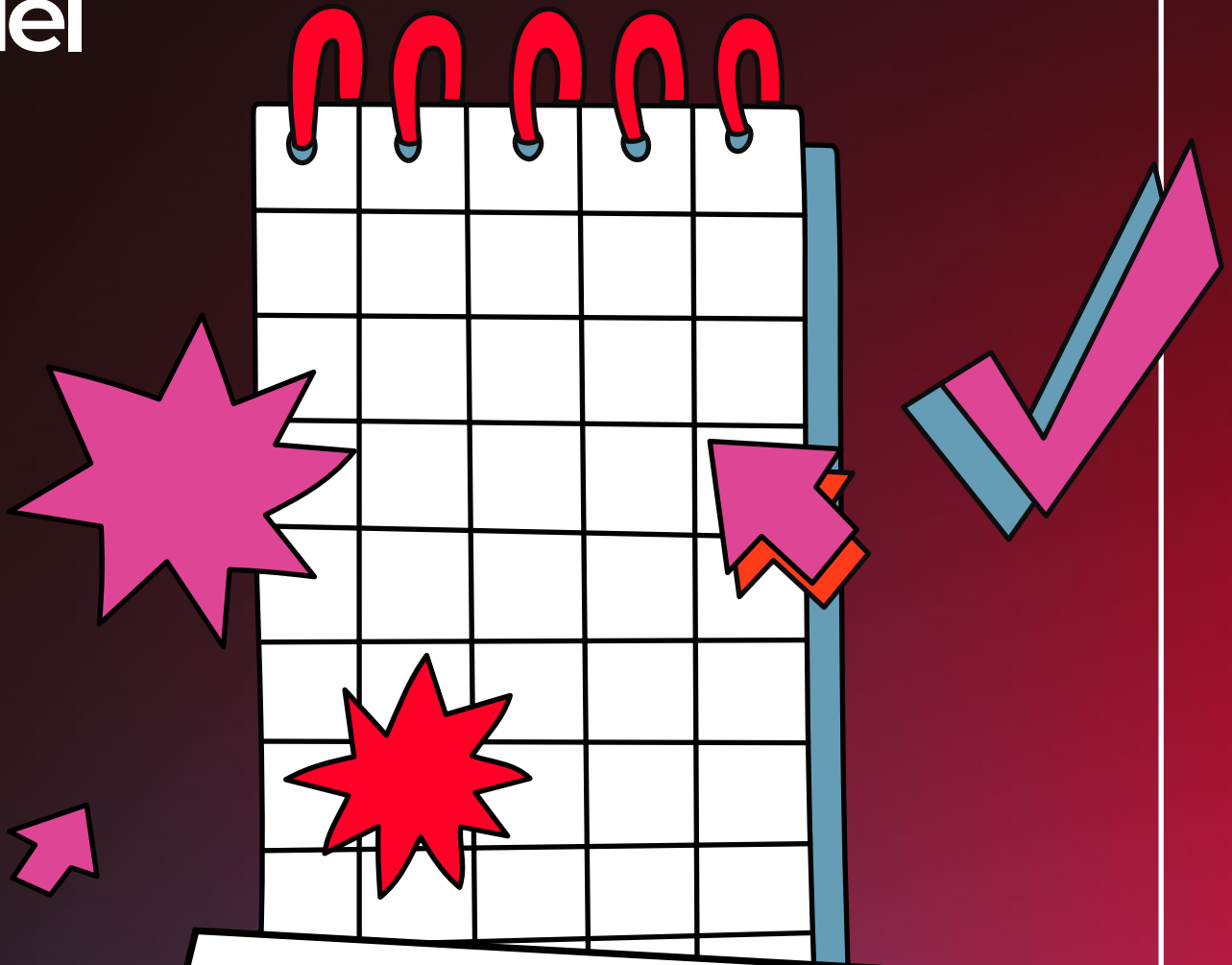


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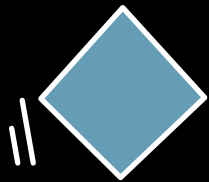


The **10-point** website inspection.

Is your website still roadworthy, or are you paying to keep a wreck on the driveway?

An honest inspection manual for business owners and marketing teams who suspect their website stopped pulling its weight a while ago.

Before we lift the hood.



The awkward thing about websites is that they don't fail in any way you'd notice.

A car at least has the decency to make a worrying noise before it dies, whereas a website just carries on looking like a website while its rankings slide a position at a time and its forms stop sending and nobody finds out for a month. Because nothing ever visibly breaks, nothing ever gets fixed, and the whole thing can drift on for years in a state that everyone vaguely senses is wrong but nobody can quite point to.

That drift is expensive precisely because the cost never arrives as a bill. It arrives as the enquiries that didn't come, the searches you didn't show up in, and the prospects who looked at the site, formed an impression, and went somewhere else. None of that appears in any budget line, which is exactly why it never gets dealt with.

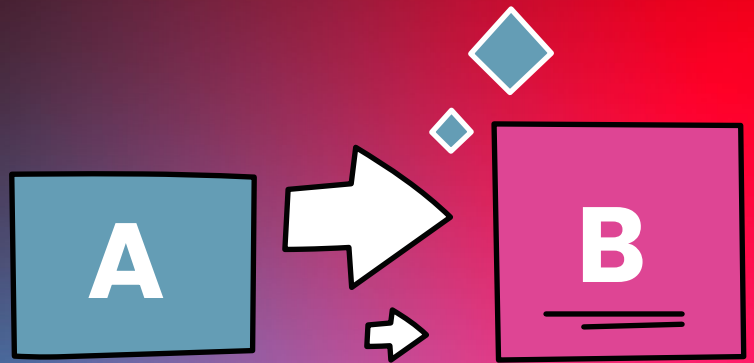
So this ebook is the inspection your website has probably been avoiding. There are ten points, each one ends with a short checklist, and we'd ask you to grade yourself honestly as you go: Pass, Advisory, or Fail. Keep a running count, because at the end we'll tell you what your score means and what to do about it.

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Point 1

Does it actually get you from A to B?



The fundamental question: is this transport, or an ornament on the driveway?

Once you strip away the design, the brand guidelines and whatever the carousel was originally put in for, a website has one job, which is to move people from arriving to acting. Traffic comes in, and enquiries, sales and bookings are supposed to come out. Everything else on the site exists to serve that exchange, and if it doesn't, it's upholstery.

Which brings us to a question worth sitting with: when did your website last generate a lead that you actually closed? We mean a real enquiry from a real person that turned into real revenue, and if you can answer that with a date and a name, you're genuinely doing better than most businesses we meet. If you can't, then the silence is your answer.

The temptation is to treat a website that produces nothing as neutral, as a thing that simply sits there doing no harm. But every one of those visitors who arrived and left was a person with a genuine need who was interested enough in your business to show up, and something on the site persuaded them not to go any further. Seen that way, a non-converting website isn't idle at all. It's talking your prospects out of contacting you, all day, every day.

The reasons this happens are:



Pages that simply end, with no suggestion of what the visitor should do next



Contact details buried too many clicks deep



Forms that demand a gazillion fields of information

Point 1

Does it actually get you from A to B?

What it's costing you

Every visitor was paid for somehow, whether through advertising, content, referrals or years of hard-won reputation, and when they leave without acting, that entire spend converts into nothing. Leaving the site alone doesn't save you money. It just means you're paying full price for zero miles.

How Fuel approaches this:

we start every website project with the journey rather than the homepage, working out who arrives, what they need, and what action the business wants them to take. The design comes after that, never before.

Inspection checklist:

☐

Could a first-time visitor tell what you do, and for whom, within 5 seconds?

☐

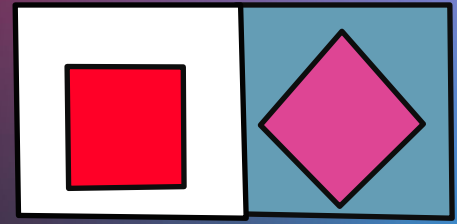
Is there one clear action on every page?

☐

Do you know your monthly enquiry and conversion numbers, actually rather than roughly?

Point 2

Warning lights you've been ignoring



Every driver knows the temptation to put tape over the dashboard.

Nobody ignores a breakdown, but almost everybody ignores a warning light, and websites produce warning lights constantly. The pages load a little slower every year as things accumulate, the rankings drift down a position at a time, the bounce rate creeps up, and mobile visitors sometimes give up within seconds of arriving. All of it is easy to dismiss for the same reason the amber glow on a dashboard is easy to dismiss: nothing has actually failed, there's no drama to respond to, and everyone has more urgent things to do.

What makes website warning lights more dangerous than the automotive kind is that they feed each other. Slow pages hurt your rankings, weaker rankings cut your traffic, and lower traffic means fewer enquiries, which conveniently disguises the fact that your conversion rate has collapsed as well. Each problem provides cover for the next one, so by the time anyone looks properly, it isn't one light glowing on the dashboard but the whole panel, and it's been lit for a couple of years.

The good news is that you can check most of this yourself, today, without spending anything. Run your homepage through a free speed test, then search for your own key services and see where you appear, if you appear at all. Finally, open your site on your phone using mobile data rather than the office Wi-Fi, because that's how the majority of your visitors actually experience it. Ten minutes of scrutiny will tell you a lot.

Point 2

Warning lights you've been ignoring

What it's costing you

Speed is money, and this is one of the most consistently measured findings in the whole industry: even a one-second delay measurably cuts conversions. Most ageing websites aren't losing one second, either. They're losing several, on every page, for every visitor, every day.

How Fuel approaches this:

performance is a build standard for us rather than an optimisation we sell you later. Every site we create is tested for speed, mobile experience and search health before launch, against benchmarks you can hold us to.

Inspection checklist:

☐

Does your homepage load in under 3 seconds on a phone, on mobile data?

☐

Have your rankings held or slipped over the last 12 months, and do you actually know?

☐

Does a named person review your analytics monthly?

Point 3

Showroom shine, engine misfire?



Looks great parked. Breaks down on the highway.

There's a particular kind of website that photographs beautifully and falls apart the moment a real customer tries to use it. A link leads to a 404, the contact form throws an error or, worse, says thank you and sends the enquiry into thin air, the site search returns nothing for a product you actually sell, and the navigation made perfect sense to whoever built it while confusing everyone who's tried it since.

This happens for a reason that's entirely understandable once you see it, which is that websites get judged on how they look in a meeting rather than on how they perform in the wild. Sign-off happens in a boardroom, on a big screen, with everyone nodding along at the homepage, and nobody in that room ever fills in the contact form or tests the checkout on a four-year-old phone. So the site gets approved as an image and then released into the world as a machine, where it's judged by an entirely different standard: whether it works.

The trust cost of failing that standard is bigger than most owners realise, because visitors will forgive plain but they will not forgive broken. A modest, functional website reads as a small but competent business, whereas a beautiful website with a dead button reads as a company that doesn't check its own work, and that impression follows you straight into the sales conversation whether you're aware of it or not.

Point 3

Showroom shine, engine misfire?

What it's costing you

A broken form won't flag up in your emails unless someone highlights it, or worse, complains. That's how a single failed form can swallow every enquiry for weeks before anyone notices. It's worth asking yourself honestly: if yours stopped working today, how would you find out, and how long would it take?

How Fuel approaches this:

every journey on a Fuel site is tested end to end before launch and monitored afterwards, so if a form breaks, we know before you do, and usually before your customers do too.

Inspection checklist:

☐

When did someone last test every form and confirm the messages actually arrive?

☐

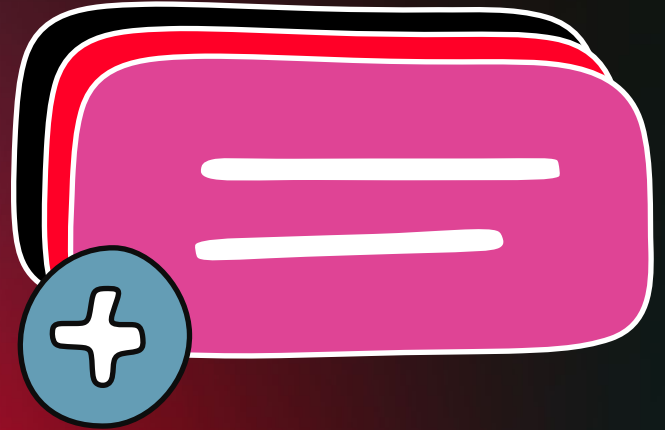
Do all your menu items work, and make sense to someone outside the business?

☐

Can a stranger complete your core journey without help?

Point 4

Aftermarket bolt-ons



Modified by different mechanics (stakeholders) who never spoke to each other.

Most established business websites turn out, on inspection, to be patchworks. There's the original build, whose developer moved on years ago, then a page builder added in year two, then a dozen plugins of varying vintage, some of them abandoned by their creators but still running, plus a booking widget wired in by a freelancer and a chat tool left over from a marketing push nobody quite remembers.

The important thing to say is that every one of those additions made sense at the time. Each was a rational answer to a real need, and nobody ever set out to build something unmanageable. But the sum of all those sensible decisions is a machine that no single living person fully understands, made of parts that were never designed to work together and held in place by settings nobody dares touch.

That's the point at which the costs turn against you. Changes that should take an hour start taking a day, because each new developer has to reverse-engineer the work of the last three before they can safely touch anything, and every fix carries the risk of breaking something apparently unrelated.

All of which raises a question worth answering honestly. Are you paying to maintain a website, or are you paying to stop a collection of patches from collapsing? Because those are different products, and only one of them is an asset.

Point 4

Aftermarket bolt-ons

What it's costing you

Try adding up the last two years of small fixes, plugin licences, developer hours and internal workarounds. For many businesses that running total is already a meaningful fraction of what a rebuild would cost, with none of a rebuild's benefits, and it's what «buy cheap, buy twice» looks like in practice.

How Fuel approaches this:

we build on modern, well-documented foundations that any competent developer could pick up, and we hand over the keys with proper documentation and training, because you should never be hostage to the people who built your website.

Inspection checklist:

☐

Could anyone currently on your team explain how the site is built?

☐

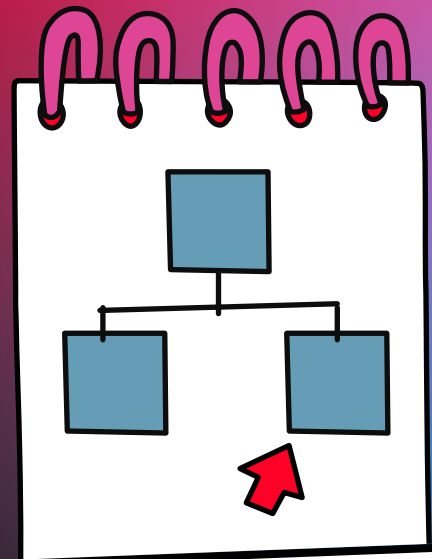
Does every change, however small, require a specialist?

☐

Has a «quick fix» ever broken something else?

Point 5

Junk in the back seat



Nobody wants to ride in a car full of someone else's clutter.

Open the site map of a website that's been live for a few years and you'll usually find an archive nobody planned: offers that expired long ago, pages for events that have been and gone, duplicate PDFs, and pages that nobody currently employed can remember publishing.

That clutter carries three costs, and only one of them is visible from where you're sitting.

The first falls on your visitors, because clutter buries the good work. Your strongest case study ends up sharing a house with pages that should have been retired years ago, and when a prospect happens to land on something outdated, they don't file it away as a legacy page. They conclude that the whole business might be behind the times, which is unfair, but it's also entirely human, and you'd probably do the same.

The second cost falls on your search performance, because search engines crawl everything and judge the site as a whole rather than cherry-picking its best pages. Thin, stale and duplicate content drags down how everything else is assessed, which means your worst pages are actively taxing your best ones.

And the third cost is simple weight, because every legacy page is something to host, secure, maintain and one day migrate. In effect you're paying, in both money and risk, to keep pages alive whose only remaining function is making you look worse.

Point 5

Junk in the back seat

What it's costing you

Every outdated page a prospect finds is a coin-flip on whether they trust anything else you say. You would never hand a prospect a brochure from five years ago, and yet your website may be doing exactly that, unsupervised, every day.

How Fuel approaches this:

a rebuild with us starts with a content audit rather than a blank page. We help you work out what earns its place, what needs rewriting and what should be retired, so the new site launches carrying muscle rather than baggage.

Inspection checklist:

☐

Do you know, even roughly, how many pages your site has?

☐

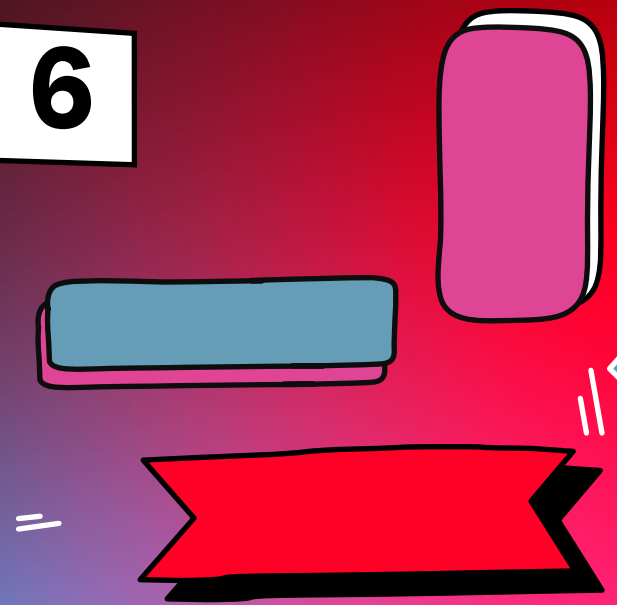
Is anything on it more than 2 years out of date?

☐

Could you confidently delete half of it? If so, why is it still there?

Point 6

Bumper stickers from every era



**Evidence of everywhere it's been.
No sign of where it's going.**

After a few years of honest growth, most websites end up carrying their history on their surface. There's the current logo on the homepage and an older version still lurking in a footer PDF, headings set in the font from the last rebrand while the body copy uses the font from the one before, one section written in a confident, current voice and another that clearly predates it, and several shades of what is technically the same blue.

Nobody decided any of this; it accrued. Campaigns, microsites and new sections were added over the years, each one faithfully following whatever the brand happened to look like that quarter, and while every individual page made sense when it went live, the collection as a whole no longer does.

This matters more than it feels like it should, because visitors register inconsistency even when they can't name it. Nobody is ever going to email you to point out that your fonts differ across templates (unless they're like us!), but they will come away with a vague sense that something is off, and that vague sense does real damage. Inconsistency reads as disorganisation, disorganisation reads as risk, and in high-stakes B2B purchases, where someone is staking their internal reputation on choosing you, that unnamed feeling of risk kills deals without ever appearing in the post-mortem.

There's a simple way to test yourself here. Put five random pages of your site side by side on one screen and ask whether they look like one company.

Point 6

Bumper stickers from every era

What it's costing you

Before a prospect believes anything you claim, they run an instinctive check on whether you seem to have your act together, because trust is built on coherence. If your website can't agree with itself about who you are, you're asking prospects to do work your brand should have done for them.

How Fuel approaches this:

we're a full-service agency, which means brand and website are handled as one job rather than two departments. The site we build speaks with one voice, in one visual system, because the same team is responsible for both.

Inspection checklist:



Same logo, colours and fonts everywhere, including the forgotten pages?



Would five random pages pass as one brand?



Does the site match your current sales deck and social profiles?

Point 7

Passengers who can't get in



You're driving off without part of your audience.

Roughly 1 in 6 people worldwide live with a disability, and most conversations about accessibility are treated as an edge case when the numbers say it's anything but. This is a larger audience than many companies' entire addressable market, and for a meaningful share of them an inaccessible website isn't inconvenient. It's unusable.

The barriers are invisible unless they happen to apply to you. Images published without alt text leave screen readers describing your work as a filename, colour contrast that looked elegant in the design review makes text disappear for anyone with low vision, forms and menus that can't be operated by keyboard shut out everyone who doesn't use a mouse, and videos without captions exclude anyone who can't hear them. None of this was ever chosen by anyone; it's simply what happens when accessibility never makes it onto the brief.

There's a legal dimension as well, and it's tightening on both sides of the Atlantic. ADA-related website lawsuits in the US now number in the thousands each year and no longer target only large companies, the Equality Act applies in the UK, and the European Accessibility Act, now in force, raises the bar for anyone selling into the EU.

The encouraging part is that accessibility isn't a tax on the rest of the site, because accessible websites turn out to be clearer, faster and easier for everyone. Search engines, which read your site in much the same way a screen reader does, understand and rank them better too, so fixing the locked door ends up improving the whole building.

Point 7

Passengers who can't get in

What it's costing you

Inaccessibility costs you three ways at once, through customers excluded at the door, genuine legal exposure, and weaker search performance, and all of it stems from problems that were invisible to everyone who signed the site off. It's also the only point in this inspection that can generate a lawyer's letter.

How Fuel approaches this:

accessibility is built into our process from wireframe onwards and tested against current WCAG standards, rather than bolted on at the end when it's expensive to fix. It protects you legally, and it makes the site better for every visitor you have.

Inspection checklist:

☐

Does it meet current WCAG standards? If you don't know, that's a Fail, and now you know.

☐

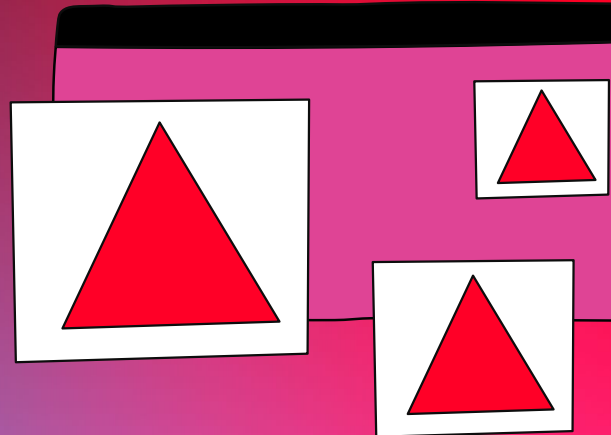
Can you navigate it, forms included, by keyboard alone?

☐

Has the site ever had an accessibility audit?

Point 8

No seatbelts



It's your passengers who get hurt.

Website security is usually framed as protecting the website, but it's more accurate, and more sobering, to think of it as protecting the people inside it. Everyone who fills in a form, creates an account or shares a payment detail is trusting you with the ride, and security is their seatbelt.

The trouble is that an unprotected site rarely looks like one. It looks like a CMS running a few versions behind, plugins abandoned by their developers but still installed, SSL renewals handled by luck rather than process, and nobody whose actual job it is to worry about any of this. Nothing is broken, exactly, which is what makes it an accident waiting for a place to happen.

It's worth understanding why age itself is the exposure. Attackers don't hunt businesses individually; instead, automated tools scan the internet around the clock for known vulnerabilities in outdated software, flaws that are publicly documented and for which the patch already exists, sitting unapplied. An old website isn't a needle in a haystack so much as a listing in a catalogue.

When it goes wrong, the damage lands in several places at once, starting with your customers' data, which is the worst of it, and moving through your reputation, which took years to build and gets dented in a day. Your rankings suffer too, because browsers and search engines actively flag and bury insecure sites, and then there's the downtime, which can close the business for days or weeks. On top of all that sits the regulatory layer: under GDPR in the UK and EU, and a growing set of state privacy laws in the US, a breach isn't merely embarrassing but reportable, with everything that implies.

Point 8

No seatbelts

What it's costing you

A hacked website costs more than any redesign ever will, once you account for the cleanup, the downtime, the lost trust and the potential fines. The cheapest security incident is the one your infrastructure was too modern to allow, which makes prevention the only genuine bargain in this category.

How Fuel approaches this:

every site we build comes with a maintenance plan that has a named owner, a patching schedule and monitoring, because security isn't a favour we do when asked. It's part of the product.

Inspection checklist:

☐

If the site were compromised today, would you know within 24 hours? How?

☐

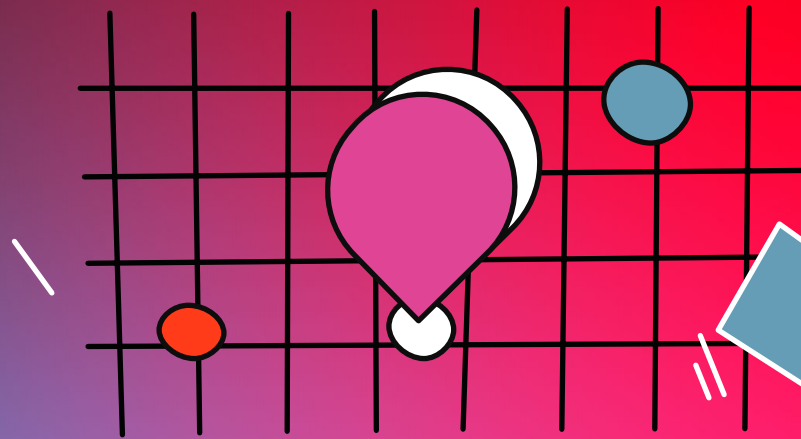
Is your CMS, and every plugin, currently up to date?

☐

Does a named person own security updates?

Point 9

Invisible on the map



Prospects are searching for exactly the journey you offer. You're not showing as a route.

People are searching for what you sell right now, with budget and intent, and the arithmetic of findability is unforgiving: if you're not present when they search, then as far as they're concerned you don't exist. They'll go with whoever appears, and they'll never learn you were an option.

Old websites sink in search for the same reasons they fail the rest of this inspection. Slow performance gets demoted, thin and stale content gets demoted, and a poor mobile experience gets demoted hardest of all, because most searches now happen on phones. It isn't really a penalty so much as an annual exam that your site keeps sitting with ten-year-old revision notes, while newer competitors turn up prepared.

And the bar has just moved again, because buyers increasingly don't search so much as ask. AI assistants are becoming the first stop for recommendations, and those systems draw their answers from fast, clear, well-structured, trustworthy websites, which means the qualities that win traditional search now also decide whether the machines mention you at all. An invisible website used to lose you the click; it can now lose you the entire conversation.

One more thing worth being clear-eyed about is that visibility is zero-sum. Every position you lose is a position a competitor gains, along with the enquiry attached to it, so your decline is, quite literally, someone else's growth.

Invisible on the map

What it's costing you

Page one gets the clicks, and everything below it barely exists. If a competitor outranks you for your own core service, they're collecting enquiries that began life as searches for businesses exactly like yours, which means you built the demand and they're pocketing the leads.

How Fuel approaches this:

search performance is designed in from the start of every build, through structure, speed, content and technical foundations that both search engines and AI assistants can read and trust.

Inspection checklist:

☐

Do you rank on page one for your core services, not just your company name?

☐

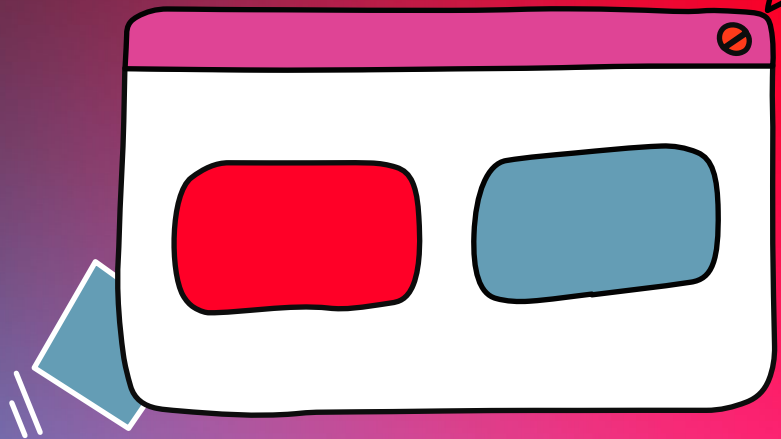
Can you be found for anything beyond a direct search of your name?

☐

Is organic traffic trending up or down over 12 months?

Point 10

Repair or replace?



The decision every owner eventually faces, usually later than they should.

This is the chapter where a lesser ebook would tell you that everything is broken and only a full rebuild can save you, so let's be precise instead, because not every failed inspection means a trade-in, and anyone who tells you otherwise is selling you a car you may not need.

Repair territory looks like isolated problems on a fundamentally sound platform: some stale content to cull, a few broken journeys to rewire, brand inconsistencies that a systematic pass can resolve. If the platform underneath is modern, maintained and understood, then fix the flags and drive on, genuinely.

Replace territory looks different, and you'll recognise it if you're in it. The problems are structural rather than surface, nobody fully understands the platform anymore, the failures span most of these ten points and feed each other, and even if every individual flag were patched, the site still couldn't support where the business is going. When the chassis is the problem, no amount of bodywork changes the answer.

Where most businesses get this decision wrong is in the comparison itself, because the choice is never «new website versus zero.» The old website is not free; its cost is simply spread across a dozen budget lines that nobody ever totals up, from the repair bills and the enquiries lost to broken journeys, through the staff hours spent on workarounds, to the search decline, the competitor gains and the risk of running unpatched software. Everything this inspection has surfaced has a price. It's just distributed, hidden, and paid continuously.

Which gives you a workable rule of thumb: when a year's worth of patching plus lost opportunity would make meaningful progress toward a rebuild, keeping the old site has become the expensive option, not the cautious one, quite literally, someone else's growth.

Point 10

Repair or replace?

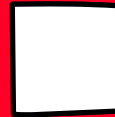
What it's costing you

'We can't justify a new website' is only a valid conclusion once you're holding two numbers: what the current site is costing you, and what a new one would actually cost. Most businesses have never held both at the same time, which means they're comparing a real price against an imaginary zero, and the imaginary zero always wins.

How Fuel approaches this:

we'll tell you which territory you're in, honestly, even when the answer is repair, because a rebuild recommendation that wasn't needed costs us more in reputation than it ever earns in fees. That's the difference between an agency partner and a vendor.

Inspection checklist:

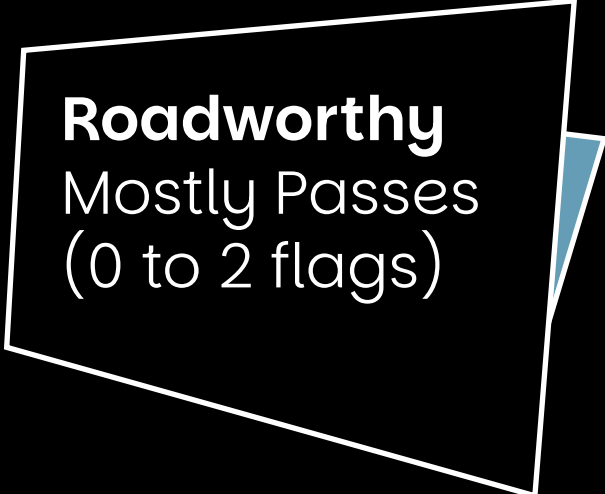


Tally your flags across all 10 points. Then keep reading.

Your Inspection Results.



Roadworthy Mostly Passes (0 to 2 flags)



You're in a small minority, and it didn't happen by accident, so keep up the servicing. Schedule a proper review annually, because every point in this inspection degrades without anyone doing anything wrong, and this year's Pass could quickly become next year's Advisory if nobody's looking.

Your website is costing you more than you think, because that's simply what this score means. The good news is that at this stage most of the issues are fixable rather than fatal, and the important move is to get them scoped and priced now, before they compound, because Advisories become Fails and they never become Passes on their own.

Advisory 3 to 5 flags



Off the road in all but name 6+ flags



You're in a small minority, and it didn't happen by accident, so keep up the servicing. Schedule a proper review annually, because every point in this inspection degrades without anyone doing anything wrong, and this year's Pass could quickly become next year's Advisory if nobody's looking.

Why an Agency, and why Fuel

fuel

If this inspection has demonstrated anything, it's that a website isn't one discipline but ten of them at once: strategy, design, content, brand, development, accessibility, security, search, measurement and maintenance, all of which have to pull in the same direction. That's precisely why the cheap option fails so predictably. A template or a solo freelancer can usually do one or two of those things well, and the other eight become your problem about eighteen months later

Fuel is a full-service creative agency, which means all ten disciplines sit under one roof with one accountable team, so nothing falls between departments and nothing gets bolted on later at three times the cost. We build websites that pass their own inspection year after year, and we're straight with clients about repair versus replace, because our reputation rests on the sites we build still working when nobody's watching.

You don't have to take any of that on faith, though. Start with the number.

The Fuel Website Cost Calculator gives you a realistic project estimate in about two minutes, with no sales call, no obligation and no chasing emails afterwards.

A website should give you momentum, not drag. Find out what it costs to get moving again.

Get your estimate

