



SEO WEBSITE MIGRATION: A PRACTICAL GUIDE



Learn how to protect your organic visibility before, during and after your migration.

INTRODUCTION

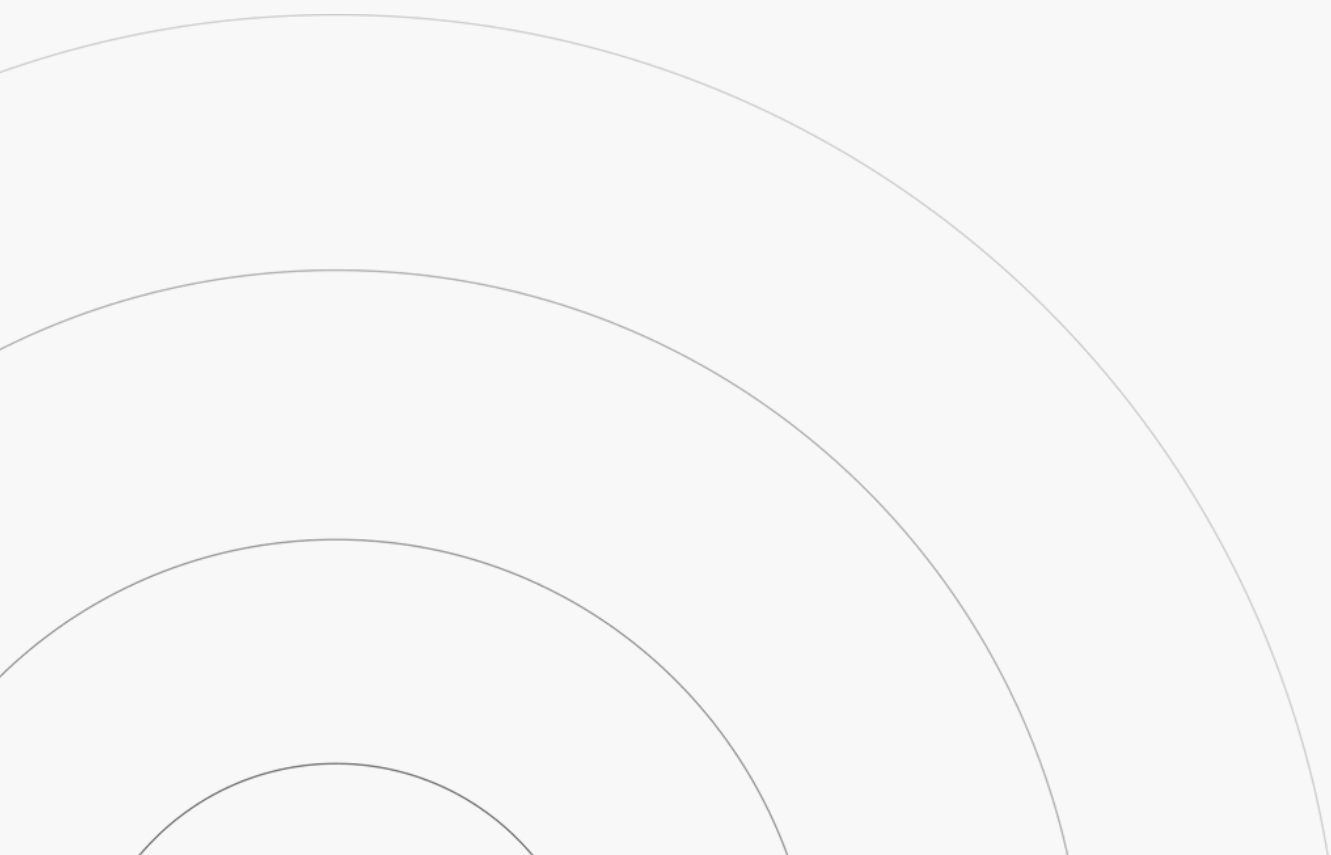
Website migrations fail far more often than they succeed. The largest risk is not the move itself, it is when SEO is brought in far too late. Decisions that affect URL structure, internal linking, information architecture and indexing are often made in design or development before SEO is ever consulted. By the time specialists see the build, the damage is already baked into the foundations.

This guide exists to prevent that.

An SEO website migration is not only a CMS change. It is any substantial shift that often changes how URLs behave or how search engines understand, index or interpret your website. That includes domain moves, rebrands, hosting changes, structural restructures, template redesigns, JavaScript adoption, and major content reorganisations.

The goal of this resource is to give you a proven SEO led migration framework that protects existing visibility, preserves equity already earned, and supports future growth. When planned correctly from the very beginning, website migrations do not need to drop organic performance. They can strengthen it.

Next we move into defining what an SEO website migration actually is and the types you will encounter.



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CHAPTER N.1

WHAT IS AN SEO MIGRATION?

WHAT IS AN SEO MIGRATION?

An SEO website migration is any meaningful change to your website that alters how search engines discover, understand, index and rank your content. It is not just a 'platform swap'. If a change affects URLs, templates, content structure, rendering, internal linking, canonical signals or indexing rules, it counts as a migration.

Below are the six core types, with plain language explanations, why they affect SEO, pitfalls to avoid, and what good looks like.

1) Platform migration (CMS change)

What it is:

Moving your site from one content management system to another. For example, WordPress to Shopify, Magento to BigCommerce, or monolithic CMS to a headless setup.

Why it matters for SEO

A CMS controls how pages are generated, what the HTML looks like, how fast pages load, and how easily you can manage titles, meta descriptions, structured data and redirects. A change in CMS often changes all of this at once.

Key terms explained:

- CMS: software used to create and manage website content.
- Headless: a modern style CMS where content is stored in one place, but the actual pages and design are built separately.
- Rendering: how a page is actually built and shown. Search engines and browsers both need to be able to see the real content. Sometimes the page is built before it is loaded, sometimes it is built as the visitor loads it.
- Structured data: code that helps search engines understand the meaning of your content, for example Product or Article schema.

Common pitfalls:

- Important SEO fields such as titles, meta descriptions and headings do not match cleanly between systems, so key information gets lost or changed..
- The CMS automatically creates new URLs that are slightly different from the old ones, which breaks previous ranking value.
- Canonical tags are missing or set incorrectly, often pointing everything at the homepage which causes confusion in search.
- Lists, filters and sorting behave differently in the new system and accidentally create lots of duplicate pages.
- Heavy use of JavaScript hides important content from search engines because they cannot easily see it.
- Redirects are added late or only handled through plugins, which can slow the site and cause ranking issues.

What good looks like:

A clear plan that maps every important SEO field from the old system to where it will live in the new system.

The main content is visible to search engines without needing lots of JavaScript to load it.

Redirects are handled properly at platform or server level and are fully tested before launch.

Consistent content structures are used so URLs remain stable, logical and predictable.

2) Host infrastructure migration

What it is:

Changing where your site physically lives online. For example, moving to a new hosting provider or server setup.

Why it matters for SEO:

Speed and reliability directly affect rankings. If your site suddenly becomes slower or unstable during a hosting move, search engines can crawl less effectively and organic performance can drop.

Common pitfalls:

- Temporary errors during the move cause search engines to see pages as unavailable.
- Security certificates and secure pages break.
- Cached versions of the site show the wrong content.
- Hosting changes trigger blocks or slowdowns for crawlers without you realising.

What good looks like:

- The move is planned in advance and monitored closely.
- All secure connections are checked before launch.
- No unexpected errors or downtime for search engines or users.

Performance and speed are the same or better after the move.

3) Domain migration

What it is:

Changing your website address. For example, moving from .co.uk to .com or changing brand name.

Why it matters for SEO:

Every single URL changes. You must transfer all existing value from the old domain to the new one with correct redirects. This is one of the highest risk types of migration.

Common pitfalls:

- Redirects do not point directly to the correct new page.
- Some pages are missed and end up as 404s.
- Internal links still point to the old domain and cause confusion.
- Not updating language or international settings for the new domain.

What good looks like:

- Every old URL redirects cleanly to its correct new version.
- All internal links, tags and sitemaps point to the new domain from launch.
- Search Console ownership for both domains is set up and validated.
- Nothing is left pointing at the old domain once the site is live.

Performance and speed are the same or better after the move.

4) URL restructure

What it is:

Changing how your pages are organised in the URL path without changing domain. For example, renaming categories or removing dates from blogs.

Why it matters for SEO:

Search engines see each URL as a unique page. If the structure changes, you must redirect old URLs to new URLs so you do not lose value.

Common pitfalls:

- Bulk redirect rules catch too many URLs or not enough.
- New navigation creates pages that are no longer linked anywhere.
- Minor format changes create unplanned duplicates.

What good looks like:

- You change as little as possible and only where it genuinely improves clarity.
- All old URLs are redirected correctly and tested.
- Internal links are updated so your most valuable pages still receive strong support.

5) Design or template rebuild

What it is:

Changing the visual layout or structure of your pages while staying on the same domain and CMS.

Why it matters for SEO:

Where content sits on a page and how you link between pages affects how search engines understand your site and which pages they prioritise.

Common pitfalls:

- Important content is moved lower on the page or behind elements that do not load instantly.
- Navigation changes remove links that previously supported rankings.
- Heading structure becomes unclear.
- Images become too large or slow to load.

What good looks like:

- The new design keeps the key content visible and easy for search engines to read.
- Navigation continues to support important page types.
- Images are compressed and fast.
- Page experience metrics improve or stay strong.

6) Full rebrand

What it is:

A major brand change that often includes new design, new content, new domain and new navigation all at once.

Why it matters for SEO:

You are effectively starting again from a signals perspective. Every major SEO lever changes at the same time which increases the risk significantly.

Common pitfalls:

- Removing content that still brings traffic and links.
- Changing messaging in a way that no longer matches search intent.
- Launching new pages with no internal linking support.
- Brand name and signals not synced across the web.

What good looks like:

- You keep and reuse the content that already performs well.
- Redirects and internal linking support the new structure from day one.
- The new brand identity is consistent everywhere online.
- You release the change in controlled phases where possible.

CHAPTER N.2

PRE MIGRATION PHASE (THE PLANNING STAGE)

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A successful website migration starts long before launch day. Most failures happen because SEO planning begins too late, after design and development decisions are already made. The pre-migration stage is about understanding everything your current site does well, documenting it, and creating a plan to protect that value during the move.

Think of it as your safety net, the work you do here determines how smooth the transition will be later.

Step 1: Benchmark your current site

Before changing anything, record how your site performs today

- Export traffic and keyword data from tools like Google Search Console and Google Analytics.
- Identify which pages bring the most organic traffic and which drive conversions.
- Crawl your site with an SEO tool to capture all live URLs, metadata, headings and internal links.
- Make a note of how fast key pages load and how they score for Core Web Vitals.

This gives you a baseline for comparing performance after the migration and helps identify which areas you cannot afford to lose.

Step 2: Map all existing URLs

Every page currently live on your site needs to be listed. This full URL map is the foundation for your redirect plan later.

- Include old campaign pages, PDFs, and blog posts — not just core pages.
- Flag which URLs are indexed and which are important for SEO.
- Remove anything truly obsolete, but only after confirming it holds no current value.

A full URL list means no forgotten pages and no unexpected 404s after launch.

Step 3: Understand your backlink profile

Links from other websites are a key part of your authority in search.

- Export your backlink data using tools such as Ahrefs or SEMrush.
- Note which pages receive the strongest links so they can be preserved or redirected accurately.

Protecting your best links helps retain domain authority and ranking power after the move.

Step 4: Define redirect rules early

Redirects are how search engines and users are guided from old URLs to new ones.

- Create a one-to-one redirect map that pairs every old URL with its new destination.
- Plan this before any development starts — it is much harder to fix later.
- Use permanent (301) redirects to pass ranking value.
- Avoid long redirect chains, which can slow down pages and dilute equity.

A clean redirect plan prevents broken links and preserves search visibility.

Step 5: Review structure and navigation

If you are restructuring categories or main navigation, now is the time to test the logic.

- Check that every important page will still be reachable within a few clicks from the homepage.
- Ensure high-value content is not buried too deeply.
- Keep URL patterns simple, readable and consistent.

Strong internal linking helps search engines understand your site's hierarchy and keeps authority flowing to the right places.



Step 6: Review on-page SEO elements

Ensure your key pages have the correct titles, headings, meta descriptions and structured data. If you are changing templates, confirm these elements will carry across correctly.

- Make sure new templates support meta data fields.
- Maintain consistent heading structures (one clear H1 per page).
- Check that image alt text and internal links are included.
-

Consistency keeps your relevance signals intact.

Step 7: Plan your technical SEO checks

Create a pre-launch checklist so nothing is missed later. Include:

- Robots.txt and sitemap setup.
- Canonical tags on key pages.
- hreflang (if your site targets multiple languages or countries).
- Tracking codes and analytics setup.
- Page speed and mobile-friendliness tests.

Having this list ready ensures all essentials are validated before and after go-live.

Step 8: Get stakeholder sign-off

Before any development begins, present your SEO plan to all key teams — design, development, and leadership.

- Confirm that everyone understands the redirect plan, timelines, and responsibilities.
- Make sure SEO changes are built into the project scope, not added later as “fixes.”

Clear communication at this stage avoids expensive surprises during launch week.

CHAPTER N.3

REDIRECT MAPPING

REDIRECT MAPPING

Redirects are one of the most important and most misunderstood parts of any website migration. When handled well, they preserve your rankings, protect your users, and pass authority from your old URLs to your new ones. When handled poorly, they can cause traffic to collapse overnight.

A redirect tells both search engines and visitors that a page has permanently moved to a new address. The goal is simple: when someone tries to reach an old URL, they should automatically land on the correct new page, not a 404 error, not the homepage, and not a near-match.

Step 1: Build a one-to-one redirect map

The golden rule of migration redirects is one-to-one mapping. Every single old URL should point directly to its new version.

Avoid shortcuts such as pattern-based redirects (for example, sending everything from /blog/ to /articles/). These are tempting but often too broad, and they risk sending users — and Google — to the wrong places.

To build a proper redirect map:

- Start with your full list of current URLs gathered during the pre-migration phase.
- Match each one with its exact new equivalent.
- Use spreadsheets to track the mapping clearly.
- Include redirects for images, PDFs, or other assets that have changed paths.

This approach is slower but far more reliable. A perfect redirect map is the single best insurance policy against traffic loss.

Step 2: Handle legacy or junk URLs carefully

Older websites often contain “junk” pages — test URLs, duplicates, or campaign pages that no longer serve a purpose. Don’t panic about redirecting every single one if they hold no value.

To build a proper redirect map:

- If a page still receives traffic or has backlinks, redirect it to the most relevant new page.
- If it has no history or purpose, allow it to return a 404 (Not Found) status — that tells search engines it can safely be forgotten.
- Avoid redirecting irrelevant pages to the homepage. This confuses users and search engines.

Being selective is part of good redirect hygiene. Quality over quantity.

Step 3: Test everything in staging

Redirects should never be added at the last minute. They need to be built, tested, and reviewed before the site goes live.

In your staging environment:

- Upload and test the full redirect file.
- Check a sample of redirects manually — do they lead to the right place?
- Use an SEO crawler to confirm that all old URLs return a 301 status code (permanent redirect) and that there are no redirect chains (one URL bouncing through several others).
- Keep an eye out for redirect loops, where a URL keeps sending you in circles.

By testing in staging, you catch errors before search engines do.

Step 4: Avoid common redirect mistakes

Even experienced teams slip up here.

Watch for:

- Redirect chains — where page A redirects to B, and B redirects to C. Always go A → C directly.
- Temporary (302) redirects instead of permanent (301). Use 301s for migration.
- Multiple redirect files managed by plugins, CMS rules, and servers all at once — these can conflict and cause slow load times.
- Missed assets like PDFs, images, or tracking links that need redirect coverage.

Simple, clean, and direct is always better.

Step 5: Launch and monitor

Once live, re-crawl your old URLs to confirm:

- Every redirect is working as expected.
- There are no new 404s or redirect loops.
- Analytics and Search Console data show traffic moving correctly to new URLs.

Over the next few weeks, monitor performance. You'll see Google re-index your new URLs and gradually transfer authority. If rankings dip slightly, that's normal — stability usually returns within a few weeks if everything is implemented properly.

CHAPTER N.4

NEW BUILD SEO IMPLEMENTATION

NEW BUILD SEO IMPLEMENTATION

Once the new version of your website is being built, SEO needs to stay involved at every stage. This is where good planning turns into action. The goal is to make sure the new site matches or improves upon everything that worked before — from on-page content to technical setup.

When SEO is considered throughout the build, the launch is smooth. When it's treated as an afterthought, even the best design can lose visibility overnight.

Step 1: Maintain meta and on-page parity

Every key page on the new site should retain the same SEO signals that helped it perform before.

- Titles and meta descriptions: copy them from the old site unless you're deliberately improving them. Make sure the new CMS supports custom title and description fields for every page.
- Headings: each page should still have one clear H1 that reflects the main topic.
- Body content: don't strip out keyword-rich or informative content just to make layouts cleaner. The words matter to search engines.
- Alt text: keep descriptive image text in place for accessibility and image search.

Consistency keeps your relevance intact and helps search engines recognise the same content in its new location.

Step 2: Check your robots.txt rules

The robots.txt file tells search engines which parts of your site they are allowed to crawl. It's essential that this file is checked before launch.

- Make sure the staging version of the file (which often blocks crawling) is not accidentally left active when the site goes live.
- Keep the rules simple. Only block sections that truly should not be indexed, such as admin areas or duplicate versions of pages.
- Add a direct link to your XML sitemap at the bottom of the file to help search engines find it faster.

One small mistake in this file can hide your entire website from Google, so handle it carefully.

Step 3: Validate hreflang (if you target multiple regions)

If your website serves users in multiple languages or countries, hreflang tags tell search engines which version of each page to show in each market.

- Check that every language or region version points to each other correctly — for example, the UK page points to the US version and vice versa.
- Use the same language codes throughout the site to stay consistent.
- Test using a dedicated hreflang tool or through Google Search Console.

Incorrect hreflang setup can cause the wrong page to appear in search results or split ranking signals between regions.

Step 4: Build and test your XML sitemaps

An XML sitemap lists all the URLs you want search engines to discover. It helps them crawl the new site efficiently.

- Generate fresh sitemaps for the new site — don't reuse old ones.
- Only include live, indexable pages that return a 200 status code.
- Split large sitemaps into logical groups (for example, products, blog, services).
- Submit them in Google Search Console once the site is live.

Think of your sitemap as a directory of everything you want to be visible in search — nothing more, nothing less.

Step 5: Test how your pages render

Modern websites often rely on JavaScript to load interactive elements or content. You need to confirm that search engines can actually “see” what users see.

- Use Google's “Inspect URL” or “View Crawled Page” tools to check rendered content.
- Make sure critical text and links appear in the HTML when the page loads — not only after extra scripts run.
- If you use lazy loading, test that all images and content still load when crawled.

Render testing ensures search engines can read your content properly and index it correctly.

Step 6: Maintain internal link parity

Internal links tell search engines which pages matter most. They also help users navigate easily.

- Keep internal links from high-performing pages to key service or product pages.
- Check that every page that previously received strong internal linking still does so in the new build.
- Avoid having too many links in one menu or section — it can dilute importance.

If your new site structure changes, internal linking is how you rebuild authority quickly.

Step 7: Review navigation and importance weighting

Navigation design isn't just user experience — it's SEO too. The higher up and more frequently a page is linked, the more search engines treat it as important.

- Keep your navigation simple and logical.
- Make sure your most important pages (services, products, or categories) are easy to reach within one or two clicks.
- Avoid hiding links behind expandable menus that crawlers might not fully read.

The way you link between pages defines your site's hierarchy. It's how search engines decide what deserves to rank.



CHAPTER N.5

LAUNCH & GO LIVE CHECKLIST

LAUNCH & GO LIVE CHECKLIST

Launch day is where all your planning pays off. The goal now is to make the transition as smooth as possible — for users, search engines, and your data.

Even with the best preparation, migrations can be stressful. A clear checklist keeps everyone focused and ensures no critical task is missed.

Step 1: Deploy your redirects

Before the new site goes live, make sure your full redirect map is uploaded and active.

- All old URLs should point directly to their new versions with 301 redirects.
- Test a random sample manually to confirm they lead to the right places.
- Avoid redirect chains — every old page should jump straight to its final destination.

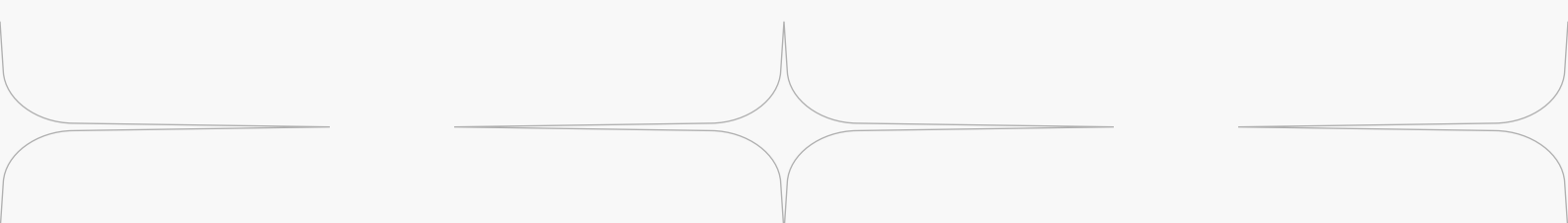
Your redirects protect your traffic, authority and user experience from the very first moment of launch.

Step 2: Crawl the live site

Once the new site is live, run a full crawl using an SEO tool such as Screaming Frog or Sitebulb. This will confirm that:

- The redirects work correctly and there are no unexpected 404 errors.
- Canonical tags, meta data and internal links all point to live, valid URLs.
- The site can be fully crawled without being blocked by robots.txt or server settings.

Crawling immediately after launch gives you a snapshot of the site's health and highlights any issues to fix right away.



Step 3: Validate canonical parity

Canonical tags tell search engines which version of a page is the “official” one when duplicates exist.

- Make sure canonicals on the new site point to the correct URLs (not staging or old domain versions).
- Check that each page references itself unless there is a clear reason not to.
- Avoid canonicals that point to redirected or broken pages.

Consistent canonical tags prevent confusion and keep your content indexed correctly.

Step 4: Re-submit sitemaps

Now that the new site is live and stable, update your XML sitemaps and submit them to Google Search Console and Bing Webmaster Tools.

- Remove any old sitemap references.
- Only include URLs that return a 200 (successful) status code.
- Monitor submission results to ensure search engines are reading the new sitemap properly.

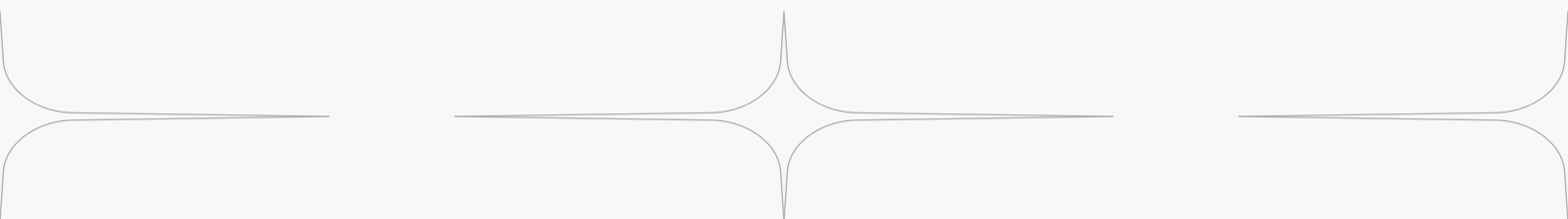
Submitting sitemaps helps search engines discover and re-index your new URLs faster.

Step 5: Check indexing velocity

“Indexing velocity” simply means how quickly search engines pick up your new pages and remove the old ones.

- Keep an eye on Google Search Console’s Coverage and Indexing reports.
- Within a few days, you should start to see new URLs appearing and old ones dropping out.
- If progress is slow, check for crawl errors, blocking rules, or redirect issues.

The faster search engines re-index your site, the faster your rankings stabilise.



Step 6: Validate tracking and data continuity

Make sure your analytics and tracking tools continue to collect data correctly.

- Confirm Google Analytics, GA4, Tag Manager and any pixel scripts are working.
- Check that goals, conversions and event tracking still fire as expected.
- Keep a record of traffic changes to compare with your pre-migration benchmarks.

Data continuity is crucial — it helps you spot issues early and measure recovery accurately.

Step 7: Monitor keyword and traffic volatility

It's normal to see some fluctuations in rankings after a migration. What matters is the overall trend over the following weeks.

- Track your top keywords daily for at least a month.
- Look for patterns — a few small drops are fine, large or sustained losses may signal redirect or indexing problems.
- Review traffic by page type, not just overall visits.

The goal is stability. If traffic holds steady or begins to recover quickly, your migration is performing well.

Step 8: Review server logs (if possible)

For larger sites, analysing server logs gives insight into how Googlebot is crawling your new setup.

- Confirm that search engines are visiting your most important pages regularly.
- Watch for spikes in crawl errors or unexpected 404s.
- Check that crawl activity shifts from the old URLs to the new ones over time.

If log analysis is available through your hosting or dev team, it's one of the best ways to validate that everything is working behind the scenes.

CHAPTER N.6

POST MIGRATION RECOVERY & STABILISATION

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An SEO website migration is any meaningful change to your website that alters how search engines discover, understand, index and rank your content. It is not just a 'platform swap'. If a change affects URLs, templates, content structure, rendering, internal linking, canonical signals or indexing rules, it counts as a migration.

Below are the six core types, with plain language explanations, why they affect SEO, pitfalls to avoid, and what good looks like.

How long recovery normally takes

Most well-executed migrations stabilise within four to eight weeks, depending on site size and how much changed.

- Small sites with clean redirects may recover within two weeks.
- Large, complex sites with many page types may take two to three months for full indexing and ranking transfer.

Patience is essential. Search engines move methodically, not instantly. Continue to monitor, but avoid making unnecessary changes too quickly.

What normal volatility looks like

Expect some natural ups and downs in the first few weeks:

- Daily rankings may fluctuate noticeably, especially for competitive terms.
- Traffic may dip 10–20 percent temporarily as Google re-indexes pages.
- You might see some old URLs still appear in search results before they fully drop out.

If the trend begins to improve after the first few weeks, you are on track. Normal volatility corrects itself as redirects and signals take effect.

When a performance drop is a true error

A short-term dip is fine. A sharp or ongoing decline needs attention.

Consider it a true problem if you notice:

- Traffic or rankings fall more than 30 percent and do not begin recovering after three to four weeks.
- Key pages that previously ranked well no longer appear in search results at all.
- Google Search Console reports crawling errors, redirect loops or widespread soft 404s.
- Important pages are marked noindex or excluded from the index.

These issues suggest something structural has gone wrong and must be investigated quickly.

How to isolate what went wrong

If performance doesn't return to normal, break the problem down step by step.

1. Check redirects

- Crawl old URLs to confirm they still redirect correctly to relevant pages.
- Look for redirect chains or loops that waste crawl budget or break link equity.

2. Review content parity

- Compare top pages on the old site with their new versions.
- Has important text, metadata, or internal linking been lost or moved lower on the page?
- If the topic depth has changed, rankings will reflect that.

3. Audit internal linking

- Crawl the site to see which pages now receive fewer internal links.
- Ensure core pages are still linked from key navigation or hub pages.

4. Examine templates and design changes

- Has the page structure changed in a way that hides or delays loading key content?
- Are headings or schema missing from new layouts?

5. Check for indexing or "noindex" issues

- Look for pages accidentally blocked in robots.txt or tagged as noindex.
- Use Search Console's URL inspection tool to confirm that pages are discoverable.

6. Monitor crawl and log data

- Check whether Googlebot is crawling your new pages as expected.
- If crawl frequency is low, it could mean access or quality signals need attention.

Work through each area methodically. Most migration issues trace back to one of these few root causes.



CHAPTER N.7

CASE STUDIES AND FAILURE PATTERNS

CASE STUDIES OR FAILURE PATTERNS

Every website migration follows the same basic principles, yet many still go wrong for the same predictable reasons. While the details vary, the patterns are remarkably consistent. Understanding these failure points helps prevent them from happening to you.

Below are some of the most common real-world scenarios we see — and what can be learned from each.

1. The “Late SEO Involvement” failure

Pattern:

The marketing or development team begins redesigning the site months before SEO is brought in. URL structures, templates and navigation are already built, and decisions that affect crawlability or content visibility have been made.

Result:

Redirects become a last-minute scramble. Key ranking pages are dropped or renamed without redirects. Metadata and on-page signals are inconsistent. After launch, traffic plummets and weeks are lost trying to rebuild what was lost.

Lesson:

SEO must be involved before development begins. Early technical input prevents expensive rework later.

2. The “Homepage Dump” failure

Pattern:

Old URLs are redirected to the homepage rather than to their closest new equivalent.

Result:

Search engines see the redirects as irrelevant and stop passing authority. Users land on pages that don't match their intent, increasing bounce rates and reducing trust.

Lesson:

Redirects must always be contextual and relevant. Each old page should lead directly to the most similar new page. Relevance equals equity retention.

3. The “Invisible Content” failure

Pattern:

A new, modern design relies heavily on JavaScript or visual components that load text dynamically. The content that once sat clearly in the HTML now appears only after interaction.

Result:

Search engines cannot “see” the main content or internal links properly. Rankings for key pages drop even though the design looks beautiful to users.

Lesson:

Always test what search engines can render. Visual appeal means little if the crawler can’t read your content.

4. The “Redirect Chain” failure

Pattern:

Old pages redirect to temporary URLs, which redirect again to the new pages. These chains often form unintentionally during testing or when several teams handle redirects in different systems.

Result:

Page speed slows, link equity weakens, and some URLs fall out of the index entirely.

Lesson:

Keep redirects clean and direct. Every old URL should point straight to its new version — no middle steps.

5. The “Lost Tracking” failure

Pattern:

Analytics, conversion tags or tracking scripts are missed during the build or not tested after go-live.

Result:

Traffic and conversion data disappear, making it impossible to measure performance or spot issues quickly.

Lesson:

Treat tracking as a critical system, not an optional extra. Always validate analytics setups before and after launch.

6. The “Thin Template” failure

Pattern:

Design teams remove large sections of copy to create minimalist layouts. Important keyword context, supporting information and internal links vanish.

Result:

Pages lose relevance for their target terms and drop in search visibility despite looking cleaner.

Lesson:

Design and SEO must balance. Aesthetics should never come at the cost of meaning and context.

7. The “Unmonitored Launch” failure

Pattern:

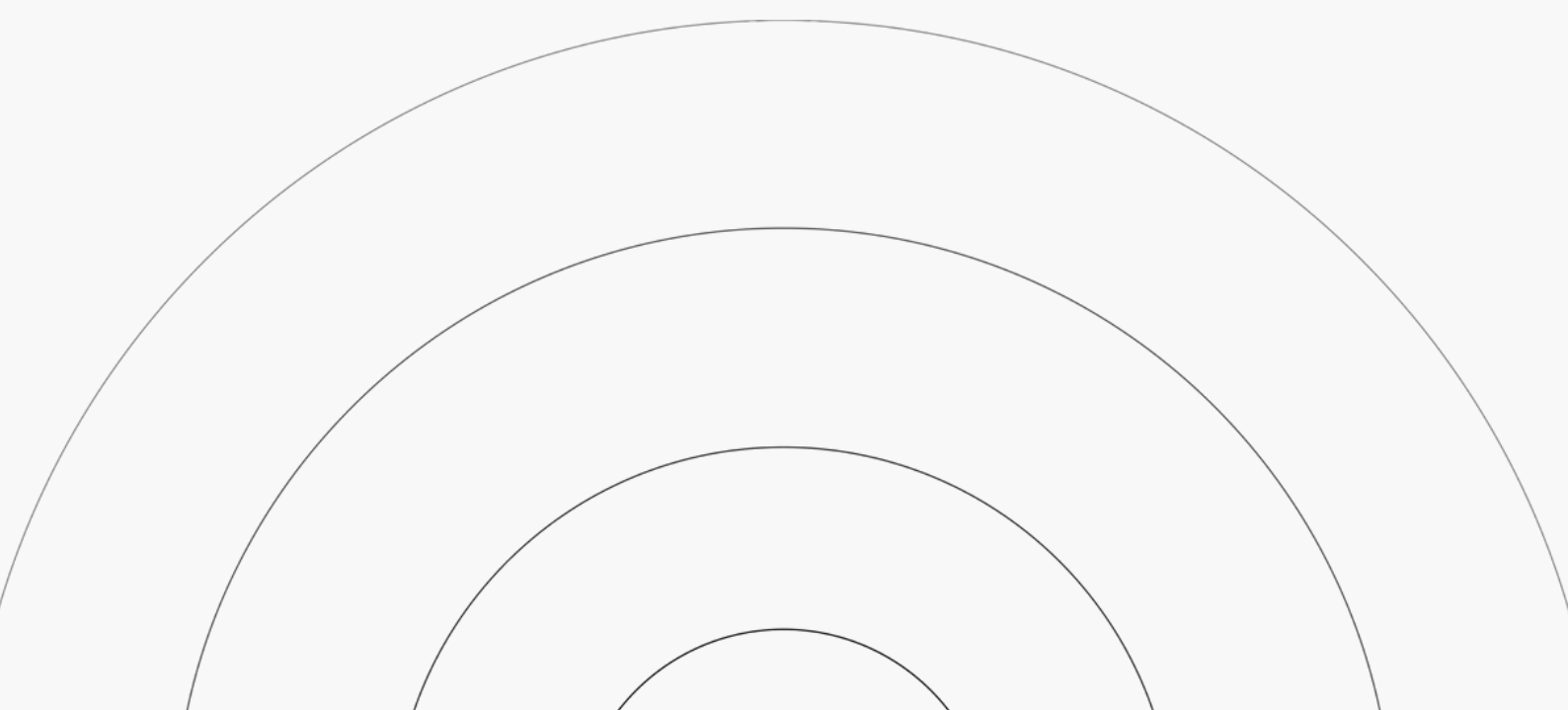
The site goes live without scheduled crawling, reporting or error tracking. The team assumes everything is fine.

Result:

Critical errors go unnoticed for days or weeks — including broken redirects, blocked pages and indexation problems.

Lesson:

Monitor constantly during the first weeks. Launch is not the end of the project; it's the start of stabilisation



CHAPTER N.8

WHICH TOOLS TO USE

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Website migrations are complex projects that involve technical audits, data analysis, and ongoing monitoring. The right tools make the process far smoother — helping you find issues quickly, test your work, and prove success after launch.

Below are the platforms and tools we rely on most when managing SEO website migrations. Each serves a specific purpose and complements the others.

1. Sitebulb

A powerful crawling and auditing tool that visualises your website structure.

Use it to:

- Create full URL inventories before migration.
- Test redirects and find broken links after launch.
- Identify missing metadata, heading issues and internal linking gaps.
- Generate easy-to-read visual reports for stakeholders.

Sitebulb is particularly helpful for seeing how changes in structure or navigation affect crawl depth and internal hierarchy.

2. Screaming Frog

An industry-standard website crawler for technical SEO checks.

Use it to:

- Crawl your site pre- and post-migration to confirm redirects and canonical tags.
- Compare title tags, headings and other on-page elements between the old and new sites.
- Spot redirect chains, loops and 404s instantly.
- Export data for detailed analysis in Excel or OpenRefine.

Screaming Frog is fast, flexible, and ideal for precise, hands-on auditing.



3. Google Search Console (GSC)

The direct line between your site and Google's index.

Use it to:

- Submit new sitemaps after launch.
- Monitor indexing progress and crawl errors.
- Check which pages are appearing in search results and for which keywords.
- Verify domain ownership before changing domains.

Search Console is essential for understanding how Google sees your new site and identifying problems early.

4. Google Analytics 4 (GA4)

Your main source of performance data.

Use it to:

- Benchmark pre-migration traffic and engagement.
- Track behaviour, conversion, and performance after launch.
- Identify which sections of the site are gaining or losing traction.

GA4 helps you prove the success of the migration through real user data.

5. Looker Studio

A powerful dashboard and reporting tool that turns raw data into clear visuals.

Use it to:

- Combine data from GA4, GSC and other tools into one live view.
- Share performance updates with stakeholders.
- Highlight trends and recovery progress in the weeks following launch.

Looker Studio saves time on manual reporting and helps teams focus on insights, not spreadsheets.

6. Ahrefs

A link analysis and keyword tracking platform.

Use it to:

- Export your backlink profile before migration to identify pages with valuable links.
- Monitor domain authority and link equity after the move.
- Track ranking positions for key terms throughout the migration process.

Ahrefs is invaluable for protecting link value and keeping an eye on competitive performance.

CHAPTER N.9

MIGRATION CHECKLIST

MIGRATION CHECKLIST

A website migration has many moving parts. Even with the best planning, small details can slip through the cracks. A simple, structured checklist keeps your project on track from start to finish — helping you monitor progress, assign responsibility, and confirm that every critical SEO step has been completed.

Below is a condensed version of the full checklist. We'll soon make this available as a downloadable PDF so you can use it as a working document and share it with your wider team.

Pre-Migration Planning

- ☐ Benchmark current performance (traffic, rankings, top pages)
- ☐ Export full list of URLs and metadata
- ☐ Identify top-performing and high-value pages
- ☐ Audit backlink profile and note pages with external links
- ☐ Plan new site structure and internal linking
- ☐ Create a one-to-one redirect map
- ☐ Review templates, titles, headings and metadata parity
- ☐ Agree timeline and get stakeholder sign-off

Redirect Mapping

- ☐ Build and test redirects in staging
- ☐ Remove any redirect chains or loops
- ☐ Redirect each old page to the most relevant new page
- ☐ Avoid redirecting unrelated or low-value URLs to the homepage
- ☐ Confirm all redirects return a 301 (permanent) status

New Build SEO Implementation

- ☐ Verify titles, descriptions and headings carry over correctly
- ☐ Confirm robots.txt is live and not blocking important pages
- ☐ Validate hreflang setup (if multi-regional)
- ☐ Create and test XML sitemaps
- ☐ Run render testing to ensure search engines can see all content
- ☐ Maintain internal linking and navigation logic

Launch & Go-Live

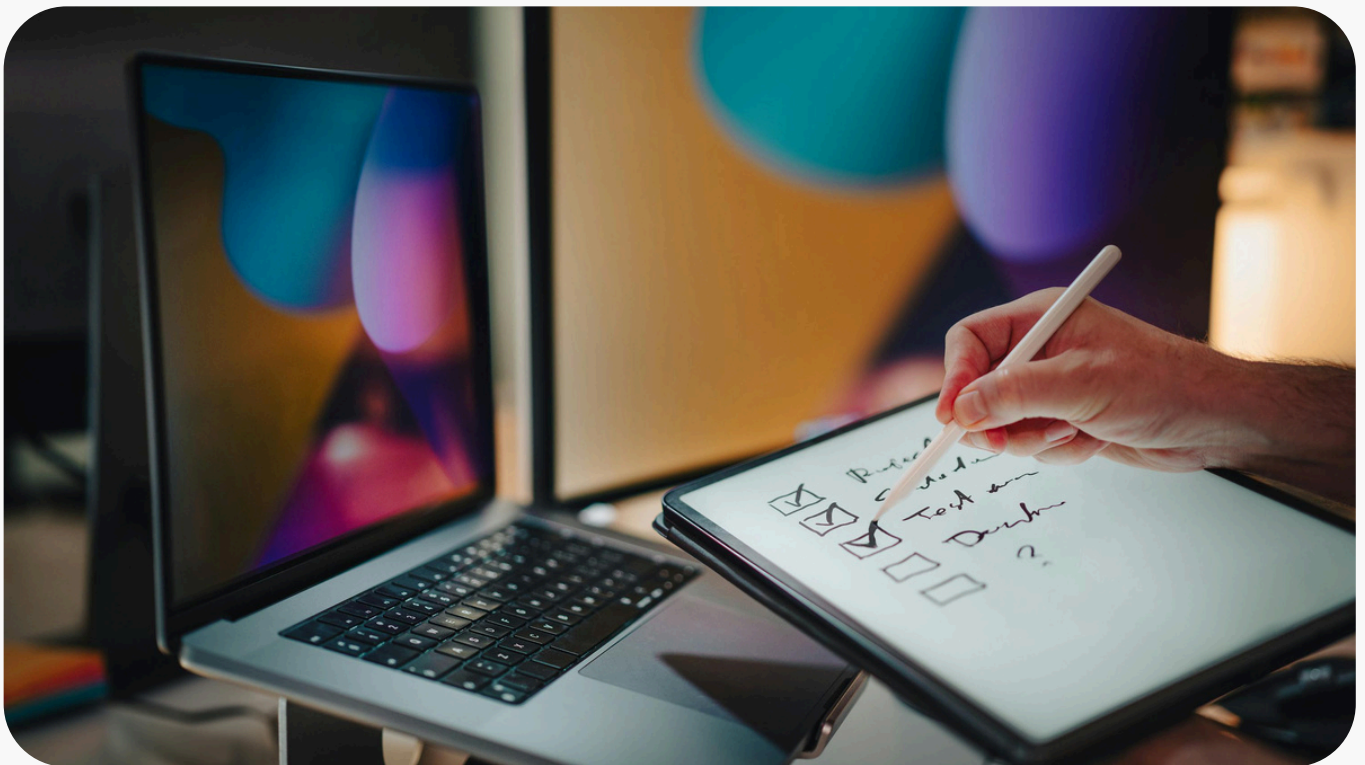
- ☐ Deploy redirects
- ☐ Crawl live site to find 404s or broken links
- ☐ Validate canonical tags
- ☐ Re-submit sitemaps to Google Search Console
- ☐ Test analytics and conversion tracking
- ☐ Monitor keyword rankings and traffic
- ☐ Check indexing and crawl activity over the first few weeks

Post-Migration Recovery

- ☐ Track performance daily for at least four to eight weeks
- ☐ Compare new data against pre-migration benchmarks
- ☐ Investigate any long-term ranking or traffic drops
- ☐ Re-check redirects, internal linking and template setup
- ☐ Review and fix any indexation or “noindex” errors
- ☐ Continue link building and content improvements to strengthen authority

Tools to Support the Process

- ☐ Sitebulb or Screaming Frog for crawling and audits
- ☐ Google Search Console for monitoring and index coverage
- ☐ GA4 and Looker Studio for data tracking and reporting
- ☐ Ahrefs for backlinks and keyword monitoring
- ☐ OpenRefine for data cleaning and redirect file preparation





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