



Content Audit Decision Options and Criteria <sample>

All content on a website needs to have a lifecycle – it is created, lives on the website, is promoted, remains for a certain length of time, is reviewed regularly, and is eventually archived or deleted.

When auditing the existing content on this website, we will review each piece of content and determine what action to take with it. We will adapt these decisions for use with ongoing content creation.

One of the primary purposes of a content audit is to uncover content “ROT” – content that is:

- R—Redundant.** Does this content already exist elsewhere where it’s more relevant, or is it duplicated and therefore confusing to the reader (and search engines)?
- O—Outdated.** Is this content no longer current and/or accurate?
- T—Trivial.** Does this content fail to serve a business goal or user need?

Here are decision options that will be used during the content audit – the criteria for each option follow:

- Keep
- Revise
- Archive
- Delete

Keep (as is)

In general, content should remain live on the website if it meets any of the following criteria:

- Is current (usually less than two years old) and accurate
- Is relevant, as evidenced by the fact that it has been visited more than 50 times in the previous year
- Is legally required to remain online for a specific length of time
- Is evergreen (such as a historical timeline, map, or privacy policy)

Specific content rules:

- Articles from the organization’s magazine and journals should remain online permanently.
- News releases should remain online for one year.
- Daily news items should remain online for six months.
- Media alerts should not be retained, but instead should be overwritten each month.
- There will be other content that is evergreen or needs a longer lifecycle. Each department may identify that, either by overriding initial decisions for the audit, and going forward, at the time the content is published.
- For the Annual Meeting, only current meeting materials should remain online. Once the meeting ends, its materials should remain online until the following year’s materials are available; however, scientific abstracts should stay online for three years.
- Materials from events other than the annual meeting will be archived after the event.

Revise (rewrite, edit, or update)

- Content should be *rewritten* if it was initially created for an internal audience but has relevance for external audiences and needs additional context in order to be understood, valued, and used by them.
- Content should be *edited* if it meets the rules for being kept on the website, but contains typos, grammatical errors, or minor factual errors.
- Content should be *updated* if it is still accurate but contains a minor amount of outdated information, or if it does not reflect brand attributes or newly developed voice, tone and style.

NOTE: These changes should be done before the website redesign/migration if at all possible, but if there are time constraints, they can be done after migration.

Archive

The primary purpose of archiving is the long-term protection and accessibility of critical information for business, governance, or regulatory compliance. Most organizations choose to archive digital information that is not needed on a day-to-day basis but is important or required to keep.

Organizations choose to archive content either online or offline.

- Online archiving – typically, on “archive” pages that are not linked to landing pages – accommodates the wish of internal content owners to leave information online just in case people need it. Content that is archived online should still not remain on the website indefinitely.
- Alternatively, if departments are legally required to retain specific types of content but not necessarily online, it should be removed from the website and stored on a private server.

For the audit:

It is likely that Content Company will not be able to identify much content that should be archived. If the department that created the content and/or Marketing have a business need to archive content, they will have an opportunity to revise the audit decision to reflect that.

Delete

For the audit:

Delete content that is no longer accurate, useful, or relevant. Pages and documents will be deleted from the website if their usage rate (as determined by unique page views) drops below 50 times in a one-year period, or if they do not meet any of the criteria listed under “Keep as is.” If the department that created the content and/or Marketing have a business need to keep content that Content Company has recommended for deletion, they will have an opportunity to revise the audit decision.

Ongoing:

Metrics indicating at-risk pages on the website will be incorporated into the organization’s monthly analytics report. The analytics coordinator and the content owner will be responsible

for tracking the usage of content. Web content will be audited annually as part of the annual analytics review meeting to identify pages that should be deleted from the website.

Be sure to update internal and external links as well to avoid sending people to content that no longer exists.