

Online Business Sovereignty AUDIT CHECKLIST

Online business sovereignty means that your business is insured against unforeseen circumstances such as account shutdowns, hosting crashes, data loss, or even economic hardship. It means that your business is not fully reliant on third-party companies to operate.

This checklist is meant to help you audit your own business to look for weak points that you may want to address. There is no score. No “right answers”. It is solely meant to have you evaluate each point.

DATA & OPERATIONS

- ☐ Do you have ownership and control of the major operations of your business and tech stack?
 - ☐ Blog content and articles
 - ☐ Online courses
 - ☐ Sales system and shopping cart
 - ☐ Affiliate program
 - ☐ Email list
 - ☐ Marketing automations
 - ☐ Member/customer records
 - ☐ Order/accounting history
- ☐ Which pieces of the business are “in house” on your own website versus being hosted by external third-parties?
- ☐ For all third-party providers you are outsourcing operations to:
 - ☐ Do any have their own internal backup procedures?
 - ☐ Are you routinely exporting and downloading data backups?
 - ☐ Is the data portable and movable, or is the system proprietary and hard to get out of?
- ☐ Data backups
 - ☐ Is your content, database and records being backed up regularly?
 - ☐ Blog content and articles
 - ☐ Online courses
 - ☐ Sales system and shopping cart
 - ☐ Affiliate program
 - ☐ Email list
 - ☐ Marketing automations
 - ☐ Member/customer records
 - ☐ Order/accounting history
 - ☐ Backups in multiple locations (at LEAST one of them offline and on your own computer).
 - ☐ Backups in usable format that could be restored elsewhere if necessary.
- ☐ Tools with recurring billing
 - ☐ Would the tool keep operating if you stopped paying the bill?
 - ☐ If hosted, do you have an exit strategy in case you needed to move that functionality elsewhere?
 - ☐ For Wordpress plugins, is the plugin GPL licensed and open source?

- ☐ For Wordpress plugins, is there any aspect of the functionality that would cease to operate if you didn't renew your subscription?
- ☐ For self-hosted email lists, do you have accounts with multiple SMTP providers?
 - ☐ Fine to use Amazon SES for sending email, but good to have a backup plan in case Amazon shut you down.
- ☐ Is your business email and core internal communications being run through Google?
 - ☐ Consider moving email to a provider that doesn't make their money by way of data mining and advertising and surveillance.
- ☐ Password Security
 - ☐ Are you using unique passwords for every account you have? (You should be.)
 - ☐ Using difficult passwords? (If you can remember it in your head, it isn't good enough)
 - ☐ Using a secure password manager? (LastPass, 1Password, etc.)
 - ☐ Keeping a backup of your password vault in secure location?

EXTERNAL NETWORKS & PLATFORMS

- ☐ Is your business overly dependent on any one social network or platform?
- ☐ Are you outsourcing your member community to outside providers?
- ☐ Are you putting adequate attention on building your own home base that you own and control rather than all effort into building a follower community you don't actually own?
- ☐ Are you optimizing off-site content in order to bring people back to YOUR platform and build media that you OWN?
 - ☐ Calls to action on all Youtube videos
 - ☐ Ongoing strategy to bring social media followers back to your own site rather than leave them on social.
- ☐ For Youtube videos
 - ☐ Are you archiving offline backups of all of your videos?
 - ☐ Are you cross-posting to other networks besides Youtube?
 - ☐ Do you have a fallback for videos on your site if your Youtube channel suddenly weren't there anymore?

FINANCES

- ☐ Are you keeping a reserve fund for your business?
 - ☐ Parking 5-10% of revenue into reserves each month
- ☐ Have you looked into other options to maintain purchasing power rather than just keeping cash in the bank?
 - ☐ Options for higher interest
 - ☐ Potentially investing chunks of business funds into other assets to increase value.
- ☐ Using multiple payment providers
 - ☐ Multiple merchant accounts, Stripe accounts?
 - ☐ At least Stripe AND PayPal?
 - ☐ If you needed to quickly divert sales through another provider, do you know how you would do it?

- ☐ Do you have ongoing, recurring revenue in your business to help provide cushion against ups and downs?
- ☐ Have you evaluated expenses to ensure costs are efficient and your profit margin is maximized?

TRAFFIC

- ☐ Are you building long-term organic traffic assets rather than relying on paid advertising?
- ☐ Do you have checklists and systems in place to optimize all content assets before release?
- ☐ Are you taking the necessary actions to fully maximize your return on investment for all content assets?
 - ☐ Optimizing for target keyword phrases
 - ☐ General SEO to rank in search results
 - ☐ Also paying attention to non-Google search engines (like Bing, DuckDuckGo, etc.)
 - ☐ Optimizing calls to action within all content in order to build owned media (i.e. email list)
 - ☐ Spending time promoting your content to maximize ROI
 - ☐ Spending time each week building up backlinks and seeking other distribution opportunities
 - ☐ Doing routine and regular content maintenance and audits to keep a high quality content footprint for search and provide max value.
- ☐ Are you regularly producing new (or updated) content?
- ☐ Are you keeping internal inventory of the marketing assets you have available to you so you can fully utilize them?
- ☐ Are you routinely maintaining communication with your community to remain “top of mind” for them?