

THE COMPLETE GUIDE

The complete website migration checklist

Moving to a new domain, new hosting or a new agency? This covers the lot — domain transfer, hosting, email, SEO, analytics, Google Ads, Meta, socials, local listings and CRM. Work top to bottom, assign one accountable owner per side, and tick nothing off on someone's word alone.

Each step below links to the matching section of the full guide at bfj.digital/insights/website-migration-checklist.



RULE ZERO

Nothing gets deleted, cancelled or decommissioned until every item below is confirmed complete **in writing**. Agree who decommissions what, and only after written confirmation of receipt. Ownership and access are not the same thing.

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Plan the project

- ☐ Migration goal written down; defines what may and may not change
- ☐ Every task assigned to a named person (agency / in-house / dev)
- ☐ Timeline built backwards from launch date; weeks not days
- ☐ Small/medium sites: move all at once (Google guidance); large sites in phases
- ☐ Moving to an existing domain: backlink / penalty / Wayback health check first

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Asset inventory (do first)

- ☐ List every domain (incl. old, redirect and defensive registrations)
- ☐ List hosting accounts, server environments and staging sites
- ☐ Identify DNS provider (may differ from registrar, e.g. Cloudflare)
- ☐ List email hosting and every mailbox / alias on the domain
- ☐ List CMS admin accounts, theme / plugin / builder licences
- ☐ List GSC, GA4, GTM, Google Ads, Meta BM, Merchant Centre, Microsoft Ads
- ☐ List Google Business Profiles (one per location)
- ☐ List social accounts: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, YouTube

- ☐ List email marketing platform, CRM, forms, chat, booking, payments
- ☐ List call tracking numbers and IVR configuration
- ☐ List review platforms, directories, integrations, APIs, webhooks
- ☐ For each asset record: owner, admin access holders, login location

2 Domain & DNS [↗](#)

- ☐ Registrant of each domain is your business entity (correct ABN)
- ☐ Domain password / EPP / auth key obtained for each domain
- ☐ Domain unlocked at current registrar; transfer confirmed at receiving end
- ☐ All DNS records exported / screenshotted before nameserver change
- ☐ DNS management account (e.g. Cloudflare) transferred to your ownership
- ☐ SSL certificates checked: issuer, expiry, survives the move
- ☐ TTL lowered 24–48 hrs before cutover
- ☐ Credentials shared via secure method only (never plain email)

3 Website & hosting [↗](#)

- ☐ Complete backup taken: files AND database
- ☐ Backup restored and verified in new environment before old is touched
- ☐ Fresh named CMS admin account in your name (not shared agency login)
- ☐ Premium plugins / themes / licences listed; agency-licensed + domain-locked ones flagged
- ☐ Hosting platform, plan, config (caching, CDN, firewall) documented
- ☐ Staging environments migrated or recreated
- ☐ Old hosting decommission date agreed in writing, post-confirmation only
- ☐ Copy of final backup stored somewhere you control

4 Email [↗](#)

- ☐ Email host identified (may share server with website — check first)
- ☐ All mailboxes / aliases listed; mail data migrated before cutover
- ☐ MX records updated at correct point in cutover sequence
- ☐ SPF, DKIM, DMARC recreated for new environment
- ☐ Email marketing platform ownership transferred; lists exported as backup
- ☐ Sending domains updated and re-verified

- ☐ Full site crawl and URL inventory exported before changes
- ☐ 301 redirect map built and tested (page-to-page, not all-to-homepage)
- ☐ Redirects prioritised by URL value (traffic, conversions, backlinks)
- ☐ Redirect chains flattened (Google: no more than 3 hops)
- ☐ Rankings, top pages and organic traffic benchmarked
- ☐ Backlink profile exported; top linked pages redirect correctly
- ☐ GSC verified for EVERY variant (www / non-www, http / https, subdomains), both sites
- ☐ Change of address submitted in GSC for each old-domain variant
- ☐ Both sitemaps kept submitted (old + new) to watch indexation cross over
- ☐ Disavow file re-uploaded to new property (if one existed)
- ☐ Host warned of post-migration crawl surge; capacity confirmed
- ☐ XML sitemap and robots.txt updated; no accidental noindex
- ☐ Staging noindexed until launch; canonicals audited at cutover
- ☐ Custom 404 page live; 404 traffic monitored in GA4 for 30 days
- ☐ Old URLs left crawlable post-cutover (no robots block / noindex)
- ☐ Bing: Site Move submitted + Bing Places updated
- ☐ Domain updated across directories, listings, partner sites, signatures
- ☐ Rankings and crawl errors monitored weekly for 90 days

- ☐ Every page triaged: keep / refresh / consolidate / retire / redirect-only
- ☐ Retired pages with backlinks redirected to relevant pages, never 404
- ☐ No redesign + migration at once (or accept the risk knowingly, benchmark harder)
- ☐ Ranking pages ported near word-for-word; same headings and intent
- ☐ Title tags and meta descriptions kept identical
- ☐ URL slugs unchanged wherever possible
- ☐ Media library migrated: same file names and alt text
- ☐ Schema / structured data carried over (LocalBusiness, FAQ, Product, reviews)
- ☐ Internal links point to new URLs directly, not via redirects
- ☐ Core Web Vitals benchmarked before and after
- ☐ Accessibility checked on new templates (headings, contrast, keyboard) + PDFs

- ☐ GA4 owned at account level by your business (not a seat on agency's)
- ☐ GTM container ownership transferred; container exported as backup
- ☐ All conversions, events and goals documented
- ☐ Tracking re-verified on new site before cutover (forms, calls, sales)
- ☐ Call tracking account and numbers transferred (numbers may be agency-licensed)
- ☐ Heatmaps, session recording, dashboards and reporting connections moved

- ☐ Google Ads account under YOUR billing / admin; agency linked via MCC only
- ☐ Agency MCC unlinked and agency users removed on exit
- ☐ Historical performance data and ad copy exported
- ☐ Meta: your own Business Manager set up; you own page and pixel
- ☐ Meta: new ad account in your BM if old one sits in agency's (non-transferable)
- ☐ Agencies granted partner access — never sole ownership
- ☐ Merchant Centre, Microsoft Ads, LinkedIn transferred same way
- ☐ Billing details updated so campaigns don't stop or misbill
- ☐ Final-month spend pacing agreed and visible in writing

- ☐ Meta: Page inside YOUR Business Portfolio; ex-staff / old agency admins removed
- ☐ Meta: NEW domain verified in Business Manager (Brand Safety > Domains)
- ☐ Meta: Page About URL, CTA button, pinned posts updated
- ☐ Meta: Facebook Login OAuth redirect URIs updated to new domain
- ☐ Instagram: linked to correct FB Page; bio link + link-in-bio buttons updated
- ☐ Instagram: action buttons updated; IG Shopping catalogue domain updated
- ☐ LinkedIn: current company-controlled Super Admin confirmed
- ☐ LinkedIn: About URL, custom button, Showcase Pages updated; top posts re-pinned
- ☐ LinkedIn: team profile links updated
- ☐ TikTok: account + Business Center ownership confirmed; bio link updated
- ☐ TikTok: pixel / events re-verified; TikTok Shop domain updated
- ☐ YouTube: channel owned by company Google identity (not personal Gmail)

- ☐ YouTube: associated website re-verified; About / banner links updated
- ☐ YouTube: end screens, cards, top descriptions, pinned comments swept
- ☐ X: bio website field + pinned post updated
- ☐ Pinterest: new domain claimed; rich pins re-validated
- ☐ GBP: every location profile transferred individually + URLs updated; Bing Places
- ☐ Scheduling tools reconnected; queued posts + UTM templates updated

10 Citations & aggregators [↗](#)

- ☐ NAP citations audited (name, address, phone, website)
- ☐ Data aggregators updated (feeds for Google, Apple Maps, Bing, navigation)
- ☐ Major directories: Yellow Pages, True Local, Yelp, industry associations
- ☐ Review platform profiles updated
- ☐ Partner / supplier sites linking to old domain asked to update (easy backlinks)
- ☐ Affiliate links, QR codes and short URLs in circulation checked
- ☐ Physical world: vehicles, signage, packaging, cards — reprint or keep redirect

10b E-commerce (if applicable) [↗](#)

- ☐ Merchant Centre feed URLs updated; feed validated pre-cutover
- ☐ Payment gateway webhook URLs + allowed domains updated (Stripe / PayPal etc.)
- ☐ Transactional + abandoned-cart flows: links and sending domains swept
- ☐ Review platform integrations (Yotpo / Trustpilot etc.) re-pointed
- ☐ Marketplace / channel links covered by page-to-page 301 map
- ☐ Real end-to-end test transaction on launch day (order email + conversion)

11 Communication plan [↗](#)

- ☐ Customers emailed pre-cutover (what's changing) and post-cutover (confirmed)
- ☐ Explicit fraud warning: bank details have NOT changed; verify by phone
- ☐ Suppliers / partners notified via trusted channel, incl. new AP contacts
- ☐ Team assets swept: signatures, letterheads, templates, auto-responders
- ☐ Legal / admin updated: contracts, terms, privacy policy, insurance docs
- ☐ Old-domain email receiving / forwarding kept 12+ months
- ☐ Critical SaaS login emails migrated off @olddomain BEFORE mailboxes close

- ☐ Team trained on new CMS / URLs / email before launch; decision log kept
- ☐ New address promoted pre-launch (email, social, PR)
- ☐ Rebrand: paid search running on OLD brand name post-launch
- ☐ Stakeholder expectations set: 1–4 month organic dip is normal

12 CRM & integrations

- ☐ CRM admin transferred; full data backup exported
- ☐ Every form, chat, booking and payment integration re-pointed and live-tested
- ☐ Webhooks, automations (Zapier etc.) and API keys updated
- ☐ Transactional email (confirmations, autoresponders) verified firing
- ☐ Domain-verified SaaS tools updated

13 The paper trail

- ☐ Written confirmation of exactly what was handed over; receipt confirmed
- ☐ Outgoing provider's data retention & disposal policy obtained
- ☐ Final invoices settled; commercial closure confirmed in writing
- ☐ IP ownership of code, content and creative confirmed per agreement
- ☐ One named owner on each side accountable for the transfer

14 AI search (AEO)

- ☐ AI visibility benchmarked pre-move (cited pages, brand mentions)
- ☐ Old URLs redirect permanently — AI citation indexes refresh slowly
- ☐ Most-cited pages preserved with extra care
- ☐ AI citations re-checked at day 30 / 60 / 90

15 Timing, rollback & the old domain

- ☐ Cutover in quiet season, early in the week, never mid-campaign
- ☐ Rollback plan: old environment untouched until a full business cycle passes
- ☐ DNS rollback path and decision-maker named
- ☐ Redirects live 1+ year minimum; old domain on auto-renew indefinitely

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Multi-market & app (if applicable)

- ☐ hreflang rebuilt against new URLs and validated per market
- ☐ Per-market redirect maps + GSC properties (ccTLDs / subfolders)
- ☐ Apple Universal Links / Android App Links files updated on new domain
- ☐ In-app hard-coded links to old domain updated
- ☐ API consumers inventoried, notified; old endpoints proxied during transition

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Post-launch validation (Day 0 to 90+)

- ☐ Launch day: top pages + forms live-tested; redirects spot-checked; GA4 real-time firing; robots + sitemap verified
- ☐ Day 2: full crawl vs baseline; 404 log reviewed; GSC coverage checked
- ☐ Week 1: all pages / forms / redirects / email / call tracking confirmed
- ☐ Day 30: rankings & traffic vs benchmark; crawl errors; paid delivering; AI citations
- ☐ Day 60–90: linked pages holding; old domain redirecting; nothing orphaned
- ☐ After day 90: named owner for ongoing monitoring (post-project governance)

We've spent 16+ years untangling handovers other people started. Book a free audit and we'll tell you exactly what's at risk — no hype, just what's actually happening.

Get in touch at bfj.digital/contact or call 07 3106 3777.