



MOVING TO A .CARS DOMAIN

STL.CARS CASE STUDY



MOVING TO A .CARS DOMAIN

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MOVING TO A .CARS DOMAIN

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Bill Hartzer is a Senior Strategist at Globe Runner (<https://globerunner.com/>). Bill is a frequent speaker and expert discussion panel participant at various search engine marketing and internet marketing conferences and events such as the Search Engine Strategies and the PubCon conferences. Bill writes frequently for Search Engine Watch, Search Engine Guide, is regularly mentioned on Search Engine Land, and his industry articles are published in many online publications. He maintains a blog on his website, BillHartzer.com (<https://www.billhartzer.com/>), and is one of the original founders of the Dallas/Fort Worth Search Engine Marketing Association. He has over 18 years of search engine marketing, SEO, and social media marketing experience.

Mr. Hartzer has several years of experience as a Webmaster at a major international software company and 17 years of search engine optimization experience working with some of the world's largest brands' websites. He specializes in highly technical search engine optimization audits of websites and link audits.

Bill has been an active domain name investor and domain developer since the mid 1990s, when he registered his first domain name and launched his first website. He continues to be an active domain name investor, and actively buys and sells domain names on a regular basis. The New gTLD domain names have Mr. Hartzer excited about the new land rush of domain names. He wrote "An SEO's Guide to Acquiring New gTLDs" that was featured on Moz.com (<http://moz.com/ugc/an-seos-guide-to-acquiring-new-gtlds>) in March 2014.

In September 2014, Mr. Hartzer completed and published the results of Globe Runner's independent testing of .Com domain names versus New gTLD domain names and their effect on online advertising, clicks, and conversions. The original white paper is available at <https://globerunner.com/com-vs-new-gtld/>. During January 2015, Globe Runner ran the tests again and updated the results in a new white paper, published in February 2015, which is available at <https://globerunner.com/com-vs-new-gtld-domain-names-8-months-later/>. In October 2014, Mr. Hartzer launched Globe Runner's New gTLD SEO Power Rankings Index (<https://globerunner.com/announcing-new-gtld-seo-power-rankings-index/>) which is updated once each quarter.

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More recently, Mr. Hartzer has provided his SEO experience and expertise to help numerous Globe Runner clients transition and migrate their websites from .COM domain names to New gTLDs. He can be reached via email at Bill@GlobeRunner.com or by phone at +1.972-538-0260.

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INTRODUCTION: THE NEW AUTOMOTIVE TLDS: .CARS/.CAR/.AUTO

Since the beginning of the Internet, Americans have primarily used three main Top Level Domains (TLDs) for our websites: .COM, .NET, and .ORG. There are other TLDs that have been introduced that we're all familiar with, such as .EDU and .GOV. It's been fairly easy for us to register .COM, .NET, and .ORG domain names. You have to be associated with an educational institution or a government entity to secure a .EDU or a .GOV domain name. And then there's the others that have been available for quite some time now, such as .INFO, .BIZ, and .TV. Most consumers in the USA are typically used to the top three, .COM, .NET, and .ORG.

In countries outside of the USA, the Country Code Top Level Domains (ccTLDs), are widely accepted and in fact often the default option. Country codes include .co.uk (United Kingdom), .es (Spain), .com.au (Australia), .ca (Canada), and .it (Italy), and are always two letters long.

Depending on the location of your business, a ccTLD makes perfect sense as an alternative to .COM. However, since January 2014, there are literally hundreds of new Generic Top Level Domains (New gTLDs) becoming available, and many are already available for registration.

The .CARS TLD

The .CARS/ .CAR/ .AUTO TLDs (Top Level Domain) was launched in December 2015 and January, 2016. The Sunrise Period for .CARS/ .CAR/ .AUTO domain names began on December 9, 2015. This period was for brands who are registered in the Trademark Clearinghouse. The EAP (Early Access Period) began on January 12, 2016, and was for OEMs, dealerships, vendors, and other entities who wanted early access. The General Availability period began on January 20, 2016. A .CARS/ .CAR/ .AUTO domain name is now available for anyone to register, and we looked at the domain registration prices at four leading registrars:

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- Uniregistry
- Network Solutions
- GoDaddy
- NameCheap

Pricing

The “suggested retail price” for a .CARS/ .CAR/ .AUTO domain name is \$3,000.00 per year. We found that we could register a .CARS/ .CAR/ .AUTO domain name for less than the suggested retail price, however.

A typical .CARS/ .CAR/ .AUTO domain at Uniregistry costs \$2,888.88. That same domain name at Network Solutions is \$2,999.99, \$2,799.99 at GoDaddy, and \$2,088.00 at NameCheap.com. Currently, the best deal on a .CARS/ .CAR/ .AUTO domain name appears to be at NameCheap (as of the writing of this document).

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CHOOSING A .CARS DOMAIN NAME

Making the choice to move your current website to a .CARS domain name can be an easy choice. Based on others that have already made the move from a .COM to a new .CARS domain, we are seeing positive results. If you are launching a new website or a new company or brand and need to choose a new domain name, a .CARS domain could be a good choice. The .CARS TLD is not the only automotive-related TLD that was launched. There are several, including .CARS, .CAR, and .AUTO.

For domain names, shorter seems to be better. If the .COM version of the domain name you want isn't available, then the equivalent .CARS domain name may be available. Recently, St. Louis Motorcars chose to move from STLMotorcars.com to STL.Cars, a shorter, "better" domain name, some would argue. If you are not going to be using your Trademark, company name, or Brand as a part of your domain name, a keyword rich domain name is a good choice.

Keyword Rich Domain Names

It is widely thought that one way to potentially gain some search engine marketing advantage is to buy a keyword rich domain name that includes the TLD as one of the main keywords. This strategy has been said to not matter when it comes to search engine ranking advantages in Google, though. Google has officially stated that they treat new gTLD (global top level domain) endings the same as legacy domain endings like .COM & .ORG. In a July 2015 blog post (<https://googlewebmastercentral.blogspot.com/2015/07/googles-handling-of-new-top-level.html>), Google stated :

“Q: How will new gTLDs affect search? Is Google changing the search algorithm to favor these TLDs? How important are they really in search?”

A: Overall, our systems treat new gTLDs like other gTLDs (like .com & .org).”

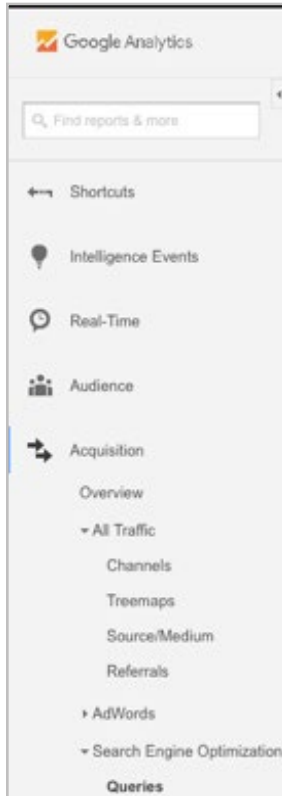
So, buying and using a keyword-rich new gTLD domain name is just as good as using one of the legacy TLDs, such as .COM and .ORG—they're all treated equally when it comes to Google's organic search results. However, at Globe Runner, as Search Engine Optimization experts, we have seen many cases where keyword rich domain names that include the

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keyword in the extension appear to actually help search engine rankings. They appear to help a website's SEO and overall search engine visibility. Some of these examples are www.Coffee.Club (Coffee Club), and www.Jacksonville.Attorney (Jacksonville Attorney). Even Verified Domains, Globe Runner's domain name due diligence service, launched on www.Verified.Domains. The site is very visible in the search results for "Verified Domains".

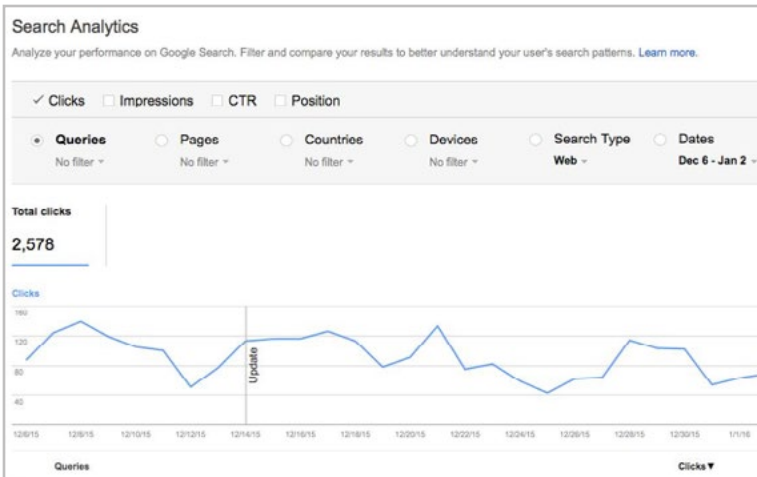
Google Analytics

One recommended source for keywords is your own website's statistics. Most websites currently use Google Analytics in order to determine the website's traffic, number of visitors, referral sources, and keywords. The list of keywords that has brought visitors to your own website is a great source of possible domain names. In Google Analytics, the Queries report shows the Google search queries that generated the most impressions for your website URLs. For more information about this, see Google's help topic: <https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1308626?hl=en>



While a certain amount of data is available through Google Analytics, you may need to use Google's Webmaster Tools (<http://www.google.com/webmasters/>), now called Google Search Console. You can easily determine the keywords that are bringing traffic to your website from Google. Using this list, you can start a list of possible domain names that you may want

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to purchase. Below is an example of the Search Analytics report available in Google Search Console. Under the graph, you will find a list of Queries and Clicks (a list of actual keywords is not shown in the graphic below).

The Queries is a list of keywords that have brought traffic (visitors) to your website. The Impressions is the number of times your website showed up in the search results for that keyword phrase (query).

Online Keyword Research Tools

We recommend researching keywords that include “car”, “cars” and “auto” for possible use when registering a domain. Online keyword research tools allow you to learn how many people search per month for a particular keyword or keyword phrase. You can also discover related keywords and the number of search per month for those keywords, as well. Typically, the more popular the keyword, the more valuable that keyword is—and a domain name that contains that keyword is going to be more valuable. The following is a list of popular keyword research tools:

- Google AdWords Keyword Planner - <https://adwords.google.com/KeywordPlanner>
- Bing Keyword Tool – <http://www.bing.com/toolbox/keywords>
- Keyword.IO - <http://keywordtool.io/>

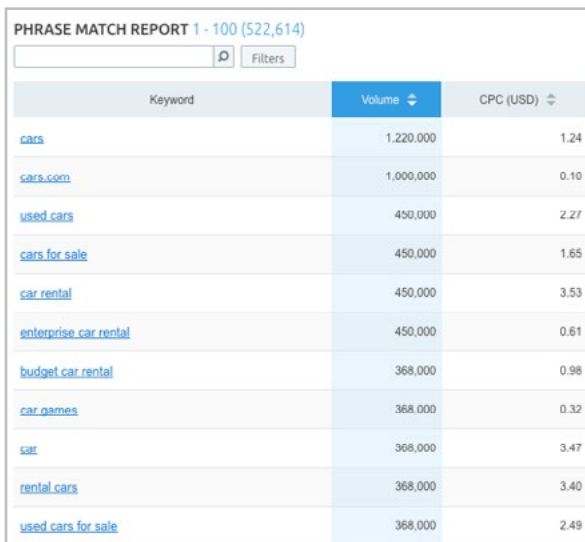
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- Wordtracker – <http://www.wordtracker.com/>
- Wordstream – <http://www.wordstream.com/keywords>
- SEMRush – <http://www.semrush.com/>
- SpyFU – <http://www.spyfu.com>

One way to start the keyword research process is to use a website such as SEMRush.com. Starting with a keyword like “cars”, we are able to see related keywords that people search for on a monthly basis, and how many times they search for that keyword.

Viewing their full report, you have access to hundreds of keyword and related keywords, along with the search volume for these keywords (how many times these keywords are searched for on a monthly basis). Typically, the higher the volume and the higher the CPC (Cost Per Click) being paid to advertise that keyword, the more valuable the keyword is. So, domain names that include those keywords would be considered more valuable.

Another option, specifically for those selling cars, would be to purchase a domain name that includes your location or geographical area. For example, if you are a car dealer in Dallas, then purchasing Dallas.Cars would be a good option for you. The same goes for used cars, such as DallasUsed.Cars.



PHRASE MATCH REPORT 1 - 100 (522,614)

Keyword	Volume	CPC (USD)
cars	1,220,000	1.24
cars.com	1,000,000	0.10
used cars	450,000	2.27
cars for sale	450,000	1.65
car rental	450,000	3.53
enterprise car rental	450,000	0.61
budget car rental	368,000	0.98
car games	368,000	0.32
car	368,000	3.47
rental cars	368,000	3.40
used cars for sale	368,000	2.49

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STUDYING THE .CARS TLD

With the recent launch of the .CARS TLD, we wanted to start digging right in and look at the data. We wanted to see if a .CARS domain name is worth the \$3,000 purchase price. With the higher price tag, many could consider these domain names more “premium” than other TLDs. We want to know several things:

- Is a domain name on .CARS worth the cost?
- Are there any direct examples of where a business moved their domain name to a .CARS domain?

Being automotive enthusiasts and marketers ourselves, we wanted to know: should a car dealer move their website to a .CARS, .CAR, or .AUTO domain name? We chose .CARS and set to find out the answer.

Finding the Appropriate .CARS Website

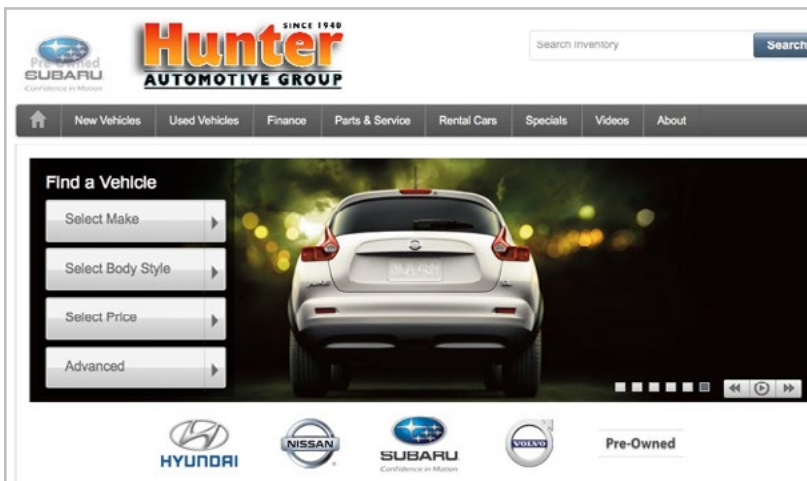
We performed some random searches on Google.com to find websites that have moved to the .Cars TLD. We found several automotive-related companies that have moved their websites to a .CARS domain, and we found that there more are being added every day. .CARS, .CAR, and .AUTO domains are registered and sites are going live at a good pace.

Some examples of websites that we found are:

- www.dcd.auto
- www.hv.auto
- www.premier.auto
- www.brilliance.auto
- www.stl.cars
- www.hunter.cars
- www.lucra.cars
- www.wichita.cars

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There is an updated list of websites maintained at www.go.cars/live. We picked a few live .CARS websites to look at more in depth.



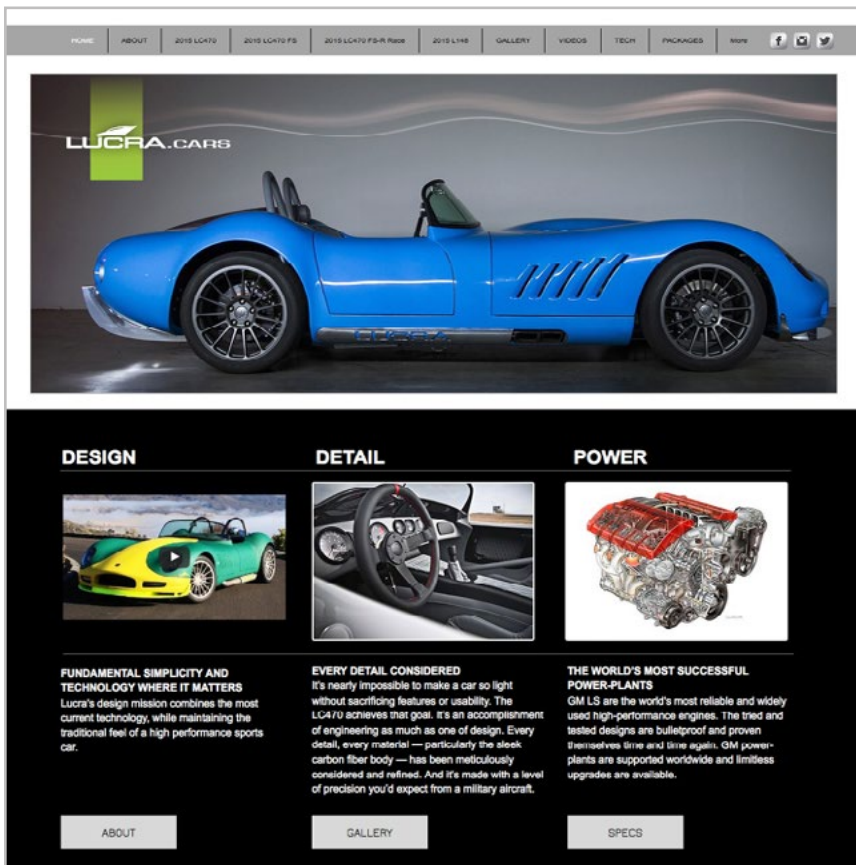
Hunter, Subaru, Nissan, Volvo, Hyundai, Lincoln Mercury

Hunter.Cars is using a redirect to another domain name, HunterAutomotiveGroup.com, so we are unable to study the effects of using a .CARS domain name. Hunter.Cars will not show up in the search engine results because of the redirect, and the website Hunter.Cars will not rank for any keywords—because of the redirect.

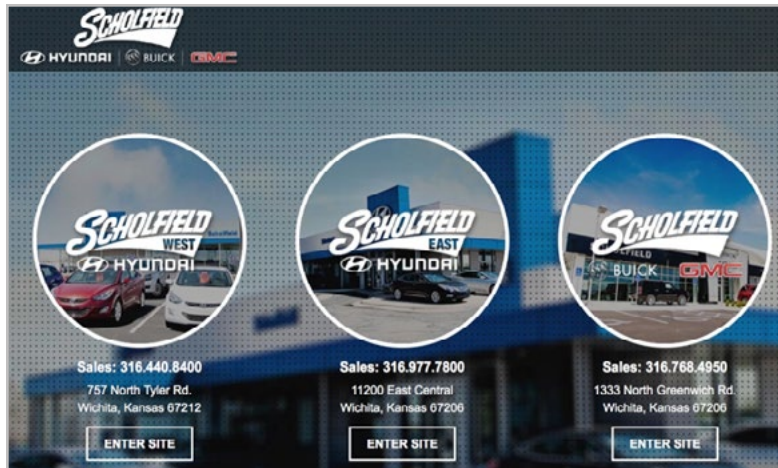
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LUCRA Cars - High Performance SuperCars

Lucra.Cars was also an interesting site to study, as they appear to have redirected LC470.com and LucraCars.com to Lucra.Cars. However, the redirect from LC470.com is not set up properly—so any results that are reported are not going to be accurate, and may have an effect on the results. The redirect from LucraCars.com to Lucra.Cars is set up properly, and using a 301 Permanent Redirect.

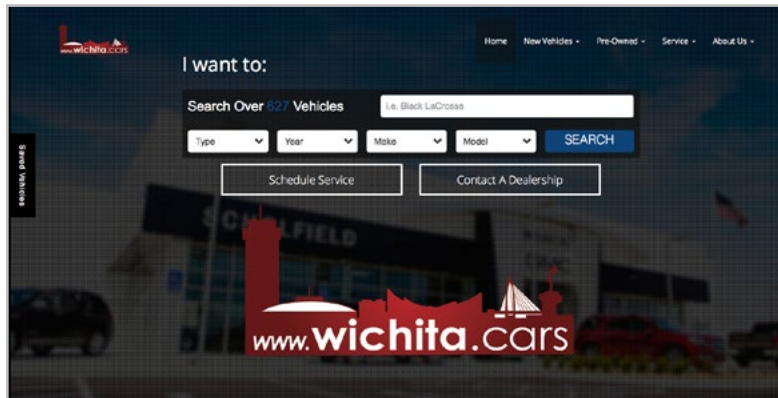


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Scholfield Hyundai Buick GMC

Scholfield Hyundai Buick GMC initially created a brand new single-page website on Wichita.Cars, which essentially allowed visitors to click through to another website. Without a considerable amount of content on the website and only “click through” functionality, the search engines had no incentive to rank this website in the top search results. Google, for example, doesn’t tend to rank “thin content” web sites very well. After checking the site in March 2016, we found that Scholfield Hyundai Buick GMC launched a new website on Wichita.Cars, as seen below:



This new website, www.wichita.cars, appears to be doing better in the Google search results, especially for keywords such as “Wichita Cars” than it previously did with a single-page website. When you search Google for the term “Wichita Cars,” the Wichita.Cars domain already outranks WichitaCars.Com, which is 15-years-old. We intend to continue to follow the progress of the www.Wichita.cars website in the future.

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St. Louis Motorcars- Midwest's Premier Luxury Car Dealer

Stl.Cars was the ideal candidate for us to review, as St. Louis Motorcars moved their website from [www. StlMotorcars.com](http://www.StlMotorcars.com) to Stl.Cars. Not only did they move the site properly, data from the website on both domain names was available. We were able to truly see the “before” and “after” data, and compare the two to see the results of moving from a .COM to a .CARS domain name. We found that Stl.Cars was the perfect candidate for our research.

Based on our in-depth review of these websites, we found that St. Louis Motorcars was one of the few automotive dealerships that has moved (properly) to their new web address, so we decided to look at Stl.Cars more in depth. LUCRA Cars, previously at www.lucracars.com and at www.lc470.com, is using a redirect that we don't recommend (a JavaScript redirect), so search engine performance in the Google search results is unreliable at best.

Hunter Auto Group, which owns Hunter.Cars, has redirected Hunter.Cars to their other website address, HunterAutoGroup.com, also making the search engine performance in the Google search results unreliable. Only live (not redirected) websites will show up in the Google search results.

We chose to look in-depth at St. Louis Motorcars, who completely moved their dealership's website from [www. STLMotorcars.com](http://www.STLMotorcars.com) to Stl.Cars. This was done during November 2015. By studying everything from the search engine rankings to the number of visitors on the website, we can determine whether or not a move from a .COM domain name to a .Cars domain name is recommended.

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STL.CARS WEBSITE MOVE: THE RESULTS

Once we determined that St. Louis Motorcars had moved properly, and data was available from before the move to after the move, we started looking at the results. We certainly had questions about the move, and whether or not it was “worth” moving. Here’s a list of the questions we set out to answer:

- Was it worth the time and effort to move to a .CARS domain name?
- Did the move hurt or help website traffic?
- Were the visitors confused or troubled by the move?
- Was the move better or worse for visitors?
- How did the search engine respond to the move?
- How did Google, in particular, treat the website’s search engine rankings?
- Did the organic search traffic go up or down after the move?
- Was there a loss of traffic to the website during or after the move?
- If there was a loss of traffic to the website, did it recover?

Overall, we wanted to see hard, fast numbers in the data that indicated whether or not the move was good or bad for the business. If there were any indications that businesses should NOT be moving to another domain name, then we wanted to uncover that data. And, likewise, if there were any indications that a business should move to another domain name (such as an automotive dealer move to a .CARS domain), then we wanted to uncover that, too.

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Did The Move Help Organic Search Engine Rankings?

The main issue that Globe Runner is interested in is whether or not the website suffered any search engine ranking losses. When the website was moved to a .CARS domain, did the website's search engine rankings go up or down?

One of the key data points that we analyzed was whether or not the move from STLMotorcars.com to STL.Cars helped the site's search engine rankings in Google. What we looked at was a list of specific keywords where the website was NOT ranking #1 or #2 in the Google search results previously. It just didn't make sense for us to look at any keywords where the site already had top rankings, because the site can't rank better for those keywords. Here is what we found.

Keywords	Aug 2015 Ranking	Feb 2016 Ranking	Ranking Status
green lotus elise	11	6	better
krypton green	16	9	better
lotus elise green	15	5	better
stl cars	19	6	better
premier luxury cars	17	15	better
used luxury cars st louis	10	6	better
white bentley flying spur	14	30	worse
premier luxury cars	17	15	better
used luxury cars st louis	10	6	better
lotus motor cars	14	13	better
cars stl	17	8	better
mercedes 9 passanger van	16	16	same
lambo dealership	18	18	same
silver aston martin vanquish	9	9	same
lamborghini showroom	19	33	worse
white bentley flying spru	14	30	worse
bentley showroom	19	38	worse
bentleys motorsports	7	26	worse
bentley car dealers	16	31	worse

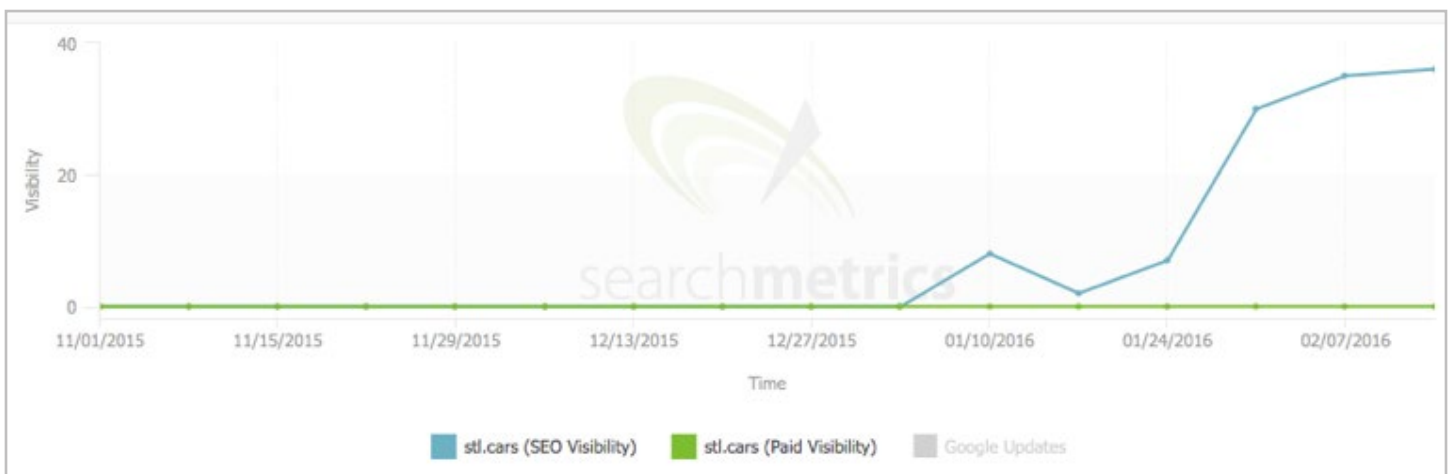
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We looked at a lot of keyword rankings of the website both when it was on the .COM domain and when after it was moved to the .CARS domain. We found 16 keyword phrases where the website ranked in the first few pages of search results. Of these 16 keyword phrases, 8 got better when it came to search engine rankings.

We found that only 5 of the keyword phrases we looked at that got worse. When it comes to those 5 keyword phrases, we consider this to be “normal fluctuations” of the search results..

Organic Search Engine Traffic

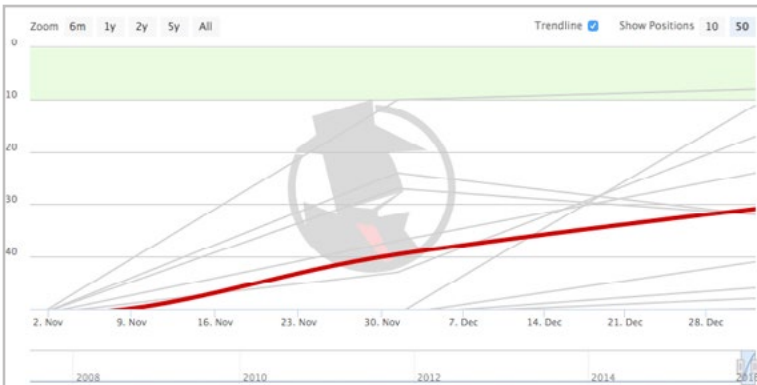
Other than actual search engine rankings, we also looked at several different sources that track organic search traffic to websites. We wanted to see, overall, if the data that these other sources have is different than the keyword rankings we reviewed.



We first looked at the SearchMetrics data for Stl.Cars to see how the organic search traffic fared. As we can see, the SearchMetric data shows that the site started receiving organic search traffic around the first of January 2016. The website was moved from StlMotorcars.com to Stl.Cars around the beginning of November. We don't believe that this SearchMetric data is correct.

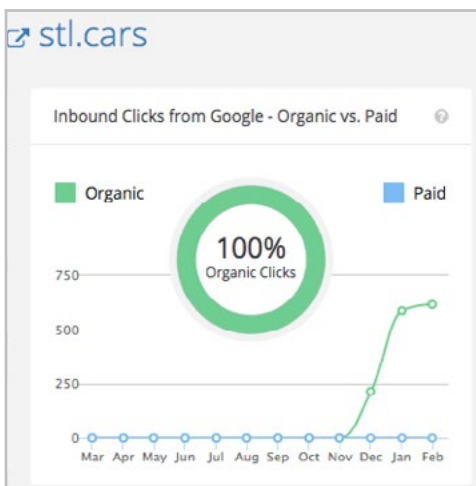
Another source we looked at was Spyfu.com, and the data for Stl.Cars on SpyFu is much more accurate based on when the site was moved (first week of November 2015). We only see an upward trend.

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Looking at the inbound clicks from Google on Spyfu, we see an upward trend, as well. There was a very quick jump in clicks from organic search between November and January, and after this initial period of time, the clicks began to rise even higher:

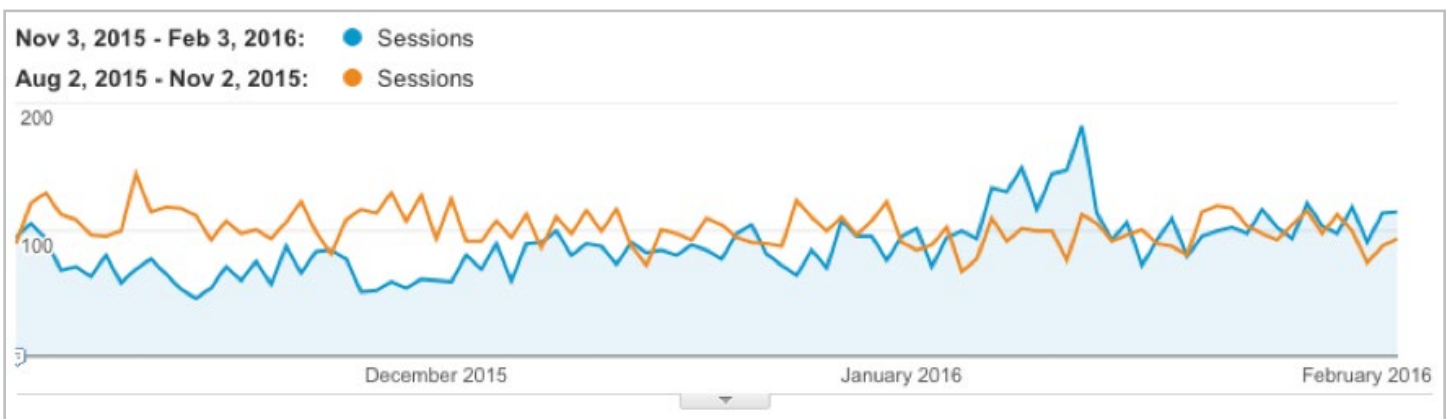
These third party websites confirm our data and we begin to speculate that the move from StlMotorcars.com to Stl.Cars was a good move for the website and St. Louis Motorcars. Keyword rankings are up, and



overall the site's clicks from organic search are trending upwards. Let's take a look, however, at even more data. We were fortunate enough to be given access to study the site's Google Analytics and Google Search Console data.

Google Analytics Data

One of the main data points that we thought would help us decide whether or not the move was a good one is looking at actual Google Analytics data for the website. Google Analytics was installed on the website before the website was moved from StlMotorcars.com to Stl.Cars. We compared the website traffic before and after the move.



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Overall, based on the number of overall sessions (overall traffic to the site), we see a slight downward trend of the orange sessions between August 2, 2015 and November 2, 2015. Looking at the number of sessions after the move, from November 3, 2015 to February 3, 2016, the traffic is trending upwards. By the end of January 2016, the number of impressions had increased to more than the number of sessions just before the move.

There are a few things to consider:

- The traffic appears to drop slightly right after the move, which was during the end of November 2015 and during December 2015. This is due to seasonality, as people don't tend to buy cars during the holiday season.
- We verified that the jump in traffic during January 2016 was due to additional local promotions

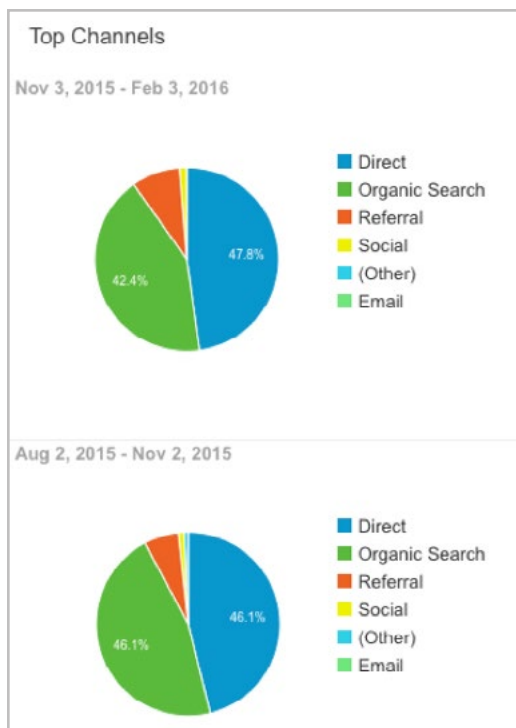
We also looked at the sources of traffic to the website before the move to the new domain name and after the move to the new domain name. Again, we compared the same periods of time, November 3, 2015 to February 3, 2016 with August 2, 2015 to November 2, 2015:

	Acquisition			Behavior			Conversions		
	Sessions ↓	% New Sessions ↕	New Users ↕	Bounce Rate ↕	Pages / Session ↕	Avg. Session Duration ↕	Goal Conversion Rate ↕	Goal Completions ↕	Goal Value ↕
	4.44% ↓	7.51% ↑	2.73% ↑	1.15% ↑	4.12% ↓	4.43% ↓	3.98% ↓	8.25% ↓	0.00%
1 Direct	1.03% ↓			11.48% ↓			2.95% ↓		
2 Organic Search	12.00% ↓			5.43% ↓			0.87% ↑		
3 Referral	33.67% ↑			28.73% ↑			22.40% ↓		
4 Social	20.09% ↑			54.77% ↑			56.26% ↓		
5 (Other)	98.78% ↓			485.71% ↑			29.31% ↓		
6 Email	100.00% ↑			100.00% ↑			0.00%		

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Overall, the percentage of new sessions is up 7.51 percent over the previous domain name, StlMotorcars.com. While the “direct” traffic is down 1 percent, we do believe that we have to be cautious here—when one website is redirected with a 301 Permanent Redirect to another location, the referral data may be lost, and it may show direct traffic when, in fact, the source was not a direct type-in of the new domain name.

While the site’s organic search rankings in the search results were up for many keywords, the traffic from organic search may be showing that it was down because of the season. We don’t expect a lot of traffic and searches during the holiday season, which would include November and December



After the St. Louis Motorcars moved their website from StlMotorcars.com to Stl.Cars, the site’s Social Media and Referral traffic went up. The referral traffic went up 33.67 percent, and the traffic from Social Media websites went up 20.09 percent. The “Other” traffic appears to have gone down, but this may be due to the redirect(s) not showing the proper referrals. Another noteworthy point is that the conversions from organic search went up slightly when the site moved from StlMotorcars.com to Stl.Cars.

Conversion rates going up has been an interesting trend amongst websites that have moved from a .COM to a New gTLD domain name, based on Globe Runner’s data of tracking and watching other websites that have moved from a .COM to a New gTLD domain name.

Another view of the comparison (before and after the move to Stl.Cars) shown, which is a list of the Top Channels in Google Analytics:

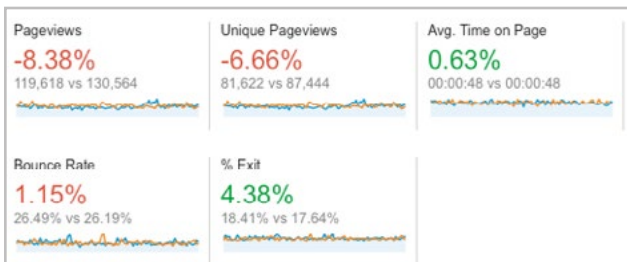
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While traffic from Organic Search went down from 46.1 percent to 42.4 percent, the Direct traffic stayed about the same. The traffic from Referrals went up after the move.

Was the Move Better or Worse for Visitors?

Another question on our mind has been whether or not the move from StlMotorcars.com to Stl.Cars was good for visitors or not. Do the visitors trust the site more or less? Are they spending more time on the site than they did previously?

From Google Analytics, we looked at several metrics, comparing the time when the site was using StlMotorcars.com with when it was using Stl.Cars



We looked at the Pageviews, the Unique Pageviews, the Average Time on Page, the Bounce Rate, and the percent of Exits. The number of Pageviews on the site went down 8 percent, but we are not overly concerned about this. Many of the pages that were viewed are vehicle inventory pages on the site. Since the website moved at the beginning of November 2015, just before the holiday season, we should expect that the number of Pageviews to be down, as it is a “slow time of year” for vehicle sales.

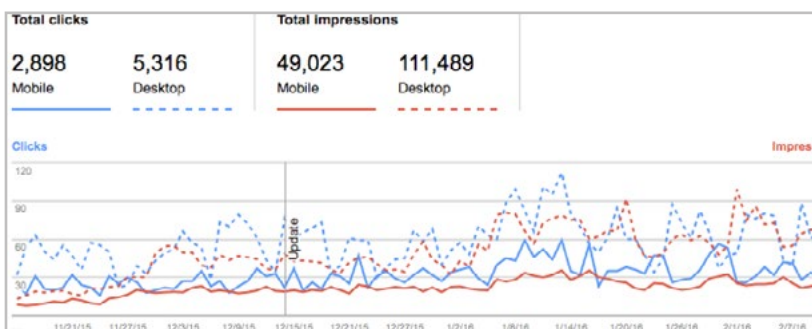
The total number of Unique Pageviews is not down as much, and again I would see this as a normal fluctuation or change. It’s only down about 6 percent. The Average Time on Page actually went up when comparing these two different periods, which is good. The website itself didn’t change, and there was not a new version of the site launched. The Bounce Rate didn’t change much either. It does appear that the visitors that did come to the site viewed more pages on the site, as the Percent Exit numbers got better.

MOVING TO A .CARS DOMAIN

Definitions:

- Pageviews – Pageviews are the total number of pages viewed. Repeated views of a single page are counted.
- Unique Pageviews – Unique Pageviews are the number of sessions during which the specified page was viewed at least once. A unique pageview is counted for each page URL + page Title combination.
- Average Time on Page – The average amount of time users spent viewing a specified page or screen, or set of pages or screens.
- Bounce Rate – Bounce Rate is the percentage of single-page visits (e.g. visits in which the person left your site from the entrance page without interacting with the page).
- Percent Exit – %Exit is (number of exits) / (number of pageviews) for the page or set of pages. It indicates how often users exit from that page or set of pages when they view the page(s).

Google Search Console Data



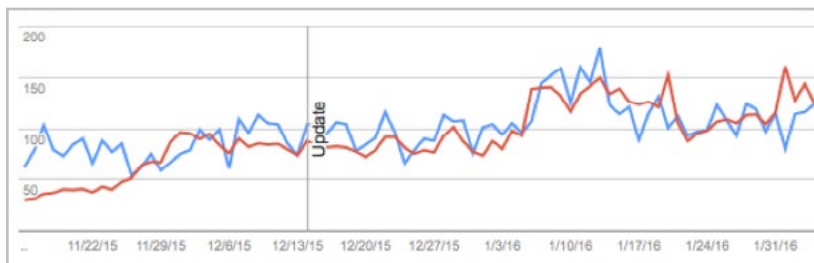
Another source of data we used to measure the effect of moving from StlMotorcars.com to Stl. Cars was the Google Search Console, formerly called Google Webmaster Tools.

We looked at the Search Analytics data within the Google Search Console and compared the data before the move and after the move.

MOVING TO A .CARS DOMAIN

Overall, we can see an upwards trend in total clicks and impressions on Desktop and Mobile, which is good. We don't see any evidence that the move from the .COM to the .CARS domain has hurt traffic, impressions, or clicks.

We also looked more closely at the overall clicks and impressions since the site was moved to the .CARS domain name.



Unfortunately, we can only see data as far back as the beginning of November 2015, and again we see an upward trend and that is very close to what we see in the Google Analytics data.

MOVING TO A .CARS DOMAIN

MOVING TO A .CARS DOMAIN NAME

If you have decided to go ahead and completely move your current web address to a new .CARS, .CAR, or .AUTO domain name, first make sure that you've acquired the domain name. We mentioned the current prices for a .CARS domain name, which is about \$3,000 per year. This is an annual fee. Below, we have put together a checklist for moving your current website to your new domain name.

Checklist for Moving to a .CARS, .CAR, or .AUTO Domain Name



Pre-Move

- Make a backup and copy of your current website.
- Move copy of website to new web hosting account.
- Crawl your website, saving URLs and other data in spreadsheet. Make list of 301 redirect(s) to put in place.
- Review current site content for references to old domain name, update copy of site, and make-ready for new domain name.
- Perform due diligence on the domain name you're moving to.
- Check links to your current site, making note of most powerful links from other websites.
- Verify websites in Google Webmaster Tools, Bing Webmaster Tools. Includes current site and domain you're moving to.
- Write press release about moving to new domain name., distribute to local media. Some companies have seen benefits from pre-announcing the move to their new web location in advance. For example, incorporating the move into a marketing or advertising campaign could be useful.

MOVING TO A .CARS DOMAIN



Pre-Planning

- Plan a date and time to move to the new domain.
- Detail the process for moving. Who is responsible for what (in your organization)?



On Moving Day

- Add 301 Permanent Redirect(s) to new domain name
- Test redirect(s) using server header check. Ask a friend in another location (using another ISP) to check the redirect(s).
- Crawl new website, checking for internal errors, any references to old domain name. Fix all errors found.
- Notify Google of change of URL address.
- Notify Bing of change of URL Address.
- Update Google Analytics with new domain.
- Check Google Analytics for referring URLs (sites sending traffic), notify those sites about change of domain.
- Update social media profiles with new domain.
- Update email signatures, email addresses with new domain name.
- Update business cards with new email address, new domain name.
- Update company internal themes/documents with new domain name.
- Update company newsletter with new domain name (send out newsletter?).
- Distribute press release about moving to new domain name.

MOVING TO A .CARS DOMAIN

- Update PPC campaigns with new domain, consider running new campaigns to compensate for any traffic loss.
- Notify your customers, clients, and business partners about moving to new domain name.
- Contact link owners of most powerful links to old site. Tell them about new domain name.



After Moving Day

- Watch Google Analytics for changes in traffic.
- Watch current site for any search engine ranking changes.
- Work on getting new links to the new domain name.
- Start new marketing campaign(s) to help awareness of new domain name in marketplace.

MOVING TO A .CARS DOMAIN

CONCLUSION

Based on our thorough review, we have observed direct evidence that the site's overall search engine rankings have gone up. Google Analytics data, Google Search Console data and third party data have all led us to conclude that the site did not suffer as a result of the move. In fact, the website's overall traffic is trending upwards since the website was moved from StlMotorcars.com to Stl.Cars.

We are very interested in the fact that the website was moved from StlMotorcars.com to Stl.Cars, without any on-site changes, and the website's rankings went up. The site's rankings continue to trend upwards, especially for 'generic' keyword phrases.

Based on our observations, we recommend that website owners in the automotive industry consider moving their websites to a .CARS/ .CAR/ .AUTO domain name if the domain name will be shorter and ultimately "better". We don't see any negative impacts from moving, and we are even seeing upward traffic and ranking trends after moving.

We recommend involving someone who is highly experienced in moving websites from one URL to another, as the moving process is complex and can easily be done in a way that can actually harm the website's traffic and search engine rankings.

* Globe Runner was compensated for their time to review the data collected and produce a report on the findings. In no way did this have an effect on the outcome of the study or Globe Runner's opinions about the results.



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Globe Runner is an Addison, Texas-based digital agency specializing in search engine optimization (SEO), content marketing and digital advertising. It has over 70 local, national and international B2C and B2B clients in consumer-packaged goods (CPG), beauty, financial services, fashion, healthcare, home and interiors, jewelry, legal services, market research and technology.

Globe Runner sits on the board of the Dallas Fort Worth Search Engine Marketing Association (DFWSEM). The agency's staff and work have been featured in the Wall Street Journal, Forbes, the Dallas Morning News and Adweek.

More information about Globe Runner can be found on its website, globerunner.com.

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