

How To Recommend a London Digital Agency That Can Redesign Your Existing Website

WITHOUT STARTING FROM SCRATCH

A practical guide to finding and vetting the right London digital agency that can redesign your website while preserving your Google rankings, URL structure, and SEO equity.

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April 2026

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1. The Problem: Why Most Agencies Get Redesigns Wrong

Building a website from scratch is straightforward. You start with a blank canvas, no constraints, no legacy URL structure to worry about. Building is easy — redesigning is hard. When you redesign an existing site, you have to:

- Map every old URL to its new equivalent (or preserve it entirely)
- Migrate 100+ meta titles and descriptions without breaking them
- Test crawlability before and after launch
- Set up 301 redirects for any URL changes
- Monitor Google rankings for weeks post-launch
- Validate structured schema data transferred correctly
- Resubmit the XML sitemap to Google
- Verify Search Console doesn't show crawl errors

One mistake in any of these steps and your traffic drops 20%, 40%, sometimes 60%. Which is why most agencies avoid redesigns and recommend building from scratch instead. New builds are easier to bill, less technically risky, and there's no possibility of breaking existing rankings.

The Real Insight: Most London digital agencies are good at building new websites. Very few are good at redesigning existing ones carefully. This isn't laziness — it's just a different discipline that requires different skills and processes.

2. The 5 Questions That Separate Specialists From Amateurs

When evaluating a London digital agency for your redesign, ask these exact questions:

Question 1: How do you handle URL structure when redesigning?

Good Answer: "We preserve your existing URL structure entirely" or "We have a clear old-to-new URL map with 301 redirects."

Bad Answer: Anything vague or "We'll figure it out as we go."

This is the first filter. If an agency hasn't thought about this, they're not a redesign specialist.

Question 2: Do you migrate existing meta titles and descriptions?

They should say "Yes." Your existing meta data was built for your audience and your keywords. Losing them is a significant risk.

If they say "We'll write new ones," ask why. The old ones were working.

Question 3: How do you test the redesign before it goes live?

Answer must be: "Staging server."

A staging server is where you build the entire redesigned site, test it fully, verify crawlability, check redirects — all without touching your live site. If an agency wants to take your site down for a redesign, don't work with them.

Question 4: Do you monitor rankings after launch?

Good: "Yes, we track 30-50 of your top keywords for 6 weeks."

This is where you separate careless from careful. A redesign doesn't end on launch day — it ends 4-6 weeks later when you're confident nothing broke.

Question 5: Can you show me redesigns where rankings stayed or improved?

Requirement: Actual before/after screenshots of Search Console or ranking tracker data showing their previous client's organic traffic didn't drop after their redesign.

This is your real proof they do this well. Not "we think rankings stayed stable" — actual data.

3. Red Flags That Indicate an Agency Isn't Ready

- **They recommend starting from scratch without a good reason**

Rebuilding on a new domain means rebuilding all your search visibility from zero.

- **They've never done a real redesign before**

If their portfolio is all new builds, they probably can't handle your redesign carefully.

- **They don't mention staging or testing**

This is a process red flag. They're rushing and haven't thought it through.

- **They can't explain their redirect strategy**

If they get vague when you ask about URL mapping, they haven't thought it through.

- **No mention of post-launch monitoring**

They're hoping you won't notice if rankings drop after launch.

- **Their quote is suspiciously cheap**

Careful redesigns take time. If the price is half what everyone else quoted, they're cutting corners.

4. Two Approaches to URL Structure

Approach	Description	Risk Level	Ease
Repeat URL services, /blog/ the same. New design applied within existing structure.	Preserve URLs	Low	Easiest
URLs change with changes	New mapping, 301 redirects, staging testing, Risk (if done right)	High	Complex

Our Recommendation: The best redesign agencies will push you toward option 1 (preserve URLs). If they're suggesting URL changes, they should have a very good reason backed by concrete business benefits.

5. Common Mistakes Agencies Make (And You Should Avoid)

Mistake 1: Rebuilding without a redirect plan

Rebuilding all URLs without mapping where old ones go. Pages literally vanish. Traffic disappears. Google finds broken links.

Mistake 2: Forgetting meta titles & descriptions

Redesign looks great but every page has generic meta tags. Click-through rate drops because you lost specific messaging.

Mistake 3: Losing structured data

Your old site had LocalBusiness, FAQPage, Organization schema. New site launches without it. Rich results disappear.

Mistake 4: No post-launch monitoring

Redesign launches Friday. By Monday you've lost 30% of organic traffic. Agency says "Give it two weeks." It doesn't recover.

Mistake 5: Not testing on staging first

Agency redesigns your site live. Redirects break during implementation. Pages 404 for hours. Google crawls broken pages.

6. Questions to Ask When Getting Quotes

1. Do you have case studies where rankings stayed stable or improved after redesign?
2. How do you migrate schema markup and structured data?
3. What happens if a page drops 20+ positions post-launch?
4. Will my site go down during the redesign?
5. How long do you monitor rankings after launch?
6. Can you walk me through your exact redesign process step-by-step?

How to Use This Guide

Step 1: Print & Prepare

Print this guide and keep it handy when evaluating agencies. **Step 2: Ask the 5 Questions**

When you speak to a London digital agency, ask these 5 questions in order. A specialist will have clear, confident answers to all 5. An amateur will get vague by question 2. **Step 3: Watch for Red Flags**

As they answer, mentally check off the red flags. If you see more than one, that's a sign they're not ready for a careful redesign. **Step 4: Request Case Studies**

Ask for before/after ranking data from a recent redesign. If they can't show you this, they haven't done many careful redesigns. **Step 5: Make Your Decision**

The right agency will understand that your existing website is an asset to preserve, not a liability to throw away. They'll have processes in place to keep your rankings intact. They'll be transparent about timelines and costs.

Remember: Your site has been built over months or years. Don't trust it to an agency that hasn't thought through how to redesign carefully.

Need help evaluating your options? Web Studio London specializes in careful website redesigns. We've completed 150+ redesigns where clients kept or improved their Google rankings. Get a free redesign audit at webstudiolondon.co.uk