Top 10 SEO Steps When Converting a Website

Zellous.org recently received a request from a local business to transfer their site from Joomla to a WordPress CMS platform. They were not satisfied with the SEO abilities of Joomla as well as its frequent security breeches and patches. The site had been active for several years with many of its pages frequently visited, probably bookmarked. Their main concern was that these business connections would be lost and their Search Engine Results Page(s) (SERP) would be adversely affected. They wanted to avoid losing their rankings and organic search traffic.

Their concerns were well founded. Many website owners usually do not think of SEO when transferring a website. It is all too common for businesses to lose their hard earned rankings when making changes to either a new server, CMS platform, or both. From our experience with this endevor we decided to share our:

"Top 10 SEO Steps When Converting a Website to WordPress"

… to help others avoid costly mistakes. Mistakes could just as easily be made while moving <u>from</u> WordPress to another platform, but either way, the risks of slowing down the flow of attention to ones site and breaking connections are high.

Through this process we came to realize just how important it is to keep this in heart and mind: Concentrate on serving the user. This will align your goals with the best of intentioned search engines.

This is the key priority and we believe is the deciding factor in making SEO work. The only other part of this equation is a resulting "conversion" to use a pop marketing term. We prefer the word "service", which comes in many forms.

When SEO is created with a genuine sense of service along with ones eye to the bottom line this foundation will support the businesses growth and evolution. From a *Sustainable SEO Design Perspective* you save your energy and do not reinvent the wheel every time Google or Bing makes a change in its methods. Ryan Jones, a respected SEO consultant in this field sums this up perfectly:

"Back when I got started in SEO the focus was all about trying to reverse-engineer the algorithm and try to rank better …. Nowadays Google makes over 500 algorithm changes per year. It's simply not possible to reverse engineer that type of algorithm. In other words, chasing the algorithm isn't sustainable.

SEOs today try to optimize for Google without realizing that Google is trying to optimize for the web searcher.

Here's a good example: Asking "how can I rank for term ___" is the wrong approach. Instead, ask "What does somebody searching for term ___ want?" Then, go build that site. That's a

sustainable approach that will continue to reward you regardless of what algorithm tweaks Google makes. That's what our focus should be on. Concentrate on the user and try to get your goals to align with Google's goals. Pay attention to the reasons behind what Google is doing and chase that. In other words, be proactive not reactive."

Why SEO Matters

To start with, here are a few statistics that might grab your attention:

1. *Email* **and** *Search* **are the Internets top two activities.**

Aside from having compelling content, 1) finding your business (searchability) and 2) having a vehicle for contacting you (email) are <u>the</u> two critical components of a successful marketing campaign. It is generally estimated that 72% of business purchase decisions start with using a search engine with Google owning 65-70% of that search engine market share. Of US Internet users ages 14 or above, 88.2% will research or browse products online first before going further. *MarketingCharts* reports that over 39% of customers come from search.

2. Using a mobile device will soon increase to half of all local searches.

Out of the 30 billion mobile searches a year, 12 billion are local. Besides underlining the importance of having ones website mobile ready, it also suggests that any relevant content one would be looking for should be conveniently located above the fold. This

is because 77% of mobile search happens at home or work via a smart phone, even though a computer may be nearby. It is now far easier to search through ones phone then awaken ones desktop and bring up the right screen. Therefore it is not surprising that 46% of mobile web users are unlikely to return or recommend to anyone else, a website they had trouble accessing from their mobile device. Of those that stay, these SEO leads have a 14.6% close rate compared to 1.7% for the traditional printed or mail ads.

3. To sum things up, SEO matters because it enables connection.

But connection is only half of the process. SEO must easily lead to useful content. So while one is juggling all of their fresh content creation, social media connecting, and follow-ups, add one more thing to juggle, SEO. These statistics are striking evidence that SEO is necessary for growing your business and therefore important enough to preserve while transferring or converting your website to a new server and or platform.

"SEO is just another form of online marketing, alongside content marketing, social media marketing, pay-per-click (PPC), online banner ads, retargeting and more. All of those elements make up the whole puzzle; SEO is just one piece. It's important to remember that just because you are doing SEO that doesn't mean you can forgo all your other marketing efforts, both online and offline. The more touch points you can create with your audience the better." ~ Nick Stamoulis

A Smart Checklist for Website Redesign

For SEO do-it-yourselfers, we have prepared a list of some of the most important tasks to perform throughout this process. For SEO non-do-you-it-yourselfers we encourage you to contact us for assistance, consultation, or whatever needs you have about your website.

SEO varies from site to site, but essentially without certain checkpoints completed, you might risk losing your search engine rankings, traffic, and momentum.

Pre Step: Data Collection and Discovery: Crawl on All Fours

1. **Internal Links:** Generally, links are considered either "external" or "internal" depending on their target. An internal link is one that points at another section of the same webpage or domain. Crawling for Internal links will give knowledge of ones taxonomy, or the way the website's links are structured and connected.

2. **Incoming Links** (or backlinks): Are your websites links received from another website (or node) and is one indication of the popularity or importance of some specific content. Knowledge of these is necessary in order to maintain page ranking or for suggesting marketing directives. It provides a list of your *Top Pages*, those that are linked to the most.

3. **Linked Root Domains:** Like incoming links and slightly more important in regard to page rank, this metric indicates the number of unique root domains linking to your site. (Note: two or more links from the same website are counted as one linked root domain).

4. **Page Authority:** Is the metric for how well your webpage is likely to rank in Google's search results. Based on all of the information covered in this article and other parameters, an algorithm is used to predictively calculate your site's rankings across thousands of other sites like your own. Page authority is related to the pages within sites, not the site itself.

These four points help establish your starting point and is a snapshot of your website at one moment in time, results will vary depending on sampling time. Within this data will also be errors of missing pages, blocked URL's, and unexpected data. There will also be other things worth checking such as speed and sustainability metrics, however, since the site is being moved these results usually just provide a before and after comparison.

Preliminary Key Questions:

- What is going to change during this transition internally and externally? Will the URL's, functionality, server, information architecture, visual design, meta, connections, and content change?

- When I run an analysis on my site, how should I interpret the data? Click here for list of third party services.

- How will marketing be affected? How will these changes affect organic search traffic, sign-up, and conversion?

To this last question, a marketer should pay special attention. This article doesn't delve into quality of branding and its placement, but consideration to how your product or service is perceived is relevant to the crafting of keyword maps.

The content is not just adapting to its new online environment but to its compatibility with the customer. Taking a fresh look at the "real" destination of your image and content is important. For more viewpoints on customizing content to us multiple intelligent humans we will be posting a new article soon. Stay in touch and subscribe.

[*"Searching in Another Person's Shoes – Understanding Customer Personas in SEO Development"*](#)

Keyword Dating

One way to describe the purpose of keyword mapping is to envision your website as a potential partner for someone who has just gone on Match.com searching for someone like you.

Match.com has four simple steps to get someone ignited:

1) Your Profile   2) Searching   3) Getting Matches   4) Connecting

"Your Profile" represents the goods and services you offer, your reputation, character, presentation, your goods … all of the ways

you identify your business form the "Chemistry Profile". This is what someone experiences with you on a deeper personal level. Inversely, the same is true with the other person in this profile equation. Their needs are not necessarily identical but center around certain similar compatibility traits.

"Searching," relates to your profile distilled down to a carefully selected set of keywords, images, and benefits. Besides destiny or word-of-mouth, these are the search elements that will hook your match … as long as you are open and these elements are well employed.

"Getting Matches" is when your SEO works and the person finds enough compatibility with you, along with a certain …. Je ne sais quoi, to want to go further – with the second date being NOW!

"Connecting" is the moment you have been waiting for, whereby, attention is engaged, chemistry right, and your conversion points are being clicked. You are the answer to their needs and apparently they are the answer to yours. Everyone is happy and satisfied.

So ideally, in the romantic world of SEO, how does this analogy apply?

Step One: Profiles

Create a keyword map through research with the customer's psychographic profile in mind, your own site, and the sites of others who are similar to your site. This need not involve a Ouija board, rather consult:

- Analytics
- Search Engine Tools
- Competitive Keywords
- Keyword Surveys
- Google Autocomplete
- Social Trends
- Click here for a great list of marketing/SEO resources.

Step One Key Questions:

- What do all of the profiles that I now examine have in common, or how are they dissimilar, and why?
- What hybrid profile best represents my customers and me?

Step Two: The Searching Paths

"SEO is an intelligible sphere whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere." – adapted fromAlain de Lille, (my apologies)

Process: With the data, analysis, and conclusions that you have discovered through the pre-step: *Data Collection and Discovery,*the next step is to develop:

- **a redirect strategy** – Download a free 301 redirect mapping schedule spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel here or a Mac Numbers version here. As a rule of thumb, redirect the most relevant content from the old site to similar content in the

new. Don't do a blanket redirect of all of the old links to the new home page. Re-enact the role of the typical user looking for content from the originating link. You would not want your keywords to suggest content that they could not find once they get to know you better.

- **new relevant content**

Along With

- **the profile knowledge you have just gained from** *Step One: Profile.*

Overview: This step achieves several purposes at once and is contiguous with the next few steps. You are preserving and expanding the existing paths that others have travelled to find you while developing new paths to your improved content. You are looking at the whole web of paths you already have going for you and seeing how they touch your community and extend through your website. You are also laying down the foundation for new content and the paths to it.

Step Two Key Questions and Resources:

- How will I individually map old URL's to new URL's? How will I organize by site architecture? Google Tip
- Will there be new pages? What pages can be eliminated and what pages should be recreated?
- If a page is being eliminated, which is the most relevant page for a 301 redirect? Google Tip
- How can I make useful 404 redirect pages? Google Tip

- Am I dealing with any "rel=canonical" links in your webpage? Do I have duplicate content that I want to redirect or combine for the search engines indexing my site? [Google Tip](#)

Step Three: Making Matches

You now know what links you will need to preserve and how they will link to your new content. You have also crafted a bunch of new URLs that will:

- compliment and enhance the new content and …
- link to the old URLs through 301 redirects. You can download a useful spreadsheet we made for this planning process: [Excel](#) [Mac](#)

You now should have the new content on stand-by ready to copy into the new website which compliments the focus keywords, meta enhanced media, and URL strings. (Note: variations on how all of these steps are prioritized and flow depends on each developer's situation.)

An Aside: If you are not linking to anybody else it looks abnormal, a bit anti-social. A well adjusted site doesn't just sing its own praises. It is a sign of community engagement to have links out like resources and favorites. Displaying trust badges can also project security. Linking out tells Google (and others) what community you want to be part of.

Step Three Key Questions:

- Have I changed all content to echo my eventual page urls?
- Will the images I have used and other media also have meta echoing these keyword phrases and words?
- Will keywords, meta description, and titles be echoing each other?
- Are keywords and phrases highlighted in the H1, H2, H3 title headings and other semantic structuring formalities?

Step Four: Preparation and Special Touches

Install WordPress script to your destination, if you have not done so already. Be sure to configure the following:

For search engine visibility, go to Dashboard > Reading > Search Engine Visibility > and click the "Discourage search engines from indexing this site". But, since it is "...up to search engines to honor this request" better yet, make the site private or password protect. Add *noindex, nofollow* and *disallow* code in robots.txt file. [Google Tip](#)

For a comprehensive "How-to" on utilizing automated website crawlers to your advantage click [here](#).

It is very easy to get into the weeds with this process, as you can see if you have been clicking on the *Google Tips.* Best to keep it simple and stay with the basics. Zellous.org follows a policy of K.I.S.S. and for the type of clients we serve, these guidelines serve

very well. If you have accomplished the objectives in this article and want to go further, and have the budget for that, there are plenty of services out there.

Social media is also not the focus in this article, but at the very least, it is recommended that you have your Facebook and Google + page set-up ready to receive selected posts. Set up your WordPress plugins to relay content manually at first as the site gets rolling again. A drop off in visitors is anticipated despite even the most careful of precautions. If the dip is prolonged, investigate.

Step Four Key Questions:

- Has my hosting tech person been contacted about the move?
- Are there any special protocols with this hosting company?
- Have I turned off all of the ways my site could be found after installation?
- Is my social media world connected and ready?

Step Five: Recreate and Improve

Assorted Tips:

If your site has a hundred or more pages consider using a customized search engine. Consider the research.

Utilize the *Meta Tags*, that Google does use. They provide engines with information which may be figured in the mix. Google Tip

Test your content and visual layout on a person you trust to give an honest and intelligent opinion. Proof read and sleep on your work.

Direct the eye of your user and the eye of the search engines by using *Google's Data Highlighter*. This webmaster tool is for teaching Google about the pattern of structured data on your website. Use *Data Highlighter* to tag the data fields on your site using your mouse. Google could then better present your data more attractively and in novel ways in its SERP and other products such as the Google Knowledge Graph. Learn some tips about using *Data Highlighter* [here](#).

Image SEO:

First, choose an image that is relevant to your topic and one that people will want to use – if you can share it, even though spiders don't care what the image looks like.

Label your images before they are uploaded to WordPress media file with the key word/phrase information in the title. Once the image is loaded instantly add key word/phrase information to the image description and alternative text. Also include your page URL that this image is attached to.

Video SEO:

Choose videos that represent what you are about, weather self-produced and informative or supporting your content (less recommended). Doing some video keyword research is recommended. This tool [here](#), might help.

Post on YouTube in your own fully fleshed out account that is branded like your site. You can also use premium services such as

Vimeo, BrightCove and others to utilize the embed code and SEO meta on the backend of the video. Be sure to edit your website logo and url into the frames. Making audio versions of videos and posting in a serial podcast is also a plus. Having multiple places for your video is acceptable.

Correspond your video meta tags and information with your related post/page content tags. This may help search engines relate the two. Be sure to include the word "video" in this process. Ones sitemap data should be self-explanatory if read like a table of contents.

Produce backlinks by submitting your articles or content to places that could post it. Encourage sharing by enabling sharing mechanisms for social engagement. Having your video on Facebook and Google+ or others will help with the cross-fertilization of your online presence. Link your various accounts to each other as a bee spreads pollen.

Audio SEO:

Much of the same techniques of adding meta data, sharing etc ... as listed in the media examples above apply to audio. Some techniques in particular are important to have for audio such as:

- Add ID3 data.This input is most often used in conjunction with the MP3 audio file format. It will allow information such as the title, artist, album, track number, and other information about the file to be stored in the file itself for indexing.

- Supply transcript of audio which, while you are at it, would contain some of your keyword phrases, sharing links and visual enhancements.
- Podcast and serialize your content while having it in a collected location on your site aside from an individual post.

Geo SEO:

- Using Google maps to locate your business may be part of your trust building relations and findability in physical terms. Sometimes these maps will be displayed in the SERP. There are several ways to enrich custom maps like a miniature version of your site great for hand-held devices.
- Geo Targeting your website may be helpful if you serve a specified region. More details on this are [here](#).

Step Five Key Questions:

- Have I improved my content during this transfer?
- Have I paid enough attention to my different types of media?

Step Six: Pre-Date Checklist

Step Six Key Questions:

? Is my hair combed? Did I bathe? Am I ready for this?

? Are all of my redirects and lines (of code) ready?

? Is my makeover complete?

? Is my analytic side working properly?

? Are my tools handy?

? Are my passwords, noindex, nofollow, and robot directives ready to switch?

? Should I run a crawl test? Will I be [screaming like a frog](#) if I don't?

? Do I have someone to call if things go terribly wrong?

Step Seven: Arrange to Meet

Timing is important. Plan to meet at a low traffic period. Record this date in your analytics so you will have a benchmark to base your future experiences on. Allow enough time to deal with the unexpected which often happen shortly after a launch.

Step Eight: Surrender to the Moment!

Going Live!

SEO is not all about how you rank. It is at this point about allowing people to do what you set them up to do with you. You are still empowered to maintain the relationship and keep it reciprocal, but keep your attention on it.

If socially people start writing fake reviews or posting BS tweets or spamming your vulnerabilities, you have got defences. Going live and presenting yourself to the world is a lot like "meeting the parents" – you are under intense scrutiny. So despite

the perils, SEO is a life affirming act. It represents a healthy sense of self and hope to want to connect. It is great feeling when all of your work pays off.

Step Eight Key Questions:

- When should I inform the search engines about this event ?
  [Google Tip](#)

- Have I informed and thanked my contacts?

- Am I confident enough to make a formal announcement yet?

Step Nine: Post Launch Check-In

1. Since Webmaster Tools is set-up, it will provide useful metrics on your sites performance. Set it up to automatically inform you of errors and also check in frequently.
2. If things do go wrong check the "Adapt" checklist in step 10 below.
3. After the site has been indexed, it is time to submit a new XML sitemap, (some plugins do this for you).
4. So much attention was given to Google in this article due to its market share, however, Yahoo, Bing, and many other industry specific search engines and directories are available. Adding your website to these places will help customers find your business.

Step Ten: Adapt and Share

Once the website has settled down and you are confident that there are no pressing things to attend to, it might be time to continue developing your site's other dimensions. We have found that making these local connections is often the most rewarding:

Adapt: If there is something wrong, however, the problem(s) can often be traced to:

- Meta robots – inadvertent NOINDEX?
- Bad redirects
- HTTP status codes messages – server errors
- Robots.txt code
- Improper canonicals
- Something reported on in Google WMT
- Miscommunication with someone else

Share:

- Business Profiles: Submit these to your local business organizations, town websites, industry associations and directories, local search sites, and any where you can.
- Press Releases: Utilize your email marketing system, post any services in local newspapers,and post to your online PR page.
- Article Marketing: Publish across selected online platforms. Find one that suites your style.
- Commenting: As your engaged, sometimes there are online writings that evoke a response. Respond and leave your breadcrumbs.

- SMO – visit our list for *Social Media Optimization* suggestions [here](#).

For a full list of references and links used to write this article please send [contact us](#).

Reference Link to: Learn the top 10 SEO steps when converting a website to WordPress. http://zellous.org/top-10-seo-steps-when-converting-a-website-to-wordpress

Finding SEO Keywords