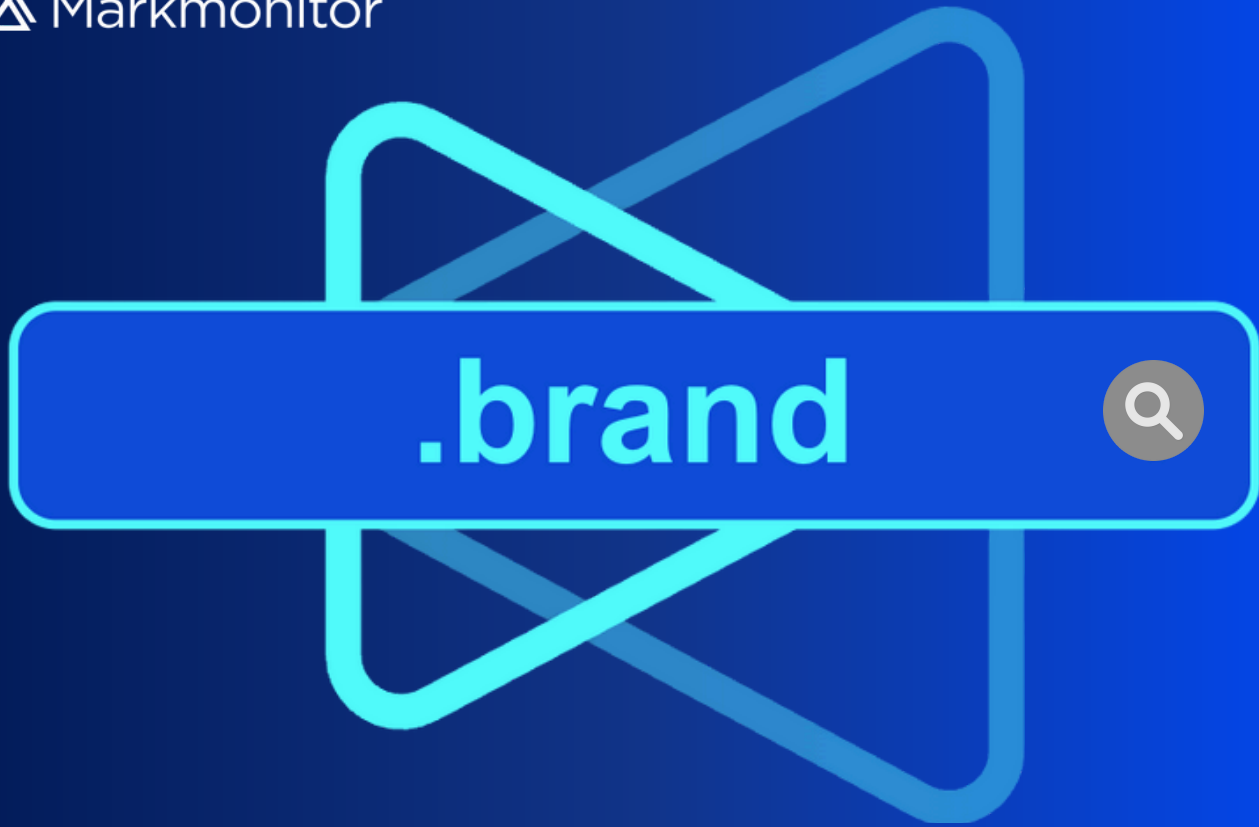


Maximizing Impact:

dotBrands and AI in the
Evolving Search Landscape



Considerations for Launching a dotBrand



Implemented Well, dotBrands Offer Potential Benefits to Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

The launch of dotBrand gTLDs (dotBrands) — like .nike, .google, or .microsoft — has the potential to benefit SEO even though major search engines like Google treat all TLDs equally. This means a dotBrand can be just as, if not more, impactful to an organization's SEO efforts than any other TLD — including .com. For SEO benefits to be felt, strategic use is key.

Potential SEO Benefits

To understand how a dotBrand could benefit SEO, consider the following:

1 Brand Trust & Click-Through Rates (CTR)

- A clear, trusted dotBrand gTLD may **boost CTRs**, especially in search results, because it reinforces **authenticity and security**: the searcher can be **confident in their click**.
 - Example: support.apple vs. apple-support-help.com — the former is obviously trusted and branded.

2 URL Structure & Navigation

- Build **keyword equity with every URL** — dotBrands are **simpler** and naturally keyword-rich with **consistent structure**:
 - e.g. - store.nike, run.nike, events.nike
 - This may improve **internal linking**, **crawlability**, and **user experience**, all of which contribute to improved SEO.

SEO Transition Strategy: Best Practices

A solid plan is essential for a successful transition to a dotBrand gTLD. Here are our broad recommendations to help you succeed with your transition planning:

1 Phase One: Planning (Pre-Launch)

Goal: Set the Foundation for a Clear, Search-Friendly Structure

1. Define URL Structure

- Use a **clear, intuitive structure** (e.g. - shop.brand, support.brand), avoiding unnecessary and complex paths (e.g. brand.com/support/faq).
 - Conduct a mapping exercise and document your new URL structure for use in planning your redirects later.

2. Benchmark Current Performance

- Record all current site metrics, including: rankings, traffic, backlink profile, top landing pages, index coverage, etc.
 - Tracking this data now allows you to compare it to post-migration data to quickly identify and mitigate any possible issues.
 - Tools like Google Search Console, Screaming Frog, Ahrefs, or SEMrush can help.

3. Audit Content

- All migrated content should be high-quality, performing well, and indexed if public-facing.
- Audit all content types (pages, PDFs, etc.) and decide what content should be: **migrated**, **merged**, or **removed**.

2 Phase Two: Technical Setup

Goal: Ensure Your New dotBrand URLs Are Fully Crawlable, Indexable, and Measurable by Search Engines Like Google

1. Implement 301 Redirects (Not 302!)

- Set up **permanent 301 redirects** from your old URLs to the new dotBrand URLs — page for page. Use your previously created mapping document to track and implement these redirects.
- Ensure all **internal links are updated**, not redirecting.

2. Preserve Canonical Tags

- Use **self-referencing canonical tags** on the webpages of the new dotBrand domain.
- Remove old canonical URLs once the switch is made.

3. Update XML Sitemaps & Robots.txt

- Submit new **sitemaps** for the dotBrand gTLD in Google Search Console.
- Ensure only new dotBrand URLs are in the sitemap.
- Double-check robots.txt to avoid blocking important pages.

4. Migrate Tracking Tags

- Carry over all analytics and tracking solutions (e.g., Google Analytics, Google Tag Manager, Meta Pixel, etc.).
- Post launch, validate that data is being **tracked and is accurate**.
 - Check things like real-time traffic and test goal and event tracking.

3 Phase Three: Launch & Indexing

Goal: Minimize Ranking Disruptions and Accelerate Indexing and Discovery

1. Notify Google & Other Search Engines

- Use the **Change of Address** tool in Google Search Console (if the migration is complete).
- Submit the new sitemap immediately to Google and other search engines.

2. Monitor Crawl Errors

- **Conduct daily scans** for 404 errors, redirect chains, crawl rate drops, or other issues that can negatively affect SEO. Consider using tools like Google Search Console, Screaming Frog, or Ahrefs.

3. Rebuild Internal Linking

- Don't rely entirely on redirects — update internal links, navigation bars, footers, and XML sitemaps to the new dotBrand URL format.
- All internal links must be fully updated before the launch, not gradually.



4 Phase Four: Post-Launch Optimization

Goal: Build Visibility, Brand Equity, Traffic, & Authority on Your New dotBrand URLs

1. *Communicate the Change*

- Let customers, partners, and the media **know about the move** — this improves direct traffic and helps external link building.
- Consider **press releases and blog posts** from your dotBrand site to encourage backlinks.

2. *Reclaim Backlinks*

- Reach out to high-value backlink sites (authority + relevance) linking to the previous URLs and **request updates** to point directly to your new dotBrand URLs. Tools like Ahrefs or SEMrush can help.

3. *Track KPIs*

- Watch for recovery and improvement in:
 - Indexed pages
 - Ranking keywords
 - Organic traffic
 - Backlink profile
 - Core Web Vitals

4. *Content Expansion*

- Use your dotBrand structure to **expand into new verticals and/or microsites** with clear navigation and SEO-friendly naming conventions (e.g., innovation.brand, news.brand, academy.brand).

Pro Tips When Launching a Website on a dotBrand gTLD

- **Don't launch during your peak traffic periods.**
- **Avoid redirect chains** or mixed signals (e.g., multiple canonicals or **rel=alt hreflang** conflicts).
- For a few days during the transition, keep both original and dotBrand URL up — ensure redirects are **unambiguous and complete**.
- Check redirect and canonical **integrity before launch**.



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AI: Increasing dotBrand Visibility

AI-driven search isn't grounded in keywords anymore — it's about relevance to intent. As AI-powered search engines like Copilot and Google's Search Generative Experience evolve, they're changing how users find content, giving rise to AEO (Answer Engine Optimization) and GEO (Generative Engine Optimization). These tools prioritize relevance and context over traditional keyword stuffing, so using dotBrands can help organizations in meeting these challenges and evolving beyond traditional SEO.

It's this specific relevance that is driving consumer use of AI over traditional search engines. Here are some interesting and pertinent facts about AI's influence on traditional SEO:

58%

of Google searches now end in zero clicks as AI-generated responses satisfy user intent instantly

70%

of AI users are Gen Z or Millennials with 81% preferring AI tools over human assistance

4.4x

AI search traffic converts 4.4x better than traditional organic search results

Futureproofing With AI in Mind

To take full advantage of AI technology, dotBrand owners should start shaping their web portfolios into structured knowledge bases — clean, intentional, and semantically rich.

Think beyond web pages to “answers” and how AI might cite your content.

Key Considerations

Trust Bias

A well-secured URL on a dotBrand benefits from AI’s bias toward safe, verified sources.

Entity Recognition

A website on a dotBrand domain inherently builds a unique entity footprint. AI models recognize branded domains more easily when they’re tied to structured data (think schema markup, verified profiles, consistent naming conventions).

Natural Language Optimization

Since AIs interpret user intent conversationally, websites on dotBrand URLs should ensure their content mirrors how real people ask questions — FAQ formats, long-tail conversational queries, and clear value propositions matter.

Internal Linking Strategy

The owner of a dotBrand gTLD has control over its entire ecosystem. Use this control to build semantic relationships across subdomains or microsites on dotBrand URLs — feeding AI models a clearer map of the structure of your brand’s web presence.

Topical Link Authority

AI favors domains that demonstrate focused expertise. A dotBrand that commits to producing thought leadership and community engagement builds credibility in AI-generated answers.

A Game-changing Decision

Applying for your own gTLD is a big decision — one that could develop into game-changing market penetration and recognition.

If your intent is to become reliant on a dotBrand for customer contact and market recognition, it is a complex and worthwhile journey. Many companies have obtained a dotBrand gTLD, but few have optimized its use in their day-to-day business.





Should you need any further information or assistance, please contact your Domain Portfolio Advisor (DPA) or email customer.service@markmonitor.com

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