2026 South Dakota Governor's Conference on Tourism

Workshop: DIY SEO Audit for DMOs & CVBs

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With You

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On Deck

- Broad SEO Overview
- The Purpose of Website/SEO Audits
- DIY Audit: Here Comes the Good Stuff
- Your Turn!

What Even is SEO?

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Changes you can make to your website and content to increase the likelihood of search engines (like Google, Bing, Yahoo, DuckDuckGo, etc.) surfacing your content in response to the questions users are asking.

Broad SEO Overview

On-Page SEO

There are four types of SEO, but our focus will be **on-page SEO** with just a toe-dip into **technical SEO** which we can tackle through:

- User Experience
- Content & Images
- Good Site Hygiene

Broad SEO Overview

User Experience

This is a very important tenet of SEO that is often overlooked. **Keep the user in mind at all times.**

- Will this information help people plan trips to my destination?
- Is the content valuable to people who are in market already?
- How would I search for this information if I were the user?
- Is information easy to find on my site? Or is it tucked away under clever, but maybe not intuitive, branded headlines? Or is it so far down the page that they'll never reach it?

Broad SEO Overview

Large Language Models (aka LLMs)

AI-driven answer engines, like Chat GPT, AI Overviews, Perplexity, Gemini, etc.

- We think of these as a branch on the SEO tree.
- LLMs can be a source of referral traffic.
- When we optimize for search engines, we also consider how LLMs will be impacted.

Why should I conduct a audit on my site?

An audit can help you uncover:

- outdated content (we see you, COVID).
- content gaps and duplicate content.
- opportunities to enhance SEO.
- issues with accessibility legal requirements/WCAG guidelines.
- technical issues on your site, like crawlability, mobile optimization, broken links, etc.

The Purpose of Site Audits

The ideal audit is a very comprehensive beast that requires bells-and-whistles tools.

Good times for these comprehensive site audits include:

- When you're getting ready to make major updates to your site, including rebuilds or systems migrations.
- In between these major updates to ensure the site is functioning properly and/or to identify adjustments that could enhance performance.
- If your site has had many owners throughout the years, and you're just not sure what's going on with it.

The Purpose of Site Audits

Just some of the tools we use at Miles for comprehensive site audits.

If you're thinking, "Oh no! I don't have all of these swank platforms!"

I'll show you some things you can do without fancy tools.

DIY SEO Audit 1: 404s & Redirects

404s are the errors that display when a page is not found.
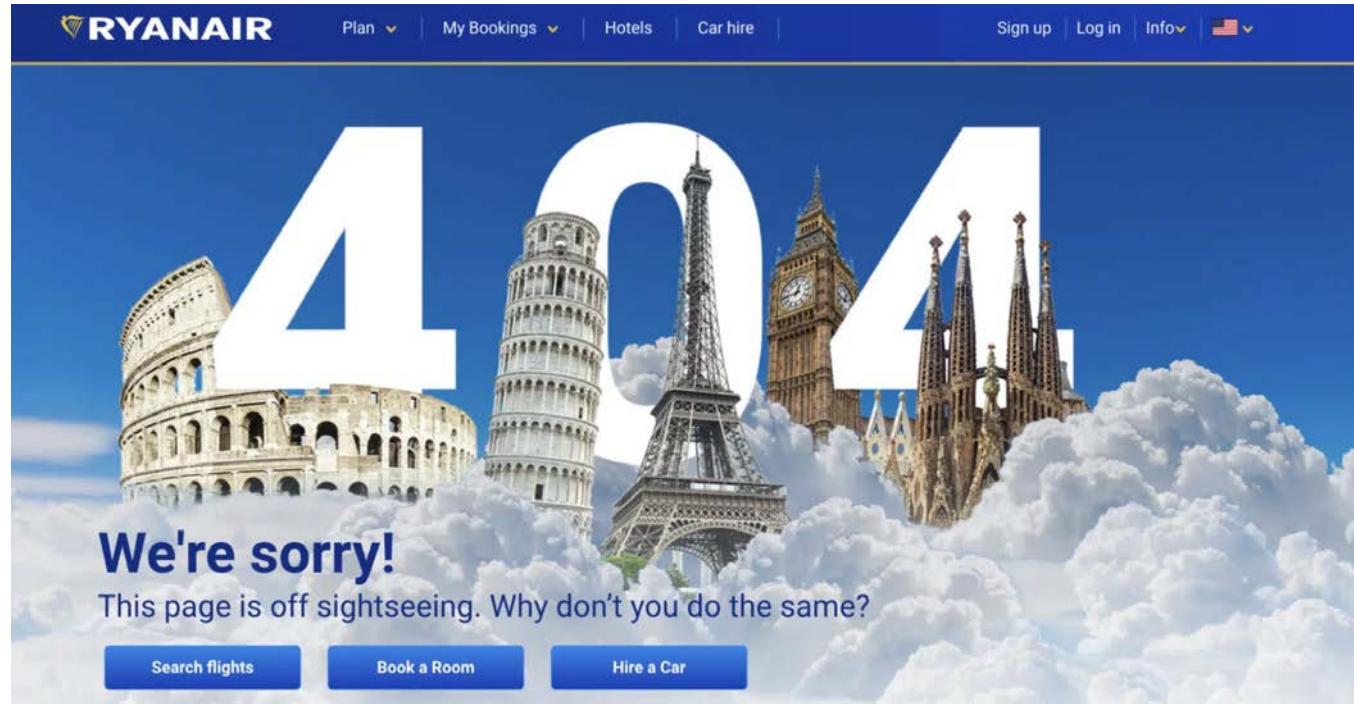
DIY SEO Audit 1: 404s & Redirects

404s are the errors that display when a page is not displayed.

Common 404 triggers include:

- A user has typed in a path that doesn't exist or a path that is a typo.
  (Example: travelsouthdakota.com/popcorn-factory)
- Major events pages unpublishing after the event is over and **not being redirected**.
- Unpublished content **that has not been redirected**. This tends to happen often after major site updates.

DIY SEO Audit 1: 404s & Redirects

**Wait … What is a Redirect?**
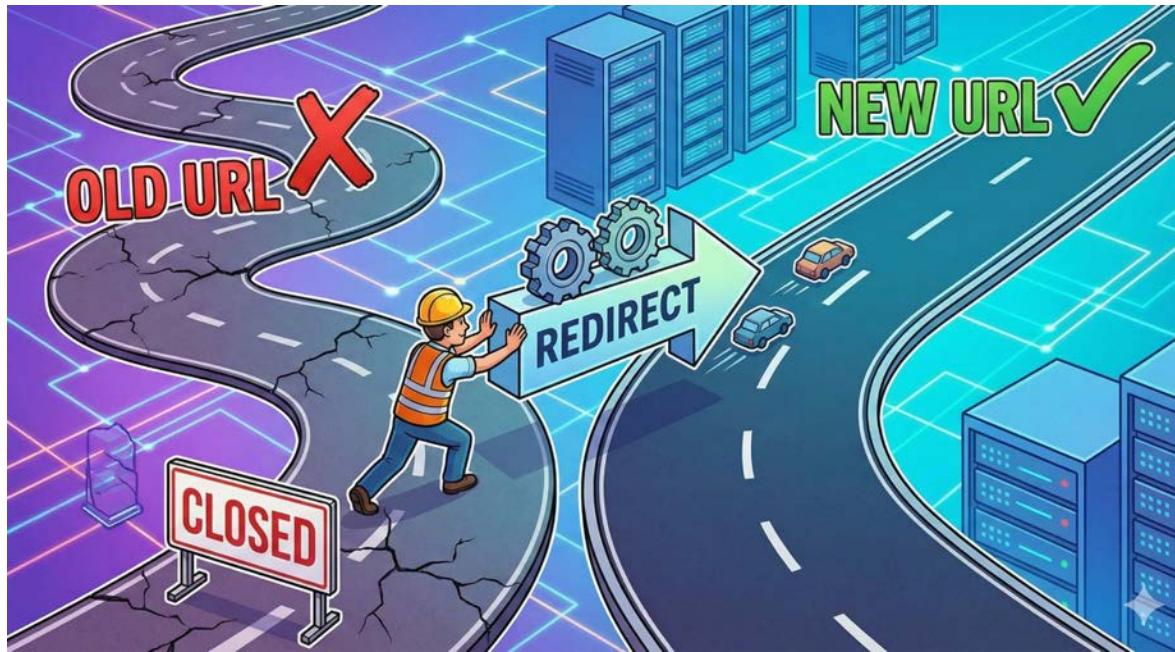
DIY SEO Audit 1: 404s & Redirects

4 Ways to address 404 errors:

1. Run a 404 report using Google Analytics (GA4) and fix broken links by redirecting them. **(Instructions linked here!)**
2. Make sure you're redirecting pages to other pages with relevant topics when you unpublish them. **(Very important during major site updates or new site builds!)**
3. On your 404 page, add a search bar or helpful links to major pages like "things to do" or "plan your trip."
4. Create dedicated pages for your major events and update the run dates and details annually.

DIY SEO Audit 1: 404s & Redirects

DIY SEO Audit 2: Image Best Practices

image 12345lksajdflk.png (4.48 MB)   Remove

Alternative text *

Short description of the image used by screen readers and displayed when the image is not loaded. This is important for accessibility.

Title *

The title is used as a tool tip when the user hovers the mouse over the image.

Name *

☐ High Resolution

Caption

Tip: Attraction and destination names are good to use in alt text and captions.

DIY SEO Audit 2: Image Best Practices

- **File name:** missouri-river-pierre-south-dakota.jpg
- **Alternative text: Missouri River** in **Pierre, South Dakota** frozen with ice during a pink and orange sunset with tall grass along the riverbank.
- **Title/Caption:** Frozen **Missouri River** at sunset in **Pierre, South Dakota**.

DIY SEO Audit 3: Helpful Content

Helpful content is something search engines and LLMs look for when they serve results or cite sources.

Does the content give your audience the information they need?

- **Example 1:** On a page about booking a meeting in your destination, it would help users to have a contact form or button so they can talk to someone about their specific needs.
- **Example 2:** On an article about a state park, users might want FAQ information about entry fees, things to do, seasonal limitations, camping, lodging, special events.

DIY SEO Audit 3: Helpful Content

Helpful content is something search engines and LLMs look for.

People also ask ⋮

Is Sioux Falls, South Dakota worth visiting?   ⌄

What are some unique things to do in Sioux Falls?   ⌄

What are Sioux Falls most known for?   ⌄

Is Sioux Falls a walkable city?   ⌄

DIY SEO Audit 4: Cannibalization

Duplicate content can result in something called cannibalization.

To eliminate cannibalization:

1. Don't create duplicate content.

   - Example: If you have a "things to do during South Dakota Gov Con" article, don't create a second one.
   - You could create a different one that targets different search intent. For example, "Best restaurants to dine at during South Dakota Gov Con."

DIY SEO Audit 4: Cannibalization

Duplicate content can result in something called cannibalization.

To eliminate cannibalization:

2. Dedupe existing content.

- If you have multiple articles about the same topic:
  - First check how the article is performing in Google Analytics.
  - Consolidate the duplicate articles.
  - Unpublish the one you're not keeping and implement a redirect.

DIY SEO Audit 5: Keyword Gimmes

These are keywords that are common across the majority of DMOs or CVBs.

- "things to do in DESTINATION NAME"

- "restaurants in DESTINATION NAME"

- "hotels in DESTINATION NAME"

- "events in DESTINATION NAME"

DIY SEO Audit 6: Content LLMs Love

These are types of content that LLMs love.

- Itineraries
- Actual hidden gems
- Questions that are answered in an article

Let's Do Some SEOing

1. Do some question mining about your destination and see what ideas it gives you for where you might add FAQs to your site.

2. See how you're ranking for gimme search terms in your destination.
   a. things to do in XXX
   b. hotels in XXX
   c. restaurants in XXX
   d. events in XXX

Q&A