

How to Do a Basic SEO Audit on Your Client's Website: The Digital Marketing Professional's 8-Step Check List



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The Importance of an SEO Audit

As a digital marketer, could be tasked with a number of important marketing services for your

clients: web development, general online marketing, social media marketing, or content creation. Inevitably, search engine optimization (SEO) will become (or has become) an important part of that. When you take on a new client, for any digital marketing purpose, a good SEO audit that analyzes their current and potential visibility is always in order.

Audits are a key part of search engine optimization. They allow marketers to assess the current state of their clients' website.

There are a lot of ways you can help your clients improve their website and brand visibility. The best way to get started is to first check under the hood. Understand their innate challenges and get an idea of their resources. You can't recommend a strategy without knowing what you have to work with.

"Audits are a key part of search engine optimization."

Reasons to conduct a thorough SEO audit:

- ü Gain insight into how your clients are doing now and what their potential is
- ü Upsell your services based on what gaps exist
- ü Significantly boost clients' lead generation and income
- ü Get your clients targeted visitors who are truly interested in what they have to offer
- ü Save your clients on cost as SEO is one of the most affordable methods of marketing their products and services
- ü Improve their brand visibility dramatically
- ü Look like a rock star

If SEO is not one of your primary services, it's easy to get overwhelmed and confused about how and where to get started. This report is intended to provide you with a basic SEO audit checklist to evaluate your clients' websites.

Best practice SEO involves a number of factors: keywords, content, links, social signals, page speed and increasingly, factors like author authority.

An SEO audit will help to determine the SEO readiness and effectiveness of a website. Research into title tags and meta descriptions, keywords, content, analytics, on page factors, links, social signals, and technical factors provide a complete view of the potential for SEO success. Here are the 8 steps to cover in a basic SEO client website audit:

- Step 1: Check the Title Tags
- Step 2: Check the Meta Descriptions in the SERPS
- Step 3: Ask These 5 Starter Questions
- Step 4: Drop In On Their Google Analytics Account
- Step 5: Review Their Social Media Presence
- Step 6: Do a Technical Audit
- Step 7: Analyze Onpage Factors
- Step 8: Conduct a Quick Check of One Important Offpage Factor
- Conclusion
- Additional Resources

Step 1: Check the Title Tags

In 5 seconds, you can quickly tell if your client has made any effort at all into SEO. How? By checking the title tag of their homepage. This is the quickest way to evaluate a client's existing and previous SEO efforts.

There are two ways to find your client's title tag:

1. Simply put your cursor on the top of the website page tab, hover there and the title tag will appear. It will look like this:



2. Go to www.google.com and enter in your client's business name or URL. The homepage should show up as one of the top results, displaying the title tag. It will look like this:



This is the most basic way to find out what keywords they have been targeting (or, that their web designer has targeted for them). A title that has been correctly optimized will be about 65-75 characters long with keywords front loaded (meaning placed toward the beginning). A well-written title may not be a complete sentence, but it makes grammatical sense and utilizes keywords effectively.

Step 2: Check The Meta Descriptions in the SERPs

Check the meta descriptions in the SERPs (search engine results pages) by following the same instruction as above:

1. Go to www.google.com and enter in your client's business name or URL. The homepage should show up as one of the top results, along with the title and meta description. It will look like this:



Meta descriptions that have been optimized (optimized well anyway) are engaging, unique, and target at least one keyword per sentence. The keyword in the description should match the keyword in the title.

Step 3: Ask These 5 Starter Questions

Before you can begin an SEO audit, there are a few basic questions you need to ask your clients.

Namely:

1. What SEO efforts have been done in the past?
2. List your top 3 competitors
3. What are your social media accounts?
4. What keywords are you looking to rank for?
5. What are you trying to get visitors to do when they land on your site?



Of course, there are lots more questions you could ask, but this is a basic check list, remember? J You don't want to inundate your client or scare them unnecessarily by asking them too many questions when you're just doing a basic audit. For a more in-depth analysis, more questions, of course, are warranted.

Step 4: Drop In On Their Google Analytics Account

If your client has a Google Analytics account linked to their website, you definitely want to get your hands on this hot little number. Specifically, you'll want to review current website search traffic and performance so you get an idea of what's working and what's not.

- ü Have your client [grant you access to their account](#) or have them provide you with their user name and password.

- ü To view keywords website visitors are using/have used that land them on the site:
 - ü Log into and open up the Google Analytics account
 - ü Select the website you want to view
 - ü Click on "Traffic Sources" (the Category in the Left Column) -> Click on "Overview" -> Scroll down to view keywords -> View full report -> Show rows through 250

These are the keywords searchers are using in Google that are landing them on the website (to either the homepage or one of the interior pages).

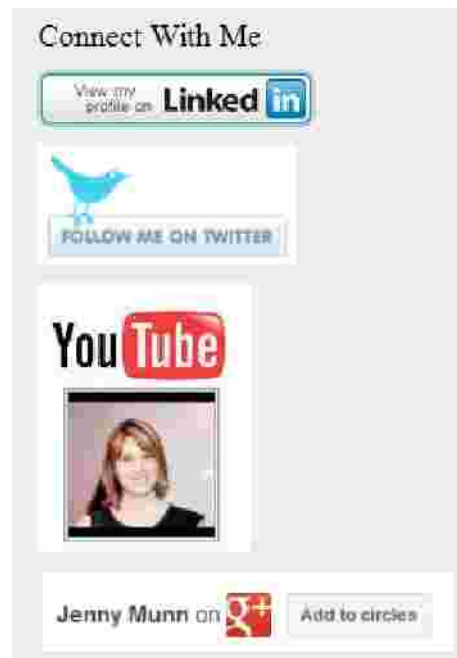
- ü Other statistics you should check out while you're there to gain insight:
 - ü The average visit duration
 - ü The pages/visited
 - ü Referring sites
 - ü Top landing pages
 - ü Top exit pages
 - ü Social Overview

Step 5: Review Their Social Media Presence

As you know, social signals have become an integral factor for SEO. As a digital media professional, you know how important effective social media is.

Here are the basic SEO checklist factors you'll want to evaluate:

- ü What social media accounts does the client have? (image below shows a few different social media sites out there)
- ü Are they active and recent?
- ü Are they targeting keywords?
- ü Does the client have a resource to manage social media marketing?



Step 6: Do a Technical Audit

Ensuring a search engine can crawl and index a site is the focus of a technical SEO audit. Depending on your technical ability, you can do this quick audit yourself or get together with a technical colleague to do the following:

- ü Check the speed of pages (you can use [Google Page Speed Online](#))
- ü Check for duplicate content
- ü Assess basic crawl issues
- ü Review the content management system, templates and source code
- ü Document the site URL structure with Xenu Link Sleuth (a free software that crawls the site and provides a report of all the URLs)
- ü Do a Google site command to see how many pages are being indexed

Tip: I do not have a technical background. So when I'm doing a serious SEO audit, I hire out a technical colleague for an hour consultation and have them assess:

Accessibility and Indexability: checking robots.txt file, identify pages that are blocking crawlers with robots meta tags, URL or 404 return errors, broken links, correct redirects, does XML sitemap exist and does it follow protocol, is site architecture appropriate, page load time, review back end WordPress system, template, source code, other SEO readiness, technical duplicate content signs, URLs parameters, HTML markup.

Step 7: Analyze Onpage Factors

Although you don't have to get too in depth here, you'll want to evaluate the client's content quality and on page factors on their primary pages at a minimum:

- ü Content Quality

- ü Are there at least 250 words on every page
- ü Is the content fresh, useful and shareable?
- ü Is the juicy stuff above the fold?
- ü Does the content load quickly?

- ü Keywords in the copy:

- ü Are there keywords in the headings and sub-heads?
- ü Are any keywords in the first paragraph of the text?
- ü Is there a call to action?
- ü Does each website page have unique, keyword-rich meta data?

If your client's site cannot offer quality and relevant content, the users will simply hit the back button. The search engines will take note of this, and will perceive this that the user did not find anything relevant for their search.

Step 8: Conduct a Quick Check of One Important Offpage Factor

No audit is complete without a quick check to see what's happening away from your client's site. While many SEO professionals subscribe to SEO software packages (like SEOMoz), you can do a basic check with a simple free tool: OpenSiteExplorer.com

- ü Enter your client's URL in [Open Site Explorer](http://OpenSiteExplorer.com) and see who is linking to them



Conclusion

Taking the time to learn about your client's site and SEO viability will be well worth it. While Google generally uses about 200 factors to identify how a site will rank, auditing these crucial website components will put you in a much better place to be seen as a trusted advisor, qualified service provider, and all-around awesome digital media professional.

After the initial audit, you can devise a plan to help your client improve their visibility, expand their reach, bring in additional customers, and become more profitable.

Additional SEO Resources

Free (and free is always good!)

- ü Google's "[Search Engine Optimization Starter Guide](#)": although it's free and straight from the source, it's not immediately evident how recently it's been updated. Plus, it's intended for webmasters so just be aware it gets technical.
- ü SEOMoz's "The Beginner's Guide to Search Engine Optimization (SEO)" is a great resource, even if it is a little overwhelming—and certainly very time consuming—to pore through.

\$20+ Resources (and a little more advanced)

- ü The Art of SEO by Eric Enge, Stephan Spencer, Jessie Stricchiola and Rand Fishkin
- ü Lee Odden's Optimize provides a great—albeit overly strategic—breakdown of the different SEO audits

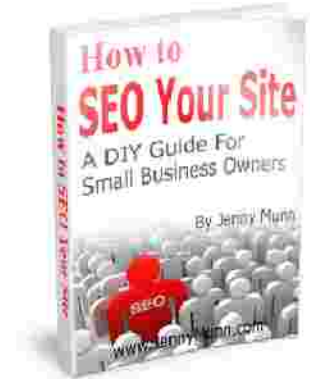
The 5 essential audits that will assess an SEO baseline are:

1. Keyword research
2. Content audit
3. Technical SEO audit
4. Link footprint
5. Social SEO audit

- "Optimize" by Lee Odden

Looking for a Step-by-Step SEO Guide?

You know the “what” of SEO...but if you want to know the “how,” check out my ebook workbook, “[How to SEO Your Site: A DIY Guide for Small Business Owners.](#)”



Here's what a few readers had to say:

“Thanks so much for your wonderful ebook. My clients have begun seeing results based on your advice and they are excited to take their SEO to the next level using the strategies in your book.” -Jason Cyr, WordPress Website Designer

“Hung out with my buddy Steve S. last night who raved about your e-book on SEO. Said it was a real eye-opener for him and the best money he's spent on his business in awhile — wanted to let you know.”
-Don Sadler, Copywriter

“Our website is miabaa.com and we rank on the first page for many key words. I can't say I've done it all myself but your book taught me a lot about SEO!”
-William Faithluvhope, Business Owner, Made In America By An American



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About Jenny Munn

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Jenny Munn is a freelance [Atlanta Copywriter](#) who specializes in SEO and website copy. She helps clients promote their products and services and execute their marketing, communications and PR strategies—online and offline.

Jenny has had the privilege of writing copy for The Home Depot, Georgia Pacific, The Real Chow Baby, SunGard, and many other agencies, SMBs and solopreneurs. Through a DIY SEO strategy, Jenny generates 50% of her business through a well-optimized WordPress website. Jenny loves blogging, speaking on marketing topics, all things WordPress, and working with driven, passionate people.

For more information visit my blog at www.JennyMunn.com/blog