

Berry Interesting Productions, Inc.



8-point Site Audit Checklist

Berry Interesting offers site audit services for brands of all sizes with the goal of increasing the stability, quality, and user experience on client websites.

A **website audit** helps you understand if your site is designed to achieve your goals - whether that's traffic from specific sources like search engines, conversion of site visitors into leads, or just plain eCommerce sales. During an audit, you'll take specific steps to identify improvement opportunities to boost your website's performance and reach your business objectives.

This high-level website audit overview reveals Berry Interesting's internal process to evaluate the health and efficacy of a client's site. We regularly perform audits for new clients using this process. However, we do **not** consider an audit as the final description of the work necessary to keep a site running well and fully serving business needs.

A website audit reflects the specific needs of our client and the capabilities of their website. We use audits like these to provide a balanced, well-maintained, and reliable website. By conducting an audit, we are able to collaboratively evaluate site performance and regularly respond to concerns. When Berry Interesting conducts an audit, we also incorporate the specific needs of both your business needs and your website itself.

Regular audits are crucial to the ongoing stability and health of your site and the marketing efforts that rely on your internet presence. Berry Interesting recommends engaging a professional to keep a persistent and responsive perspective on website performance concerns. You already know that attention and focus lead to business success. Berry Interesting can help you identify the right approach for your objectives, whether that's assigning one person in your organization who's tasked with regular audit activities, asking your marketing agency to handle these concerns alongside their other services, or hiring a consultant specifically for web support.



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INTRODUCTION

WHAT YOU'LL LEARN FROM A WEBSITE AUDIT

- 🍷 How easy is it for a visitor to use your site?
- 🍷 Is your site using up-to-date technology to minimize compatibility errors on your site with visitors' devices?
- 🍷 How visible is your site to search engines?
- 🍷 Are your messages consistent and speaking to your ideal audience?
- 🍷 Are your content marketing tools adequately supporting your marketing team?

A close-up photograph of several ripe raspberries with green leaves, filling the top portion of the page.

INTRODUCTION

HELPFUL TOOLS

Great news! A wide digital toolset is available (and many are free!) to make this process easier. At BIPi, we use the following:

- **Google Drive** - for high-availability document sharing and editing. Google Docs act pretty much the same as Word, allowing for change tracking and commenting. These documents are stored in the cloud, allowing multiple team members access and editing without creating new versions. You can also roll back contents easily to previous versions, making version control a snap.
- **Dropbox** - this is where we store files that don't need version control, like photos, graphics, fonts, and miscellaneous documents.
- **BugHerd** - this paid tool allows multiple users to basically put "sticky notes" on a website, which are then collected in the BugHerd interface. This "sticky note" interface encourages better communication with your team about the exact spot being discussed.
- **SlickPlan** - for creating website sitemaps, SlickPlan has additional content management features in its paid plan. This tool allows shared team editing and the ability to export final content to a website. SlickPlan is a good alternative to Google Docs with a visual experience of the site's architecture.
- **Teamwork** - In our opinion, this is some of BIPi's best-spent money! Teamwork is a task and project management tool to assign tasks to one or multiple people, set deadlines, assign urgency, categorize tasks by type, and enforce task dependencies.
- **Screaming Frog** - this is a paid tool for crawling websites that extracts information from the code of your website and helps you improve SEO. We use it mainly to monitor for broken links.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Now is a great time to get super organized in preparation for an audit. If you do discover something during the audit and need professional help, you're prepared to give your support team all the info they need for success. Trust us — your website and your budget will thank you later!

First, collect usernames, passwords, and login links for your website. Your website is unique and will have its own unique set of necessary credentials. We recommend creating a spreadsheet to cover all the website information you use.



Pro tip!

At BIPi, we use Google sheets to organize info like this for our clients and for ourselves. You can even [access a sample of the sheet we use here](#).

Now is not the time to be shy. Like a doctor's checkup, a successful audit relies on a clear, honest, and thorough evaluation. It may take several days to think through each piece, but the resulting information will make an audit much smoother and faster!

Don't get overwhelmed! You may not have all of this information at your fingertips, and that's okay! Collect what you can now, and you will make your "digital life" much easier in the future.

One last question: What color paint is this?

Your audit pre-work is almost done! An effective audit also includes a review of the branding on your site, including fonts, colors, logo versions (such as .eps, .ai, .jpg, and .png formats), and style guides. If you have previously developed a branding kit or brand standards guide, then much of this should be included. If not, you can establish your brand standards at the beginning of a website build.



Pro tip!

If you only have one .jpg file of your logo, immediately reach out to the original designer to acquire it, or plan to have the logo rebuilt as a vector. If you don't have a Brand Standards guide, give us a call! We can help you sort that out or find a great designer.

01 TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Let's begin the audit with your technical architecture to explore the performance of the underlying technology. In a way, this is like taking a car for a test drive, and evaluating the look, the style, the sound, the performance, and the handling in varied conditions. On your website, technology considerations affect every other aspect of the site and your user's experience, so it's your first and biggest concern.

- Is your site loading as expected?
- Do you see any glaring issues (broken images, pages that don't load at all)?
- Are site logins, on-site contact forms, and social media integrations working as expected?

Next, check your site performance across a variety of devices and applications. Think Mac vs. PC, mobile vs. tablet, Internet Explorer vs. Chrome. Note any platforms that are causing problems below.

- Does your site load properly across all the major browsers?
- Does your site load properly across all the major mobile devices?

Run a speed test using a tool like Pingdom's Website Speed Test and analyze the results.

- Is your site loading in less than two seconds in a desktop or laptop browser? Less than three seconds in a mobile browser?
- Are there any red flags in the results?



Pro tip!

The results for each of these questions will result in a range of responses. Think carefully about what your range means to your customers, and whether they remain on your site if it is moving "too slowly" for their expectations.

When we look at security, we are evaluating how well your site incorporates common hacking-prevention techniques and practices.

- Do you have an SSL certificate installed?
- Is the site loading via “https://” on all pages? Note any security messages you might receive from different browsers.
- Advanced question:* Have you implemented security best practices, such as refusing logins after multiple failed attempts?
- Advanced question:* Are you forcing users to use two-factor authentication and strong passwords?

Your website, just like your computer or smartphone, requires regular software updates for smooth and safe website access.

- How frequently do you update your site’s software, such as plugins, themes, and scripts?
- How frequently do you perform full site backups?
- Are you able to easily restore your site to a backup if problems arise or your website is accessed without your control?
- Is there software on your website that is not licensed but should be? Like making a list of your licensed plugins, make a similar list of all freeware, acquired, or inherited unlicensed products.



Pro tip!

Some developers create a great plugin, but then never update it for various reasons. Abandoned plugins can become a security risk! If you have a plugin that is an old version or has not been updated for a long time, consider installing a newer or better plugin to use instead.

A quality User eXperience (usually referred to by the acronym **UX**) is essential for website-based sales or marketing. Your website is most likely the first interaction that a client or customer will have with your business. Maintaining quality UX is the website equivalent of keeping your brick-and-mortar office clean, welcoming, and easy to access.

The visual presentation of your website must be consistent and welcoming to users. You may not have gone through a complete branding process, but these questions can identify the important values in your users' experiences.

- Is your color palette distinct and consistent with your in-person branding or printed collateral?
- Is your logo easy to read, recognize on a page, and consistently identify?
- Are the fonts on your site used consistently, and reflect your in-person or printed materials?
- Are the "calls to action" (buttons, links, icons) the same color/shape/size/style?

Menu structures are also a common source for web visitors' confusion. It's important to think critically about the order and organization of your site's menus, including your primary menu (often found at the top of the page) or secondary navigational elements (like sidebar selection tools).

- Is your menu easily accessed? Does it make sense to new visitors? Do your visitors know how to find specific information on your site?
- Is your menu consistent from page to page, or does it shift location, format, or function?
- Are the items in your menu in a logical order? Are the most important items highlighted or featured in any way?
- Are secondary navigational items clearly labeled and logically placed?
- Do you have a menu in the footer that acts as a sitemap or takes the pressure off the primary navigation to be "everything"?

04 MOBILE-SPECIFIC CONCERNS

Mobile website viewing currently accounts for a little over half of web traffic worldwide. If your website doesn't emphasize mobile presentation first, you are in danger of falling behind.

You don't need a mobile-specific version of your site to succeed at being mobile-friendly! In fact, you're usually better off with a site that's "responsive," which means that the site content adapts to the size of the user's screen.

A consistent experience on your website should be reliable on every device, regardless of screen size. The emphasis on mobile web use reflects many web developers' mobile-first perspective. If a website provides a quality mobile experience, your visitors often translate the consistent experience into an expectation of reliability for your work.

- Are buttons on your site big enough to be easily "tapped"?
- Are your voice phone numbers configured as "click-to-call" links? How about fax and SMS numbers?
- Does your site use advertising that interferes with content viewing?
- If your site uses "popover," "popup," or "cover" engagement tools, is it easy for the user to dismiss the notice?



Pro tip!

Button size is important! The recommended minimum size for iOS is 44px x 44px; for Android it's 48px x 48px. That's big enough for a human finger to accurately and consistently be able to successfully "tap" on an icon or button without inadvertently taking another action.

The most important part of your site is your content. Developing solid content should precede the build and launch of your website, but it's very common for this aspect to be overlooked in the rush to get a site launched. Your content is the reason for your website, and includes written copy in all forms: headlines, calls to action, body copy, sidebars. But copy goes beyond just words, to include photography, graphics, form fields, and downloadable assets or documents.

If your site's content did not get the attention it deserved when you were first developing your site, this part of the audit process becomes even more important. Now is the time to identify strategies to improve your site's performance and strengthen all of your content to support your marketing efforts. The good news (or great news!) is that you can develop new content without fully redesigning your website. If you are working hard to maintain simplicity, you can develop new content with as little as a text document. For teams, consider using a tool like SlickPlan or Gather.

A content auditor is particularly aware of the following opportunities for improvement. Think of them as potential "failure points" in your content structure and places to make positive changes.

DUPLICATE COPY

If you are creating a strategy to boost your online search results, consider this: Google's content search tools will rank you higher with original content. That means that your site's duplicate copy can contribute to a lower search engine rank. A common characteristic of low-value sites is the same information copied on the same page, across multiple pages, and (we know you don't do this) plagiarized or copied from different sources. For example, if you have posted the full text of a news article that is still published on the original source site, Google's search engine will perceive this as scam-related content and will penalize you.

- Does your site include duplicate copy? How do you know?
- If you intend to leave duplicate copy on your site, what is your reasoning?
- Do you have a plan to phase duplicate content out or replace the content with original content?

CALLS TO ACTION

Understanding your website visitors includes giving them meaningful ways to interact with you. Most business websites are designed to get visitors to make some sort of action (a Call to Action, or CTA). The CTA is especially important on your home page. Check your CTAs with these questions.

- Does your homepage CTA align with your site goals?
- Methodically go through every CTA on your site. Does each CTA encourage a meaningful “click” or interaction?
- Have you considered alternatives that could improve your site’s performance? Do you have an easy-to-follow flow to encourage reading multiple blog posts, submitting a form, taking a survey, or signing up for your newsletter?

BROKEN LINKS

Search engines, website visitors, and broken website links don’t mix. If you have broken links on your site, search engines will penalize you by lowering your search engine ranking. When your website visitors click on links that don’t work, it signals to users that your site is out-of-date. Broken links are a part of having a website, but they are relatively easy to fix or remove.

Berry Interesting uses several tools for identifying broken links as part of our client audits. If you’re conducting the audit yourself, try running a broken-link audit using a tool like [Screaming Frog](#).

- Create a plan for identifying and resolving all broken links.

PHOTOGRAPHY & GRAPHICS

Like text, images and graphic elements should always align to your website purpose. Every image should reflect your story, and not leave the viewer confused or unclear about the purpose of the image.

- Does the photography used on your site properly represent your brand?
- Are you using photos that accurately represent your company and your customer base?
- If you're using 100% stock photos, consider hiring a photographer to take photos of your brand in action.
- Do your graphic choices match your brand standards in terms of shape and color? You may want to consider finding an illustrator to create a set of icons/graphics that you can use repeatedly while staying true to your brand standards.



Pro tip!

In 1974, the modern version of the phrase “content is king” emerged in the publishing world, and was popularized when internet-based information emerged in the 1990s. Today, good website writing and graphics are more meaningful than ever. Investing in solid content development is a cost that redeems itself over and over again. If you find that your content is lacking after an audit, BIPi can help you build a content development strategy.

ACCESSIBILITY

If you are like most website owners, managers, or developers, accessibility is a newer consideration of the online world. Website accessibility is a topic that will continue to grow in importance, so auditing your website's structure now will help eliminate problems in the future as your site grows and changes.

There are plenty of ways to improve your site's accessibility without a full audit or a knowledge of coding! See below for some questions to ask as you get started:

- Does your site offer an "after market" accessibility tool for the users? For example, the BIPi website uses a simple plugin that gives the user a toggle on the right hand side of the browser that allows them to increase the text size or enhance the site contrast.
- Does your site use breadcrumbs on every page (other than the home page or first tier of pages)?
- Does your site have a link or box for searching on every page?
- Are your header tags ("h tags") properly nested and visually unique?
- Do all the images on your site include alt-text?
- Is your site's color palette accessible to users with vision impairments like color blindness?
- Do you have downloadable assets like .pdfs? Have those downloadable assets also been reviewed for accessibility?

FINE PRINT

With the advent of the [GDPR](#) (General Data Protection Regulation) and [CCPA](#) (California Consumer Privacy Act), every site developer needs to consider site visitor disclosures. Berry Interesting *always* suggests that you work with an attorney, although you may be able to start using data safely at first with an online “terms and conditions” generator like [termsfeed](#).

Including well-crafted legal statements on your website signals that your website (and your business) is trustworthy and legitimate. The goal of legal data collection strategies is to both *protect your business* and *inform your site visitors* of how your website collects data and how the data will be used. As an additional benefit, keeping your legal documents up-to-date helps you modify these statements periodically to ensure they provide adequate legal coverage.

- Does your site have a Privacy Policy?
- Does your site have an Accessibility Policy?
- Does your site have a Terms & Conditions page?



Pro tip!

View [BIPi's Intro to ADA Compliance guide](#) to get started. If you're super overwhelmed by accessibility and legal concerns, you're not alone! Contact BIPi for a full accessibility audit and remediation scope.

Search engines like Google wield a profound influence over your business. There's no getting around "playing nice" with search engines if you want your site to appear when your customers are searching. Luckily, the work you do to "shake hands" with search engines will also make your site more user friendly!

The following audit questions are fairly comprehensive. Don't be intimidated by the breadth of the questions, because many of them are related.

- Does your site have an up-to-date XML sitemap to improve your pages' indexing and search engine recognition?
- Is your site connected to Google tools, analytics, and web console? Is a specific person on your team who is paying attention to notifications?
- Is your on-page content structured properly, using header-tags? Are you considering on-page keywords and search terms?
- Have you used schema markup in spots where it's appropriate, such as addresses, phone numbers, or unique identifiers?
- Does every page on your site have a title tag and a meta description that a human thoughtfully configured?
- Is your business address and phone number clearly (and correctly!) displayed on the website in a spot where users would expect it to be?
- Are your URL structures readable and keyword-aware? (In other words, are they long strings of letters/numbers, or are they "readable"?)
- Are on-page images optimized for keywords and accessibility? Do they use alt text and meaningful file names?
- How many shares is your site receiving on social media? How do you monitor the growth of your social media presence? Where and how often do you track this data?
- Are you reaching out to, and sharing content with, social influencers in your field regularly?



Pro tip!

Adjusting your website to integrate with search engines effectively requires persistence and periodic evaluation. These questions will get you started, but SEO is a long-term commitment. BIPi has a great deal of experience in this field, and can help you with your SEO efforts.

The internet is a big place, with plenty of room for exploration and expansion. As your business grows, your audit should include a more “global” perspective that goes beyond just your website presence. Here are some questions to consider from that perspective:

- Do you “own” handles on all major social media platforms, with multiple identities that include common misspellings or formats? Have you thought about identities that include underscores or periods? (You don’t necessarily need to participate on all platforms on all handles; registering a variety of handles can protect you from “brand-identity-theft” by malicious actors.)
- Are you participating in at least one major social media platform,
- Do you own any alternate domains? If so, where do they point?
- Have you claimed your “Google for Business” profile? Is it up to date?
- Review the results in search engine results pages (SERPs) and any online reviews for your website. Are there any concerning results? How frequently are you monitoring these results and how are you tracking them?

**Pro tip!**

These are more advanced audit questions, and should be part of a growing or expanding web presence. Berry Interesting recommends these questions as a separate audit discussion focusing on marketing strategies.

IN CONCLUSION

We hope you've found this guide helpful as you assess the quality and efficacy of your website.

Berry Interesting recommends engaging a professional to keep a keen eye on these concerns on a regular basis - whether that's assigning one person in your organization who's tasked with regular audit activities, asking your marketing agency to handle these concerns alongside their other services, or hiring a consultant specifically for web support.

Regular audits are crucial to the ongoing stability and health of your site and the marketing efforts that rely on it.

At BIPi, we specialize in taking concerns like this off your plate so that you can focus on the bigger picture of business success! If this audit left you frustrated or overwhelmed, we're here for you!

Berry Interesting is a small, distributed team of web technology professionals, with a vast network of specialists that we leverage to provide our clients with a digital team that's custom-built for their unique business needs.

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