pedalo

MOT Your Website:
Website Maintenance Checklist

MAINTAIN YOUR WEBSITE IN 15 SIMPLE STEPS

Could you be losing customers or income because of website performance issues? It's easy to leave your website running, unchecked, with sub-optimal performance that may be dramatically affecting your online results.

Just like a car needs regular MOTs and servicing, websites need ongoing maintenance to stay up-to-date and working optimally. Follow our 15-point website maintenance checklist to update your site and keep it in tip-top shape:


✔ 1. MAXIMISE PAGE SPEED

Page speed is how quickly your web pages are displayed to users. It's a key area of website performance as users often give up when pages load too slowly. Use Google PageSpeed to check how quickly your site loads. You can improve page speed by: compressing images, using a photo editor; enabling caching, which allows web browsers to 'remember' items from your website; and activating AMP (Accelerated Mobile Pages) to maximise mobile speed.

✔ 2. INSTALL SOFTWARE UPDATES

Whatever software you use for your website, regular updates are needed to fix bugs, enhance and add features, and generally improve performance. If you don't update your software, you may have issues in areas such as page speed and browser compatibility, and your site will be at increased risk of security breaches. Check your Content Management System dashboard to see whether your site is up to date, and if not, install the latest software version.
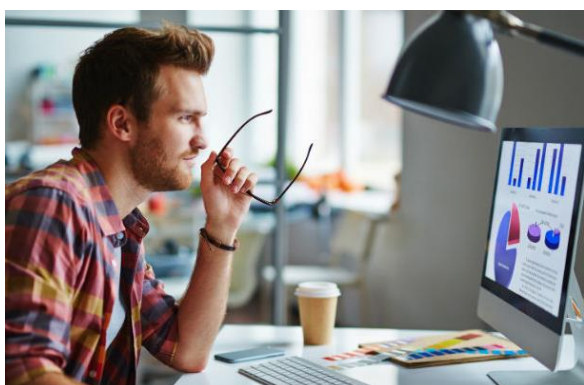
✔ 3. REPAIR BROKEN LINKS

A broken link is a link to a webpage that doesn't work, leaving users frustrated and negatively impacting search engine rankings. Check for and amend broken links on your site with Dr Link Check, and make sure you have a great 404 error message which informs the user when pages are unavailable and provides options to help them reach other content.

✔ 4. ENSURE ACCESSIBILITY

Web accessibility means making sure your website can be accessed and enjoyed by all users, including those with disabilities. To make your site accessible, text should be written in plain English, displayed in a legible font, and be clearly contrasted with the background behind. Also, use a logical layout and site structure, and provide information in different formats – such as audio clips, videos and images – where possible. The Gov.uk website has more information about accessibility for particular user groups.

✔ 5. GET BROWSER-COMPATIBLE

There are a vast number of different browsers and operating systems available, and each has its own method for interpreting and 'translating' your website's code. Cross-browser compatibility means that your website can be displayed correctly and is fully functional for users across most browsers. You can test your site's browser compatibility with Browserling. Issues can usually be remedied by simplifying website code and removing anything unnecessary to make your site easier for browsers to 'translate'.


✔ 6. CHECK DATA PROTECTION COMPLIANCE

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into effect in May 2018. To ensure your website complies, make sure that any personal data is stored securely and only used for the purpose for which it was collected. Data needs to be kept accurate and removed when no longer needed. You should also ensure you have an up-to-date privacy notice which explains why data is collected, who it will be shared with and how long it will be kept for, as well as mentioning that users can contact the Information Commissioners Office if they have a problem.

✔ 7. MAXIMISE SECURITY

Without adequate security, vulnerabilities in your site can be exploited, enabling hackers to access data, send spam and/or make code changes, with potentially severe consequences. Non-secure sites also experience decreased user trust and reduced site traffic. To keep your site secure, make sure that your software is up-to-date and apply automatic updates to keep it this way. You should also switch your site to HTTPS by getting a free SSL certificate from Let's Encrypt.
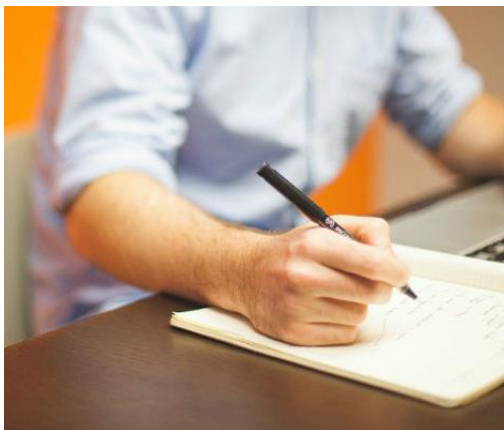
✔ 8. ADD NEW CONTENT

Web content is any material on your website that a user can see and/or engage with, including web pages, articles, blogs, videos, infographics, testimonials and webinars. Producing regular new/updated content is a vital component of site success as it shows that your website is current, helps search engines find your site, and enables you to connect with users. For great web content, think about what your audiences would like to engage with and create that – and then make sure to share widely!

✔ 9. ENSURE MOBILE COMPATIBILITY

With mobile browsing accounting for more than half of internet traffic, having a responsive or mobile-friendly site is vital. A responsive website reacts to its environment – whether it's mobile, tablet or desktop – and changes the browsing experience accordingly, whilst mobile (friendly) sites are separate versions of desktop sites designed specifically for mobile. To check your mobile compatibility, use the Google mobile test tool. If your website isn't responsive and/or doesn't have a mobile version, you may need to get a plugin or update your site's code. Mobile compatibility can also be improved by making buttons larger and clearer, avoiding pop-ups, compressing images and turning off background videos.

✔ 10. IMPROVE SEO

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is the process of optimising your website so that it's displayed higher up on search engine results pages. With billions of search engine searches made every day, it's a key way to bring traffic to your website. First, ensure search engines can find your site by creating an XML sitemap and removing any robots.txt blocking tags. Then think about what keywords your users are likely to be searching for and include these across your site, and get other websites to link to you to show your website is highly regarded. For more information, read Moz's beginner's guide to SEO.
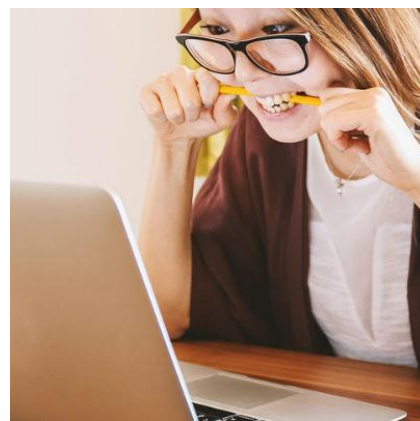
✔ 11. TEST FUNCTIONALITY

Functionality testing means making sure that all features and content on your site are working correctly, both from a user perspective and in terms of back-end administration. If they're not, users may give up and/or data may not always be transferred into your inbox or database. Test your site's functionality with Nibbler and also manually check webforms, search boxes, calls to action and payment processes. Don't forget to check everything both on desktop and mobile/tablet.

✔ 12. MAXIMISE SOCIAL MEDIA INTEGRATION

Social media integration means linking your website with social media channels to create a streamlined user experience. Make sure your site includes working feeds displaying your latest social posts as well as 'share' and 'follow' buttons so that website users can share content and follow your social channels with a simple click. Embedding users' photos, tweets and social posts on your website is also a great way to encourage social media engagement.

✔ 13. OPTIMISE METADATA

Metadata is a summary of what's on a webpage. It's used by search engines – both to decide if your webpage is relevant and to display to users in their search results. The most important website metadata is the title tag and meta description – these should be filled in and kept up-to-date in the back-end of your site. Great metadata is brief, relevant and persuasive; it should encourage a user to click onto your content, contain the keywords that users will be searching for, and be concise.

✔ 14. REVIEW ANALYTICS

Website analytics are the measurement and analysis of data about how people are accessing, using and engaging with your site. Consider what are you trying to achieve with your website and how success can be measured. Then collect relevant data (and not just page views and bounce rate!) using tools such as Google Analytics. Review this data and use it to make changes to optimise your site. Over time, you'll need to keep reviewing your website objectives, collecting relevant data and making informed edits.

✔ 15. PREPARE FOR THE WORST

A website backup is a copy of all of your site's files and information, which can be used to reinstate the website in case of a problem such as accidental file deletion or a virus. Check what's included in your hosting package and ensure that backups are regular enough to prevent you losing too much data if the worst happens. You should also check the quality of your backups, and make sure you use different locations for backup storage.

Prefer to leave website maintenance to the experts? *With nearly two decades of experience, Pedalo is your ideal website maintenance partner. We tailor our services for your unique requirements and offer prepaid blocks of hours which you can use as and when you need. For more information, visit our website or get in touch on 020 8747 3274 / info@pedalo.co.uk.*