How to Do a Content Audit: The Ultimate Checklist by @ashleymadhatter

When was the last time you ran performed a content audit?

Can’t remember?

You aren’t alone.

Most content creators are so focused on creating new content that they forget to audit their existing content.

Here are a few reasons *why* you need to audit your content:

- **Goals:** Is your content achieving its goals? Are you gaining any ROI from the content you’ve produced? You won’t know unless you measure your content’s performance and track it through regular audits.
- **Staleness:** Your content can become stale or even outdated overtime. Don’t beat yourself up, though. Stale content isn’t always your fault. What was relevant two years ago may not be as relevant now. On the bright side, you may just need to add a little extra spice to it to adapt to the times.
- **Wrong Information:** As your content ages, facts and data that once were accurate can become inaccurate. Running an audit through your content regularly will ensure your post’s accuracy and protect your brand’s reputation.
- **Know What’s Working:** How will you ever know what type of content or which blog post is your most successful if you never go back to audit all of your content pieces? Perhaps pumping out three blog posts a week is really just tiring, and not actually producing any results. You’ll never know if you don’t go back and do a content audit to see which pieces perform best, and which were

the worst.

Hopefully one, if not all, of those bullets spoke to you and you now understand why it’s so important to audit your content regularly.

Now, let’s get into the audit breakdown.

Content Details Audit

The first part of a content audit is dissecting the basics on the content piece and is a one-time entry on your audit.

Looks at how the content was created, how many people it took to create the content, and the basic publishing information.

You'll want to track the following for each piece of content in a separate content details audit spreadsheet:

- URL
- Author
- Team Produced (content team, social team, SEO team, etc.)
- Total Time (how long did it take to produce the content in it's entirety)
- Title
- Date
- Content Type (is it a blog post, infographic, case study, etc.)
- Content Goal (what was the point of producing the content: backlinks, traffic, conversions, etc.)
- Word count
- Comments
- Shares (break this down by social network and total)

Content Data Audit

Here comes the fun part.

The content data portion of your audit needs to come with it's own handy dandy excel doc, just like this one I created for you guys and gals.

Perform a Past Audit

Before we get into the data, you need to backtrack and audit your past produced content.

Knowing how the content you've already published performed will help you gauge what kind of content you need to create in the future, and what kind to *not* create.

This part of your content audit is going to be very in-depth and time consuming in the beginning.

You’ll need to decide how far back you want to begin your content audit and then gather all of the content URLs for that time period.

I recommend going back at least 1 year and gathering data for how your content performed the year before.

Collecting all of your past content URLs doesn’t have to be a manual process, though.

Luckily, there’s plenty of website analytics tool like Google Analytics or SEMrush’s Content Audit (*disclosure: I work for SEMrush*) tool that can quickly audit your content based on your sitemap data and provide you with the list of content pages.

Prepare Yourself For Ongoing Audits

Once you've caught up and added all of last year's content into your Excel doc, you'll want to repeat this audit activity for new content on a weekly basis.

It will be much easier to keep track of your content and audit it regularly when you're only having to go back one week to input data.

Add the following to your Excel doc and upload the most recent numbers and stats on a weekly basis.

Over time, if you see any drastic changes take note.

Sometimes content, especially evergreen content, can take months before it really takes off.

Metrics to Track

Here are the metrics you'll want to track for your content data audit:

Organic Traffic

Ideally, our content would be receiving a lot of organic traffic.

We wouldn't have to put any extra dollars towards advertising, people would just organically come across our content, love it, and engage.

If you aren't getting a lot of organic traffic to your content that could be a potential red flag.

Perhaps there is something wrong with:

- Your content strategy.
- How you're distributing the content.
- The content type.

- The content itself.

By evaluating the organic traffic metrics regularly in your audit, you'll know when you can pat yourself on the back or when you need to start over.

Bounce Rate

Are users bouncing right off your content page without viewing any other pages on your website?

If so, that's a sign of bad content.

Ideally, your content is just a gateway that leads a user from a search to your website, entertains or informs them, and then guides them to tour the rest of your site for their needs.

Unsure of what a good bounce rate is?

Rocket Fuel put together this graphic to describe the variety of percentages:

Backlinks

Bring on the backlinks – but only the good backlinks that give us a lot of boost and credibility, please!

You need to track the backlinks that your content produces on a regular basis for two big reasons:

- **Your backlinks will change over time.** The first day you publish a new piece of content you may gain 2-3 backlinks. Let a week go by and now 10-12 backlinks have appeared. A year down the road and now you have 589 backlinks to one piece of content.
- **Not all backlinks are good.** Sure, 589 backlinks might sound like a good thing, but not if 500 of those backlinks are potentially dangerous to your website and lead to spam. Those 500 links need to be removed ASAP or your website and rankings could take a hit. If you don't monitor all of your backlinks by auditing your content regularly, you'll miss out on the opportunity to remove dangerous backlinks before they begin to affect your rankings.

Time on Page

If your content is a long-form blog post of 2,500 words and the average time on page is 18 seconds, something is wrong.

This metric will inform you if your content just isn't right for your audience, or if it is and you need to create more content focusing on topics just like it.

Unique Visitors

We want lots of unique visitors viewing our content and increasing the amount of views the piece of content gets.

The more views, the more chances of ROI from content like conversions, engagement, shares, and backlinks.

Pages Per Session

How many pages is the user looking at after they have viewed your content?

What pages are they going to?

A blog post about the best winter coats to have can encourage a user to then click on links within the blog post and shop around on your website for different coats. Heck, maybe they'll even make a purchase (<– goal!).

New vs. Returning Users

Are you attracting a new audience with this piece of content?

Returning users are great. Returning customers are even better.

But we also need to aim to attract *new* users with our content.

Traffic Sources

Learn where your traffic is coming from by defining your main traffic sources.

If a majority of your content's traffic is coming from Facebook, post more of your content on your Facebook page.

If hardly any is coming from your email newsletters, it may be time to restructure your emails.

Conversions

If your goal for a new piece of content is to generate 100 conversions in the first quarter, let's say email opt-ins for your email newsletter, you need to add a column and track the amount of conversions coming in from that piece of content.

The first week you're conversions could be as little as 2 and

you start to doubt the content entirely. Let two months go by, and continue to audit each week, and notice that now the content has produced 140 total conversion, not only hitting your goal but surpassing it.

Measure Results

Based on what your original content goals are, you need to decide whether your content is working for you.

Each piece of content you audit will have several data metrics attached to it. These metrics will tell you if you're hitting the mark or missing it drastically.

For the content that does well, take note of the content details audit. Analyze what type of content it was, the topic, who produced it, and when it published.

Repeating your successes can help you create similarly high-performing content.

For the content pieces that don't hit your goals, take extra note of their metrics. Sometimes it's the channels the content was published on. Other times it's a mixture of things such as the author, timeframe of publication, and/or the content type.

Don't be afraid to try new content types as long as you're willing to measure it's effectiveness through regular auditing.

Image Credits

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