

## SEO Case Study: Precious Metals Retailer

### Background

The client is one of the country's leading retailers of precious metals, offering investors and collectors a wide range of gold, silver, platinum, coins, and rare currency.

### Challenge

Looking to improve their site's speed and backend usability, the client needed to upgrade their Content Management System (CMS). Their previous CMS was slow and cumbersome, making it difficult for the client's Marketing Team to quickly and easily create new pages or make changes to the site's navigation. They needed to upgrade to a CMS that was more search-engine-friendly and would enable them to scale their online marketing strategy and drive organic traffic. In an effort to support their long-term online marketing goals, the client decided to implement a website redesign in tandem with the CMS migration.

The client turned to The Search Agency to develop and execute a Website Migration Plan, which would prevent the loss of organic search traffic and ensure a consistent user experience during the migration process. The client also sought The Search Agency's expertise redesigning their website to promote the creation of new content and grow organic traffic long-term.

### Solution

The Account Team immediately started executing a three-phased website migration strategy to maintain traffic and the client's on-site consumer experience during the migration and drive long-term organic traffic.

- **Developed a migration timeline-** The client partnered with The Search Agency 12 months before their planned launch date, providing the account team ample time to review the site's analytics data and develop an understanding of how consumers interacted with their site. With insight into the type of research consumers conducted on their site and an understanding of what content was popular and which pages drove the most traffic and conversions, the account team was able to establish high-level content and structural priorities for the new site. The account team then developed a 7-month-long timeline to design and code the new site, optimize on- and off-page content, and implement a site wide linking strategy. Here's a summary of the timeline:
  - 1.5 month wireframes
  - 1.5 month design
  - 3 months of coding
  - 1 month of Quality Assurance
  - Launch
- **Coordinated Tech and Marketing goals-** The account team worked directly with the client's Marketing and Tech teams during the initial pre-migration phase to ensure that both of their interests for the new site were addressed and incorporated into the migration strategy and site redesign plans.
  - The account team conducted bi-weekly calls with the Tech Team and weekly calls with the Marketing Team during the first three months

- After the initial design and strategy phase, the account team conducted weekly collective calls with both Marketing and Tech to further coordination between the two teams during the migration prep and assure that all changes made to the site were SEO-friendly.
- **Conducted original site analysis-** In collaboration with the client’s marketing team, the account team conducted further research on on-site user behavior to determine where the original site was succeeding and where improvements could be made going forward.
  - **Competitor analysis-** The account team also conducted extensive competitor research to see how other players in the industry had structured their content, and if there were any best practices or strategies the client could leverage in its redesign. In this case, none of the client’s competitors had a good model to replicate and this research became the standard of what not to do on the new site.
  - **Webmaster Tools analysis-** From a technical standpoint, the account team leveraged Google and Bing’s Webmaster Tools to research how the search engines were crawling and indexing the original site.
- **Developed a logical content structure-** The account team developed a content structure centered on the client’s key products and services—gold, silver, and precious metals. An intuitive on-site content structure makes it easier for consumers to drill quickly into a site and find the exact content or product they are looking for. It also makes it easier for search engines to quickly scan and access a site, helping to improve site crawlability and drive long-term organic traffic.
- **Improved internal linking scheme-** The account team developed an SEO-optimized internal linking plan to better correlate content and products on the client’s site.
- **Designed content migration plan-** The account team designed a comprehensive content migration plan, which outlined what content needed be migrated and where it would live on the new site as well as what content would be left behind in the migration. The process included reviewing all existing URLs, prioritizing the migration of content, and removing expired pages.
  - Prioritized important site pages, i.e., high traffic pages, pages that were essential from a marketing or brand standpoint, such as the Homepage.
  - Developed a detailed URL inventory of the site’s 12,000 URLs.
  - Removed all expired product pages that were sitting dormant on the site.
  - Cross-referenced the client’s entire product inventory with URLs.
  - Discontinued “orphan pages” and redirected them to relevant alternatives.
- **Optimized existing content-** The account team conducted extensive keyword research and edited all existing on page and meta-data content that was to be migrated to the new site to make it SEO-optimized.
- **Introduced proper 301 redirects** to send both users and the search engines to the new pages
- **Developed a linking migration strategy-** The account team reviewed each of the client’s 30,000 external links. The account team reached out to high-level links and asked them to update their anchor texts, the pages their links were pointing to, and ALT texts in the case of images.
  - **Removed “spammy” links-** The distribution of precious metals is still an up-and-coming industry online and there are lots of “spammy” links generated by low-end metal resellers. When the account team started developing the linking strategy, they came across several such “spammy” links directed to the client’s site. These links needed to be broken, as they were a liability for the client’s organic traffic going forward. The account team reached out to individual link holders and asked them to remove the links. If the links were directed to pages of little value to the client, the account team replaced the pages with 404 error pages.
- **Leveraged The Search Agency’s best practices to help the client design a custom 404 page.**

- **Implemented an immediate migration and QA-** Once all the pre-migration preparation was completed, the client was ready to migrate their site. In collaboration with the client's Tech Team, the account team migrated the site at 12pm EST. By 12:30 the account team had crawled 1,000 pages, identifying missing analytics code and broken links, issues they were quickly able to fix.
- **Post-migration monitoring reports-** The account team created weekly customized monitoring reports, which were reviewed with the client every Monday morning. The weekly reported included information on the following data points:
  - Webmaster Tools analytics on crawl behavior and traffic.
  - Monitored top 100 brand and non-brand keywords.
  - Monitored in-bound links and how they were impacted post migration.
  - Monitored traffic daily for 90 days post-migration.
  - Investigated any drops in traffic or rankings.
- **Summited updated XML sitemap and XML video sitemap to Google and Bing.**

## Results

Thanks to The Search Agency's SEO-focused website migration plan, the client has seen consistent growth in its organic traffic. Immediately after the migration, the account team noticed an expected decline in traffic, number of pages indexed, and non-brand keywords. Within a month of the migration, though, the client's organic traffic had increased by almost 75 percent and continues to grow steadily.

**Overall Organic Traffic**

