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SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION (SEO) CHECKLIST

Fáilte Ireland
National Tourism Development Authority

SEO PROCESS

SEO is the process of optimising your website to drive relevant traffic to your website. There are a large number of factors that will have an impact on your SEO rankings and SEO traffic. This checklist breaks these factors into appropriate categories including:

- Keyword Research
- Content Gaps
- Onsite SEO
- SEO Technical Audit

- User Experience
- Offsite SEO (Links)
- Local SEO (Google my Business)

The purpose of this checklist is to provide you with a tool to comprehensively assess your SEO implementation identifying gaps and opportunities. This checklist can be used as an internal document or in conjunction with your SEO agency.

Step 1 - Identify Keywords Relevant to Your Business and Benchmark Rankings

Item	Description	Ownership
Keyword Research	Keyword Research typically is carried out using Google Search Console, Google Keyword Planner and Google Ads keyword data where available. Identify Upper Funnel v Top Converting Phrases. Also review competitor sites to identify possible opportunities. Helpful Resource: https://adwords.google.com/KeywordPlanner	Agency or in House.
Benchmark Rankings	Add and analyse 20 - 40 most relevant phrases to Keyword Ranking Tool and run report to establish initial benchmark. Helpful Resource: semrush.com / seranking.com	
Identify SEO Competitors	Use Competitor Discovery to identify competitors on your SEO Tool.	
Competitor Keyword Review	What keywords are your competitors ranking for/targeting?	
Identify High Potential Key phrases	Identify targeted phrases with high impressions which are on page 2 or bottom of page 1. Cross reference these with phrases that are converting on Paid. These will form your High Potential Phrases.	
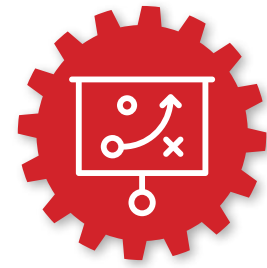
Step 2 - Content Gap and Strategy

Item	Description	Ownership
Review Existing Content - Gap Analysis	Review current content depth and also review competitor sites. Identify gaps based on keyword research and competitor review.	
Content Plan	Identify New Content Opportunities based on the above.	
Schedule Content Build	Create a schedule for content creation based on the content plan.	

Step 3 - Onsite Optimisation

Item	Description	Ownership
Review Keyword Research	Review results of keyword research to identify priority phrases.	
Match keywords to Pages on the Site	Map keywords to relevant pages on the client site. Use a combination of Search Volume, Keyword Relevance and Competitiveness to identify the right mix of keywords and most important phrases to be optimised on your home page. E.g. wedding phrases will be optimised on Wedding pages.	
Meta Data - Title Tag	Update the Title Tag on every page of the site with relevant keywords. Each title tag should be able to accommodate 2 Key Phrases and the Brand Name. Helpful Resource: https://moz.com/learn/seo/title-tag	

Item	Description	Ownership
Meta Data - Description Tag	Optimise the Description Tag on every page. This should be written for the customer with keywords included where it makes sense. This should be viewed similar to ad copy on Google AdWords because a well written description tag can aid click through rate. Helpful Resource: https://blog.kissmetrics.com/meta-description-magic/	
H1 Tag	Ensure there is 1 H1 tag on each page. There should never be more than 1. Where possible this should include the keywords targeted in the title tag but it should never be keyword stuffed as this is the most visible piece of content to a user on a page and needs to read well.	
Keyword in Content	Ensure that the target keyword is included in the content of the page in a natural way. If you have matched your keywords to the right page on the site this should be easy to achieve.	
Internal Links	Add Internal links where relevant to other pages on the site. For example if the homepage mentions weddings then you can link through to the Weddings page from there.	
Alt Tags	Implement Alt Tags on Images where possible - Alt tags should describe the image and include keywords in a natural way.	

Step 4 - SEO Audit

Item	Description	Ownership
Run Technical Audit Using SEO Audit Tool	Run an SEO Audit and Document Errors and Warning. SEranking.com or Semrush.com.	Agency or In House
Run Audit via Search Console	Run Google Search Console to identify any 404 errors, coverage and mobile usability warnings.	Agency or In House
Here are some of the items that should be reviewed in the Technical Audit		
Duplicate Title Tags	Identify Any Duplicate Title Tags and ensure they all become unique.	
Missing Title Tags	Identify any pages missing Title Tags and ensure these get added.	
Long Title Tags	Identify any pages that have overly Long Title Tags - Ideally less than 75 characters.	
Short Title Tags	Ensure Title Tags include at least 20 characters.	
Duplicate Description Tags	Identify any Duplicate Description Tags and ensure they all become unique.	
Missing Description Tags	Identify any pages Missing Description Tags and ensure they get added.	
Missing H1 Tags	Ensure every page has a H1 Tag.	
Duplicate H1 Tags	Ensure there are no pages with more than 1 H1 Tag	
Broken Internal Links	Identify any Broken Links and ensure they get fixed. https://www.deadlinkchecker.com/	
Broken External Links	Identify any Broken Links to 3rd party sites and ensure they get fixed.	
Broken Images	Identify any Broken Images and ensure they get fixed.	
404 Errors	Identify any 404 Errors and fix if possible. If the page has been removed identify, where possible, a suitable page for it to redirect to.	

Item	Description	Ownership
Crawl Errors	Identify any pages that cannot be crawled using SEM Rush and/or Search Console.	
Duplicate Content	Identify any instances of Duplicate Content and add unique content where relevant.	
Low Text / Html Ratio	Identify pages with Low Text / Html Ratio and add additional content where possible.	
Low Word Count	Identify pages with Low Word Count and add additional content where possible.	
Temporary 302 Redirects	Identify any pages with Temporary Redirects and get these updated to 301.	
Additional Technical Checks		
Ensure Site is using Https	Ensure site is using Https rather than http.	
Https Redirects	Ensure the http version redirects to Https version.	
Sitemap.xml Review	Ensure Sitemap.xml is in place and includes all relevant pages.	
Schema Markup	Identify relevant applications for Schema Markup such as Hotel, Hotel Room, Restaurant, Local Business, M&E, Review, Article etc. The SEO manual includes all of the tools you need for this. Map out on your page URL file which pages you can add some type of schema to and then follow this as you implement schema across the site. Make sure you include keywords in your schema descriptions. Inspect the pages you have implemented schema on via Search Console and then request them to be indexed. https://www.coreoptimisation.com/5-types-of-schema-markup-hotels-can-use-to-improve-seo-performance/	
Review Site Architecture	Check if there are any issues with indexing due to Site Architecture. https://searchengineland.com/guide/seo/site-architecture-search-engine-ranking	
Mobile Navigation	Document any issues or warnings.	

Step 5 - User Experience

Item	Description	Ownership
Review Mobile Website Speed	Use ThinkWithGoogle, Search Console and / or PageInsights tool to Review Mobile Speed. Best Practice would be 1-2 secs. https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/feature/testmysite/	
Review Desktop Speed	Use Pingdom, Page Insights Tool and Search Console to Review Desktop Speed. Best practice would be 2-3 secs or less. https://tools.pingdom.com/	
Large Image Files	Compress images if images are slowing down speed. https://compressjpeg.com/	
Mobile Experience	Run your site through Google's mobile friendly test to ensure there are no mobile usability issues. https://search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly	
Bounce Rate	Review pages with Bounce Rate of over 45% and identify ways of improving relevance of the page.	
CTR of Phrase	Review CTR of Phrase on Search Console. Focus on improving Description Tag and Ranking to improve CTR.	
Review use of PDFs or links on the site	Make sure that all of the PDFs *(menus, wedding packages etc.)* are working correctly and that they also include relevant and useful information for the user.	

Step 6 - Offsite Factors (links)

Item	Description	Ownership
Domain Authority	Benchmark Domain Authority against competitors. https://moz.com/researchtools/ose/	
Competitor Analysis	Review links in place on Competitor sites and identify opportunities for links.	
Partner Review	Review sister properties, suppliers and identify link opportunities.	
Bad Quality Links	Run website through Backlink checker on your SEO Tool and identify poor quality links. These then need to be disavowed using Search Console Disavow Tool. https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/2648487?hl=en	
Keywords in Anchor Text	Where it is possible include relevant keywords in Anchor Text of Links. However you should not keyword stuff. For example Hotel Name Dublin would be a good use of Anchor text while www.hotelname.com would be less effective.	

Step 7 - Google my Business

Item	Description	Ownership
Tracking	Add **?utm_source=mybusiness&utm_medium=organic** to your website URL in Google my Business to isolate this traffic on Google Analytics. Otherwise it appears under Organic Traffic (E.g. Mydomain.com**?utm_source=mybusiness&utm_medium=organic**).	
Data Completion	Ensure Profile is fully completed.	
Category	Fill out all relevant Categories.	
Amenities	Add in Relevant Amenities.	
Photos	Identify opportunities to add new Photos.	
Additional Business	If, for example, you are a hotel managing more than one business it will make sense to identify more opportunities for additional GMB pages, e.g. the restaurant could have its own GMB listing.	