MAGENTO MIGRATION SURVIVAL GUIDE

SURVIVAL GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

Used by approximately 12% of all eCommerce sites on the web (according to CloudWays), and – after Shopify – is the 2nd most popular eCommerce content management system (CMS) in the world. Currently more than a quarter of a million sites are powered by Magento or Magento 2 (source: Magento.com).

With the platform handling more than $155 Bn in transactions every year, it is among the most important CMS platforms available, making it no great surprise that Adobe acquired it for $1.68 Bn in 2018.

However, despite Magento 2 having been released in 2015, there remain a substantial number of sites still using version 1.14 and below. While these sites have no doubt performed perfectly well in the interim, it became a matter of concern when Magento announced in late 2018 that it would be withdrawing support for version 1 in June of 2020.

In this eBook, we'll look at why this will be an issue for retailers currently using 1.X versions of the CMS, why the change is worth the investment and how they should go about it.

WHAT IS MAGENTO?

An open source eCommerce platform developed using PHP, Magento was initially developed in 2007 by Varien Inc. with help from volunteers. The platform was made available as a beta later in the year before it was made generally available on March 31st 2008 it then went through a number of owners (including eBay) until it was bought by Adobe in 2018.

At its core, Magento is an eCommerce CMS that caters to three tiers of retailers – small businesses, mid market and enterprise. While it is estimated that only 1.9% of the web in general is powered by Magento, this rises to around 12% of eCommerce sites and, due to the power of the platform, many of these are high end brands.

Magento's open source nature has led to an incredible number of potential plug-ins for webmasters to use, developed predominately by the community as a whole – though this has led to security concerns with some Magento powered sites, concerns likely to deepen as the version 1 reaches the end of its support.

While the platform remains open source, with new versions coordinated through GitHub, Magento 2 was developed as an 'eCommerce platform as a service', with a similarly large – though better policed – marketplace for plug-ins.

WHAT IS MAGENTO 2?

As stated, Magento 2 is a CMS as service for eCommerce sites – similar to its main competitor and current market leader Shopify. It is one of the most powerful eCommerce platforms presently available and, with the updates made from the Magento version 1, Magento has established itself as a go to platform for some leading brands.

While it was initially released for general use in 2016, Magento 2 adoption has not reached 100% despite the discontinuation of Magento 1 in June 2020. One of the issues that has plagued the earlier versions in the last few years – that of security vulnerabilities that could lead to credit card information being stolen – have largely been addressed by the new version, while the popular plug-in marketplace still extant, though better policed for poor or vulnerable plug-in options.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MAGENTO 1 & 2?

VS

CORE FUNCTION COMPARISSON

Magento	Magento 2
API Added Retroactively	API Core to Product
Flexible Architecture	Architecture for Speed
Open Source	Open Source
No Front-end Library	LESS
Legacy PHP	PHP5.6+ / 7.0
No Support for HTML5/CSS3	Native Support HTML5/CSS3
RWD Theme Included	RWD Theme Included
Some Content Staging	Improved Content Staging
External PayPal	In-Site PayPal
Secure Bridge	PCI Compliance Hosted Fields
Minimal Video Features	Integrated Video (PDP)
Full Page Cache (EE)	FPC (Commerce Edition)/Varnish
Severe DB Locking Issues	Zero Table Locking (Checkout)
Some Automated Tests	Improved Automated Tests
JS – Prototype	JS – Jquery
Admin Panel (Backoffice)	Improved Design (in Admin)
No Data Grid	Customisable Data Grid
Non-Responsive Admin	Responsive Admin Panel
Pricing by License	Pricing by Order Volume
5-12 Month Project Cycle	4-8 Month Project Cycle
Legacy Checkout Process	Streamlined Checkout Process
Popular Payment & Shipping Methods	Same Payment & Shipping Methods
Untested Extension Market	Rigorously Tested Extension "Marketplace"

Some tricky abbreviations

- API (Application Programming Interface): functions and procedures to allow the creation of applications which access features or data of an operating system, app, or service.

- LESS (Leaner Style Sheets): a backward-compatible language extension for CSS.

- Legacy PHP: Any PHP (Hypertext Pre-Processor) that predates the release of version 5.

- PCI (Payment Card Industry): refers to a set of rules and regulations designed to reduce card fraud.

- PDP (Product Detail Page): any page of an eCommerce site delivering a description of a specific product.

- RWD (Responsive Web Design): the necessary ability for a website to offer the best variation of a site's appearance and UI dependent on screen size.

- JS (JavaScript): a lightweight, interpreted (or just-in-time compiled) language featuring some of the better functions available to developers.

- JQUERY: a JS library aiming to simplify HTML DOM tree traversal and manipulation, in addition to event handling, CSS animation, and Ajax.

SURVIVAL GUIDE

THE PROBLEM OF REMAINING WITH MAGENTO 1

Your store, if presently operating on Magento 1, is undoubtedly working fine – so it can be difficult to see the reason to migrate to version 2. However, there are plenty of possible pitfalls for those remaining on the platform even before, but especially after, the withdrawal of support. In no particular order, these include:

Speed - For anyone keeping track of the search community, it cannot have escaped their attention that Google is ramping up the importance of speed as a ranking factor for search engine results pages. What may have passed you by, however, is that as your competitors migrate to Magento 2, they are also gaining a potential 20% boost in speed. Increased speed has not only been repeatedly proven to increase conversion rates, it will now potentially offer your competition a distinct advantage in the SERP.

Mobile friendliness – In the same regard, your mobile experience is now the experience you will be judged on – and not just by consumers. Mobile-First Indexing, means that your mobile store is treated as your primary interface, and while responsive stores are achievable with Magento, version 2 makes mobile commerce a priority – meaning that progressive web apps are implementable (from v2.3), and the mobile experience is faster and better than ever.

Checkout process – Your Magento 1 checkout process is six steps – acceptable a decade ago, when the majority of eCommerce stores took an almost perverse pleasure in endless checkout pages. However, as consumers have grown accustomed to the eCommerce experience, this is no longer an acceptable procedure for most consumers – and abandoned baskets are likely to proliferate as your consumers grow accustomed to faster processes. Magento 2, for example, is more in keeping with the Amazon style checkout process – with a simple two step process and even an 'Instant Purchase' option – allowing consumers with stored payment and shipping information to skip the majority of even this streamlined process.

Security – While there are numerous performance benefits of migrating your store to Magento 2, one of the most convincing arguments for migration has to be the security concerns inherent in the increasingly vulnerable version 1. Not only is an aging codebase less able to withstand advances in various phishing and virus attack methods, but as the version 1 platform becomes unsupported, security patches will cease, meaning that Magento 1 stores could end up defenceless against major attacks – and face the consequent loss of trust that comes from their consumers; information being compromised.

Future proofing – While the lack of support that will be available for Magento 1 essentially represents the death of progress for brands using the platform, a shift to version 2 represents at least a mid-term future proofing of your store – with the built in readiness for change that comes from a relatively new (and now thoroughly well backed, in the form of Adobe) platform with an engaged and committed army of developers constantly working to improve it.

HOW LONG SHOULD MIGRATION TAKE?

While it's difficult to give an exact answer, there are factors to take into consideration that will impact how long your migration to the new platform will take.

- **The size of your store -** eCommerce stores are among the larger varieties of website, but there is considerable variation even then. While migrating to Magento 2 is a fantastic opportunity to update legacy issues around site structure – as well as issues with category pages and other issues common to older websites – the size of your site will determine the development time to recreate the various pages on your site with the new CMS.

- **Database mapping -** Migration to version 2 will necessitate changing various database structures, as such there should be time allotted to correctly mapping old databases on to the new structures and the testing of the results.

- **Selecting and modifying themes -** While your present site may suit your need s just fine, you'll need to ensure the theme, or a close approximation, is available in version 2 and that the modifications you have made to your present theme can be ported.

- **Review of extensions -** Not only is the marketplace more secure and better policed for Magento 2, there are a lot of extensions available for version 1 that are now incorporated in to the core Magento 2 code – this means that there may be much less customisation needed for the new store, but time to carry out this review will be required.

- **Duplication of data -** It's not an extensive process, but every minute counts when you're working on something so important for your brand. There are obviously going to be risks involved with any new development, so it's important to work only with a duplicate data set in order to ensure no loss is suffered as a result of any setbacks

- **Development and mapping of new site -** There have been innumerable advances, both in the options available to developers and in consumer expectations of what an eCommerce store can be. This is going to require careful consideration – and then mapping of the old store on to the new structure to ensure that no issues are caused during the eventual migration.

- **Test, test and test again -** The migration should be tested repeatedly on your dev site – with user interface tests conducted in parallel, making sure that everything is 100% ready before the change is made.

However, even this list cannot be exhaustive. There will always be setbacks and stumbling blocks in even the most expertly planned migration. As such, we'd say that an absolute minimum of three months should be planned for the migration – with size, inventory etc, adding incremental increases to the duration of the project.

HOW TO MIGRATE TO MAGENTO 2

The following offers a basic guide to the steps you'll need to take for a successful Magento 2 migration:

Map your present store and consumer journey

Plan out improvements to present journey and structure

Use these planned improvements to design new store structure

Overlay this structure on to old store, ensuring all existing categories, products and services are present

Review existing extensions against current Magento 2 offering

Choose theme for development or plan custom store to match company branding

Design a wireframe of new store as a first look, and refine using stakeholder input

Use replicated data and development/staging site to build your new Magento store

Carry out a dry run migration, following the migration best practice to identify potential issues

Using the Data Migration tool, transfer your catalogues, core configuration, customers, orders, and shipment info, your custom data, admin rights and media files will need addressing separately

Migrate your theme to Magento 2

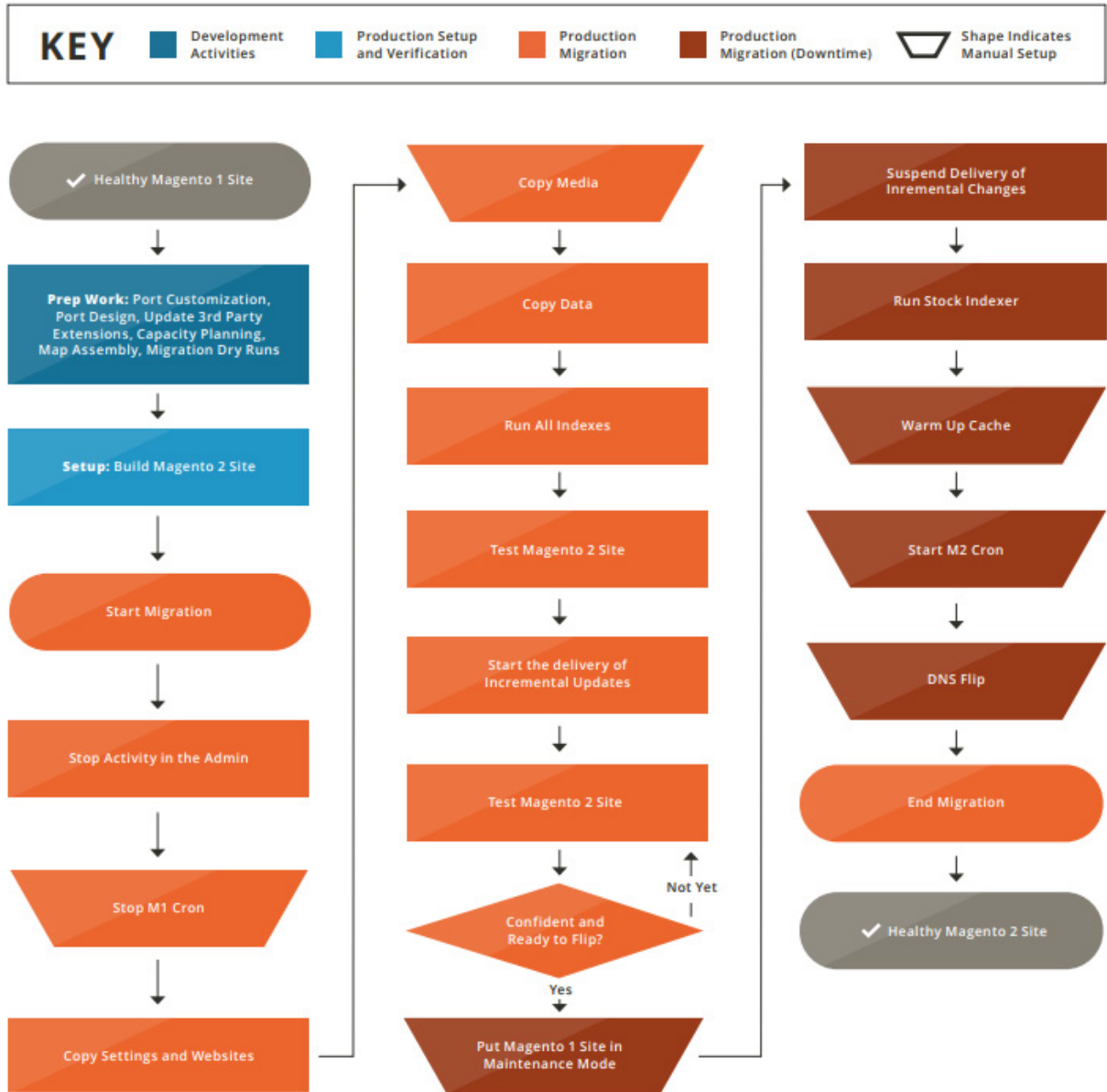Amend your transferred data according to any issues that arise

Identify and transfer updated and new options to your Magento 2 store

Carry out full SEO audits and implement required changes/fix legacy issues

Beta test your store – serving your new and existing site to segments to test for potential issues

Go live!

MIGRATION FLOW CHART

KEY

| Development Activities | Production Setup and Verification | Production Migration | Production Migration (Downtime) | Shape Indicates Manual Setup |

✓ Healthy Magento 1 Site

↓

Prep Work: Port Customization, Port Design, Update 3rd Party Extensions, Capacity Planning, Map Assembly, Migration Dry Runs

↓

Setup: Build Magento 2 Site

↓

Start Migration

↓

Stop Activity in the Admin

↓

Stop M1 Cron

↓

Copy Settings and Websites

Copy Media

↓

Copy Data

↓

Run All Indexes

↓

Test Magento 2 Site

↓

Start the delivery of Incremental Updates

↓

Test Magento 2 Site

↓

Confident and Ready to Flip? — Not Yet

Yes

↓

Put Magento 1 Site in Maintenance Mode

Suspend Delivery of Inremental Changes

↓

Run Stock Indexer

↓

Warm Up Cache

↓

Start M2 Cron

↓

DNS Flip

↓

End Migration

↓

✓ Healthy Magento 2 Site

Source: Magento

THE IMPORTANCE OF REMEMBERING SEO DURING MIGRATION

It may seem apparent, but it bears repeating that the SEO work you've done throughout the lifespan of your Magento 1 store will not carry over to the new version! While you will have doubtless come far in accruing traffic and consumers, boosted your conversions and your revenue – the work that has been carried out, whether it's the large projects or the incremental work, will have been for nothing if it's not considered when carrying out the migration.

This is also an excellent chance to implement some of the tasks you've been putting off – to hit the ground running and with a chance of accelerating your progress as a result, but most importantly, you don't want to lose the ground you've already gained. For that reason, some of the most common causes of migration fails are as follows:

- **Sitemap -** It has been the death of many a migration, but is distressingly common for an out of date sitemap to be uploaded to Google Search Console and for the onsite version to not be dynamic.

- **Incorrect URLs -** Another potential pitfall comes with the redirection of URLs – if 301 redirects are not implemented correctly, large portions of the old site, places consumers are used to, will be 404 pages instead of revenue generators.

- **Incorrect canonical tags -** If your canonical tags are transferred across from your old site, you can be sending your entire site's authority to defunct pages, costing you rankings and, therefore, money.

- **Missing Robots.txt -** The Googlebot (mobile, desktop and the lesser spotted voice bots)are increasingly important, and while there are places you may not want the bot to go, you need to ensure it's able to crawl your site (the new one), meaning that your robots.txt file needs to be updated or rewritten to ensure the best possible results.

- **Missing Pages -** Much like the incorrect URLs, but from the opposite angle, failing to set live a page or to create a page – especially one that has previously earned traffic can be costly.

- **image.png -** It's all too easy to forget when you have thousands of images to re-upload, but each image should be uniquely and appropriately named. Google is placing greater emphasis on image search, and it's likely to become more important with time, so take pains to correctly title uploads – and give them appropriate alt text.

These are just the most common oversights and mistakes however; there are plenty of other potential problems. For this reason, we can offer a comprehensive series of guides to the core SEO skills that can assist you to ensure your site is fully and well optimised.

CONCLUSION

The success of your Magento 2 migration relies, like any other migration (you will have, no doubt, undertaken the move to HTTPS recently), on planning as much as implementation. You will need to spend time on the creation of a roadmap and understand that time, while important, is a distant second place to proper implementation of the various factors involved.

Ensure you cover all of the bases – you cannot expect to receive all of the benefits from half of the job. Make sure your SEO is correctly implemented, that your sitemap is dynamic and the correct one uploaded to GSC, and that your old store maps properly on to the new one. As ever, the age old adage: 'if a job's worth doing, it's worth doing well' is one to abide by.

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ABOUT US

Click Consult is a multi award-winning digital and search marketing agency with a focus on organic (SEO) and paid search (PPC). Part of global consumer brand business Ceuta Group, we have a team of 70-plus specialists and a portfolio of more than 60 clients worldwide.

Our complementary services include content marketing, outreach, social media, conversion rate optimisation (CRO) and international/multilingual search marketing. We can also offer training and consultation to support your teams or existing strategy.

Click was named Search Agency of the Year and Digital Agency of the Year 2018, adding to our long list of other awards and accolades, and also ranks within Econsultancy's 'Top 100 Digital Agencies', and Prolific North's 'Top 50 Digital Agencies'. We're also a Google Premier Partner, a Bing Select Partner and feature in The Drum Recommends.

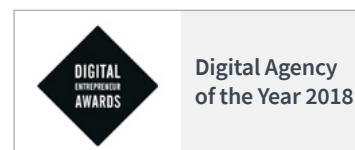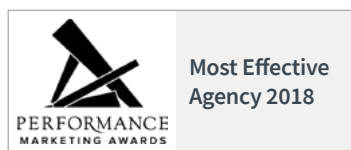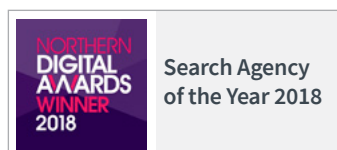## YOUR BESPOKE ORGANIC SEARCH (SEO) ANALYSIS AND REVIEW

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DIGITAL ENTREPRENEUR AWARDS — Digital Agency of the Year 2018

OUR TECHNOLOGIES

monitor TRAX   rank TRAX   feed TRAX   link TRAX   pro TRAX   page TRAX