The Senior Executive's Guide to Site Migrations: Key Considerations for Success

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A site migration is a huge undertaking, and getting it wrong can have a dramatic negative impact on your business. But if you get it right, it can support growth for years to come.

Whether you're currently migrating a site or considering it soon, this 4-step guide will help you ask the right questions and consider every angle so you can execute a successful site migration project.

Watch our video series, The Senior Executive's Guide to Site Migrations, for more details on how to execute the Plan, Build, Launch, and Run phases of your site migration project.

Watch the Series

Step 1: Plan Your Migration Project

Upfront planning is essential to the success of a site migration. Here are the key things to remember.

1. **Set goals and keep them top of mind.** Your migration is an opportunity to set up your business to achieve many of its objectives for years to come. It's a big investment, so carefully plan for how you will reach your goals.

2. **Better planning now will save you money in the long run.** Use this time to ensure you account for everything that will benefit your business long-term. It's easier, quicker, and more cost effective to modify your site's architecture or lay the foundation for other structural changes when the site is being torn down than when it's complete. If you think about it in terms of construction, changing pipes or inserting wiring is a lot simpler when the walls are already open than when you've put up the drywall and added a fresh coat of paint.

3. **Make strategic compromises.** Go deep on a few key channels or technology objectives rather than trying to scratch the surface on all of them. It's likely that you're going to have to choose some over others, and that's fine if you do an excellent job on the important ones.

4. **Plan for everything.** Clearly articulate the plan for every digital marketing channel you want active at launch, even if you don't have it right now.

Migrating a site is like building a house. The best time to make structural changes is when the walls are open. It costs 5x more to implement the same foundational alterations if you wait until after the migration is complete.

Step 2: Build Your Site

Once you have a plan for your site migration, it's time to start building. A migration requires the involvement of multiple departments, so in this phase it's important to partner with others across your organization. Some things to keep in mind at this stage include:

1. **The key to a successful build is constant engagement.** Include other departments in the discussion from the beginning and throughout the entire build process. Keeping everyone informed early and often will save you from explaining decisions and retracing your steps later.

2. **Remember your goals from the planning stage.** The goals you set at the beginning should be your guiding light. You want to enable tactics, but not be driven by them. To remain focused, have someone on the team continuously ask if what you're building achieves your strategic objectives.

3. **Maintain an iterative review approach to ensure things are done right.** Check your work as it's completed. Don't wait until the last minute to make sure everything works as expected.

4. **Constantly review your strategic plan against design and development milestones.** Your plan from Step 1 is still the most important driver here.

Step 3: Launch Your Site

You've built your site in partnership with others across the organization and now you're ready to think about launching it. After investing so much time, effort, and dollars into preparing your new site, it's crucial that you get it right when it goes live. Consider these three things when launching your migrated site:

1. **Build a checklist or plan and assign parties for each task.** Check your redirects, landing pages, images, and migrated content to ensure everything that was supposed to move actually did. Review as much as you can prior to launch to prevent any catastrophes when the site goes live.

2. **Understand that you'll see a drop in traffic.** As search engines and your customers adjust to your new site, you may see a loss in traffic from organic search or other channels. Put plans in place to generate traffic from a variety of sources to keep traffic consistent.

3. **Set benchmarks for both wins and losses.** Then check against them at planned intervals to make sure things are going smoothly.

Step 4: Run Your Site Using Digital Marketing Tactics to Drive Success

Congratulations – you've launched your migrated site! Now it's time to run with it and implement successful digital marketing tactics across all channels. Here are some key things to remember and consider post-launch:

1. **A solid foundation is table stakes.** It's your ante into the game and it won't ensure victory, so don't neglect this stage.

2. **Leverage data to drive decision making.** It will be your North Star for success. Integrate it into the way you run your digital marketing campaigns and ROI will follow.

3. **Don't forget about conversion rate optimization.** It's the ROI multiplier across all your digital marketing channels. Monitor performance, run A/B tests, and optimize as needed.

4. **Drive traffic across channels other than SEO in the near term.** Since organic traffic losses are expected at the beginning, put a plan in place to get traffic from other sources, like paid, to diversify your traffic and set up your site for better success long-term.

5. **Remember that digital marketing requires constant investment.** Keep leveraging data, optimizing for conversions, and investing in your site for weeks, months, and years after your migration project is complete.

The work doesn't end once your site is live. Keep your focus on growth and your site will continue to thrive.

Questions? We Have Answers

A website migration or re-platform is a complex project and this guide is by no means a complete list of the considerations that must go into the process. However, by thinking through these key areas, you can reduce risks to your budget and timeline, positioning your team for the best chance of success.

Do you need help planning, building, launching, or running your site? We're a leading global digital consultancy and have migrated and re-platformed hundreds of websites. We'd love to help you with yours. Contact us to get started.

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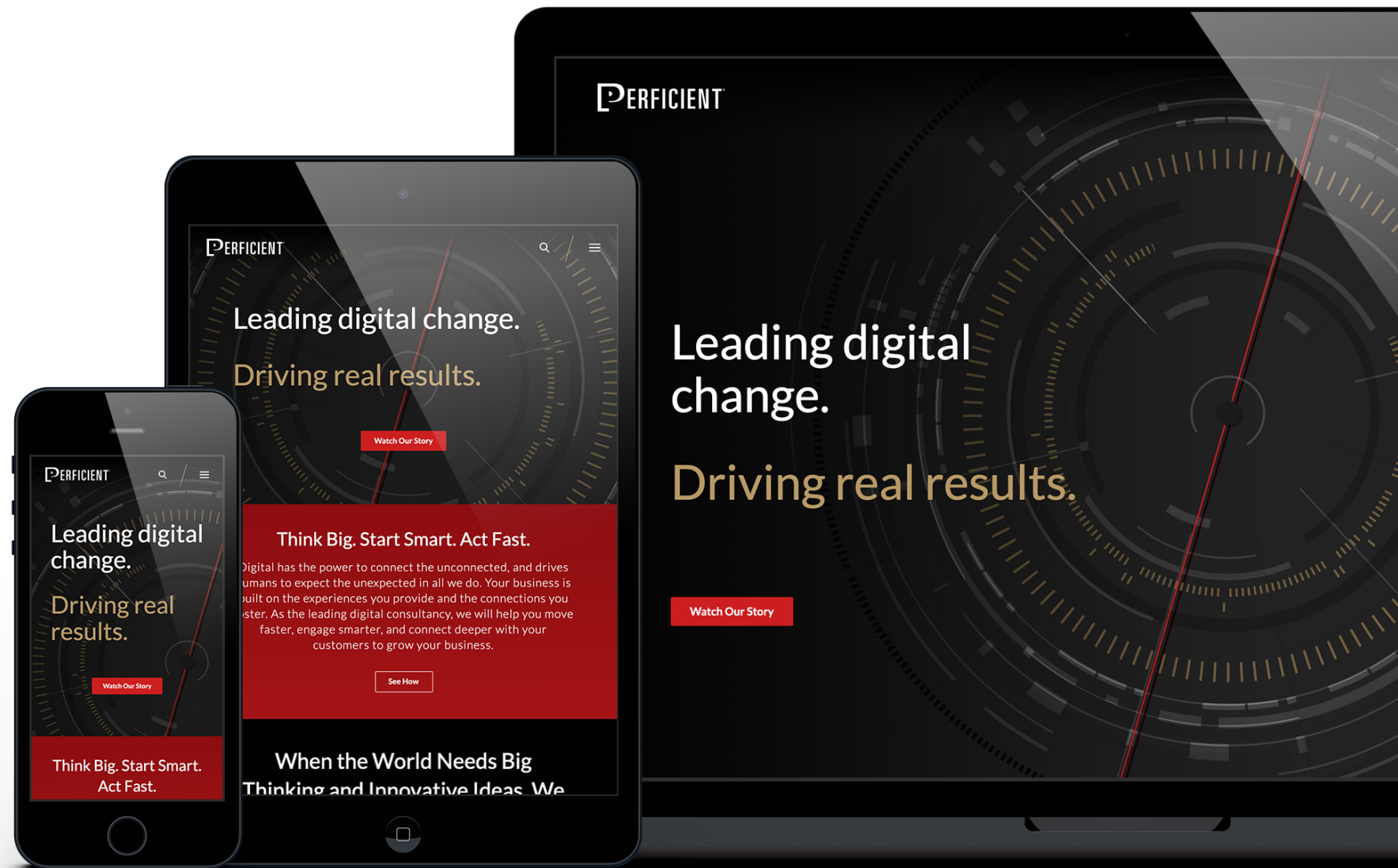
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