

SEO Migration Checklist

Move without losing traffic - by Leonardo Tuan, SEO & Organic Growth Lead

Migrations are one of the most common causes of a sudden traffic collapse - and almost all of it is preventable with a plan. This is the sequence I used to hold a full site migration at 0% organic loss: baseline crawl, redirect mapping, staging QA, launch day, and a structured monitoring cadence.

1. Pre-migration baseline crawl

- ☐ **Full crawl of the live site:** every URL, status, title, meta, canonical, H1, internal link, redirect.
- ☐ **Export 3-6 months of GSC data** (impressions, clicks, position) by page and by query.
- ☐ **Export the backlink profile** by target URL - every changing URL needs a redirect target.
- ☐ **Document current sitemaps, robots.txt, and existing redirect rules.**
- ☐ **Screenshot/archive rankings** for your priority commercial terms.

2. Redirect mapping

- ☐ **Map every old URL to its new equivalent, 1:1** where possible (not wildcard shortcuts).
- ☐ **Never redirect everything to the homepage** - the single most damaging mistake.
- ☐ **Use 301s, not 302s**, for anything permanent.
- ☐ **Eliminate redirect chains:** A -> B -> C should become A -> C directly.
- ☐ **Cross-check the map against the backlink export.**
- ☐ **Build the map as structured data** (spreadsheet/table) so it is machine-checkable pre-launch.
- ☐ **Flag parameter & pagination URLs** explicitly - the most commonly forgotten category.
- ☐ **Assign a named, SEO-literate owner** for the redirect map.

3. Staging QA

- ☐ **Crawl staging** the same way you crawled the live site.
- ☐ **Test the redirect map programmatically:** every old URL returns a 301 to the intended destination.
- ☐ **Canonicals point to new URLs** (no leftover old-domain references).
- ☐ **New sitemap.xml** lists the new URL structure only.
- ☐ **Staging robots.txt blocks indexing;** production robots.txt is ready to go live open.
- ☐ **Validate structured data** on new templates against the old site's schema.
- ☐ **Spot-check Core Web Vitals** on the new templates before launch, not after.

4. Launch day

- ☐ **Deploy the redirect map first**, confirmed live, with the cutover (not as a follow-up task).
- ☐ **Submit the new sitemap** in Search Console immediately.
- ☐ **Request indexing** on your highest-priority pages directly.
- ☐ **Re-verify the redirect map on production** - caching/CDN can differ from staging.
- ☐ **Confirm production robots.txt is open** for crawling.
- ☐ **Monitor 404/500 rates in real time** for the first few hours.

5. Post-launch monitoring

- ☐ **Daily (first 2 weeks)**: indexed count, 404 rate, redirect spot-checks, priority rankings.
- ☐ **Weekly (first month)**: full GSC comparison vs baseline, by page and by query.
- ☐ **Re-run the crawl comparison** at 2 weeks and again at 6 weeks.
- ☐ **Distinguish the normal 'dip and recovery'** from a sustained loss.
- ☐ **Keep old redirects live 6-12 months** (longer for a domain change).
- ☐ **Re-verify backlinks land correctly** a few weeks post-launch, not just at launch.

The crawl-comparison method is what turns 'did the migration work' from a subjective call made a month later into a checklist you run on launch day. If you want the baseline and redirect map built and verified before launch rather than diagnosed after a drop: leonardo.kairoxbuild.com/seo-recovery