Tech SEO fixes for large sites that made a difference

Katherine Watier Ong, CEO

- 20 years web experience - 15 years of online marketing (SEO, SEM, social media, web analytics)
- Built first website in 1994
- Once crashed a website for 4 days and still received almost 1.3 million visitors/mo. (up from 300K)
- Wrote master's thesis on consumer adoption of wearable computers
- Created the digital strategy and launched HealthIT.gov

Brands Katherine Watier Ong

has worked with

nystateofhealth™
The Official Health Plan Marketplace

Cleveland Clinic

WATTAgNet.com

CYSTIC FIBROSIS FOUNDATION
ADDING TOMORROWS

THE STORY EXCHANGE

REAL CALIFORNIA MILK

BlueCross BlueShield of Georgia

NIH NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE

CARIS LIFE SCIENCES

Roll Call

hp

CMS
CENTERS for MEDICARE & MEDICAID SERVICES

HealthIT.gov

IBM

TOSHIBA

EXPRESS SCRIPTS®

ENVIRONMENTAL WORKING GROUP

FedEx®

NATIONAL HONEY BOARD

razoo

ConAgra Foods
Food you love

WO STRATEGIES

@KWATIER

Hours of coding...

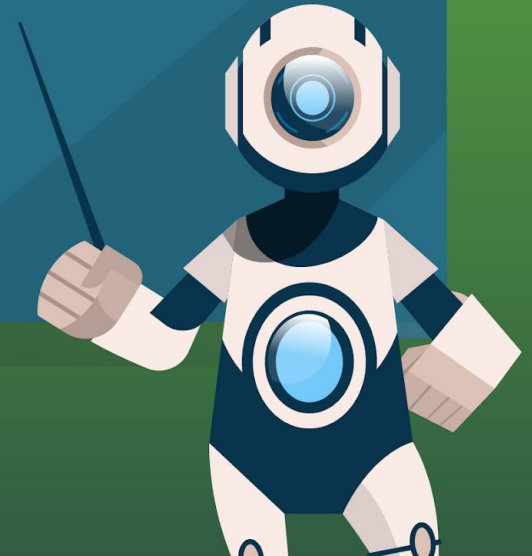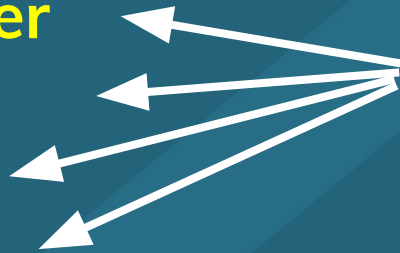Post launch:
"Why can't our users find us on Google?"

SEO is complex, BUT *sometimes* the fix is simply making the site easier for Google to crawl.

Ranking in Google

1. **Discover**
2. **Crawl**
3. **Index**
4. **Render**
5. Rank

These are technical SEO

Do .gov sites get special SEO treatment?

But...

- .Gov are often high authority, so acquiring links or "fixing" bad backlinks are usually not the problem.

- Content is usually comprehensive and often quality - though often needs online readability and targeting help.

- Usually large enterprise sites with technical issues, which is why tech SEO fixes often move the needle.

Tech SEO can make a huge impact

Criteria

- Large authoritative sites with high quality backlinks

- Decently high quality content

- Existing discovery, crawl or indexing issues

Don't waste Googlebot's time

Crawl improvement had a huge impact

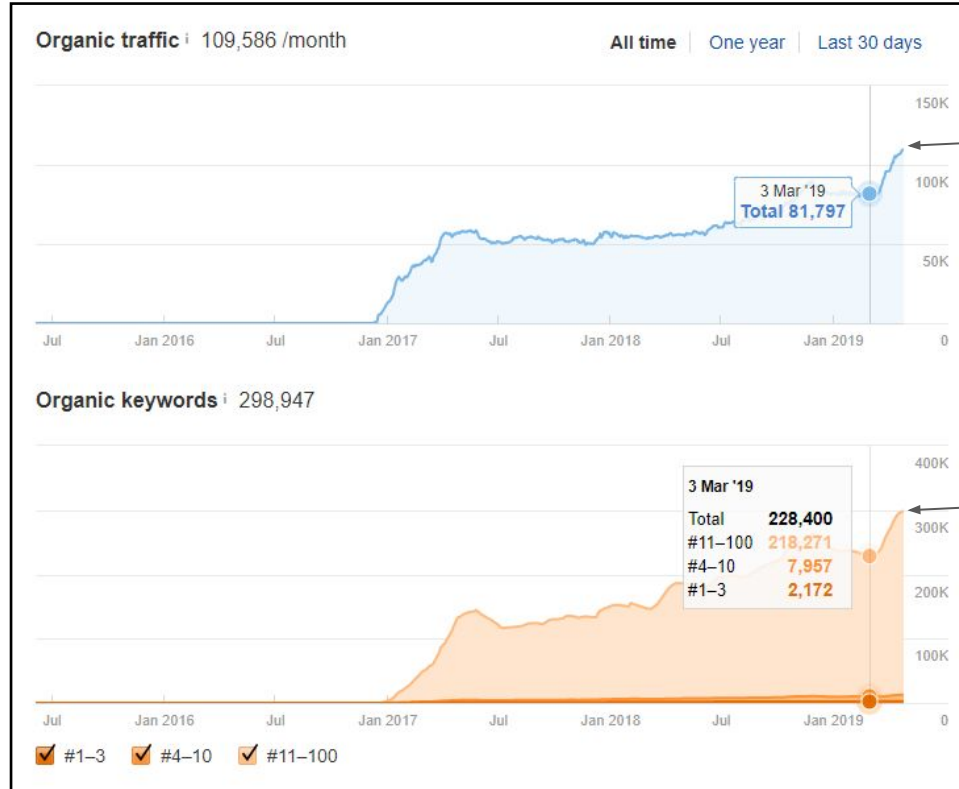**Challenge:** The Drupal site's URLs were not being indexed or ranked quickly enough to generate expected citations.

Strategy: We did a full SEO audit and managed the implementation of SEO technical recommendations

Fixes implemented: Remove full page mobile interstitial. Establish functioning 404 page and status, flip 302s to 301. Remove error in relative link coding that resulted in google crawl waste.

Results

26,894 more organic traffic

76,573 more keywords

Organic traffic 109,586 /month   **All time**   One year   Last 30 days

3 Mar '19
Total 81,797

Now : 108,691

Organic keywords 298,947

3 Mar '19

Total	**228,400**
#11–100	218,271
#4–10	7,957
#1–3	2,172

Now 304,973

✔ #1–3   ✔ #4–10   ✔ #11–100

Create dynamic pages that answer searcher's intent

Custom landing pages for the win

Challenge: Client had lost organic traffic and did not have an SEO strategy or staff in place.

Strategy: During the initial SEO audit, Katherine recommended they adjust their dynamic search results to create optimized landing pages to match the current search volume.

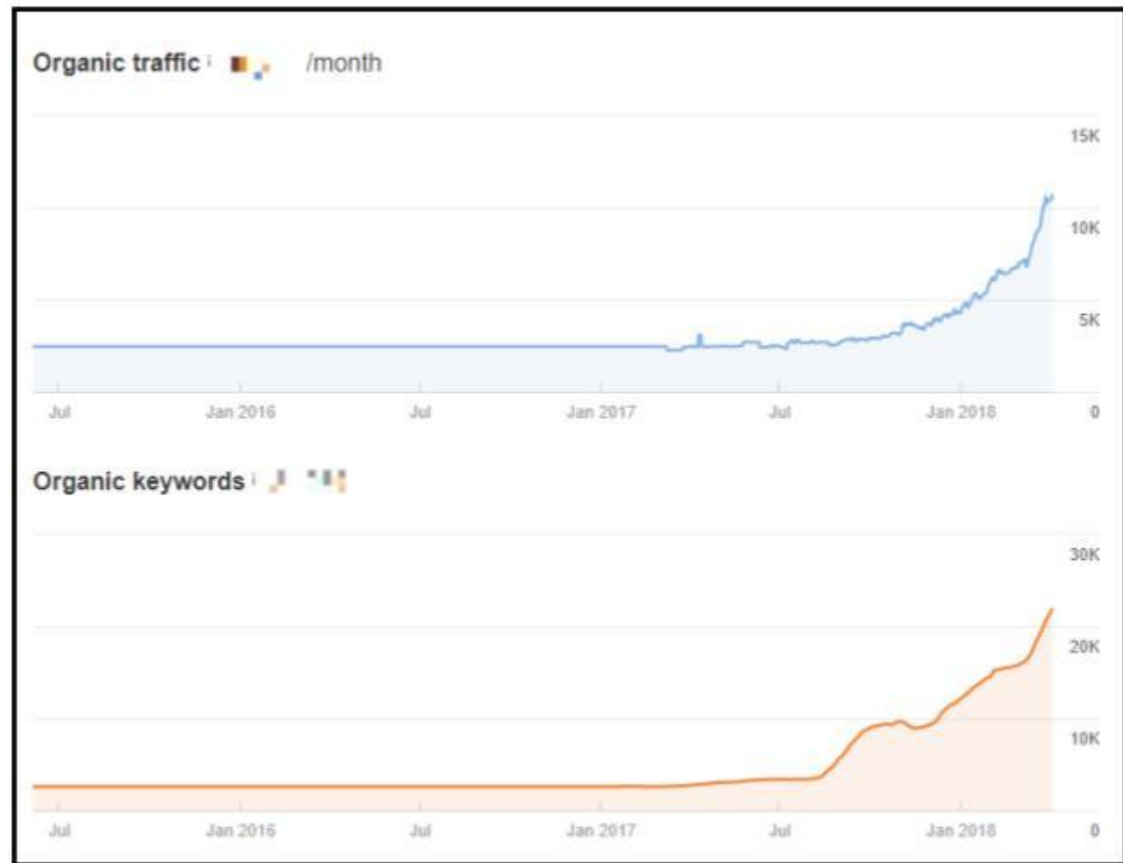**Results:** 79% increase total number of related keywords.

Make discovery fast and easy

Make Discovery Fast and Easy

- Added XML sitemaps

- Decreased homepage page load speed by 50%

Results

Organic traffic /month

Organic keywords

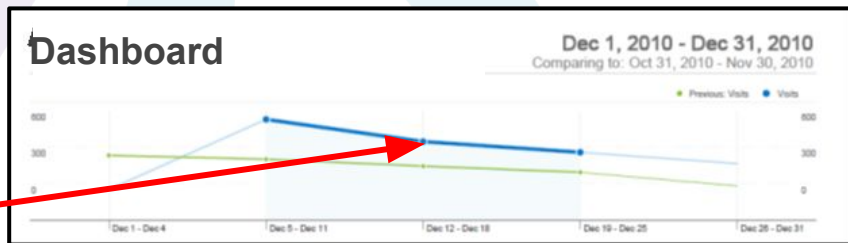# Reduce thin pages and duplication

Impact of Thin Content

Google needs quality content, and sites with multiple pages with thin content can either be suppressed in search results or penalized:

Google | 🔍 Describe your issue

Search Console Help

Little or no original content

One of the most important steps in improving your site's ranking in Google search results is to ensure that it contains plenty of rich information that includes relevant keywords, used appropriately, that indicate the subject matter of your content.
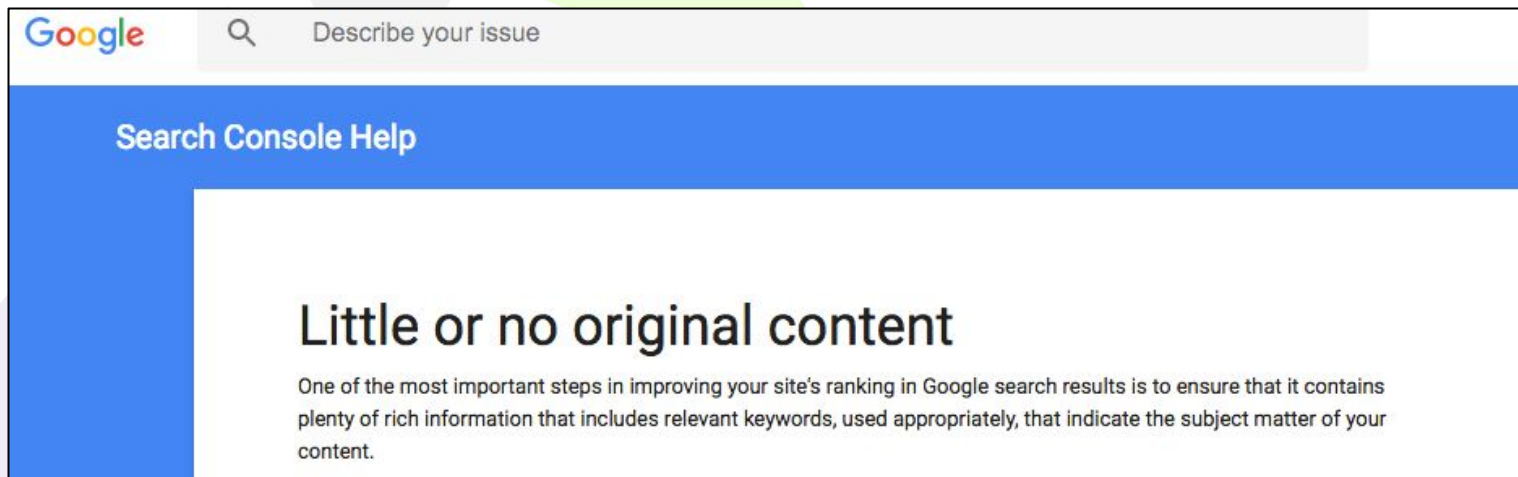
Technical SEO Case Study:

By just fixing the SEO technical issues, we were able to increase traffic to the website by **27.89% in 3 months!**

Total Errors Found

Total Warnings Found

Dashboard — Dec 1, 2010 - Dec 31, 2010
Comparing to: Oct 31, 2010 - Nov 30, 2010

Don't block Googlebot crawling

URLs Limit Discovery

URL: http://www.sharks.noaa.gov/topic/marine-life-distress#conservation-&-management

URL is not on Google
This page is not in the index, but not because of an error. See the details below to learn why it wasn't indexed. Learn more

VIEW CRAWLED PAGE   Page changed?   REQUEST INDEXING

Coverage   URL is unknown to Google

Discovery

Sitemaps   N/A
Referring page   None detected

Over 10K URLs not crawled!

Google Does Not Crawl Beyond the Hash.

Trish Carey
@TrishCarey

Follow

No hashtags in the url @methode #Pubcon
"that's bad for search"

Good URLs are critical.

- No "#" (hashtag) – URLs.
- Canonicalize & HTTPS.
- Sitemaps.
- Use "<a>" with "href".
- Internal linking.

Traditional URLs
example.com/traditional-url/
example.com/page#subsection

Don't use fragment identifiers for content
example.com/#home

10:10 AM - 17 Oct 2018

9 Retweets 12 Likes

9   12

IGary was specifically talking about using hashtags where the # calls new content to load.

Basic web anchors to scroll down the page or to a location in the page but that content has already been loaded on first load - then it is fine.

But if you programmed your site to load new content based on what comes up after the # sign in the URL, then that content will not be crawled.

@KWATIER

Make discovery easy

HTML Sitemaps for The Win
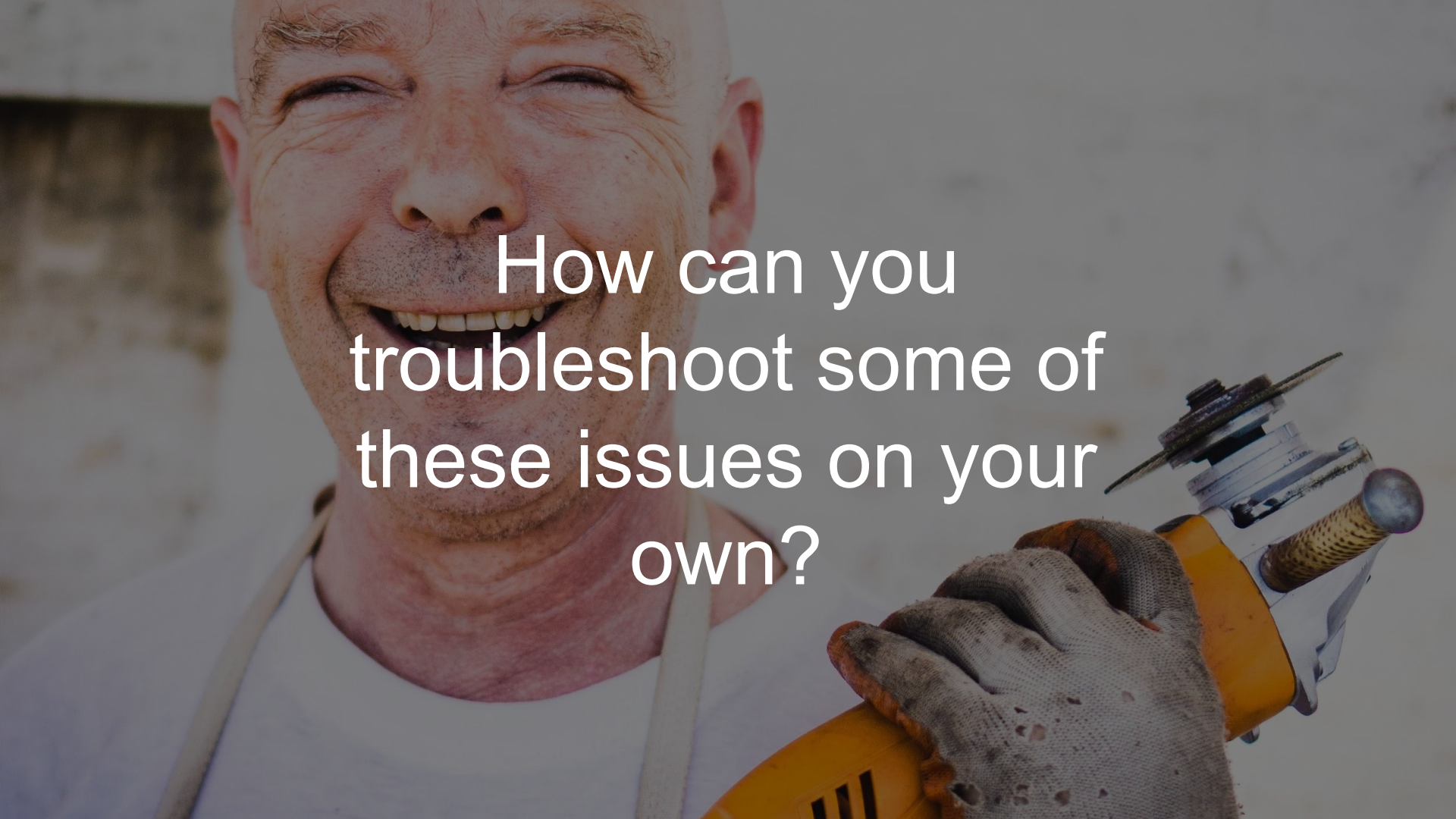
How can you troubleshoot some of these issues on your own?

Crawl Your Site

- [Deepcrawl](#)

- [Screaming Frog](#)

- [OnCrawl](#)
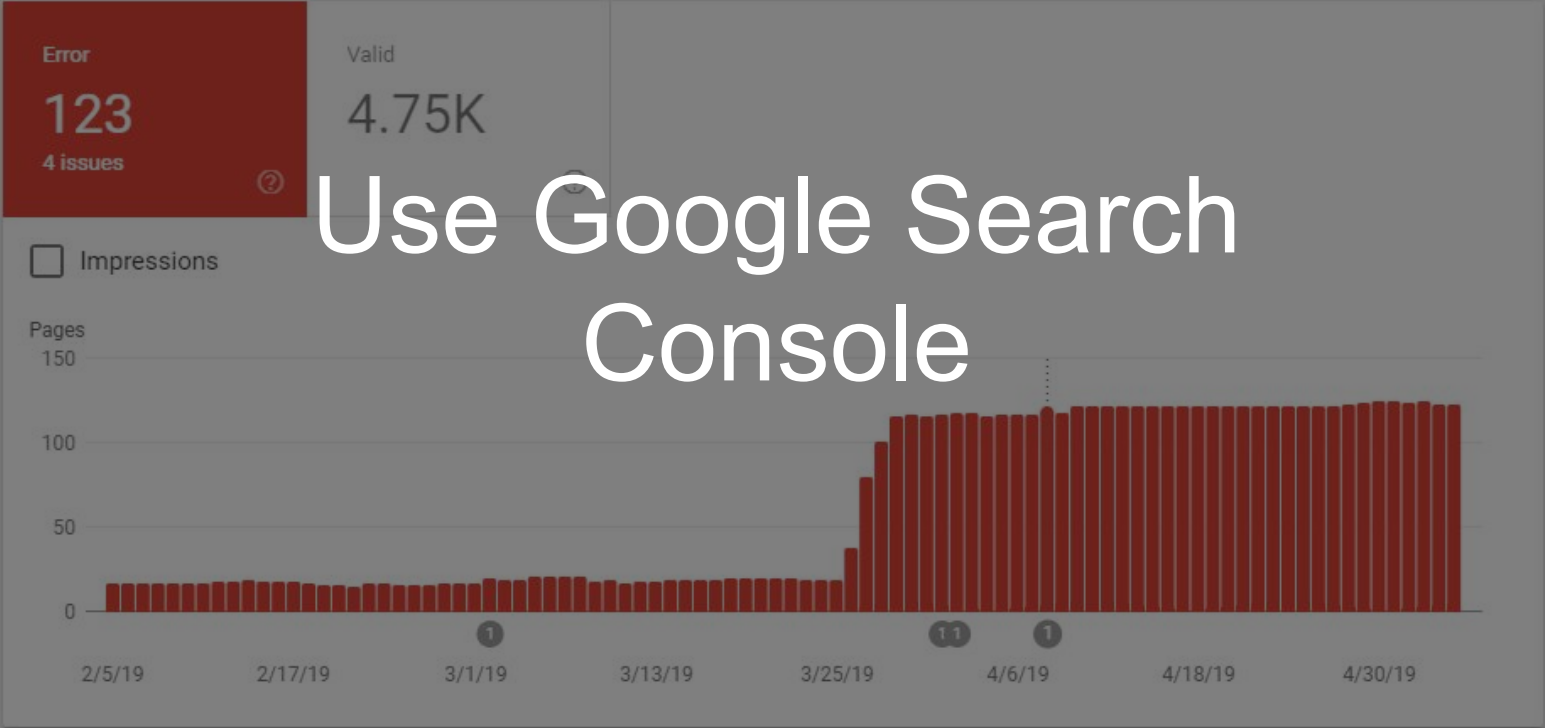
GSC: URL Inspection Tool

GSC: Coverage Report

Status	Type	Validation ↑	Trend	Pages
Error	Server error (5xx)	⚠ Not Started	———	117
Error	Submitted URL has crawl issue	⚠ Not Started	———	58
Error	Submitted URL seems to be a Soft 404	⚠ Not Started	———	40
Error	Submitted URL not found (404)	⚠ Not Started	———	9
Error	Redirect error	⚠ Not Started	———	3
Valid	Indexed, not submitted in sitemap	N/A	———	25,376
Valid	Submitted and indexed	N/A	———	12,843

Rows per page: 10 ▾   1-7 of 7   ‹   ›

Page Speed Test Tools

Lighthouse audit in Chrome

Google's Page Speed Insights

WebPageTest.org

GTMetrix.com

Google's Developer Resources on Page Speed and Performance Optimization

WO STRATEGIES

Technical SEO Resources

Google's resources for developers:
https://developers.google.com/web/fundamentals/

Google's SEO Starter Guide:
https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/7451184?hl=en

Google's image optimization resources:
https://developers.google.com/web/fundamentals/performance/optimizing-content-efficiency/image-optimization

https://moz.com/blog/category/technical-seo

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