

# Content audit guide

Content audits are tedious and time-consuming, but necessary if you want to take stock of the content you have on your site. Here's our guide to get you started and you can download our content audit template.

## Why do an audit?

An audit can help you collect the information you need to:

- Review or redesign your information architecture (site structure, navigation systems)
- Migrate content into a content management system or new design
- Manage content quality
- Develop your content strategy.

## How to do an audit

### Decide on your goals before you start

Be clear on why you are doing the audit. Work out what you want to know about your content before you start. Think about how you will use the data you collect. There is no point collecting information you have no use for—spend your time wisely.

Talk to people involved in your project or team to make sure your goals and information needs are clear and understood.

### Get a page list

To get a listing of pages on your site, your IT department may be able to provide a:

- Directory listing from the web server
- Report from your content management system. You may be able to collect extra information about each page, like the metadata (page title, keywords), maintainer, approver, date created and expiry date.

If not, you could use one of these free tools to crawl your site:

- Xenu Link Sleuth (Windows) - <http://home.snafu.de/tilman/xenulink.html>
- HTTrack Website Copier (Windows) - <http://www.httrack.com/>
- SiteOrbiter (Mac OS X) - <http://www.siteorbiter.com/>

These tools require a small license fee to use:

- WinWebCrawler - <http://www.winwebcrawler.com/>
- ExtractURL - <http://www.spadixbd.com/extracturl/>

If none of the above suit your needs, you can always create a page list as you do your audit.

### **Copy your page list into a spreadsheet**

We have created this spreadsheet you can use. Add or remove columns, filters and formatting as you need for your project. Edit column comments or instructions if the template is going to be used by a small team doing an audit.

Excel template for content audit (XLS 46 kb) - <http://4syllables.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/content-audit-template.xls>

### **Work out what people power you will need**

If you have a very large site, you may need to get help with the audit. Keep the team as small as possible to reduce the risk of variations in your data.

Run a briefing workshop to make sure everyone knows why the audit is being done and how to do it. Get everyone to do a small sample first. Meet and review the data and discuss any problems or issues that came up. Keep in touch with the team as they work. Resolve issues as they arise.

### **Record your data**

#### **Begin with a small sample**

Do a small sample first to help you:

- Find problems or issues you may need to sort out
- Identify terms you can use for different types of data you want to collect
- Work out if there are any other shortcuts you can use to save time and effort.

#### **Work methodically**

If you have a list of pages generated for you, organise it to match your site's information hierarchy before you start. If you are going to generate the list as you go, work through your site methodically, section by section, level by level.

Click on each link (on the site, or from your spreadsheet or database) and record the relevant data. Most of the information you need will be on the page or in the source code. Record this first. Then turn to other sources to record any other data you need (usage statistics, page author/approver).

#### **Consider these tips**

- Automate as much data collection as possible
- Use 2 monitors — one for your web browser and one for your data collection spreadsheet or database
- Use keyboards shortcuts as much as possible (backspace for the browser back button; Ctrl-C/Ctrl-V for copy/paste)
- Take regular breaks to stretch and give your hands, eyes and body a rest.