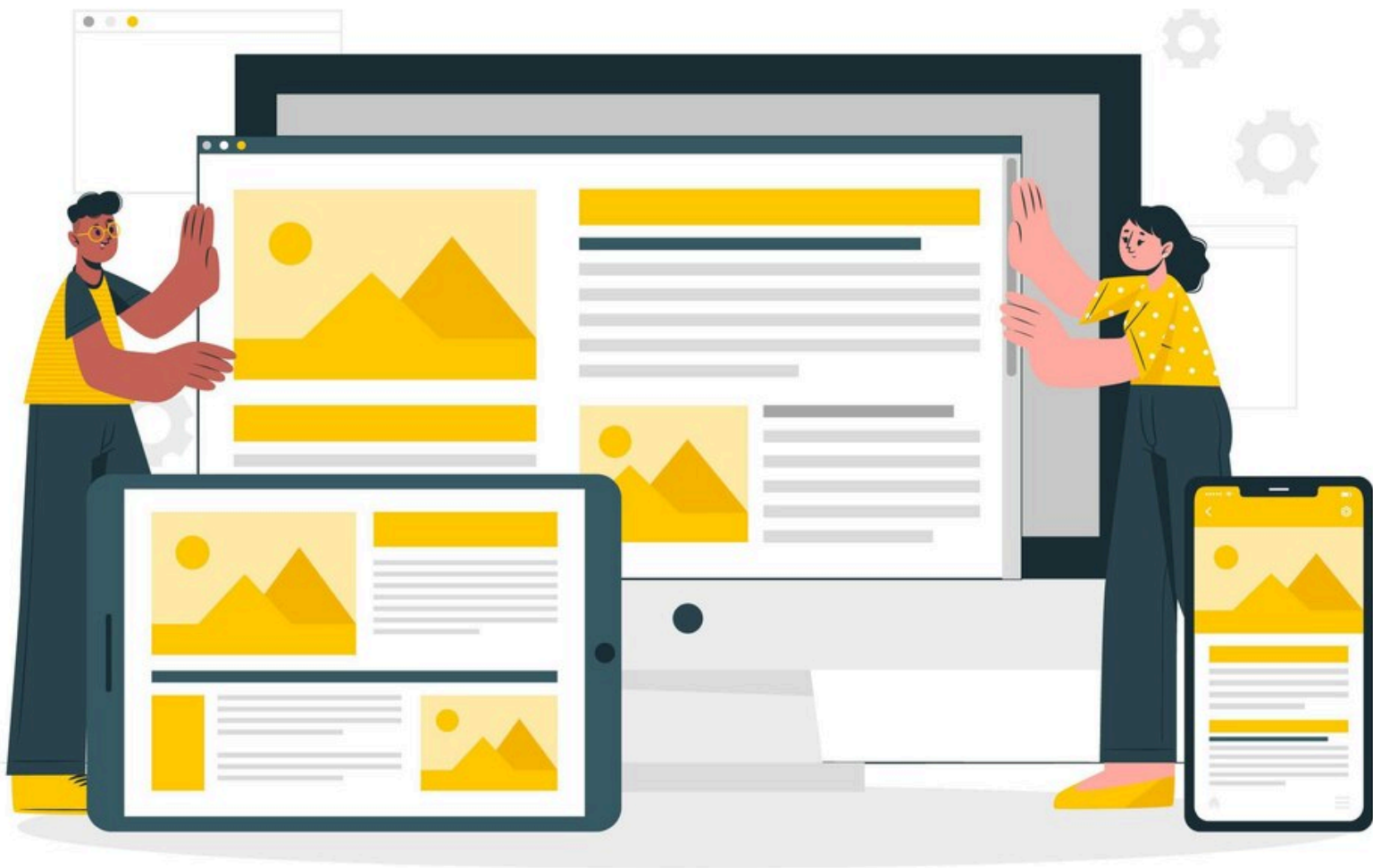


SEO: Redesign and Merge Your Website Without Losing Traffic



communications@codeandpeddle.com



www.codeandpeddle.com

Comprehensive SEO checklist to follow when redesigning a website to maintain and improve search engine performance:

1. Pre-Redesign Analysis

- **Benchmark Current Performance:** Record current rankings, organic traffic, top-performing pages, and backlinks to measure post-redesign performance.
- **Crawl Existing Site:** Use tools like Screaming Frog to map out all current URLs, meta tags, content structure, and indexation status.
- **Identify Top Pages:** List pages with high traffic, backlinks, and conversions to ensure they're prioritized in the new structure.
- **Gather Backlink Data:** Export backlinks to key pages from tools like Ahrefs or SEMrush to manage link equity in the redesign process.

2. Site Architecture & URL Structure

- **Maintain URL Consistency:** Keep the same URL structure for top-performing pages. If URLs change, plan 301 redirects.
- **Organize Site Hierarchy:** Ensure intuitive navigation with logical categories and subcategories to make finding content easier.
- **Optimize Internal Linking:** Use internal links to create a logical flow between pages and direct users and search engines to important content.

3. Content Optimization

- **Update and Improve Content:** Refresh outdated content, add value where possible, and ensure every page targets relevant keywords.
- **Include Target Keywords:** Optimize titles, headers, and body content with primary and secondary keywords, maintaining readability. (ONLY IF Planning to Change)
- **Optimize Images:** Compress images, use descriptive file names, and add alt text for accessibility and SEO benefits.

4. On-Page SEO Elements

- **Title Tags & Meta Descriptions:** Write unique, optimized title tags and meta descriptions for each page. (ONLY IF Planning to Change)
- **Header Tags (H1, H2, etc.):** Use header tags to structure content and include relevant keywords naturally. (ONLY IF Planning to Change)
- **Schema Markup:** Add structured data (e.g., product, local business, FAQ schema) where applicable to enhance SERP appearance.

5. Technical SEO

- **301 Redirect Plan:** Set up 301 redirects for any removed or changed URLs to preserve link equity and prevent 404 errors.
- **XML Sitemap Update:** Create and submit a new XML sitemap to ensure all pages are crawled by search engines.
- **Robots.txt Review:** Update the robots.txt file to reflect the new structure, ensuring critical pages are crawled and nonessential pages are blocked.
- **Canonical Tags:** Use canonical tags to indicate the preferred version of pages and avoid duplicate content issues.
- **Mobile-Friendliness:** Test the redesigned site on various devices and screen sizes to ensure a responsive, mobile-friendly experience.

6. Page Speed Optimization

- **Minimize Load Time:** By Compressing images, enabling browser caching, and minimizing CSS, JavaScript, and HTML files.
- **Implement Lazy Loading:** Load images and media as users scroll down the page to enhance performance.
- **CDN Usage:** Use a content delivery network (CDN) to improve loading times for global users.

7. User Experience (UX) Enhancements

- **Clear Call-to-Actions (CTAs):** Place CTAs in intuitive locations, guiding users through the site. (ONLY IF Planning to Change)
- **Accessible Design:** Follow WCAG standards for accessibility, including alt text, keyboard navigation, and readable fonts.
- **Structured Navigation:** Simplify menu structure and use breadcrumbs to improve user flow and SEO.

8. Post-Launch Tasks

- **Monitor 404 Errors:** Use Google Search Console to check for 404 errors post-launch and set up additional redirects if needed.
- **Check Indexing:** Confirm that all important pages are indexed by Google using "site:yourdomain.com" searches and Google Search Console.
- **Submit Updated Sitemap:** Re-submit the updated sitemap in Google Search Console to encourage crawling of new and updated pages.
- **Track Performance Changes:** Compare pre- and post-launch analytics, including organic traffic, keyword rankings, and bounce rates.
- **Monitor Backlinks:** Ensure backlinks pointing to old URLs redirect to the correct new URLs, preserving link equity.

Following this checklist during the website redesign will help maintain and improve your SEO performance, enhancing visibility, traffic, and user engagement.

When merging two or more websites into one, it's crucial to handle the process carefully to retain SEO value and avoid traffic loss.

Here's a detailed SEO checklist for merging websites:

1. Pre-Merge Analysis

- **Audit Current Sites:** Crawl each site to catalog URLs, metadata, content structure, and backlinks. Tools like Screaming Frog or Sitebulb can help with this.
- **Identify High-Value Pages:** Make a list of high-traffic pages, pages with high conversion rates, and those with significant backlinks. Prioritize these pages during the merge.
- **Gather Backlink Data:** Export all backlinks for each site from tools like Ahrefs or SEMrush to ensure key backlinks are directed to the new site.
- **Set SEO Benchmarks:** Record current keyword rankings, organic traffic, and other SEO metrics for each site. This provides a baseline to measure post-merge performance.


2. Planning the New Site Structure

- **Map URLs to the New Structure:** Decide which pages from each site will be merged, redirected, or discarded, ensuring no valuable content is lost.
- **Organize Site Hierarchy:** Structure categories and subcategories logically to integrate content from all merged sites. Use internal linking to guide users through the site.
- **Consolidate and Optimize Content:** Avoid duplicate content by consolidating similar pages from each site and updating key pages with comprehensive, high-quality content.

3. Setting Up Redirects

- **Create a 301 Redirect Plan:** Redirect URLs from the old sites to the new URLs on the merged site to preserve link equity and avoid 404 errors. Ensure the redirects map logically (e.g., from service pages on the old sites to similar service pages on the new site).
- **Test Redirects:** Before going live, test the redirects to confirm they're functioning correctly. Check each URL with tools like Screaming Frog or manually test critical URLs.

4. On-Page SEO Elements

- **Consolidate Title Tags & Meta Descriptions:** Rewrite and optimize title tags and meta descriptions to avoid duplicates. Focus on target keywords from each original site.
 - **Set Up Canonical Tags:** Use canonical tags on pages with similar content to indicate the primary page, helping prevent duplicate content issues during the merge.
 - **Implement Structured Data:** Ensure schema markup (e.g., LocalBusiness, Product, or FAQ schema) is correctly implemented on the new site.
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5. Content Optimization and Enhancement

- **Revise Content for the New Site:** Update old content with new branding, messaging, and relevant keywords.
- **Refresh Visual Elements:** Optimize images, including compressing them, using descriptive file names, and adding alt text for SEO and accessibility.
- **Include Internal Links:** Add internal links within the new site to guide users and search engines through the content and direct traffic to high-priority pages.

6. Technical SEO Setup

- **Update XML Sitemap:** Create a new XML sitemap for the merged site, ensuring all essential pages are listed. Submit the updated sitemap in Google Search Console.
- **Revise Robots.txt File:** Update the robots.txt file to reflect the new structure, ensuring search engines can access and crawl all necessary pages.
- **Check Mobile-Friendliness:** Test the new site on various devices and screen sizes to ensure a responsive, mobile-friendly design.

7. Maintain Backlink Value

- **Reach Out to Key Linking Sites:** Contact websites that link to high-value pages on the old sites and request updates to point to the new URLs if possible.
- **Monitor Backlink Redirects:** Ensure all high-quality backlinks are redirected properly, preserving link equity in the new site.

8. Post-Merge Tasks

- **Monitor 404 Errors:** Use Google Search Console to check for 404 errors and set up any additional redirects needed post-launch.
- **Track Indexing Status:** Verify that all critical pages are indexed by Google and other search engines. Use the "site:yourdomain.com" command to check the indexing status.
- **Measure Performance:** Track key metrics, comparing pre-merge benchmarks with the new site's performance (e.g., rankings, traffic, and conversions).
- **Update External Listings and Profiles:** Update business listings, social media profiles, and directory listings to reflect the new URL.



9. Announce the Site Merge

- **Inform Users and Stakeholders:** Publish a blog post or announcement about the merge to explain any changes users might notice, including rebranded pages, updated links, or new content.
- **Update Marketing Materials:** Ensure that email signatures, email templates, and other promotional materials reflect the new domain and structure.

Merging websites is a delicate process that, when executed well, can strengthen your SEO and user experience. Following this checklist will help consolidate SEO value and ensure a smooth transition for both search engines and users.

Key Elements

- Meta Tags Optimization
- Heading Structure (H1, H2, etc.):
- Alt Text for Images:
- Internal Linking
- URL Structure
- Page Speed Optimization
- Mobile usability
- Keyword-Based Content Optimisation

Note

ONLY IF Planning to Change – These steps should only be followed if there are planned changes or updates to the website content. If no content changes are anticipated, these steps can be skipped.



For more information

 communications@codeandpeddle.com

 www.codeandpeddle.com