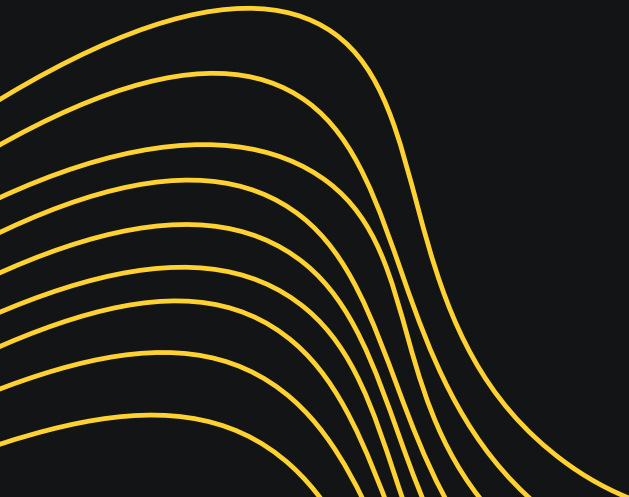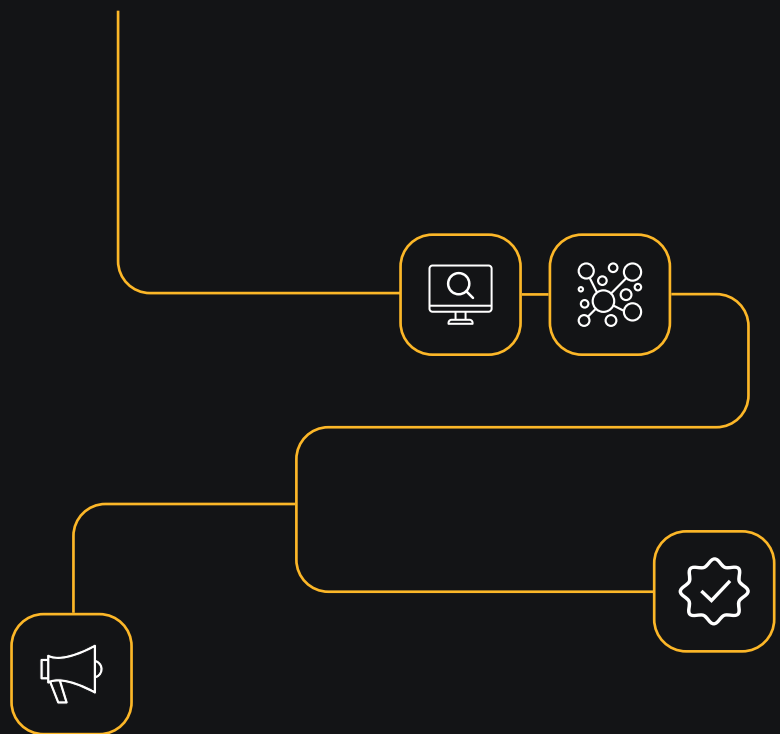# Aptitude 8's 2021 SEO Audit Workbook

Importance of SEO

SEO has become a must-have for every organization. If you want to find new and recurring customers, developing an SEO strategy will be critical.

SEO used to be as simple as stuffing your website pages full of keywords. Including as many keywords as you can in your meta descriptions, alt texts, and content for search engines to crawl your site. Search engines have gotten a lot smarter over time. Today they can see through the old "keyword stuffing" tactics and look more towards user experience. So, if you want to drive traffic to your website, you need to establish relevant keywords for your audience.

Keyword Research

Keyword research provides insight on what your audience is looking for. When you understand your audience's goals, you can create content that is more relevant to them, thus helping you improve your SEO.

In this section, you'll learn how to:
- Analyze your audience and their goals
- Determine topics you want to be known for
- Figure out what people search
- Analyze the search volume and competition of keywords
- Create topic clusters

If you're ready, let's hop into getting a closer look at your audience.

Analyze Your Audience and Their Goals

The key to a great SEO strategy understanding your audience. Create your buyer personas keeping SEO in mind.

Start building your buyer personas:

Demographics:

Demographics gives you data you need to make target better with your SEO strategy. When starting SEO, always keep your buyer persona in mind.

- Age
- Gender
- Job Title

- Income
- Industry
- (add any other category you think you'll need)

Goals & Problems:

How often do you go to google? Usually to solve a pain point of yours or find something you're curious about. Understanding your audience's goals, challenges, and ambitions will give you the framework to target keywords.

List out your buyer persona's:
- Goals
- Challenges
- Tools

What are they searching:

Write down as many words, terms, and phrases your audience might put into a search engine. Try to write down as many as you can. If you don't know exactly what they are searching, make educated guesses. Another tactic is to ask your customers about their search habits:

What do you want to be known for?

Think about all the topics that are relevant to your business. For a shoe company this could be "running shoes." The goal is to find out what topics your customers search for, and then targeting those topics. However, there are a variety of topics you could choose.

Write down a list of relevant topics to your business (think about the problems your personas are trying to solve) :

Figure out what your audience is searching online:

After you've listed bunch of topics, it's time to go a step further: start identifying subtopics that correlate with each of your broad topics.

For example, If you're a shoe company choosing the topic "running shoes," subtopics could include: "red running shoes" "best running shoes near me," "how to choose the best running shoes", and so on.

Not sure where to start for your business? Don't worry, there are a lot of keyword research tools you can use to find terms for your chosen topic! Here are some common research tools:

- Moz Keyword Explorer
- SEMrush

- Google Keyword Planner
- Keyword Surfer

Write down as many keywords as you can for your topic. You don't have to write down every single keyword. As you experiment, you'll discover new keywords and what works best for you.

Analyze search volume and competition

Search volume is the number of times that a keyword is entered into a search engine (typically calculated per month). Competition is how difficult it is to rank for the given keywords. DIfferent tools may give different results, but they will all generally be similar.

Using the research tools provided in the previous section, go ahead and write down each keyword, their search volume, and competition.

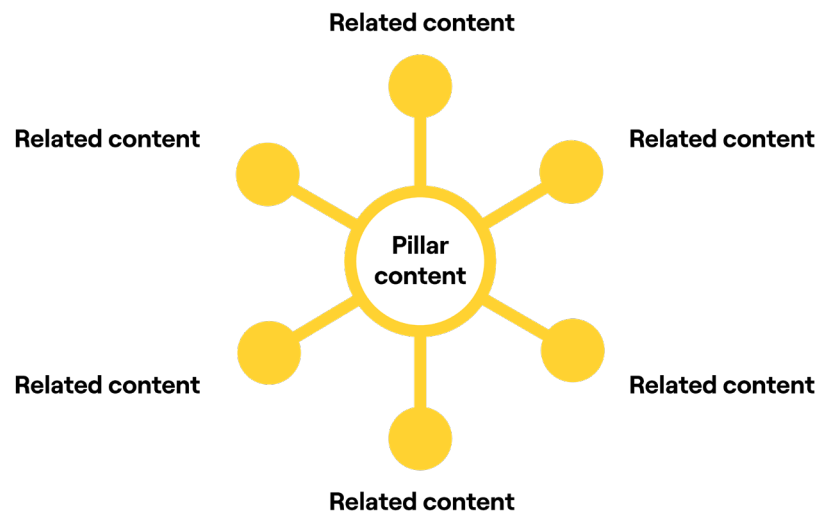| Keyword	Monthly Search Volume	Competition

Based on the chart, narrow down your list to 5-8 keywords to focus on. You may want to avoid high search volume and high competition as they will be difficult to rank for. Find which keywords are easy and relevant to start your targeting.

Keyword	Notes

Create Topic Clusters for Your Keywords

Topic clusters are a method of organizing your content for both your users and search engines to easily identify. This is usually multiple pages on your website grouped together by a common core topic. The core topic is the pillar page, a comprehensive resource that covers a core topic in depth.

Related content

Related content   **Related content**

Pillar content

Related content   **Related content**

Related content

Domain Authority

Your domain authority determines your rankings on search engines. Search engines assess your SEO authority when deciding how to rank your content compared to your competitors. Here are some key factors you need to consider when improving your domain authority:

- Does your content reflect the keywords you want to be known for?
- Are you promoting your content with quality backlinks?
- Are quality media sites mentioning and linking to your website?

This section will give you more insight on how you can dissect your domain authority and take action on improving it. Ready to start taking steps to rank higher with a higher domain authority? Let's hop in:

Does your content reflect your keywords?

The more relevant your keywords are to your ideal audience, the better your authority will be. Creating high-quality content will compel search engines to rank you higher, and your audiences will be more likely to engage.

Does your content consistently cover your topics?

To figure out if your content covers target topics, take a look at the content you've created. Analyze the number of social shares and backlinks for each one.

Using the table below:
- Create a list of blogs, gated content, and other assets on your website. (Whitepapers, eBooks, Webinars, Videos, Infographics, etc.)
- Calculate the average number of shares per content asset. Try using a free social sharing analytics tool like BuzzSumo.
- Record the average number of backlinks per content asset, which you can find on individual pages by searching for the asset's URL in Moz's free Open Site Explorer and referring to the "Total Links" number in results.

Topic	Number of blog posts	Number of gated content	Avg number of shares per content asset	Avg number of backlinks per content asset

Using this chart can help you identify what's working and what needs more work. Find out where you need to be building more links to topics you want to be known for.

Where can you improve?

Ask yourself:
- What target topics have the most social shares?
- What topics have the most backlinks?
- What topics have the least shares & backlinks?
- Where are opportunities to promote your topics?

Are you effectively promoting your content and getting quality backlinks?

Creating high quality content is critical to an effective SEO strategy. However, you also have to get people to talk about your content and link back to it.

How do you promote new pieces of content?

When you publish a new piece of content, how are you getting eyes on it? Are you sharing it internally, on social media, subscriber lists, and so on?

Do the following exercise: think of the last piece of content you published. List all the channels you promoted that content on:

Promotion Channel	Why and how are you using this channel?
Email	
Social	
Website (Blog)	
Paid Ads	
Guest Blogging	
Agency Outreach	
Influencer Outreach	
Video	
Infographics	
Internal	

Is your team spending time on content promotion?

Getting your teams and departments to help with content initiatives can be difficult. Especially if you're just setting due dates and the value isn't presented. That's why it's important to demonstrate value so your team will promote content, not just publish it.

Does your team have established goals around content promotion? Or are they just creating it to get it done? Answer below:

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Are you pursuing guest blogging efforts?

Guest blogging on reputable and relevant sites is one of the best ways to get quality backlinks to your content. If your team has guest blogging placements, take a moment to record a few of them here — alongside the guest blogs you wish your team had.

Which blogs/websites do you have placements on?	Which blog/websites do you wish you had placements on?

If you're not sure, use a free tool like BuzzSumo and/or Google Alerts can help you find and track mentions.

For reputable blogs you're looking to get placements on, you'll need a plan to get them to share your content. Choose a handful of your existing guest posts, and take a deeper look into them by using this table:

Name of Blog	How Reputable Are They?	Title of Post	What topic is this post on?	Does this post link back to your website?	Which page does it link to?

Guest blogging is a great way to boost your SEO authority. The key is to get high quality (reputable websites) showcasing your content and linking it back to yours.

Are reputable sites mentioning your brand?

Aside from guest blogging, another great way to get backlinks to your site is media mentions.

Here are some following: be sure to take notes and think about what needs more attention:

Do your products or services have earned reviews online? Are these reviews mostly positive?

Have your products or services earned any special awards or recognitions?

Is your content getting referenced in online news articles and sites? Are these reputable sites that are referencing your content?

What percentage of your guest blogs link back to your site? Which pages are they linking to?

Your Domain Authority Wish List

Now that you've taken a deep dive into your domain authority, it's time to start looking for improvements.

Here's an example of what your next steps might look like:

To-Do List	Wish List
Create a strategy and concrete goals around content promotion	Incentivize team members to write one guest blog per month
Identify 5 reputable websites to write guest blog content for and develop a pitch	Identify 3 recognitions our product/service can apply to win this year

Now, do the same for your organization! Write down next steps to improve your SEO strategy and authority:

To-Do List	Wish List

Congratulations, You've Completed the SEO Workbook!

Nice work! You've evaluated your current SEO and built a plan to improve your current SEO authority. SEO is constantly changing, so your website can always be improved on each year. Refer back to this workbook when you need guidance on building a stronger SEO strategy.

About Aptitude 8

Aptitude 8 is a consulting firm with a focus on RevOps and Demand Generation. A8 is made up of practitioners with a deep understanding of the tools, technical acumen, best practices and cutting edge strategies in their field.

Our HubSpot practice is made up of HubSpot certified consultants, developers, designers, and marketers that help you leverage HubSpot's best in class tools. Across these disciplines, we are certified across Marketing Hub, Sales Hub, Service Hub, and CMS Hub, and have an Advanced Implementation Certification for each.

We also have the most advanced Salesforce practice of any other HubSpot partner. The team includes consultants, architects, and developers, each holding a Salesforce certification

Our most common projects include: custom objects, advanced integrations, CMS Enterprise Sites, enterprise CRM implementations, system migrations, marketing automation, web design & development, campaign execution, data mapping and technical systems audits.