

How to Conduct a Content Audit for Quality and Audience Experience

by [SONIA SIMONE](#)

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However you may feel about New Year's resolutions, January just seems to bring on the desire for fresh starts.

This month, the Copyblogger editorial team is tackling something we've had our eye on for awhile — a content audit.

Now I don't know about you, but that word *audit* doesn't really inspire me. In fact, the feeling it engenders is something more like phobia, or at least dread.

(If you have a friendlier term than *audit*, [come swing by LinkedIn](#) and make your suggestion — I'm all ears. Maybe a content makeover. Or a content cleanse. Hm, definitely needs work.)

Content audits get conducted for all kinds of reasons, often to ensure that content is well optimized to be discovered by search.

But, as we know, the [smartest SEO strategy in 2015](#) (and the foreseeable future) is to build a robust, interesting site with a lot of audience-satisfying content. So our audit will focus on those qualities — which might make things a little more fun as well.

If you want to give your site a fresh, clean start for the New Year, why not join us? Here are some thoughts:

Getting started

If your site's big, I'd suggest mobilizing your entire content team. If you're on your own, that's fine as well — but you'll need to prioritize and work your way through your most important content.

For larger sites, start with the most important pages — typically the ones that are already getting the best traffic. If you don't have a lot of content yet, just work from oldest to newest — that will give fresh eyes to material you haven't seen in awhile.

What do you want your content mix to look like?

One of the benefits of a content audit is you can get a good sense of what *The Whole Thing* looks like.

Before you do that, though, give some thought to what you *want* it to look like.

Some types of content attract new visitors, some strengthen your relationships, and some pave the way for a sale. What would be the ideal mix for your site?

(If content strategy is tricky for you, pick up two free ebooks from Brian Clark in our member library — [The Business Case for Agile Content Marketing](#) and [A Content Marketing Strategy that Works](#). Together, they'll help you figure out what kinds of content are needed for different functions. In fact, we have an entire free marketing library for you, which will come in handy as you're doing a project like this one.)

You'll also want to know what your most important topics are. [Keyword research](#) matters here — primarily to find the exact language that your audience uses when they think about the problems that you solve.

And you'll want to understand the basics of SEO copywriting as it works today. You guessed it, we have a free ebook to help you out there as well: [How to Create Compelling Content that Ranks Well in Search Engines](#).

Mechanics

The best tool for this is our friend, the spreadsheet. (The one in Google Docs works well if you're going to be sharing the workload with other people.)

You'll want columns for date, headline, full post URL, SEO optimization if you like, and "Action Required." You may want to also include columns for your most important content topics, and for content types (audience attraction content, persuasive content, relationship-building content, etc.).

If you haven't already, you'll probably want to set up blog categories for your key topics.

And finally, add anything you particularly want to improve on your site. You might wish you had better headlines, or a stronger writing voice, or more compelling post images. It's *your* site, so you get to decide what matters most to you.

Get started

Now you're ready to work your way through your content, piece by piece. Enter the headline, the page URL, and the publication date in your spreadsheet, and look for the following:

- Does the post fit into your content strategy? Where does it fit into the [audience experience](#) that you're trying to create? Is it on point for one (or more) of your important site topics? Has it been given a category?
- Have you done anything awkward to try to "optimize" this content for search, like stuffing it with keywords? If so, flag it as "Action Required" and schedule time to undo the damage. [Scribe](#) or your Rainmaker Platform SEO tools will help you make sure your post isn't "over-optimized," as well as help with the other elements that make sure your SEO is in great shape.
- Do you have rights to the image that you use? Are you sure?
- How does the headline look? Does it offer a benefit to the audience? Is it boring? Take a look at our [Magnetic Headlines ebook](#) if you think you might need some help on this one.
- How does the first paragraph read? Does it grab the reader's attention?
- How does the whole post read? Anything awkward that could be rewritten? Outdated information to correct? Typos to fix? Fluff or jargon that could be cut?
- Any dead links to correct or remove?
- Can you add links to your cornerstone content? For example, if you wrote a terrific post a year later on "Blue Widgets," and you use the phrase *blue widgets* in this post, go ahead and add a link to the great later article.
- Check the formatting. Can you add more line breaks? More subheads? [Reader-friendly formatting](#) is a quick way to make the content more readable without "dumbing it down" in any way.
- Is this piece of content particularly strong? Should it be compiled with other great posts onto a [content landing page](#)? Should you link to it more frequently in your other content? Could you create a podcast on some of its ideas?

Would it make a good infographic or SlideShare? Mark it “Action Required” with a note on how you might repurpose it.

- If for any reason you don’t want the post on your site anymore, redirect it to another page. Never delete a post that has any links to it.
- What’s the [call to action](#) on this page? Is it extremely clear? Is it currently relevant to your audience *and* your business?

Repeat this process for all of the written content on your site. You won’t go back and edit video or audio content, but you can edit the pages they’re housed on. You may want to schedule updates for key multimedia content if an idea is worth revisiting.

You’ll also want to go through this process for your [landing pages](#) — sales pages, your email opt-in page, and so forth. Look at them with a fresh eye and apply your latest marketing knowledge to them — since, as a Copyblogger reader, you’re



always learning, after all.

You may want to bring a [professional copywriter](#) in for some of these key pages if you don’t feel comfortable tackling them yourself.

As you move forward

A content audit will help you understand your site much more deeply — but that’s not the primary reason to do it. The *main* reason is to fix any issues and make the site much more audience-friendly (and supportive of your business goals).

Once the audit is completed, look through the “Action Required” items on your spreadsheet. Start scheduling them. If you’re low on a particular topic that’s important to your audience, schedule some posts on that topic in your content calendar right now.

At the end of this process, you’ll have a site that’s fresh, that’s up-to-date, that’s aligned with your content strategy, and that doesn’t have embarrassing problems like outdated information or dead links.

You’ll also have a mental template (you could even turn it into a checklist) for new content you create. You can hand that checklist to any new or guest writers, to let them know what matters to you.

Why you want to do all this in the first place

I know, right about now, you’re probably thinking that this sounds like a lot of work. Which, depending on the size of your site, it will be.

So why do it?

Because for content marketing to work, the content has to be in great shape. Which means it has to serve an audience incredibly well.

Google doesn't want to make websites popular, they want to rank popular websites. If you don't understand the difference, you're in for one hell of an uphill climb.

~ ["Sugar" Rae Hoffman](#)

A content audit that focuses on quality and audience experience produces the kind of site that Google wants to rank well — because it's the kind of site that your audience wants to watch, listen to, and read.

Doing your own content audit? Join us inside Authority

We'll be sharing our findings, stuck spots, and best practices over in the Authority community, where we're discussing member content audits and sharing tips and insights. (Of course, we'll also share what we learn during our own Copyblogger audit.)

Be sure to [swing by the forum thread](#) if you're a member and join the party! And if you aren't a member yet, [here's how you can take care of that](#). We have advanced marketing education and networking opportunities for you year-round, to make the most of your site and your content marketing.

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- 15 high-impact ebooks on content marketing, SEO, email marketing, landing pages, keyword research, and more.
- A 20-part Internet marketing course that lays out a comprehensive path for your own online strategy.

- An organized reference guide to the “**best of the best**” of Copyblogger.com, and how it all profitably fits together.