

ProBlogger: How to Do an End-of-2016 Blog Audit



Your Epic End-of-Year *Blog Audit Checklist*

Grab a pen and notebook, a fresh Google Doc, a spreadsheet if you're into that sort of thing, or anything else you're happy to take notes on or in, and go through each section of your blog thoroughly. What worked, what didn't, what did you hate, what will you change for next year? As science historian [James Burke](#) said once "you can only know where you're going if you know where you've been". True dat.

So let's get stuck in.

Content:

You're going to have to look at some stats for this, so open your WordPress Jetpack or Google Analytics and be prepared to dive in. First though, a look through the posts themselves:

- How long were posts? Did you have a variety of word lengths? All long? All short? Which performed better? What would you say your average post word count would be?
- What were the most popular posts? Overall, and for each category of your blog?
- What type of posts worked? What resonated with your audience?
- What fell flat, or just quite didn't make it?
- Did you write to your niche? Or did you branch out? Was that a wise choice?

- Were you helpful?
- What posts got the most comments/emails? Which one seemed to touch a nerve in your audience?
- What was shared most?
- What did you enjoy writing?
- Where are you sourcing images? Are you making or taking your own? Could you start? What other options are there (you can find a selection of places that have collections of [free, no-attribution images here](#)), what program are you using to create and personalise your images? Is it enough or should you try something new? What are your image sizes? Are they optimal? Have you changed blog layout and now some of them are poorly sized? Make a note of them so you can update later with a better image.
- Which day of the week got the most traffic? What were you publishing on those days? Was it consistent with your brand?
- Was your overarching theme this year consistent with your brand?
- What search terms got the most people to your blog? are you providing content for them?

- Does each post have a good image that's formatted correctly, a keyword-rich headline, and is it pleasant to the eye? Is there enough white space, and are there calls to action where necessary?
- Were you providing enough value?

Back End

The nitty-gritty that we usually ignore unless something has gone wrong. Do a cleanout!

- Are your plugins still working for you? What can you delete? What needs updating?
- What do you have as a 404 error message? Can you make it more useful to the reader who finds themselves there?
- Do you have broken links? (one way to find out is to use a [broken link checker](#), or install a plugin that will do it for you). Can you update them?
- What is your SEO plan? Are you inserting key words in all the right places? If you have Yoast installed, is there a green light on the majority of your posts? What can you do to improve in the new year? (Moz has a pretty comprehensive [post here on doing a full SEO audit](#) if you feel you need that much depth, and a [content audit here](#)).
- Have you filled out the alt-text field on all your images with keyword-rich descriptions? (remember, this is what Pinterest pulls so make it user-friendly)
- What have you been using to track metrics/traffic? Is it working?
- Create a Google Analytics report about what has happened on your site, and who is reading it (and on what device!) Darren has a [great tutorial here](#) on how to find the most useful stats in Google Analytics and use that knowledge to set up your next year of blogging on the right foot.

Design

We eat with our eyes, as they say, and readers will make snap judgements about you and your blog based on how it looks when they get there. What does your design say?

- Is it functional?
- Is it reader-friendly?
- Is it pleasing to the eye?
- Does it describe you and your blog at a glance?
- Have you stayed consistent with colours and fonts?
- Are there any widgets that need removing?
- How is your sidebar working? What can you shuffle around or delete entirely?
- Are you making the most of the bottom-of-the-blog real estate?
- Are the ads old? Can you write to the advertisers and offer them a new deal?
- Are you making the most of your design to point to where you could make an affiliate sale?
- Are there several points on the page where readers can follow you?
- Is your newsletter signup box prominent? Do you have more than one?
- Is that pop-up box worth it?
- Are your social media icons in the right order (you might want to put your most popular sites at the front). Are they linked to the right place? Are they the right size or colour?
- Do all the links on your homepage work?
- What can you remove from the design to enhance the look of your blog?
- What are you using for social sharing? Do you like it? are people using it? Can you find something that works better?
- Personal branding: is it recognisable? Have you been using the same branding techniques on your post images?

Pages/Topics

The umbrella of what you're about. How's that workin' for ya?

- Are the pages and topics you've sorted your content into still relevant? Have you moved onto other things? Can you merge some? Nest them?
- Did you share content equally across all or did you find you wrote on a particular topic the most?
- Is the navigation streamlined and user-friendly?
- Are your pages and topics easily accessed?

Social Media

Our home away from home!

- On what platform did you see the biggest growth?
- Where was the most engagement?
- What did you enjoy the most?
- Have you changed profile pictures and bios lately? How current are they?
- What brought most return for your efforts?
- Where would you like try in the new year?
- Is it obvious on all of these platforms what you're about? What you can offer people?
- Do all your platforms link to your blog, and are these options obvious and easy to find?

Your promotional strategy

You can't just "build it and they will come". Because they're busy reading someone else.

- How did you get your blog in front of new readers?
- How successful was that?
- What wasn't worth the time invested?
- Where will you invest your time next year?
- What have you got [as an opt-in?](#) Does it need upgrading?
- How are you offering your newsletter or [mailing list?](#) Have you been consistent with it, have you been tracking open rates etc?
- Did you guest post anywhere? Was that worth your time? Where could you try this year?
- Did you try to get some traditional media coverage?
- Did you try any collaborations or cross-promotions? Who could you work with in 2016?
- Did you do any giveaways? How successful were they?

Monetization

- What has been your strategy this year?
- What monetization models were you using?
- What has been the most lucrative?
- What hasn't been worth your time?
- What will you spend your resources on next year?
- What programs, ebooks or courses need updating?
- Can you bundle them together and do a quick lead-up to christmas sale?
- Can you release something quick in time for christmas or new year?
- How has your audience reacted to each monetisation strategy?
- What model have you most enjoyed using?
- What would you consider for the future?

Your goals

- Did you create any? did you meet them?
- Were you too ambitious? Or not enough?
- What did you have in mind for next year?
- Have you written your [future goals and a plan for how to get there?](#)
- How could you learn from the mistakes you've made this year to help you reach your goals now?

Your feelings

- How did you feel overall?
- What did you excel at?
- Where did you feel you could have done better?
- Did you enjoy blogging?
- Do you still enjoy it?
- Have you thought about [quitting, moving on to something else](#) (like [podcasting](#), for example), do you want to [write a book](#), open an online store... did you think about expanding or moving on?
- What would you like to do on your blog for next year?
- What will you be leaving behind?

Ahhhh that's better. Pens down, New Year's celebratory drinks up! That's you in a snapshot. May your 2017 be even more amazing.