DOM DIRECT ONLINE MARKETING

SEO Site Migration Checklist

Use this checklist as a basic guide for preparing against the inevitable rankings and traffic fluctuations when you change your site. Failure to prepare is preparing to fail: **some sites lose as much as 30% of their traffic when they don't plan ahead.** If you wait too long, rankings losses can become "permanent," and can only be overcome by starting your SEO efforts over from scratch.

1 Determine Your Migration Type

☐ **Platform Switch**
Changing the back end of your website from one Content Management System (e.g. WordPress) or coding language (e.g. PHP) to a new one.

ⓘ This switch will affect your URL or site structure (if not both) after the migration, which will hurt your organic (SEO) traffic and keyword rankings if not handled correctly.

☐ **Domain Name Change**
Changing from one domain name to a new one.

ⓘ This is comparable to moving from one office location to another in real life. The search engines need to know where your new site lives. Notify Google Search Console and Bing Webmaster Tools once the switch is live.

☐ **Secure Site Update**
The transition from an unsecure (http) site to a secure (https) one.

ⓘ This update should be a boost to your SEO efforts, but doesn't come without risks. When you go secure, everything on your site needs to be made secure, too. Linking to unsecure sites from a secure site will negatively impact your rankings and traffic, so only link from https to https pages.

2 Build Your SEO Migration Plan

☐ **Benchmark & Record Current Data to Compare After Your Migration**
Any significant fluctuations in this following performance areas post-migration will indicate issues to address. Some of the most important site migration KPIs are:

✓ **Keyword Rankings**   ✓ **Organic Traffic**   ✓ **Top Organic Rankings**

☐ **Evaluate Existing Resources**
Take a look through your website's current resources like PDFs, images, videos, landing pages, subdomains, active redirects, etc. Take note of what should be included on the new site, and what will be removed.

ⓘ Search engines have a historical index of every piece of content on your website which they use for influencing rankings. If you don't properly transition these resources and tell the search engines where to find them, you will lose rankings that Google assigns to your site and hinder new traffic opportunities.

> **TIP** Site migrations usually cause URL structure changes which will change your page destinations. Set up a spreadsheet to compare your current URLs to the future versions to map out what redirections need to happen when it's time to migrate.

Implement Relevant SEO Work from the Old Site to the New Site

SEO provides long-term value, but you can quickly lose all of your progress if you don't transfer the content you've optimized to your new site.

ⓘ Make sure your previous optimization work - like page titles, meta data, schema markup, etc. - is added to your new site while it is still in development, so downtime and ranking fluctuations are minimized.

3 Implement Your SEO Site Migration Plan

Benchmark & Record Current Data to Compare After Your Migration

Plan and prioritize necessary redirects, optimization, and link building tasks with your team for a smooth transition on your launch day.

4 Launch Day Activities

Launch page-to-page redirects that you've already built in preparation.

Oversee your traffic and site errors in real time throughout the day to make sure your SEO Site Migration is on track.

5 Monitor Key Metrics

Keep an eye on analytics, webmaster tool accounts, and other SEO tools you use to ensure your plan minimized the negative effects of the site migration.

Ranking Fluctuations

Rankings will fluctuate regardless of your migration. Generally, a ranking drop of ten or more positions indicates an error that needs to be addressed.

Traffic Patterns

If there are significant drops in traffic to your pages, then you need to investigate.

Site Error Reports

Check site error reports to ensure your site is being crawled correctly and errors logs don't get out of control. Take care of any errors as soon as you can; if a third party tool's crawlers come up with errors, search engine crawlers will certainly find them too, and your performance in search could suffer as a result.

6 Link Reclamation

Start your link reclamation campaign while continuing to monitor site health.

ⓘ Ask sites who've linked out to your old site to update any old URLs with your new link destinations.

7 Standard SEO

After a few weeks, your site migration work should be complete, apart from any ongoing link reclamation. Now is the time to resume your standard SEO activities.

💡 **TIP** If you're not confident in your ability to successfully navigate a site migration without losing traffic and rankings, get in touch with an SEO agency to help guide you.