How does your website stack up?

The apartment marketer's guide to improving website performance

89 Performance

97 Accessibility

93 Best Practices

85 SEO

PWA Progressive Web App

▲ 0–49   ■ 50–89   ● 90–100

89 Performance

Metrics

● First Contentful Paint — 1.6 s
● Time to Interactive — 3.2 s
● Speed Index — 1.7 s
■ Total Blocking Time — 470 ms

REACH
by RentCafe

>>>
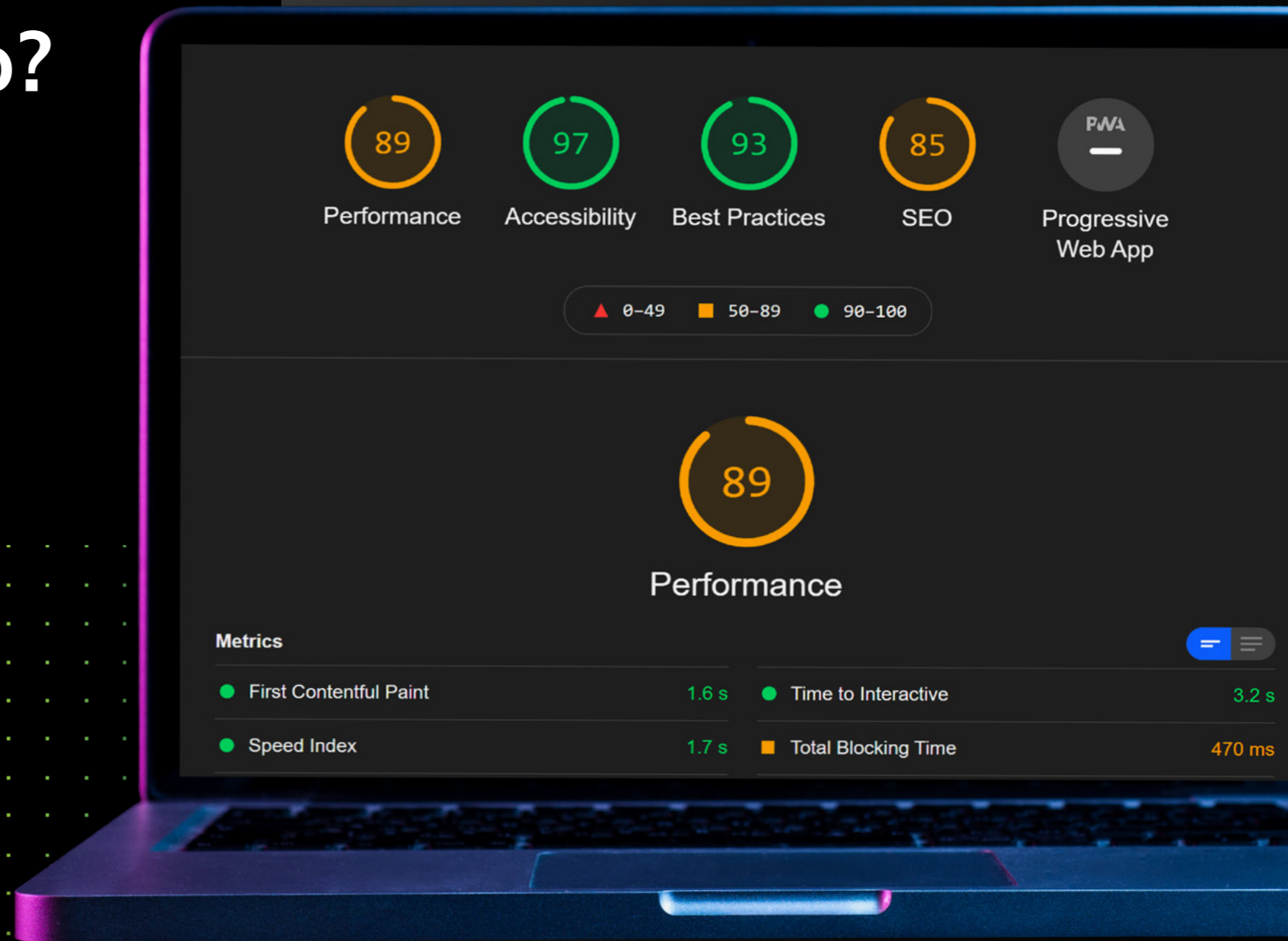
Intro

You have a nice website that advertises your apartments, but it doesn't get the traffic you think it should be getting. Or it does get the traffic, but the traffic doesn't convert into leases.

Sound familiar?

Learn how to evaluate your website performance using free, Google-backed tools so you can fix what's broken and get more traffic — especially high-quality leads that convert into happy renters.

What you'll learn

The basics

Lighthouse 101
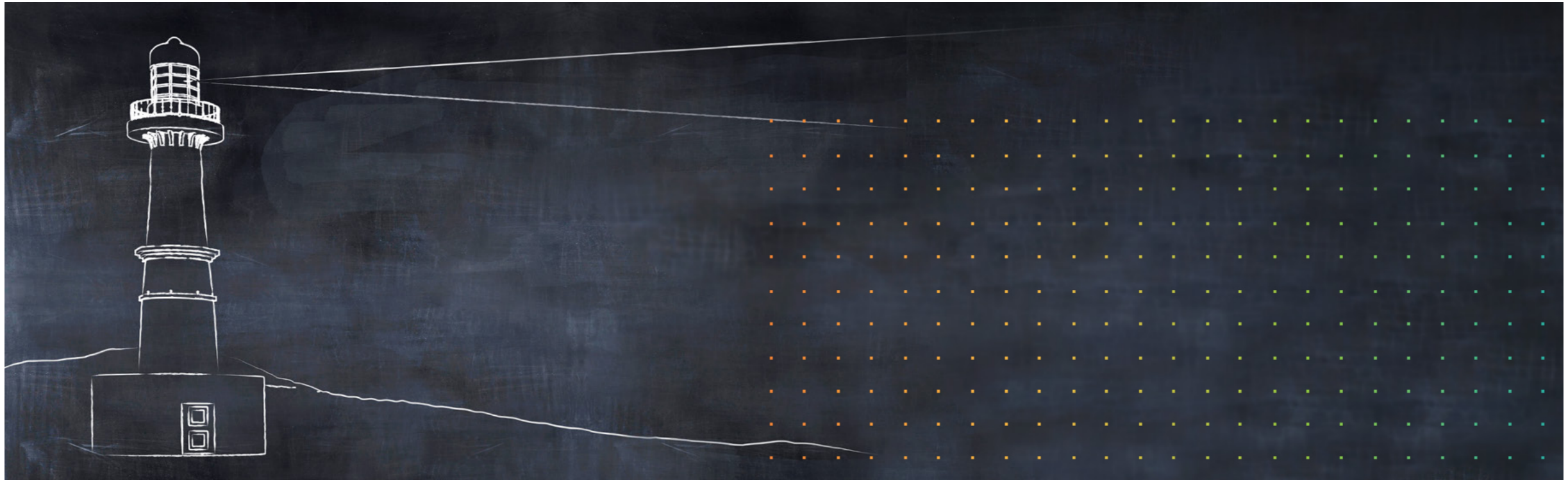
How to audit

How to get help

The basics

Let's start from the very beginning. Can you answer the following questions about your website?

- How would users rate website performance?

- What is your page speed?

- Does your code and UI meet Google standards?

- Do you have a successful SEO strategy?

- Is your site accessible?

If you answered "no" or "I don't know" to one or more questions, keep reading!

Before you learn how to audit your website to provide the best user and search experience, there are a few things you should be familiar with:

WHAT IS LIGHTHOUSE?

Per Google, Lighthouse is an open-source, automated tool for improving the quality of web pages. It audits for performance, accessibility, progressive web apps, SEO and more. Anyone can use Lighthouse to assess and enhance websites.

WHAT ARE CORE WEB VITALS?

Core Web Vitals are a set of metrics Google uses to assess page performance. These include speed, responsiveness and visual stability. The Core Web Vitals report shows how your pages perform in a real world scenario. You can use this information to identify and fix poor user experiences.

WHAT IS A PROGRESSIVE WEB APP (PWA)?

A PWA is a type of software delivered through the web that creates a user experience on par with a native app. Think of it as a website that meets consumer expectations by acting and feeling like an app.

"The key is to not confuse the user. Keep the site simple, and keep it real. A good website is intuitive and should be usable for everyone. Make sure the menu is visible and not overly complicated, the call-to-actions are easily accessible and the message is clear."

— **Neha Marathe**
Creative Lead
REACH by RentCafe

Lighthouse 101

So you just learned that Lighthouse is a tool for evaluating website performance. But there are many tools like that out there. Why use this one?
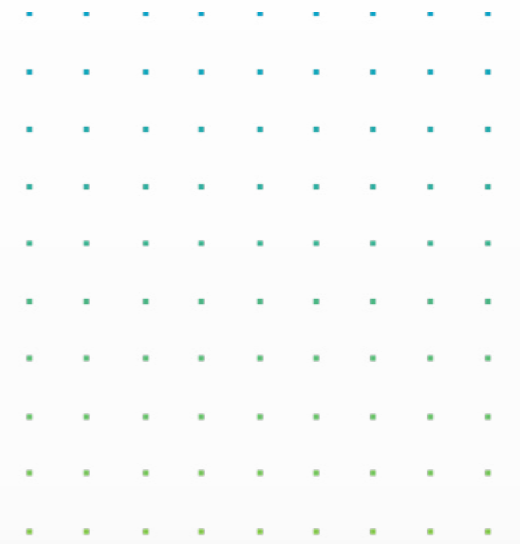
Lighthouse is

✔ Free

✔ Easy to use

✔ Supported by Google

Whether you're building a new website or optimizing an existing one, Lighthouse is a fast, accurate way to evaluate your work.

What does Lighthouse evaluate?

Lighthouse scores your website across five categories.

PERFORMANCE

Does your site load quickly and provide a good user experience from the get-go?
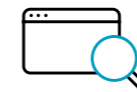
ACCESSIBILITY

Is your site accessible to all users, including those with vision impairment?

BEST PRACTICES

Is your site code clean, secure and healthy?

SEO

Is your site optimized to appear in search results?

PROGRESSIVE WEB APP

Lighthouse checks whether your site is PWA optimized or not. (You don't actually get a score for this one.)

Performance metrics

Let's take a closer look at the performance score. Your performance score is a combination of six metrics designed to represent a user's perception of your site.

The three metrics represented by Core Web Vitals are part of Lighthouse performance scoring.

1

FIRST CONTENTFUL PAINT

What it measures: The time it takes for the first text or image to appear onscreen

Your goal: Less than 2 seconds

2

SPEED INDEX

What it measures: How quickly the contents of a page are visibly populated

Your goal: 4.3 seconds or less

3

LARGEST CONTENTFUL PAINT

What it measures: How long it takes for the largest text or image to appear onscreen

Your goal: 2.5 seconds or less

4

TIME TO INTERACTIVE

What it measures: The time it takes for the page to become fully interactive

Your goal: Less than 3.8 seconds

5

TOTAL BLOCKING TIME

What it measures: The time between first contentful paint and time to interactive (to tell you how long a customer is blocked from acting)

Your goal: 300 milliseconds or less

6

CUMULATIVE LAYOUT SHIFT

What it measures: How much page elements above the fold shift during page load
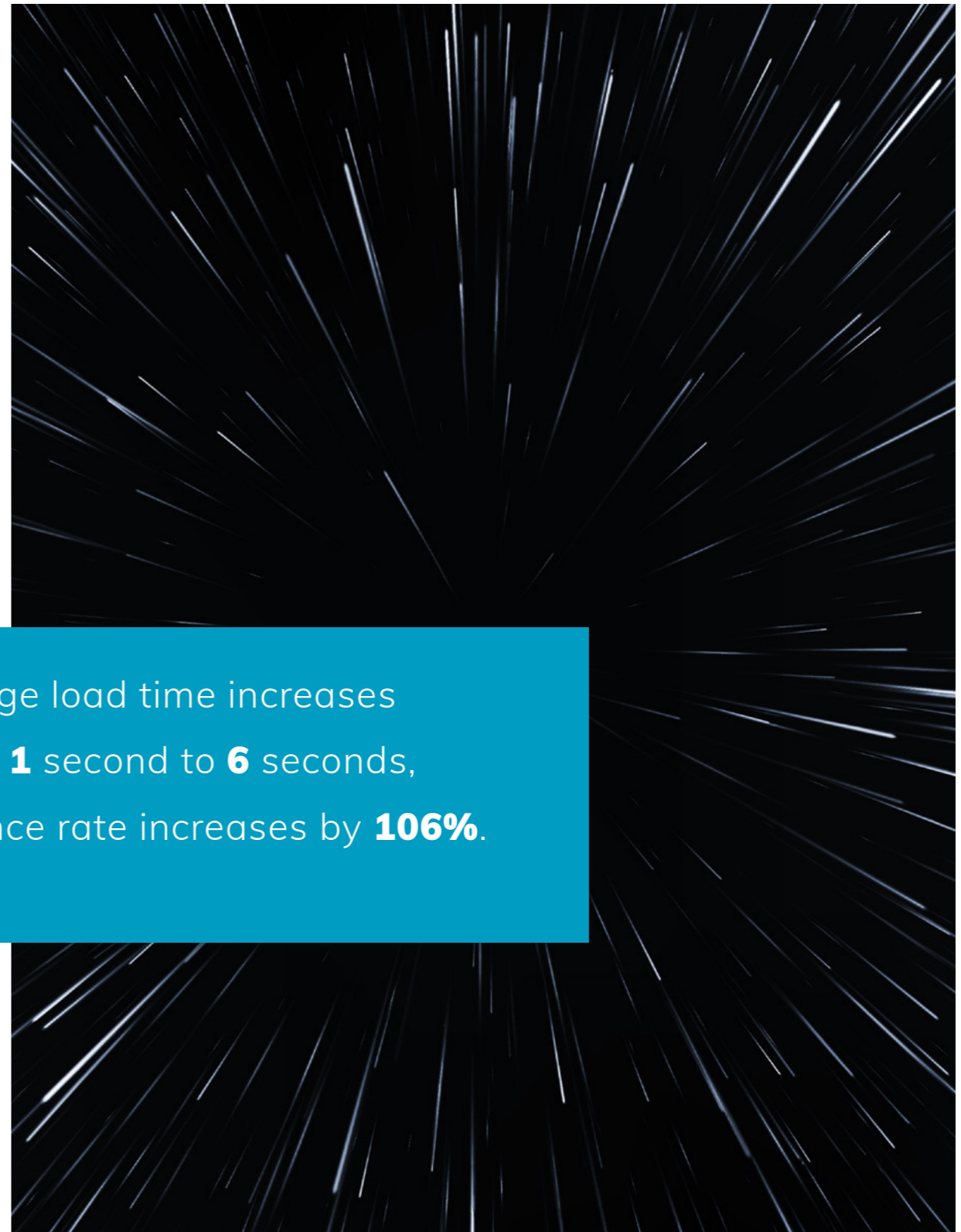
Your goal: A score of .1 or less

Why is speed so important, anyway?

You've probably heard that long page load times have a severe effect on bounce rates.

FOR EXAMPLE

If page load time increases from **1** second to **3** seconds, bounce rate increases **32**%.

If page load time increases from **1** second to **6** seconds, bounce rate increases by **106%**.

How to audit

Ready to check your website performance?

There are two easy ways to run a Lighthouse audit:

1. Use Chrome: Download **Google Chrome for Desktop** if you don't have it yet, then use it to go to the URL you want to audit. Open Chrome's main menu and select **More Tools > Developer Tools**. Go to the **Lighthouse** tab and click **Generate Report**. (For best results, run a Lighthouse audit while in Incognito mode.)

2. Run PageSpeed Insights: Navigate to **PageSpeed Insights**, enter a webpage URL and click **Analyze**. Note that this method only gives you a performance score. It does not score the other four categories.
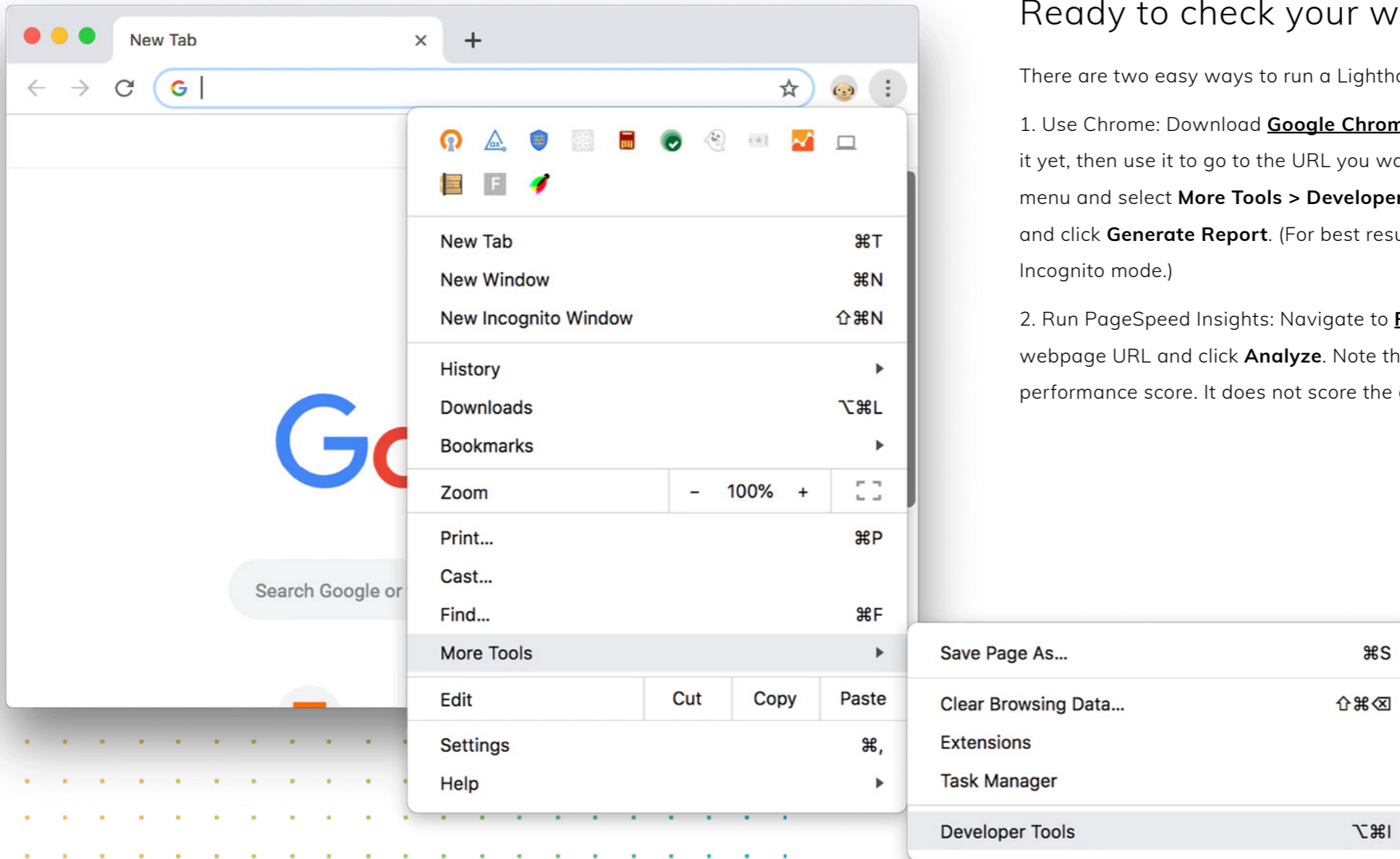
You did it!

You ran a Lighthouse report and are now looking at a bunch of numbers. Those are your scores.

## HOW TO READ YOUR LIGHTHOUSE SCORES

▲

0 to 49: Poor

■

50 to 89: Needs Improvement

●

90 to 100: Good

Remember, your performance score is a weighted average of the metric scores. It is designed to show a balanced representation of the user's perception of overall performance. Focus on this score unless you have a reason to concentrate on a specific metric, like SEO or accessibility.

While you should strive to have a good score, please know a perfect score of 100 is extremely challenging. Don't stress over those last few points.
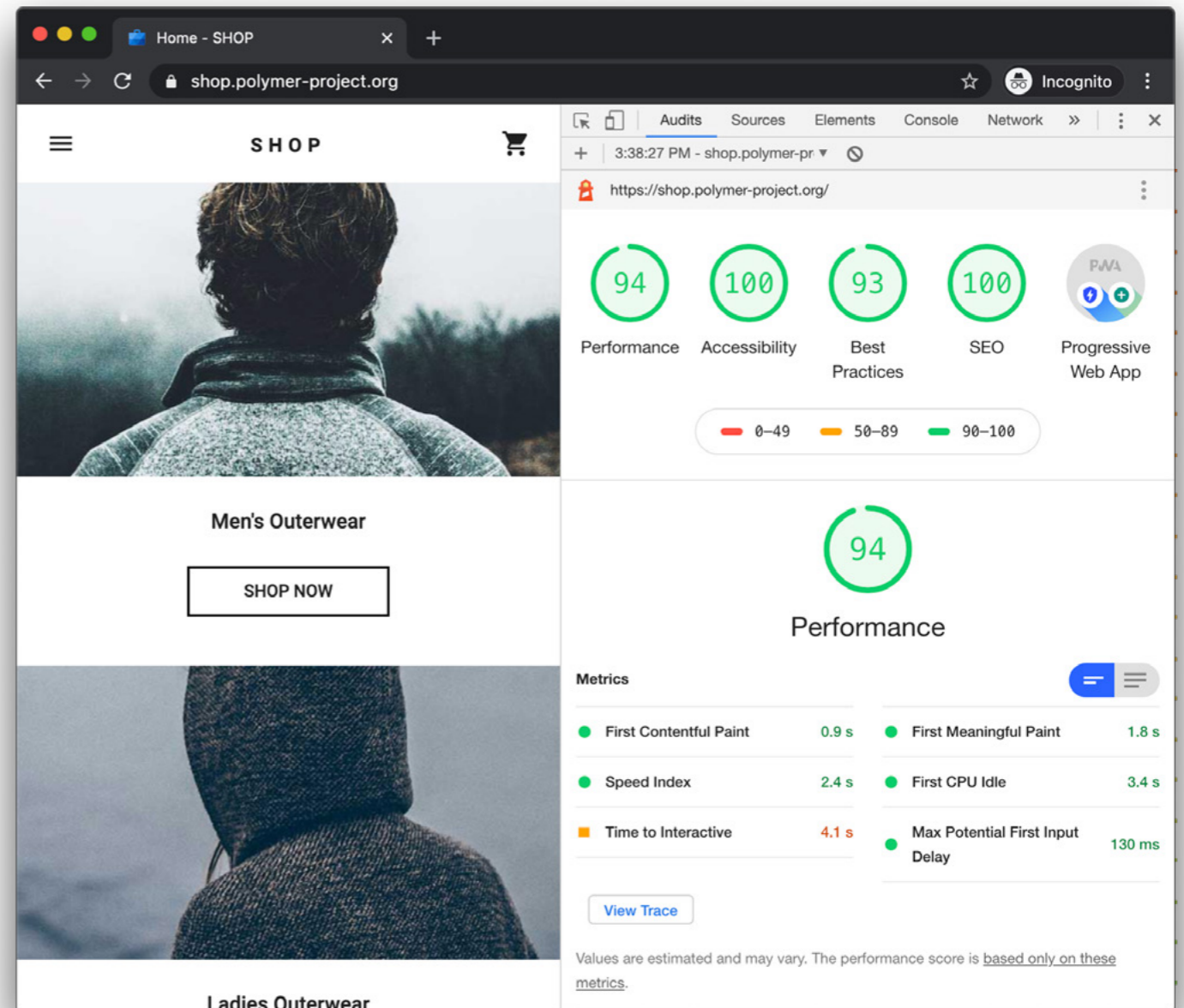
Scores of **70-89** aren't bad, but there are definitely opportunities to improve.

See the next page for tips.

Want to raise your scores?

You're not alone. Most websites have room for improvement.

The good news is that Lighthouse is here to help. **When you run a Lighthouse audit, it alerts you to areas for review that may be negatively impacting your results.**

Under your performance score, there is an **Opportunities** section with itemized improvement suggestions and links to detailed implementation documentation.

Under your accessibility, best practices and SEO scores, you will see a variety of subsections with flagged data points. A red triangle ▲ indicates something that contributes poorly to your score. An orange square ■ indicates something that isn't terrible but still has room for improvement.

Check out this **guide to Lighthouse performance audits** to learn more about common opportunities and diagnostics.

Test and test again

By now, you probably realize that your Lighthouse scores are fluid.

Scores can fluctuate based on browser extensions, user locations and even ads displayed on the page.

But most significantly, they can change because of work you've done to improve performance. If your website gets a poor score the first time, you're not stuck with that number forever!
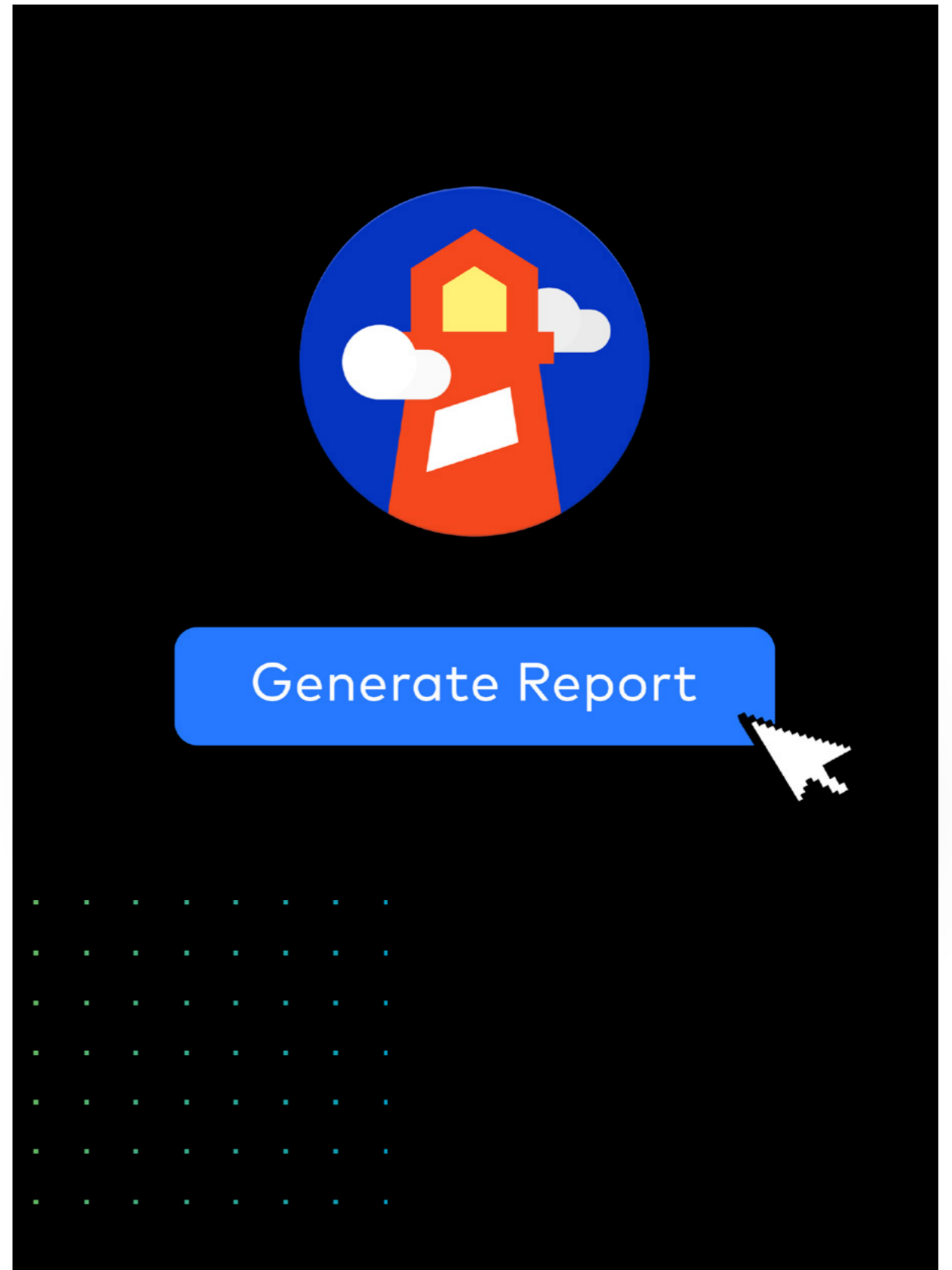
How to get help

Managing your website performance can eat up a lot of valuable time. If you're not maximizing your online potential, and if you want help boosting your Lighthouse scores, the digital marketing experts at **REACH by RentCafe** can help.

WHY REACH?

Our property marketing websites are built for performance, with an emphasis on Core Web Vitals — speed, responsiveness and visual stability.

When you partner with REACH, you'll create a winning web presence that engages and converts customers. Our full-service agency is a Google Premier Partner. Make your marketing goals a reality by pairing brilliant creative with effective SEO, PPC, reputation management, social media and more.

SEE PACKAGES ❯

WEBSITES | **SEO** | **PPC** | **REPUTATION MANAGEMENT** | **SOCIAL MEDIA** | **ANALYTICS**

Google Partner
PREMIER 2022

"Your REACH by RentCafe digital marketing agency is so great. You really are an extension of our marketing team."

— Ashley Cerasaro
Vice President, Communications & Digital Media
AVE by Korman Communities

Thanks for reading!

If you want to learn more about Lighthouse scores (or anything else digital marketing), reach out anytime:

reachby**rentcafe**.com | **sales@reachbyrentcafe.com**