The State of Space Sector Websites 2017 Audit by Martin Wilson

Google is the biggest referrer of website traffic and Google just loves space exploration - but do space sector organizations return Google the love it requires? And do space brands take as much care about their primary marketing and PR channel (their websites) as they do perfecting their products and services? Clearly not...

The space sector Search Engine Optimization (SEO) audit below indicates that the majority of space brands still neglect to maintain healthy, error-free, websites. The table shows the most common usability issues visitors encounter and SEO errors Google faces when sending robots to crawl, index and rank sites in the search results.

Is your site listed below? Click the logos to read more about each website, click the pdf link next to the logo to see a full SEO review and send it to your marketing team or get in touch to find out how to resolve the "under-the-hood" issues holding it back. If your organization isn't listed below, simply request a website review, visit the online SEO audit to sort the rows or subscribe to email updates.

Google friendly space websites - Table of results

	Download Audit pdf	Crawled Web Pages	Domain Authority	Total SEO Score	Total SEO Errors	Total SEO Warnings	Broken Links	Temporary Redirects	Duplicate Content Urls	Duplicate Meta Titles	Duplicate Descriptions	Broken Image Urls	Missing Alt Tags
NASA	n/a	n/a	96	n/a	The NASA site is not fully crawlable by website crawling tools								
esa	pdf	20883	92	33%	11039	193362	693	49	1257	3363	3340	924	146626

Company													
Boeing	pdf	13533	89	48%	15266	41538	4271	812	1903	4023	3557	109	12648
Space.com	pdf	24281	89	40%	4107	43942	717	71	2048	57	248	2	851
Lockheed Martin	pdf	20496	85	35%	35622	98524	25	486	11556	110	11548	65862	65862
SpaceX	pdf	3868	83	48%	4164	10918	65	474	1199	1212	1479	157	4789
JAXA	pdf	3147	81	53%	2255	11735	573	0	201	17	254	44	6585
UK Space Agency	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	The UK Space Agency does not currently have its own website								
Virgin Galactic	pdf	179	75	59%	25	236	3	3	2	10	5	0	37
	n/a	1468	70	44%	2432	1494	117	69	31	1292	1292	0	1425
Airbus Defence & Space	pdf	1862	70	55%	440	2004	77	28	35	82	144	69	409
CSA ASC	pdf	10284	69	57%	18830	11852	8364	123	595	1468	1452	0	5
ULA United Launch Alliance	pdf	1005	66	56%	850	3478	4	0	153	643	0	32	97
Planetary Resources	pdf	467	64	58%	910	3315	33	0	408	408	0	10	1752
Blue Origin	pdf	301	63	66%	270	851	2	1	16	248	285	0	15
Orbital ATK	pdf	5055	61	55%	4691	21810	166	87	2213	2212	0	0	13399
Sierra Nevada Corporation	pdf	401	60	65%	71	502	0	24	5	5	0	0	0
XCOR Aerospace	pdf	206	59	56%	132	1181	15	2	0	8	14	1	727
Bigelow Aerospace	pdf	123	57	64%	113	745	0	0	55	56	0	0	473
Nanoracks	pdf	525	54	79%	7	825	0	0	0	0	0	0	528

Key and descriptions

The downloadable pdf audit file for each site contains further data about issues that are not visible in the above table. Each issue indicates not only the difficulty search engines have when crawling, indexing and ranking sites, but also, more importantly, highlights usability issues faced by website visitors.

As well as manually reviewing each space organization's site included in the 2017 study, SEMrush auditing tool was used to count issues and export reports, Moz software was used to ascertain domain authority scores and Screaming Frog was the tool chosen to crawl each website.

Google was also used to uncover the pages listed in the Google US search engine results pages.

- **Crawled Web Pages** - the number of urls SEMrush was able to discover whilst crawling a domain or website

- **Domain Authority** - an overall score Moz calculates from a site's content and incoming links from other sites

- **SEO Score** - an score out of 100 SEMrush attributes to how well a website is optimized for the search engines

- **SEO Errors** - hidden issues that Google and other search engines face when crawling websites and domains

- **SEO Warnings** - lesser important technical SEO and usability issues, but missed opportunities nonetheless

- **Broken Links** - the number of internal image and text links that are broken and return a 404 not found error

- **Temporary Redirects** - temporarily rather than permanently redirected urls that hinder a page's ability to rank

- **Duplicate Content** - pages with exactly the same content seen on multiple urls that compete with each other

- **Duplicate Meta Titles** - pages with non-unique meta titles (the valuable blue links seen in the search results)

- **Duplicate Meta Descriptions** - non-unique meta descriptions (the line or two of text seen in the search results)

- **Broken Image Urls** - code for missing or deleted images that have change address, leaving a big empty space

- **Missing Image Alt Tags** - images that lack the tag that describes to search engines what is seen in the image

Summary of findings

As is often the case, large websites operated by government organizations that are less tied to providing value to the customer (than their commercial counterparts), tend to have the biggest sites and therefor suffer the highest number of issues. Websites that represent large brands, that outsource site management tasks to agencies suffer to a lesser degree. And sites owned by smaller firms enjoy the best results, likely due to their keeping marketing staff close to the core of their business. Below are some key findings uncovered whilst auditing the top 20 space industry sites...

- Russian Space Agency attempts to hide all web pages from Google search results
- Web developers have sneaked their own name and services into the ULA website code
- The CSA are catching up with NASA on domain authority due to incoming link quality
- Boeing and Lockheed Martin's websites contain more usability issues than pages
- Blue Origin site lacks meta descriptions, forcing Google to guess what the brand is about
- The UK Space Agency is awaiting long needed website under new chief Graham Turnock
- Bigelow, NanoRacks and Sierra Nevada Corp's websites enjoy zero broken links

By far the most common website errors that make life difficult for visitors are broken links and missing images - similar to inviting customers to your company offices and allowing erroneous door signs to get them lost and stressed-out before a meeting. Common issues Google has with space industry sites include homepages with multiple urls, including the https and http variants and those linked to with and without the www. Do you know which is the correct address of your own site? Does your marketing team?

Because some brands are so big and care less if they rank high in the search engine results pages for the name of their products or services, many space sector web pages lack being optimized for target keyword phrases. Some, including NASA, are happy to have many uncrawlable web pages online, others, like the UK Space Agency have held back from creating a dedicated website and interestingly the Russian Space Agency's site is coded to hide all its pages from Google - to little effect.

Take-aways and your next steps

Fact 1 - Google traffic brings untold opportunities

Google prefers making money rather than spending it. Their biggest expense is discovering and crawling web pages in order to index and rank them in the search results. Despite their ongoing attempts to inform webmasters and online marketing managers, making sites efficient for their robots to crawl is the most important thing that can be done to help Google give websites maximum visibility in the search results.

Action - Have your site submitted to Google

Most of your traffic already comes from Google, so having your webmaster sign up to their free service at Google Search Console and adding your site is all that is needed to have Google run it through their tools and flag hidden errors that can be resolved. These issues should not be allowed to hold you back from higher rankings and increased traffic from your target online markets.

Fact 2 - Untapped search markets mean money

Sure your site will rank for your brand name but those are just the words searched by people who already know about your firm. The much larger volume of potential customers are most likely searching for phrases that relate to your products and services for information that could solve their individual needs and encourage them to share your information on the social networks or get in touch with your team.

Action - Search for products - not for names

if you create "separation hardware for spacecraft" go ahead and search Google for that phrase and any other phrase potential customers may search for. Have your SEO guy do some basic keyword research and optimize every page on your site so that not only potential customers, but journalists, prospective employees and your fans can see what is on offer.

Fact 3 - Brand trust matters in the space sector

Because of the nature of the space industry, its products, and its reliance on gaining and maintaining the trust of customers, it is essential to prove your team pays enough attention to detail. However, representing your brand with a site full of broken links, missing images, erroneous navigation, or lack of support for mobile, tablets or other devices, is a sure fire way of trashing the trust and authority your brand really needs to maintain.

Action - Have your site health checked regularly

Have third parties review and user-test your website and make recommendations - and not just for the aesthetics. A website is a marketing machine, make sure it works perfectly in all browsers and device types. If done correctly you will be rewarded with improved brand trust and for paying true attention to detail - often claimed by competitors, and likely, by your own company.

Fact 4 - Digital marketing is central to your goals

Government organizations and large firms that leave the management of their websites to staff in external agencies suffer the most. Webmasters that are unaware of the goals of C-Suite leaders and marketing directors tend not to report issues that are holding the site back. Worse is that new opportunities are often not relayed to the appropriate decision maker to be acted on.

Action - Know your market (and your marketers)

If you are a director, manager or a decision maker of any sized space industry brand, take steps to bring your web team much closer to the core of your business. Have them feedback issues and opportunities their managers wouldn't usually bother you with and allow them to make the best of the online opportunities your brand has left untapped.

The errors uncovered in the audit above are not just visible to Google and the search engines, they are experienced by potential customers, journalists, competitors and fans of your brand countless times every day. A broken link is a reflection of a broken relationship and just because management don't have time to constantly review and experience these issues, they are still there doing damage to the brand every day.

To learn more about the difficulties space industry website users face and the drop in confidence they experience when visiting a site that should work as well as the hardware on offer, sign up to email updates in order to download the full audit pdf, click the logo of each brand to read more about their website or get in touch for a SEO audit and recommendations for your website. Feel free to share the audit findings around the web and with your company\'s marketing manager - it could make all the difference.

Get In Touch

Currently working for an aerospace, spaceflight or satellite business? Visit the website to learn more about each of the brands above. Feel free to ask any question, enquire about my space marketing services or request a Skype consultation to find out how I can help grow your space business.