

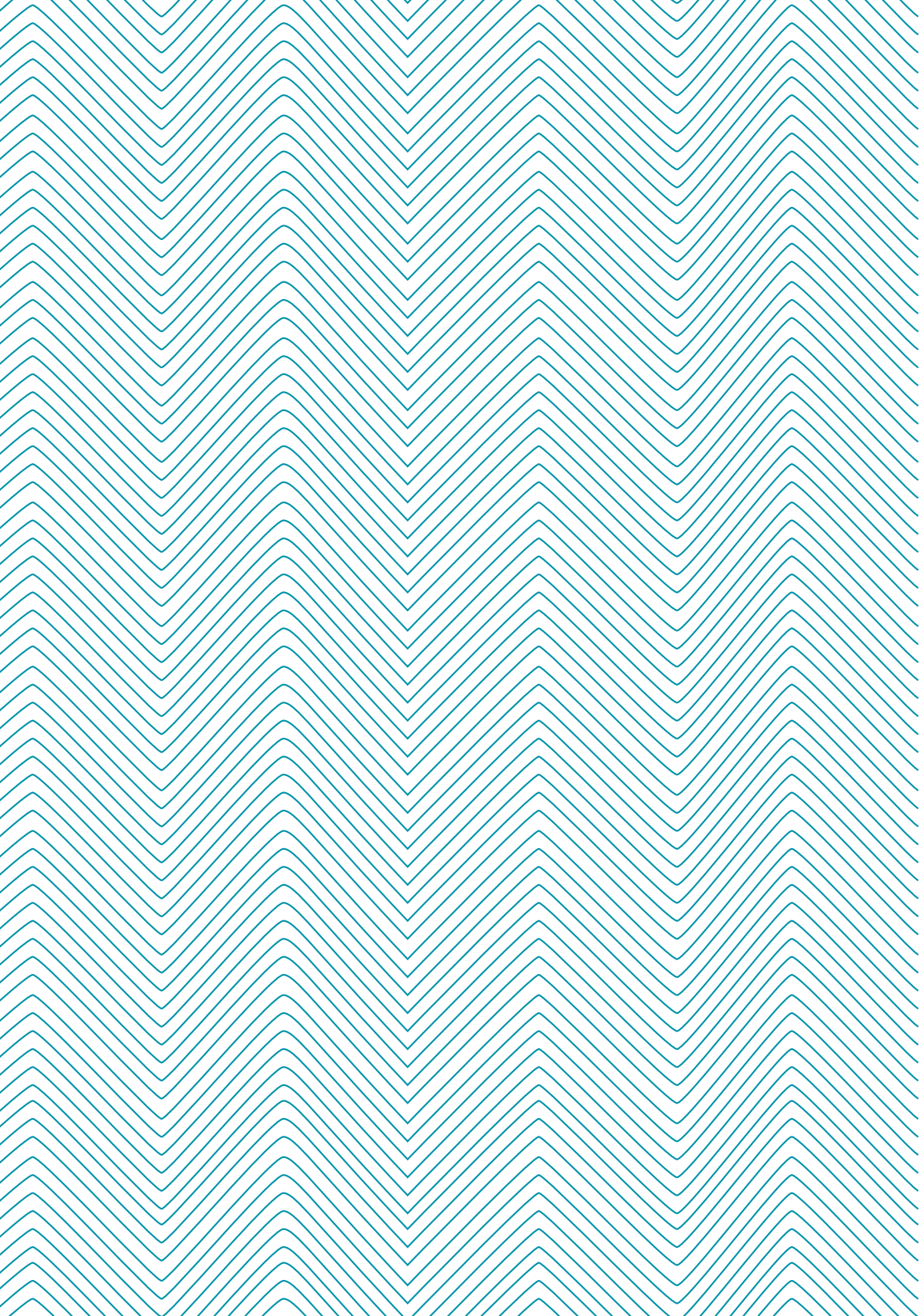
GUIDE FOR YOUR CONTENT AUDITS

Assess the quality and
quantity of your content



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From preparation to presentation

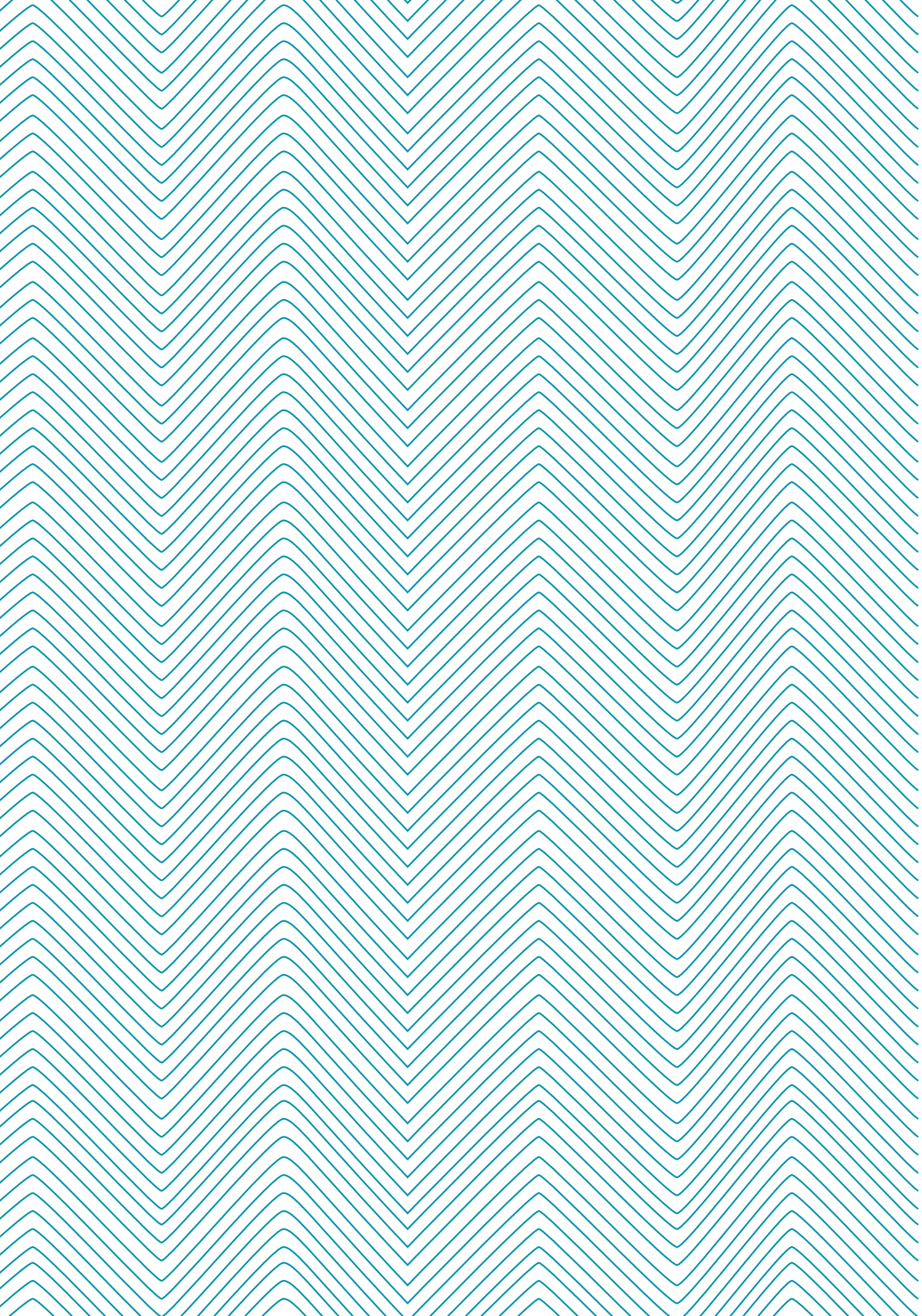
This guide will walk you through the process of a content audit from preparation to presentation.

A content audit allows you to take well-considered decisions about your content. It is an assessment of its volume, quality and variety.

A content audit is useful for project managers, information architects, content strategists, marketers and communication managers. It offers answers to questions such as:

- × Does your content address your audience's needs and interests?
- × Does your content support your audience's objectives and tasks?
- × Is your content really used?
- × Is your content well structured?
- × Is your content *on-brand*?
- × Do you have enough content, not enough content or too much content?
- × Is your content correct and current?

A content audit can help convince the people of your organisation of the importance of content. It is also a useful tool to create a content strategy and content marketing programme.



Phase 1 Preparation

Audit scope and purpose

The first step is to establish the scope and purpose of your audit.

What exactly do you want to achieve with it? Do you have any specific questions you are trying to find an answer to or are you looking for a more general evaluation? Are you considering all your content or are you focusing on certain parts of it? And are you putting a time limit on your assessment or do you prefer continuous evaluation?

We distinguish four types of content audits based on scope:

Specialised audit

In a specialised audit you subject all your content or part of it to a **limited series of evaluation criteria**. This type is recommended if you want to tackle a specific aspect fast, the usability of your website, for example.

Full audit

A full audit applies an **extensive list of audit criteria** to all your content and all your publication channels. Such an audit can be considered as a series of specialised audits. You can start in a single domain, your product information, for example and then move on to the next area, your corporate content. Or you can first evaluate one channel, your print material, and then another, your website.

Sample audit

A sample audit gives you a general idea of the quality of your content based on a **representative selection of your content materials**. This type of audit is recommended if you want to assess a considerable amount of content in a relatively short time.

Continuous audit

A continuous audit is one that never ends and involves reporting **at regular intervals**. This means that the execution of the audit becomes an integrated part of your workflow, and the auditors are automatically informed when a piece of content requires inspection.

We distinguish two types of content audits depending on the purpose:

A top-down content audit

A top-down content audit is based on a **clear list of questions or criteria**. You want to find answers to your questions or check the criteria.

A bottom-up content audit

A bottom-up content audit is **explorative**. You do not start from specific goals, questions or criteria, but you simply consider what you actually have to offer at the moment.

During a content audit you usually go through your content several times looking for specific patterns. Bear in mind that a bottom-up content audit is more difficult, requires more time and produces a more uncertain result. This guide focuses on the top-down approach.

In *Content Strategy for the Web* Kristina Halverson makes another useful distinction between two assessment types:

A best practices assessment

A best practices assessment is a “comparison of your content with the best examples in the sector, usually made by a third party, an independent assessor”.

A strategic assessment

A strategic assessment examines “to what extent your content achieves your strategic objectives”.

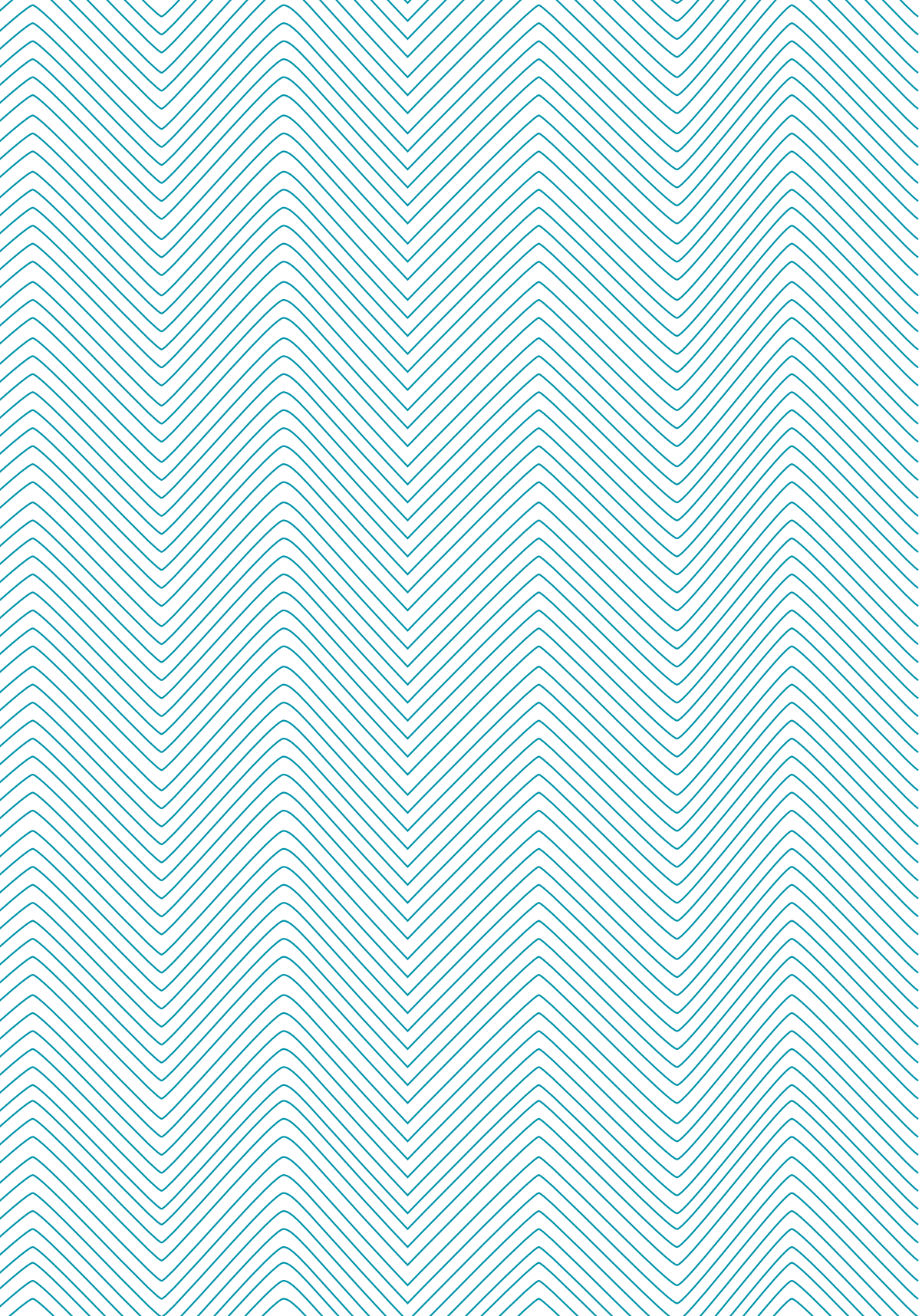
The Financial Times Bowen Craggs Index of Corporate Website Effectiveness is a good example of these two types. The index is based on eight criteria to describe the quality of websites. The first three are universal: the website structure (including the navigation, orientation, integration, on-site search and visibility in search engines), news and contact information.

Every audit is different

Because every audit is different, it is very difficult to estimate how long it will take. Everything depends on the size, the degree of detail, your auditors' experience and the level of automation.

If you know that you do not have the time and resources for a full audit, you can already get started with a specialised or sample audit. The results may encourage your organisation to make available more resources for content audits, so that you can still perform a full audit later.

“Make the content audit an integrated part of your workflow.”



Phase 2 Content Inventory

Why take a content inventory?

Before you start to audit your content, you need to know which content you have and where it is located. That is the objective of the content inventory, sometimes also referred to as “quantitative audit”. It is a list of the content and its quantitative characteristics. A content inventory provides the following basic information:

- × Your content **volume**
- × The **number** of content items and their **type**: images, articles, reports, applications, etc.
- × The **location** of your content: for digital content this is the URLs
- × The **relationships** between pieces of content: hyperlinks, for example.

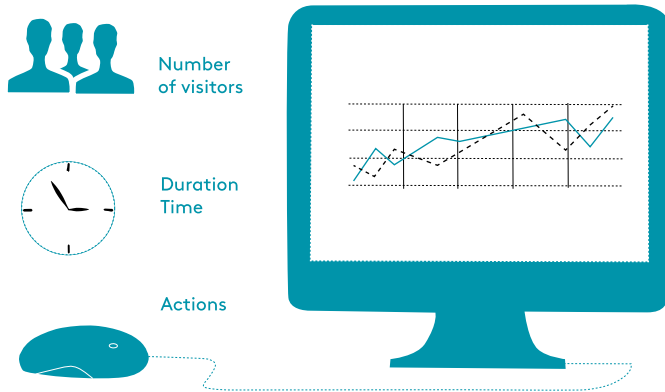
If you are using a content management system, you can find most of this information there. You can also create a simple Excel template.

“A content inventory is a list of content and its qualitative characteristics.”

Which data do you include in the content inventory?

This obviously depends on the type of questions you are trying to answer. A traditional content inventory documents the following:

- × **ID:** you give your content a unique identification and reference number.
- × **Title:** for content in HTML you provide the <h1> tag.
- × **Subject/category/theme:** preferably create a list of subjects/categories/themes in advance.
- × **Description:** for printed articles you can provide the introduction or part of the introduction, for HTML content you can use the meta description. The meta description is the text provided with a URL in a SERP (Search Engine Results Page).
- × **Technical format:** of documents (html, xml), images (jpeg, tif, png), media (swf, mp3, mp4), applications (pdf, doc, xls), web files (js, css), etc.
- × **Location:** here you provide the URL, the page and the navigation title of web content. Also document where the content is stored: in your content management system, a customised database, at an external agency, etc.
- × **Publisher, author, editor-in-chief, 'Approved by':** in this section you document who was involved in the creation, assessment and approval process. For HTML content also provide the meta tags "rel=author" and "rel=publisher" if these were used.
- × **Most recent update:** the day your content was last updated.
- × **Language:** if you have content in different languages.



It is useful to complete your content inventory with statistics about web traffic and use extracted from Google Analytics or any other analysis application. The following are some important statistics for HTML pages:

- × Number of **visitors** per page
- × The **duration** of a page visit and the **time** spent on the site
- × The **actions** that take place on a page.

For printed materials you can gather similar information through a survey.

ID	Title	H1	Topic/Category/Theme	Meta-Description	Location	Format	Publisher	Author	Editor	Approved by	Latest update date	Language
1	Fictional Bakery: London Delicious Cupcakes, Cate & Cookbooks	Cakes to your door!	Home	The Fictional Bakery hand-make delicious cupcakes in our bakeries, or online for daily London delivery or collection.	https://fictionalbakery.com/	text/html	Steven	Jim	Vanessa	Steven	05/05/14	EN
2	Welcome - The Fictional Bakery Blog & FAQs	15th Anniversary Competition: Win a cookbook and tote bag	Blog		https://fictionalbakery.com/blog/	text/html	Steven	Mia	Vanessa	Steven	01/07/14	EN
2.1	15th Anniversary: Wish us happy birthday! - Fictional Bakery Blog & FAQs	15th Anniversary: Wish us happy birthday! - Fictional Bakery Blog & FAQs	Blog		https://fictionalbakery.com/blog/2014/01/15th-anniversary-wish-us-happy-birthday/	text/html	Lisa	Mia	Vanessa	Steven	01/08/14	EN
2.2	Richmond - here we come! - Fictional Bakery Blog & FAQs	Richmond - here we come! - Fictional Bakery Blog & FAQs	Blog		https://fictionalbakery.com/blog/2014/01/richmond/	text/html	Jane	Mia	Vanessa	Steven	03/05/14	EN
2.3	10 Years of The Fictional Bakery!	10 years of The Fictional Bakery!	Blog	The Fictional Bakery is celebrating 10 years of American baking in London!	https://fictionalbakery.com/blog/2014/03/10-years-fictionalbakery/	text/html	Steven	Mia	Vanessa	Steven	03/08/14	EN
2.4	15th Anniversary: Win a box of cupcakes!	15th Anniversary: Win a box of cupcakes	Blog	To celebrate ten years of The Fictional Bakery we are giving away 10 boxes of cupcakes!	https://fictionalbakery.com/blog/2014/03/15th-anniversary-win-box-cupcakes/	text/html	Steven	Mia	Vanessa	Steven	05/16/14	EN
2.5	The Fictional Bakery: 15th Anniversary - Win £50 vouchers	15th Anniversary: Win £50 vouchers	Blog	Spot the difference between our celebration cakes and be in with a chance of winning £50 vouchers to spend on cake and other treats at our London bakeries.	https://fictionalbakery.com/blog/2014/04/15th-anniversary-win-50-vouchers/	text/html	Steven	Mia	Vanessa	Steven	04/26/14	EN
2.6	Wedding Cakes by The Fictional Bakery	Wedding Cakes by The Fictional Bakery	Blog	Does The Fictional Bakery make wedding cakes? We do! For the best wedding cake, visit with an American-style twist, discover Cakes by Con-sultation.	https://fictionalbakery.com/blog/2014/04/wedding-cakes-fictionalbakery/	text/html	Jane	Mia	Vanessa	Steven	04/27/14	EN
2.7	15th Anniversary: Win a Home Sweet Home Cookbook and Tote Bag	15th Anniversary: Win a Home Sweet Home Cookbook and Tote Bag	Blog	The Fictional Bakery is celebrating 10 years of baking in London! Enter for your chance to win one of 10 copies of Home Sweet Home and a tote bag.	https://fictionalbakery.com/blog/2014/05/15th-anniversary-competition-win-cookbook-tote-bag/	text/html	Jane	Mia	Vanessa	Steven	05/05/14	EN
2.8	Baking FAQs - Fictional Bakery Blog & FAQs	Baking FAQs	Blog	An extensive resource of baking tips and answers to frequently asked questions from The Fictional Bakery.	https://fictionalbakery.com/blog/baking-tips/	text/html	Jane	Mia	Vanessa	Steven	03/03/14	EN

The data in this content inventory was collected by means of a spider called 'Screaming Frog', then imported into Excel and processed there.

How do you collect your data?

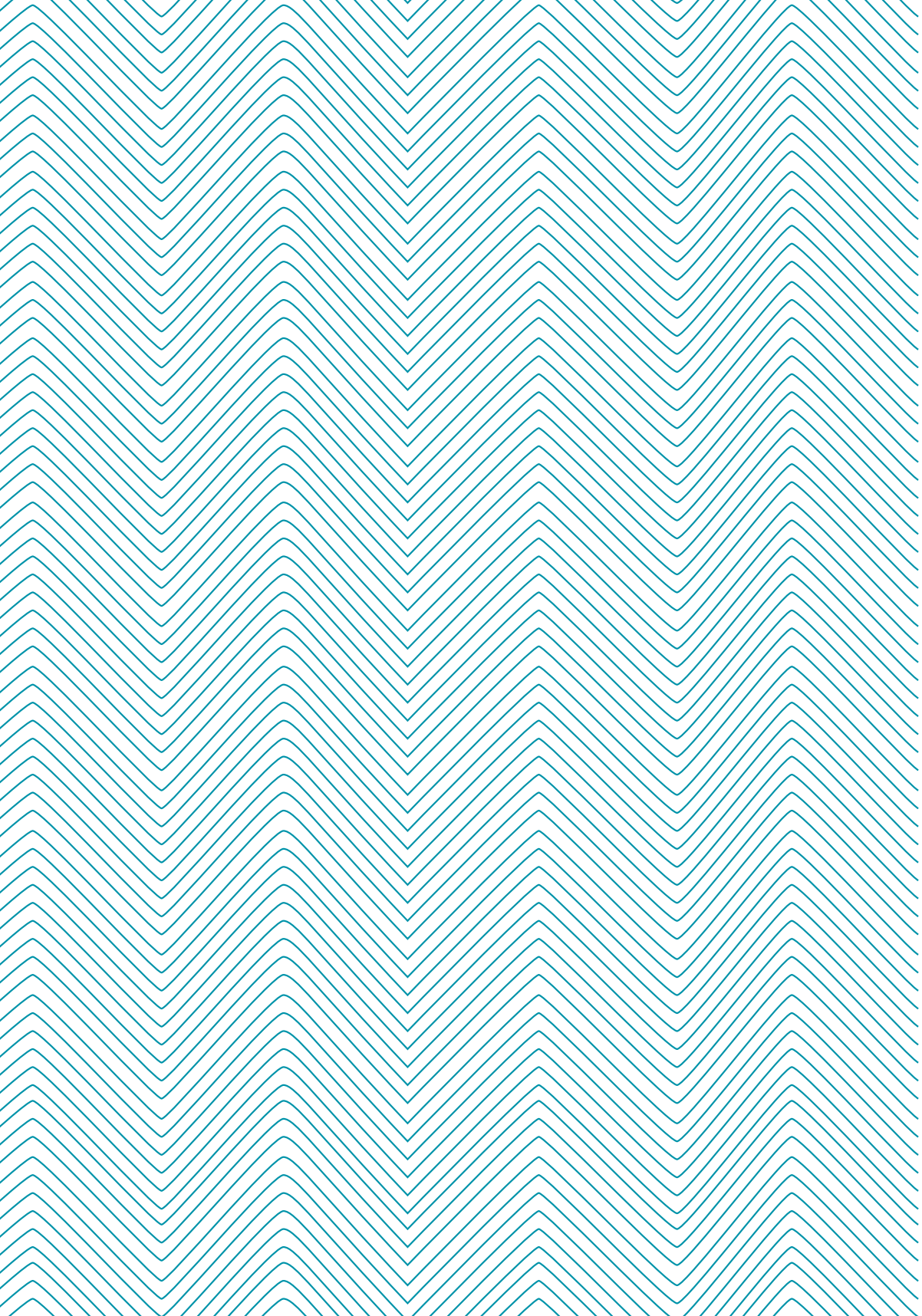
Once you know which data you want to include in your content inventory, you can start to think about the most efficient method to collect this information. There are several ways to automate data collection, as indicated by a **Content Strategy Group discussion** on LinkedIn. Yet no tool automatically provides you with all the necessary information. Some manual work is inevitable.

One of the best ways to take a content inventory is to use a **content management system (CMS)**. Drupal has a module for content auditing you can use to generate a complete inventory. Some other content management systems offer similar solutions.

When your content management systems do not offer an automatic inventory and your website is too large to create one manually, you can use automation tools such as **Content Analysis Tool (CAT)** or a spider. **Screaming Frog** for Mac and **Link Sleuth** for Windows are well-known examples.

Remember that the more consistently you document your data, the easier you can automate the analysis of your data at a later stage. So always ensure that word use, figures, data and spelling are consistent.

“A content management system makes your content inventory easier.”



Phase 3 Content Assessment

Evaluation of your content inventory

In this stage you go through the items of your content inventory to evaluate them. How detailed you make your assessment depends on your goals. Here are a number of key areas and questions to consider:

Audience

- × Do you approach your themes from the **perspective** of your target audience?
- × Do you pay attention to the **needs** and concerns of your target audience?
- × Are you communicating at the appropriate **level**?
- × Does your content offer enough **context** to understand everything?

Commitment

- × Are you inviting your target audience to **respond**?
- × Are you encouraging your target audience to **share** and discuss your content?
- × Do you prompt your target audience to explore **even more** content?
- × Is it easy for your target group to **share** your content?

Language and structure

- × Have you created a clear **structure** with titles and subtitles?

- × Does your content have the structure of an **inverted pyramid**: the most important information first, and the details later?
- × Have you **reduced** large sections of text to lists, tables or diagrams that are easier to read?
- × Does your content observe the rules of your **style guide**?
- × Do the **links** between your pieces of content work?
- × Is your content free from grammar, spelling and punctuation **errors**?
- × Does your content use the right **tone of voice**?

Facts, sources, legal obligations

- × Have you removed all **inaccuracies** from your content?
- × Are you consistent in the way you use **quotes**, references and **terminology**?
- × Is your content **in accordance with** all legal and regulatory standards?

How do you proceed?

The best way to assess the quality of your content is to use a scoring system. Averages can quickly tell you how your content is doing in general or in a specific area. You can add the scores to the spreadsheet or database you used for your inventory. Remember to use a new column for every aspect you want to allocate a score to.

Based on (combined average) scores, you can make a distinction between:

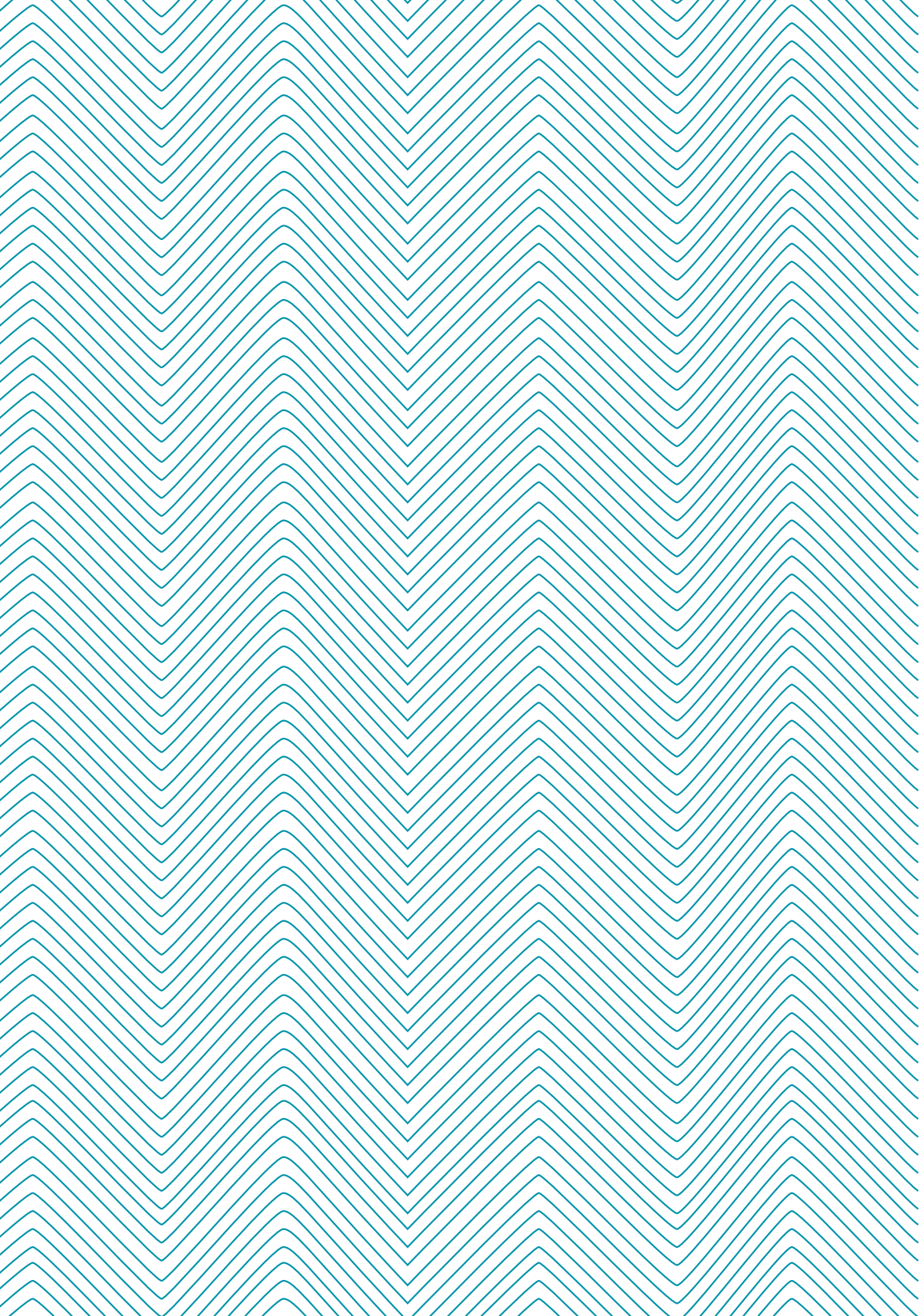
- × Content that does not meet your quality standards or goals
- × Content that must be reassessed
- × Content that is best removed.

If you prefer not to use a scoring system, you should still mark the content that must be reviewed or removed with a comment explaining why this needs to be done and how urgent it is. Use a separate field in your spreadsheet for notes.

“How detailed you make your assessment depends on your goals.”

STATISTICS			QUALITY					NOTES
Language	Number of visitors/readers	Time spent on content	Conversions/actions	Adapted to audience?	Engaging?	Quality of language/structure	Facts, sources, compliance	
EN	213178	00:01:17	8%	Y	Y	3 - HIGH	ok	
EN	10645	00:01:03	-	Y	N	2 - MEDIUM	ok	Broken link in 3th paragraph
EN	6222	00:00:45	3%	Y	Y	3 - HIGH	ok	
EN	5823	00:00:59	-	Y	N	2 - MED	ok	Needs bullet list of key elements
EN	5121	00:02:57		Y	Y	1 - LOW	ok	Inconsistencies in spelling
EN	4998	00:02:16	12%	Y	Y	3 - HIGH	ok	
EN	3542	00:01:21	-	Y	Y	3 - HIGH	ok	
EN	3374	00:00:11	2%	Y	N	2 - MED	ok	Call to action needs to be rewritten
EN	5994	00:03:32	1%	Y	Y	1 - LOW	ok	Inconsistencies in spelling
EN	7412	00:01:58	-	Y	Y	3 - HIGH	ok	
EN	7231	00:00:39	-	Y	Y	3 - HIGH	ok	
EN	1247	00:01:05	-	Y	Y	3 - HIGH	ok	
EN	3662	00:02:02	6%	Y	Y	1 - LOW	ok	Inconsistencies in spelling
EN	3578	00:01:21	-	Y	Y	2 - MED	not ok	Eliminate the 'click here'
EN	2114	00:03:54	-	N	N	1 - LOW	ok	Information is not specific enough
EN	3987	00:02:14	-	N	N	1 - LOW	ok	Not written for the web
EN	3947	00:05:32	7%	Y	Y	3 - HIGH	ok	

For this content audit example, the data in the inventory on page 14 was completed with statistics about visitors, and then evaluated according to a number of parameters such as engagement, language and structure.



Phase 4 Content Analysis

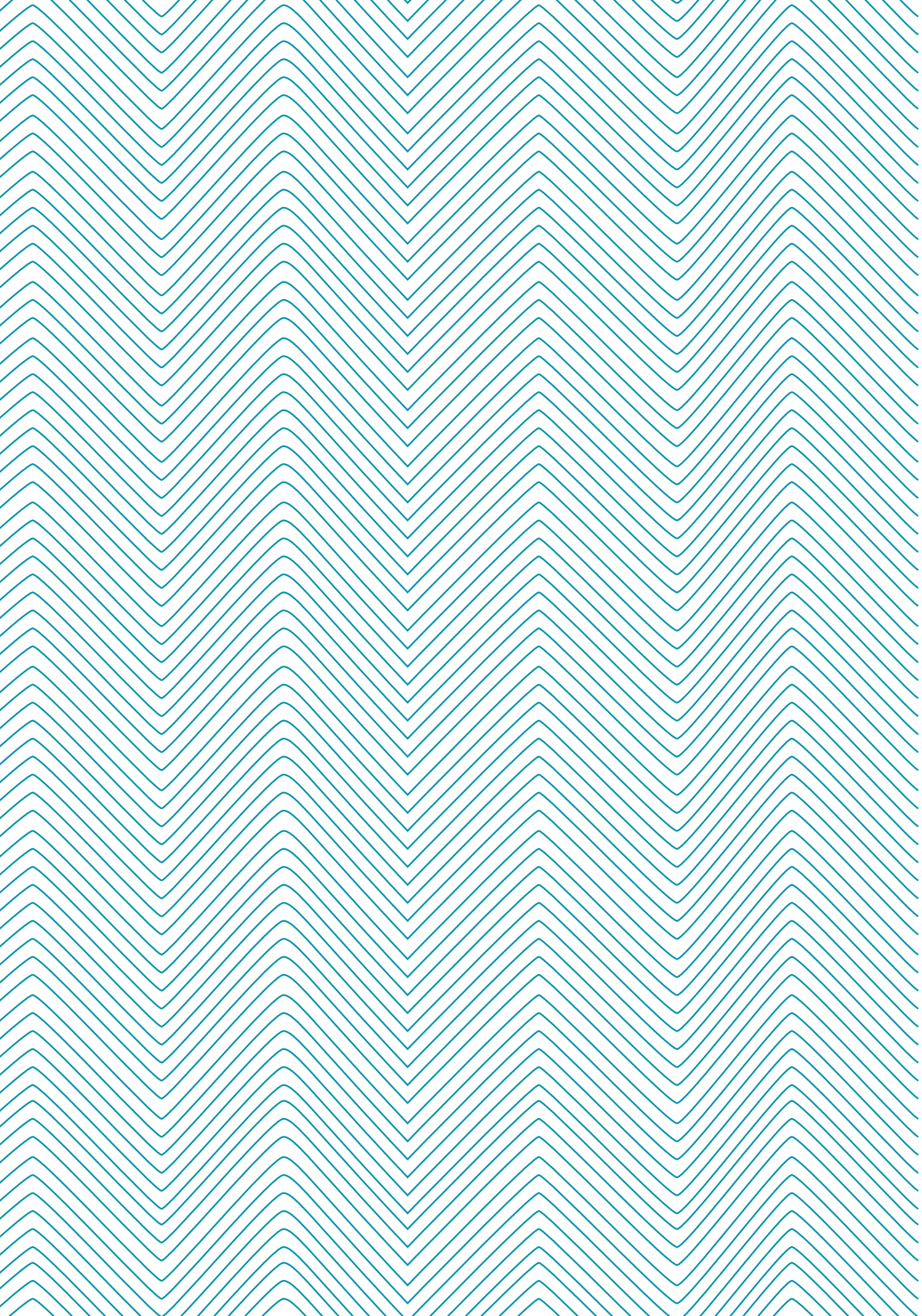
The coherence of your content

When you have gathered all quantitative and qualitative data in a spreadsheet or database, you can start your analysis. In other words, you can look for patterns, correlations and possible explanations by sorting, filtering and using other functions. For example, you may discover that the most popular content is all from the same author or in the same specific format that is not used sufficiently.

What can you do with your data?

- × List your subjects and compare them to the **mental model** of your audience, if you have it. If the mental model and your subjects are very different, you will need to create a better match.
- × Create a **list** of double, irrelevant, incorrect or low-quality information. Check which content from this list can be improved and which content is best removed.
- × Organise your content according to the **number of visitors/readers** and study the characteristics of your most **popular content**. Then also do this for your least popular content. Which patterns emerge?
- × Create a list of content that contributes to **conversion** and consider its characteristics. How is conversion encouraged?
- × Look for **gaps** in your content and for opportunities and risks.

“Organise your content according to the number of visitors/readers and study the characteristics of your most popular content. Which patterns emerge?”



Phase 5 Presentation

How do you present your audit?

Above all it is important that your presentation is compelling and does not overwhelm your audience with unnecessary details, complicated tables and difficult jargon. You can structure the presentation according to the stages in this guide.

1 Start by explaining the **goal and scope** of your audit.

2 Give your audience an idea of **the volume and type** of your content. Focus on the volume (*how much*), your topics (*what*), the content formats (*how*), the status (*when was the content created*) and the location (*where*).

3 Show how your content scores in different areas by presenting the **most important results** of your quality assessment.

4 Share your **findings**:

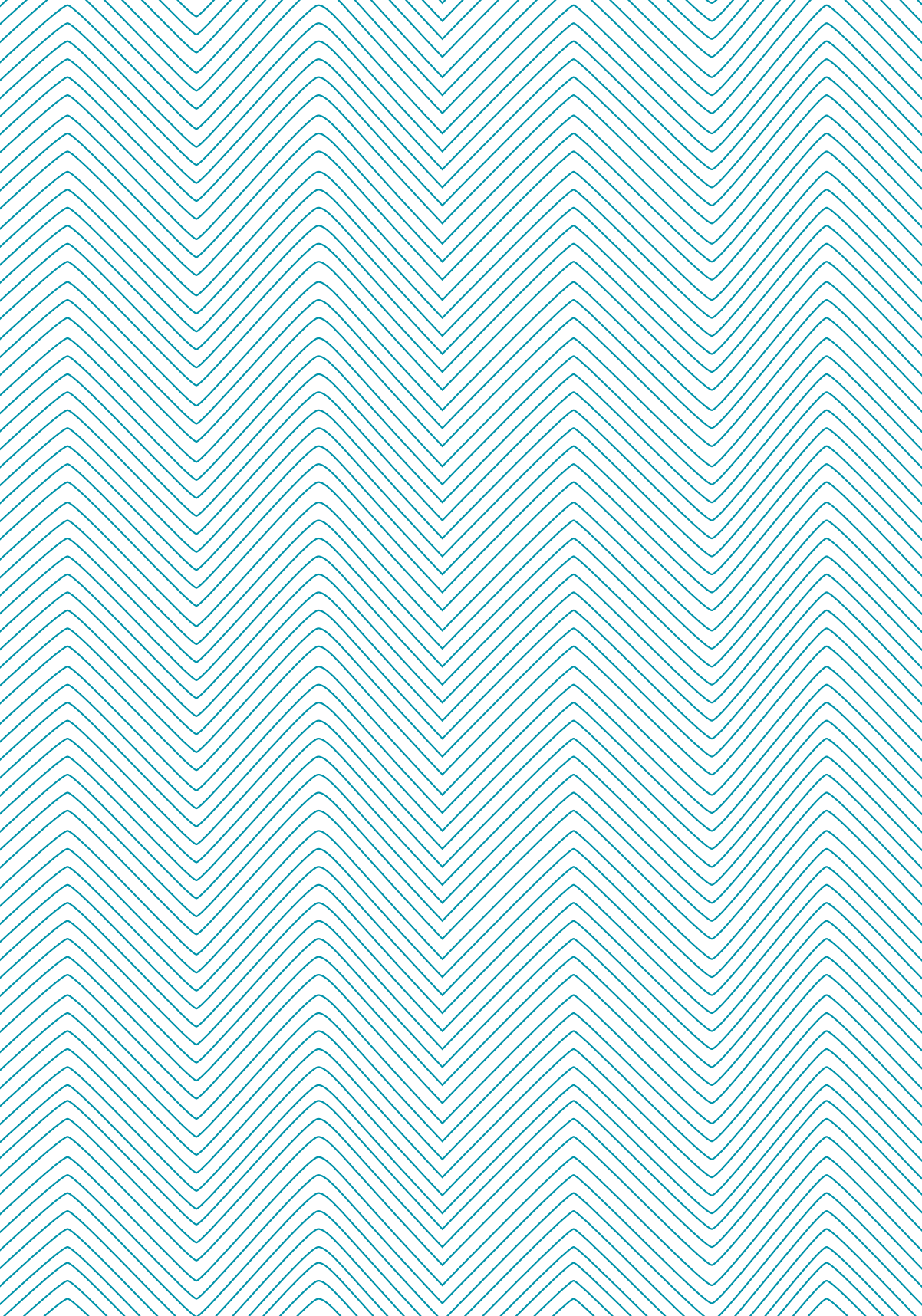
- × What is your most valuable content and why?
- × In what areas can you make the most significant improvements?
- × What are your priorities for review and redesign?
- × Is there any content that should be removed? If so, why?

5 Present your **action plan**.

- × What are the next steps and priorities?
- × When are you planning your next content audit?
- × How will you organise this?

Discuss any specific details that are relevant to your audience. For example, if you are presenting to project managers, it is best to discuss in more detail some aspects of the content workflow, such as authorship, approval and updates. Information architects will probably be more interested in the structural aspects of your content, and marketers will want to know all about conversion.

“Share your findings: what is your most valuable content and why?”



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Cypres plans, creates and manages cross-media content for your customers, employees and other stakeholders.

Our baseline is “*Content To Connect*”, because we believe that you can build and strengthen the relationship with your audience by using information your audience perceives as valuable.

Discover how we create strong content for you and your stakeholders.

The **Content Room** is Cypres’ open knowledge centre and creative lab where we think about and experiment with new ways of creating, using and distributing content.

Specialists from here and abroad discuss everything to do with content and content publishing. Some of the covered topics are content strategy, content governance, social content and content co-creation.

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