

A Year of Website Updates

Looking for a simple way to keep your website fresh all year around? Well, look no further! I created this checklist for myself, as a way to keep my own sites in tip-top shape from year to year.

Note: this was created with WordPress websites in mind, but I have a feeling most of the items would be relevant no matter your platform!

General Monthly Maintenance

Here's a general maintenance list that I recommend completing every month:

- Ensure full website backup is taken
- Ensure WordPress is running the latest version
- Ensure theme is up to date
- Ensure all plugins are updated

January: Security Focus

January is the time I like to do a deep-dive into the security of the sites I work on to reveal any outstanding security flaws or other website vulnerabilities. I make sure to execute the following WordPress security best practices:

- Set strong passwords for every user of your site
- Prevent multiple login attempts to the WordPress admin using a plugin like [WordFence](#)
- Monitor activity by installing a WordPress audit log plugin like [Activity Log](#)

February: Content Assessment

February is a great month for combing through your website's content to ensure everything is up to date. Here are a few things I check on:

- Scan through all website content and check for anything that needs updated or revised
- Add in any new clients, projects, or case studies
- Update staff
- Ensure prices are accurate
- Replace any photos that need updated

March: Speed Focus

Website speed is one of my favorite things to tinker with, as it has such a significant impact on your overall site experience. Here are some of the steps I take during the month of March:

- Perform several site speed tests to establish a baseline and areas for improvement. I use a combination of [PageSpeed Insights](#), [GTmetrix](#), and [Pingdom Website Speed Test](#)
- Audit to ensure hosting platform is suitable for optimal website performance. I base this on the size of the site, bandwidth, etc. and may recommend to switch from something like a shared hosting plan to a VPS or Managed WordPress Hosting platform
- Install and/or properly configure a WordPress caching plugin like [W3 Total Cache](#)

April: Basic SEO Optimization

SEO is a HUGE undertaking, so this plan covers some of the very basics. As part of this annual checklist, here are some things to make sure of:

- Ensure [Google Search Console](#) is correctly implemented
- Ensure [Yoast SEO](#) is installed
- Check Google Search Console for any 404/500 errors, duplicate content, missing titles, etc.
- Ensure primary page keyword(s) appear in page URLs
- Ensure all meta description tags are 155 characters or less
- Ensure each page uses an H1 title with keyword in tag
- Ensure each page has enough search engine-accessible text (at least 100 words to warrant a page)
- Ensure each image has a descriptive ALT tag and filename

May: Analytics

A proper analytics set up helps to gauge your site's performance so you're able to make changes and updates based on what's working and what's not. In May:

- Ensure Google Analytics is installed and tracking properly
- Bonus: set up analytics goals based on website conversions (for example: newsletter signup, time on site, contact form fill out, etc.)

June: Heat Map

A heat map is a neat little tool that helps you visualize where users are scrolling and clicking on your website. This is a great asset for determining the most successful areas of your site. This month:

- Implement a heat map in the beginning of the month. I recommend taking the [Mouseflow Heat Map Plugin](#) for a spin (there's a free plan)
- Determine a plan of website improvements based on the heat map results at the end of June. Some ideas include shortening up pages that aren't getting much scroll, changing up CTAs that aren't getting many clicks, and adjusting the content in the "hot" areas of your site to take full advantage of their use

July: Heat Map Results Implementation

Take action on the plan you made in June! This month:

- Based on the heat map results and your list of improvements, make any necessary changes

August: Email Signup Evaluation

An email list is an incredibly valuable tool that just about every small business owner should have on his or her website. For August, you'll want to:

- Ensure your email opt-in is prevalent on your homepage and/or as an initial website popup
- Ensure that any email forms lead to an email marketing program, or are set for a monthly email marketing platform upload
- Ensure your opt-in is enticing (an offer, percentage off, etc.) and well-designed to match your overall website aesthetic

September: Contact Form Evaluation

Your contact form is a vital part of your website: there's no doubt you want it to be quick and efficient when your prospective clients choose to reach out. Optimize any contact form on your website using this list of best practices:

- Ensure the form has a descriptive heading and subheading—let users know exactly what they can expect from filling out your contact form
- Add in helper text for any fields that may be confusing
- Test forms to ensure proper delivery/confirmation

- Remove any unnecessary fields—I like to simplify any form as much as possible
- Bonus: add an opt-in checkbox to your contact form, as this can be a simple way to help promote your mailing list

October: Legal Check

Getting your legal ducks in a row on your website is always a good thing, especially making sure you have a solid privacy policy in place. For October:

- Ensure you have a privacy policy on your website. Linking this in your footer is just fine; I recommend generating one through [iubenda](#) (paid) or [freeprivacypolicy.com](#) (free)
- Ensure website contains proper copyright information in footer, updated with current year
- Ensure all images are purchased or otherwise legally sourced, including hero images, blog post images, etc.

November: Content Plan

November is when I really start gearing up for the year ahead. This is also when I develop my content plan for the upcoming year: blog posts, any portfolio items I know need added in, social media calendar, etc. For your website:

- Develop your blog posting schedule - I personally commit to one post per month, but this can be anything that fits your schedule

December: Review and Planning Ahead

December is always a month of reflection in my business. I like to spend this month assessing what went well, anything that didn't, and figuring out where improvements can be made in the upcoming year. In December:

- Review analytics to see what blog and page content performed well and what did not
- Assess inquiries received from your website. How could this be improved?
- Evaluate any feedback received on your website throughout the past year. Can you make any changes based off of this knowledge?

