

mollie

No-Dip Website Relaunch

Friends of Search Awards

Mar 23, 2023

This case is about...



**SEO
by Design**



**Ruthless
Prioritization**



Love

Disclaimer

We only migrated 2,011 pages, not a large e-commerce website, but the **methodology and high standards stay the same.**

Some stats.

+9%

MoM Organic Sessions

+73%

MoM Organic Sessions on
low-funnel pages

+21%

Lower-funnel conversion
point

-0.5%

Non-brand queries lost
from #1-3

Feb 2022

Website scoping starts

Oct 31, 2022

Launch date

2,011

Total pages migrated

Jan 2022

Proactive SEO involvement

290

SEO tickets created

31

Critical SEO tickets

**Why a new
website?**

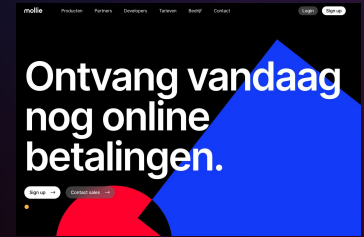
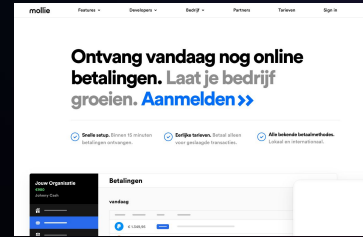
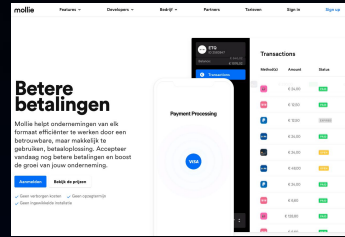
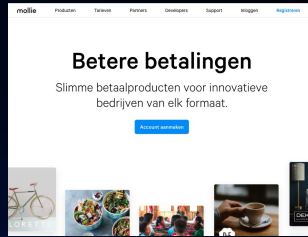
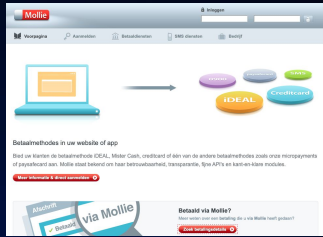
2014

2018

2019

2020

2022



Business Objective 1
Align with new branding

Item	Dependencies	Time invested
Duplicate existing page template	2-3 developers	1 week per landing page
Create new page template	2-3 developers, UX, design	2-3 weeks per landing page
Implement redirects	1 developer	10 minutes per redirect (one-off requests)

Business Objective 2

Autonomy for Marketing



Business Objective 3
Improve localisation capabilities

Business Objective 4

SEO by Design



Impossible to implement best practices

- Mollie.com originally thought to be SEO compliant (according to non-SEOs),
- Too much foundational work required
- **High dependency** on dev resources
- 90% of SEO asks needs dev (+ training on 'why')



Impossible to 'do proper SEO'

- Existing templates not flexible for SEO targeting
- New page templates **nearly impossible to launch** (ex: 7 months for HTML sitemap!)
- For 3 years: limited to update content



1x Page template 'by SEO for SEO'

- Only content with **exponential growth** (+645% YoY)
- Most page types (not 'SEO by Design') stagnating or declining

Scope

Item	Decision	Rationale
New Branding	✓	New branding needs to be reflected on website
New CMS	✓	Former CMS not marketer-friendly + development too heavy
Improve website structure	✗	Resource intensive, higher risk, successful push back
Update on-page content	✗	Resource intensive, higher risk, successful push back
Localised URL structure	🤔	Only what's commercially necessary, higher risk

Initial timeline/expectations

6 months from scoping to live



Team structure



Baba



Global SEO Agency



Claudia

Web Team

Dev agency
(Decode)

SEO Goals

Excellence

Reach SEO Excellence with **max -10% impressions**, no-dip in performance at relaunch and the 2-3 months following it.

Simplify

Reduce crawl depth from high share of pages in 10+ to most pages in 3-4 depth.

SEO by Design

Implement SEO best practices, making the website **easier to crawl** and manage (breadcrumbs, hreflang, translation/localisation, sitemaps...)

SEO by Design

"The best content isn't just optimized for search – it **starts** with search"

Website Rebuild / Decision Documentation 3 Jira links

New Website: URL Structure for SEO

Problem


To start rebuilding the website on a Wordpress based solution we need to gather all technical requirements upfront that should guide us towards the desired solution going forward with URL structure.

Why do URLs matter for SEO?

- Improved user experience:** a well-crafted URL provides both humans and search engines an easy-to-understand indication of what the destination page will be about. With a human-readable, semantically accurate URL, you provide a clear idea of what the destination page is about, and you provide visitors with an improved user experience by making it clear what they'll see if they click the link from the SERPs.
- Localisation:** by making the country and language clear in the URL, you indicate precisely to the user that they are on the right page.
- Rankings:** URLs are a minor ranking factor search engines use when determining a particular page or resource's relevance to a search query. While they do give weight to the authority of the overall domain itself, keyword use in a URL can also act as a ranking factor.
- Links:** well-written URLs can serve as their own anchor text when copied and pasted as links in forums, blogs, social media networks, or other online publications.

URL structure definition

To make sure we're talking the same language:



At Mollie, Page = slug

Requirements

	Description	Impact
URL structure	The new stack will make use of a so called multi-site structure. This means that every market/country technically has its own website. For example https://www.com.nl would be the website for the Dutch market.	None

	Keep Relative	Kill Relative
Count	78.38%	21.62%
Sessions	99.66%	0.3%
Impressions	99.38%	0.62%
Clicks	99.81%	0.19%
New Users	99.48%	0.52%
SU	99.99%	0.01%
ODS	99.99%	0.01%
FP	100.00%	0.00%

	Keep Relative	Kill Relative
Crawl Depth		
1	100%	0%
2	85%	15%
3	72%	28%
4	67%	33%
5	48%	52%
6	41%	59%
7	52%	48%
8	46%	54%
9	28%	72%
10	24%	76%
11	11%	89%
12	13%	88%
13	0%	100%
14	0%	100%



SEO Requirements documentation

Easy to read for non-SEOs, most critical elements tackled (e.g. URL, header/footer, Homepage, hreflang/canonicals,...).

Tip: make it visible – tag stakeholders, bi-weekly 1:1, follow-ups, be a PITA!



Content audit

20% of pages not migrated = -1% traffic & 1 conversion lost

Tip: be proactive = make it simpler for your web team



Testing & Monitoring

- Smoke test new technology: crawl staging
- Educate development teams
- Server logs alerting

Tip: use data to educate and build trust

Ruthless Prioritization

All about letting go of your 'SEO perfectionism'






SEO Prioritisation

Priority levels	Communicated to web team	SEO timelines
Highest	SEO will block if not fixed	Fix before relaunch (by web team)
High	SEO might block if not fixed, but we understand you want to move forward and won't block you	Fix before relaunch (by SEO)
Medium	Would be good to fix before, but is not critical to relaunch	At best, fix max 2 days after relaunch
Low		Someday, maybe
Lowest		

As the situation evolved, we re-evaluate each ticket daily (sometimes multiple times per day, close to relaunch)

Tip: define a solid prioritisation matrix - review priorities frequently

Examples

URL Localisation		LOW	
Imperfect content on secondary market		LOW	
Canonicals		HIGHEST	(it depends)
Faulty redirects		MEDIUM	(it depends)
Missing migrated pages		HIGH	(it depends)

Love

We don't only care about a successful project.
We want people to [grow with SEO](#).



DEVELOPERS

SEO TEAM

SURPRISE!

Enable

- Get introduced to dev agency,
- Join all important Slack channels,
- Educate developers about implications/risks,
- **Demonstrate** with as-clear-as-possible data (even estimates) to prove our point,
- **Train marketers** on using Wordpress+SEO

Empower






- Give regular feedback, **appreciate** and clearly communicate when good ideas are being brought to the table,
- Thank the whole team for their involvement, ideas and challenges + 🍻

IMPORTANT: this guide is applicable to any and all content posted on the website, not just /growth/ posts! 📢

From headings to links and meta descriptions, let's talk all things critical SEO elements.

- How to handle this Pool thing
 - General explanation of the logic
 - What if I have a piece of content that is meant for one market only?
 - How do I go about creating a new Pool page and the related market versions?
 - Start by creating a Pool page
 - Translate your Pool page
 - Create the local market versions from the Pool
 - Add your SEO title and meta description
 - Pages disconnected from Pool, what does that mean?
 - What does this mean for me?
 - How can I see if pages are disconnected?
 - What if I want to add some other market languages at a later stage?
 - How to go about editing existing pages linked to a Pool version?
 - Are the pages connected to the Pool?
 - If the pages are disconnected...
- URLs
 - General knowledge
 - 🚫 Rule 1 - Every post should have a unique slug
 - Translating your slug
 - If your post will have the same slug across all markets...
 - If your post will need to have a different/translated slug...
 - Special case: setting a unique slug on BE FR (relevant for /news and /growth posts)
 - 🚫 Rule 2 - After creating a page, do not change the slug again
- H1
 - General knowledge
 - How to type in your H1
 - 🚫 Rule 1 - There can only be one H1
 - 🚫 Rule 2 - Do not change the H1 of existing posts
- H2 and other subheadings - how to
 - General knowledge
 - How to add headings in your text
 - Changing heading level
 - 🚫 Rule 1 - Always follow a logical structure
 - 🚫 Rule 2 - Add H2s to help users navigate the text better
- Links - Internal and external
 - General knowledge
 - How to add outbound links on WP
 - How to add internal links on WP
 - 🚫 Rule 1 - Always add internal links to your posts
 - 🚫 Rule 2 - Internal links should always go to the same locale
- Meta tags - SEO title and description
 - General knowledge
 - How to set the SEO title and description
 - Setting the SEO title and meta description for BE-FR
 - 🚫 Rule 1 - Always add a SEO title and Meta description to your post
 - 🚫 Rule 2 - Do not change the slug
- Indexation (aka "SEO controls")
 - General knowledge
 - Which pages should I show or not show on Google?
 - How to change indexation settings
 - 🚫 Rule 1 - Do not change indexation settings of existing content
- Other Yoast settings - aka stuff you can and should skip!
 - Do I need to set a focus keyphrase?
 - Do I need to check the "SEO analysis" and "Insights" sections below?
 - Should I edit something in the "Cornerstone content" section?
 - Should I look into the "Advanced" Yoast settings?
 - What about "Readability" and "Schema"?
 - What about "Social"?
- Additional Options - SEO options - aka another thing to skip 🙄
 - General knowledge
 - What do I need to do?
 - Exception: new Payment Method pages, new Integrations, new Product pages.

Set expectations & Communicate

	When we did it	What we did
INFORM	4 weeks before	 Set expectations to Management: CMO, CCO, CTO, CPO, CEO
OWNERSHIP	1 day before	 Update where we're at and confidence level
REACTIVITY	1st week Daily	 Email management & stakeholders on early results
REASSURE	Weekly	 Email management & stakeholders on performance, next steps & SEO debt tickets
CONFIRM	Month+1	 Slide deck on key takeaways, top-level metrics, key observations

Tip: inform about your communication plan at your first update with Management

Examples - Updates to stakeholders

Case Study: Pay.nl

-24% org traffic on pay.nl 2 months after their relaunch

Relaunch type	Redesign New navigation New website structure Content clean-up/new URL of top pages	mollie ✗ mollie
Relaunch date	July 14, 2022	
Impact (2 months after relaunch)	+30% traffic on homepage -24% traffic domain-wide -40% pages ranking in Top 100 -35% keywords ranking in Top 100	

Pay.nl domain performance post-relaunch

Est. organic traffic to pay.nl homepage

mollie - in scope for Mollie Relaunch

Impact of redesign and replatforming on SEO is limited by "soft SEO relaunch"

Confidence level

MINIMISED IMPACT	RISKS
<p>Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEO involved from the start ("SEO by Design") Close collaboration with main stakeholders <p>Website structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most URLs unchanged Website structure mainly unchanged Content pruning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 22% pages killed < 1% estimated loss of traffic 	<p>Internal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No SEO consultation on last minute decisions to speed up go-live No visibility on how Googlebot sees our website <p>External</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-market relaunch even more complex to assess Seasonality leading up to end of year Google updates New design and content structure don't talk to the user/search engines 2-3 days data-delay from Organic Search (Search Console)

"In 20 years of SEO, this is one of the smoothest SEO redesigns I've ever seen"
— Andrew Sholland, SEO

Timeline

Q1-2022

SEO Requirements

Q2-2022

SEO x Dev reviews

Q3-2022

SEO QA & Prioritisation

Q4-2022

Relaunch

Monitoring &
Communication

Results

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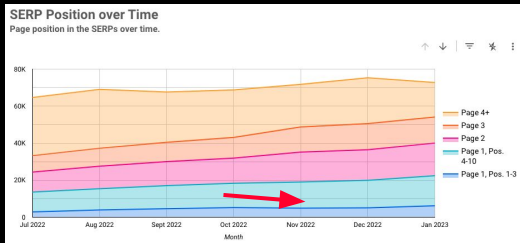
SEO by Design

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Excellence

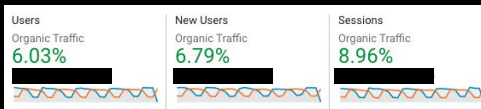
Rankings

- **+2%** monthly impressions
- More keywords from pos. #4+
- **0.5%** drop generic keywords in Pos. #1-3



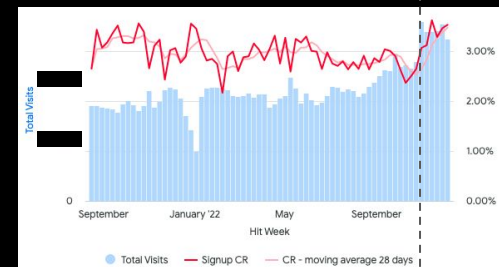
Organic traffic

- **+9%** MoM organic sessions
- Top market (NL): +7%



Conversions

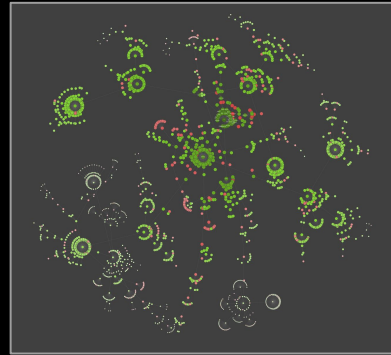
- Increased YoY org. sessions (+62%) & conversion rate (+0.4 p.p.)
- **+21%** low-funnel conversion point



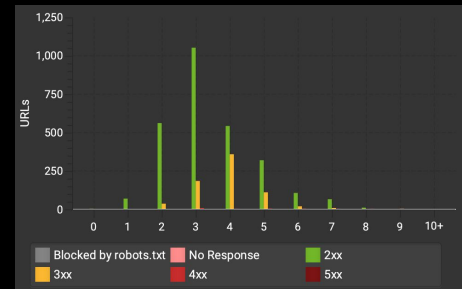
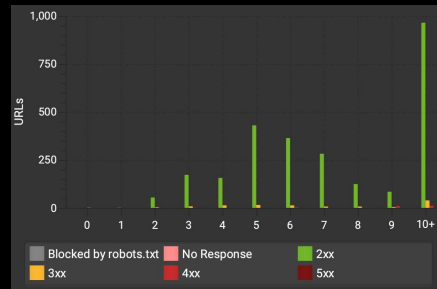
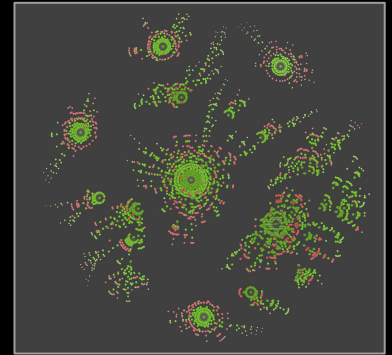
Simplify

- More logical website structure
- Reduced crawl depth

BEFORE



AFTER



SEO by Design

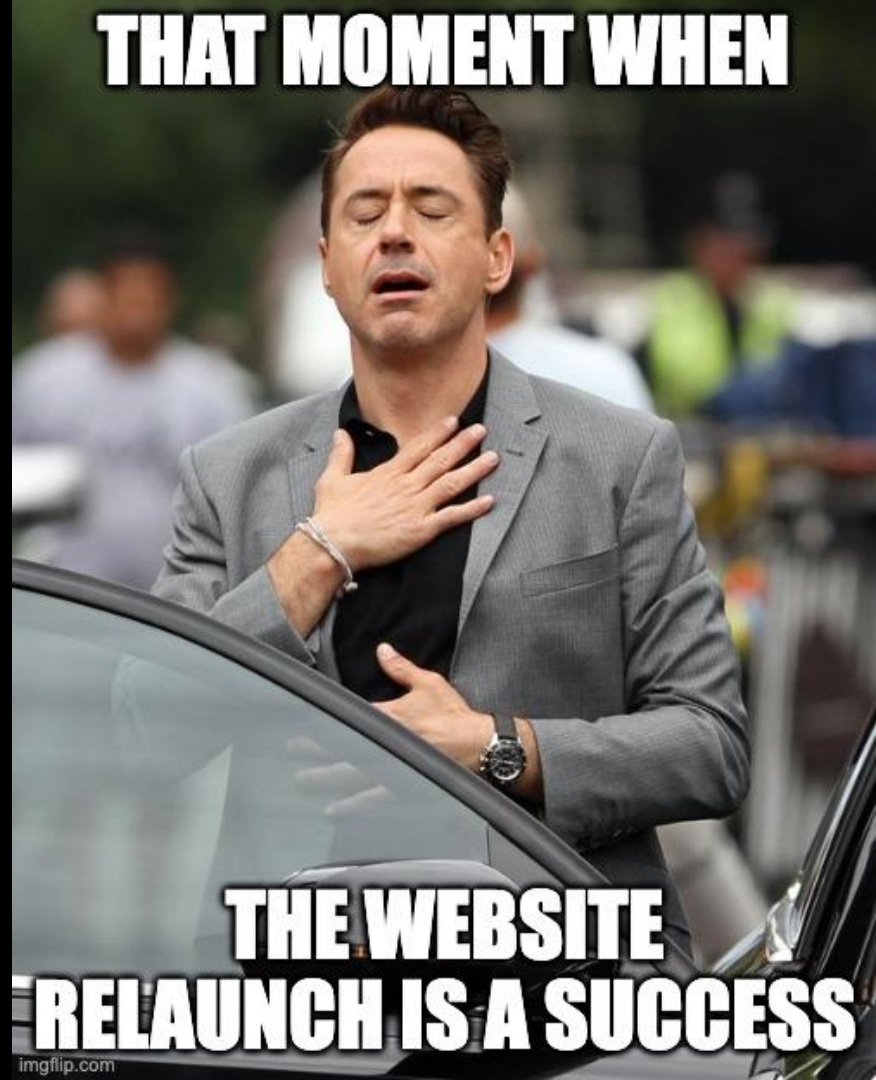
- **Sturdy website structure with automatically-handled:**
 - Sitemaps
 - Breadcrumbs
 - Hreflang & Canonicals
 - URL mapping
- **Thorough redirection process**
⇒ changed ownership from tech- to knowledge-owners
- **SEO is part of the decision-process**



Finally feels like we're competing
in the 21st century

What was not ideal, but we survived...

- ... no access to server logs;
- ... no keyword research for updating product pages (as initially planned);
- ... the SEO team worked on URL localisation, but dev **dropped it** later in the project;
- ... we had to manage expectations and projects from agencies with an uncertain launch date;
- ... **content freeze** for 1.5 months before launch;
- ... launch date **defined on a Friday** for following Monday.



Learnings & Lessons

Be sure

While working with a web development agency, make sure that they indeed know or have some understanding of SEO.

Saying “we handle SEO”, because they have installed Yoast SEO isn’t an option.

While we were highly involved in the process, a lot of resources could have been saved if they had an internal SEO consultant.

Be feared

It is important to keep a close collaboration, communication channel, regular contacts, and feedbacks with the web team. Get devs involved in the decision, not just “do what I say”.

You want to achieve a point where **they are “concerned” there will be an impact with SEO.**

Sometimes SEO problems get higher priority than they should: go along with it! ;-)

Be focused

Ruthless prioritisation and “eyes-on-the-target” make a project a certain success.

This means that every ticket, priority, and task can and should be questioned: **is this indeed a problem or “SEO perfectionism”?** Can this wait, or will this have a massive impact on performance?

Exception: secondary projects that help give visibility to your craft.

Thank you



Baba Hausmann

Senior Search Engine **Optimist**

Let's connect to chat about

SEO

STARTUP

BURGERS

SEO GEEKING

BEERS

SEO PRODUCTIVITY

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/baba-seo/>



mollie