rtCamp

Enterprise open-source platform engineering

SEO Checklist for Website Migration

100+ checkpoints that protect organic visibility through the migration. Every migration phase is covered.

The risk is in how you leave your previous platform.
Most SEO losses during migration are caused by planning failures, not platform failures.

2X

Cox Automotive improved Core Web Vitals 2X after migration.

48%

VinSolutions improved Core Web Vitals by 48% after moving off Kentico.

This checklist covers every phase where rankings are at risk, pre-migration through 90 days post-launch.

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How to use this checklist

Work through each phase in order. Skipping a phase doesn't eliminate its risk, it defers it to launch day. The Notes / Evidence column is for your team to record findings, owners, and validation results.

Who this is for?

IT Directors, Engineering Leads, and Product Owners managing an enterprise CMS migration (AEM, Sitecore, Kentico, Drupal, Arc XP, or a custom platform) who need to preserve organic traffic, rankings, and Core Web Vitals through the transition.

Phases covered

01 **Pre-Migration Audit**
Before a single line is written

02 **Architecture & Build**
Build to preserve, not just to match

03 **Pre-Launch Validation**
Crawl simulation before DNS switch

04 **Launch Day**
DNS switch and first 24 hours

05 **Post-Launch Monitoring**
Days 1–90 (Hypercare)

Also included

Platform-specific SEO risks for AEM, Sitecore, Kentico, Drupal, and Arc XP, resolve before migration.

100+ checkpoints across 5 phases

Every migration phase covered: Pre-Migration Audit through 90-day hypercare.

Phase 01

Pre-Migration Audit

Before a single line is written

1.1 URL & redirect inventory

	Task	Notes / Evidence
☐	Export every live URL from the current CMS (full crawl, not sitemap only) Use Screaming Frog or sitemap + crawl combined	
☐	Flag URLs that earn organic traffic (GA4 / Search Console export) Priority URLs = top 500 by sessions	
☐	Flag URLs with backlinks (Ahrefs / SEMrush link export) Especially DR 40+ referring domains	
☐	Document URL patterns and slug structure, note every pattern variation e.g. /en/products/ vs /products/en/	
☐	Identify paginated, faceted, and filtered URL structures Common AEM pattern: URL params as SEO signals	
☐	Map every current URL to its new target URL on the destination platform 1:1 mapping spreadsheet, mandatory before build starts	
☐	Validate redirect chains: max 2 hops (A → B → C is a failure) Chain depth erodes link equity	
☐	Confirm no destination URL conflicts (two old URLs mapped to same new URL) Crawl the draft map for duplicates	

1.2 Metadata & on-page inventory

	Task	Notes / Evidence
☐	Export all page title tags, flag duplicates and missing values Screaming Frog or CMS export	
☐	Export all meta descriptions, flag duplicates, missing, and >160 characters	
☐	Export all H1s, flag pages with missing or multiple H1s	
☐	Document canonical tag logic (self-referencing vs. cross-domain vs. none) Document CMS-level canonical rules, not page-by-page	
☐	Export all hreflang tags (for multilingual sites) Critical: Videojet migrated 22 languages, hreflang errors cause ranking collapse	
☐	Export OG and Twitter card tags for social-shared pages	

	Task	Notes / Evidence
☐	Document noindex / nofollow rules, crawl directives, robots.txt, meta robots	
☐	Export structured data / schema markup per content type Product, Article, FAQ, BreadcrumbList, map to new CMS fields	

1.3 Performance baseline (Core Web Vitals)

	Task	Notes / Evidence
☐	Record LCP, INP, CLS for top 20 traffic pages (field data from CrUX) Google Search Console → Core Web Vitals report	
☐	Record TTFB baseline for server response time Target: <800ms	
☐	Screenshot PageSpeed Insights scores for top pages Attach to project record as baseline evidence	
☐	Record current crawl budget: average pages crawled per day (Search Console)	
☐	Benchmark total organic sessions and impressions (last 90 days) Comparison baseline for post-launch	

1.4 Content & internal linking audit

	Task	Notes / Evidence
☐	Crawl and export all internal links from the current site	
☐	Identify pages that will break if a URL changes without a redirect	
☐	Export image alt text across the site, flag blanks and generic values Alt text is migrated as data, not reconstructed post-launch	
☐	Document custom fields and content model per content type Field-by-field mapping prevents data loss in migration scripts	
☐	Export author and contributor data (bylines, profiles, taxonomies) Critical for media/publishing sites and acquisition scenarios	
☐	Document taxonomy structure: categories, tags, custom taxonomies Map to destination taxonomy before migration scripts run	
☐	Flag pages with thin content (<300 words) that may not warrant migration Decide: migrate, consolidate, or 301 to parent	

Phase
02

Architecture & Build

Build to preserve, not just to match

2.1 URL architecture on destination platform

Task	Notes / Evidence
☐ Implement 1:1 URL map as server-level 301 redirects (not CMS redirects where possible) Server-level redirects are faster and more reliable at scale	
☐ Test every redirect in the map before launch, confirm 301 (not 302) and correct destination 302s do not pass full link equity	
☐ Confirm no redirect loops in the map A → B and B → A is catastrophic	
☐ Verify that priority URLs redirect to exact equivalents, not category pages Diluting high-equity URLs to category pages destroys equity	
☐ Test URL patterns for dynamic pages (pagination, taxonomy archives, faceted navigation)	

2.2 Metadata implementation

Task	Notes / Evidence
☐ Confirm CMS field mapping for title tags, source field → destination field documented	
☐ Confirm CMS field mapping for meta descriptions	
☐ Confirm CMS field mapping for canonical tags, test self-referencing logic on staging	
☐ Implement hreflang tags on staging and validate with hreflang validator For multilingual sites; validate before launch, not after	
☐ Implement structured data on destination platform, validate with Rich Results Test	
☐ Verify OG and Twitter card tags are populated and rendering correctly on staging Use OpenGraph.xyz preview	

2.3 Performance architecture

Task	Notes / Evidence
☐ Implement image optimization pipeline: WebP conversion, lazy loading, explicit width/height CLS failures most commonly come from images without dimensions	
☐ Implement font loading strategy: font-display: swap + preload for critical fonts LCP impact from late font loading	
☐ Configure server-side or edge caching, confirm TTL for page types and assets	
☐ Set up CDN and confirm asset delivery paths on staging	
☐ Configure Critical CSS or defer non-critical CSS (above-the-fold LCP targets)	
☐ Validate that third-party scripts (analytics, CRM, ads) are loaded async or deferred Third-party script loading is the #1 cause of INP regressions post-launch	
☐ Run PageSpeed Insights on staging for top 5 pages, confirm equal or better CWV vs baseline Must match or beat the pre-migration baseline	

2.4 Technical SEO on staging

Task	Notes / Evidence
☐ Block staging environment from Google with robots.txt disallow or noindex Do not allow staging to be indexed	
☐ Generate and validate XML sitemap on staging platform Must include only indexable URLs	
☐ Validate robots.txt on staging, confirm production rules are not accidentally blocking pages Common launch failure: production robots.txt copied from staging	
☐ Implement pagination handling: rel=next/prev or canonical-to-paginated-parent strategy	
☐ Confirm breadcrumb navigation renders and schema is implemented	
☐ Audit internal links in migrated content, update hardcoded old URLs to new paths Absolute old-domain internal links break after DNS switch	
☐ Test 404 page: custom 404 returns 404 status code (not 200 or 301)	

Phase
03

Pre-Launch Validation

Crawl simulation before DNS switch

3.1 Full crawl simulation on staging

	Task	Notes / Evidence
☐	Run full crawl of staging with authentication headers (Screaming Frog → staging URL) Crawl as Googlebot to catch any blocking differences	
☐	Compare crawled URL count to source crawl from Phase 1, flag missing pages A 10% delta in crawlable page count needs explanation before launch	
☐	Spot-check 50+ high-traffic pages: title, meta, H1, canonical, structured data	
☐	Validate all redirects in the full 301 map are live on staging Automate: run the URL map through a redirect checker script	
☐	Confirm no redirect chains > 2 hops remain	
☐	Check for soft 404s: pages returning 200 status with 'page not found' content	
☐	Run broken link check across the full staging site	

3.2 Integration & analytics verification

	Task	Notes / Evidence
☐	Verify GA4 fires correctly on all page types in staging Use GA4 DebugView to confirm page_view events	
☐	Verify Google Tag Manager container is loading and all triggers fire Export GTM container from old platform; validate in new environment	
☐	Confirm Search Console ownership verification carries over to the new platform HTML tag or DNS method preferred	
☐	Test all forms: lead capture, contact, newsletter, confirm CRM integration Broken form integrations cost leads on day 1	
☐	Test any DAM integrations, media assets resolving from correct CDN paths	
☐	Test Marketo / HubSpot tracking script firing per page type	
☐	Confirm ad conversion pixels (Google Ads, Meta) fire on confirmation pages	

3.3 Final go/no-go checklist

Task	Notes / Evidence
☐ Full URL redirect map validated: 100% of priority URLs return 301 to correct destination Non-negotiable before DNS switch	
☐ Staging robots.txt updated to allow production crawl, staging block removed	
☐ XML sitemap tested and confirmed to return 200 status and contain correct URLs	
☐ GA4 firing confirmed on staging with production config loaded	
☐ Rollback plan documented and tested: can revert DNS within 15 minutes Blue-green deployment or instant DNS TTL reduction	
☐ DNS TTL reduced to 300 seconds (5 min) at least 48 hours before launch Allows fast rollback if needed post-switch	
☐ Monitoring dashboards live: uptime, Googlebot crawl rate, organic sessions, 4xx error rate Set alert thresholds: 4xx >2% triggers review	
☐ Hypercare team assigned: who owns SEO monitoring for 30 days post-launch?	

Phase 04

Launch Day

DNS switch and first 24 hours

4.1 DNS switch & first 24 hours

Task	Notes / Evidence
☐ DNS switch executed, confirm propagation with DNS checker across regions dnschecker.org, check A record across 20+ nodes	
☐ Crawl production immediately post-launch: confirm redirects live, no staging URLs leaking	
☐ Confirm XML sitemap is live and submittable in Google Search Console Resubmit sitemap in GSC within 1 hour of DNS switch	
☐ Confirm robots.txt on production allows Googlebot, no leftover staging disallow First thing to check after DNS propagates	
☐ Monitor GSC Crawl Stats: confirm Googlebot is crawling new platform within 12 hours	
☐ Monitor GA4: confirm organic sessions are registering from launch (not 0 or flat)	
☐ Monitor 4xx error rate in real-time, flag any URL generating significant 404 traffic Any 404 from a previously-ranked URL needs an immediate redirect	
☐ Monitor server response time and uptime, alert on TTFB > 1.2s	
☐ Spot-check top 50 priority URLs on production: title, meta, canonical, structured data	
☐ Confirm all form integrations are live and passing data to CRM	

Phase
05

Post-Launch Monitoring

Days 1–90 (Hypercare)

5.1 Week 1 (critical window)

	Task	Notes / Evidence
☐	Daily: check GSC Coverage report for new Index/Excluded/Error URLs Spike in 'Excluded' = canonicalization issue	
☐	Daily: monitor organic session trends vs 14-day pre-migration baseline Expect 5–10% fluctuation; >20% drop requires investigation	
☐	Daily: check 4xx error log for any high-traffic 404s, add missing redirects same day	
☐	Run a full re-crawl of production (Screaming Frog) on Day 3 and Day 7	
☐	Confirm Googlebot crawl rate in GSC Crawl Stats is stable A crawl drop means Googlebot is being blocked	
☐	Validate Core Web Vitals in PageSpeed Insights on Day 7 Compare to pre-migration baseline	

5.2 Month 1 (stabilization)

	Task	Notes / Evidence
☐	Weekly: compare top 100 ranking keywords to pre-migration snapshot Track position delta, not just session volume	
☐	Weekly: check for new GSC errors in Index Coverage Resolve any Crawl Anomaly or Server Error entries	
☐	Submit updated XML sitemap to GSC after any URL structure changes	
☐	Validate that CWV field data is beginning to populate in GSC, usually takes 28 days Field data lags; don't alarm at day 7 gaps	
☐	Run backlink audit: confirm high-DR referring domains resolving via 301	
☐	Confirm all lead capture / form conversion events tracking in GA4 correctly	

5.3 Months 2–3 (recovery & improvement)

	Task	Notes / Evidence
☐	Compare organic sessions (30-day period) to same period pre-migration	
☐	Run full CWV audit: compare field LCP, INP, CLS to baseline Cox Automotive achieved 2× CWV post-migration; VinSolutions 48% improvement	
☐	Remove any now-unnecessary redirect chains, update internal links to final URLs Clean up Phase 1 redirect debt	
☐	Review top 10 pages that dropped in ranking, audit for metadata, link equity, content gaps	
☐	Archive or 410 any legacy platform URLs still generating crawl traffic Old staging, CDN paths	
☐	Build and publish migration retrospective Governance documentation is a standard rtCamp deliverable	

Platform-specific SEO risks

Resolve before migration. Each platform has unique crawl, URL, and schema traps.

Adobe Experience Manager

URL parameter handling: AEM sites often serve identical content under multiple URL patterns. Audit for canonical conflicts before migration. DAM asset paths change in every AEM migration, map /content/dam/ paths to new CDN/media paths explicitly.

SITECORE

Sitecore XM Cloud migrations frequently change URL structure due to SXA component changes. Personalization rules can generate unique URLs that become orphaned post-migration. Audit experience profiles and personalization variants before finalizing the URL map.

Kentico

Kentico's virtual path provider generates URLs not visible in standard crawls. Run a direct DB export of the virtual URL table alongside the crawl. Xperience 13 → 26 upgrade path frequently breaks structured data schema, re-validate all schema after migration.

Drupal

The Drupal Pathauto module generates aliases that may not match the canonical path. Export both node/[id] paths and aliases, both need 301s. Drupal Views pages frequently create unindexed content that becomes orphaned unless Views are rebuilt in the destination CMS.

arcxp

Arc XP's content API generates content at canonical URLs that differ from rendered page URLs. Both need mapping. Traffic-based pricing model means that post-migration crawl simulation should account for reduced Googlebot crawl rate on lower-traffic staging environments.

rtCamp

Not sure where your migration stands?

rtCamp's migration architects will map your current CMS architecture, identify every SEO risk, and build the redirect map before any contract is signed.

Get 20 hours of free discovery →

About rtCamp

rtCamp is an enterprise open-source platform engineering company. We replace vendor-controlled CMS platforms with governed WordPress infrastructure that enterprises own.

300+ enterprise engagements.

Our clients include Cox Automotive, Danaher (Videojet), Penske Media, Al Jazeera, Private Media, and LeadVenture.

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