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

**February 2022**
- Website scoping starts

**October 31, 2022**
- Launch date

**January 2022**
- Proactive SEO involvement

**2,011** Total pages migrated

**290** SEO tickets created

**31** Critical SEO tickets
Why a new website?
Business Objective 1
Align with new branding
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Dependencies</th>
<th>Time invested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duplicate existing page template</td>
<td>2-3 developers</td>
<td>1 week per landing page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create new page template</td>
<td>2-3 developers, UX, design</td>
<td>2-3 weeks per landing page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement redirects</td>
<td>1 developer</td>
<td>10 minutes per redirect (one-off requests)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Decision</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Branding</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>New branding needs to be reflected on website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New CMS</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>Former CMS not marketer-friendly + development too heavy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve website structure</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>Resource intensive, higher risk, successful push back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Update on-page content</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>Resource intensive, higher risk, successful push back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Localised URL structure</td>
<td>😞</td>
<td>Only what’s commercially necessary, higher risk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Initial timeline/expectations**

6 months from scoping to live
Team structure

Baba + Claudia

Global SEO Agency

Web Team

Dev agency (Dekode)
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”
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

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**SEO Requirements documentation**

To start building the website on a WordPress-based solution, we need to gather all technical requirements upfront that will guide us toward the desired solution going forward with URL structure.

**Why do URLs matter for SEO?**

- Improved user experience: a well-crafted URL provides humans and search engines an easy-to-understand indication of what the destination page will be about. With a human-readable, semantic, and accurate URL, you provide a clear link to the destination page in the URL, and this provides valuable with an improved user experience by making it clear what they’ll see if they click the link from the SERP.
- Localization: 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 for engines when determining a particular page or resource’s relevancy in a search query. While they don’t influence the authority of the overall domain itself, keyword-in-a-URL can act as a ranking factor.
- Unless well-written URLs can serve as their own anchor text when copied and posted as links in forums, blogs, social media, websites, or other online publications.

**URL structure definition**

To make sure we’re talking the same language.

**MOZ SEO Cheat Sheet: Anatomy of a URL**

**Requirements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>URL structure</td>
<td>The two words will make use of a co-related meta-related structure. This means that every page/audit’s structure has its own website. For example...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ruthless Prioritization

All about letting go of your ‘SEO perfectionism’
**SEO Prioritisation**

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

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)
We don’t only care about a successful project. We want people to **grow with SEO**.
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 + 🍻
# Set expectations & Communicate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When we did it</th>
<th>What we did</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 weeks before</td>
<td>Set expectations to Management: CMO, CCO, CTO, CPO, CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 day before</td>
<td>Update where we’re at and confidence level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st week Daily</td>
<td>Email management &amp; stakeholders on early results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>Email management &amp; stakeholders on performance, next steps &amp; SEO debt tickets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month+1</td>
<td>Slide deck on key takeaways, top-level metrics, key observations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relaunch Type</th>
<th>Redesign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relaunch date</td>
<td>July 14, 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact 2 months after relaunch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+30% traffic on homepage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-24% traffic domain-wide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-35% pages ranking in Top 100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-35% keywords ranking in Top 100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

**MINIMISED IMPACT**

- **Collaboration**
  - SEO involved from the start (SEO by Design)
  - Close collaboration with main stakeholders

- **Website structure**
  - Most URLs unchanged
  - Website structure mainly unchanged

- **Content pruning**
  - 12% topics meet
  - <1% estimated loss of traffic

**RISKS**

- **Internal**
  - No SEO consultation on last-minute decisions to speed up go-live
  - No visibility on how Googlebot sees our website

- **External**
  - 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 site-dwell from Organic Search (Search Console)

"In 20 years of SEO, this is one of the smoothest SEO redesigns I’ve ever seen."
- Yoko Mabuchi, CEO
Results
SEO Goals

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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...)
**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
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.
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.

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 that they should: go along with it! ;-)

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 helps give visibility to your craft.

Learnings & Lessons

Be sure

Be feared

Be focused
Thank you

Baba Hausmann
Senior Search Engine Optimist

Let’s connect to chat about

- SEO
- STARTUP
- BURGERS
- SEO GEEKING
- BEERS
- SEO PRODUCTIVITY

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