

Content audit method

How to decide keep, update, consolidate, redirect or delete -- from figures rather than from feelings.

The most valuable verdict is Update, and it is the one people skip. Rewriting a page that already has impressions is almost always a better use of an hour than publishing a new one -- it is just less satisfying, because it produces nothing new to point at.

The method

- Export every URL. Search Console for the last 12 months, or your sitemap if you want pages with no impressions too.
- Exclude anything published in the last three months. It has not had a fair run, and judging it early is how good pages get deleted.
- Add clicks, impressions and conversions per page. Conversions change the verdict more than traffic does.
- Add backlinks per page. A page with links is never deleted -- it is redirected.
- Mark each page still accurate, or not. An inaccurate page is a liability whatever it earns.
- Let the verdict calculate, then read the rows it marked Update. That list is your next quarter of content work.

The five verdicts

Verdict	When it applies	What to do
Keep	Earning clicks or conversions, and still accurate	Nothing. Set a refresh date and move on.
Update	Impressions but few clicks, or good traffic and out of date	Rewrite for the query it actually ranks for. Usually the highest-return work in the whole audit.
Consolidate	Two or more pages competing for the same intent	Merge into the strongest URL, redirect the others. Keeps the links and stops the cannibalisation.
Redirect	No traffic, no longer relevant, but it has backlinks	One hop to the closest genuinely equivalent page. Never to the homepage.
Delete	No traffic, no links, no longer accurate, nothing equivalent	Remove and let it 404 honestly. A 404 is not a penalty; a misleading redirect is worse.

The two patterns worth looking for

High impressions, almost no clicks

The page ranks for something, but not for what it was written to answer -- or the title does not match the query it is winning. This is the highest-return rewrite on any site, because the demand is already proven. Read the Search Console queries for that page before touching a word of it.

Two pages, one intent

Consolidation, not deletion. Merge the weaker page into the stronger URL and redirect it in one hop. You keep the links, you stop the two pages competing, and the surviving page is usually better than either was.

What a content audit will not tell you

What to write next. It tells you what to do with what exists, which is a different and usually cheaper question -- but a site with nothing worth keeping does not have a content audit problem.

Your totals

Pages audited

Keep

Update

Consolidate

Redirect

Delete
