

website **AUDIT**



web **savvy**
marketing

Instructions for Performing a Self-Audit



We believe in the power of the Internet and we believe anyone can turn their website into a profit center. It just takes a little introspection, some knowledge of web design and SEO, organization, and a lot of due diligence.

We believe the best audits are done by an impartial person who who is an experienced web developer and/or SEO expert. Unfortunately not everyone can afford an audit of this nature, so we've decided to turn our professional website audit into a document that the average website owner can use to evaluate and grade their own website or blog.

Make no mistake; being successful on the Internet requires a lot of hard work and a lot of research and ongoing education. We've been working with web design and SEO for ten years, so we know what to read and watch, as well as how to execute and what to change. You or your internal team member, who most likely work on your website part-time, does not have the time or the resources to successfully keep up with industry trends and best practices. This website audit is designed to provide a guide to allow you to do a deep dive into your website and online marketing efforts.

As you read through this report, think less about "how did this happen" or "who failed" and think more about "how can we fix this issue". The "can do" attitude will be far more beneficial and it will be the driving factor for success.

Scoring

Scoring should be based on a simple pass or fail grading scale. Do not get bogged down by how good or how bad something is or even the manner in which you need to fix it. Just go through the items one by one and give yourself a pass or fail.



Keep in mind there is a lot of grey area in SEO and website design. This report is design to get you started and give you a basis by which you can review and audit your efforts.

Taking Action

If you give yourself a large number of "fails", do not stop or get overwhelmed. Keep pushing yourself through tyour audit and once you're done grading, revisit the list and assign yourself the top ten actions items that you need to resolve in the near future. Once those are done you can move onto to other items that need to be addressed.

You cannot fix everything at one time, so remember this as you complete the audit.

Need Professional Help?

Self-audits will not work for every person or company. If you'd like professional assistance we can help. Or if you've come to the conclusion that you need an overhaul, we'd love to help there as well.

Top Ten Action Items



	ISSUE	RESOLUTION OR ACTION ITEM
①		
②		
③		
④		
⑤		
⑥		
⑦		
⑧		
⑨		
⑩		

Scoring: Domain and Hosting



CRITERIA	SCORING	BEST PRACTICE
Domain Age is Greater Than One Year		The domain age of a website refers to the length of time a domain has been in existence. The older the website, the more legitimate the website looks to search engines like Google and Bing.
Domain Expiration Greater Than Two Years		Google and other search engines may penalize websites with domains that are set to expire soon. The primary reason for this is because many spam websites are often registered for short periods of time. Most registrars support paying upfront for several years and the cost is relatively low.
Load Time is Optimized		The search engines want to provide users with the most relevant content and an overall great experience. Fast websites increase user satisfaction and improve the overall quality of the internet. Having a website with a fast page load not only benefits the user, it will help with your overall ranking with search engines. Target a page load time of 2 seconds or less for ideal performance and SEO.
Public Domain Registration Listing		Private domain name registration (websites that block the owner's contact details from displaying in registration information) is a signal that the website owner does not believe in transparency. Transparency is something that Google has long preached and believes is core to strong search results and user experience factors. For this reason, private domain registration may have negative impact on your SEO and should be avoided.
Location of Website Host		Geographical location is important in regards to country and not necessary state or region. If you're website services US based visitors, you should have your website hosted within the US. That being said, a Michigan based company with a website hosted in Texas should have little alteration to overall ranking.

Scoring: Website Architecture



CRITERIA	SCORING	BEST PRACTICE
Content Silos Present		A content silo is simply a directory structure that organizes your content and makes it easy for visitors to know where to find like content on your site. A good structure would be www.website.com/SEO/on-page-optimization . In the example given, SEO is a content silo or a directory. Search engines digest slashes as sections and dashes as word separators.
SEO Friendly URL Structure		A Uniform Resource Locator (URL) is address used to identify a specific page on a website. It contains the site's main domain name plus the name of a specific page or post. Example: www.website.com/contact/ . The industry best practice is to use SEO friendly URL structures, which refer to page names within the URL as opposed to characters or numbers.
Canonical URL's Utilized		Canonicalization refers to individual web pages that can be loaded from multiple URLs. Canonicalization is the process of picking the best URL when there are several choices. Best practices for canonicalization is to set a preferred URL structure and/or page for search engines. This can be achieved via your HTML code, a plugin, or via Google Webmaster Tools.
Sitemap.xml Used		An XML Sitemap file is a file that is submitted to search engines such as Google or Bing via Webmaster Tools. XML Sitemaps make it easier for search engines to discover the pages on your website and it clearly defines your preferred URL structure.
Appropriate Use of Robots.txt File		A Robots.txt is typically placed in the root directory of your website and is used to inform search engines whether they can access and crawl specific parts of your site). This file, which must be named "robots.txt", uses such terms as "allow" or "disallow" for communicating with the search engines.
Proper 404 Page		No matter how hard you try, website visitors will occasionally come to a page that doesn't exist. This can occur due to an outdated inbound link from another website or search engine or a broken link on your website or even by manually or typing in the wrong URL. Having a custom 404 page that guides users back to a working page on your site can greatly improve the user's overall experience.
Google Analytics Installed		Google Analytics is a powerful tool that shows you where people come from, what they do, and when they leave. Bounce rate (people who leave your website as soon as they arrive) is taken into account in ranking a page for a given search term. You need to control bounce rate and Google Analytics is a great and free way to monitor it.

**RSS Feed
Available**

RSS is an abbreviation for Really Simple Syndication, which is an industry standard for easily delivering content to visitors and other websites. RSS is commonly used with blogs, news feeds, and other formatted news or other sources of information.

**Conversion
Form for
FeedBurner or
Newsletter**

When website visitors locate a quality website they generally want to stay up to date with the site's content updates. Having a way for visitors to subscribe to your website is critical for this to occur. RSS feed subscriptions via Google's FeedBurner or email subscribe boxes (Constant Contact, Bronto, MailChimp, etc.) should be in the sidebar of every page and one of the top call to actions.

**Sharing
Options for
Website
Visitors**

Blogging is integral to link building and driving inbound traffic. Without adequate sharing options, this cannot occur. Best practice for sharing content is to have easy to use and easy to recognize options for your visitors to share your blog posts and/or web pages. Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Google+, and Pinterest are the most popular social media websites.

Scoring: Website Usability



CRITERIA	SCORING	BEST PRACTICE
Consistent Website Formatting		Consistent formatting refers to a standard template for navigation, headers, text, typography and hyperlinks. Use this template site wide so users will easily be able to differentiate sections of text and/or hyperlinks from standard text.
Layout Meets Best Practices		Every website should include sections dedicated to a header, content, and footer. Sidebars, or sections to the right or left of content, are also commonly used. Header and footer content should remain relatively uniform across the website.
Navigation Used Appropriately		Every website that is more than one page should include a navigation bar or section. This navigation bar typically resides in the header and lists all top level (most important) pages. Lower level (children) pages can be included as needed. Navigation options should be no more than three levels deep. All pages should be accessible from the home page and reached within three clicks by the user.
Content is Free of Spelling and Grammatical Errors		Grammatically correct content and website elements are free of spelling errors, properly edited and written in the authors native language. Double check all content for errors prior to posting and take the time to run content through spellchecking devices prior to posting. Many bloggers set aside a new post for an hour or day and review again prior to posting.
Content is Easy to Read and Digest		Creating useful content will influence your website more than any of the other factor. Easy to read content refers to content that is digestible and conforms to the average person's typical reading pattern. Most website visitors read text from left to right and in an F-shaped pattern. Longer articles or large blocks of text should be broken out by the appropriate use of sections or subheaders. It is also advisable to use a mix of paragraphs and bullets, so that you can capture the attention of both in-depth readers and those that simply scan web copy.
Readability Level is Appropriate		This measures the level of education necessary to read and understand the web page content. In most cases, the content should be made to be simple so that a majority of the target audience can understand it. If a user cannot digest the content, they will not stay on the website.
Page Titles Accurately Represent Content		Each website page should have a clear and concise title that effectively communicates the topic of the page's content. Choosing a descriptive title and avoid using default titles or vague titles like "Untitled" or "Page 1".

**Contact
Information is
Available on
Every Page**

If a website visitor is interested in your product or service offering, they should be able to quickly find this information. Best practice is to include one primary phone number in the header of the website. This will not only help your visitors connect with you, it will help search engines associate your page content with local searches and results.

**Website Has a
Complete
Contact Us
Page**

Full contact information builds trust and it makes it very easy for potential customers to reach you. Whether you are a brick-and-mortar facility or simply operate a website, your contact page should provide a street address, city, state, zip code, full phone number, and an email address that is checked regularly.

**Clear Call to
Actions
Present**

A call to action is a phrase that asks a user to take a specific action or that tells a user how to proceed. These requests should be clearly identified and be comprised on concise text that is actionable. Home pages should have no more than three or four call to actions.

**Visitor
Sitemap is
Present**

A visitor sitemap is a visible list of all the pages for a given domain or website. Search engines sometimes use sitemaps to discover new pages on a domain, while users use a sitemap to browse a hierarchy list of available content. Sitemaps can include only pages or they can include posts, categories, and tags or authors.

**Favicon is
Used**

A favicon is a 16 x 16 pixel image that is also known as a shortcut icon. Browsers that provide favicon support typically display a page's favicon in the browser's address bar and next to the page's name in a list of bookmarks. Favicons help provide branding for the website and support ease of use while reviewing bookmarks for a particular website or link.

**No Animated
Images**

Constant animations can be distracting to most visitors. There should be no more than one animated object in your view at any time and in modern websites, such animation should be used for advertisements or call to actions.

**No Automatic
Music or Video**

Automatically launching a music file or video will annoy most visitors. This type of design was popular years ago, but modern day users find it distracting. Use of such practices will produce lower rates of user satisfaction and in turn increase bounce rate levels.

No Frames

Frames segment out content into two separate sections. Frames present a variety of problems including support for older browsers, user navigation, and the search engines ability to crawl the page successfully. Frames should be avoided if at all possible.

No Flash

Flash is a method of displaying movable or dynamic content. Flash is difficult for search engines to digest and index, as well as utilizes a great deal of bandwidth. Flash is generally not supported on mobile devices such as the iPhone or iPad.

Scoring: On-Page Optimization



CRITERIA	SCORING	BEST PRACTICE
Appropriately Targeted Keywords		Consider the words that a user might search for to locate a web page or post on your website. Anticipating the right keywords and writing your content with these keywords in mind will produce positive results. A mix of regular keywords and long-tail (longer phrases) will provide the best mix of search traffic and results.
Keyword to Page Mapping		With the increasingly competitive nature of organic SEO and website optimization, best practices for keyword selection and implementation is to focus on one keyword per web page. In cases where the keywords are long-tail keywords or keywords of lesser competitive nature, it is possible to target two similar keywords or phrases on one page.
Keyword in Page URL		URLs with keywords that are relevant to your page content will help visitors remember the content better, increase inbound links, and will make the pages rank higher due to the inherent SEO value.
Keyword Stuffing Avoided		Google defines "keyword stuffing" as the practice of loading a webpage with keywords in an attempt to manipulate a site's ranking in Google's search results. Such practices create a negative user experience and can harm your site's ranking. Focus on creating useful, information-rich content that uses keywords appropriately and in context.
Meta Descriptions <160 Characters		Meta Descriptions are HTML attributes or tags that provide short explanations of a page's content. If used correctly, search engines will use this text to display preview snippets for a given page in search results. A good meta description will begin with the page's target keyword or phrase while also providing compelling text that will encourage a searcher to click through to the content. The meta description should be no more than 160 characters.
Meta Titles <60 Characters		A meta title tag is the line code or text that describes an online document such as a web page or file. Meta titles should be keyword rich, without appearing as if the writer is keyword stuffing. They should be less than 60 characters. The main keyword word or keyword phrase should begin the title and clearly align with the page content and targeted keyword.
Meta Descriptions Unique to Each Page		Meta Descriptions are HTML attributes or tags that provide short explanations of a page's content. If used correctly, search engines will use this text to display preview snippets for a given page in search results. It is important to avoid duplicate meta description tags, as it degrades your page's value in the eyes of search engines. Google Webmaster Tools will provide a list of any duplicates that exist for your website.

**Meta Titles
Unique to
Each Page**

A meta title tag is the line code or text that describes an online document such as a web page or file. It is important to avoid duplicate meta title tags, as it degrades your page's value in the eyes of search engines. Google Webmaster Tools will provide a list of any duplicates that exist for your website.

**Correct Use of
H1 Title Tags**

Search engines expect to see only one H1 title tag, as it is the top of the heading hierarchy. The H1 title tag should use your page's targeted keyword and provide a quick summary of the page's overall content. Ideally there should only be one H1 tag per page or post.

**Keyword as
First Word(s)
in H1 Title Tag**

H1 tags are like newspaper headlines. They are one of the first things that the search engines read when reviewing your page and they should provide a concise view of what your page is about. If your H1 tags contain your keywords, then your page will be seen as more relevant.

**Keyword Use
Non-H1
Headline Tags**

Heading and subheading tags are used to represent a structure on the page for users and search engines. There are six sizes of heading tags, beginning with <h2>, which is the most important, and ending with <h6>, which is the least important. Heading tags should accurately represent the content section, as well as provide keyword support.

**Keyword Used
in Bolded Text**

Bold text is another factor SEOs believe influence the rank of a given page. Have the keyword at least once in bold. You can use either the or tags, as search engines consider them equivalent.

**Keyword in
First 50 Words
on Page**

When reviewing content and indexing a particular page or post, search engines are believed to place higher emphasis on the first fifty words of content. It is therefore important to include your page or post's targeted keyword in the first fifty words of your paragraph text.

**Content is of
High Quality**

High quality content is related to the website's overall keyword focus, is well written, is of substantial length, and provides value or insight to readers. Make sure your website is about a focused topic or industry. Make sure you adequately explore the topic in question on your web page or blog post. Prior to posting, ask yourself if you are proud of the content and would you want to share it with your friends or family.

**Content is
Fresh**

Nothing screams run away like a home page that includes a news story from 2006! A web page is given a "freshness" score based on its inception date and this freshness score can boost ranking for certain search queries. Websites that add new pages at a higher rate may earn a higher freshness score than sites that add content less frequently. Some SEO consultants suggest that website owners add 20-30% new pages to your site every year.

Deep Links Utilized

Deep links refer to the usage of an internal links. An internal link is one that points to another page on the same website. Internal links or deep links are used to establish site architecture, ease of navigation for visitors, and for providing search engines with insight on the most important pages within a website. When setting up internet links it is important to use descriptive, page specific keywords in anchor text that match the target keywords of the destination page.

Anchor Text in Internal Links

"Anchor text is the clickable text that users will see for a given hyperlink. The better your anchor text is, the easier it is for users to navigate and for search engines to understand what the page you're linking to is all about. Anchor text that includes a keyword (where appropriate) is always better than nondescript and generic text such as ""click here""."

Alt Attributes for Images

The "alt" attribute allows you to specify text for an image so that it can be used in the event an image cannot be viewed. If a user is viewing your website on a device that doesn't support images or is using a screen reader, the text within the alt attribute provide information about the picture. Utilizing good alt text is beneficial for both the user and search engines.

Keyword Use in External Link Anchor Text on the Page

External Links are hyperlinks that point to a domain other than the source website that has created the link. Some SEOs believe that having external links with your keywords that match your page's keyword target is of value and helps overall ranking for the page.

Limited or No Duplicate Content

Duplicate content refers to pages or blocks of text that appears on the Internet in more than one place. This can exist within a website or across multiple websites. Only publish content once on your website, keep consistent URL structures to avoid unintentional duplicates, and do not use or post content already in use on the internet. If you allow your content to be distributed, make sure you do not repost content on third-party websites until the original is indexed on your website.

Page Count is Inline with Competitors

Web crawlers for the major search engines will visit the website periodically and look for new content to index. Generally, the more pages found on your site by search engines, the better. This is especially true if you are competing against other websites that have substantially more pages than your website.

Active Blog on URL or Subdomain

Search engines crave and reward fresh content. Blogging is a great way to provide a constant stream of on-site content for your website. Blogs should be housed on your URL as either a directory or subdomain. Content should always appear on your blog (or website) before it is posted anywhere else. Businesses that blog at least 20 times per month generate 5X more traffic and 4X more leads than those that only blog a few times per month.

Scoring: Off-Page Optimization



CRITERIA	SCORING	BEST PRACTICE
Inbound Links to Domain		An inbound link, or backlink, is simply a link from an external website that points back to your website. The more sites you having linking to your own site, the better. Having links to your website from authoritative resources on the Internet helps you rank higher in search engines since these links are an indication that your website is trustworthy and contains good content.
Inbound Links to Pages		Inbound links should not come to just your home page. Inbound links should come to a variety of pages and/or blog posts. This helps support the ranking of those individual pages and posts, as well as demonstrates the value of the overall website. Inbound links should always include keywords when feasible.
Diversity of Link Sources		In simple terms, each link to a page on your site from another site adds to your site's PageRank. A diversity of inbound links from different URLs is an example of the authority of your website to search engines. Best practice tactics include link building efforts from a variety of high quality sources that match as close to your industry or website content as possible.
Link Schemes Not Present		A link scheme is use of excessive reciprocal links or excessive link exchanging. Such schemes are commonly acquired through the practice of "Link to me and I'll link to you" type of inquiries. Links of this nature are designed to manipulate PageRank and are highly discouraged by the search engines.
Keyword Rich Alt Tags in Inbound Links		Anchor text is the clickable text that users will see for a given hyperlink. The better your anchor text is, the easier it is for users to navigate and for search engines to understand what the page you're linking to is all about. Anchor text that includes a keyword (where appropriate) is always better than nondescript and generic text such as "click here".
Google Page Rank		A PageRank or PR" is an industry term that was named after Larry Page, one of the co-founders of Google. PageRank is an algorithm which helps determines the authority a website page. PageRank is defined on a scale from 0 to 10, although few sites have ever achieved a PageRank of 9 or 10. A solid PageRank goal for a website is a PR of 5 or above.
DMOZ Listing		DMOZ is a human edited directory that is difficult to gain entry. Google pulled directory data from this source and still considers it as an authority on the internet. While obtaining entry into DMOZ is not mandatory, it is highly suggested. Make sure you target the right topical area when requesting a link within the DMOZ directory.

**Wikipedia
Reference**

A Wikipedia entry for your company or organization is valuable. It lends credibility to your organization, giving searchers who see a Wikipedia entry while searching for you the impression that your organization is bigger and more legitimate.

**Yahoo
Directory
Listing**

Yahoo's directory is a paid for listing. It costs a few hundred dollars for a one-year listing. It has been a long-standing belief that a Yahoo listing is a ranking factor for Google.

**Links .edu and
.gov Domains**

The search engines place highest emphasis on .edu and .gov inbound links because they are far more difficult to obtain than the average .com or .net link. While these links are of value, they are not mandatory. If you can obtain an inbound link from a credible .gov or .edu website, it will help with overall ranking.

**Links from
Industry
Websites**

Having links to your website from authoritative resources on the internet helps you rank higher in search engines since these links are an indication that your website is trustworthy and contains good content. Focus on high quality links from within your industry.

**Domain
"Mentions"**

While inbound links are desired, mentions (non hyperlinked listing) of a URL can also provide weight for ranking and branding. The exact value of mentions is unknown, but the need for mentions is undisputable.

Scoring: Social Media and Content Tagging



CRITERIA	SCORING	BEST PRACTICE
Facebook Company Page With Active Posts		It is estimated that 93% of US adult internet users are on Facebook? A Facebook company page (not profile) builds branding and provides a good source on inbound links to your website. It can also alter the search results of a given user if the search engines can associate connected user accounts that have already interacted with these brands. Facebook pages should include a keyword rich profile, hyperlinks back to your website, and a profile image that matches your logo and brand. There are many apps that can be integrated for expanding your page to truly reach your audience, so make sure you explore the app directory.
Facebook Company Page with Likes > 100		Engagement via social media websites takes effort. The easiest and best way for engagement is to engage with others, ask others for likes and follows, include interactive social icons on your website, include links to social sites on email footers and business cards.
Twitter Account With Active Tweets		It is estimated that 79% of US Twitter users are more likely to recommend the brands and companies that they follow. A Twitter account (not profile) builds branding and provides a good source on inbound links to your website. It can also alter the search results of a given user if the search engines can associate connected user accounts that have already interacted with these brands. Twitter accounts should include a keyword rich profile that includes hashtags, a hyperlink back to your website, and a profile image that matches your logo and brand.
Twitter Account With Followers > 500		Engagement via social media websites takes effort. The easiest and best way for engagement is to engage with others, ask others for likes and follows, include interactive social icons on your website, include links to social sites on email footers and business cards.
LinkedIn - Employees		LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network with over 120 million members and growing rapidly. It is good for overall branding and it is good for building inbound links to your website. Every business professional should have a personal profile. Personal profiles should include your targeted keywords, keyword rich hyperlinks back to your website, and integration to Twitter.
LinkedIn - Company Profile		LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network with over 120 million members and growing rapidly. It is good for overall branding and it is good for building inbound links to your website. Did you notice we said that two items in a row? Every company, whether big or small, should have a LinkedIn company profile. Company profiles should include your targeted keywords, your products and services, keyword rich hyperlinks back to your website, and a client recommendations specific to your offering.

**Google+
Company
Page**

With more than 40 million users and a growing influence on search, Google+ has become as a key player in social media and inbound link building. Companies should have a Google+ business page and they should encourage their key employees to set up personal profiles. Both types of accounts offer great opportunities for inbound link building and influencing search results via connected accounts.

**Google Places
Listing**

Over 97% of consumers search for local businesses online. Help your business stand out by adding photos, videos, and offers to show customers why they'll want to choose you. It is good for SEO and local searches.

Foursquare

With over a billion checkins logged, Foursquare cannot be ignored as a possible marketing option for both B2B and B2C businesses. Businesses can connect their Twitter accounts and leave tips for visitors or alerts on specials and promotions.

Bing Local

More customers are searching Bing to find businesses and services in their local area. Claiming your business listing can help increase your visibility and influence customers to visit your business. Similar to other local directory websites, to get the most out of your profile remember to use keywords and hyperlinks.

Yahoo Local

Yahoo! Local is a new local experience that brings you news, deals, and events in your metro area and city all in one place. Make sure your company profile is listed and you monitor comments and reviews.

StumbleUpon

StumbleUpon lets users "stumble" through web pages and state if they like or dislike recommendations. As with other tagging websites, StumbleUpon is a good resource for inbound traffic and inbound links.

Digg Entries

Digg is a social news website made for people to discover and share content. It is also a great source of referral traffic and inbound links. Make sure your website and content is represented in Digg.

Technorati

The leading blog search engine and directory, Technorati.com indexes more than a million blogs. It provides a source for inbound links and blog authority for companies and individuals who use blogging as a form of online marketing.