
WORDPRESS WEBSITE AUDIT WORKSHEET

Created by APX Design LLC



The following is a comprehensive list of what to look for in your website to determine if it is created to have the best possible results for your marketing and branding efforts. Starting with a look at your website's current analytics, you can determine how well your website is achieving. Then, by scoring your website's performance, SEO, design, content, and usability, you can determine ways to improve it in order to maximize its potential. While not all of these may be required to have an effective website, if you find you are having problems related to any of the areas listed below, utilizing these best practices may help to solve them.

Before you begin: generate an analytics report

In order to determine the effectiveness of your current website, it is helpful to look at your analytics. This will provide a baseline with which you can measure your progress. If you don't have analytics set up for your website, skip this section but not before you set up a new analytics account to start tracking the metrics listed below.

Criteria	Description
Unique Page views	This metric only counts a pageview once per user session
Avg. Session duration	This measures the average length of sessions in your data range dates.
Pages/sessions	Average number of pages viewed during a session.
Avg. Time on Page	This metric shows the average time users spend on a specific page or screen.
Goal conversions	A conversion is reported whenever a user completes a goal or makes a purchase during a session. When a user converts for a particular goal during a session they'll be counted as a goal completion.
Cost per conversion	The cost incurred through paid ads or other means to generate a conversion on your website. Marketing strategies will need to be modified if the cost per conversion is higher than its value.
Exit pages	Which pages users leave the website.

Bounce rate	Bounce Rate measures single-page visits, where users entered and exited your site from the same page.
Top page visits	Which pages users visit most often, either through search or referral from another site.
Top search terms	Common search terms that people have used to generate search results for your site.
Referral sites	A referral is a visitor to your site who is sent there, or referred, from a direct link on another site.
Direct Traffic	Visitors to your site are classed as direct traffic when they access your site via a bookmark, or by entering its URL straight into their browser's address bar.

Security

WordPress security is a topic of huge importance for every website owner. Each week, Google blacklists around 20,000 websites for malware and around 50,000 for phishing. If you are serious about your website, then you need to pay attention to the WordPress security best practices.

Criteria	Description
Malware check	Malware is software created for malicious purposes that can attack and infect your website's files. You should periodically scan your website for malware or utilize automated malware scan software. Malware scan from Sucuri - https://sitecheck.sucuri.net/
Domain blacklisting	A blacklist is a list used by receiving networks to judge a given IP and/or sending domain's reputation. These lists are run by anti-spam groups and most blacklistings are the result of sending Unsolicited Bulk Email (UBE) to addresses that never asked for it. Website blacklist status scan from Sucuri - https://sitecheck.sucuri.net/
Is your site using SSL/TLS?	SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) is a standard security protocol for establishing encrypted links between a web server and a browser in an online communication. All websites should use SSL, especially if they are used for transactions of sensitive data.
Anti-spam for contact forms	To avoid spammers from using your forms to deliver you spam emails, several plugins are available to help block them before they are sent to you.

Automated backup/restore system	<p>A trusted backup system is essential to maintaining a Wordpress website. If a plugin or theme update is made that causes your website to stop functioning, your website is infected with malware, or any number of issues that may occur, having a backup that can be used to restore previously working files will allow you to get your site up and running as before.</p>
Wordpress security checklist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Remove all administrator accounts with username “Admin” <input type="checkbox"/> Track and maintain records of all your FTP accounts <input type="checkbox"/> Track and maintain records of all Administrator accounts <input type="checkbox"/> Require use of strong passwords for all user accounts <input type="checkbox"/> Use a plugin to stop ‘brute force’ attacks <input type="checkbox"/> Use up to date Wordpress core, theme, and plugin versions <input type="checkbox"/> Remove unused plugins and themes <input type="checkbox"/> Use a unique database prefix <input type="checkbox"/> Properly set file and folder permissions on the server

Speed & Performance

Fast page loading time is essential to improve your visitor’s experience. People are more likely to leave your site if they have to wait too long for it to load. Google may also decrease your website’s ranking if your page speed scores are poor.

Criteria	Description
Test website with page speed scores	<p>Google PageSpeed Insights analyzes the content of a web page, then generates suggestions to make that page faster.</p>
Quality hosting company that specializes in Wordpress websites	<p>Review your hosting company and hosting package to determine if it provides the best features for your website’s performance.</p>
GZIP Compression	<p>Gzip can be used as a method of compressing files for faster network transfers.</p>
Leverage Browser caching	<p>The browser cache is a temporary storage location on your computer for files downloaded by your browser to display websites. Files that are cached locally include any documents that make up a website, such as html files, CSS style sheets, JavaScript scripts, as well as graphic images and other multimedia content.</p>

Dynamic Caching	You can speed up the loading of content on your page by storing it in the server's memory for a faster access.
PHP Version	Wordpress functions best on the most current version of PHP. This can be updated through your web host.
Minify Resources (HTML, CSS, and JavaScript)	Minification refers to the process of removing unnecessary or redundant data without affecting how the resource is processed by the browser - e.g. code comments and formatting, removing unused code, using shorter variable and function names, and so on.
Image optimization	All images used on the site should be reduced in file size as much as possible without compromising their quality.
Optimize Database	Optimize your WordPress database so that it runs at maximum efficiency – remove unnecessary data, compact MySQL tables.
Are you using outdated or plugins or themes?	Outdated Wordpress plugins and themes may be incompatible with newer versions of Wordpress. Sometimes plugin or theme developers will stop developing or supporting their software and so it may be necessary to replace them with a different option.
Does your Wordpress core installation need to be updated?	Wordpress frequently requires updates. It is recommended to keep your website up to date with current versions of Wordpress to ensure it continues to function properly, has the latest features and is secure.
Utilize a CDN	A content delivery network (CDN) refers to a geographically distributed group of servers which work together to provide fast delivery of Internet content.
Lazy Load content	If you display a lot of content on your website with larger file sizes, "lazy loading" is a technique for loading web content when it's needed rather than all at once.
Host videos on external platform	Hosting video media on platforms like YouTube or Vimeo will provide better performance for videos on your website.
Does your site use AMP for mobile?	Depending on the purpose of your website, using AMP to serve a mobile version can help speed up page load time on mobile devices.

SEO

There are many free services to run an SEO report on your website based on the criteria listed below. The following are a couple excellent options for tools that you can use to run a free SEO report for your website:

<https://www.seoreviewtools.com/>

<https://seopop.net/>

<https://yoast.com/wordpress/plugins/seo/>

Criteria	Description
Conduct a focus keyword analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Optimize your page content for keywords, keyphrases, synonyms, related keywords and all word forms of those• Determine ideas for internal links• Be sure your content can be found by search engines
Backlinks (inbound links)	Backlinks are created when one website links to another. Backlinks are especially valuable for SEO because they represent a "vote of confidence" from one site to another. The higher the profile of the site generating the backlink, the more valuable.
SEO content score	The content score is an aggregated predictor for the competitiveness of online content. Content Score uses data to determine the quality of the writing and optimization to what is considered to be relevant content. The content score is calculated from four factors: word count, sentence structure, repetitions, keyword coverage
Use keywords in page URL	While they do give weight to the authority of the overall domain itself, keyword use in a URL can also act as a ranking factor. While using a URL that includes keywords can improve your site's search visibility, URLs themselves generally do not have a major impact on a page's ability to rank.
No keyword stuffing or any other outdated SEO tactics	Keyword stuffing is an outdated practice of including a large amount and variety of keywords on a web page. This practice, while effective for producing search results many years ago, can now penalize your ranking. There are a variety of other tactics like this that were utilized during the early days of search engine marketing that are no longer effective. Search engines now have much more advanced methods of determining the value of a website based primarily on quality and relevance of content.

Unique meta titles and descriptions	Title tags and meta descriptions are bits of HTML code in the header of a web page. They help search engines understand the content on a page. A page's title tag and meta description are usually shown whenever that page appears in search engine results. Focus keywords should be used in both the meta title and description.
Alt and title tags for images and internal links	Since search engines are unable read text on a graphic or determine the context of a graphic within a page, an Alt Tag can be added to the image code to provide info and context to a graphic. Alt tags are also needed for accessibility. You can also use alt and title text on internal links to show search engines context behind where the link is directed
Correct use of headline tags	Use focus keyword as first the word in H1 tags
Web page freshness score	Search engines may prioritize newer content in search results.
Duplicate content	If duplicate content is present on a website (internally or externally), canonical URL's should be provided to tell search engines the preferred source of the content. Duplicate content can occur on Wordpress websites due to the use of Tags and Categories and also domain duplication such as www/non-www or HTTP/HTTPS.
Google page rank	PageRank is Google's system of counting link votes and determining which pages are most important based on them. These scores are then used along with many other things to determine if a page will rank well in a search.
Active Social Media accounts with followers	Facebook business page, Twitter account, LinkedIn company page, Google+ company page can help improve SEO through their ability to generate traffic to your website and allow followers to share your content and generate backlinks.
Local directory listing	Listing your business on local Google My Business will highlight contact information in the sidebar of Google search results when people search for your business name.
Utilize Schema Markup	Schema markup is a type of code you can add to your pages to help search engines better understand their contents. Using schema markup, you transform your regular meta descriptions into rich snippets.
404 Error pages	Having a 404 error page on your site tells a visitor that a page doesn't or no longer exists. Too many links within your website to 404 error pages can negatively affect your page rank.

301 Redirects	If you change the URL of a page, add a 301 Permanent Redirect to your .htaccess file to tell search engines where the new page is now located and to avoid visitors encountering 404 error pages if they use an old link
Robots.txt	Robots.txt is a standard used by websites to communicate with web crawlers and other web robots. This can be used to tell search engines which parts of your website you want to be crawled or not.
SEO checklist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Utilize Yoast SEO <input type="checkbox"/> Search engines are not discouraged from your site (Settings -> Reading) <input type="checkbox"/> Add site to Google Search Console <input type="checkbox"/> Set the preferred www or non-www URL in GSC <input type="checkbox"/> Properly setup and submitted your sitemaps to GSC <input type="checkbox"/> Check the 'Crawl Errors' section of GSC <input type="checkbox"/> Check the 'HTML Improvements' section of GSC <input type="checkbox"/> Run 'fetch as Google' and ensured no robots.txt errors in GSC <input type="checkbox"/> Run a site:http://yourwebsite.com search in Google to identify potential indexing issues

Design / Branding

Your website is the central hub for all of your branding and marketing efforts. Because of this, it needs to maintain a consistent look, sound and feel like all of your other branded materials.

Criteria	Description
Brand guidelines document	You should have a brand guidelines document that provides information for keeping consistent design and content across all marketing materials, including your website.
Logo	Your logo should be featured on every page of your website. It should be displayed correctly and have a 'retina ready' version.
Consistent design and formatting	Navigation, typography styles, colors, photo and graphics styles should all be consistent throughout the website.

High quality images are used that are relevant to and support the content.	Consistent brand imagery can help with user engagement and comprehension.
Favicon	A Favicon is a branding element that is represented on the browser tab.
Is the website's design cohesive with your company's branding	A cohesive branded design is important for brand consistency.
White space is used around images and text to help viewers focus on one section at a time	Packing too much information into one screen can hinder people's ability to read and comprehend what they are reading. Using more space around elements is one technique that can be used to improve the design on your website.
A well-structured typographical hierarchy is used	A hierarchy should be used to clearly distinguish different typographical elements on each page. The main headlines should be largest, with a logical sequence of descending sizes for subheadings, body copy, captions, etc... These should be consistent across all pages on your website.
Font styles	Your website should use no more than 3 different kinds of font styles. Font pairings should work well together and usage should be consistent throughout the website
Use consistent tone of voice	To maintain a consistent brand, the tone of voice should be consistent in all marketing materials, including your website copy.

Usability

Usability means user-centered design. Both the design and development process are focussed around the prospective user — to make sure their goals, mental models, and requirements are met — to build a website that is efficient and easy to use.

Criteria	Description
Customer persona	Develop a customer persona to determine the most effective user experience for your specific target audience.
Intuitive layout	Different sections of the website should be clearly differentiated and easily located – navigation, page headers, content sections, footers.
Content readability score	Content should be grammatically correct and free of spelling errors. Content should be easy to read and broken into easily digestible chunks.
Typography	Text should be large enough and have good contrast with the background to be easily readable.
Appropriate readability level	Copy should be written at an appropriate education level for its target audience.
Page Titles	Page titles should be consistent with the navigation and content on the page.
Call to action	Clear calls to action should be utilized on each page to give users directions for how to proceed to the next intended part of the marketing funnel
Flash or any other outdated website technology that is no cross-browser compatible is not present	Flash should not be present on any part of your website. Flash has not been supported in some mobile browsers for a while and will officially no longer be developed as of 2020.
Music or video can only be played by user interaction	Autoplaying music or videos may cause visitors to leave your website or at least spend time searching for how to pause or mute the audio or video. Always provide visitors the option to play your media rather than playing it automatically.

<p>Accessibility</p>	<p>The following website accessibility standards should be implemented in the development of each page in order to aid in your website's usage by people with disabilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Captions for all videos and/or audio clips <input type="checkbox"/> Audio and video do not play automatically <input type="checkbox"/> Does not contain any elements that flash repeatedly <input type="checkbox"/> Add alt text for all non-text content <input type="checkbox"/> Add title element to all links <input type="checkbox"/> Add aria-label attribute when text label is not visible on the screen <input type="checkbox"/> Use heading tags where applicable <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate visual contrast ratio for text <input type="checkbox"/> Provide options for easy resizing of fonts <input type="checkbox"/> UI components operable by keyboard <input type="checkbox"/> Include bypass navigation (skip to content link) <input type="checkbox"/> Include Input assistance (labels for form fields, error messages for incorrect info entered in forms)
<p>Is your website using responsive design for mobile devices?</p>	<p>Responsive design should be utilized for all websites. Responsive Web design is the approach that suggests that design and development should respond to the user's behavior and environment based on screen size, platform and orientation. The practice consists of a mix of flexible grids and layouts, images and an intelligent use of CSS media queries.</p>
<p>Cross Browser testing</p>	<p>Your website should look and function consistently across all modern browsers – Chrome, Firefox, Safari, Edge</p>

Website Architecture

Website architecture refers to the way you structure your website to ensure you meet our business goals while delivering a great experience for your users.

Criteria	Description
<p>Content silos</p>	<p>The grouping of pages on your website should be in a logical structure of like content (ex. website.com/team/john-smith)</p>
<p>SEO friendly URL structure</p>	<p>Users and search engines should be able to understand what is on each page just by looking at the URL and should use keywords that describe the content of the page (ex. website.com/new-page-1 vs. website.com/contact)</p>

Website structure	Using index cards, lay out all the pages on your website on a whiteboard and draw a line between the pages that are linked to each other. Determine ways to rearrange and regroup them to simplify your website's structure and make the content on your website easier to navigate.
Sitemap.xml	An XML sitemap lists a website's important pages, making sure Google can find and crawl them all, and helping it understand your website structure.
Sitemap page	If you have a complex website with a lot of pages, it can be helpful to provide users a page that outlines the structure of your websites with links in order to help them navigate.

Content

Website content is the text, imagery, videos, audio and graphics that make up the user's experience. How you develop and utilize your website's content will play a large part in how effective it is at marketing to your potential customers.

Criteria	Description
Customer Personas are utilized	Developing customer personas will help you to tailor your content towards your specific customers
Does your website utilize an optimized conversion funnel?	A systematic approach to funneling your leads towards converting (Awareness – Interest – Desire - Action)
Readability Analysis	A readability score is a computer-calculated index which can tell you what level of education someone will need to be able to read a piece of text easily. To ensure your content is readable by 85% of the general public, you should aim for a readability score of Grade 8 or better.
Homepage introduction	Your homepage should clearly communicate what you do 'above the fold'.
Effective use of headlines	All headlines should demonstrate value and benefits to your target audience

<p>Have you clearly defined the conversion goal for all of the pages that you have added to your website and set Goals in your analytics to track them?</p>	<p>Each page on your website should have a clearly defined goal that fits within your Conversion Funnel. Google Analytics can be used to track the rate at which each of these goals are completed by visitors, providing insight into the effectiveness and value of each page within your funnel.</p>
<p>Do you have effective CTA's (Calls to Action) on all of your pages that lead your visitors to a desired action?</p>	<p>Each page should contain clearly defined Calls to Action to help guide visitors to the next step in your conversion funnel. Ex. "Sign up now to download our sample website audit report."</p>
<p>Does the content throughout your website focus on the problems that you solve in simple and easy to understand language to your readers?</p>	<p>The copy throughout your website should focus not just on your company, but rather primarily on how you can help your target customers to solve a problem. The copy should also focus on how your brand fits into their deeply held beliefs. The language you use should generally be devoid of technical jargon and should help to explain your company in language that is easy to comprehend.</p>
<p>Sharing options</p>	<p>Buttons should be provided to easily share content found on the website on various social media platforms.</p>
<p>Privacy policy</p>	<p>If required, your website should have a page with your privacy policy.</p>

Forms

Forms are an essential component that are present on almost all websites. As they are the primary method for how your customers communicate with you, it is important that they are well maintained and configured correctly.

Criteria	Description
All forms on site are configured correctly and tested to ensure they are working correctly	Depending on how a contact form is configured, email delivery may fail or be incorrectly marked as spam. Spam protection such as Captchas may also need to be used to avoid spam emails being delivered from your forms.
Test autoresponders	Ensure autoresponders are delivered after form submissions.
Form redirects to landing pages after form submission	People should receive some sort of message after submitting their information letting them know what to expect next. A redirect to a landing page is a common technique to thank someone for contacting your company and also providing them with more information. A landing page can also be used to track form submission goal conversions.

For questions or for assistance with implementing any of the strategies discussed in this audit, contact jpribble@apxdsgn.com