

ALKALI

The B2B Website Migration Checklist

Seven phases for moving a site to new URLs or a new platform without losing the search visibility it has already earned. This is the technical half of a redesign, and it is where the damage happens.

How to use it: assign an owner to every row. Phases 2, 3 and 6 are the ones that decide whether rankings survive. If you only have time to be rigorous about three things, make it those.

PHASE 1 Inventory what exists today

You cannot preserve what you never wrote down. Everything else in this checklist depends on this phase being complete rather than approximately complete.

DONE	TASK	OWNER	DATE
☐	Crawl the current site and export every URL, including ones nothing links to.		
☐	Add traffic, rankings and inbound links to each URL so you know what is worth preserving.		
☐	Export current page titles and meta descriptions. These are easy to lose in a move.		
☐	Save the current XML sitemap as a reference copy.		
☐	Record 12 months of traffic and rankings as a benchmark you can compare against later.		
☐	List URLs with links from other websites. Losing one of these loses an asset somebody else built for you.		

PHASE 2 Map every old URL to a new one

This spreadsheet is the single most important artifact in a migration. Treat it as the deliverable, not as paperwork.

DONE	TASK	OWNER	DATE
☐	Create a two-column map: every old URL, and the new address it should go to.		
☐	Map to the closest equivalent page. Never map in bulk to the homepage.		
☐	Decide deliberately which URLs will 404 because no equivalent exists, and record why.		
☐	Where several thin pages merge into one, point all of the old URLs at the merged page.		
☐	Have someone who did not build the map spot-check 20 rows at random.		

PHASE 3 Set the redirects up correctly

Rankings belong to URLs. Redirects are the mechanism that carries them across, and the failure modes are quiet.

DONE	TASK	OWNER	DATE
☐	Use permanent (301) redirects, not temporary (302) ones.		
☐	Remove chains so no URL redirects more than once before landing.		

DONE	TASK	OWNER	DATE
☐	Confirm redirects preserve the protocol and the www or non-www choice you settled on.		
☐	Check that redirected URLs return the destination page, not a redirect to a 404.		
☐	Keep the redirects in place indefinitely. Old links keep sending traffic for years.		

PHASE 4 Carry the content and metadata across intact

Content thinning is the second most common way a migration loses rankings, and it usually happens by accident.

DONE	TASK	OWNER	DATE
☐	Confirm the new site has at least as much content on each retained page as the old one.		
☐	Migrate page titles and meta descriptions, or write better ones deliberately.		
☐	Preserve heading structure. A page that loses its headings loses the structure it ranked on.		
☐	Move image alt text across. It is routinely dropped in a platform change.		
☐	Confirm structured data is present on the new templates.		

PHASE 5 Get the technical setup right before launch

Each item here is a single line of configuration that can undo the whole project.

DONE	TASK	OWNER	DATE
☐	Canonical tags point at live production URLs, never at staging.		
☐	The new XML sitemap lists only live, indexable, canonical URLs.		
☐	robots.txt allows crawling of everything you want indexed.		
☐	No page carries an accidental noindex directive inherited from staging.		
☐	Analytics and conversion tracking are installed and firing on the new templates.		

PHASE 6 Launch day

Work through these in order, and do the first one before anything else.

DONE	TASK	OWNER	DATE
☐	Remove the staging crawler block and confirm the live site is indexable. This is the most expensive item on this page to miss.		
☐	Submit the new XML sitemap in Google Search Console.		
☐	Spot-check redirects on your 20 highest-traffic URLs.		
☐	Confirm forms submit and deliver from the live domain.		
☐	Request indexing for your most important pages.		

PHASE 7 Monitor for 90 days

Most migration damage is recoverable if it is caught in weeks rather than quarters. Nobody catches it without looking.

DONE	TASK	OWNER	DATE
☐	Check crawl errors and 404 reports weekly for the first month.		
☐	Compare traffic and rankings against the Phase 1 benchmark at 7, 30 and 90 days.		
☐	Watch for pages that dropped out of the index entirely, not just pages that fell.		
☐	Fix any high-traffic URL that is missing a redirect the same week you find it.		
☐	Expect some movement in the first few weeks. Judge the migration at 90 days, not at 7.		