FullStack Optimization

Targeted page checklist

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ONPAGE

A targeted page is / has / does ...

- ☐ an HTML page, answers with HTTP 200
- ☐ targeted at one - site-wide unique - dominant phrase
- ☐ fulfills the “job to be done” / search intent of the person who searches for that phrase
- ☐ fulfills a business utility
- ☐ reachable via exactly one URL (see URL-rules)
- ☐ hosts unique content or a unique collection of content
- ☐ content fulfills the pre-defined quality criteria (the QC)
- ☐ uses exactly one language
- ☐ links to other targeted pages
- ☐ gets linked from at least 1 other targeted page
- ☐ all resources necessary for rendering (JS, CSS, images) are accessible
- ☐ everything visible above the fold and the main content is HTML - delivered by the server (visible with JavaScript turned off)
- ☐ displays the content and links visibly without user interaction
- ☐ links to other targeted pages are real links: `<a href="URL">` (work with JavaScript turned off)
- ☐ is listed in the sitemap.xml

THE QC

QC = quality criteria

- ☐ fulfills the company's product standard (a good page)
- ☐ fulfills a minimal content standard (e.g.: structured content + image, at least 5 items)
- ☐ guarantees unique content or a unique combination of content - no internal duplicate, no external duplicate of already indexed content

QC IMPACT

- ☐ **pages that fulfill the QC** are
  - ☐ set to index via the robots meta tag (if no robots meta tag is set, index is the default)
  - ☐ systematically interlinked
  - ☐ listed in the sitemap.xml
- ☐ **pages that do not fulfill the QC**
  - ☐ either do not exist (HTTP 404, HTTP 410) - or - are set to noindex via the meta robots tag
  - ☐ are not systematically interlinked
  - ☐ are not listed in the sitemap.xml
- ☐ **QC not met** and page set to noindex or 4xx: the rest of this checklist does not apply

URL-RULES

Every URL must be ...

- ☐ **1.** **unique** (1 URL == 1 resource, 1 resource == 1 URL)
- ☐ **2.** **permanent** (they do not change, no dependencies on anything)
- ☐ **3.** **manageable** (equals measurable, 1 logic per site section, no complicated exceptions, no exceptions)
- ☐ **4.** easily **scalable** logic
- ☐ **5.** **short**
- ☐ **6.** (optional) with a **partial / variation of the targeted phrase**

URL-rule 1 is more important than 2 to 6 combined, URL-rule 2 is more important than 3 to 6 combined, … URL-rules 5 and 6 are always a trade-off. A truly search optimized URL must fulfill all URL-rules.

REDIRECTS

- ☐ URLs do not change: the best redirect is the one that is not necessary.
- ☐ With any URL redirect, calculate with 20% to 50% traffic loss for that URL.
- ☐ If you redirect anyway: HTTP 301 permanent redirects only.
- ☐ No redirect chains. Every redirect is a “one hop” redirect.

ONSITE INTERNAL INTERLINKING

- ☐ **1.** every targeted page has at least one link from another targeted page
- ☐ **2.** every targeted page is reachable through a click-path starting from the startpage
- ☐ **3.** more important targeted pages have more links than less important targeted pages
- ☐ **4.** the most important targeted pages have a static link from the startpage
- ☐ **5.** every targeted page must have the chance to get a link from the startpage at least once
- ☐ **6.** we only link systematically to the canonical URL
- ☐ **7.** we do not link systematically to dead weight
- ☐ **8.** hidden links (e.g.: after user interaction, drop-downs) do not count as votes
- ☐ **9.** linked images must have an alt text, which replaces the anchor text; linked inline SVGs must have a `<title>`

LINKS TO EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- ☐ Link to external webpages that help fulfill the user's search intent - as much as you like.
- ☐ Links you get direct monetary valuable consideration for (paid links) are set to “sponsored” or “nofollow”.
- ☐ No other links and no complete pages are set to “nofollow”.

PAGE WEIGHT

Root HTML, uncompressed (unzipped)

up to 150 KB	search engine optimized - the target
150 KB to 250 KB	too heavy - reduce it
above 250 KB	harmful for search engine optimization - not search engine optimized
above 2 MB	broken - Googlebot only crawls the first 2 MB (uncompressed), the rest is cut off and never indexed

- ☐ the root HTML of every targeted page is at most 150 KB, never above 250 KB
- ☐ every single CSS and JS file stays below 2 MB uncompressed (same cutoff per file)
- ☐ measure: `curl -s --compressed URL | wc -c` (bytes)

SPEED

- ☐ Google PageSpeed Insights: 80 points (min), best 90+ - and the screenshot must show the rendered page correctly
- ☐ Core Web Vitals: 90%+ of mobile URLs are “good” (green) in the Core Web Vitals report in Google Search Console
- ☐ Average response time in Google Search Console Crawl Stats
  - ☐ HTML: 200 ms to 400 ms (max)
  - ☐ Googlebot Smartphone: 200 ms to 400 ms (max)
  - ☐ CSS, JS, images: 75 ms to 150 ms (max)

TARGETED PHRASE

- ☐ every page needs a targeted phrase: “something” we want the page to get found for
- ☐ one page, one unique (per site) dominant targeted phrase

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TARGETING ELEMENTS

- ☐ **URL:** should include a short (partial) variation of the targeted phrase (optional, see URL-rule 6)
- ☐ **title:** ~60 characters + brand, must include the targeted phrase, should encourage click-through
- ☐ **meta description:** ~160 characters or more, must be unique per page, should include a number
- ☐ **headline 1:** main headline of the page, one per page, should include a variation of the targeted phrase, must be the biggest headline above the fold on mobile
- ☐ **image file names** (above fold, main content): must fulfill the URL-rules, should include a short variation of the targeted phrase
- ☐ **image alt text** (above fold, main content): descriptive, about 5 words, should include a descriptive variation of the targeted phrase
- ☐ **anchor text:** links to this targeted page should include a sensemaking variation of the targeted phrase

CONTENT

Goal: unique content or a unique combination of content - and - diversity of content types.

- ☐ paragraph of text or unique combination of content (a site-wide unique list)
- ☐ image (see Images)
- ☐ video (optional)
- ☐ H2 (optional, includes a variation of the targeted phrase)
- ☐ structured content: tables, bullet points, definition lists (info boxes), key: value pairs
- ☐ chunkable content sections: headline + content (e.g.: Q&A / FAQ elements)
- ☐ list of links to other targeted pages

IMAGES

- ☐ one unique main image per targeted page, above the fold
- ☐ the image is an `<img src>` in the server-delivered HTML and its URL is crawlable
- ☐ the image links to a bigger version of itself (at least 1200 px wide)
- ☐ file name and alt text include a variation of the targeted phrase (see Targeting elements)
- ☐ the main image is declared in `og:image` and in the structured data (`image`) - the real image of the page, not the site logo

3 SEO TESTS

- ☐ 1. **PageSpeed Insights:** minimum score of 80 (still orange), preferably 90 (green) + sensemaking screenshots for desktop and mobile
- ☐ 2. **"JS turned off" test:**
  - ☐ above the fold and main content must be visible with JS turned off
  - ☐ interlinking must work with JS turned off (visible links must be links)
- ☐ 3. **Rendering test:** Google Search Console → Inspect URL → Test live URL → View tested page → Screenshot must show the rendered page (images below the fold might get lazy loaded)
  - ☐ alternative way, no Search Console access needed: Rich Results Test → View tested page → Screenshot

META

- ☐ **canonical:** a server-less implementation of the URL logic, every page must have one, created automatically, can be overwritten editorially - failsafe for stuff that usually goes wrong with URLs
- ☐ **meta robots:** default on every targeted page - index, follow and all previews allowed:

```
<meta name="robots" content="index, follow,
max-image-preview:large, max-snippet:-1,
max-video-preview:-1">
```

  can be editorially overwritten to "noindex, follow" if we do not want the page to get indexed
- ☐ **never on a targeted page:** `nosnippet`, `noimageindex`, `max-image-preview:none` or `standard`, `max-snippet:0`, `nofollow`
- ☐ meta robots and the `X-Robots-Tag` HTTP header say the same - if they conflict, Google applies the more restrictive rule
- ☐ robots.txt blocks neither the page nor its images, CSS and JS
- ☐ **rel-alternate:** necessary if an alternate version of this page (e.g.: language, market specific, amp) with the same targeting exists

STRUCTURED DATA

- ☐ only use structured data markup that Google Search supports - and follow the Google specification for it to the letter
- ☐ Article · Breadcrumb · Carousel · Course list · Dataset · Discussion forum · Education Q&A · Employer aggregate rating · Event · Image metadata · Job posting · Local business · Math solver · Movie · Organization · Product · Profile page · Q&A · Recipe · Review snippet · Software app · Speakable · Subscription and paywalled content · Vacation rental · Video

MOBILE

- ☐ responsive (strongly recommended)
- ☐ or dynamic delivery: same URL, different content (needs correct User-agent detection, HTTP Vary header) - not recommended
- ☐ or separate URLs (http://m.example.com/ - needs correct rel-alternate, correct User-agent detection & redirect, HTTP Vary header) - strongly not recommended
- ☐ must render correctly with visible content (see 3 SEO tests, test 3)

DEAD WEIGHT / BALLAST

A page that has no targeted phrase (does not want to get found for anything), does not fulfill the QC, has no business utility or does not solve the "job to be done" for the user is dead weight. It

- ☐ must either not exist (HTTP 404, or HTTP 410 if it existed once)
- ☐ or must not get indexed (meta robots: noindex)
- ☐ is not systematically linked, not referenced onpage and not listed in the sitemap.xml
- ☐ no redirects before errors

Edge cases: pages like ToS, contact and similar are treated as brand intent targeted pages.

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