



In-Depth Guide:
How to Healthcheck Your Ecommerce Website

Please note: This Guide should be used in conjunction with our accompanying Benchmarking spreadsheet.

Table of Contents

How To Use This Guide	3
Tracking & Analytics	4
Driving Organic Traffic	5
Organic Traffic	5
Technical Factors	5
Google Page Insights	5
Google Search Console Data	6
Search Performance (pages)	6
Content	6
Paid Search	7
Engagement & Conversions	7
Engagement.....	7
Conversions	14
You're Done!.....	14
About Innovation Visual	8
Get in touch	8

How to Healthcheck Your Ecommerce Website

This is a **SAMPLE** of the full Healthcheck Guide – please go back to the **web page** you accessed this sample from to download the full version.

Are you sure that your ecommerce website is working as hard as it should be? Your website is your primary tool as an ecommerce business, so it is important that it is operating as well as it possibly can in order to deliver optimum results. If your site is letting the side down, how would you know, and would you know how to find out and then fix it?

Our in-depth guide to benchmarking your ecommerce website walks you through giving your site a thorough MOT (don't worry, this guide is for ecommerce managers, not techs!). Leaving you with a clear idea of where your site meets best practice and where, more crucially, it does not.

Once you have read the guide and completed our self-test tool (use them simultaneously), you'll be able to identify any areas of concern. You will also be able to plan the repairs and get your site working like the well-oiled machine you need.

How To Use This Guide

The written document explains what you should assess and why it is important when benchmarking your ecommerce website. It is designed for established ecommerce businesses and those that are serious about ecommerce. The self-test is a simple matter of answering yes or no to a series of questions in the accompanying spreadsheet, but you will have to look up the answers within your own systems to determine the right response.

Once you have completed the self-test, you will have a score shown as a percentage. The percentage is designed to give you a good idea of where your business sits on the scale. 100% indicates a near perfect ecommerce digital operation. We would suggest that anything under 85% requires attention. 85%-95% is very good but has room to improve still!

When you download the full guide and tracking spreadsheet you will see worksheets that match each stage in the guide, here are two example worksheets from the tracking spreadsheet.

Tracking & Analytics Benchmarking

		Yes or No?
1	Do you have properly filtered views?	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Do you have goals set up?	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Are you using enhanced ecommerce tracking?	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Do you have your purchase funnel set up in Google Analytics?	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Are you tracking properly across domains and payment gateways?	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Are you using event tracking?	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Do you have content groups set up?	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Do you have a dashboard to see your most important website metrics?	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Do you have alerts set up for big data swings?	<input type="checkbox"/>
TOTAL		0%

Move to next tab once complete

Paid Search Benchmarking

		Yes or No?
1	Do you know what your lifetime customer value / profit is?	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Do you generate more profit from your paid campaigns than you spend on them plus any management costs (internal employee or agency fees)?	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	If you subtract the value of all sales from campaigns that are running on brand names you own, are you still making a profit?	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Are your paid campaigns set up to be granular and reflect product categorisation?	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Do you have dynamic remarketing running?	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Are you using optimisation such as 'maximise ROAS' or 'maximise conversions'?	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Do you run A/B tests or other optimisation campaigns on landing pages on an on-going basis?	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Do you use data from paid search to inform your organic search and content strategies and tactics?	<input type="checkbox"/>
TOTAL		0%

Move to next tab once complete

Tracking & Analytics

To make good decisions you must have good information to base them on, yet this is an often-overlooked area. Data should be the foundation of your ecommerce benchmarking, because it is essential to have access to accurate data to guide and inform good decision making. However, good data also means better tracking and analytics that will allow you to uncover opportunities to gain competitive advantage over your rivals, deliver better content to your prospective customers and improve your buyer's journey, ultimately delivering more sales. Let's get started, don't forget, each of the below requires a YES or NO answer to be added to the relevant tab of the associated spreadsheet:

1. Do you have properly filtered views?

If you are looking at the default "All Data" view in Google Analytics, then you are not looking at a real picture of your website data. You need to create at least one but, for many ecommerce sites, multiple filtered views to get better information. Filtered views not only remove traffic from within your own business (people working on the site or being on the site for work), but they are also essential to remove spam traffic and crucially focus down onto the traffic you care about. If you only ship to the UK, then the view that you should focus on should be UK traffic only for example. If you don't have properly filtered views, then all of your metrics will be distorted from time on-site (people with your business are likely to be on your site for longer periods) through to conversion rates. You will also be seeing inflated figures in terms of the amount of relevant traffic your site is receiving.

2. Do you have goals set up?

Goals are defined as important actions that a user can take on your site which will bring value to your business. For example, someone purchasing a product on your site. These goals allow you to identify how good – or bad – your site is at getting users to perform valuable actions or converting. They bring you valuable additional data to the ecommerce conversion report, and allow you to analyse your visitors' behaviour. You should only track macro conversions as goals, actions that will directly bring value to your business such as purchasing on your site, submitting a contact or demo form, phoning your business, etc. If you have secondary conversions or micro goals, they can be tracked as events in Google Analytics (see the question about event tracking below for more information). For example, someone playing a video is likely to be a micro conversion. You should decide which actions are key to your business and which are secondary and ensure that you are tracking them all. When you add goals to your campaigns, they will be shown in the Conversions > Goals report of the Google Analytics platform.

There are 9 steps in the full version of this section.

Driving Organic Traffic

How good are you at driving traffic from different sources and is your investment in different sources delivering results?

It is difficult to broadly benchmark organic traffic on ecommerce sites. So, for the purposes of this exercise, we have focused on those measures that should be accessible to everyone using this guide, rather than just those that have access to specific paid tools. We believe that, as a principle, the best long-term ecommerce sites focus on driving sales from organic search rather than simply paying to access the traffic with biddable media. Organic is more complex, harder to predict and more difficult to win, but those that embrace the challenge and deliver the results build a stronger platform and greater competitive advantage than those that take the easier routes to traffic and revenue generation with PPC.

Organic Traffic

Do you get the majority of your traffic from organic search?

This is a difficult and rather arbitrary way of benchmarking; however, it does provide a useful indication. If you are not getting more than half of your traffic from organic search, then are you failing to invest in this channel or is it simply underperforming? Are you over-spending in other channels? Much will also depend on the maturity of your website; younger sites will struggle to get as much organic traffic than more well-established rivals. The results will also be biased by your current biddable media spend. A strong organic traffic position lasts beyond the investment, unlike biddable media. In challenging times, it may be tempting to spend on biddable for the instant hit but, if you stopped all PPC activity, your revenue would be from only direct and organic traffic, so it makes sense to diversify and ensure that traffic is being delivered organically and via paid.

Is your growth of organic traffic growing by more than 15% YoY?

Many ecommerce businesses have seen excellent growth recently (during 2020). There were some retailers that saw huge growth during the Coronavirus lockdown, as physical shops were shut. If this applies to you, while you might be celebrating your ongoing growth, are you actually getting your fair share of that growth or are your competitors making more of the good times than you are? You should compare your organic traffic growth and the revenue from that growth to the growth in your sector / segment. During April 2020, overall online sales grew by 23.8%. However, health and beauty grew by 82%, electrical sales grew by 102% and gardening (because of the good weather as well as closure of garden centres) grew by a massive 288% ([IMRG figures](#)) so if you are in those sectors, you should be aiming to see your organic traffic and revenue growing by at least these percentages. Make sure you research the growth in your sector to compare against your competitors more accurately.

Increasing your organic visibility by more than the market is important in growth times, but it is absolutely vital when markets are shrinking. With a recession likely to be deeper and potentially longer than any before, your ability as an ecommerce site to get found more easily in organic search than your competitors will be vital. This is because costs of biddable media are likely to rise as companies fight over an ever-decreasing pool of buyers in certain sectors. In order to survive, it's key that your business is not reliant on PPC for sales.

There are 7 steps in the full version of this section.

Technical Factors

The technical factors that impact organic search are vital to ensure that you are ranking well for terms that will deliver revenue, however work on them is often neglected. There are a wide variety of paid tools to analyse technical SEO performance, but we have omitted their use here to make the benchmarking open to as many people as possible. For a full, more in-depth audit we would recommend using a number (not just one) of paid tools and / or ensure that your agency is not only doing this but reporting the results to you regularly!

Google Page Insights

Does your website score more than 75/100 for Mobile?

Google indexes the mobile version of your website. You might get more transactions on the desktop version, it doesn't care. With that in mind, the mobile speed and technical tests are the ones that need your focus. While

Google only gives your score a green rating if you are over 90, the higher the score the better. As a benchmark you should be at least over 75 out of 100 for mobile.

Google Search Console Data

Google Search Console is a mine of great data. If you are using Google Data Studio for your ecommerce dashboard, bringing some of the key metrics from Search Console is good to ensure that you are seeing a full picture of your site's performance. For benchmarking we have picked a number of crucial measures and have attempted to put them into a question context that will work for large and small websites alike. As with many of these areas, deeper analysis is worthwhile, as are additional metrics, but for our purposes it should give us enough data to start with.

Index Coverage - Is the percentage of errors to all pages less than 2.5%?

Take the number of errors that Search Console is reporting and divide by the total number of *indexed* pages. This percentage should be as small as possible and certainly below 2.5%. If it is higher than this then you have issues that need to be tackled.

Does a valid sitemap.xml exist?

This is an easy score but, remarkably, we still come across sites that do not have valid sitemap files in place. Sitemaps are vital for best practice SEO, as they help search engine bots to easily access and crawl your site.

Search Performance (pages)

Do your website pages, excluding your Home and Contact pages, receive more than 50% of total traffic?

Your traffic should not all be going to the home page. You really want an ever-increasing percentage of traffic going to pages other than home as it shows that people are landing within categories or other content within the site. You want visitors finding you for granular terms and getting straight to what they want (buying products) so work on making sure category pages are ranking and that paid traffic is going to the right landing pages.

Do you review and update your disavow file at least every three months?

You will get links from bad neighbourhoods, or worst still you might have had a less than good SEO agency create links from places that they shouldn't. Not all links are created equal and some links are positively bad. You should therefore be active in cleaning up your link profile every three months as a minimum. If you have ever employed an agency that promised a certain number of links every month then you should prioritise having your link profile looked at very carefully, as you may find it is currently doing you more harm than good. Regardless of previous choices you will gain links from places that can actively damage your ranking so ensure it is done on a regular basis.

Content

Benchmarking content for ecommerce websites as a group is very difficult. The metrics we are suggesting are the best approximation to allow you to create a score and understand how well you are doing. However, each site will vary and metrics will be affected by sector and industry. The following metrics allow for this breadth but, if you prefer, you could perform a more in-depth audit of content if you have the time.

Are all category descriptions over 400 words long?

Categories are vitally important to your organic search strategy. These are the gateway for people searching for a type of product and allow you to showcase to them those products you stock in the category. You need to provide good information on these pages, so having the category information being 400 words long as a minimum is a start at delivering better knowledge to your visitors and getting found. Don't forget, this needs to be useful, descriptive content that is not duplicated elsewhere.

To see all 18 steps in the Technical Factors section download the full guide today.

Paid Search

In ecommerce, paid search is a vital component in your tactical toolkit. It is not always possible to rank organically for search terms that you want and for some generic search terms narrowing the targeting with the tools available in paid search can actually make a lot of sense. However, do you know how healthy your paid search campaigns actually are? Do you have full transparency on how your investment is being used and which campaigns are performing? To do great paid search you need to know your numbers and know your customers.

Paid search is a vast area and we could do a whole benchmarking exercise just on this. However, if we got you to benchmark everything which could or should be included, it would take a long time to complete and the numbers could well skew the overall outcome. Therefore, the questions are a selection, as with all of these categories, to give you a sense of your alignment to best practice.

Do you know what your lifetime customer value / profit is?

Customer lifetime value (CLV or often CLTV) is a vital number. If you win a customer today how much are they worth to your business, in terms of revenue as a minimum, but even better in terms of profit over the length of time that an average customer buys from you? Investing time and effort in determining CLV, and even better CLV by different personas and/or different types of searches, helps inform your decision making. You need to know that the amount of money you are spending on winning that customer is really worthwhile. Without this you cannot judge any of your campaigns effectively or understand their true value to your business.

Do you have dynamic remarketing running?

For an ecommerce site this is an easy win. If someone has been looking at specific products and not purchased, serve display ads to drive them back to the specific products they were looking at. Be careful of your use of discounts in dynamic remarketing though, many shoppers have become savvy to those stores that always offer a discount if you leave without buying and now play the system. It is good practice to A/B test to see what works best in your business in terms of remarketing.

There are 8 steps in the full version of this section.

Engagement & Conversions

Understanding how visitors interact with your website and the behaviours that push them to convert is vital to optimise your site for conversions. It can be a great help when you're looking at improving your user experience and scaling up your conversions.

Engagement

1. Are you using bounce rate, pages / session and average time onsite to measure user engagement?

Engagement cannot be measured with just one metric. You need to look at metrics such as bounce rate, pages/session and average time onsite together, to gauge how well people engage with your site. Bounce rate tells you how many visitors have left your site after visiting a single page without triggering any Google Analytics hits. This means that someone landing on a blog, reading it and leaving the page will count as a bounce, which isn't negative as they read your blog! Pages/session shows you how many pages someone views on average during one session. This measures how well they interact with your site before leaving. Finally, average time onsite gives you an indication of how long people stay on your site before leaving. Together, these three metrics can help you identify how people interact with your site.

Review the 'Benchmark Data by Area' section of the [spreadsheet](#) to see how well your website is doing within the relevant sector.

2. Do you compare engagement metrics between customers and non-converters?

Using a segment in Google Analytics, to compare engagement metrics between converters and non-converters, can give you a goldmine of information and help you optimise your site for more conversions. Your converters might look at 4 pages on average before converting, or they might spend 5 minutes on your site. This can help you make decisions on how to improve your website to optimise pages for conversions.

There are 5 essential steps in this section, see all of them by downloading the full guide today.

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About Innovation Visual

We are a full-service digital marketing team with a difference. We believe in partnership and that focusing on digital marketing alone is not the way to get great results. We work with our clients, alongside them, learning about their business and taking a step back to appreciate and understand the wider business and its goals because without that, how can we hope to deliver on those goals? This is part of our '*Just The Expertise You Need*' ethos and why we developed the [Digital+](#) approach, find out more about us [here](#).

Get in touch

If you'd like to talk to us, get more information or simply ask a question then we'd love to hear from you. You can contact us in any way that suits; telephone, email, social or via our website. We're looking forward to hearing from you.

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