



Pizza SEO: Effective Web

Effective Web Audit

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Table of Contents

1 (X)HTML Code / CSS Code

- 1.1 Valid code*
- 1.2 Layout*
- 1.3 CSS & JavaScript*
- 1.4 TITLE element*
- 1.5 META Description element*
- 1.6 Structure of pages*

2 Structure of URL addresses

- 2.1 Friendly URL addresses*
- 2.2 Duplicate content*

3 Technical issues

- 3.1 Indexed pages*
- 3.2 Cached pages*
- 3.3 Robots.txt*
- 3.4 Links functionality*

4 Statistics

- 4.1 Visitor tracking*
- 4.2 Google Webmaster tools*
- 4.3 Keywords & their positions in search engines*
- 4.4 Backlinks*

5 Accessibility

- 5.1 Different web browsers*
- 5.2 Text size changing*



5.3 Text links identification

5.4 Loading time

6 Usability

6.1 Logo positioning

6.2 Site navigation

6.3 Visitor's current location

6.4 Sitemap

6.5 Unique selling proposition

6.6 Links target

6.7 Link titles

6.8 Meaningful content

6.9 404 page



Summary

Pizza SEO team was using Effective Web Audit for evaluation of web pages of their clients from year 2007 to mid-2009. Effective Web Audit was our entry service and served as a basis for further optimization. It was aimed at recommendations regarding optimization of the web site (code and content), however it also included basic recommendations on usability and accessibility.

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About Pizza SEO

Pizza SEO company is a team of professionals in internet marketing. Good presentation on the internet means for us effective web sites, meaningful presence in the social networks and measurably effective ads. User testing brings in simple usage of web sites.

We help clients to manager their reputation online. We design and manage advertisement campaigns in Adwords, Facebook and other ad systems.

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1. (X)HTML Code / CSS Code

1.1 Valid code

The code of your site should be valid (according to W3C standards). Valid code is more readable for search engines, easier for web browsers to parse and shorter in size, which means, that it can be downloaded faster by the browsers.

Is the code valid?

1.2 Layout

Many websites use tables (TABLE elements) to layout their pages. This method of dividing the content of a page seems quite easy for developers to manage, but brings several serious disadvantages. Each table needs quite a lot of data (you need to type <tr> tags for each table row and <td> tags for each table cell etc.). This leads to needlessly large files, which are also hard to read for the search engines, since the content is not ordered logically in the code.

We recommend using tables only for displaying tabular data. For page layout it is better to use (X)HTML/CSS layout. This means using DIV elements in (X)HTML code to divide the content and CSS (Cascading Style Sheets) to style these elements (their look, position on the site etc.).

What kind of layout does website use on its pages?

1.3 CSS & JavaScript

It is not advisable to store unnecessary data in the (X)HTML code, because it increases the ratio of code to content. If a page contains huge amounts of code and only little text,



Effective Web Audit

the search engines may consider this page as not very important for the user.

This is why you should remove all visual styling attributes (STYLE, WIDTH, MARGIN, BORDER, etc.) and visual styling elements (FONT, CENTER, etc.) from the (X)HTML code and put it into an external CSS file/s. Also you should remove all JavaScript functions specified in the (X)HTML code and move them into external JS file/s.

Furthermore, when all styling attributes, elements and JavaScript code are removed from the (X)HTML code, the amount of data transferred will be reduced (external CSS and JS files are not being transferred repeatedly for each page) and the pages will be displayed a little faster.

Is there any unnecessary CSS and/or JavaScript data on pages?

1.4 TITLE element

Each page on a site should have TITLE element set in (X)HTML code. This titles should be unique for each page and should contain the most accurate keyword/s describing the page, reflecting keywords potential users search for/expect to see. If written properly, they can increase the page's ranking for the keywords in the search engines. The major search engines also use these titles as the titles of results in their SERPs (Search Engine Results Pages).

Are the TITLE elements written properly?

1.5 META Description element

As well as the TITLE element, META Description element is one of the major factors of the page's ranking in the search engines for selected keywords. The content of this element



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should consist of one or two sentences describing the purpose of the page. Use the main keyword/s of the page in this element, but do not only list the keywords. The major search engines use the content of the META Description element in their SERPs (Search Engine Results Pages) as the description of the result link (snippet). Consider the fact that it can encourage a user to click on the link in the SERPs if it is written properly (or discourage otherwise).

Are the META Description elements written properly?

1.6 Structure of pages

To make the pages easier for web crawlers (but also for users) to “understand”, you should keep a logical structure of the pages. You should use the most significant (level 1) heading (H1 element) exactly once on each page to tell what is the main title of the page, then use 2nd level headings (H2 elements) for subtitles under the main title on each page etc. For listing of some content items (this includes page navigation, since it actually is a list of links to subpages on a site) use UL (for unordered lists), OL (for ordered lists) and LI (for list items) elements. For new paragraph of text, use P element, for address use ADDRESS element, for code examples use CODE element etc.

Are the pages structured correctly?



2. Structure of URL addresses

2.1 Friendly URL addresses

We recommend using search-engine and user-friendly URL addresses. This means that there are no long and hard (or impossible) to remember text strings in the addresses. This is usually a problem of some online shops which use addresses like 'http://www.domainname.com/index.php?cat=3&product=104'. It would be much better to replace this with an address like 'http://www.domainname.com/categoryname/productname'. Not only can the average visitor remember such an address, but also the search engines like them better since they are easier to crawl and index.

Is website using friendly URL addresses?

2.2 Duplicate content

Some site owners use 'www' in their URL addresses (http://www.domainname.com), others prefer 'non-www' URL addresses (http://domainname.com). It does not matter to search engines which version is used. Problem may appear when both the 'www' and the 'non-www' URL addresses are active and show the same content. The search engines consider them as two different pages and will index one of them (the one they find first) and when they find the other one, they will index it as the duplicity of the first one. This is a problem because it can also happen with all subpages on a site (http://www.domainname.com/page1 vs http://domainname.com/page1 etc.). The more duplicate content the site has indexed in the search engines indices, the less valuable the site appears to the search engines. Additionally, outside links may point to two different addresses for the same content rather than to a single stronger page.



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To solve this problem, you should decide whether you want or not the 'www' in URL addresses of your site's pages and redirect the other version accordingly using 301 HTTP Status Code. When the redirection is done, change all the internal links on your site so that they will point only to the addresses you prefer.

The problem with a duplicate content rises also with incorrect using of URLs. That means, that the duplicity problem causes not only the www and non-www URLs, but also when for example <http://www.domainname.com> and <http://www.domainname.com/index.php> have the same content.

To solve this problem, you should redirect the pages which can cause duplicity to relevant pages using 301 HTTP Status Code.

Does website contain a duplicate content?



3. Technical issues

3.1 Indexed pages

If a site is not new (several days/weeks old), all of its pages should be indexed by the major search engines. Otherwise (if there are some pages from the site missing in the search engines' indices) it is very likely that the search engines have penalized some pages of the site. The reasons could vary, for example using [black hat SEO techniques](#) or containing some badware (mentioned below) etc.

Are the pages indexed in Google.com?

3.2 Cached pages

Google regularly visits pages it considers as valuable and stores them in its cache. If there is no cache record for a site in Google indices, there is a chance that the site blocks Googlebots from visiting it. This may be done via 'robots.txt' file or '.htaccess' file or via META Robots element directly on a page. To make the search engines cache the site all the search engine robots should be allowed to visit and index the site.

Are pages cached in Google?

3.3 Robots.txt

'Robots.txt' file defines how the search engine robots should behave when visiting the site. It should not disallow them to see any important part of content on the site. It is also possible to use this file to prevent the search engines from indexing duplicate content.



To allow all robots to see entire site you should create 'robots.txt' file with this content:

```
User-agent: *  
Disallow:
```

Is there a 'robots.txt' file created for website?

3.4 Links functionality

If there are some broken links (e.g. leading to non-existing pages) on a site, it signals to the search engines that the site is not updated. Sites that are not being updated regularly are considered by the search engines as less valuable to users.

Existence of broken links on a site can be checked using various tools, e.g. the Xenu Link Sleuth from <http://home.snafu.de/tilman/xenulink.html>.

Are there any broken links?



4. Statistics

4.1 Traffic tracking

It is advisable for website owners to track their sites' traffic. They can see statistics of how many users visit the site, what pages are the most visited, how long the visitors stay on the site, where do the visitors come from and many other actionable data. These statistics are very valuable to improve the site's content and structure and so gain more visitors who will stay longer on the site.

There are numerous tools ways for tracking site traffic. As one of the options we recommend installing [Google Analytics](#) to track your site's traffic.

Is traffic tracking sufficient?

4.2 Google Webmaster tools

We recommend using Google Webmaster tools to gain additional information about a site, which is very useful for SEO. In Google Webmasters tools you can find information about any possible problems of crawling or indexing individual pages of the site, PageRank statistics, internal and external links and other useful information.

Does website have Google Webmaster Tools enabled?

4.3 Keywords & their positions in search engines

It is very important to determine what keywords are the most important for a site. Then a



Effective Web Audit

complex keyword analysis can show which of them are appropriate for SEO. The analysis can also suggest alternative keywords with potential to bring useful traffic. When you have chosen the right keywords, you can use them according to the recommendations mentioned above. Then you can track how your site ranks for the keywords in the major search engines.

What are the basic keywords and how do they rank in search engines?

4.4 Backlinks

Backlinks are links that are directed towards your website. The number of backlinks is an indication of the popularity or importance of that website. Backlinks are important for SEO because some search engines, especially Google, will give more credit to websites that have a good number of quality backlinks, and consider those websites more relevant than others in their results pages for a search query. The anchor texts of backlinks tell the search engine the word or phrase, for which is target website relevant. Backlinks should not target only to homepage, but also to some inside pages.

There is a lot of tools to check backlinks for the webpage, for example <http://www.backlinkwatch.com>.

How are the backlinks looking?



5. Accessibility

5.1 *Different web browsers*

If the site wants to have the highest number of visitors possible, it should be readable and displayed correctly at least in the most popular web browsers. We provide website testing in Internet Explorer 6, Internet Explorer 7 and Mozilla Firefox as part of the Web Effective Audit.

Is website readable and being displayed correctly in the tested browsers?

5.2 *Text size changing*

Many users like to increase or decrease the size of the text in their web browsers. They may have variety of reasons to do so (visual problems, different screen resolutions etc.). To avoid losing these visitors, the site should be readable even if the text size in the browser has changed.

Is website readable when the text size in browsers is not set to default?

5.3 *Text link identification*

If text links on a site are not differentiated enough from other text on the site, many users will overlook them and thus they will not find the content you want to show them. In our opinion the best way how to differentiate the links from other text is to underline them and set them a color that is not used for any other text on the site.



Are text links differentiated enough from other text on the site?

5.4 Load time

Huge pages, which take too long to display may discourage some users from visiting the pages again. There are still some users with slow internet connection. We recommend to keep the pages at most so big that they can still be loaded in less than 10 seconds when using 56.6 kbps connection or in less then 3 seconds with high speed connections.

How long does it take to load a home page?



6. Usability

6.1 Logo positioning

Most internet users expect some picture logo of the site at the top (or top left) of the company's website when they visit the site. They also expect this logo to function as a link to the home page of the site. If your site has a picture logo, we recommend that you place it in the top left part of the page and make it a link pointing to your home page.

Is the logo positioned properly?

6.2 Site navigation

Navigation menu on a site should be well-arranged and usable even for users who turn off image displaying and/or JavaScript in their browsers. We recommend to use unordered list (UL and LI elements) styled via CSS (Cascading Style Sheets) for creating the menu. We do not recommend using only pictures or JavaScript for the menu.

The navigation menu should also contain the basic links a user can expect, such as 'home', 'about us', 'contact' etc.

Is the navigation menu well-positioned?

6.3 Visitor's current location

If the structure of a website is more complex, it is really important to let a visitor know where on the site (s)he currently is and where can (s)he go next. If the visitor miss such a



information, (s)he will get lost on the site and will rather leave it. You can highlight the navigation menu item to show the visitor his/her current location or if your page is more complex, you can use [breadcrumbs \(breadcrumb trails\)](#).

Is it clear to a visitor what his/her current location is?

6.4 Sitemap

Sitemap is a page with a structured list of links to all important pages of the site. It is useful not only for visitors to get the view of the site's structure of pages, but also for the search engines to make them find important parts of the site easier.

Is there a sitemap?

6.5 Unique selling proposition

Every website should contain a short descriptive text about the key benefits of visiting the page. This information should be placed at least on the home page of the site and should serve as a proposition that makes a visitor stay on the site and not leave it for a competitor's site. Such a short descriptive text on the site also increases the amount of content on it and if the main keywords are used within it, the search engines will take it into consideration.

Is there a unique selling proposition?



6.6 Links target

Some webpages target links to a new window. We do not recommend doing so in general. Today users expect the links to open in the same window and they can force opening a link to a new window themselves if needed (using middle mouse button in Mozilla Firefox for example). There are some exceptions when opening a link opens a new window (e.g. opening larger picture view), but the new opened window should not be too big (or even full-screen) because the user should immediately recognize that new window has opened. It is a good idea to inform the user about the links opening in a new window ('will open in a new window' text next to the link for example).

Are there links targeting to new window?

6.7 Link titles

Every link on a website should contain a TITLE attribute – text description, which tells to the user, where is the target of the link or (more precisely) what the user can expect from clicking on the link.

Are there titles defined for the links?

6.8 Meaningful content

If there are some errors or mistakes in the text of a website, the site loses its credibility. You should take care to write rich and correct texts on your website. Avoid any grammar mistakes and consider a type of your site's audience to choose the most proper style of language (e.g. do not use slang on a professional company's website).



Is text written correctly?

6.9 404 page

When the user 'asks' for a nonexisting page in a browser, usually '404' or 'Page Not Found' page appears. If not set else, the generic server 404 page is displayed in that situation. Instead of it, it is good to have specific (own) 404 page, with website logo, sitemap and/or alternative to the requested page.

Does a 404 page exist?