Pre-Migration Content Audit Checklist

**Streamline Your Next Website Migration Project
With a Data-Driven Content Audit**

Pre-migration content audit checklist

Without careful planning, content migrations lead to site errors, unexpected downtime, and high costs as development teams work to resolve coding conflicts and replicate old functionality.

However, by following these tactics, you can deliver a successful migration through proper planning and conducting a thorough content evaluation.

○ **Evaluate site analytics:** Google Analytics illustrates the parts of your organization's content portfolio that are successfully attracting visitors. Plus, you can determine which areas of the site are performing well based on their relationship with other content.

○ **Preserve and expand on high-ranking content:** Use website data to identify migration priorities as well as prioritize areas for additional content refreshments based on their success in attracting user interest and high SEO ranking.

○ **Eliminate low-performing, irrelevant content:** Take a critical look at content with low visitor numbers and delete pages that don't effectively serve your current business needs. Similarly, if the site has been used by the business for a long time, delete any topic areas that have grown out-of-date or irrelevant.

○ **Consolidate content:** Conduct a high-level analysis of existing content to ensure it is accurate and consistent with your present-day business. Duplicate or similar content items should be combined and simplified into new pages to reduce the migration workload. For example, older content that may have merited a long-form explanation when it was first created can possibly be simplified to a list or another more SEO-friendly format.

○ **Recategorize and retag content:** Evaluate site pages to determine that content hierarchies are clear and intuitive to use. As time goes by, an organization's priorities often change. Make sure each menu item is current with your business goals. Where appropriate, lower priority topics should be grouped under new, top-level umbrellas and content should be tagged so it displays properly after the move.

Pre-migration content audit checklist, continued

○ **Simplify content structures:** Streamline how the site is organized by applying a content hierarchy aligned with your organization's objectives.

○ **Evaluate the tools of the new system:** As you plan the migration, you need to understand how existing content and its relationships will be impacted. To prevent a long and costly remediation process, you should ensure the components of each content item are set up to work with your new platform's capabilities and not against it.

○ **Add new fields and data to the existing CMS:** If your new site requires keywords or new fields to populate the site, you should make a plan for editorial teams to verify their completion and ensure content shows up in the right place after migration.

○ **Cleanup content in the existing CMS:** Resolve any fields in the old CMS that have new requirements to display correctly on the new site. If, for example, titles in blog articles can't exceed a certain character count, you should run queries to identify content items that need to be repaired by your editorial teams.

○ **Define conditions to determine when migration items fail:** If blank fields or other conditions will cause the new site to break after migration, you should work with your team to determine how these errors will be resolved. Failed items can be excluded from the migration and placed in a queue for repair. Or, you can still migrate the content item with an automated resolution such as populating a field with approved placeholder text for later review.

Pre-migration content audit checklist, continued

○ **Remove hard-coded embeds:** Embedded code that points to other content within fields of the old CMS will often cause errors on the new site. You should work with your team to determine a strategy for identifying and removing bad code before migration.

○ **Select representative items for each content type to test after migration:** Depending on your content portfolio, you should plan to review a sampling of each content type after migration to verify the results.

○ **Determine if automated testing is needed:** After migration, you should consider a need for conducting a functional automated test that URLs appear as expected in the new system. Discuss with your team that automated tools add to the overall budget and their need ultimately depends on risk tolerance. If you're migrating financial data, a field that goes blank after migration could be far more damaging than something out of place on a blog post.

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