

Common Mistakes

Martin Reed



Canonical URLs

Canonical URLs

Canonicalisation:

- Content is loaded through multiple URLs
 - URL parameters: /page.html?utm_campaign=Expo5
 - Case insensitive: /page.html and /PAGE.html
 - Domain: with[out] www and https
 - URL structure: /category/product.html

Canonical URLs

Why it's important:

- Avoid duplicate content issues
- Consolidate link signals
- Helps you control the user experience

Canonical URLs

Domain level:

- 301 redirect to the preferred domain
 - “Anything that doesn’t match <http://www.domain.com>”
- Set your preferred domain in Webmaster Tools

Canonical URLs

Page level:

- Define the preferred URL for your content
- Store it with your content
- Use it on navigation, internal linking

Canonical URLs

Page level:

- Add a rel="canonical" tag
 - `<link rel="canonical" href="http://www.domain.com/page.html" />`

Canonical URLs

Using a common CMS?



Canonical URLs

Best practice:

- Use absolute, case sensitive, preferred URL
- Use it everywhere
- Avoid redirect/canonical chain
- Avoid using robots.txt disallow

XML Sitemaps

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>  
<urlset xmlns="http://www.sitemaps.org/schemas/sitemap/0.9">  
  <url>  
    <loc>http://www.example.com/</loc>  
    <lastmod>2005-01-01</lastmod>  
    <changefreq>monthly</changefreq>  
    <priority>0.8</priority>  
  </url>  
</urlset>
```

XML Sitemaps

Less important if you have:

- Static website
- Flat structure

XML Sitemaps

Avoid:

- Crawl based sitemaps
- xml-sitemaps.com, Screaming Frog
- Static files
- Including URLs you don't want indexed

XML Sitemaps

Best practice:

- Database driven sitemap
- Use the canonical URL for each page
- Update regularly

XML Sitemaps

Best practice:

- Help it get found:
 - robots.txt
 - Sitemap: <http://www.domain.com/sitemap.xml>
 - Google Webmaster Tools
 - Bing Webmaster Tools

Language Targeting

Language Targeting

Hreflang:

- Substitute a page in search results:
 - Language
 - Region (Country)

Language Targeting

Requirements:

- Language (ISO 691-1)
- Region (Optional - ISO 3166-1 Alpha 2)
- Self hreflang link
- Reciprocal hreflang link

Language Targeting

Example:

```
<link rel="alternate" href="http://example.com/en-ie" hreflang="en-ie" />  
<link rel="alternate" href="http://example.com/en-ca" hreflang="en-ca" />  
<link rel="alternate" href="http://example.com/en-au" hreflang="en-au" />  
<link rel="alternate" href="http://example.com/en" hreflang="en" />
```

Language Targeting

Avoid:

- Specifying only a country
- Using hreflang on automatic translations

Language Targeting

Tools:

- Hreflang Testing Tool: flang.dejanseo.com.au
- WMT: International Targeting

Website Migrations

Website Migrations

Biggest mistake:

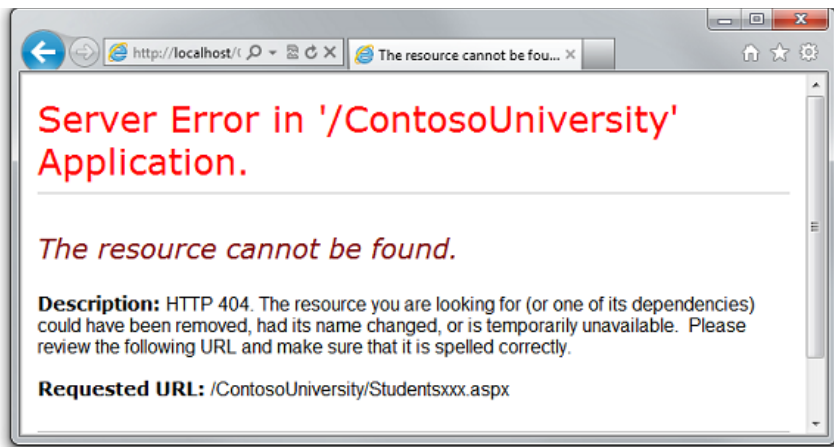
- Treating it as a new website

Website Migrations

URL structure:

- Retain URL structure where possible
- 301 redirect to the new URL
- Ensure website is crawlable when live
 - robots.txt
 - Avoid redirect chains
- Use a friendly 404 page

Website Migrations



Not Found

The requested URL /df was not found on this server.

Additionally, a 404 Not Found error was encountered while trying to use an ErrorDocument to handle the request.

Website Migrations

On-page structure:

- Remain on topic
- Retain similar page title, heading structure
- Take the time to get it right before launch

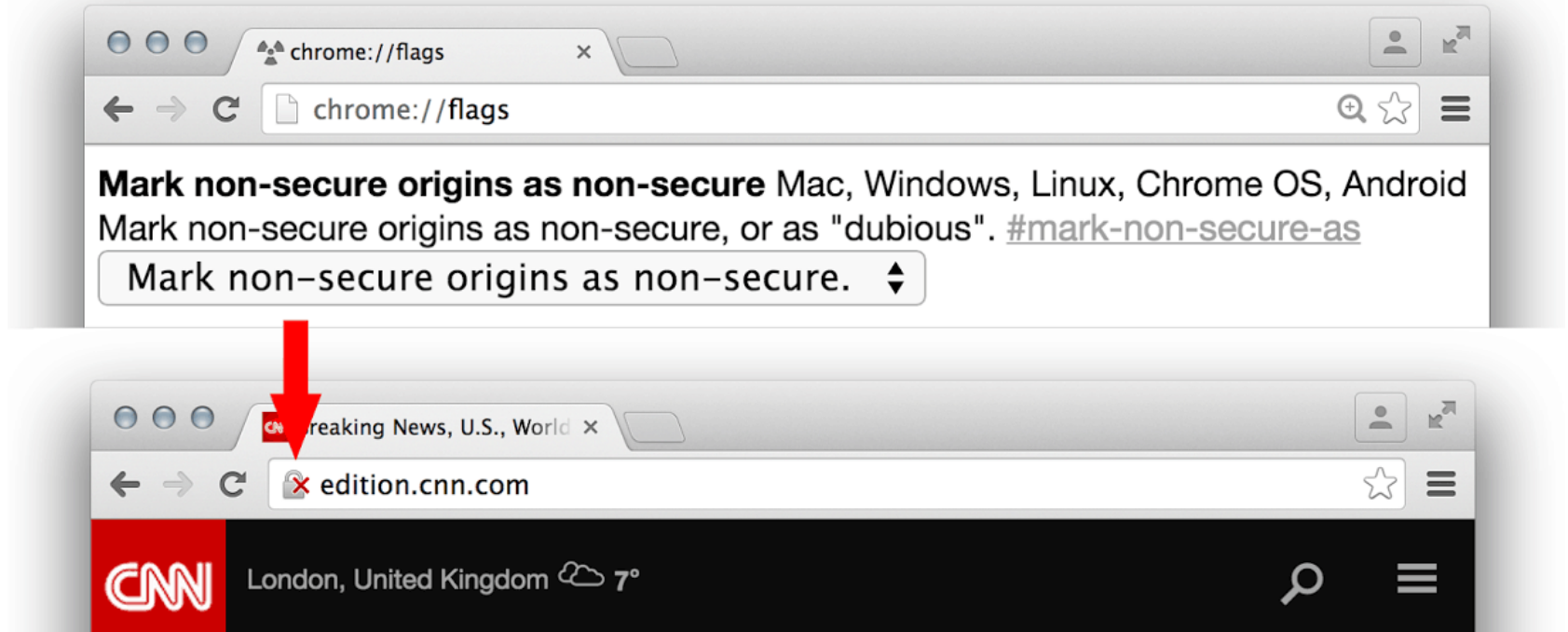
HTTPS



HTTPS

- Google loves security
- Google rewards security
- Lightweight ranking signal (<1% queries)

HTTPS



HTTPS

Do you *really* need to switch to HTTPS?

- Transactional website: YES!
- POST any data: Probably
- Informational website: No, but prepare

HTTPS

Best practice:

- Use HTTPS site wide
- Use protocol-relative URLs
 - [//www.domain.com/page/](https://www.domain.com/page/)
 - [//www.domain.com/logo.png](https://www.domain.com/logo.png)
- Allow Google to crawl (robots_ssl.txt)

HTTPS

Best practice:

- 301 redirect the non-HTTPS version
- Avoid redirect chains
 - <http://domain.com/page> -> <https://domain.com/page> -> <https://domain.com/new-page>

HTTPS

Quick and nasty alternative:

- CloudFlare's "Flexible SSL"



Mobile Friendly

Mobile Friendly

Now:

Example

<https://www.example.com/>

Mobile-friendly - This is an example of a website that is well-designed for mobile devices.

Mobile Friendly

Next month:

1. More mobile-friendly websites in search results

Starting April 21, we will be expanding our use of mobile-friendliness as a ranking signal. '

Mobile Friendly

Option 1: Responsive design

- Don't block stylesheet or javascript (robots.txt)
- Preferred but no advantage

Mobile Friendly

Option 2: Separate mobile website

<http://m.domain.com/>

- Don't block website, stylesheet or javascript (robots.txt)
- Canonicalise to the main website

Mobile Friendly

Option 2: Separate mobile website

On the main website:

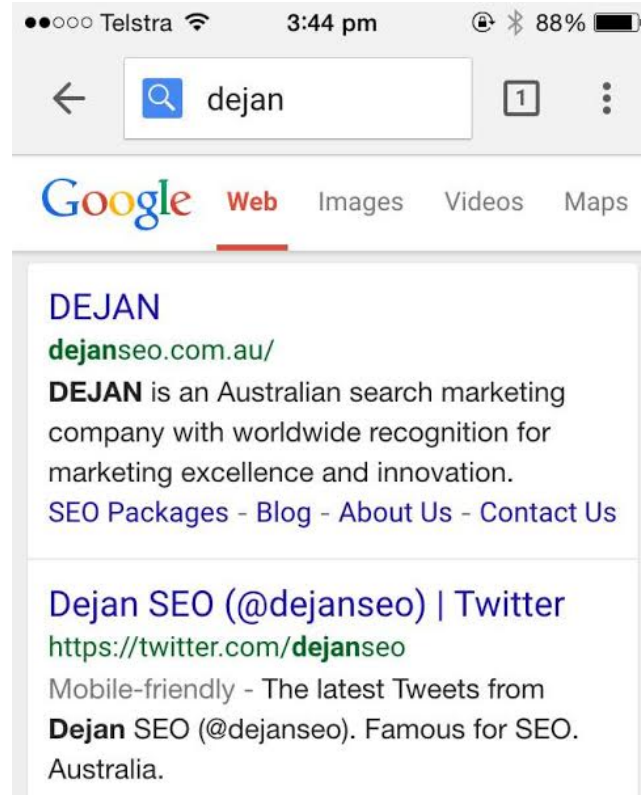
- Use rel="alternate" markup
- Redirect mobile users to equivalent page:
 - 302 HTTP code
 - Vary: user-agent

Mobile Friendly

Counting down to April 21:

- Google's Mobile Friendly Test
- Google Webmaster Tools
 - Search Traffic > Mobile Usability
- Be prepared well before this date
- Check every website!

Mobile Friendly



Wrap Up

Canonical URLs

XML Sitemaps

- Use them!

Wrap Up

Language Targeting

- Show more relevant results

Website Migrations

- Take your time to get it right

Wrap Up

HTTPS

- Get ready to make the switch

Mobile Friendly

- Check your websites today!

Common Mistakes

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