2021 WEBSITE AUDIT

BACKGROUND

WHAT IS IT?
• A website audit is a full analysis of all the factors that affect website’s visibility in search engines. This standard method gives a complete insight into any website, overall traffic and individual pages.
• A Website audit is completed solely for marketing purposes.
• There are multiple types of site audits, including the following: Website health audits, Security Audits, Technical SEO audits, Optimization audits and more.

UPFRONT THINGS TO CONSIDER
• How are you measuring/going to measure success? Are you properly setup to measure?
• Has your website been increasing in volume, decreasing or somewhat neutral?
• Does each page have a clear purpose?
• Where are you currently getting the most traffic from? The least?
• Where does the highest quality traffic come from? The lowest?
• Does your website audience match your business audience? Where/how do they differ?
• What’s the most common action people are taking on your site? What are they not doing you need them to?
• Do you have any existing benchmark? Can you benchmark moving forward

ESSENTIAL FREE WEBSITE TOOLS
• Google analytics
  o Track all of your website volume, behavior, performance, etc all in one “easy to use” dashboard. Dive deeper into specific audience segments such as age, gender or location. Understand the best and worst parts of your site, and where to improve them the most.
• Google Search Console
  o Create an account and claim your website to have free access to a number of developer tools designed to improve your performance on Google. Also great for troubleshooting and can be used in conjunction with Google Analytics for increased visibility into organic search.

MYTHS
• A good website is an expensive website
• Website projects should take at least a year
• I need to redo my entire website or none of it
• Once my website is complete and doing well, I am done
• A website is not the most important part of my brand or organization

DESIGN & LAYOUT

AUDIT QUESTIONS

• Does your site have consistent branding from page to page? Section to section?
• Does the logo stand out, without being intrusive?
• Is there a brief headline or subhead letting people know what you do/why they are there?
• Are you consistent with your navigation format, headers, text, typography, hyperlinks, etc.?
• Is your most critical content easy to find/navigate to?
• Do your CTAs (Call to actions) clearly guide users along a desired path?
• Does the site design align with your overall brand/organization's design?
• Is there continuity/synergy between your imagery and copy?
• Do your images add value? Tell a story? Invoke action/engagement?
• Do the right elements "pop" enough?
• Are you using breadcrumbs? Are they clear and logical? Are you anticipating your user’s behavior in moving forward and backward between sections of your site? Are you giving people the most direct path to their desired action/outcome?

TOOLS

• Check for broken links and duplicate pages. You can use webmaster or a free tool like Siteliner (https://www.siteliner.com/)
• Create logo’s that standout using https://www.canva.com/ or https://www.wix.com/

TIPS

• Define a Primary and possibly Secondary CTA for each page (tertiary only if absolutely necessary) and list them out
• Mix between unique CTAs and CTAs a user would typically expect is optimal for balancing intrigue with familiarity
• Use contrast to draw the user’s eye to a specific location or along a pre-defined path
• Elements can be grouped by Shape, Size or Color
• Imagery of people and especially in action are typically more compelling
• Use margins and padding to increase space between images, copy and other elements
• Ask someone not familiar with your site to browse around and keep track of their page behavior as potential “paths” to keep in mind
• Use landing pages to better control the most common entry points in order to improve the overall experience and effectiveness of those page visits
• Most important CTA’s should be above the fold but can be strategically placed in the footer or lower on the page as a backup/second opportunity

DEFINITIONS/EXAMPLES

• Landing page- Call to action is a marketing term for any device designed to prompt an immediate response or encourage an immediate sale. A CTA most often refers to the use of words or phrases that can be incorporated into sales scripts, advertising messages, or web pages, which compel an audience to act in a specific way
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USER EXPERIENCE(UX)/USABILITY

AUDIT QUESTIONS

• Is your site responsive?
• Is your site mobile optimized?
• Are you using Title Tags? Description Tags? Alt tags for images? Interior page title tags? Are there hyphens in your image file names?
• Is each page enlisting the proper number of keywords (enough to make an impact but without “stuffing”)? Are the keywords relevant to the overall page theme and your organization? Are they pulling in the right audience?
• Is the main navigation easy to follow?
• Are there too few menu items? Too many?
• Does it have enough information scent?

TOOLS

• Is your website mobile friendly- https://search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly
• Behavior analytics and user feedback service that helps you understand the behavior of your website users- https://www.hotjar.com/
• Website speed and Performance Optimization- https://gtmetrix.com/analyze.html

TIPS
• Google rewards websites that have multiple links from other sources driving people there, and when your site drives people to multiple sources off-site and even factors in the “authority” or quality of those sources.
• Avoid over usage of Carousels, sliders and any other sources of friction (i.e., slowing down page load times or distracting users).

DEFINITIONS/EXAMPLES
• Information scent - the user’s ability to “follow their nose” and choose navigation options without hesitation or confusion.
• Alt Tags/text - Alt text (alternative text), also known as "alt attributes", “alt descriptions, are used within an HTML code to describe the appearance and function of an image on a page.

TECHNICAL/SECURITY

AUDIT QUESTIONS
• What is your page & image load speed?
• Check or enable data caching (may be built into to your CMS)
• Are you using structured data to mark up your website’s code and make it more readable for Search Engines?
• Does your site have an SSL (secure-socket layer) Certificate? https:// vs http://
• Is your CMS updated to the latest version?
• Do you currently have a technical support or site maintenance plan?
• Do you currently have an XML Sitemap submitted to the major search engines? Is it up to date? Has it been optimized recently enough?

TOOLS
• This tool will help you add structured-data markup to a sample web page- https://www.google.com/webmasters/markup-helper/u/0/
• Check your page speeds on all devices- https://developers.google.com/speed/pagespeed/insights/
• Review your XML sitemap- Go to yourwebsite.com/sitemap.xml

TIPS
• If not already marking up content via your CMS you can use the Google Structured Data Markup Helper to generate tags that can be manually added.
• Type Site:(your site) into Google and record the pages that are listed and their order. Are all your pages showing up? Any showing up that should not? Any showing up lower than they should? Higher?

DEFINITIONS/EXAMPLES

• CMS- Content management system. Is an application that is used to manage web content, allowing multiple contributors to create, edit and publish. Content in a CMS is typically stored in a database and displayed in a presentation layer based on a set of templates.
  o Examples of Content management systems are: WordPress, Drupal, Joomla!, Magento, SharePoint, and Box
• HTTPS: Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure (HTTPS) is an extension of the Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP). It is used for secure communication over a computer network and is widely used on the Internet.
• XML- Extensible Markup Language is a markup language that defines a set of rules for encoding documents in a format that is both human-readable and machine-readable.
• Sitemap- A site map is a list of pages of a web site within a domain. There are three primary kinds of site map: Site maps used during the planning of a Web site by its designers. Human-visible listings, typically hierarchical, of the pages on a site. Structured listings intended for web crawlers such as search engines.

CONTENT/SEO

AUDIT QUESTIONS

• Is each page enlisting the proper number of keywords (enough to make an impact but without “stuffing”)? Are the keywords relevant to the overall page theme and your organization? Are they pulling in the right audience?
• Do you utilize both outbound and inbound links?
• Does the homepage clearly describe what you do and why?
• Are you updating (refreshing) content frequently and consistently?
• Do you utilize similar language and design as your other channels and properties (i.e., email)?
• Do you have any duplicated content? Outdated?
• Have you confirmed there are not any spelling or grammar mistakes?
• Do you use bullets or numbers to break up lengthy content or highlight key pieces of information?

TOOLS

• Keyword Planning and Research Tools:
o UberSuggest (has free component), SEMrush (Free Trial), Moz (Free Trial), Keyword Dominator (Free Trial), Google Trends (free), and Answer The Public (free)

**TIPS**

- Google rewards websites that have multiple links from other sources driving people there, and when your site drives people to multiple sources off-site and even factors in the “authority” or quality of those sources
- Ideal load time is 3 seconds (even though most sites are much slower)
- Look to compress imagery especially if your site uses a lot of heavy image files