ASMM DIGITAL MARKETING

# Website
## Audit

GET THE MOST OUR OF YOUR WEBSITE

ASMM
DIGITAL MARKETING

As a business owner, one of your most valuable assets is your website. But too often people build a website and then let it sit. Instead of considering what might make their site valuable, they create a brochure of their business that happens to be on the internet.

At ASMM Digital we help our clients get the most out of their existing websites by auditing them on a regular basis. During these audits, we look for what is missing, update the messaging, and give our clients an idea of how much money they are leaving on the table by not updating their website.

But, as small business owners ourselves, we understand that sometimes the best you can do is tackle the job yourself. We want you to know you do not have to hire a digital agency to perform a website audit. With the right information, you can begin your audit on your own.

## Is Your Website Valuable?

Your website is one of the few assets you truly own online. But is your website valuable by its very existence? In most cases, the answer is no. If your website is basically a digital brochure you are leaving money on the table.

Let's take a minute to consider this question.

## Connections

Does your website give potential customers a fast and easy way to connect with you? If you do not have an e-commerce website, creating a connection with your potential customer is your next best option. If your website does not make it easy for your potential customers to contact you or become involved with your brand in some way, your website may not be as valuable as you want it to be.

## Education

Your website should educate your customers. On a broad basis, it should help them understand your industry at large. But, even more importantly, your website should help your customers understand why you are the obvious choice in their search. When you can create content that does both at the same time, your website starts to become truly valuable, not just to your clients but to your bottom line as well. In addition, the content you create on your website can be repurposed as video, podcasts, social media posts, and more, expanding your reach to multiple audiences.

## Revenue

Finally, does your website produce revenue?  Can your customers schedule a consultation, set up an appointment, or make a purchase of some kind directly on your website?  If so, you have created a website that can be truly valuable to your bottom line. If not, we will discuss creating an eCommerce element a little later in this guide. Don't worry if you don't have a physical product.  We will give you several ideas for creating this new stream of income.

## Your Website Audit

In this guide, we will identify the most important areas of your website to monitor and update on a regular basis. If you are able to edit your website yourself, we encourage you, as a business owner, to take each of these tasks in turn until complete.  If not, we encourage you to create a document with your concerns to share with your website team.

As a small business owner, you or a third party who has not been involved in the build should perform the audit so you are aware of what is happening on the site, any authorized users, and the areas where you are most vulnerable.

In each chapter below, we will identify tasks to be completed with an estimate for the amount of time to be spent on the task. A thorough DIY website audit may take you several weeks.  If you feel like you cannot do this, ASMM Digital can do it for you.  But don't be scared off.  Most of what we will discuss will take only a few minutes.

 If you have questions our team is available to help you.  Please reach out to us directly at (443) 679-4916

# Do They Know What You Do?

How often have you visited a small business's website and left wondering what they really do? This is a common theme for small businesses. A website audit gives you the opportunity to consider this question.

## Copy

When we perform a website audit for our clients, we always start with copy because it is generally the most time-consuming task and will almost always involve our copywriter. To complete a DIY audit, we encourage you to have two or three friends or colleagues read through your website and ask them what they think it is that you do. If they are unclear about your service, product, or brand message, you should consider hiring a copywriter who focuses on small businesses.

## Why Is Your Copy Unclear?

There are several reasons why a small business's copy is usually not up to snuff:

- The owner may have been in a rush when building the site and only wrote the bare minimum in order to complete the site in time.
- The owner believes that people don't read the website and too many words take away from the message.
- The owner loves his product or service so much that he talks over his potential customers' heads or believes that his customer already knows exactly what he is offering, leaving the potential customers confused and frustrated.

Let's address each of these issues directly.

## No Time

If you own a small business and find yourself working longer days than you thought humanly possible, you are not alone. This is something we, as small business owners ourselves understand. But, you don't have to do it alone. A good copywriter can help you write the copy for your website. They will interview you to learn more about your business and they will ask the questions your customers are most likely to ask. This is an extremely important part of a copywriter's job. Understanding your business and being able to come at it as a consumer will give you the best possible chance of reaching your customers where they are. Even better, a

good copywriter is far less expensive than you might expect.  This is because most copywriters are freelancers with very little overhead.  If you need a copywriter but don't know where to find one, reach out to us and we will connect you with one we have worked with in the past. This is a good idea anyway because each copywriter is a little different.  We know which ones do a better job for each industry.

## Too Many Words

If you fall into the second category of believing that people don't want to read that many words, you are partially right.  People generally skim a website.  This may make it seem as though you want to use as few words as possible.  But, because you want to rank higher on Google, Bing and Firefox, you need to consider what they are looking for as well.

### Search Engine Optimization

The search engines consider several factors when sending people to your website.  One of the most important is legitimacy.  Are you an expert in your field?  One of the ways the search engines determine this is by the amount of information on your website.  That's why we encourage you to be effusive.  Let people know what you do by adding all of your services and products and good descriptions for each of these.  We will go further into this later.  But for right now, know that when it comes to copy, more is better, as long as it is done using a format that will also allow people to skim through the information.

## Confusing Your Potential Clients

If you love your business and are a true expert in the field, it is easy to talk over a client's head.  Interestingly, we find this most often in digital agency work.  We see SEO and ROI and a host of other acronyms thrown around without any explanation as to what they mean.  We encourage you to consider writing your website with your potential clients in mind.  What will they look up to find you?  Starting from this point of view puts you in the frame of mind to answer the questions they may have.

If you are a plumber, your client wants you to understand the science behind their plumbing but what they really want to know is that you have the ability to fix their problem.  Consider creating copy aimed at a particular client. What is the problem you will solve for one client? As a plumber, this may be unclogging their sink or stopping a leak that is costing them money.

When you are explaining your services, look at the blank page as an opportunity to answer the most often asked questions.  Your clients will thank you and Google/Bing/Safari will reward you by sending more people to your website.

Time Commitment: 1 day to 2 weeks depending on your copywriter

# How Secure Is Your Website?

Whether your website has been acting as an online brochure or is currently creating revenue for your business, you own it.  Unfortunately, it is easier than ever to lose access to it and have to start all over. In this chapter, we will discuss who should have access to your website, how to make sure you are protected, and how often you should go back to your website to audit access.

## Who Has Access To Your Website

Most small business owners do not consider this. They hire a company to build or work on the website and then never go back into it again.  We insist that the companies with whom we work  have access to the website.  We make this a policy because we have too often seen a company lose access to their own website and domain name and have to start all over again.

Understanding who has access to your website can save you money, time, and aggravation.  Best of all, it isn't rocket science.  You simply ask for the website login information and have the website company show you the structure of access.

We encourage you to use a password keeper such as iStratus or 1Password so that you have access to all of your digital marketing assets in one place.  When you are originally given access, make sure that you are assigned as the owner of the site and that the website designer is assigned as a manager or administrator.  Anyone else who is added should be given editor rights.

## Why Is Access Important?

While most website companies are reputable, some aren't and if they own the site they can hold it hostage, not allowing you access and even changing it completely without your permission. On the other hand, many website designers who work with small businesses are small businesses themselves and unfortunately may not always be around. Most importantly, you may become unhappy with your website designer, and if they are the owners of the website you will have to ask them for permission to remove them from the website.  This can cause you more headaches than necessary.

In short, you want to remain in control of your website at all times even if it is just to transfer responsibility to another website design company.

## Who Else Has Access?

One of the things we find in 90% of our audits is that several people have access to the website.  Sometimes it is an older website company that is no longer involved in the day-to-day management of the site, and sometimes it is current or even previous employees.  With access to your website, a person can make major unwanted changes.  Just imagine the damage a disgruntled employee can make to your website. Each time you audit the website, pay particular attention to who has access.  If someone was made an editor for a particular project, do they still need to maintain access?  Is there someone who should have access who doesn't?

## How Often Should You Audit Your Access Settings?

Although we encourage you to do a full audit quarterly, your security settings should be checked monthly.  Because life changes fast for small businesses, we find that waiting three months gives employees and contractors too much time to make unapproved changes.  Checking monthly not only allows you to correct these changes, but also shows everybody that you are well aware of what is happening on your site.

Pro Tip -

Create a list of each of the places where employees have permissions. This includes your website but also, your social media platforms, email marketing software and any other accounts.   If you need to let an employee go for any reason, you can immediately remove them from these sites even before termination.

Time Commitment: 10 minutes

# Navigation

One of the goals a company has for its website is to keep the customer on the site as long as possible.  This is further proof to the search engines that the company is a credible expert in its field. To do this, a company creates paths that guide potential customers through their journey.  This includes buttons and links to other pages on the website or to a credible outside website that will help them make a more informed decision.

Unfortunately, these paths can become deadends.  When this happens, potential clients are likely to leave the site in frustration.

## Do Your Buttons Work?

Buttons are a great way to direct people to other areas of your website, thereby keeping them on the website longer. They are also a great way to help your potential clients commit to a purchase.

But, it is very easy for the link behind the button to stop working. Sometimes this happens because you have deleted a page or changed the URL and sometimes, if we are being completely honest, it is just a glitch in the system.  Therefore, we suggest you schedule a recheck of the buttons once a quarter at minimum.

Starting on your home page, click on each button to make sure that it is redirecting in the way you expect. If they work, that is great.  Move on.  If the button doesn't work, edit the URL to go to the page you want the user to see.

This is also a good opportunity to decide whether you have added content that would be more relevant to your button.

## Check All Hyperlinks

You may also have links that are not buttons. As you go through your website updating your buttons, take the time to check these links.  This is especially important when linking to another company's website as you have no control over their content.  Often when a company rebuilds its website, the web designer inadvertently changes the URLs.  Double-checking on a regular basis will keep your customers from being redirected to the wrong site.

Time Commitment: 15 minutes

# A Picture Is Worth A 1000 Words

Photos and videos always evoke emotion better than words. These days it is expected that your website is not only functional but also beautiful.  That means you should include plenty of photos and videos. Because you see your website more often than your customers, it is easy to overlook the photos when you go to the site.

It is important to pay attention to these photos when you perform your website audit. An outdated photo or one that doesn't represent your brand as it is today can be a detriment to your company.

But before we get to the photo quality, let's consider some behind-the-scenes information.

## Alternative Text

Most website platforms will give you the opportunity to include alternative text for your photos. While this is often presented as an option, it is important that you understand what alternative text does.  This is the text that Google looks for when a consumer creates a search. It should not only describe the photo but also relate to your business.

A plumber may post a photo of a toilet, but the alternative text could be "clogged toilet." That way when a person searches for clogged toilets, your photo shows up as an additional option for the consumer.

Alternative text usually includes a keyword. Learn more about the role of keywords in search engine optimization.

## Employees

It is easy to overlook photos that have been up for a while.  Many companies find upon audit that the site still has a photo of someone who is no longer with the company.  While this does not always matter, there are cases when it does.  If your employee left under bad circumstances, if they are working for a competitor or have become a competitor, or if they have not given you permission to use their photo, then you may want to consider replacing the photo.

But recognizing employees on your website is not a bad idea for company morale.  Oftentimes, an employee appreciates being featured on your website.  It makes them feel as though they are an important part of your team.

## Improvements

Another area that is easy to overlook is the documentation of company improvements.  We get so busy building and improving our businesses, we forget to take the time to document these changes. Have you made improvements to your office space or storefront since the photos were taken?  Have you bought new vans or updated your logo?  Have you made a major change to a product you sell?  These sorts of changes are important to add when looking through the photos on your site.

Think of your website as a portfolio for your business.  Your potential customers took the time to look you up.  Shouldn't they get a clear picture of who you are and what you do?

## Seasonal Photos

An easy way to keep your website looking fresh is to update seasonal photos. For example, if you are a landscaping company, you may want to change the photos based on the seasons. This may mean adding more flowers in the spring, showing a video of your team mowing and weeding a yard in the summer or seeding and aerating a yard in the fall.

These small changes may not attract new customers but research shows many potential customers are deterred by a website that looks out of date.

Time Commitment: 1 - 3 Hours

# Can Your Customers Reach You?

Consumers have less patience than ever.  That's why it is important that you make your contact information available in multiple places. We encourage you to have your phone number at the top of every page, include a contact page, and give even more detail, including email address and directions, at the bottom of every page.

## One-Click

Your contact information needs to be clickable.  This includes the information on your contact page as well as in your header and footer. Make sure that when someone clicks on your phone number they can call you, when they click on your email address they can email you, and when they click on your physical address it takes them to a site that gives them directions.

 Also, keep in mind that the contact information is a big part of your company's website but is sometimes completely overlooked.  We have audited sites for clients who have moved five years before and never bothered to change the address or phone number on their site.  It is critical to make sure all of your contact information is up to date.

Your contact information is one of the biggest calls to action your site has.  It should give people direct access to your company in a quick and easy way.

## Add A Map

Adding a map to your contact page can make all the difference for some of your potential clients.  Many industries are hyperlocal, such as gyms and grocery stores.  Making it easy for your customer to visualize right where you are can help them make a decision more quickly. It is easier than ever to add a map to your contact page or even in your footer.

Time Commitment: 10 - 20 minutes

# What Do You Do Or Sell?

We mentioned earlier that you want to help search engines see that you are the expert in your field. But it is also important to tell your potential customers what you do. Your products and services pages should give this information in great detail.

## Services or Products

You may love your business so much that you forget what others do not know. Your services and products pages are especially vulnerable to this problem. It is easy for a small business to add or subtract a service or product from its business without ever going in to add or subtract it from its website.

We will let you in on a little secret. We have personally been guilty of this in the past. That's why your website audit is so important. If you go down the checklist, you will be much more likely to address this issue.

A website audit is the perfect opportunity to double-check that everything on your site is still offered and everything you offer is on the website.

## Pro Tip:

Make a habit of asking yourself, "How will this decision affect our website?" anytime you are making a decision about a product or service and immediately make the changes to the website when you add or delete a product or service. It is never a good idea to leave money on the table and that's exactly what you do by not having all of your products available on the website.

## Add Pages

Let's go back to search engine optimization. When it comes to Google you want to be found fast. Being on the second or third page is not going to cut it. One of the easiest ways to ensure that you make it higher in the ranking is to have enough content on your website that you are hard to ignore. That means creating pages for each of your products or services.

The website audit is a good time to evaluate what new pages you may want to consider for your website.  If you are an auto mechanic, you may start with one page for services where you list every service you offer. But as you grow, you will need to create separate pages for general maintenance, tires, truck repair, fleet services, and air conditioning repair.  Again, we encourage you to work with a copywriter and use keywords that will attract search engines and people to your website. These pages should be complete, so be sure to add photographs following the guidelines we laid out above, include robust descriptions of the services, and describe why your clients need them and why you are the best choice for them.

Time Commitment: 3 Hours - 1 month depending on whether you want to add service or product pages to your website

Pro Tip:
Make a habit of asking yourself, "How will this decision affect our website?" anytime you are making a decision about a product or service and immediately make the changes to the website when you add or delete a product or service.  It is never a good idea to leave money on the table and that's exactly what you do by not having all of your products available on the website.

# What Can They Buy?

We wrote earlier about the added value when you create the opportunity for your potential clients to commit right from your website.  This can include purchasing a product or service, scheduling a service, or arranging an initial consultation.  Here we will go into detail about just what this looks like.

## E-commerce

At the time of print, we are in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many companies have lost money due to new social distancing regulations.  Most of the companies that are thriving have an e-commerce site of some sort.  If you have an e-commerce site, you should edit your descriptions for keywords and make sure every link can lead to a sale.

If you have not created an e-commerce site, what is stopping you?  One objection many business owners give is the lack of a physical product. Let us point to our own e-commerce site. At ASMMCampus, we created courses for small business owners to help guide them through the process of doing their own digital marketing.

Companies can follow this example or they can sell a service or gift card.  Having an e-commerce site gives you the opportunity to add a new stream of income whether you are in the middle of a pandemic or your traditional business is thriving. If you are still doubtful, consider creating the opportunity for your potential customers to schedule a 15-minute consultation with you.  At the very least, that gets you one step closer to a sale.

Pro Tip:
Make a habit of asking yourself, "How will this decision affect our website?" as you introduce a new product, delete one, or change a service and immediately make the changes to the website when you add or delete a product or service.  It is never a good idea to leave money on the table and that's exactly what you do by not having all of your products available on the website.

## Scheduling

Speaking of scheduling, if you are a service-based industry, specifically one in the trades, such as a plumber, HVAC technician or electrician, consider adding a scheduling program to your website so your potential customers can book your services even when your office is closed. Sometimes making the sale is as simple as giving the client an opportunity to commit.

# Content Is King

You have heard it said before that, "content is king."  As a digital agency, we know this to be true.  Your website is the perfect place to start a robust content marketing strategy. Although we acknowledge that there is great value in owning your website, we believe the content on your website can be made even more valuable when shared on multiple platforms.  In this chapter, we will give you a quick look at how this might work for your company. To learn more about content marketing strategy read our case study.

We encourage you to start with a blog or resources page.  But there is so much more you can do to help Google and your potential customers see that you are the expert in your field.

## Blog

Creating a blog is one of the easiest ways to share your expertise with your customers.  It is also a way of giving back in the form of education.  Your best customers are often your most educated customers.  A blog gives you the opportunity to educate them and create evangelists for your brand at the same time.

But, we get it.  Writing is not everybody's forte and even if it is, where do you start?  This may be a good opportunity to use a copywriter. But whether you use a copywriter or write it yourself, you can follow these tips for starting and maintaining a blog.

Pro tip:
Make a habit of asking yourself, "How will this decision affect our website?" anytime you are making a decision about a product or service and immediately make the changes to the website when you add or delete a product or service.  It is never a good idea to leave money on the table and that's exactly what you do by not having all of your products available on the website.

### What Are Your Customers Asking?

One of the easiest ways to get started with a blog is to begin with the questions people ask about your products or services. These can be the questions people ask you before they hire you or they can be the questions they ask Google that lead to you.  This is a good strategy because Google is trying to answer the public's questions as thoroughly as possible.  If your client asks Google, "why is my toilet hissing?" having a blog post titled Why Is My Toilet Hissing? is more likely to be seen than a website without the specific question on it.

### What Do You Wish People Knew About Your Company?

When we meet with clients for the first time, we often hear, "we wish people knew…"  A blog is a perfect opportunity to tell them the things you wish they knew.  Start with a list of all of the

things you want people to know.  Keep the list on your phone so you can add to it as the ideas come to you.  Enlist the help of your team or even your clients. Ask them what they were surprised to learn about your company.

For each of the items on your list, write a blog article with an explanation. These articles will not only attract people to your site, but they will give you content for email marketing and social media marketing campaigns later.

What are the words people use most often when searching for your industry?  These keywords make a great jumping-off point for a blog.  Creating a blog based solely off of a keyword will act as a guiding star for search engines.  The more keywords you are able to identify for your business, the better.  To go back to the example of plumbers, you may use the words toilet, leak, dripping faucet, drain, clog, or sump pump, to name just a few.  This is also your opportunity to use keywords that your more educated consumers may use.  Although we encourage you to create blog posts for the everyday consumer, we also understand there are people who have read about your industry in detail and will search for you using keywords that are advanced and specific to your industry.

Time Commitment: 1 hour to set up and between 1 - 6 hours a month

Pro Tip:
Make a habit of asking yourself, "How will this decision affect our website?" anytime you are making a decision about a product or service and immediately make the changes to the website when you add or delete a product or service.  It is never a good idea to leave money on the table and that's exactly what you do by not having all of your products available on the website.

# Lead Generation

How do you know who visits your website?  For the most part, you don't.  But creating a lead generator can help with that.

If your website does not currently offer a way to get your readers' contact information, consider what you might do to change that.  As you audit the site consider the sorts of things that might entice someone to leave their content information.

## Industry Guides

Guides are valuable in almost all service industries.  Attorneys may create a guide to help a couple understand the difference between a divorce with trial and mediation. They may create a guide for parents who are considering adopting.  A financial planner may create a guide for planning for your child with special needs as they get older.  A home builder may create a step-by-step guide for how to choose the right  home builder.

These guides should be valuable to your potential clients so they begin to see you as their clear choice when hiring in your area.

The downside is that they take time to create.  You may spend several hours or several weeks creating them.  But again, keep in mind that the information contained in the guides can be repurposed and used throughout your marketing.

Pro Tip:
Make a habit of asking yourself "How will this decision affect our website?" Any time you're making a decision about a product or service and immediately make the changes to the website when you add or delete a product or service.  It is never a good idea to leave money on the table and that's exactly what you do by not having all of your products available on the website.

## Checklists

Checklists are less time consuming but just as valuable to your clients. If you are an attorney, you may create a checklist of the forms and documents you need to have on hand when taking your parents to the doctor.  A remodeling company may create a checklist to use for budgeting a major kitchen renovation.  A marketing company may have a checklist for steps to take to optimize your YouTube channel.

## Free Consultations

A free consultation gives you the opportunity to meet face to face with your website visitor.  If you offer this to your clients, we encourage you to give the consultation a value so that the potential client understands the value of your time.  In addition, create a questionnaire for them.

them to complete which includes their name, phone number, email address, and any information that will tell you how far they have progressed in their buyer's journey.

Time Commitment:  3-12 hours depending on content creation.

Pro Tip:
Make a habit of asking yourself, "How will this decision affect our website?" anytime you are making a decision about a product or service and immediately make the changes to the website when you add or delete a product or service.  It is never a good idea to leave money on the table and that's exactly what you do by not having all of your products available on the website.

# What's Next?

Now that you have completed your audit, it's time to schedule your next steps.  Start with your security check.  Schedule that in exactly one month from the end of your audit.  We cannot stress enough how important this is. If you lose your website because someone has access who shouldn't, it could cost you thousands of dollars.

Next, schedule your next audit in three months.  Each time you do it, the process will become easier and take less time.

Finally, create a regular schedule for content creation. When it comes to content, Google wants to see consistency.  It matters to them that you post weekly or monthly as opposed to posting randomly.  For our ASMM Digital blog, we post every Monday.  This ensures that even without paying for additional SEO services we almost always rank on the front page for digital marketing.

Pro Tip:

Make a habit of asking yourself, "How will this decision affect our website?" anytime you are making a decision about a product or service and immediately make the changes to the website when you add or delete a product or service.  It is never a good idea to leave money on the table and that's exactly what you do by not having all of your products available on the website.