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Saas

website migration

SaaS Website Migration Checklist

SaaS website migration can form a huge part of the digital transformation many forward-thinking businesses are undertaking. Getting a migration correct increases traffic, reduces operational costs, and can even create more storage space for a site.

But a migration can also have a significant impact on your digital marketing. That's because any change that is made to a website will affect the visibility of content, having an impact on SEO.

With the right know-how, migrating is a simple enough process. However, there are points where it can get tricky, and if not done properly, can have negative SEO implications. This guide takes those wanting to migrate - or even those curious about it - through the process, creating a checklist of what is needed for a successful SaaS website migration.

Types of Site Migration

Before getting into the details of how to perform a successful site migration, it's good to know what types exist. The migration method that is used will depend on the needs and desired results of your business.

Some of the most common types of site migration are:

- **Site moves**
- **Replatforming**
- **Content Migration**
- **Mobile Setup Changes**
- **Structural Changes**
- **Site Redesigns**
- **Hybrid Migrations**

Site Moves

This usually means when a site changes its URL. There can be a range of reasons why this may happen:

- **Protocol changes** – for example, moving from HTTP to HTTPS.
- **Subdomain or subfolder change** – An example of this is when a mobile site that uses both subdomains and subfolders starts to respond but neither the desktop nor mobile URL is informed.
- **Domain name change** – This happens when businesses change names or rebrand themselves.
- **Top-level domain change** – This change occurs when companies move from a national to an international website. I.e., from .co.uk to .com. Or the other way around.
- **Site structure changes** – This move occurs when the structure of the site architecture changes. Something which, in turn, changes the internal URLs or links of the site.

Replatforming

This is when a website moves from one platform or CMS to another. For example, if it were to move from Wix to WordPress. There are often technical limitations to the replatforming process. That can lead to changes in URL and structure of the site. It also results in a different look than was used before.

Content Migrations

Every time a piece of content is altered, consolidated, or edited, it can change the organic search visibility of a site. For example, if a 1,000-word piece is posted and then cut down to a 500-word piece, keywords and hyperlinks may be destroyed in the process. The taxonomy and navigation of a site may also be affected.

Mobile Setup Changes

When setting up a website, many platforms or CMS give the option to see how it looks on a mobile. However, an older site may not have this option. Sometimes sites have a 'mobile-friendly' site vs a desktop site. So, information needs to be migrated over to make it suitable for a smaller screen. As there are many options when it comes to this, including migrating to an app, there are often problems that occur along the way.

Structural Changes

Site navigation, user journeys, and internal links can be altered when a site's taxonomy gets tweaked.

Site Redesigns

Changing the outlook of a site can be essential to move with the times. However, a revamp means that significant code, media, and copy changes alter the information saved about the site.

Hybrid Migrations

Any of these points can be combined to make for hybrid migrations. And the more combinations, the more complicated the result. Which also means the higher the risk of things going wrong somewhere along the line. However, with good planning and execution, hybrid migrations can still be successful. It's much better to deal with any potential problems from the start, or as they are discovered, rather than at the end and going back to them. It's more cost-effective to do it that way, too.

How to do a Site Migration

Before any migration takes place, consider any growth opportunities or any potential risks. Then, liaise with stakeholders to set realistic goals. Finally, for each phase, plan.

Then, at last, the SaaS website migration process can begin.
There are typically six stages to the procedure, with each just as important as the last. Remember that any stage missed out, or not done with patience and accuracy, can cause much bigger issues later on.

Following each of these stages closely will make sure that everything goes to plan and there will be a successful migration.

These stages are:

1. **Scoping and planning**
2. **Pre-launch preparation**
3. **Pre-launch testing**
4. **Launch day support**
5. **Post-launch review**
6. **Performance review**

Phase One
Scoping and Planning

From the start, there needs to be a clear objective for the migration. This will help manage expectations and will set goals for each stage. Each type of migration will have different objectives and thought processes. From an SEO perspective, an ever-present goal must be to retain site traffic after a migration is complete.

Doing a site migration is a great time to deal with any prior problems that may exist. It's also a great chance to implement any changes that will benefit the future of the site and the company. For example, putting in place anything that will help save money or show off new ways of working. The points that will make the site successful need to be addressed and boosted, whilst the points that are risks and have a negative influence on sites visibility will also need to be assessed and worked on.

Talk to experts

Each point of your migration needs to be planned for accordingly, with experts assessing every aspect and making a suitable plan.

Acquiring feedback from various teams, including SEO, UX, content, and analytics will help see where the changes need to be made. This goes for both issues and opportunities. Then, having a conversation with stakeholders will make sure that everyone is prepped for what the website migration will take.

An expert will know what to expect and how to deal with things. However, it is important to plan on how to deal with a range of outcomes that may occur when migrating. This way, unexpected problems won't arise, and time and money won't be wasted figuring out how to deal with them. After dealing with all of this, activities can be prioritised, and it will be easy to see which elements of the migration require most time and investment. Then consider the migration strategy and discuss all insights with stakeholders. This will mean that realistic goals can be set, reducing the chances of any mistakes.

Plan

SaaS website migration can sometimes be a complex and time-consuming process that can take months to fully complete. So, a suitable plan must be made for each phase. There will need to be a time scale and a completion date in mind at every step. These dates and times may run over or under, but it's important to at least have an idea so team members can carefully plan how their role fits and what needs to be done for when.

Furthermore, somebody needs to be put in charge of each task, whether that be the UX consultant, content editor, web developer, SEO consultant, or web developer. Everyone involved in the change should be made aware of what the plan is so they can fully understand their role.

The plan should also be shared as early as possible so that if anybody wants to make any clarification or changes, they have the chance to do so. Try to put as much detail in every phase as possible, so that everyone is aware as to what is going on.

A big part of that plan is creating a launch date. This should be when traffic is low to avoid any disappointment if things go wrong. Remember, too, that it is quite common for something to go wrong with SaaS website migration, even if things have been planned as meticulously as possible. So, it's important to stay flexible.

Reason Site Migrations Fail

Poor Strategy (e.g. unclear objectives)	**Late involvement**
Poor Planning	**Poor Testing**
Lack of SEO/UX Consultation	**Slow response to bug fixing**
Lack of resources/budget	**Under-estimating scale**

Phase Two
Pre-Launch Preparation

Amongst other things, this means any activities that can be done whilst the new website is being made.

The SEO requirements should be established by this point and the wireframes should be well on the way to being developed. This should be done by having high levels of communication with the designers and information architects, and should all get completed before the new site starts to be staged.

This is also a good time to sort out any unresolved SEO or UX issues.

Do a wireframe review

Before going ahead with any development, the prototypes and wireframes need to be checked. Doing this will help see if any UX or SEO problems are occurring at this stage.

It may be that the pages that get high amounts of traffic are no longer being directed to from the landing page. Or that new wireframes necessitate the removal of crucial content. Anything being changed needs to be reviewed for SEO or UX issues.

Prepare technical SEO specifications

A detailed technical SEO specification needs to be prepared, and it needs to make sense to whoever is implementing it. This specification needs to identify all SEO requirements in regard to the migration. The keyword here is how. A technical SEO specification should explain how elements must get implemented to protect a site's search ranking.

The following are just some things that need to be considered in a technical SEO specification:

- **Redirects**
- **URL structure**
- **Main & secondary navigation**
- **XML sitemap**
- **HTML sitemap**
- **Metadata**
- **Structured data**
- **Copy & headings**
- **Internal linking**
- **Mobile setup**
- **Custom 404 page**
- **JavaScript, CSS, and image files**

It should also be considered whether those using the company's CMS can do the following:

- Update page titles, h1 – h6 headings, and meta descriptions
- Specify custom URLs and override defaults
- Add or edit alt text on images
- Bulk uploads

These are just some of the things that must be taken into consideration.

Identify priority pages

The success of site migration can often depend on the quality and quantity of the pages being migrated. Meaning that it's more important to focus on the pages that have the most relevance and substance. These being the pages that get the most visits, the most traffic, convert the best, and have good links.

To do this, you need to crawl the legacy site, and identify top-performing pages amongst all indexable pages. Shed the pages that are now irrelevant or aren't performing so well. This will make a smoother transition.

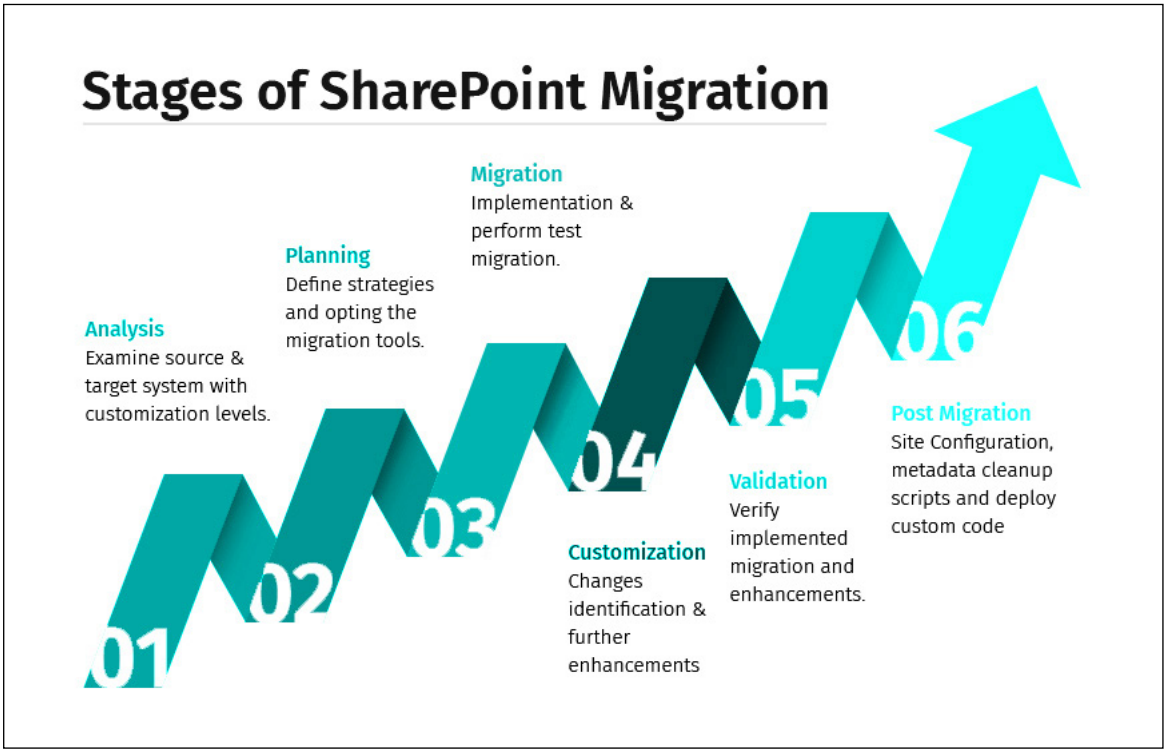
Crawling sites can be time-consuming but is worth it. It gets you a record of all page titles, URLs, headers, metadata, redirects, and broken links related to the legacy site.

When deciding on a crawler's settings consider ignoring robots.txt, following "no follow" links, and crawling subdomains and outside start folders. Also, change the user agent on both desktop and smartphone to Googlebot.

In case any data is ever needed, always keep a copy of the old site's crawl data for a few months after the new site has gone live. This can be stored on a hard drive or the cloud.

Once the crawl's complete, it's important to identify indexable pages. An indexable page is a HTML page that:

- **Has no canonical tag or self-referring canonical URL**
- **Isn't excluded from the robots.txt file**
- **Has no meta robots noindex**
- **Returns a 200-server response**
- **Has internal links from other pages**



Source: **Tatvasoft**

The indexable pages are those that drive traffic to your site. If there are a large number of indexable pages, it might be the case that you need to prioritise some among them. These would be the top performing pages.

When looking for the top performers, there are many things to bear in mind. Top-linked pages, pages with high page views and clicks within a certain timeframe, and organic visits to each page are all key factors. As well as this, there is revenue and conversions generated by each page.

The reason for these being given priority is because a website's ranking will be affected negatively if they don't exist post-migration.

Benchmarking

The legacy site's performance will need benchmarking as the new site's launch grows closer. This will enable the performance of the two sites to be compared, and it will also make it easier to discover the underperforming areas. These issues can then be addressed quickly before they get worse.

There are a number of elements of the legacy site's performance to benchmark:

- **Keyword rankings**
- **Page load times**
- **Data from old site crawls**
- **Search console data**

Keyword Rankings

Before the site goes live, existing keyword rankings need to be tracked. This helps to understand at a later date if the migration went smoothly. Ideally, this should be done around a week in advance of the launch.

Figure out which keywords for which your site is most visible in organic search and track them across mobile and desktop. It's hard to keep on top of all keyword combinations, so the least that needs doing is figure out the ones that drive traffic to the site.

To narrow this down again, if you get traffic from the brand and non-brand keywords, focus on traffic from a tracking point of view. Non-brand keywords are usually the competitive ones, so try to lean more towards these.

As a lot of traffic can also come from mobile as well as desktop, it's vital to track rankings for both. If there are any problems after the launch, it will make it much easier to figure out their source.

Furthermore, if high amounts of traffic are coming from various countries, try to rank traffic keywords in different markets as visibility, rankings, and website performance can vary from place to place.

Load times and performance

If your new site takes a longer time to load, or if generally doesn't run smoothly, visitors are more likely to leave. Obviously, this has a bad effect on sales. With this in mind, website performance also needs to be monitored before the migration takes place.

TIMELINE FOR A SUCCESSFUL

SEO SITE MIGRATION

WHAT IS A SITE MIGRATION?

Any substantial website change that can significantly affect search engine visibility

TYPES OF SITE MIGRATIONS

Understanding the type of site migration you are undergoing is important because different types require different SEO strategies, and some take longer than others. Knowing your site migration type will ensure you enlist an SEO team at the appropriate time

New Site Location

Examples: Domain name change, a protocol change, a top-level domain change, or moving/merging parts of the site

Time Needed: 2 Months

New CMS/Backend

Examples: Moving to a new CMS, integrating different platforms, moving to a new platform

Time Needed: 1 Month

New Site Architecture

Examples: Changes to site hierarchy, navigation, or page structure

Time Needed: 1 Month

New Design/UX

Examples: Minor look and feel changes or major messaging, media, and code changes

Time Needed: 1 Week +

Acquisition

Examples: Consolidating one site into another one, merging two sites together

Time Needed: 2 Months

+ Any Possible Combination!

Source: **obilityb2b.com**

Data from old site crawls

You crawled your legacy site in phase one of the SaaS website migration. As you approach the end of phase two, you should do it one more time. As well as save the old site's robots.txt and XML sitemaps, make a record of the following information:

- **Meta descriptions**
- **H1-h6 headings**
- **Canonical tags**
- **Page titles**
- **Server status**

Having that information on hand means you can more easily pinpoint optimisation issues or technical misconfigurations post-migration.

Search Console Data

Exporting the following search console data for your old site could also prove to be invaluable:

- **Internal links and links to the site**
- **URL parameters**
- **Search analytics queries and pages**
- **Index status**
- **Structured data and crawl errors**

Redirects preparation

One of the most vital activities during website migration, redirects need to be prepared so that the legacy site's content can be found, even if it no longer has a URL. Otherwise, the rankings will drop dramatically. This is because redirects help people - and search engines - get 'redirected' from pages that might not exist any longer, have been moved to a different location, or have been renamed.

They also help search engines index and discover new URLs faster, making it better for SEO as the old site pages are then associated with the new site's content. This pushes up or retains the rankings as the signals pass from one to another.

Because of this, redirects need to be properly implemented. Or else there may be catastrophic consequences. People will either end up on 'not found' pages or pages that are just not relevant to their needs.

This, in turn, hurts the site's bounce rate and search engines may not be able to relate new pages to the old URLs. Ranking and organic visibility will drop, and it will take longer for the search engine to find and index the new pages.

Which redirects to use

There are a few different options to use when it comes to redirects. Picking the right one will make the transition that bit easier. 301s should be used when the URLs of the old and new site are different. The permanent redirects mean the search engine will index the new URLs and forward on the ranking factors from the old ones.

So, if the site moves domain or subdomain, 301 is the best one to use. This also goes for changing from HTTP to HTTPS, or if site parts have been restructured.

Temporary, 302 redirects should only be used when a redirect doesn't need to be permanent, as indexing those new URLs won't be a priority. If these temporary redirects end up staying long term, they can adopt the same behaviour as 301 redirects. Initially, though, Google will be hesitant to index new pages related to 302 redirects.

Try to avoid meta refresh and JavaScript as they may be ignored by Google during the crawling stage. So, the signals won't be passed to the new pages.

Redirect mapping

If your SaaS website migration doesn't include any URL changes, you can head straight down to phase three. Otherwise, it's essential you create a redirect mapping file - usually in the form of a spreadsheet.

The redirect mapping file includes two columns. These are:

- **Legacy site URL.**
- **New site URL.**

Use the columns to map the redirects from each old page to a new one. The move from the old to the new site should be mapped with the most relevant corresponding page. If an appropriate page doesn't exist, try not to redirect to the home page because this just creates a bad user experience. Sometimes, bad redirects can end up becoming 'not found' pages. A map can always be made to the parent category page if needs be.

The development team will need to create and test the redirects before the new site is launched. Because this area is a place where things can go wrong, every step needs to be taken seriously. Therefore, it should be taken out to professionals in the field.

On a small site, redirects may be a quick and manual process, but on a larger site, there could be up to hundreds of thousands of sites that need mapping. Doing this manually is an impossible task and so, automation will need to be introduced.

A tip to make sure that mapping is accurate is to make sure that the new site structure is complete, so there are URLs to link to. Otherwise, things may get messy.

To avoid overwrites, keep hold of the old site's current redirects. Especially if the site has also had some prior migrations. This way, any previous legacy rewrites won't get lost. Try to hold on to as many legacy redirects as possible so that issues don't occur when they are combined with the new sites redirects.

Any redirect chains, for instance, should be eliminated at the early stage. It's easy to check this by looking to see if the URL appears as 'Legacy URL' or 'New site URL' in the redirect mapping sheet. The 'New site URL' will need to be updated accordingly.

Also, try to figure out using rules that cover as many URLs as possible. That's as opposed to using lots of one-to-one redirects. Talk to the development team about the number of redirects the server can handle without it causing problems.

To avoid duplicate content issues, some rules should always be followed.

These include:

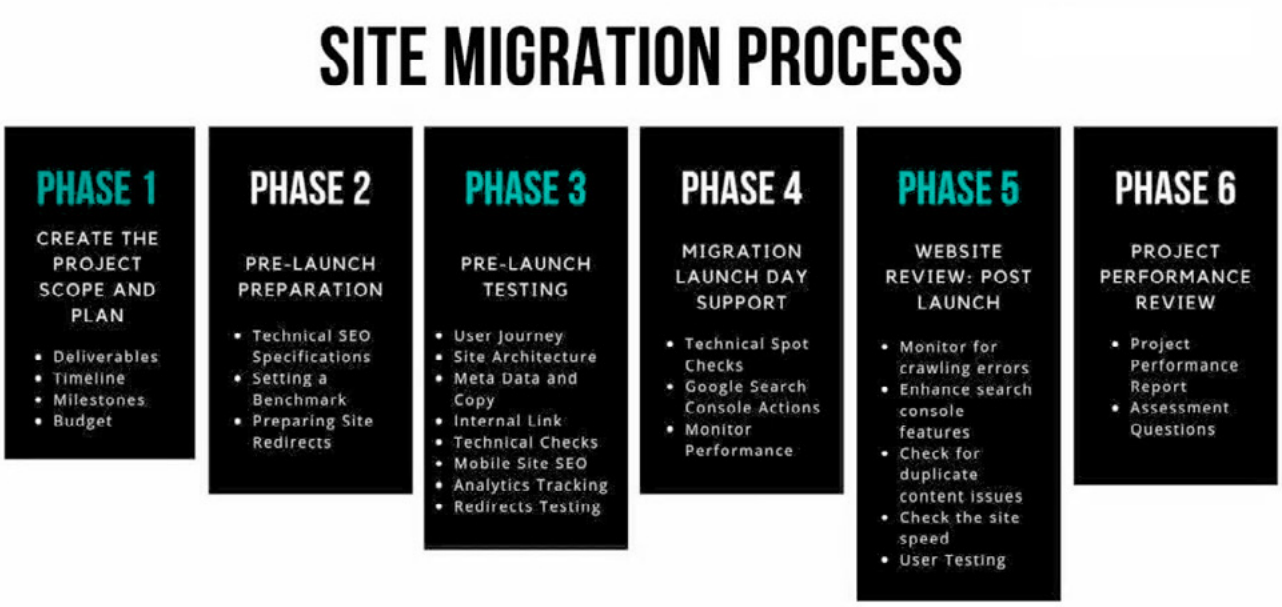
- **All URLs containing upper-case characters should be 301 redirected to all lower-case URLs**
- **On a secure website, requests for HTTP URLs should be redirected to the equivalent HTTPS URL**
- **Any URLs not containing a trailing slash should redirect to a version with a trailing slash**
- **All non-www URLs should be redirected to a www version.**

These rules may already exist on your legacy site. Sometimes, though, they still need to be specifically requested for the new. Talking to the right team and involving professionals will clear up any confusion in this area.

Another key thing to remember is to avoid internal redirects by updating your site's internal links. This is simply because internal redirects add to page loading and crawl times.

Finally, to help images be discovered by search engines quicker, redirect old image URLs to new image URLs, if the images have been moved to a different place. Try to at least do this with images that have backlinks if it will be too hard to redirect them all.

All of this will help retain or even boost the SEO of your new site after an SaaS website migration.



Source: **Pixel Cut Labs**

Phase Three
Pre-Launch Preparation

The earlier the testing stage starts, the better. Because the earlier a problem is identified, the quicker it can be dealt with before the launch date of the site. This prevents delays and reduces long term costs. It also prevents dealing with consequences and knock-on effects to UX and SEO once the site has gone live.

Not everything need to wait until close to the launch date to be tested. For example, content issues can get dealt with near the start. More technical issues, though, can only get dealt with once the new site is fully ready. Make sure search engines don't index in a testing stage

During the testing stage, sites are a little more vulnerable. So, search engines mustn't index parts of the new site during this stage.There are three ways to ensure this doesn't happen.

The most recommended way is to make the site available to specific IPs only. This stops search engines from crawling it, and means that people can't access the URL unless their IP matches. Unfortunately, this does prevent certain web-based tools - like many from Google - being able to be used on it.

Another way to prevent sites being indexed is to use password protection. This means that only those with the password can access the site undergoing testing, and it prevents search engine crawls from accessing it. However, using a password means that site crawler applications may not have access to the site. You can get around this with forms for authentication to let the crawlers get access, but this may cause unexpected issues. This is because the crawler will click on all the links on the page and might accidentally remove pages.

The third way is to add certain lines of code to the test site:

**User-agent: *
Disallow: /**

This stops search engines crawling the test pages. However, although the content won't get indexed, the unallowed URLs may still come up on the search engine's search results.

User Journey Review

Chances are that the user journey will have been affected in some way or another during the redesign. Reviewing and testing as soon as possible and with lots of time before the site launches won't be an easy feat because there won't be a lot of data. However, a UX professional will know what might harm the site's conversion rate. Doing some user testing - in lieu of full-on AB testing - will mean that real feedback can be retrieved from real users.

Annoyingly, this feedback may require big changes. And for some site overhauls, decisions may have to be based on expert know-how, something which is particularly important when data can't back them up.

This is a good stage to realise that SaaS site migration also provides a chance to re-organise the architecture of the site. That's something that can also improve user experience. It's great to organise content and to also identify the keywords that help users get onto the site with minimal clicks. This makes a big difference to the site's organic traffic levels.

Metadata & copy review

Reviewing the copy and content of your new site is essential, too. This includes making sure that meta descriptions, headings, page titles, and body copy have been transferred from the old site to the new without any issues. Any new pages created need to be optimised to avoid harming the site's traffic and ranking. They should also avoid targeting keywords already covered by existing content.

Internal linking review

An internal linking system is what keeps a site structured, so the internal links need to be flawless and reviewed across the whole site.

This includes:

- **Pagination links**
- **Main & secondary navigation**
- **Header & footer links**
- **Cross-site links (e.g. links across international sites)**
- **Body content links**
- **Horizontal links (related articles, similar products, etc)**
- **Vertical links (e.g. breadcrumb navigation)**

Technical checks

Doing technical checks will make sure that the new site is set up well technically. This makes sure that problems won't occur on a technical level down the line.

Part of this includes preparing the robot.txt file by testing for errors in this stage to avoid problems with search engine crawl when the site goes live. If something is missed, then keywords associated with the page will be brought down in the search results on the search engine.

There are a few preparations that can be made with the robots.txt file to prevent problems in the future.

These are to make sure:

- **It doesn't block search engine access to pages that need indexing.**
- **It doesn't block any JavaScript or CSS resources search engines require to render page content.**
- **The legacy site's robots.txt file content has been reviewed and taken over.**
- **It references the new XML sitemaps(s) rather than any legacy ones that no longer exist**

Canonical tags review

Take a look through all canonical tags. They will need to be updated if they don't return a 200-server response. When reviewing the tags, try to identify pages that either have a canonical tag pointing to another URL or ones that have none at all.

Meta robots review

Pages that have their meta robots' properties set to 'no follow' or 'noindex' need to be reviewed. If these aren't supposed to be there, remove them.
XML sitemaps review

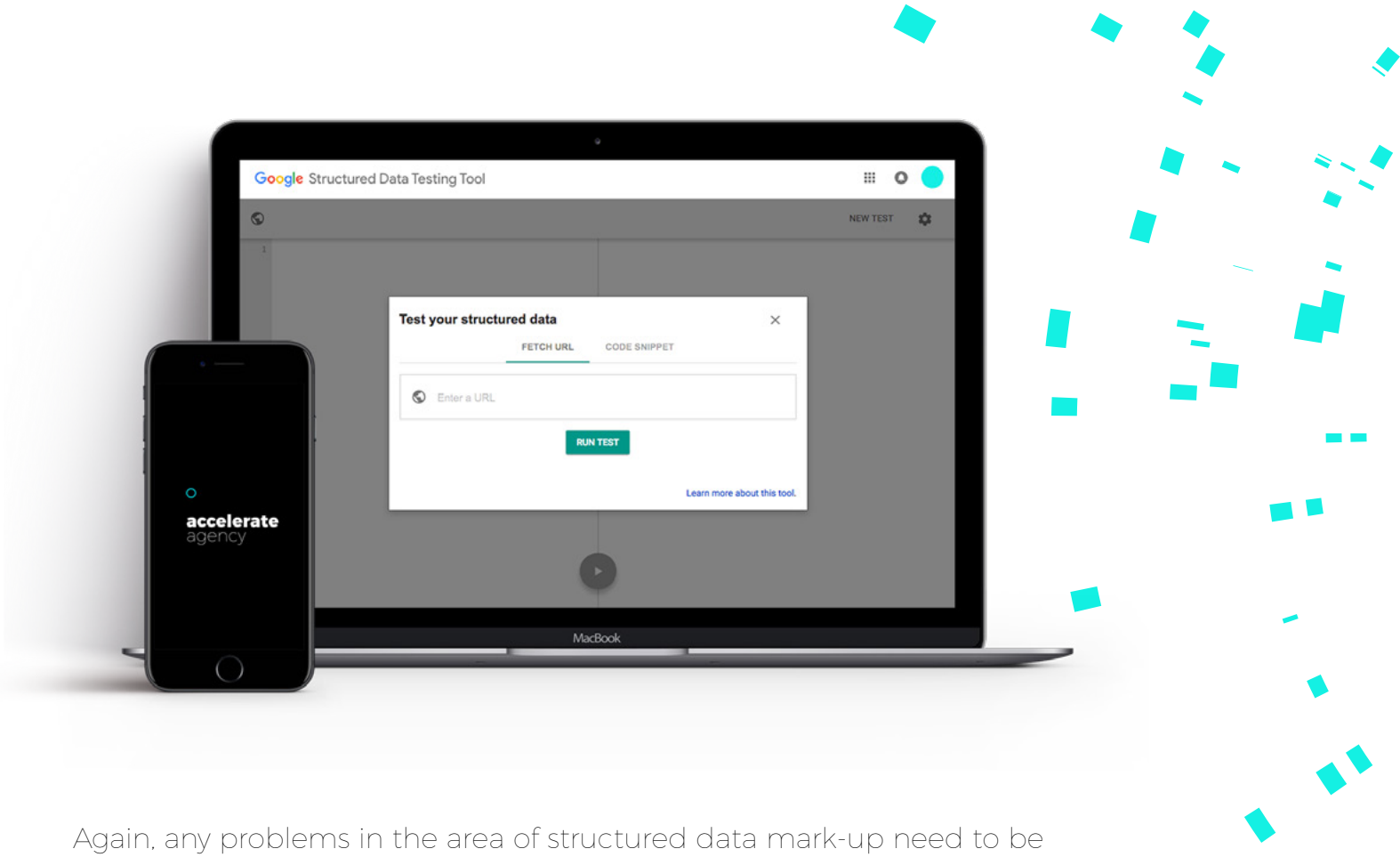
A tidy sitemap will make it much easier to spot indexing issues should they arise.

When performing SaaS website migration, two sitemaps should be set up. One should contain all of the old website's indexable pages so that Google is aware of any redirects. The other should include the indexable pages for the new post-migration site – this will help Google find the new site's indexable URLs. This will be beneficial once the migration is complete as it will update search results quicker.

Any non-indexable URLs should be kept out of the sitemaps. This includes 3xx, 4xx, and 5xx pages, soft 404s, and canonical pages, amongst others. The sitemaps should validate smoothly and not contain over 50,000 rows (or exceed 50MBs). If this is the case, then the sitemap needs to be broken down, so the server does not become overloaded. It should also be encoded as UTF-8.

HTML sitemap review

Having an HTML sitemap made up of URLs that don't get linked to from the main navigation of the site can boost page discovery and indexing. Yet, an HTML sitemap with lots of URLs isn't always needed. The amount that is needed depends on the site's authority with more authoritative sites being able to use more nested sitemaps and URLs.



Again, any problems in the area of structured data mark-up need to be spotted early so they are fixed before site launch. Preferably, every single page template should be tested. This should be checked on both desktops and mobile pages.

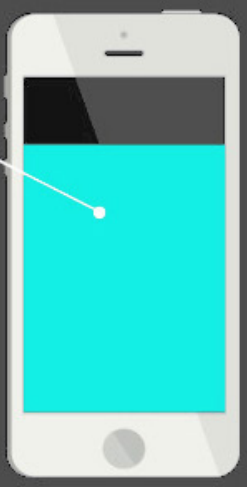
The Current State Of

Mobile SEO

Is your site and content mobile friendly enough for search engine discoverability?

By the year 2022, experts project that around 72.6% of the world's population will browse the internet using their mobile devices

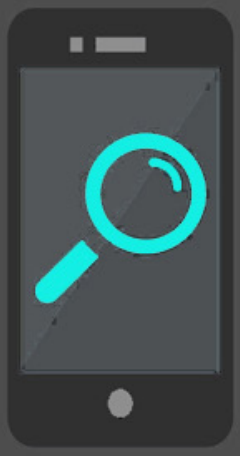
72.6%



Mobile Discoverability

The first organic listing on mobile receives 27.7% of clicks, versus 19.3% of clicks on desktop.

The impact of mobile on SEO



52% of all internet traffic now comes from mobile — **52%**

57% of customers won't recommend a business with a poorly designed website on mobile — **57%**

40% of searchers have turned to a competitor's site after a bad mobile experience — **40%**

Source: Page Traffic Buzz

First, ensure that nothing is being blocked by the robot.txt file. This includes any images, CSS or JavaScript that are needed as content for the mobile site. It's important to make sure that everything is visible.

Make sure that everything is consistent between the desktop and the mobile. This avoids issues to do with Google's mobile-first index. Thoroughly investigate the following areas:

- **Copy**
- **Headings**
- **Page titles**
- **Canonical tags**
- **Meta descriptions**
- **Internal links**
- **Structured data**

Responsive Site Review

All devices must be served with the same HTML code. This, of course, is tailored to the size of the screen a web page is being viewed on. This can be detected by Googlebot. This is why it is important that Googlebot can have access to all essential assets.

A page may be flagged as non-mobile-friendly if there is a missing meta viewport tag. This causes inconsistencies on the page.

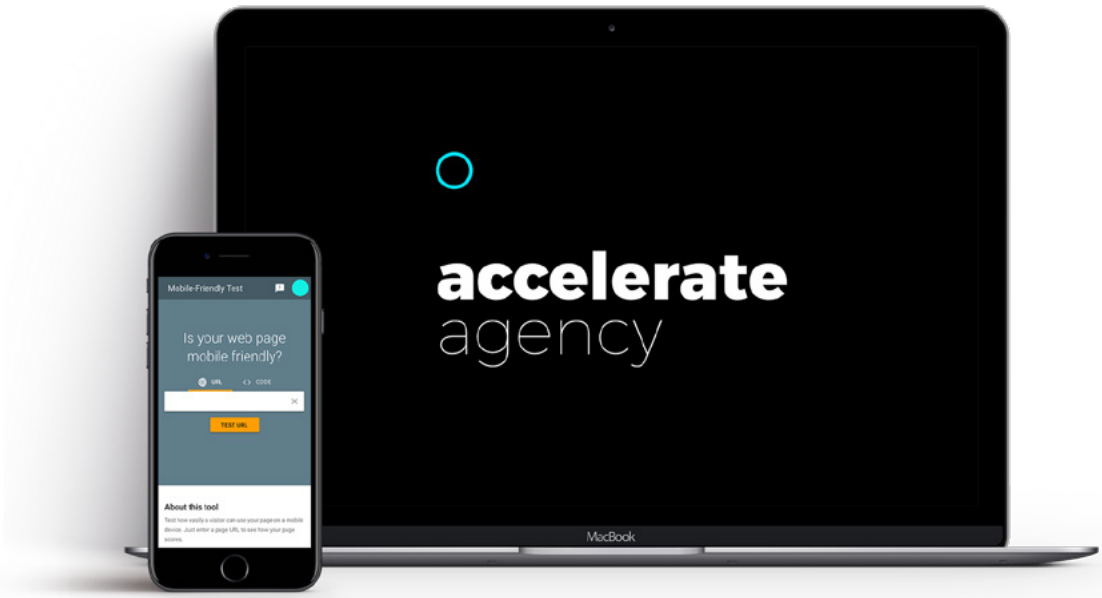
Separate Mobile URL Review

If a different URL is used between mobile and desktop sites, then it is vital to have a tag from each desktop page that points to the mobile URL. As well as this, when desktop URLs are requested on a mobile device, they need to be redirected to the correct mobile URL. There also needs to be a 200-server response on each mobile URL.

Dynamic serving review

Dynamic serving websites need to be reviewed, too. Make sure the HTTP header is correct as Googlebot won't be able to discover the content otherwise.

Mobile-friendliness review



For a website to be mobile-friendly after the migration, pages must be properly set up. Keep an eye on the viewport and whether it creates usability issues. Other details that may seem obvious but are important include font size, touch element spacing, and visual intrusions.
AMP site review

If an AMP website and a desktop version are available, it is important to make sure they are valid. Also, be sure that:

- **Each non-AMP page (i.e. desktop, mobile) has a tag pointing to the corresponding AMP URL.**
- **Any AMP page that does not have a corresponding desktop URL has a self-referring canonical tag.**
- **Each AMP page has a rel=”canonical” tag pointing to the corresponding desktop page.**

Mixed content errors

To avoid issues with mixed content, the new site should be launched on HTTPS and all resources also requested over the same protocol.

- **Using something like a crawler application will help identify any mixed content errors. It's also an idea to compare loading times between the sites.**
- **Also, set up analytic tracking properly and make sure this is carried out by a professional consultant.**
- **Redirects testing**
- **As you know, old site URLs need to be redirected to the correct URLs on the new website. Take time going through all redirects, making sure there are no redirects or canonical URLS that have a 4xx or 5xx server response.**
- **Ensure that there are no redirect or canonical loops or chains, either. Also, be aware of any host inconsistencies and trim any trailing whitespace characters.**

Source: Phocus Wire

Phase Four

Launch Day Support

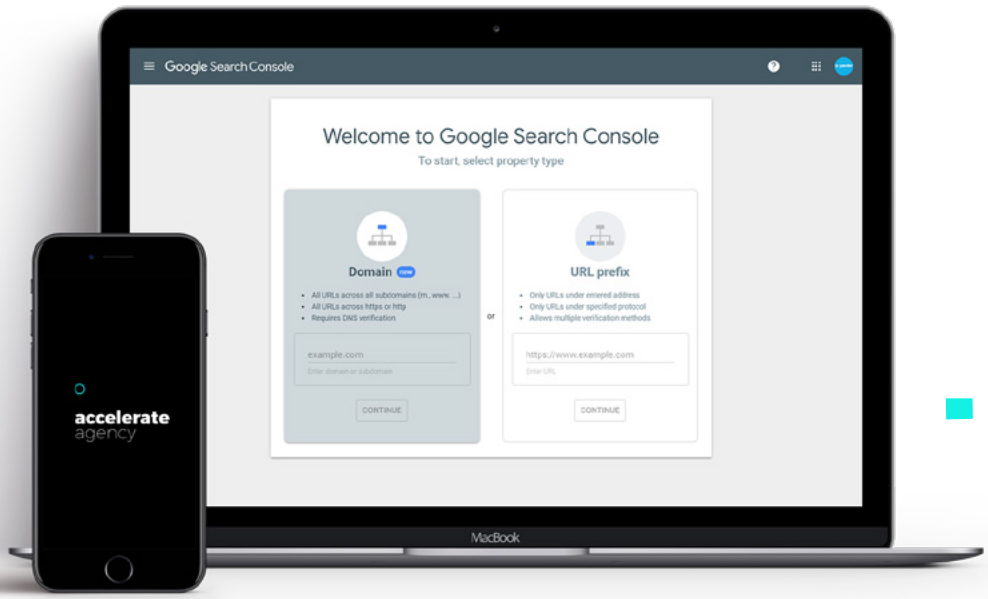
The day finally arrives and it's time to launch the new website. Make sure that website downtime is kept to a minimum. Visitors will be deterred from returning if they don't think your business has a running website.

However, a 503 response can be set up to tell any search crawlers that come along to return and index your new site later.

Technical Spot Checks

One of the first things that should be done once your new site goes live, is to perform spot checks of all its technical aspects. For example, testing the redirects, canonical tags, and server responses of its top pages. Carrying out such actions on mobile and desktop will test the new website's fundamentals post-migration.

Search Console Actions



Configuring URL parameters, testing and uploading XML sitemaps, and setting the preferred location of the domain are all things that need to be done as soon as possible after launch, too.

Phase Five
Post-Launch Review

Similar to pre-launch activities, checks should be carried out after the event. Now with a new site, there will be access to more features - and crucially data - meaning they can be reviewed in more detail.

You should repeat your pre-launch tests, but can now also:

Crawl Stats and Server Logs

Ensure Google can crawl the pages of the new website. By looking closely at its crawl stats in the Search Console, a website owner will be able to know whether Googlebot can crawl it. If there is a spike in the search console, this means that it can be crawled free of issues.

No spike means an issue with the new website's pages.
Another great way of detecting crawl issues is by taking a look at server log files. There are tools available (such as Botify), that can crawl new pages and pull up server log data. They highlight pages that can't be crawled successfully, which will need to be investigated and sorted out.

Crawl errors must also be checked regularly. When the new website is in its first few weeks, check every day. Spotting errors early on will be quicker and easier to fix. By using Google Analytics, it is easy to find out the most commonly requested 404s. These should be prioritised.

Monitor Site Speed

It's key to check that pages on both mobile and desktop are loading fast enough. A company will lose leads and conversions if it slips down the rankings due to poor speeds, so any issues need to be dealt with straight away.

Luckily, Google has tools that allow website users to evaluate this. The following are two of the most notable:

Lighthouse - This is ideal for mobile performance. It can measure how quickly a page is populated and how fast it takes for a page and user to be able to interact. It also indicates how long it takes for the content of a page to be visible.

Pagespeed Insights – This measures the performance and shows the speed of a page. It gathers user data from Chrome and provides and categorises data by speed score, optimisation score, page load distributions and page stats, amongst other factors.

Speed from Real Users

After the website has been successfully migrated, take a look at average load times for visitors. Comparing this data to that of the previous website will show how well it's doing now. A good tool to use (as well as Google Analytics) is Pingdom.

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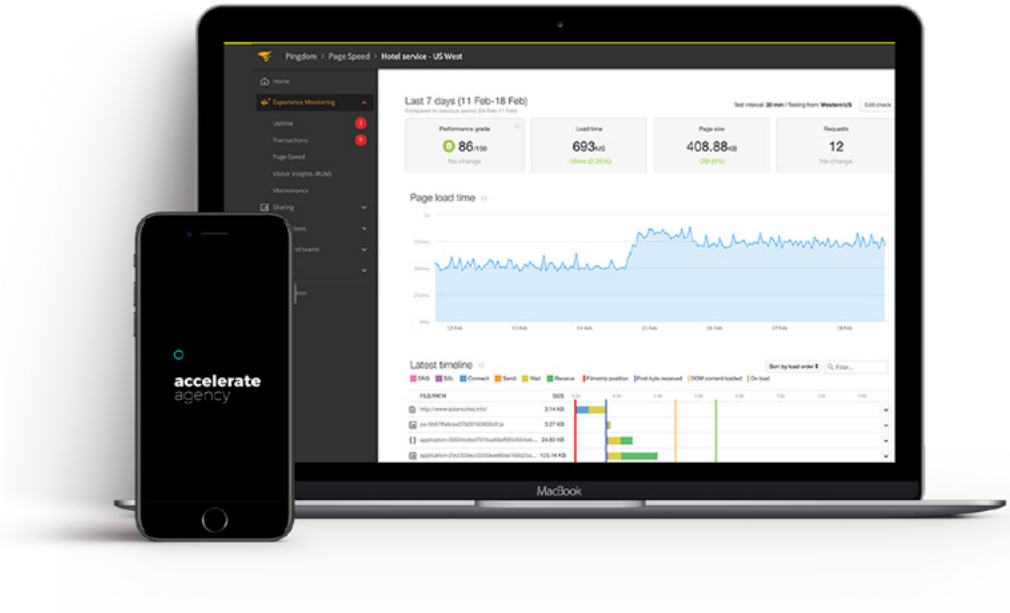
This evaluates site speeds for visitors to the new websites and allows the website owner to take a look at how it differs based on geographical location.



Phase Six

Performance Review

Now it is the final part of the SaaS website migration checklist. It has been a long process, but there are some final things to do to make sure the new website is successful beyond the first few weeks of monitoring, measuring, and checking.

This is the stage in which the success of migration is revealed. Of course, the true answer will only be found out over time. But in the meantime, people are eager to find out if their hard work has been a success - and how much of one.

A small site should wait 4-6 weeks before comparing itself to the legacy site to see if it matches up in terms of visibility and traffic. Whilst a bigger site needs to wait 2-3 months before a comparison is made.

If there is a radical change between the old and new site then the user will also need time to adjust to things, too. There will inevitably be a drop in usage at first because of this. But this should improve after a few weeks as people get used to it. So, this shouldn't instantly affect any decisions or data regarding this.

If any other changes continue to be made after the launch of the website, then the results of the changes will also have to be monitored over time.

Measuring the Results

When measuring performance, there's more to it than merely tracking revenue and traffic. Some of the other points to measure include:

- **Desktop & mobile visibility**
- **Desktop and mobile rankings**
- **User engagement**
- **Sessions per page type**
- **Conversion rate per page type**
- **Conversion rate by device**

From a technical viewpoint, other thoughts to keep in mind are:

- **Number of indexed pages**
- **Submitted vs indexed pages in XML sitemaps**
- **Pages receiving at least one visit**
- **Site speed**

Observing all these points will help determine if the migration has been a success or not.

SaaS website migration is an excellent way to keep an online business up to speed. But as this guide has pointed out, it can be very fragile and there are many ways in which things can go wrong. Patience, time, understanding, and precision will help avoid problems occurring along the way and will aid a smooth, successful transition.

When following the six-step phases, keep in mind that accuracy is the key to a successful migration. And remember that hiring a professional will ensure that every phase is done properly.

Otherwise, good luck!