APIARY DIGITAL

· ENTERPRISE SEO

Audit Checklist

· STEP 01

Process Definition

Define the website's purpose, audience, and goals.

Before you roll your eyes in "Duhhh, that's obvious" disappointment, hear us out.

Many high profile brands are relying on heavy ad budgets largely because their organic search performance is mediocre at best, abysmal at worst. And yet, most of these brands have mechanisms in place to conduct regular SEO audits either through in-house resources or an SEO agency, which makes them think that they're already doing all the right things so they have no choice but to accept their lackluster Google results.

But we haven't yet seen a single case where that was actually true.

You cannot conduct an effective enterprise SEO audit without well-defined goals, and clarity on the exact (exact!) audience those goals apply to.

All that investigation and curiosity we mentioned earlier? It'll amount to a tiny flashlight in a dark room if these foundational details aren't ironed out first because you won't be clear on the results you're seeking, and the ones you want to optimize for.

Your target keywords, content strategy, and meta descriptions will either be wildly mismatched (reducing acquisition and therefore, conversion volume), or you'll only see conversions from an audience that doesn't mirror the strategically-selected audience profile that your paid media and other acquisition tactics are targeting.

Get clear on why you're doing this audit in the first place, and then move onto:

Create a project roadmap that defines each phase of the process, and make sure to include performance benchmarks and a detailed timeline.

Confirm full process buy-in from both your technical and content teams.

Check the boxes once you've completed the steps

· STEP 02

Technical Audit

The technical portion of your enterprise SEO audit will determine if search engines are crawling your website properly and whether the site is functioning at an optimal level.

If search bots aren't able to find your URLs or users aren't able to interact easily with your pages, the content doesn't even matter.

Google has made this clear on numerous occasions, but maybe none were clearer than the huge Core Web Vitals rollout back in May 2020. Poor site performance (aka: a subpar user experience, which is largely determined by page speed) has and will continue to result in SERPs punishment. This is why on-page SEO matters so much.

So, here's our technical checklist recommendations for enterprise brands:

Carefully examine performance. Are there any concerns with organic traffic? Are you seeing a decrease YoY? Has there been a change in keyword rankings? If there is concern with organic traffic, is it stemming from specific URLs? Did downward trends start at a specific time period that aligns with website changes or algorithm updates?

· Use the Panguin Tool to see if changes in your organic traffic match up to algorithm updates.

· If you aren't sure if URL updates are the cause of a decrease in organic traffic, use the Wayback Machine.

Crawl your website. Use a tool like Screaming Frog to crawl your entire site. Crawl data can be used for taking stock of all website URLs, checking response codes, understanding URL structure, seeing metadata, checking inbound links, and more.

In addition to collecting and viewing website data, Screaming Frog can also run reports that make the technical health of your site more visible, including redirect issues, broken links, and hreflang errors.

Inspect Google Search Console to see how Google views and crawls your website.

- Look at pages being indexed and not indexed. Are there pages being excluded from search results that should be included? Are there pages that have no value that are eating up crawl budget? Are there 404s that should be 301 redirects elsewhere?

- Has a Sitemap been submitted to Google and are there any errors on it?

- Are URLs failing Core Web Vitals? Is the website usable on mobile devices?

- Does Google detect schema markup on the website and are there any errors that need to be fixed?

- Are there manual actions or security issues that need to be addressed?

Conduct site searches on Google to weed out additional URL types that shouldn't be indexed. For example, to find URLs that are using parameters, search site:www.mywebsite.com/inurl: "?" or whatever you think the parameter might include.

Create a single data source. Put your website crawl data, Screaming Frog reports, and Google Search Console data into a spreadsheet that will function as your single source of truth while fixing technical issues.

· STEP 03

Content Audit

Auditing a website's content ensures the right keywords are being targeted, pages are optimized to rank organically, and the content you've invested in creating is actually meeting searcher intent.

Conduct keyword research and compile a list of keywords to target.

· What keywords or topics are strategically valuable? Identify those head terms/topics and use a tool like SEMRush or Keywords Everywhere to compile lists of long-tail keywords within those keyword buckets.

· Look at competitors, both websites that are thought to be direct competitors and any sites that are ranking well for your keyword topics. Again, use something like SEMRush to see what URLs are performing well for them, and what keywords those pages are targeting.

Analyze keyword data in Google Search Console (GSC), especially non-branded keywords.

· Use GSC keyword data to uncover cannibalization issues. Are there multiple URLs fighting to rank well for one keyword? Should those pages be combined or better optimized to target different keywords?

· Are there URLs or keywords that are generating a high number of impressions but not seeing many clicks? These would be optimization opportunities.

KEYWORDS UNLOCK FURTHER INSIGHTS

Prioritize top level keywords/topics to be targeted by core webpages. Once topics and keywords have been identified and compiled, pages such as category URLs or blog posts should be used to target long-tail keywords.

- Map keywords to existing URLs
- Use remaining keywords to drive new content initiatives

Identify search intent for target keywords.
Use SEMRush or conduct Google searches to identify search intent for target keywords. Does informational, transactional, or navigational content perform best? These results should inform your ongoing content strategy for all channels - web, email, organic social media, and paid.

Check onpage optimization

- Write/rewrite URL metadata to follow best practices and target keywords, including title tag, meta description, and H tags.
- Write/rewrite page content to meet searcher intent
- Include target keyword in URL slug
- Write/rewrite image alt tags to include target keyword
- Use target keywords for anchor text in internal links. Conduct site searches (www.mywebsite.com/"keyword") to find link opportunities
- Use Copyscape to check for duplicate content

· STEP 04

Backlink Audit

External backlinks have long been a powerful ranking signal. Having a quality backlink profile tells Google that a website is trustworthy and should be viewed as an authority in its niche.

Use a tool such as Majestic to take stock of existing backlinks. Are there spammy links that you should ask to be removed or disavowed? Are there valuable links going to URLs that are actually 404s and should become 301 redirects instead?

Again, use Majestic to **compare your website's backlink profile to competitors**. Competitors' backlinks can represent new opportunities.

Outline your strategy for building new links.

· YOUR AUDIT IS COMPLETE

Now What?

The optimization opportunities available from an enterprise SEO audit will quickly evaporate if these performance insights aren't clearly communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

So what's the best way to communicate your audit findings? For real-time discussions as well as asynchronous review, we love a good slide deck overview that links to a more granular spreadsheet.

Here is a list of the exact slides and spreadsheet tabs we use. Go ahead and copy us!

Presentation Deck Slides

1. Website Performance & Goals Looking Forward

a. Organic traffic (Google Analytics)

b. Top performing URLs (Google Analytics)

c. Goal Conversions (Google Analytics)

d. Top performing keywords (Google Search Console)

e. Goals going forward

2. Technical Issues

a. XML Sitemap

b. Robots.txt

c. Mixed content

d. Redirect chains

e. 404 errors

f. Orphaned URLs

g. Broken links

h. Hreflang errors

i. Canonical tag issues and recommendations

j. Core Web Vitals

k. Structured data errors and recommendations

l. Site structure/navigation recommendations

m. Backlinks

3. Content Recommendations

a. Keyword topics

b. Competitor analysis

c. Title tags

d. Meta descriptions

e. H tags

f. Image optimization

g. New content opportunities

4. Next Steps

a. SEO Roadmap

Spreadsheet Tabs

1. Technical Audit

a. Website crawl

b. 404 errors with necessary redirects

c. Redirect chains

d. Orphaned URLs

e. Broken links

f. Hreflang errors

g. Canonical errors and recommendations

h. Recommended site architecture

i. Existing backlinks

j. Competitor backlinks

2. Content Audit

a. Priority keywords

b. All keywords (one topic per tab)

c. Optimization recommendations

d. New content recommendations