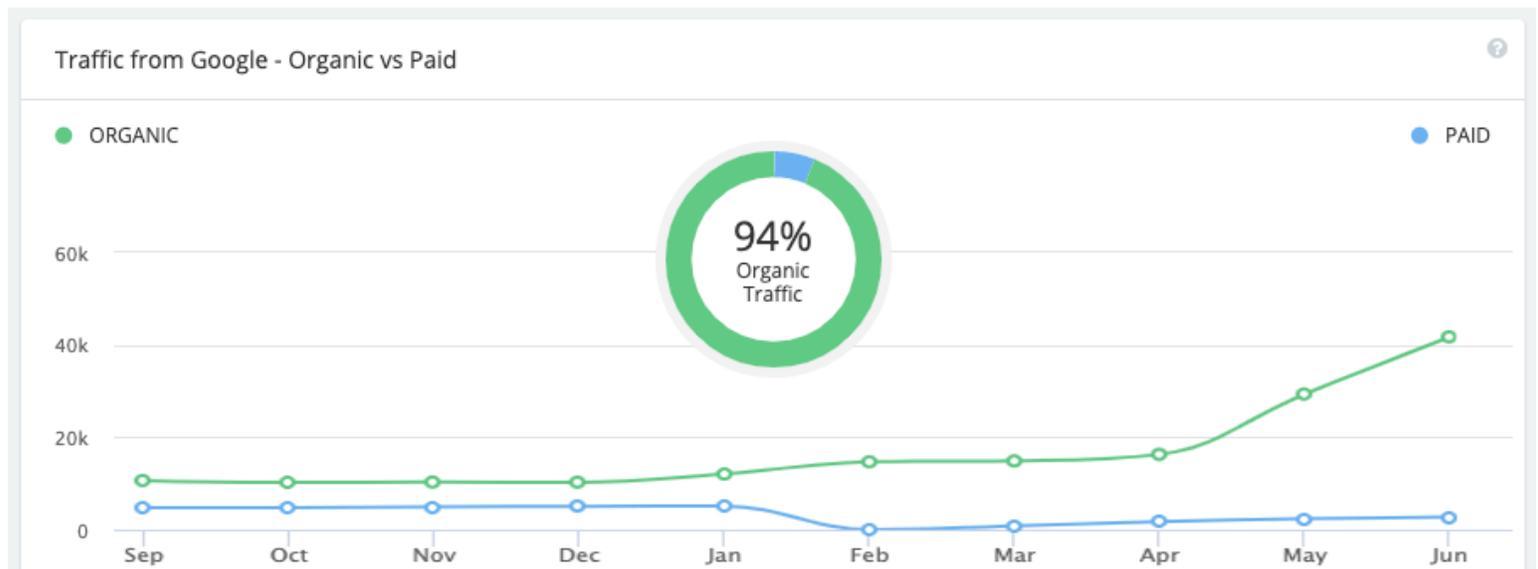


Departmental SEO Overhaul and Successful Enterprise Website Migration

When it comes to Enterprise SEO, businesses today share one common (yet, very attainable) goal: to be on the front page, at the top, of Google and other search engines. Yet, to get there they all take varying routes. Sometimes, these routes are difficult to navigate due to changes in algorithms, other factors, or just simply the competition upping their SEO game. More and more businesses are understanding the value of investing in white-hat organic SEO.

When taking on a large corporate website migration for a fortune 500 conglomerate, there are many considerations ranging from content to technical SEO. Many businesses fail to adequately support all areas and once migrated notice a substantial drop in Google rankings. But, this is a success story. Through carefully plotted out strategies, meetings with the leading company minds, and SEO guides custom written for each department, this team of professionals scored a decisive victory. Optimized content starting landing on both the current site and site in development in late January while launching the new website happened at the beginning of May. The company did not experience any drop in SEO through its website migration process. In fact, looking at their traffic increases for the months of May and June, they've quadrupled December's organic traffic levels!



Client Background Information

This client is in the global SaaS business space with more than 10 radically different software products built for different markets, verticals, and sizes of companies. This client is so well established they have an international network of smaller companies representing their products to their local constituents in nearly every industrialized country in the world. Their SaaS products support businesses in refining and streamlining manufacturing facility maintenance, multi-business site operations & management, financial reporting to meet national & international standards, physical space management, and more, also offering business intelligence metrics and insights. Their software is intricate and customized to each client, the equivalent of retaining a data scientist with a robust reporting team!

My client is very successful, so much so that a large Fortune 500 company bought them in 2019 and they became the money-making darling of the global super conglomerate. Their marketing mainstay was flooding the web with disjointed content, paid ads, email campaigns, global partners taking on all the marketing efforts for their local regions, and direct sales. They were using the spray and pray approach! Unfortunately, when it came to SEO they struggled to properly rank for relevant intent-based keywords.

To give you more of an idea of how much they struggled with keyword rankings, when I started, out of the nearly 500 keywords they managed to rank within the top 100 results, the only results in the top 20 were direct brand name words related to their software products. They had a strong desire to change that, and it became part of my mission. Once you get to the last pages of this case study you will see just how effective my support was in turning this around, first, all the details.

Goals

While collaborating with this client, their goals grew from ensuring a smooth, successful website migration to expanding their overall marketing reach and educating multiple departments on how to incorporate SEO into their messaging, leading to increased organic traffic, revenue, and conversions.

Timeline

My work on this project began with a narrowly defined set of objectives in late March 2020. While diligently turning straw into SEO gold, I studied the project parameters, listened carefully to the executive meetings where the website was introduced and began to notice a vast disparity between the state of the creative product being promised and what they had created so far. In late June 2020, the project crashed and burned. The company web developer leading the project was fired, and the project was handed to the director of creative services.

With new project management in place, the months of July and August were spent rescoping every step of the project and earning approvals at the different steps of the corporate structure. At this point, I was moved up into

a project management position to oversee the work being completed and became the liaison between the parent company and the website migration project.

September, October & November were spent creating standard operating procedures (SOPs) & protocols, writing SEO documents, overseeing the redevelopment of the drupal core of the website, preparing optimization strategies for each department, and supporting the content team's efforts to clean up web content.

December was spent implementing the changes with demand generation & beginning strategy implementation with the content department. The data reporting system was rehabilitated to be functional, accurate, and professional.

January, February & March were spent building advanced SEO principles into the website core and ensuring their proper display on the front end. Technical corrections were made, the advanced coding & image handling systems were developed and installed on the website.

April was spent ensuring the new website contained equal or improved content compared to the old website. The 301 redirect list was created and vetted. The website was crawled to locate and exterminate 404 errors, find and update internal 301 links, and major efforts were made to cross-link related content. The effects of the image naming and resource coding features were verified successes on the front end of the website.

The beginning of May was the launch point of the new website. There was a content freeze for the last two weeks of April and the first two weeks of May in an attempt to isolate the changes in analytics due exclusively to the website migration. Looking up at the graph on the first page, you can see the dramatic rise in organic traffic for the months of May and June.

In the last days of May 2021, my job was completed. Here is the feedback left on my Upwork profile by the director of creative services:

"Brant has worked with our organization since March of 2020 as our Search Engine Optimization Expert in building a new website. In this time, he has surpassed all expectations I had regarding his skills and abilities related to the project role. He has extended his responsibilities in this team to guide the project deliverables for SEO compliance and act as the SEO integration expert with content, technical, and marketing knowledge.

I have never seen an individual learn the business verticals as quickly as Brant. He is known within the project as the de facto expert in these areas and has been an incredible team member. He ensures his knowledge is accessible to anyone who needs it. Additionally, the speed and accuracy with which Brant

works is an absolute joy to watch. He has a high quality of output and is extremely clever in how he applies industry standards to the company's needs.

Brant's communication and documentation skills consistently go above and beyond requirements. He was extremely valuable to our team and I believe will make a tremendous impact in his next role. We completed our project successfully and I would work with him again given the opportunity."

Strategy

My SEO success strategy was built on a four-prong approach encompassing the organization as a whole as well as leveraging aspects of the parent company.

1. Identify and implement the immediate game-changing SEO optimizations for the company, to score some wins for demand generation in terms of leads & exposure.
2. Safeguard the long-term organic growth and success of the company by instigating company-wide change in perceptions of SEO.
3. Actively listen to the successes other OpCos were achieving and integrate their wins into our process.
4. Ensure the success of the website migration process!

Short Term SEO Growth Strategy

- Audit backlinks to disavow toxic links and sever black hat backlinks.
- Rewrite page titles, page addresses & content headings to include intent-based & volume-driven keywords with unique content.
- Perform an SEO audit of the entire company's internet presence, every page, every asset, and provide detailed optimization recommendations to improve SERP visibility for every page. Identify thin, stale & irrelevant pages marking them for improvement or removal.

Long Term SEO Growth Strategy

- Complete a detailed (250+ page) competitive analysis of 20 word-of-mouth competitors and 20 data-discovered competitors. Including data tables, public marketing assets & website sitemaps.
- Create department-specific SEO protocols for the sales & marketing, demand generation, content, and web departments. Train protocol recipients on leveraging SEO principles for greater success.
- Overhaul rudimentary data reporting system to provide clear & accurate professional business intelligence dashboards.
- Leverage data-driven metrics to tie relevant intent-based organic traffic with paid advertising to maximize exposure for key phrases with high conversion rates.

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- Develop extensive SEO-driven SOPs for content writers including single-page flyers for each content type. Train SOP recipients on leveraging SEO principles for greater success.

Conglomerate SEO Growth Strategy

- Collaborate with digital marketing leaders to solve pressing SEO issues including:
 - Increase conversion rates for product sales-based OpCos.
 - Increase organic rankings for pillar content pages.
 - Expand minimum standards for on-page content & blog content.
- Collaborate with social media marketing leaders to solve pressing SEO issues including:
 - Increase readership through leveraging social media platform-specific features.
 - Expand marketing reach through profile completion & social asset optimizations.
 - Connect with industry influencers & reputable brands to build off one another's successes.

Website Migration SEO Growth Strategy

- Meet with company leaders to present, approve and synchronize front-end SEO optimization initiatives.
- Recommend technical corrections to optimize the addressing system. Reorganize products & solutions, correct misspelled resource categories & include new categories.
- Devise a coding system for pages on the back end of the website to mark each page. Specify which product/industry/solution each resource asset belongs to.
- Insert approved recommendations into the JIRA ticket system to facilitate implementation.
- Train and manage back-end Drupal developers & Gatsby.js front-end developers on implementation of the latest SEO standards.
- Oversee the creation of detailed landing pages representing resource-rich experiences. These include videos, infographics, and images with correctly applied content headings and new words per page minimums.
- Create a directory of 301 redirects between all the verticals & products within the company.
- Crawl the website under construction with ScreamingFrog to identify technical SEO errors and insert them into JIRA tickets for resolution by the dev team.

Strategy Implementation

My work with this company ranged across several departments. There were immediate fires to put out in demand generation & content which were parallel pathed against my SEO work specifically addressing the website migration. On a third parallel path, I was asked to participate in and contribute to parent company-wide meetings featuring professionals from all 20 operating companies (OpCo) to bring back important lessons and discoveries for implementation at my local OpCo, while managing the website migration implementation team.

The Digital Marketing Office Hour meeting presented an opportunity to directly connect my OpCo with the latest internal tools and insight-generating integrations from an amazing group of professionals. After taking copious notes, vocally participating during strategic meetings, and supporting the resolution of their SEO dilemmas, I documented potential changes and updates to the project & submitted them to my team for inclusion.

The objective of the Social Media Marketing Office Hour is to codify a set of best practices to be employed across all OpCos. While each of these professionals is an expert in their social craft, each focused on their market & niche, they were missing a major component of social media's role and connection to the greater internet. I was asked to give a lengthy presentation comparing technical & content SEO principles with the social media platforms where they ply their craft and made suggestions on how to leverage their content for greater reach.

Demand Generation

Focusing back on the work with this client, demand generation was the natural place to start, diving deep into the sales funnel problems with the website, poor conversion rates, and waffling rankings: the center of the dysfunction. One typical failing of large companies is the speed with which they move and implement changes, updates, and upgrades. Thankfully, my presence bypassed most of the red tape typically involved in this system. As an independent contractor, I was able to take new ideas directly to the decision-makers for approvals and assign work to the appropriate employees for completion, usually on the same day.

Quick gains needed to be made with UX updates and targeted content updates to really start the ball rolling. I made a lengthy list of SEO requests starting with visual improvements to optimize conversion rates and ending with breaking down the number of barriers between users discovering the website and the ability to become a marketing qualified lead (MQL). This also included a backlink audit and the first of three rounds of submitting disavow files directly to Google. Someone somewhere was actively working against the best interests of the company, new black hat backlinks from bad digital neighborhoods were appearing on a weekly basis.

Once my research was complete, answer in hand, I made an appointment with the head of demand generation to present my findings with the goal of assigning this work to the appropriate parties to help put this fire out. By the end of the meeting, my list was divided into responsible parties and passed off to their digital desks.

Collecting intelligence on other businesses was a point of weakness for this company. Using a data-driven research approach we next identified the top 20 closest competitors and compared them against the top 20 word-of-mouth competitors uncovered through client interactions to select 40 targets. The result was a 250+ page competitive analysis complete with extensive data tables for each competitor featuring complete

advertising history (including text, ad spend & conversions), SERP ranking words & phrases, marketing materials publicly available through their web presence, and detailed website sitemaps with metadata.

Presenting internal business intelligence was another point of weakness. With an overwhelming number of complaints about their internal data reporting system, used to make multi-million dollar decisions for the company, attention needed to be turned to streamlining the Google Data Studio dashboards. The data sources pulled into Data Studio were examined and corrected to work out data reporting errors and false statistics before properly reconnecting them. The dashboards were revised to focus on including relevant information for use by specific departments. Capabilities to capture the reported data in a usable form were cleaned to provide accurate, readable data tables. A much more professional methodology for switching between data segments was deployed. This new data system included a table revealing the highest converting keywords which the ad specialist used to reduce cost per lead (CPL) from over \$1,200 to just over an astounding \$25.

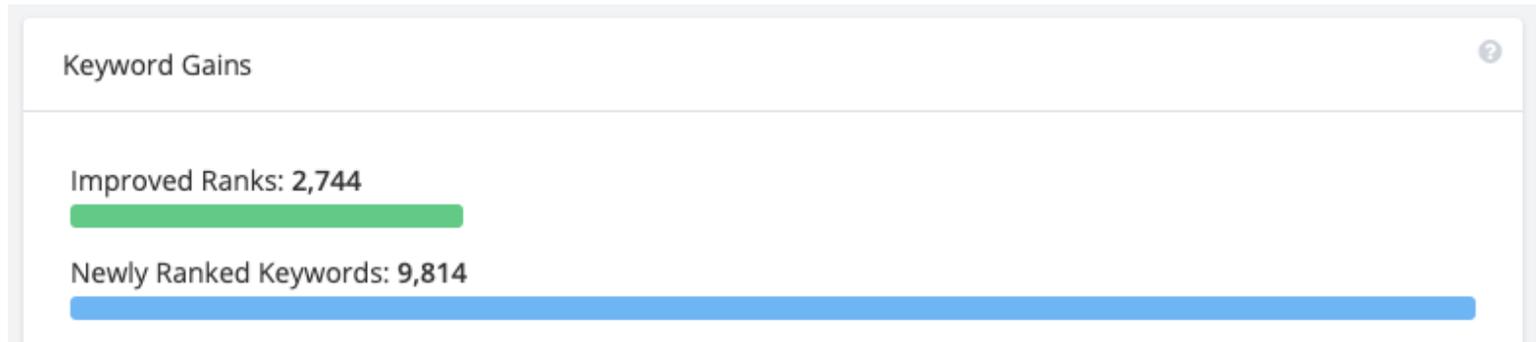
Content Department

Suggesting the content department was overworked and understaffed was an understatement. This micro department is responsible for 10 different SaaS products, the range of industries each product is compatible with, and the types of solutions represented by each combination of product & industry, and what solution the product satisfies. When stepping into this department it resembled a game of whack-a-mole rather than the lean, mean writing machine I stepped out of.

Having made substantial progress on putting the fire out in demand generation, I turned my attention to auditing every page on the website to uncover every possible way to breathe SEO life and sprinkle organic white hat SERP growth serum into every page. I made an optimization wish list of gains for implementation: expanding thin content found on nearly 500 pages, correcting how content headings are used, and correcting spelling & grammatical errors. This list, and the effort it represented, was used to secure more departmental funding and double the size of the team.

My work here was a ground-up approach where I first wrote guidelines and formulas for content creation. Once approved we scheduled training using the newly developed SEO training materials to get the content writers on board. The content department initiated a parallel path approach to fulfilling company-wide content requests leveraging the new guidelines while methodically building out or updating thin & stale content.

The previous content creation process lacked the "voice of Google" to reach and influence potential clients. I first examined keywords where my client was already ranking between positions 4 - 20. Together with the head of demand generation, we selected intent-based keywords to drive more marketing qualified leads (MQLs). These select keywords represent the prime SEO juju used to create landing pages with optimized addresses, headings, images & feature robust content from multiple content types.



The resources section of the website was a bear to tackle! It consists of collections of several content types from articles to videos. Single page flyers were created for content writers & marketing managers to leverage the upgrades in the platform for each of these resources with the optimized new website. I was asked to write an essay on Thought Leadership for the marketing department (product marketers and product marketing managers) to better understand how Google works, develop powerful new tools to discover & reach their audiences, and better interface with the new and improved content department.

Social Media Management

While shepherding the website migration along and focusing on the content department, I was able to work with the social media professionals to enhance their effectiveness in brand messaging. SOPs & guidelines were developed for each platform the company was utilizing for branding around delivering more effective and pointed content. I also wrote an essay on interlinking with businesses & influencers and finding more effective hashtags to expand brand reach.

Many of the principles of the Social Media Marketing Office Hour instigated by the parent company were captured and utilized by my client to increase the effectiveness of their social campaigns. The SMOH included an international cohort of professionals working in an incredible array of markets, verticals & niches.

While setting a new direction for future social content we also covered re-optimizing current asset titles, descriptions & profiles to renew SERP standing across platforms, and corrected URLs on social profiles to include keywords instead of randomly assigned letters and numbers. These are some of the most commonly overlooked SEO areas for social media!

Web Department

My initial SEO audit conducted as version 1.0 of the website was crashing and burning revealed that starting again from scratch and rebuilding the website from the bottom up was the only way to proceed. Many of the pages were missing meta information completely, documentation was non-existent, none of the pages included

schema data and tragically the titles & descriptions were often redundant and unrelated to the topic. Corrections were made in parallel to the content on both new and old websites while addressing & heading structure was only updated for the new website.

The web optimization process we employed ensured links from the old website landed on equal or improved content on the new website. This type of parity was established across the new site between the page address, page title, and H1 found on the page, with consideration to the keyword or key phrase the page was actually targeting. This concept resulted in small but steady gains in visibility during the duration of the project up to and through the final switch over. This was only one of many SEO improvements implemented during the migration process, represented in the dramatic increase in organic keywords represented below.

A groundbreaking intuitive system was developed to automatically rename images before display on the front end of the website, including image dimensions for cumulative layout shift (CLS) requirements, ALT tags & title tags. This system was entirely devised by myself, communicated & implemented at my express direction. The images are stored in a database-driven repository called by the front end of the website for display and thus providing an opportunity to alter the normal process and maximize the SEO value of the front-end of the website. Inserting delicately crafted code into this critical juncture enhanced the page-level SEO by using formula-based file naming conventions. These file names were then converted into ALT tags and title tags, optimizing each image on the front end for both search engines and Google's CLS update.

An advanced automatic internal linking system was developed and deployed with the new website to help website visitors, and Google, access resources based on a linking system in the back-end of the website. This was another value-driving system I devised, communicated & shepherded through completion during the website migration process. All pieces of optimized content, including every webpage and marketing asset present on the website, are now coded on the back end for their related product(s), solution(s), and industries. These codes are used to serve content based on back-end product, solution & industry selections to the front-end of the website. All resources, such as blog posts, displayed as images, metadata & intro content across the website now include their linked content type at the bottom of the intro content. The linked content type gives access to all other entries of that content type, for example, clicking on "Blog Posts" takes you to all blog posts. Following the main section is a new section featuring links to the related industries where clicking will take you to all resources for that industry. Following the section linking industries is a section linking applicable "solutions" where clicking takes you to all resources relating to that solution. Following that is a final section for which SaaS product(s) the content applies to where clicking takes you

Organic Keywords (SEO)

Organic Keywords

15,739 ↑

Est Monthly SEO Clicks

13,604

to all resources relating to that SaaS product. The resources are now so incredibly interlinked, any visitor (including Google) can now access any portion of the body of resources they want across four distinct slices: content type, industry represented, solution represented, and product of choice. Overall, we developed and published new content in each of the content types, developed fresh landing pages, overhauled product, service & industry pages, and created thousands of internal & external links throughout the website through both this interlinking system and highly valued editorial content links.

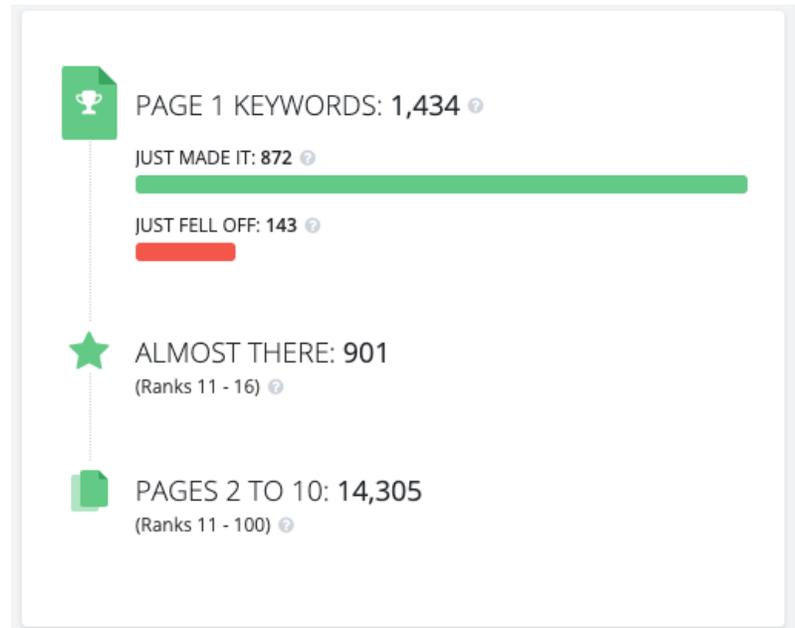
During the final cleanup stage, while the final pieces were being developed and dropped into place, my attention turned to bad, broken, and previously redirected links in the content. Crawls of the pre-launch website revealed substantial numbers, in the thousands, of 404 errors from internal pages removed from the website. Each of these errors was tracked down and corrected. Redirect errors, where an old link was redirected but not updated in the content, were next on the list, also numbering in the thousands. Up until the day of launching the new website, I was tasked with auditing, reauditing, and verifying all of the changes and enhancements being made to the website. Finally, the time came to update the DNS to point to the new website, deploy the 301 redirects, submit the sitemap to search engines & celebrate months of diligent work.

Website Migration Success

After two months, the results of the website migration are clear and have surpassed expectations! As you can see in the 6-month keyword screenshot, there are now 1,434 keywords on page 1 of Google, 872 just arrived there as a result of the migration. There are 901 keywords ranking on page 2 and an astounding 14,305 ranking within the first 100 positions in Google search.

Advanced data analytics were added to the website near the beginning of the year to monitor and track actual users as they navigate the website and offer methods for delivering feedback to the company.

The two weeks before and after launch included a content freeze where the content department stockpiled new optimized content to deploy post-launch. This important time was used to benchmark the changes in analytics before and after the new optimized website replaced the old one. While many of the changes performed prior to the content freeze were still leading to an increase in rankings and visibility, the analytics were rock steady.



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When the content freeze ended, the final results were in! The website migration was more than a complete success, no rankings were lost, there was no dip in traffic, in fact, quite the opposite! The great and wise Google was thoroughly appeased by the offering of the new website upon the altar of search. As you can see from the graphs below, this client more than quadrupled their organic traffic while reclaiming their ad spend for other priorities. And the best part? Even now, two months after launch, they have not yet fully realized the results of my work!

