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HOW TO PERFORM A WEBSITE HEALTH CHECK

SIMPLE CHECKS TO ENSURE YOUR WEBSITE IS USER-FRIENDLY

You need to look beyond the aesthetics to understand how effective your website is. These simple checks will help all insurance brokers understand how easy it is for prospective customers to access and use their website.

A jargon-free guide

When pulling this guide together we've purposely avoided technical jargon. None of the actions we recommend needs any technical knowledge. After reading this guide, you should be able to perform simple health checks on your website. The results will help you discuss ways to improve performance with your marketing department or web hosts.

Keeping your website user-friendly

Your website is likely to be the first experience your prospective clients have of your company. It's therefore vital that you create an excellent first impression. Also, Google and other search engines have useability measurements built into their algorithms. So, if you want to perform well on search engines, you need to ensure your website is user-friendly.

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8 simple website health checks

We've selected these health checks because they are free of charge, simple to undertake and require no specific technical knowledge.

1. Does your website display correctly on different browsers?

Not everyone uses the same web browser. Different web browsers interpret your website's code in different ways which can lead to inconsistencies in the way your site is displayed.

A Browser Market share report by statcounter.com in May 2020 showed that Chrome was by far the most popular web browsers worldwide with 63.93% market share. Safari was the next most popular with 18.19%. Microsoft's IE and Edge only accounted for a combined 1.98%.

How do I check?
Access your website on several different browsers to make sure everything displays consistently.
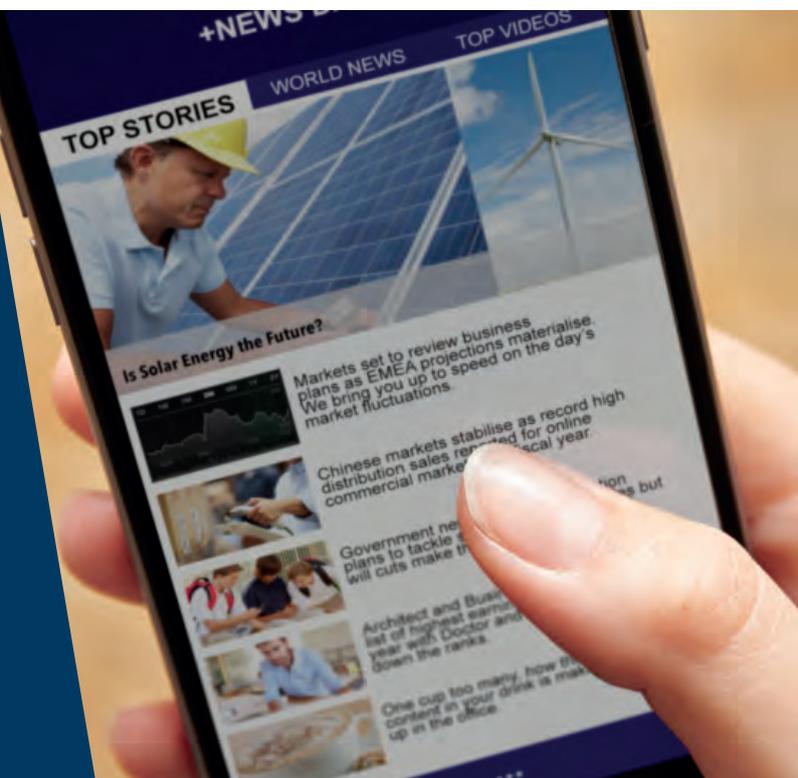

2. Can the website be used on different devices?

As well as displaying sites in different ways, different devices have different display sizes. This can lead to unexpected results where items move around the screen or even disappear. It's essential to make sure your website is still useable on the smallest mobile phone through to the biggest desktop monitor.

How can I check?
Load your website up on different devices such as mobile phones and tablets to make sure everything is still visible. Pay particular attention to navigation. Is it even possible to tap on all the buttons? Also, is all the text still readable on smaller screens without the need to zoom?

As an additional check, Google provides a free tool to test how easily a visitor can use your web page on a mobile device. It can be accessed at https://search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly

SSL Certificate

3. Is an SSL certificate installed to keep your visitors safe?

An SSL certificate is a vital component of a website. SSL stands for Secure Sockets Layer and creates a secure connection between the web server and the visitor's device. SSL certificates keep the information sent between the visitor and website encrypted and secure from malicious access by hackers.

There's a common misconception that they're just for securing e-commerce sites that take credit card payment. All websites should have them installed to keep visitors safe.

Even though you may have an SSL installed, it may have expired, or some content on the page may not be secure. You need to ensure the site is fully protected across all pages.

When a site is secure "HTTPS://" appears at the beginning of the web address in your browser. SSL certificates also improve customer trust in your website by verifying that your website is secure.

Web browsers now flag a website that isn't secured by an SSL certificate. For example, Chrome adds the words "not secure" in the address bar when an unprotected site is loaded.

Search Engine Optimisation experts also believe that the Google Algorithm gives secure websites an advantage over unsecured websites in its search results.

How do I check?

The simplest way to check if your website is secure is to access your site. If "https://" appears in the address bar, it has an SSL certificate installed. Additionally, some browsers will add a padlock symbol to show it's secure. If your browser indicates that your website isn't protected, talk to your web hosting providers about having an SSL certificate installed. SSL certificates are not overly expensive, costing less than £250 to secure your site.

If you find you do not have an up to date SSL please contact your existing web provider or Ignition. SSL certificates are generally not overly expensive, and it should cost less than £250 to resolve.

4. Does your site load fast to avoid frustrating visitors?

How long a visitor has to wait for a page to download is an essential factor in how visitors interact with your website. Several factors drive page load times. These include the hosting environment and the design of the page. Low-quality hosting and poorly optimised site design with large images will both increase the time visitors have to wait to view your webpage.

But in the age of lightning-fast broadband, do page load times matter that much anymore? Yes, every split second does count. Slower page response times increase page abandonment as potential customers become frustrated and go elsewhere. Fast page load times are even more important for mobile device users who still expect websites to load quickly, no matter what the strength of their signal.

As page load times are such an important indicator of website useability, Google considers them when deciding how to rank sites in its search listings. It's therefore vital that you optimise your website so it as fast as possible.

How do I check?

Google has a free tool called PageSpeed Insights which you can access at: https://developers.google.com/speed.

After entering your website address, PageSpeed Insight tool applies a range of tests before marking your website with a score out of 100 for both mobile and desktop devices. It also provides recommendations and opportunities to reduce load times that you can discuss with your website hosts.

5. Is Analytics capturing visitor behaviour?

Google Analytics provides anonymised user behaviour data that you can't attribute to a particular individual. From a GDPR compliance perspective, you'll need to make it clear in both your website cookie policy and privacy notice that you're collecting and processing this data.

While there are alternatives packages, Google Analytics is free and the industry standard for understanding how visitors find and interact with your site.

You can access Google Analytics by logging into analytics.google.com. It's easy to get swamped by all the information provided. If you need assistance, Ignition can provide brokers with a dashboard to help cut through all the noise and highlight the critical information which you should be monitoring.

Website performance figures should be part of regular management reporting. It's therefore essential that you set up some key Goals and KPIs that highlight how effective your website is at attracting and engaging visitors.

How do I check?

The simplest way to check if Google Analytics has been installed on your site is to ask whoever built the site for you. Alternatively, you can view the page source code of your website in a browser and search for "google". You should find a reference to "google-site-verification" or "google-analytics". If you don't think Google Analytics is installed, talk to your web hosts about getting it added.

6. Is there a favicon to improve brand recognition?

Favicon is a shortening of the phrase "favourite icon". It is a small icon which is assigned to a website by developers. It is usually your company logo. Favicons act as a visual marker to help visitors quickly identify your website in bookmark lists, browsing histories and across multiple open tabs. Additionally, In 2019 Google also added website favicons to its search listings on mobile devices.

Favicons are easy to set up and help to enhance the usability of your website and support brand awareness.

How do I check?

Access your website in a browser. If your company logo appears at the left of the browser tab your website favicon has been set up correctly. If one doesn't appear, it's a simple task for your web designer to implement.

7. Do all contact forms work?

Contact forms are a vital part of your website's lead generation. It's therefore essential that they work correctly and deliver information accurately. Common issues with contact forms include validation issues, emails being blocked by email filters or being delivered to the wrong email address.

How do I check?

Try to submit test information on all the web forms on your site and make sure all the information comes through to the designated email address.

8. Does the website handle common www variations?

A common mistake is for your website to only display on one variation of its address. Your customers may not be familiar with which convention you've chosen. Anyone typing in an alternative into their address bar will see an error message instead of the website.
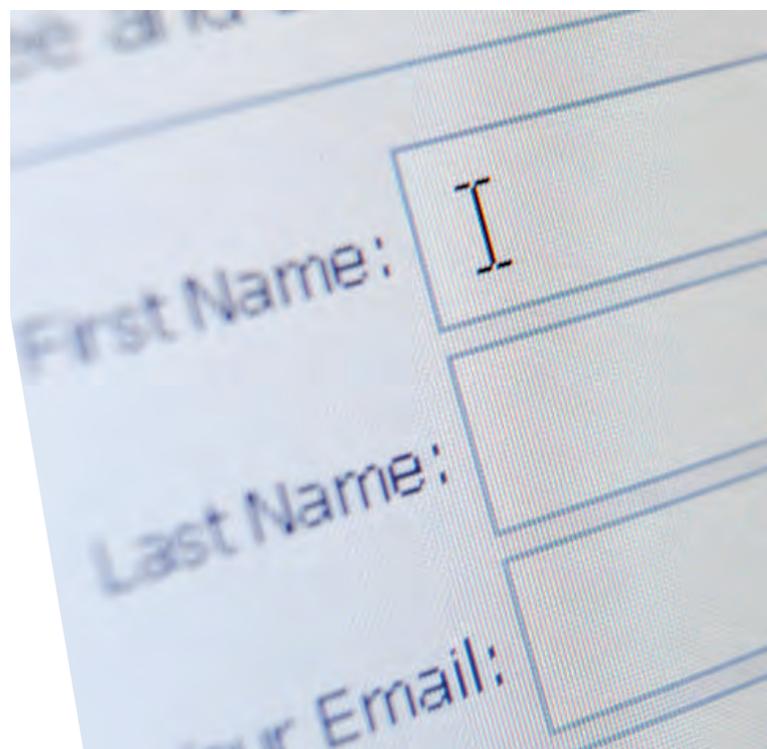
Your website should handle all common variations of its address automatically, such as:

- http://example.com/
- http://www.example.com/
- https://example.com/
- https://www.example.com/

A redirect should be set up by web hosts to handle all these variations and automatically point all traffic through to your site.

How do I check?

Trying accessing your site using all the common variations of your web address and check you're redirected to the website without seeing any error messages.

In-depth website health checks

The tests listed above are designed to be simple health checks that brokers can undertake themselves. However, these are just the start. Many other factors contribute to the performance of your website.

Ignition can provide a report on everything you need to make sure your website is performing as well as it should. These web reviews cover:

- Spelling and grammar checks
- Broken link detection
- Mobile compatibility checking
- Speed tests
- Readability
- Search Engine Optimisation best practice

You'll also receive itemised actions to help you optimise your website.

AXA Prime and Premier Partners are entitled to one of these website reviews free of charge.

If you'd like a review of your website, contact Ignition on 0161 831 7199.

About Ignition

At Ignition, we've built a reputation as the marketing specialist and digital technology experts for insurance brokers.

Our success starts with us taking the time to understand what each broker is aiming to achieve and why. From creating professional leave behind brochures to revitalising your brand or website, from building web and mobile applications to detailed marketing consultancy projects, Ignition offers a wide range of cost-effective marketing and development solutions to help Insurance brokers win and retain business.

Want to see how your website has changed through time?

The Internet Archive at archive.org/ has been recording snapshots of websites for over 20 years. Enter your website address in their Wayback Machine, and they'll show you a timeline of how your website has looked since it was launched.

If your current site has looked the same for longer than you thought, it may be time for a redesign. Remember web technology and trends move quickly leaving your website looking tired and difficult to use.

If you'd like to talk about having a new website produced, call Ignition on 0161 831 7199.

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