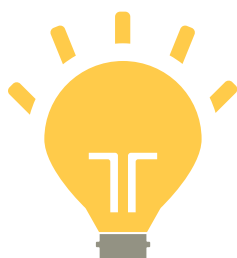


# What's the #1 SEO Mistake in Website Redesign?

One reason that companies enlist the services of a digital marketing partner is because their website traffic (or rankings as they usually tell me but yet they are not tracking rankings) falls.

I am seeing so much of this lately that I decided to put together a tip sheet – well 3 really since the one got so long. This is the first of 3 tip sheets on how to prevent your traffic (and more importantly, your conversions) from falling after a site redesign – heck if you are doing a redesign why not aim for higher conversions?



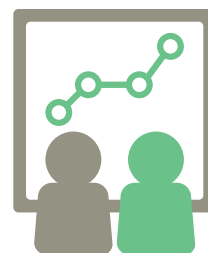
## ... Forgetting to put the **analytics tracking code** back on the site!

Does that feel like a letdown? Were you looking for something more dramatic?

There are no golden nuggets in SEO – it is all common sense and a bit of knowledge. I can't count the number of times that web masters forget to put the analytics tracking code back on the site.

## How can you measure the impact of the redesign without tracking code on the website?

Here is a checklist of other best practices to consider pre-website redesign so you don't lose your visibility in search engines:



## Part 1: Pre-Design

### Errors

Fix and all errors in [Google Webmaster Tools](#) BEFORE launching the new site so that any new errors can be seen after site launch and fixed quickly.



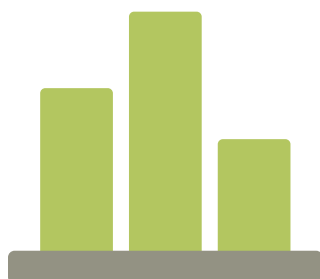
- Broken links (fix now, not on the new site, so you can be notified of new broken links that arise).
- Load time (can be addressed on the new site).
- Responsive / mobile friendly (can be addressed on new site as it is part of design).

### Content Porting

- Should you bring ALL of the existing content over to the new site or just the content that is performing?
- Are there certain blog post categories that are underperforming? Should you rename the category? Link to these blog posts from other, more popular posts?



### Pre-Launch Key Performance Indicators



- Rankings – if you check rankings on a regular basis, be sure to check them immediately before and after the redesign.
- Indexed pages – use `site:domain.com` in Google to see how many pages Google has indexed for your site. This may fluctuate slightly day to day therefore it is important to have this metric over a range of time – e.g. document it monthly.
- Site speed and bounce rate.

## Part 2: During Development

### Block Crawlers



- While the new site is in development, use a robots.txt file to make sure that prying eyes and search engine spiders are not able to see or index the site – you wouldn't want the new site, in its incomplete form, showing up on Google!
- Read more: <http://goo.gl/s9SUt>
- Make sure to allow the new site to be indexed by search engines once it is ready to go live.

### Analytics Software

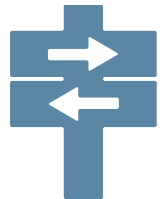


- The tracking code can be put on the new site during the development phase.
- Consider moving to Google Tag Manager at this time – it can easily allow tracking of additional information such as clicks to your social media platforms, clicks on phone numbers by mobile device users, clicks on email addresses – the list goes on!

**Do you want to be able to track:** PDF downloads, clicks on your email addresses, clicks on your phone number, clicks out to your Facebook or other social platforms, etc. Email now to [info@drivetraffic.ca](mailto:info@drivetraffic.ca) with subject line Google Tag Manager Setup Required.

### URLs

- In an ideal world your URL structure will not change. If your pages ended in .php in the past, try to have this on the current site.
- If you absolutely have to change the URLs, be sure to do a [301 redirect](#) from the old URL to the new URL.



As a marketer, you can simply make a table in a word processor that lists existing URLs on the left and the new URLs on the right; your IT person/webmaster can take care of the 301 redirect.

### Page Meta Data



- So many companies lose organic traffic after a site redesign because they change page titles, meta descriptions and H1 tags!
- If you are updating content during this redesign and are familiar with SEO Best Practices and how to perform on-page optimization, it is fine to improve page titles, etc.



It's best to change/test a small number of items at one time to ensure no loss of traffic.

### 404 page

- Create a custom 404 error page for when a user lands on a page that no longer exists.
- Offer direct links to your most relevant services or products, a search feature and an easy way to reach you.



# Part 3: Post Development – You Are Live!

## Analytics

- Annotate the date of re-launch in your analytics software.
- It takes at least a few days to see a trend such as falling traffic in Google Analytics therefore you will want to look at numbers by the day until you can use Google Analytics to easily compare weeks.
- If the first day of your re-launch is a Sunday for example, pull all previous organic traffic by the day (e.g. last Sunday you had 100 visits, the Sunday before 98 and the Sunday before than 101) so that with each passing day of the re-launch you will be able to tell if traffic is falling compared to previous weeks.



## Crawlers



- You want Google to be able to crawl your site therefore once it is ready to go live therefore you'll need to remove “/” in the disavow row.
- Read more: <http://goo.gl/s9SUt>

## Errors

- Keep a daily eye on [Google Webmaster Tools](#) the first week, then perhaps every 2-3 days the second week after launch and then eventually weekly and monthly.
- Reach out to websites that are linking to your old URLs and ask them to update their links to your new URL.



## Post-Launch Checks



- Rankings – if you check rankings on a regular basis, be sure to check them immediately before and after the redesign.
- Indexed pages – use **site:domain.com** in Google to see how many pages Google has indexed for your site. This may fluctuate slightly day to day therefore it is important to have this metric over a range of time – e.g. document it monthly.
- Site speed.
- Bounce rate.

### Need Help?

Tell us what you need or ask your questions on our [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) Pages.