

Tackling domain migrations: 5 strategies to manage web address changes

For small and medium business owners, domain migrations are fairly common. Whether you're updating your website to boost your search engine rankings or starting fresh with a full rebrand in response to emerging market trends, there are lots of reasons why you might migrate your web address.

Temps de lecture : minute

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In an online landscape of more than 628 million registered domains, it's important that your new web URL stands out from the crowd. Whatever the reason for your domain migration, you must protect your site's SEO, content and consumer communication if you want to see success.

Stick with us as we walk you through the reasons why you might change your domain and reveal 5 strategies to manage web address changes safely.

When should you change your web address?

Changing your web address should not be a quick decision. Not only should you create a migration plan, but also weigh up the pros and cons of starting from scratch before powering ahead.

When done incorrectly, domain migrations can affect your SEO ranking and cause you to lose valuable customers who were familiar with your previous website.

However, in some cases, a domain migration is essential. Here are some of the reasons why you might need to migrate your domain:

If you have A harmful URL structure

If you have created your website on a custom platform or a content management system, your URL could be doing your business more harm than good.

For example, website builders such as Weebly or Squarespace are known for adding gibberish to their URLs, especially when faced with foreign characters. Another key cause for concern is permalinks with non-readable text. While these were popular ten years ago, they may be the reason that your site is struggling to rank.



(Image Source: [Neil Patel](#))

Sometimes, harmful URLs sprout from human error. These can be 'harmless' misspellings or keyword stuffing, but these all factor into your domain's overall SEO score.

If your URL falls under any of these categories, it could be time to invest in a new domain name. Once you've checked for *domain availability*, ensure that your potential new URL ticks all boxes for readability and SEO best practices.

To improve your findability

If you're struggling to get discovered as a new online brand, your URL could have something to do with your troubles.

For example, if your website is split into a number of complicated sections, one simple URL for each page is not enough to suffice. Consider reflecting each section of your site in a separate URL to allow consumers to search for different topics, pages and categories with ease.

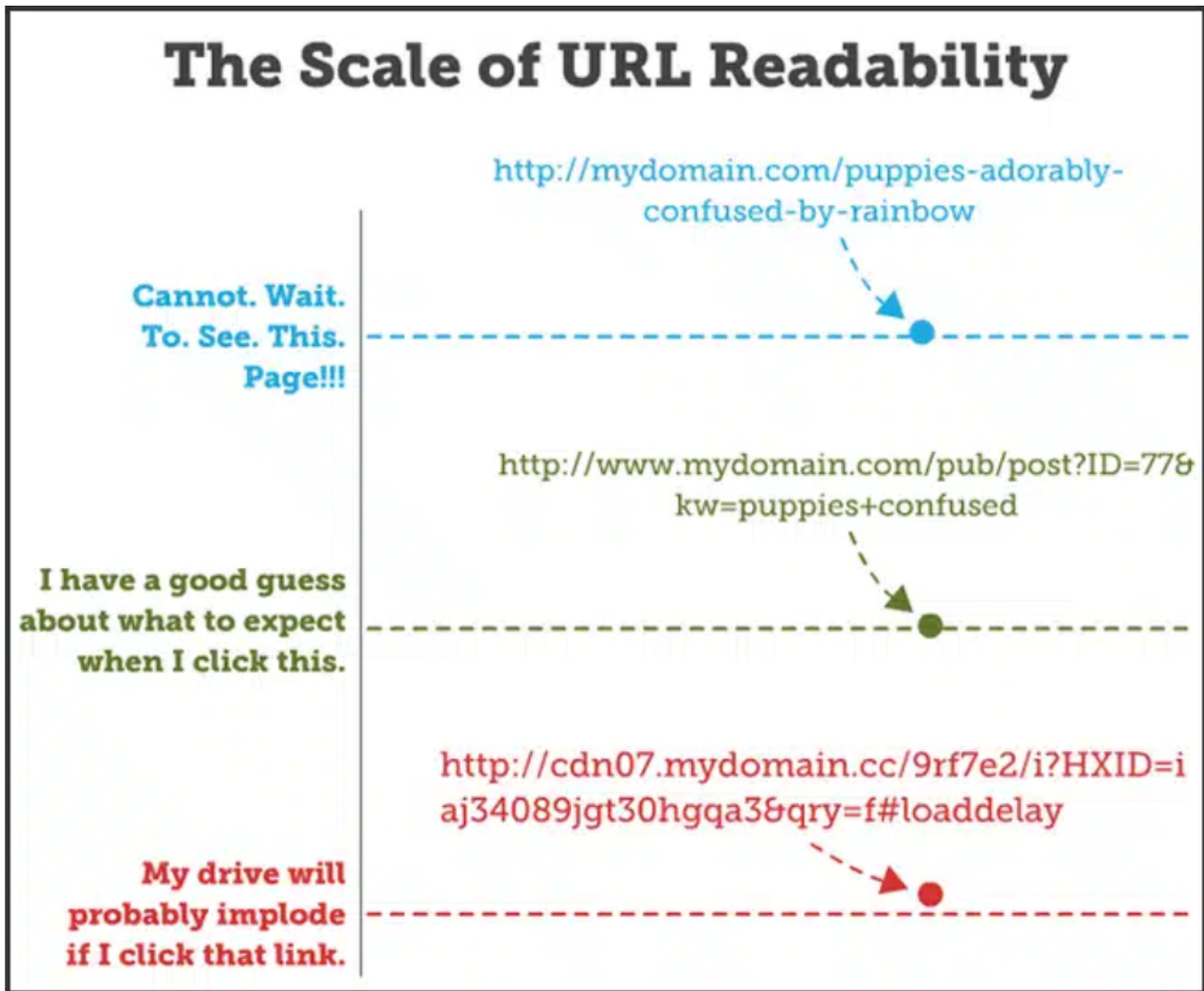
To boost your SEO

One of the most common reasons for a URL migration is search engine optimisation, otherwise known as SEO. While it shouldn't be the first step you take to improve your site ranking, domain migrations can significantly improve your SEO score when done correctly.

One of the key SEO errors first-time domain buyers make is a *lack of readability*. Like its users, Google needs to be able to crawl your URL quickly if you're going to appear on the top page of results.

If your URL is too long or contains numbers and symbols Google can't recognise, don't be surprised if your ranking takes a dip.

Take a look at this example from Moz, explaining how readability affects a URL's success:



(Image Source: [Moz](#))

If you migrate your domain to a more readable URL that contains at least one relevant keyword, you'll receive richer anchor texts that will significantly benefit you in a Google result.

5 ways to safely manage a domain migration

If you're undergoing your own domain migration, it's important that you carry out your change of web address safely. This will avoid negative impacts on your SEO and ensure that your brand identity still remains

intact.

Here are 5 ways you can migrate your domain safely:

301 redirects

If your brand was well known under a different domain, your loyal customers may be confused as to why they can no longer find you. Worse still, they may still be searching for your domain dead name and finding themselves unable to access your content.

Implementing 301 redirects to ensure that older URLs point users straight to the new one is a great way to avoid losing a consumer.

For example, if your previous domain was unicorns.com and your migrated domain is sparklyunicorns.com, installing a 301 redirect from unicorns.com/page to sparklyunicorns.com/page directs users and search engines to new content.

“301 redirecting the old URL to the new URL is essential. This will help to pass the power from existing external links to the old URL across to the new URL,” says Alex Harvey, head of SEO at ASOS. “It’s also important as it will enable search engine spiders to effectively find your new page, index the new URL, drop the old URL from the index and help to transfer any existing power the old page has across to the new page.”

XML sitemaps

One of the first steps in tackling a web address change is the creation of a new XML sitemap.

XML sitemaps list a URL for a site, making it easier for the website to be indexed by search engines such as Google. If you’re quick to inform Google of a change, your rankings are less likely to be affected.

If you're using a WordPress domain, we recommend using an SEO tool specifically for WordPress-managed sites, such as Yoast SEO or Google XML Sitemaps, which will help set up site-wide SEO defaults and monitor new rankings closely.

Content migration

If you're starting fresh, changing your domain name may be all that you need to do. However, those transferring their site content to a new website must have a secure content migration plan in mind.

We recommend that you implement the content migration process before redesigning your new interface. Doing this ensures that your new design can centre around your current content, maintaining familiarity and consistency across your website.

Before migrating your content, take time to re-work low-performing blog posts, headlines and product descriptions, as your site is already down to the public. This means that your new website will be home to more engaging, user-friendly content for a greater site UX.

User communication

One of the greatest risks you take when migrating your web address is the loss of your audience. If your target consumers are used to your old domain name and structure, it is a good idea to maintain an element of consistency within your new design.

This includes keeping brand colours the same and still adding certain recognisable keywords within the new domain name for a seamless jump.

Better still, why not keep your consumers in the loop? Send out an email to your subscribers and update the social followers of your migration on a number of different platforms.

Monitoring and testing

Last but not least, ensure that you are monitoring your domain migration to the best of your ability.

If you stay on top of your user experience design, broken links and redirects, you'll have little room for an SEO error.

We suggest that you try out a number of SEO monitoring tools to automate the process, such as Broken Link Checker and SEMrush, both of which can be used to inspect incoming and outgoing links as well as anchor texts and 404 errors.

Should you migrate your domain?

There is no easy answer to this question. While it is possible to change your web address at any time, it's important that you consider the pros and cons of domain migration before embarking on the change.

While it can have a positive benefit on your SEO, those who migrate their domain must follow a number of safety measures to ensure that their content and credibility stays in tact.