

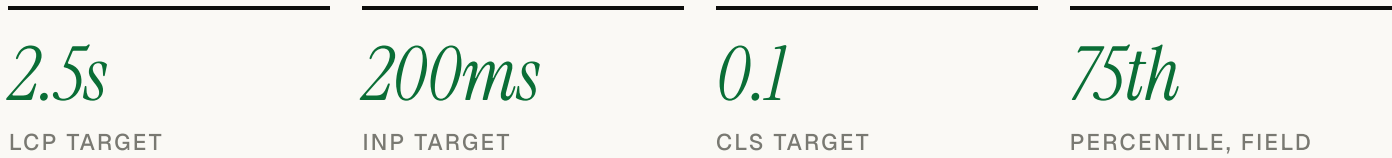
The Webflow audit we run on *every retainer.*

Ten pages of what we look at in the first two weeks of every engagement. Performance, CMS, symbols, tracking, accessibility, crawlability, launch. The same checklist that drives the diagnoses we send paying clients.

SECTION 01 · PERFORMANCE

Core Web Vitals, measured *in the field*.

Lab numbers lie. Pull 28-day field data from CrUX before you touch anything. These are the thresholds we hold builds to and the eight root causes we see most.



Measurement steps

- Pull CrUX, not Lighthouse.** Lab data is a smoke test. Field data is the grade.
PageSpeed Insights → Origin Summary, last 28 days.

- Segment by device.** Mobile is usually 2x worse than desktop. Audit them separately.

- Open DebugBear or Calibre.** Trace the largest contentful element and the slowest event handler frame.

- Map every <script> on a page.** Webflow ships its own; GTM ships everyone else's. Count them.

Eight root causes, with fixes

CAUSE	FIX
Hero image weighs 1.4 MB	Re-export as AVIF at 1.5x intrinsic size, set <code>loading="eager"</code> on LCP only, lazy the rest.
Webfont swap during paint	<code>font-display: swap</code> , preload the two real weights, drop the seven you don't use.
Interactions loaded in head	Move Webflow interactions to defer. Or strip the page-level ones and re-do in CSS.
GTM blocks paint	Server-side container. Or at minimum, defer the GTM snippet below the fold.
Embedded YouTube iframe	Lite-YouTube facade. Loads the real iframe on click. Saves 800 KB on first paint.
Layout shift from ads / forms	Reserve height on the form container; preload the form library.
INP killed by third-party JS	Audit GTM tags. Pinterest, LinkedIn, and TikTok pixels often run 200ms tasks.
Render-blocking Webflow CSS	Critical CSS extract on the templates you publish most. Above-the-fold inline, defer the rest.

SECTION 02 · CMS

Schema sanity, before *it bites you*.

CMS structure is the part you cannot refactor cheaply. Get it right week one. These are the limits, the tradeoffs, and the failure modes that show up at month nine.

Hard limits to remember

- 20 collections per site (workspace plan: 40)
- 30 fields per collection
- 5 multi-reference fields per collection
- 10,000 items per collection
- 10 reference levels in a query

Multi-ref vs option

Use multi-ref when the values are managed by editors and reused across items (authors, tags, products). Use option fields when the list is fixed and small (status, tier). Option fields are queryable and filterable; multi-ref counts against the 5 cap.

Schema checklist

- Slug field is set and unique.** Webflow auto-fills but doesn't sanity-check. Add a fallback rule in the publish workflow.
- SEO title + meta description present on every collection.** If they're not, the template falls back to the H1 — fine, but make that explicit.
- OG image field exists and has a default.** A blank OG image is worse than a generic one.
- Plain-text fallback for every rich-text field.** When you syndicate to a podcast platform or email, the rich text breaks. Keep a 280-char plain alternative.
- Published / draft / scheduled, in that order.** Editors should never need to ask which one means "live".
- Archive strategy.** When you hit 9,000 items, you have 1,000 to figure it out. Archive to JSON in storage; keep the last 24 months live.
- 10K warning.** At ~8,500, set a Slack alert. Webflow does not warn you. The 10,001st item fails silently in some workflows.

SECTION 03 · SYMBOLS

The symbol library is the codebase. *Audit it like one.*

Symbol drift is the #1 reason a Webflow site stops being maintainable. Three checks, run quarterly, will keep it honest.

-
- 1 Spot the forks**

Open the Symbols panel. Look for variants of the same name: `NavMain` , `NavMain-old` , `NavMain-marketing` . Each fork is a future bug. Decide which is canonical, copy the differences into a single symbol with overrides, retire the rest.
 - 2 Naming that survives teams**

Prefix by role: `nav/` , `cta/` , `card/` , `form/` . The slash forces the panel to group. Bonus: when someone duplicates the site, the name still reads.
 - 3 When to break vs swap**

If you need a different layout on one page, swap to a different symbol. Don't unlink. Unlinked symbols are the silent killer — they look the same, then diverge over six months.
 - 4 Lock + role hygiene**

Editor role: never touches symbols. Designer role: can edit symbols, cannot create new ones. Admin: full. If the admin count is more than three, you have an organizational problem disguised as a Webflow problem.

"Every Webflow site that's been touched by more than four people has at least one zombie symbol. Find it, kill it, ship the audit."

— INTERNAL SOP, ENG / WEB / 04

SECTION 04 · FORMS & CRM

Form to CRM, *wired clean.*

The native Salesforce integration ships fast and breaks slowly. The webhook path is harder to set up and stays correct. Pick on purpose.

PATH	WHEN TO USE	THE CATCH
Webhook → server	Anything that touches more than one system, anything with conditional routing, anything where you need to retry.	You own the endpoint, the retry, the validation, the alerting. 3 days of work.
Native Salesforce integration	Single-form sites, marketing-only campaigns, no routing logic, no enrichment.	Fails silently on field mismatch. No retry. Hidden cost: someone has to check.
Zapier / Make	Prototype, demo, internal handoff. Forty submissions a month, max.	Latency, cost-per-task, and the Zap that runs once an hour by accident.

Wiring checklist

- Hidden UTM capture.** Five fields: `utm_source`, `utm_medium`, `utm_campaign`, `utm_term`, `utm_content`. Filled from the query string on page load. Persisted in `sessionStorage` for cross-page forms.

- Page-URL + referrer.** Two more hidden fields. The first form a lead fills out is often not the page they came in on.

- Server-side validation.** Webflow's required-field check is client-side only. A bot will submit blanks. Validate on the endpoint, drop the bad ones, log them.

- Double opt-in for newsletter forms.** Drops deliverability complaints by ~60%.

- Dedupe on insert.** Email is the natural key. Update the existing record; don't create a duplicate.

- Honeypot + reCAPTCHA v3.** Honeypot catches 90% of bots silently. v3 catches the rest without a challenge.

SECTION 05 · ACCESSIBILITY

The twelve things *Google notices*.

Not a full WCAG audit. The dozen items that show up in Lighthouse, in Search Console's accessibility crawl, and in the lawsuit letter your client may one day receive.

1 Contrast 4.5:1 for body, 3:1 for large text
Run axe DevTools. Fix every error before launch. The grey-on-grey hero text is the #1 finding on every audit we've run.

2 Focus rings, visible and consistent
If you removed the default outline, replace it. `:focus-visible` with a 2px ring in `--accent` works everywhere.

3 Alt text on every image
Decorative? Empty string, not missing. CMS images need an alt field; default it from the item name.

4 Heading order — one H1, then H2s in document order
Webflow lets you set any element to H3. People do, for sizing. Don't.

5 Form labels, not placeholder text
Floating-label patterns are fine, as long as the label is a real `<label>`.

6 Link text that means something out of context
"Learn more" is the most-failed item in screen-reader testing.

7 `<html lang>` set
One attribute. Five-second fix. Lighthouse flags it.

8 Modals trap focus
When the modal opens, focus moves in; when it closes, focus returns. Webflow modals don't do this — it's a custom interaction.

9 Skip-to-content link
First focusable element on the page. Visible on focus. Jumps past the nav.

10 Honor `prefers-reduced-motion`
Disable the marquee. Disable the parallax. One media query.

SECTION 06 · CRAWLABILITY

Crawlability and URL architecture, *audited together.*

Search Console pulls signal from both. If one is broken, the other carries less weight. Walk the list in order.

- sitemap.xml.** Webflow generates one. Confirm it's at `/sitemap.xml`, that every CMS template is included, that drafts are not. Submit to Search Console + Bing Webmaster Tools.

- robots.txt.** Webflow's default allows everything. If you have a staging subdomain (`*.webflow.io`), block it with a separate robots in Webflow's site settings.

- Canonical tags.** Default to self-canonical on every page. Override for pagination (`?page=2` → page 1) and faceted filters.

- Redirect strategy on rebuilds.** Map old URL → new URL in a spreadsheet before the rebuild. Webflow's redirect panel accepts 301 only. Don't 302 anything you care about.

- Indexable filter pages.** If you have a /blog with category filters, decide which categories deserve their own URL (indexable) and which are query-string only (canonicalized to /blog).

- Trailing slash consistency.** Pick one. Set it as the canonical. Redirect the other.

- Soft-404 audit.** Pages that return 200 but say "not found". Search Console flags them. Fix the template.

"Webflow ships with sane defaults. The audit isn't about flipping them on; it's about catching the seven places someone flipped them off."

— SEO PLAYBOOK, LINE 102

SECTION 07 · PRE-LAUNCH & HANDOFF

Pre-launch and handoff, *one walkthrough.*

Pre-launch checklist

- Pricing pages** — every plan correct, currency switched, "from" prefix where applicable.

- OG + Twitter cards** — render on every top-level page. Test in opengraph.dev.

- Favicons** — 32, 192, 512, Apple touch icon. Webflow only handles two.

- 404 page** — branded, useful, links back to top destinations.

- Console errors** — zero. Open DevTools on five pages, fix what you find.

- hreflang** — only if multi-locale. Pair every page with its alternates.

- Cloudflare proxy + SSL Full (Strict)** — never Flexible.

- Uptime monitoring** — Better Stack, 1-minute pings, three regions.

- Analytics smoke test** — fire one of each event, confirm in DebugView.

- Form smoke test** — submit every form, confirm CRM record + Slack alert.

Handoff checklist

- Editor training** — 45-minute Loom covering: creating a post, swapping a symbol's text, publishing.

- Documentation skeleton** — one Notion page per content type, screenshots, "where to change X".

- Admin list** — written down, with phone numbers. Limit to three.

- Editor list** — written down. Removed when people leave.

- Backup runbook** — quarterly export of Webflow + CMS to S3, scripted.

- Domain + DNS** — written down, in the client's vault, not yours.

- Quarterly review** — booked on the calendar before you sign off. Audit drift before it compounds.

SECTION 08 · RED FLAGS

Red flags — the signs *to stop building*.

If you're seeing three of these, the next feature is the wrong move. Stop and refactor first.

-
- RF / 01 **Interaction count over 80.** Webflow gets unstable at ~100. The publish takes 30 seconds. The editor freezes on the home page. Audit, consolidate, kill the parallax that nobody noticed.
-
- RF / 02 **Class explosion — 1,000+ classes in the Style Manager.** Half are orphans. Run Webflow's "Clean up styles" weekly during a build; once at the end is a thousand classes too late.
-
- RF / 03 **Page publish takes more than 90 seconds.** Usually means too many embedded scripts, too many CMS bindings, or a Cloudflare cache invalidation problem. Diagnose, don't shrug.
-
- RF / 04 **More than two "wrapper" divs around every section.** The HTML is doing real work for the styling system. Switch to flex/grid utilities, retire the wrappers.
-
- RF / 05 **Custom code blocks in twelve+ places.** Each one is a script someone forgot they added. Move to a single GTM container, document, delete.
-
- RF / 06 **The editor takes more than 8 seconds to load the home page.** Means content + interactions are competing for the main thread. Editors will stop using Webflow and go through you — and that's how budgets die.
-
- RF / 07 **No staging site, no rollback plan.** Webflow's "publish to staging" is a checkbox. Use it. Branching is harder; that's why you have a backup runbook.
-
- RF / 08 **Three different button styles, none consistent.** Design-system drift. Fix it before you ship the next page; otherwise, the next page makes a fourth.
-

SECTION 09 · NEXT

Three moves *from here.*

If this is the first time the audit's been run on your site, expect 14–22 findings.

Two days to triage, three weeks to ship the fixes worth shipping.

1 **Book a working session**
One hour, screen-share, we walk your site against this checklist and leave you with a triaged list. No deck.

2 **Read the GA4 checklist**
Same vibe, six pages. The container architecture, the events, the BigQuery export, consent-mode v2. Companion piece — most performance wins come unstuck when measurement is broken.

3 **See the stack diagrams**
Five canonical patterns. Form to CRM. Tag to measurement. Event spine. Closed loop. Edge layer. Useful as a kickoff artifact, useful as a sanity check at month nine.

Want this run on your site?

We do this audit in the first two weeks of every retainer. Send the URL
— we'll come back with a deck.

[Book a working session](#) →

socialcatnip.com/contact