2- Bonus On-Page SEO Techniques: SEO Content Audit & Information Architecture

(Plus how to use your IA Template)

Now that you've got a solid understanding of seo content strategy, and technical maintenance, it's time to dive deeper into some more complex content strategy techniques. Knowing your way around a content audit and learning the basics of information architecture best practices are key for a solid on-page SEO strategy.

In this bonus document you'll find a breakdown of how to perform a content audit from start to finish, plus the nuances of creating an IA for crawlers vs. users. This can't be found anywhere else on the Damolade site—it's yours as part of the swipe file.

Let's go!

SEO Content Audit and Information Architecture

There is a lot of overlap in the world of digital strategy. For instance, a content audit is derived from the discipline of content strategy, whereas information architecture is its own department entirely. However, with any good digital strategy, all the elements need to work together, as they all affect one another.

For the purposes of this post, I will give you action items as they relate to your SEO. You can expand upon them and analyze your content and architecture from many different points of view depending on your priorities at the time of the audit. If you grab all the data in one place, you will at least have everything from which to pursue further analysis or repairs.

Let's get started!

1. Content Audit

Gather Data

Running a content audit on your site will allow you to see the best- and worst-performing content from a variety of angles. Content audits can be completed according to your KPIs and goals. There is really no one-size-fits-all audit. Don't overwhelm yourself, just grab what you need for current and future content goals. Your KPIs could be based on a variety of metrics like:

- Quantifying visits, actions taken on-page, "stickiness," or conversions
- Finding content gap opportunities to drive content ideation and editorial calendars
- Determining which pages are ranking for which keywords, or which pages should be ranking
- Finding your pages with highest page authority and link to/pass authority to other pages

Screaming Frog SEO crawler will grab the important SEO data for you to be able to pull it into the content audit spreadsheet provided in the swipe file. If you pay for a license, you will be able to filter what Screaming Frog pulls for you (e.g., only HTML and no code like CSS & Javascript). Configure your crawler to behave like your favorite search engine crawler (e.g., Googlebot, Bingbot, etc.). Set the crawler's user agent to an appropriate string.

Popular Search Engine User Agents:

- Googlebot - "Mozilla/5.0 (compatible; Googlebot/2.1; +http://www.google.com/bot.html)"
- Bingbot - "Mozilla/5.0 (compatible; bingbot/2.0; +http://www.bing.com/bingbot.htm)"

If you use the free version, you will need to run a filter inside your spreadsheet and delete all the files you don't need that Screaming Frog will gather by default.

Once you have a final list of all the URLs/pages on your site you want to work with, copy/paste that list into your spreadsheet in the content audit tab, shown below:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
1	import your screaming frog crawl into this spreadsheet - EXPORT ALL HTML																	
2	EXAMPLE:	Analyze		Screaming Frog														
3	Address	Action	Strategy	Conten	Status	Status	Title 1	Title 1 L	Title 1 F	Meta D	Meta D	Meta D	H1-1	H1-2	Meta R	Canonic	Word C	Respon
4	http://damolade.com	Improve	write out detailed plans for what	text/htr	200	OK	damola	19	165	Small b analysi	134	766	damola	damolade cons		http://c	174	0.2
5																		
6																		
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13																		

In Part 1 of the ebook included in your swipe file, "Complete On-Page SEO Techniques For A Killer Content Strategy" I help you gain a better understanding of how to improve your content from an SEO perspective for the following factors:

- URLs
- Title tags
- Title length (Google will truncate your title after ~67 characters, but will index up to 85)
- Meta descriptions
- Meta description length (Google will truncate after ~155 characters but will index up to 200. The substance and appeal to searchers should reside in the first 155)
- H1s & H2s
- Word count

Screaming Frog will pull all this data for you to populate all these fields in the template. The next step will be to analyze and prepare your strategy.

If you still aren't sure what metrics to audit for, check out this handy auditing matrix, which may help you come to some conclusions.

Content Audit Tab

Optional tools

There is a tool called URL Profiler that can grab every metric you could ever want for each URL on your site. Depending on how comfortable you feel with APIs, you can set up URL Profiler to grab data from sites such as Moz for backlinks, social sites for shares, and Google Analytics for all the GA data. For clarity, I won't go into detail here, but the important metrics are in the spreadsheet in columns S-AF provided, should you dare go there.

You could also export all your data manually from tools like Open Site Explorer - Moz and SharedCount then compile everything manually by VLookup. Good times!

However you choose to gather your metrics, the end result should be that you have everything needed for each URL in one place so you can begin sorting to spot opportunities and make educated decisions about what to do with each piece of content.

Analyze the Content

Preparing your strategy

For each URL decide if you will:

- Update/refresh the content
- Keep as is
- Consolidate the content
- Remove it/Redirect it

These are pretty self explanatory. Make detailed strategy notes for yourself in column C. You will be able to prepare a more cohesive content strategy document from these notes later.

Keywords

Next you will want to perform keyword research. There has been plenty written on the topic of keyword research already so I won't provide a step-by-step, but here is one of my favorite how-to's on the subject.

Use the IA_keyword matrix tab in your spreadsheet to map your existing URLs and choose a focus keyword for each page.

M	P	Q	R	S	T
	PLANNING	SEO & ENGAGEMENT (ON-PAGE)		SEO & ENGAGEMENT (C	
Focus Keyword	CALL TO ACTION	TITLE TAG	IETA DESCRIPTION TA	H1	H2
Map1 primary phras Put top phrase in Ti 2nd most important Integrate both as ex Include all top phra	EXTREMELY IMF	<title></title> 60 characters MOST IMPOR EVERY WORD	<meta name="descrip Max of 150; aim for 1 SIGNIFICANTLY IMPC DO simply repeat key	<h1> Primary	<h2> List H2s Do not stuff k Headings hig Headlines for

From here it's easy to determine which keywords do not have an appropriate page match and use those to fill in the Content Gap worksheet tab in the IA-SEO template. If you find keywords that look valuable to your overall content strategy, the Content Gap worksheet will help you organize and match keywords to new content ideas and landing pages.

Write the Strategy

Finally, create a simple document that includes a summary of your plan to optimize existing pages, the number of new pages you brainstormed to fill content gaps, an explanation of how many pages need to be redirected, etc. You should have notes in column B of your content audit, to make writing out your content strategy a breeze.

Optional: I don't go into too much detail here, but there is ample information about buying cycles online. It could be beneficial to incorporate buying cycles into your content gap ideation as well as include summaries of your personas. This way when you are filling in details in the various worksheets, you can map these things to the content you are analyzing as well.

Good luck!

2. Information Architecture (IA)

Information architecture is about how users and search engines find their way around your site. As your site continues to expand, you want to make sure you have a plan in place for adding new pages and posts. It's about getting the best, most relevant content in front of users and reducing the number of times they have to click to find it. The same goes for search engines: the easier it is for a search engine to crawl your content, the more gains you will make with indexation rates.

Your information architecture defines the structure of your site. It's like the frame of a house: it's what holds up your rooms.

Information Architecture For Crawlers

We not only have to satisfy our users along their buyer's journey—we want to make it easy for search engines to crawl from the top to the bottom of our website, too (passing all that good SEO juice around our site along the way). That's why keeping a database of your pages in the template is so important. It lets you look at your site from both perspectives: human and machine. Pretty cool!

Look at the homepage and draw a general diagram of the IA. Start at your top level (your home page and map), then move to category > sub-category > product, like so:

When you evaluate your IA you should think about these things:

1. Click depth

How many clicks does it take to get to the deepest level of your site? You should for 3 deep, maximum. Use breadcrumbs to guide users and search engines. (These levels are mapped for you in the IA-SEO template, you just have to map your pages to them.)

2. Horizontal breadth

Is your site linked well across levels? Are your levels well-represented? Or do your users have to search to find categories, sub-categories, etc.?

3. Internal linking

Are your new posts linking back to your evergreen content (aka, main landing pages)? Is a page being linked from a page higher up the information architecture? Is a page being linked from pages with higher PA?

4. Category, sub-category, and product level keyword optimization

Are the main categories of your site optimized for a keyword? Navigation (aka main landing pages) are the best place to target broad or more competitive keywords that you can't target on an individual product page.

Don't forget about best practices in optimizing these main pages as we discussed above.

A quick recap:

1. Use the keyword in the meta title & description

2. Use the keyword in the <h1> & <h2> tags

3. Include content of at least 150 – 200 words at the top of the page, explaining what the page is about. Don't forget to use the keyword in that paragraph.

4. Use the keyword in links to the actual products/converting pages. (But, only if it's natural. Don't keyword stuff!)

5. Use the keyword in the URL

5. URL structure

Oftentimes when I complete an SEO Audit I find technical issues with URLs. Duplicate URLs are repeat offenders, and are often the result of small but

significant inconsistencies (like using lowercase and uppercase versions of the same page, or some pages using trailing slashes, and others not). These need to be resolved with your web developer once you spot them. Likewise, you should look for pages that are overly similar (not just duplicate verbatim) and evaluate whether they can be consolidated. 301 redirect/canonicalize those duplicate pages into the URL with the higher authority.

The Goal of IA for Crawlers

Make sure you aim for a "flatter" site architecture. This will take advantage of both vertical and horizontal linking opportunities, as well as make sure that the most important pages are prioritized in the architecture. During your audit, you should keep a list of pages that need pruning, consolidation, and redirects. The image below shows levels 1-3 of a site. In the IA-SEO worksheet included in this swipe file I include these levels (aka category, sub-category, product) for you to map your pages to. Helpful, right?

Flat architecture

For example, if you sell hats, your IA levels would be Home/Level 0, "Hats/Level 1/ 1 - click from home page," "Fedoras/Level 2/ 2 - clicks from home page," and a specific "Fedora" = Product level/Level 2.1 - 3 clicks from home page. Review the image below for the specific mapping examples.

IA-SEO Template

File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Add-ons Help All changes saved in Drive

SEO & ENGAGEMENT (ON-PAGE)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
1	Content Worksheet											
2		IA NAVIGATION - MENU LABEL						LEVEL		PAGE INFO		
3	PAGE ID	TOP LEVEL	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	1	2	PAGE LABEL	URI	HIERARCHY
4	es are 1, 2, 3 e	Home / root	av / Main Cate 1 click from ho	dary or Catego clicks from ho	porting, Subco clicks from ho	detail: Tier 4 - 4	ting or Product rom home pag	Level 1 & Hom	Level 2	Navigation, m	Depends on c	Breadcrumb (s
5	0	Home						x		Home	index.html	Home
6	1.0	About						x		About	/about.html	Home > About
7	2.0	Hats						x		Hats	/hats.html	Home > Hats
8	2.1	Fedoras							x	Fedoras	/hats/fedoras.	Home > Hats >
9	3.0	Scarves						x		Scarves	/scarves.html	Home > Scarv
10	4.0	Blog						x		Blog	/blog/	Home > Blog
11	3.0											
12	4.0											
13	5.0											

Keep your Page IDs as a running count of pages, add new pages to column B as you create them, and then assign and map them to their level.

Site Architecture For Users

Navigation that reflects user behaviour

What are users looking for when they land on one of your pages? Help users find the content they seek by adding clues for them in the navigation. There are a variety of ways you can achieve this.

Think in terms of visuals (like Warby Parky does) and make their search frictionless.

You can also check out the Search Terms report in Google Analytics to build phrases into your navigation that are already being searched by your visitors. Go to **Behavior > Site Search > Search Terms**

Look at landing page traffic in Analytics to see if the most popular pages are appearing prominently in the site navigation, if some pages prominent in the navigation are getting no traffic, etc.

Want to encourage your visitors to stick around longer? Include a search bar in your header. You can make it sticky, the way Twitter does:

Or very prominent, the way Amazon does:

A footer is an intuitive place to add a sitemap like section for users to navigate, without overwhelming them in the top navigation. Separate your content in a footer by categories that make sense for your site. Eyewear brand Ditto does a great job with its footer:

To make it easier for users to shop, they highlight their top products as well as the designers and collections they carry.

If you operate multiple locations in different cities, try using a location-specific footer that will benefit your local SEO the way GrubHub does:

Use a Little Psychology

According to the serial position effect, people tend to recall the end of a list best and first. The first few items are also recalled more frequently than the middle items. Therefore, it makes sense to place your most important links at the beginning and end of your menu.

In my navigation, I place my Services within the first two positions and the Contact button at the end:

These are just a few examples of how you can design your site to maximize your user's experience. Help them through your site the way Google Maps helps you on the road: show them where you want them to go! You will desired behaviors around your pages and increase conversions if you provide the kind of experience users expect to see.

Content Audits and IAs: Key Takeaways

So we've covered the intricacies of on-page SEO and how incorporating a content audit and IA evaluation into your yearly SEO audit schedule can have a huge impact on your strategy. Let's review!

Content audits:

- Use the crawler of your choice to pull all content-relevant data—see where your content is and what it's really doing.
- Analyze the content by filling in your IA/SEO Template, and develop a strategy based on your KPIs.

- Let your work with the IA/SEO Map inform your evaluation of content for gaps and opportunities.

Information architecture:

- An IA optimized for crawlers has different needs than one optimized for users—though it's important to cater to both.
- Aim for an IA that is simple, ordered, comprehensive, and easy to navigate.
- Users need visual cues, intuitive navigation, and convenient searchability.
- Having an IA plan in place makes expanding your site easier and faster. Plan ahead so that when you add new pages and posts, it will be simple and quick, and you can focus on strategy and growth.

For a convenient year-round reminder of what's on tap, refer to your SEO schedule. And when you hit those yearly tasks, you'll be more confident in your ability to maintain your site for maximum performance!