

6 Tips on Transitioning an Optimized Website

If you are considering a website re-design or making development changes, always keep user-experience in mind as well as search engine ranking. Hiring an expert to implement your transition is a smart move, this way your overall message remains seamless and technical specifications are left intact. In the *Search Marketing Standard's* winter 08/09 issue, Joe Griffin states, "Paying attention to maintaining the strength of certain variables, one can make significant changes to a site's design and function while safeguarding its position in search engine rankings."

Here are 6 tips for transitioning your SEO strategy to a new website:

- 1. Domain name changes**

If you intend to change your domain name, a 301 redirect of the old domain to the new domain name will ensure search engine rankings will not be affected.

- 2. Filename and platform changes**

Changing filenames is not recommended unless absolutely necessary. If a filename is changed, internal 301 redirects will be needed on a file to file level. At this time, also consider the use of static URL's, an SEO best practice for URL structure. Upon changing platforms, opt for a CMS or Shopping Cart platform that can be used to designate the file names that you need.

- 3. Template changes**

Continue linking to the same pages that were being linked to on the previous website. Rankings can be impacted if the internal PageRank distribution is cut, the homepage is usually the PageRank generator so be especially careful with how this page is managed, since it is the most trusted page on a website.

- 4. SEO migration**

Ensure that all existing work is properly migrated. Transition over titles, meta descriptions, meta keywords, heading tags, alt tags, and other SEO specific content.

- 5. Flash and frames**

Do not, by any means, create a 100% flash website; however, if you have a flash embedded object, be sure to include optimized text. If you're designing a new website, do not include frames. If the current site has frames, replace them with a dedicated page under your domain. If including certain elements of content within your site via frames, be aware that the content from frames will not be indexed as part of the master page.

- 6. Additional items to remember**

Don't forget to add Google Analytics code across all redesigned or migrated pages. Additionally, revisit or implement Google Webmaster Tools, which will provide helpful information about your website, specifically broken links, backlinks and sitemaps. Thirdly, ensure there are no old URLs being linked to on the site. Lastly, remember to update website sitemaps, Google sitemaps, and any feeds that are running.