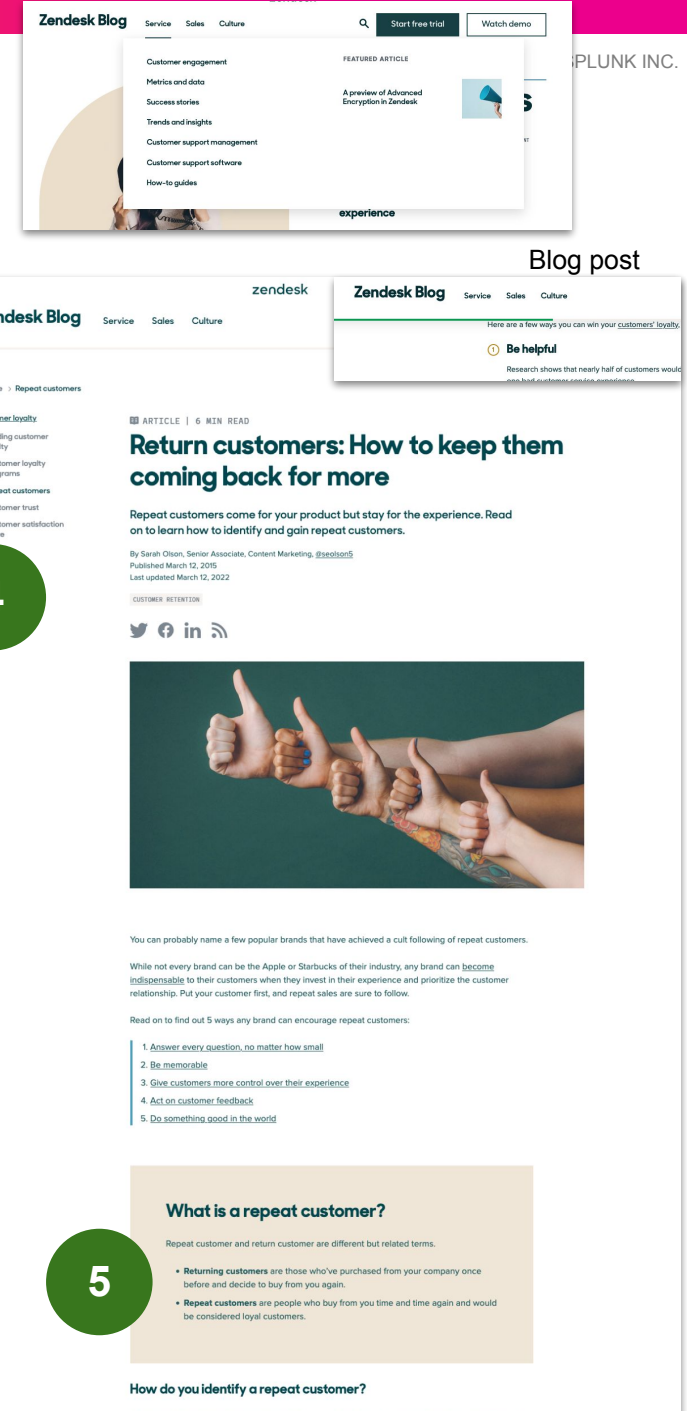
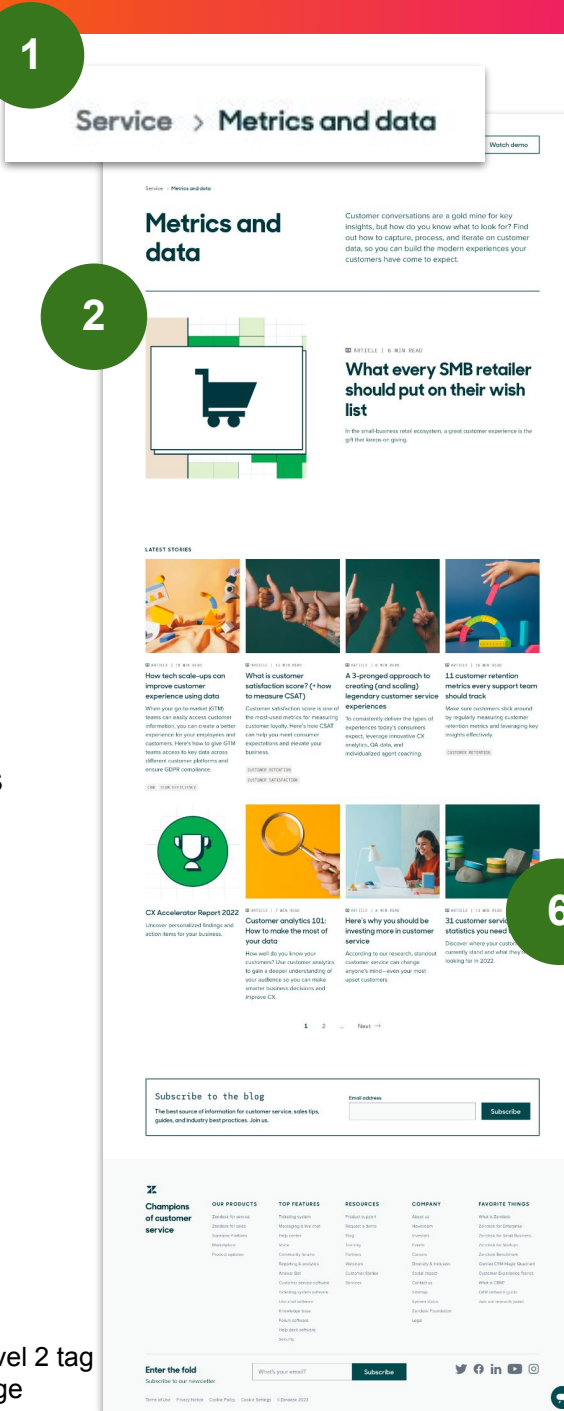
Zendesk (tag and blog post pages)

<https://www.zendesk.com/blog/>

Opportunities

1. Level 2 tag pages have breadcrumbs at the top to communicate hierarchy and provide orientation
2. Tag pages have a clean and easy design: short and descriptive header, one spotlight post, then straight into the full collection of posts for that tag
3. Not every single tag is in the blogs navigation. Some tag pages are only accessible from clicking on tags on blog posts
4. Blog posts have a guide in the left rail that links to hyper-related blog posts. This effectively adds a 3rd level of hierarchy specific to a small collection of posts. This is could be improved by becoming sticky
5. Some blog posts have an SEO-focused section that answers top of mind user questions
6. Blog posts have a horizontal line that fills up as you scroll through the blog posts, indicating how much is left to read

Level 2 tag page



Competitive heuristic: overall blogs experience

ContentKing Academy

<https://www.contentkingapp.com/academy/>

Opportunities

1. Homepage color coats primary categories for easy differentiation
2. Breadcrumbs at the top of blog posts provide orientation and communicates topic hierarchy
3. Tags on blog posts are large and different colors to differentiate topics
4. There are section-specific table of contents with anchor links that link to sub-sections, as well as the overall page table of contents
5. Blog posts use a mixture of different promotions and boxes to break up the blog content, making the page more dynamic and easier to read through
6. Every headline in a blog post has a link share option
7. Blog posts have a sticky free trial registration with interactive social proof (logos change on hover, reviews navigate you to more testimonials) in the right rail

Things to avoid

1. No imagery on the homepage or category pages, however, they seem to have an extensive and well-branded icon library to differentiate blog posts and topics

The collage consists of several overlapping screenshots from the ContentKing Academy website. The main screenshot is the blog post 'How to Remove URLs from Google Search in a Snap!'. Other screenshots include a sidebar with 'Useful resources', a 'Frequently Asked Questions' section, and a 'Why is log file analysis important in SEO?' section. The annotations are as follows:

- 2**: Points to the breadcrumb trail: Home > Academy > Technical SEO > Remove URLs from Google.
- 3**: Points to the large, colorful tags 'Technical SEO' and 'SEO Fundamentals'.
- 4**: Points to the table of contents for the article.
- 5**: Points to a 'Quick note on terminology' box.
- 6**: Points to a section titled 'How to remove URLs with duplicate or outdated content'.
- 7**: Points to a sticky sidebar on the right containing a free trial offer, social proof (logos for Netflix, Amazon, Adidas, etc.), and a 'FANTASTIC REVIEWS' section.

All screenshots from a blog post

Elastic

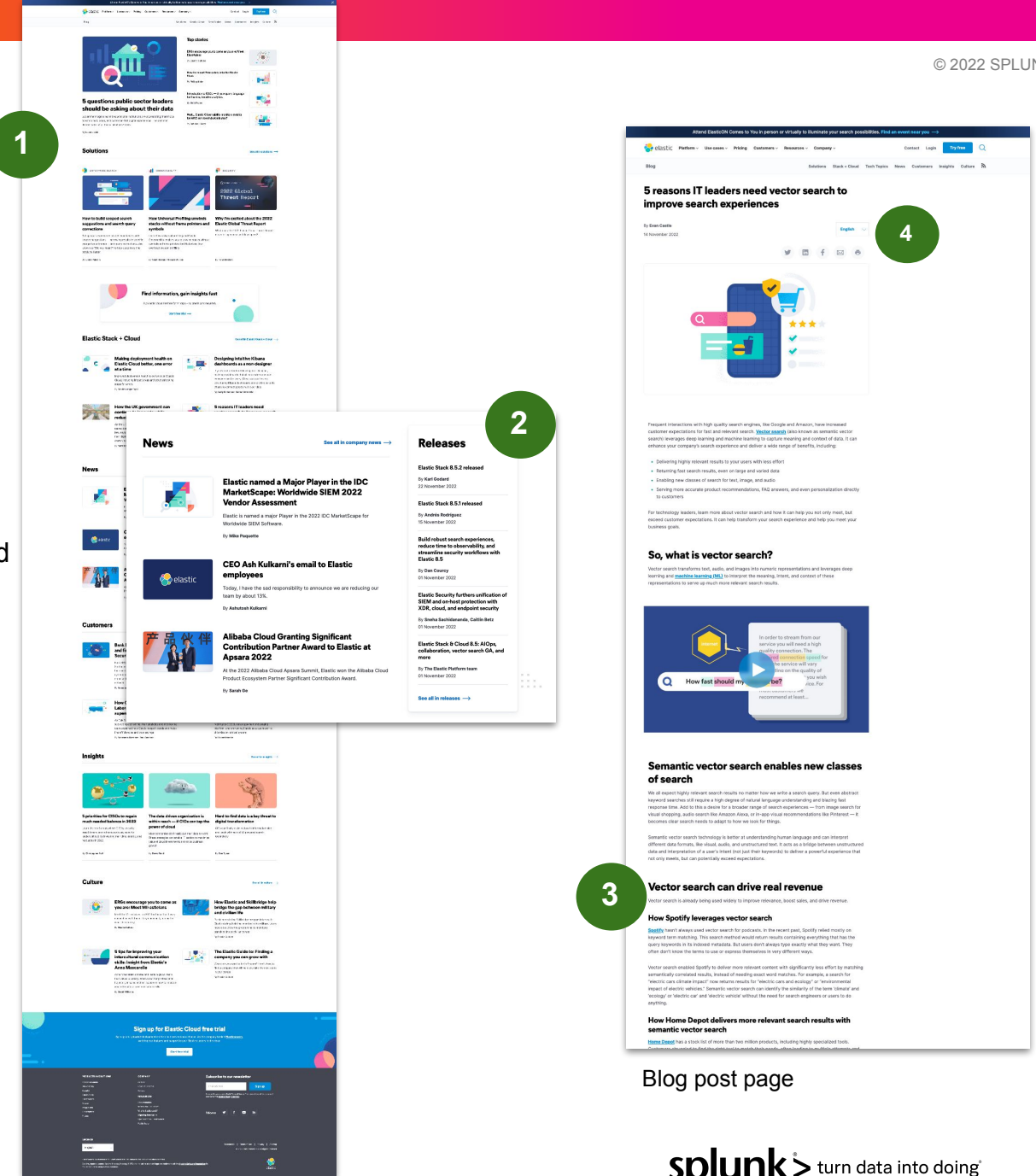
<https://www.elastic.co/blog/>

Opportunities

1. Clean, organized, editorial-like homepage that first presents top overall blog posts, then provides an overview of each top category with a few featured blog posts for each
2. Though it's not a defined category in the sub-navigation, there's a defined space for releases on the homepage, presented in an attention-grabbing column adjacent to the news section
3. Clear hierarchy with **blog post** typography
4. Dropdown menu in blog post header that allows users to select a language, accompanied by share and print options

Things to avoid

1. The **category pages** in the blogs-specific sub-navigation are the only mechanism of refinement or organization of content — no present tagging or filtering scheme
2. **Author pages** don't include a short biography, potentially harming the author's credibility



Homepage

Blog post page

Competitive heuristic: overall blogs experience

IBM Research

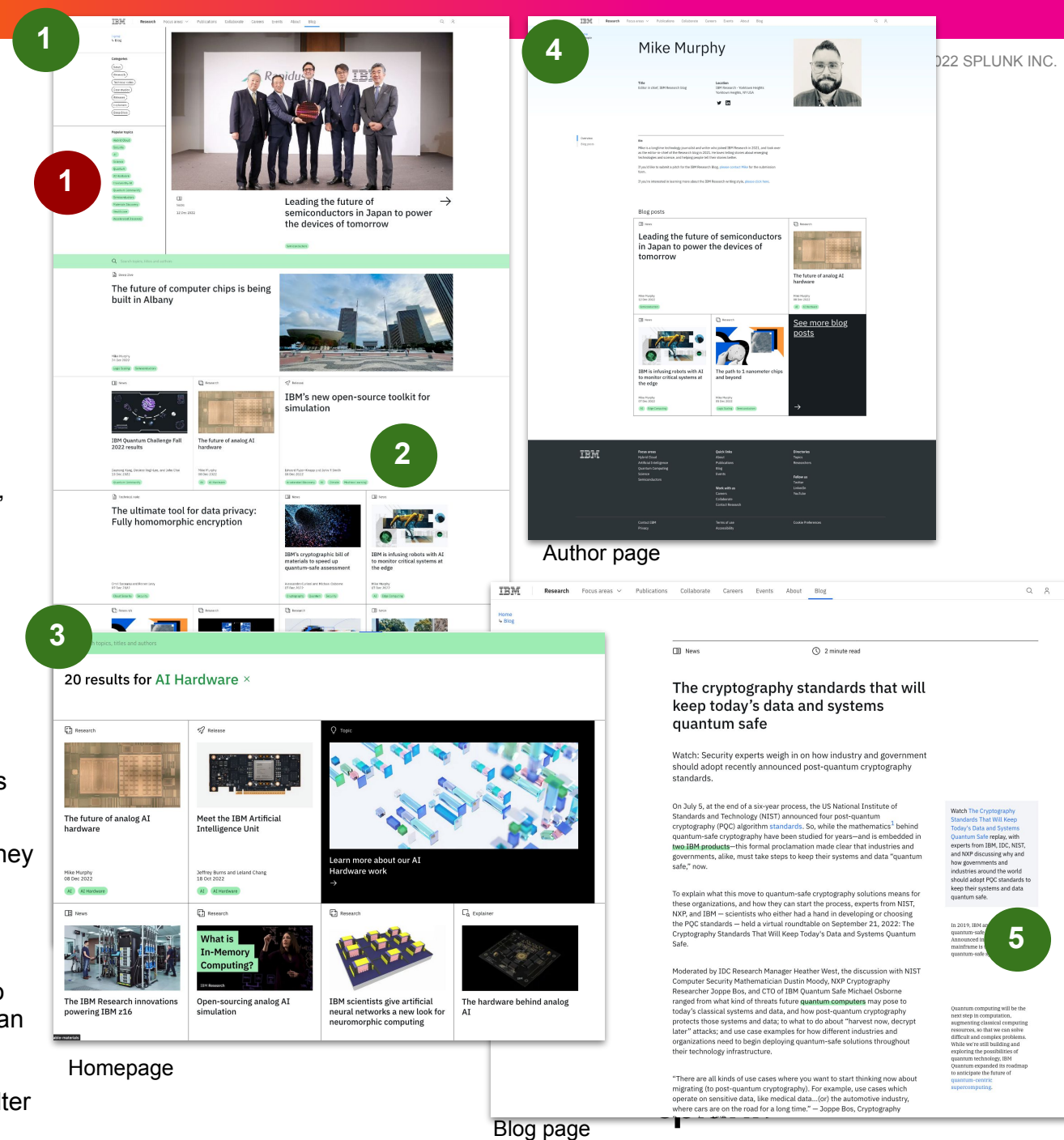
<https://research.ibm.com/blog>

Opportunities

1. Highly interactive homepage that focuses on content refinement and presentation of relevant topics
2. Different sized cards in the filter creates hierarchy, and creates a dynamic, editorial-like experience
3. Homepage filters also act as tag/category pages, keeping all exploration consolidated into one page.
 - However, this could be restricting and make it difficult to scale as more tags and contents are added over time
4. Clean, visually appealing [author pages](#) that include socials, bio, title, location, and posts written by that author
5. [Blog posts](#) use the right rail to provide in-context notes, definitions, or links to more info on topics specific to a single paragraph or text chunk
6. Blog posts end with previous and next links, providing a defined user journey through related blogs

Things to avoid

1. Tags have inconsistent behavior: sometimes clicking on a tag takes you to another page within IBM.com outside of the IBM research blogs, rather than going back to the homepage filter with that tag's filter option pre-selected, which can be disorienting. Author tags sometimes takes you to the author page, or sometimes to the homepage with that author pre-selected as a filter



Competitive heuristic: overall blogs experience

New Relic

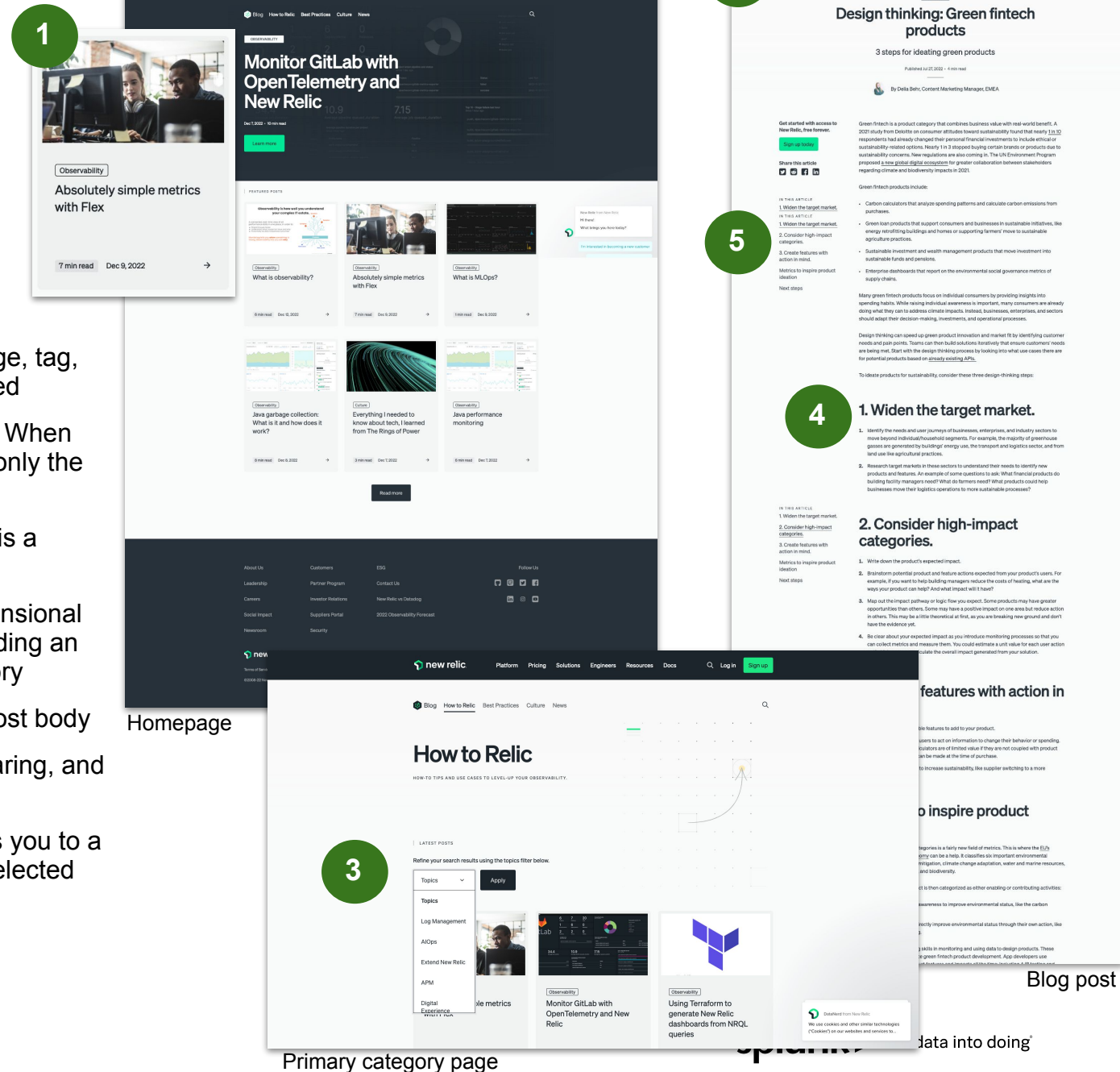
<https://newrelic.com/blog>

Opportunities

1. Effective card design that presents blog posts. Includes an image, tag, headline, how long it takes to read the article, and date published
2. Blogs-specific navigation is present throughout all blogs pages. When you scroll down, the greater global navigation disappears, and only the blogs-specific navigation remains visible
3. Blogs homepage links to the full collection of blog posts, which is a [search experience](#) with milu-dimensional filters
4. There are 4 primary [category pages](#) that each have a one-dimensional filter, allowing users to drill down into a sub-topic, effectively adding an interactive second level of hierarchy within each primary category
5. Clear, easy-to-read headlines and typography within the blog post body
6. Left rail of blog posts are used to promote a free trial, social sharing, and an in-page table of contents
7. Clicking on a tag that isn't one of the 4 primary categories takes you to a [search page](#) with additional filter categories, with that tag pre-selected

Things to avoid

1. Pre-selected filters aren't visible after clicking on a tag



Competitive heuristic: overall blogs experience

Dynatrace

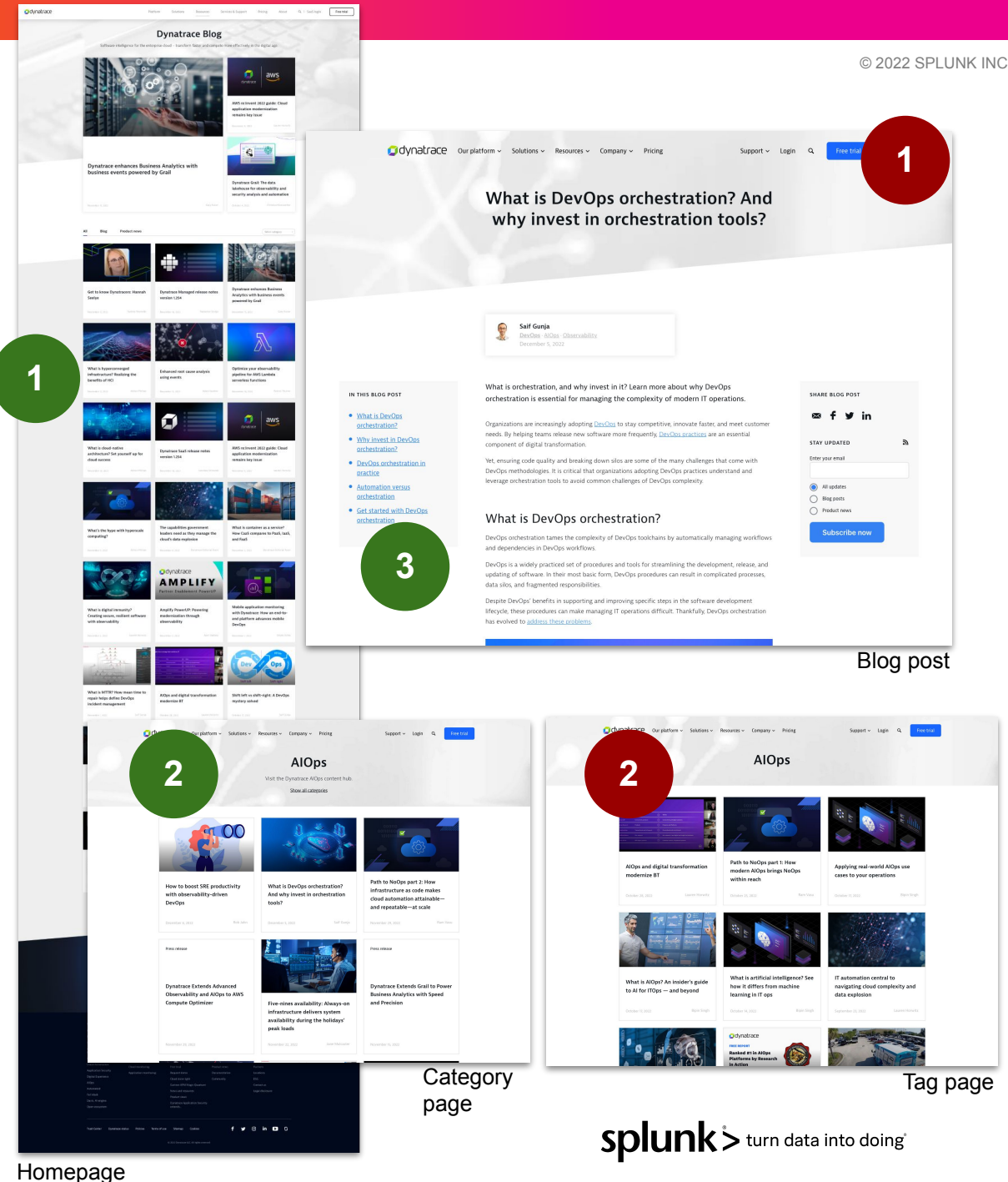
<https://www.dynatrace.com/news/blog/>

Opportunities

1. Visuals and graphics have consistent look and feel with greater website
2. Clear category pages that are accessible from author boxes on blog posts
3. Sticky table of contents in left rail of blog posts
4. All categories page consolidates all available categories and links to top blog posts for each

Things to avoid

1. No blog-specific navigation. When on a blog post, no way other than the back button to return to the blogs homepage/filters
2. There are tag pages to go along with category pages, accessible by clicking on tags at the bottom of blog posts. This makes for duplicate pages and could cause bloat
3. Tags that communicate what blog posts are about are difficult to find - either in light gray in the author boxes or all the way at the bottom of the page



Competitive heuristic: overall blogs experience

Datadog

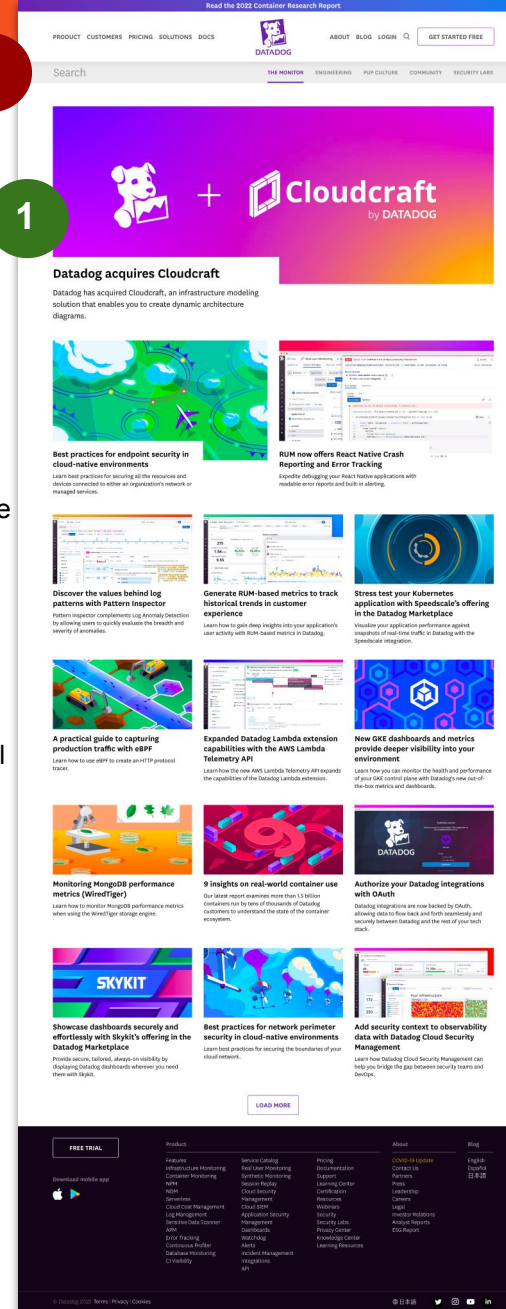
<https://www.datadoghq.com/blog/>

Opportunities

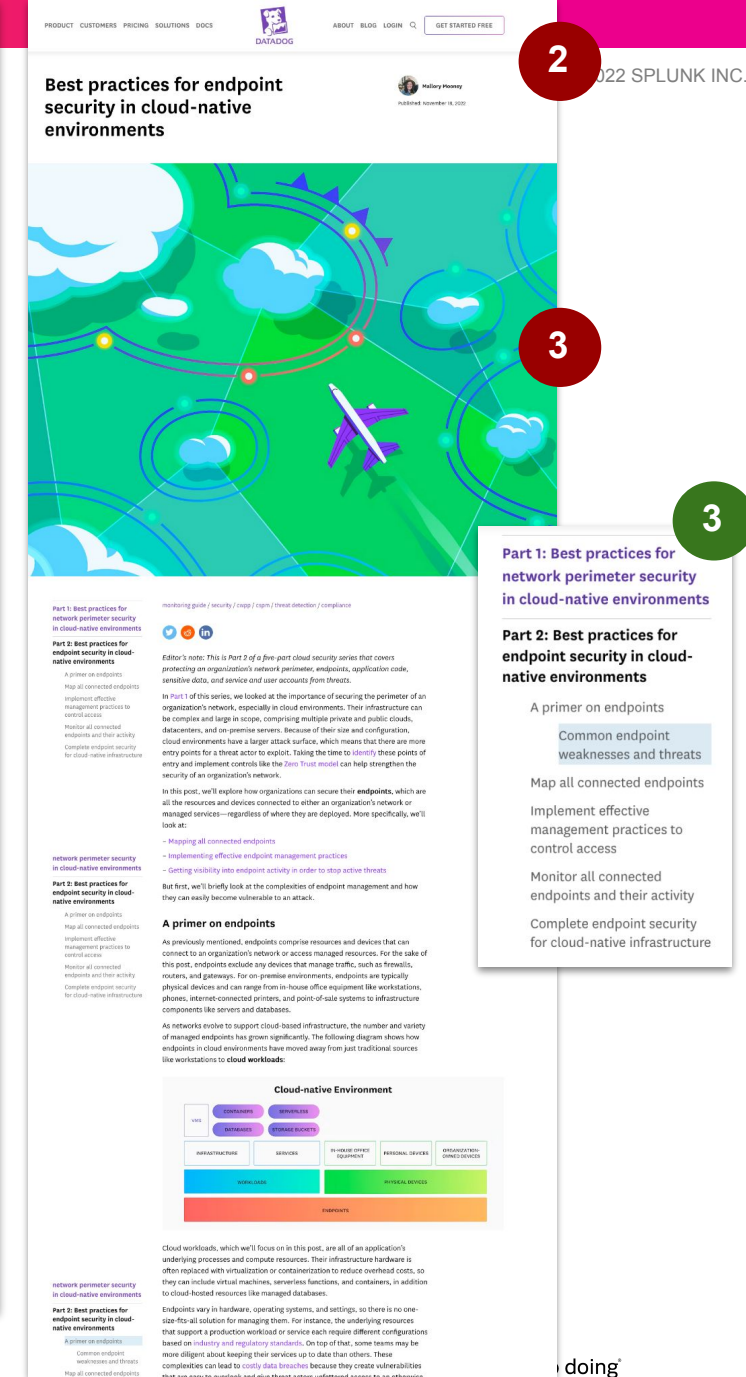
1. Strong, vibrant image strategy that uses lots of quality product imagery and matches the look and feel of imagery on the greater website
2. 4 clear category pages that are housed at the same level of hierarchy as the blogs home ("The Monitor")
3. Comprehensive descriptions of blog posts on cards
4. **Blog posts** have a sticky guide in the left rail that includes both anchor links to in-page sections and links to other hyper-related blog posts. Some blogs also include a free trial button or a gated asset promotion beneath the guide
5. You can click on a headline within the blog post and get the anchor link for that section

Things to avoid

1. A search bar is present in the blogs-specific sub-navigation, but it's actually site-wide search and not blogs-specific search. This could be confusing
2. Blogs-specific sub-navigation not displayed on tag or blog post pages. However, you can reach all the same links from the global navigation, which allows them to get away with this
3. Blog posts start with huge imagery that makes you have to scroll far to reach the blog contents
4. Tag pages are only accessible by clicking on tags on the top of blog posts (which look like breadcrumbs), which makes for discovery of relevant content difficult
 - a. Having tag and category pages could cause for difficult maintenance moving forward



Homepage



Blog post page

Drift

Opportunities

- ## Things to avoid

1. No blog-specific navigation. Blog homepage takes on a resources-specific navigation, which goes away on blog post pages
2. No tagging or categories — makes it difficult to see how blogs are related
3. Because of this, no visible hierarchy or IA within blogs
4. Inconsistent use of title and sentence case for blog headlines



Competitive heuristic: overall blogs experience

Sumo Logic

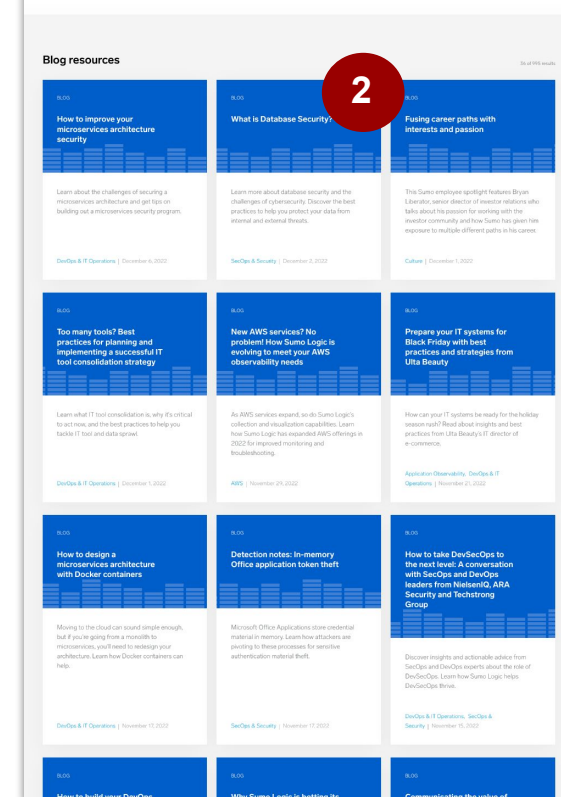
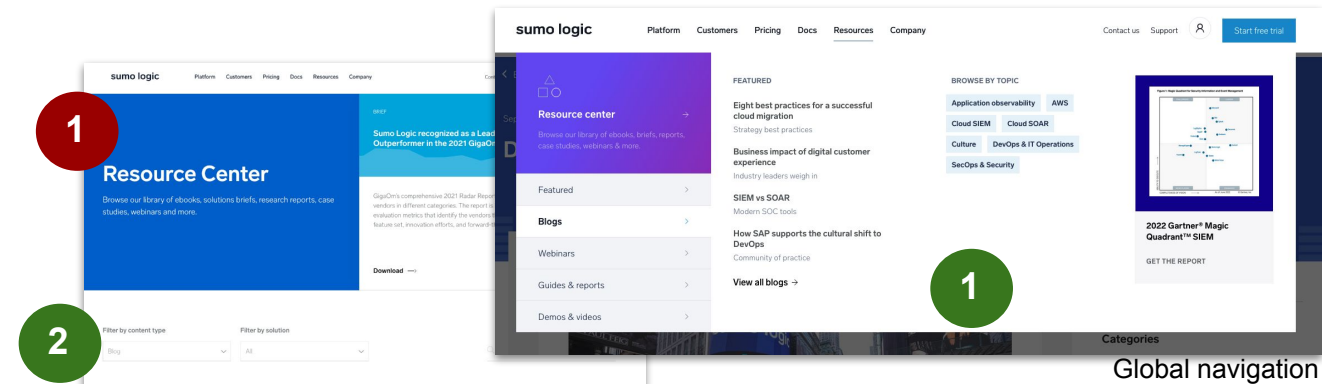
<https://www.sumologic.com/resources/blog/>

Opportunities

1. Blogs receives a dedicated section in the resources flyout menu in the global navigation, displaying 4 featured blog posts and tags for available topics
2. Filter allows users to refine the collection the blogs to a set of options relevant to them
3. Blog post right rail is used to promote a free trial as well as a spotlight gated asset

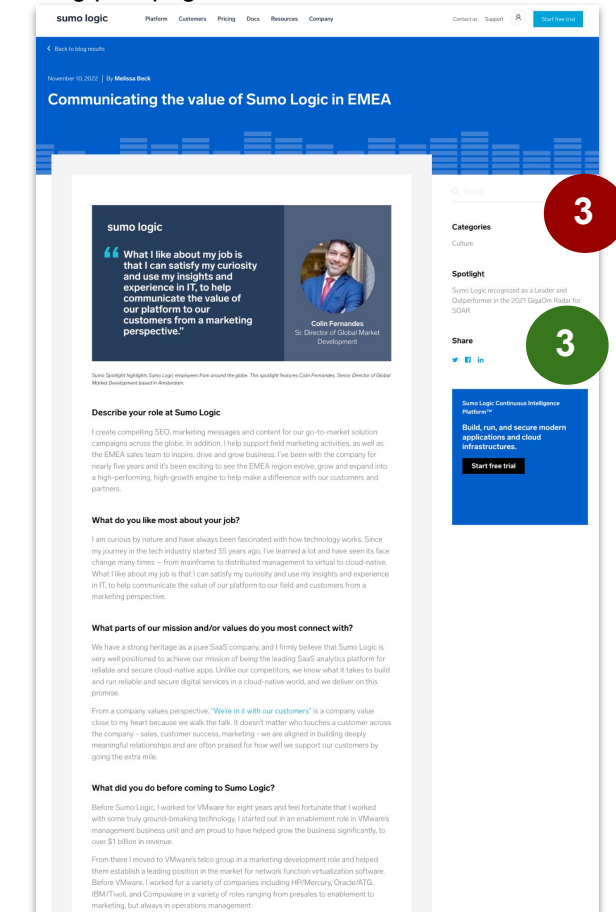
Things to avoid

1. Blogs are folded into the greater resource center and treated as another content type, rather than getting their own section. Though this may help with content discovery for non-blog assets, it limits the ability to present a curated blogs exploration experience
2. No imagery used to promote blog posts, just a generic graphic repeated for almost all assets
3. Search bar seems randomly placed in the right rail



Homepage

Blog post page



Tweet functionality

Summary and Recommendations

For tweet functionality

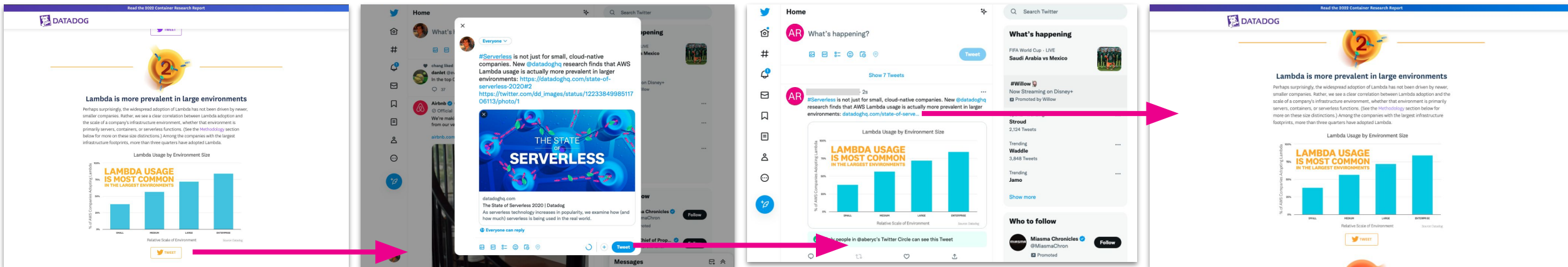
- Place “Tweet” buttons adjacent to key takeaways or concepts within the blog body, so that each button maps to a single takeaway or concept.
- Pre-populate the tweet with a succinct phrase that closely matches the headline of the page section the “Tweet” button pertains to.
- If there is a key, communicative image for that section, such as an infographic or diagram, include that in the tweet’s pre-populated contents.
- Use an anchor link in the tweet’s pre-populated contents that links directly to the relevant page section.
- Visually differentiate the section “Tweet” buttons from the Twitter share button that allows users to share the entire article as a whole.



Competitive heuristic: tweet functionality

Datadog

<https://www.datadoghq.com/state-of-serverless-2020/#2>



01

There are multiple “Tweet” buttons throughout the page that allow users to tweet the concept of that page section.

02

Clicking it opens Twitter, where the tweet modal appears pre-populated with tweet text, image, and link.

03

Tweet image matches the image in that page section.

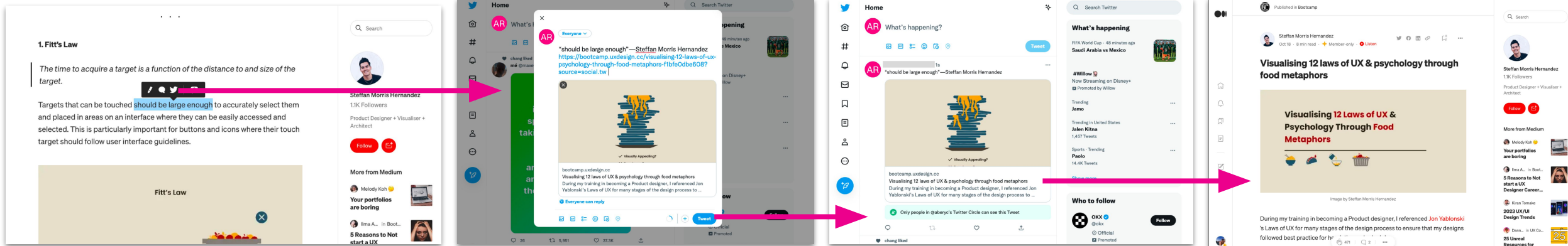
04

Clicking on the link in the tweet brings you directly to that page section, not the top of the page, with an anchor link.

Each different “Tweet” button throughout the page has different tweet text based on that page section.

Medium

<https://medium.com/design-bootcamp/visualising-12-laws-of-ux-psychology-through-food-metaphors-f1bfe0dbe608>



01

Users can highlight any text in the body, and a tooltip appears giving users the option to highlight, comment, tweet, or take a personal note for that highlighted text.

02

Clicking the tweet option opens Twitter, where the tweet modal appears pre-populated with the exact highlighted text, the author of the article, and a link to the article.

03

Tweeting doesn't add any imagery or other media, just the link.

04

Clicking on the link in the tweet brings you to the top of the article, regardless of where in the page the highlighted text is.

Print CSS

Summary and Recommendations

For print CSS

- Focus on the content and not the interactivity on the page
 - Remove any elements that would take the users off of the page if they clicked on it
 - Grey out social share links and tags
- Use a format similar to mobile
 - e.g “hiding” some navigational elements
- Add the title of the blog at the top of every printed page in small print
- For videos include the thumbnail and video icon



Zendesk

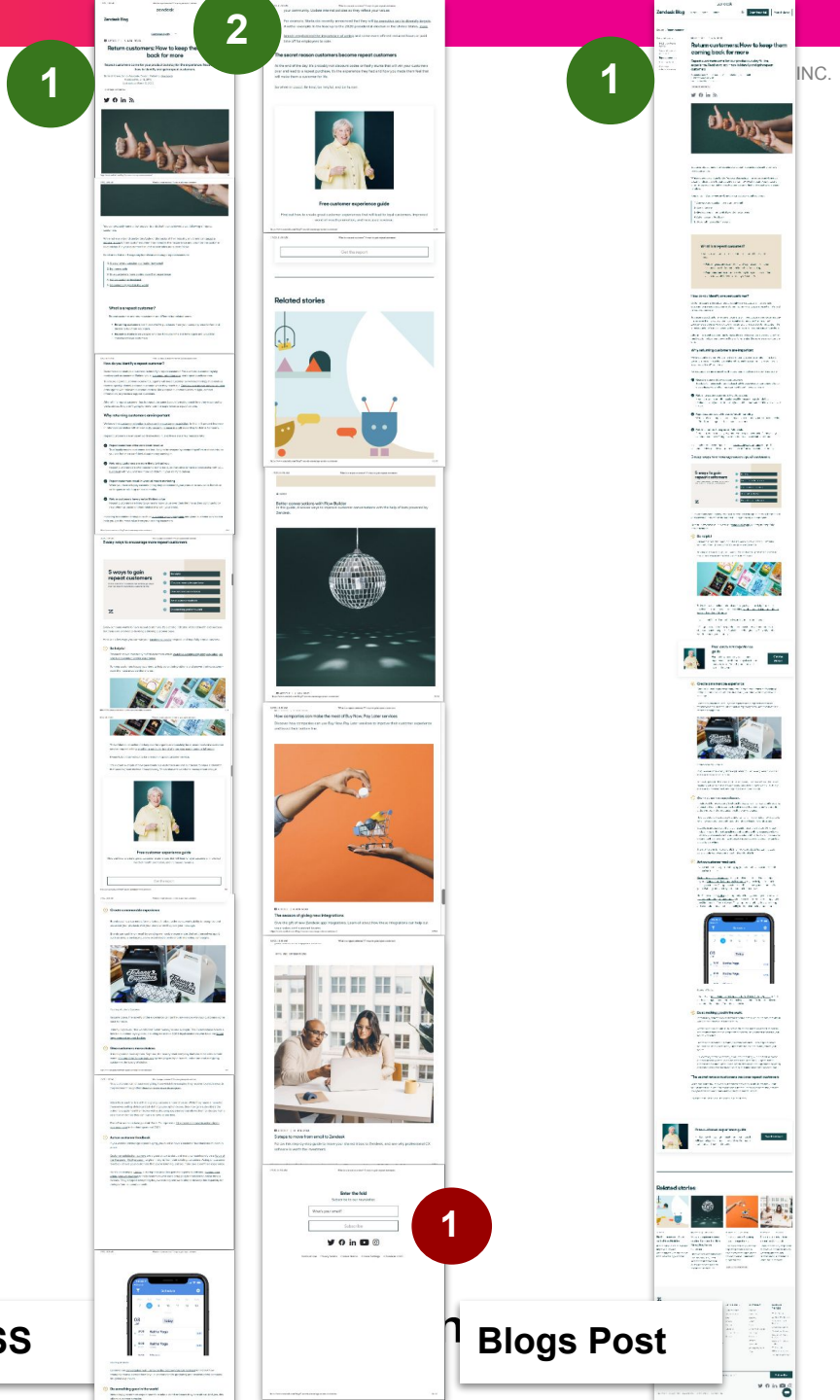
<https://www.zendesk.com/blog/5-secrets-encourage-return-customers/>

Opportunities

1. Minimizing or changing the navigation to mobile view
2. Moving items from the right/left rail to the top of the body of the page

Things to avoid

1. Remove or “grey out” any items that would navigate the user off the page or is only beneficial when viewing on the website
 - a. e.g fields, check boxes, social share links



Dynatrace

<https://www.dynatrace.com/news/blog/what-is-site-reliability-engineering/>

Opportunities

1. Moving the table of contents from the left rail to the top of the body of page

Things to avoid

1. Having text/logos/images overlap each other
2. Including links/images that will not show
3. Remove or “grey out” any items that would navigate the user off the page or is only beneficial when viewing on the website
 - a. e.g fields, check boxes, social share links

Print CSS

Blogs Post

Elastic

<https://www.elastic.co/blog/how-to-add-a-store-locator-to-your-ecommerce-store-front-with-elastic>

Opportunities

1. Moving the recommended articles found in the right rail to the bottom of the page
2. Enlarging images

Things to avoid

1. Avoid including Global nav vertically
 - a. Use mobile view or do not include it
2. Remove or “grey out” any items that would navigate the user off the page or is only beneficial when viewing on the website
 - a. e.g fields, check boxes, social share links

Competitive heuristic: Print CSS

IBM

<https://research.ibm.com/blog/label-sleuth>

Opportunities

1. Changing navigation to mobile view
2. Social links and tags are moved from the left rail to the bottom of the page

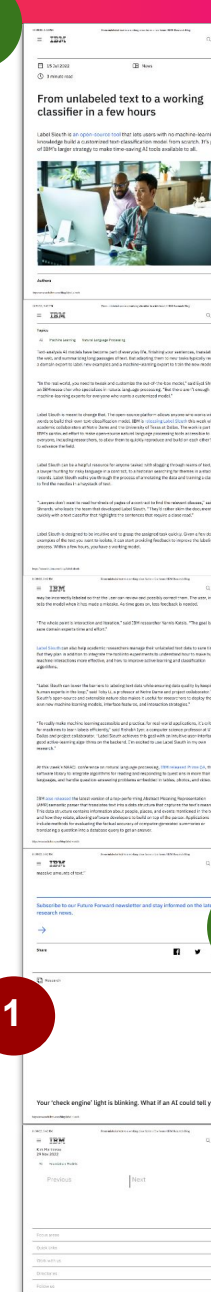
Things to avoid

1. Placing content that will not show

Notes:

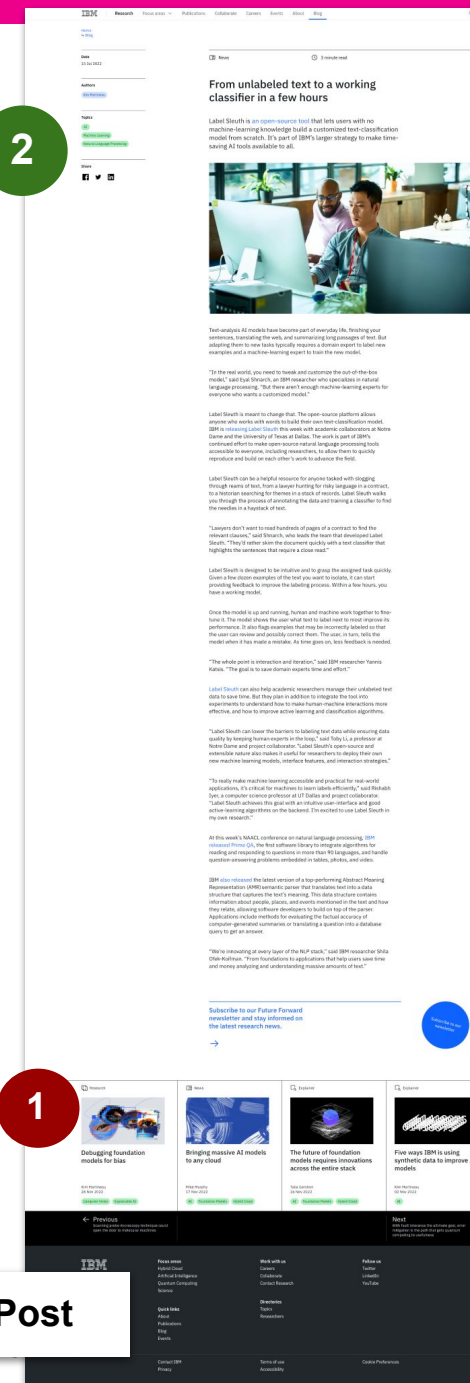
- Text links found in the body paragraphs remain

1



Print CSS

2



Blogs Post

Datadog

<https://www.datadoghq.com/blog/securing-cloud-native-infrastructure-endpoints/>

Opportunities

1. Make the page similar to mobile view
2. Enlarging images
3. Social share links are greyed out
4. Content found in the right rail is moved under the image in the body of the page

Things to avoid

1. Placing content that will not show

Notes:

- Text links found in the body paragraphs remain

Print CSS

Blogs Post

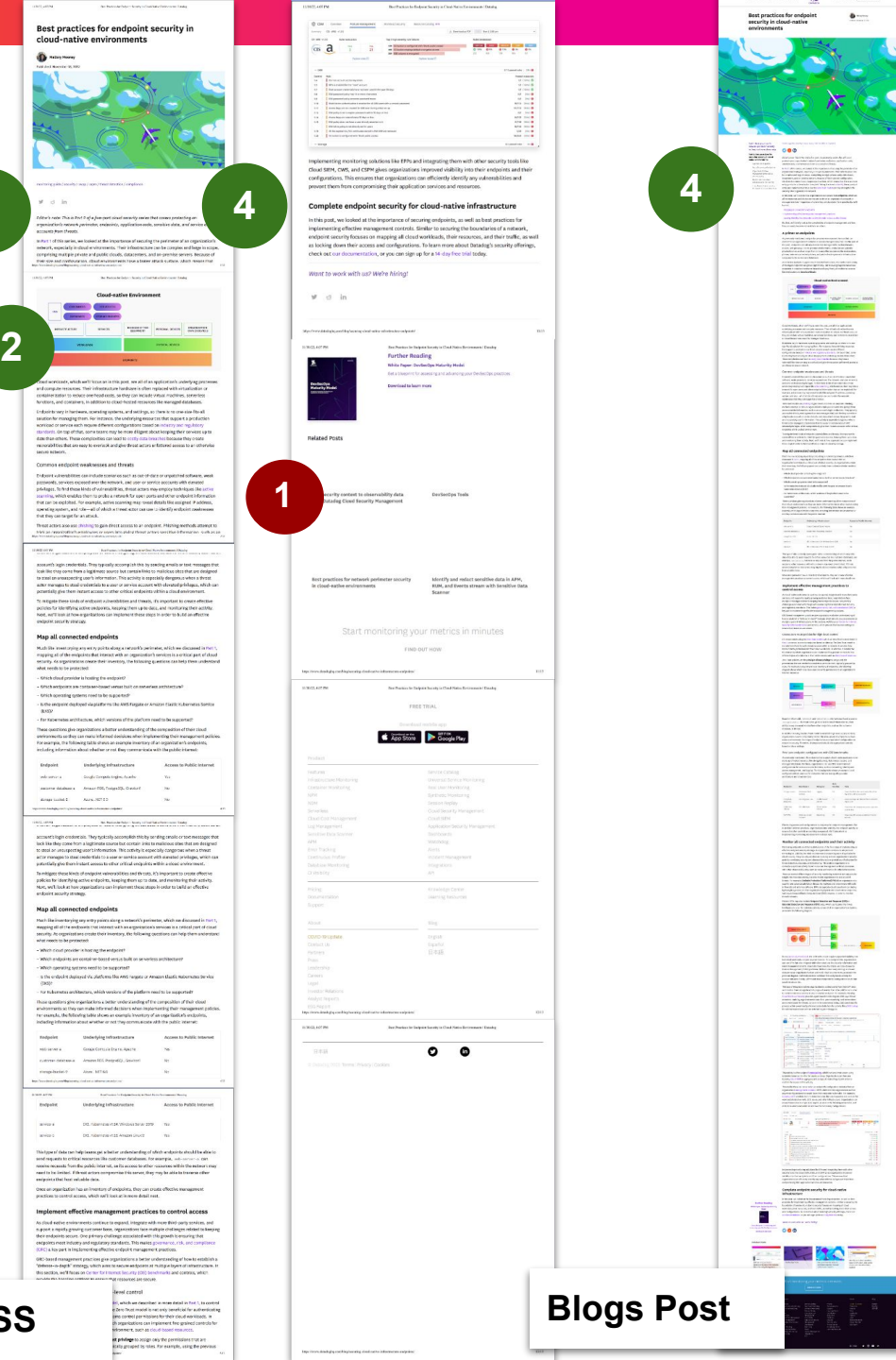
3

2

4

1

4



Medium

<https://tedbauer.medium.com/university-of-idaho-murders-now-it-looks-like-john-jack-showalter-right-efbe57a2cd17>

Opportunities

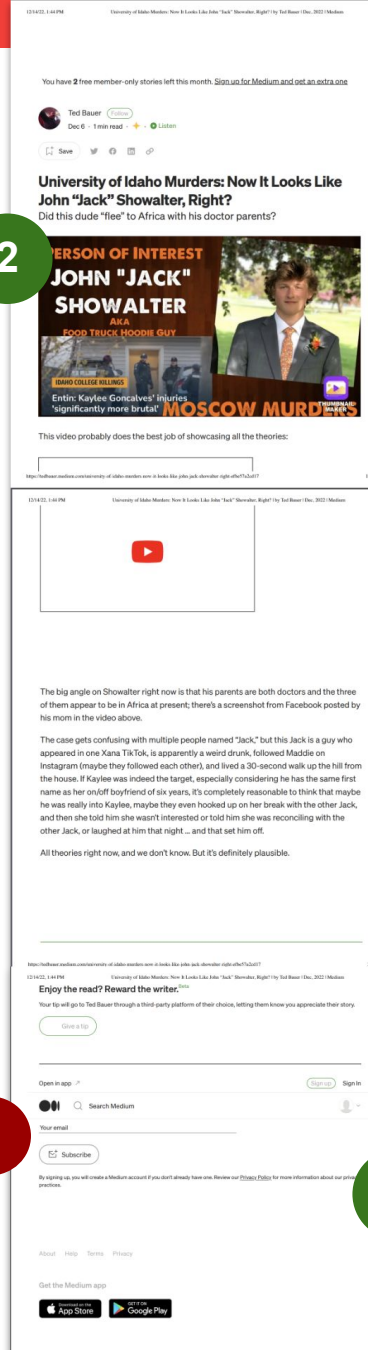
1. Make the page similar to mobile view
2. Enlarging images
3. Content found in the right rail is removed
4. Related articles are removed

Things to avoid

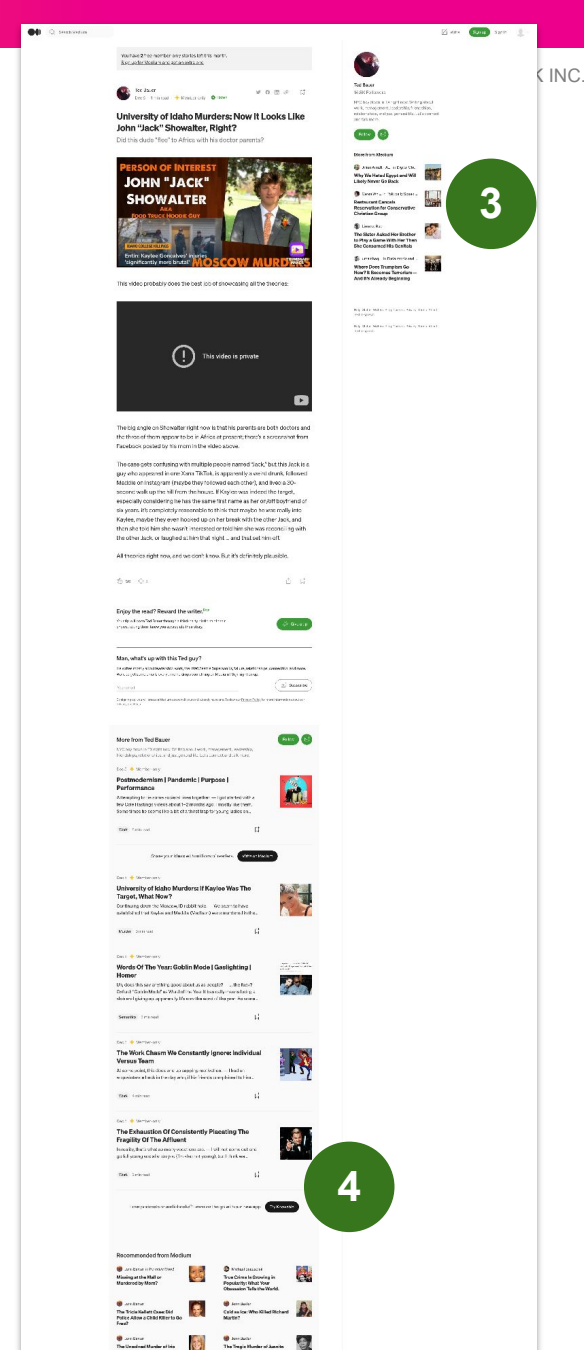
1. Remove or “grey out” any items that would navigate the user off the page or is only beneficial when viewing on the website
 - a. e.g fields, check boxes, social share links

Notes:

- A box with a video icon is used to inform the reader that a video is on the pag



Print CSS



Blogs Post