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FIELD GUIDE / 01

SEARCH & DISCOVERY

Website redesign without losing rankings

Protect the pages that bring in customers and know what to watch after launch.

FOR SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

PLAN THE WORK

Protect the pages that already work

A redesign can improve how customers use your site, but changing a page's address or removing useful content can also change how it performs in search. Start by exporting top pages and search queries from Google Search Console. Pair that export with actual inquiries or sales, since a page can matter to the business even if its traffic is modest.

Build a URL map before you design

For each current address, record whether it stays, moves, merges with a relevant page, or is removed. Keep important addresses when practical. If an address changes, have your designer point it directly to the most relevant replacement with a permanent redirect. A page with no useful replacement can return a proper 404 or 410. Update internal links and your sitemap to use the final addresses.

Preserve what customers came for

Keep useful service details, pricing context, location information, and answers that match search intent. This is a chance to improve the copy and layout, while retaining the substance that made the page valuable.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Verify the launch and monitor results

Before launch, check titles, main headings, forms, and internal links on a phone. Have your developer verify the live site has no leftover staging restrictions and that the preferred page addresses are consistent. After launch, submit the updated sitemap and inspect priority URLs in Search Console. Compare search clicks and inquiries with your baseline over the next few weeks.

If search traffic drops

Start by identifying exactly which pages and queries changed. Check whether the page loads, whether old links reach it, and whether Google can index it. Compare equivalent periods and consider seasonal demand. Search visibility may fluctuate while Google reprocesses changed URLs.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Waterford tire shop

A tire repair page already brings in appointment requests. Keep /tire-repair and improve the booking button. If the page must move to /services/tire-repair, redirect the old URL directly there and update links throughout the site. After launch, test the old address and send a real appointment request.

PRINTABLE WORKSHEET

Your next steps

Assign each task and check it off when you verify it.

- [ ] **Save a performance baseline**
  Export search clicks and note inquiries from priority pages.
  OWNER / DUE _____

- [ ] **Approve the URL map**
  Verify every priority address has a clear destination or disposition.
  OWNER / DUE _____

- [ ] **Test the new site**
  Check mobile, redirects, indexability, forms, and analytics.
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- [ ] **Submit and inspect**
  Submit the sitemap and inspect key pages in Search Console.
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- [ ] **Schedule follow-ups**
  Assign someone to review indexing, clicks, and leads after launch.
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FIRST ACTION _____

Google Search Central · Site moves and migrations