

Search Basics & On-Site Signals: The Simple Things That Hold a Website Back



A website can look professional on the surface and still struggle to appear in search results. Often the reasons are simple: missing information, unclear signals, technical issues or pages that are hard for Google to interpret. At the diagnostics stage, our aim is to spot these issues early so you can understand what might be holding your site back.

This is not about deep SEO work — that comes later. Here we focus on the essential signals that help your site appear, stay visible and support future improvements.

Can Google Understand Your Website?

Before a page can appear in search results, Google must be able to crawl it, read it and understand what it is about. When something blocks or confuses this process, visibility drops. We use Google Search Console to check:

- whether pages are indexed or stuck in “discovered but not indexed”,
- whether errors or warnings appear in the coverage report,
- whether Google is able to crawl your website reliably,
- and whether technical issues are preventing the site from being seen.

If Google cannot access or interpret your content properly, the site will struggle no matter how good the design looks.

Clarity of Information: Does Each Page Say What It Means?

One of the simplest — and most common — issues we find is unclear content. Pages sometimes use internal language or vague descriptions that make sense to the business but not to potential customers.

We check whether each page:

- explains the service clearly,
- answers the visitor's core question,
- uses straightforward wording,
- and gives Google enough information to understand the topic.

When content is unclear, Google hesitates to rank it and visitors hesitate to take the next step.

Metadata: The Basic Signals That Often Go Missing

Metadata is the small amount of text that appears in search results — the title and description for each page. It does not need to be technical or complicated, but it must be present and relevant.

During diagnostics, we look for:

- titles that are missing or duplicated,
- descriptions that do not reflect the content,
- pages with no clear keyword or subject focus,
- and inconsistent wording across important pages.

Missing or poorly written metadata weakens visibility and can cause pages to compete with each other.

Old, Thin or Outdated Content

Many websites contain outdated pages that were created years ago and have never been updated. These pages often:

- receive little or no traffic,
- no longer reflect your current services,
- or sit half-finished with only a paragraph or two of text.

While these pages may seem harmless, they dilute the authority of your core content. Google wants to see fresh, helpful and complete information — not fragmented pages scattered across the site.

Broken Links and Technical Gaps

Broken links, unreachable pages and missing resources send poor signals to both visitors and search engines. When we run diagnostics, we look for:

- links that go to pages that no longer exist,
- URLs that produce 404 errors,
- images or scripts that fail to load,
- and pages that take too long to open.

These issues may seem small but they chip away at trust and can limit how far your pages reach in search results.

Simple User Signals From GA4

GA4 gives us clear indicators of how visitors interact with your pages. We are not fixing issues at this stage — we are simply diagnosing whether your content resonates with real users.

We look at:

- time spent on the page,
- whether visitors scroll far enough to see key information,
- whether the page encourages further exploration,
- and whether it supports enquiries.

These signals help us identify whether the page matches what visitors expected based on their search.

Are Pages Supporting or Competing With Each Other?

Even without meaning to, some websites create multiple pages covering similar topics. This confuses Google and spreads your visibility thin. During diagnostics, we look for:

- pages that overlap in subject,
- duplicate content or repeated messaging,
- and internal competition between service areas.

Later in the playbook, we address how to consolidate or realign these pages, but for now we simply identify where competition might be occurring.

Building a Clear Picture Before Making Changes

The goal at this stage is understanding, not fixing. By reviewing Search Console data, GA4 signals and the core on-site basics, we can highlight the simple issues that may be limiting your website's potential.

This gives us a strong foundation before we move into the Website Structure & Planning section, where we decide how to correct, strengthen or reposition your content for long-term growth.