
The Botify logo consists of the word "BOTIFY" in a bold, white, sans-serif font, followed by a vertical line. It is enclosed within a white rectangular border.

Success Story

MIGRATING URLS

*How BlaBlaCar used Botify for
a successful site migration*



Bla Bla Car

INDUSTRY
Travel

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#BotifySuccessStory



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ABOUT BLABLACAR

Blablacar was planning a complete site migration. How do you move an entire website – content, navigation, and all – to new URLs without losing all your hard-earned organic traffic?

Founded in 2006 in France, ridesharing website BlaBlaCar is now present in 22 countries. From Spain to Russia, Turkey to Mexico, BlaBlaCar connects car owners with empty seats with passengers in need of a ride.

With a fast-growing user base and strong SEO, the company needed to move their site with as little disruption as possible to their valuable organic traffic.



JÉRÔME MOUSSAY,
SEO MANAGER,

Jérôme Moussay, SEO manager, knew he needed a powerful tool that could take their website from A to B successfully, without sacrificing valuable SEO standings in the process.

He turned to Botify as his top tool for this major project, and for ongoing monitoring for the future.

At the time of the migration, BlaBlaCar was present in a dozen European countries, all using Botify Log Analyzer.



22 Countries



Over 3 billion
miles shared



Over 21 million
app downloads

One-Time Challenge, Long-Term Benefits

BlaBlaCar was planning a site migration of their entire platform.

They needed a tool that would permit them to closely monitor the progress and changes to their site as they transitioned all of their URLs.

They were updating their French platform. From an SEO perspective, they needed:

- To effect a complete site migration of all URLs
- To take the opportunity to optimize their site structure
- To maintain as much existing organic traffic as possible

The largest challenge in the group?

To preserve existing traffic while changing completely the way Google sees the website structure. Many pages that were currently generating good organic traffic would be impacted by changes to the site structure.

As BlaBlaCar had already acquired strong positions in search results – they were already number 1 for a large number of queries – it was important to minimize the effect of the migration and structure changes on the site's SEO value.

In anticipation of their upcoming website migration, the BlaBlaCar team had already begun looking at their web server log files to see how Google was seeing their site.

With their focus solely on the upcoming migration, Jérôme and his team looked at the logs with a “one-shot” approach, without a view on changes over time.

Changes Now & Changes Over Time

Botify offered Jérôme a view into not just what is happening right this second, but what happens next, what happened before, and how Google's crawl of your site changes over time.

“When a change on the website impacts Google's crawl or organic visits, I can detect and measure the effects the very next day in Botify Log Analyzer, as well as potential side effects. This goes much further than Google Webmaster Tools, where the change's impact will only show a few days later.

In addition, in GWT, I can't be sure what really happened, as Google's exploration graph shows the search engine's crawl on all pages over the past 90 days. Botify's Log Analyzer provides visibility over each type of page through customized URL categorization.”

AN OPTIMIZATION OPPORTUNITY

Jérôme and the BlaBlaCar SEO team were preparing to update the French site platform, moving the entire site to a new domain. From an SEO perspective, the migration presented a golden opportunity to optimize the site structure.

However, as changes would impact pages that were generating organic traffic, the team would have to be extremely careful not to impact the search positions already acquired.

For example, for searches based on start city / destination city, BlaBlaCar was often the number 1 result. In changing the website's organization, you also change the way Google sees and crawls your site, potentially putting previously-strong pages at risk of losing organic traffic.

The Foundation of Migration: Redirects

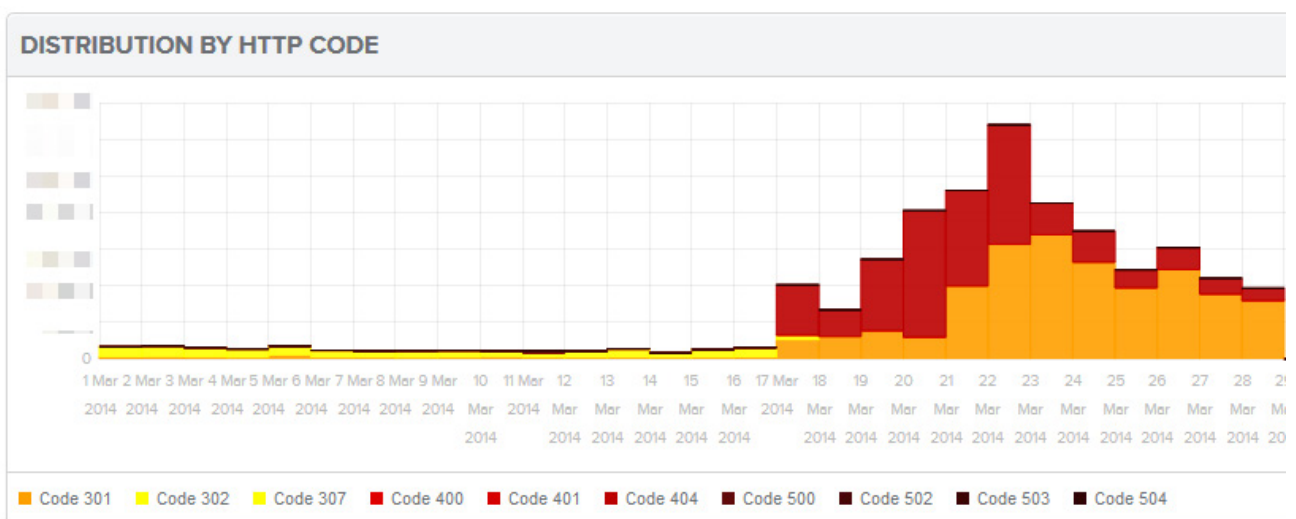
In order to preserve existing traffic while completely changing BlaBlaCar's site structure, there were two key actions to take:

1. Redirects of old pages to new URLs
2. Disallowing crawl of certain website areas

These two steps would allow the BlaBlaCar SEO team to direct Googlebot (and other search engine crawlers) to the right pages to help them learn where the new site lives. Meanwhile, disallowing the crawl of some pages through the robots.txt file would optimize Google's crawl, saving critical crawl budget for the most important parts of the website.

“Botify Log Analyzer's added value lays, among other things, in the way it allows you to analyze how Google reacts to redirections. The tool was extremely useful to closely monitor Google's crawl.”

When monitoring the success of a site's redirections, the goal is to watch how Google finds, follows, and adapts to the new URLs. The main metric to watch is HTTP status code. For instance, the graph below shows all crawled pages returning any HTTP status code other than 200 (OK), that is to say, any redirection or error:

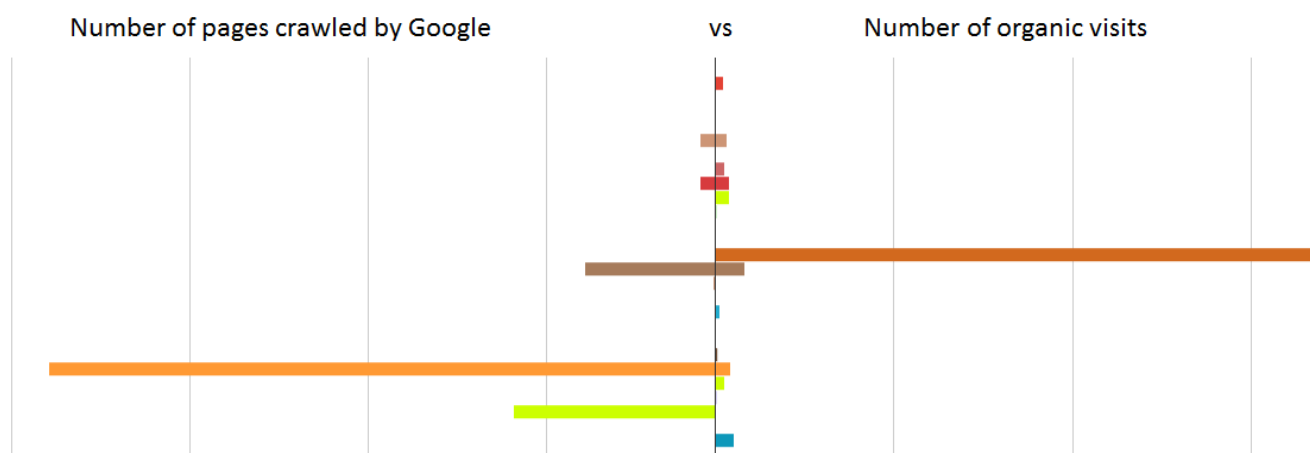


With Botify Log Analyzer, BlaBlaCar was able to verify that 301 redirects were increasing as expected. Googlebot was being sent to the new site.

However, they also discovered an error. With a sudden surge of HTTP 404 status codes (page not found), clearly something was amiss in the migration. Thanks to log analysis, the team was able to identify and solve the problem immediately, without significant loss.

PREVENTING WASTED CRAWL

Before the migration, BlaBlaCar was experiencing extremely high crawl volume, in part due to the large number of “Trip” pages, which detail each trip posted by a driver between two cities, on a specific date. As a result, there are an extremely large number of these pages.



SEO efficiency by type of page, before the migration:

The orange line represents trip pages, and the left part of the line Google's massive crawl on these pages. The active pages rate was also very low (0.3%).

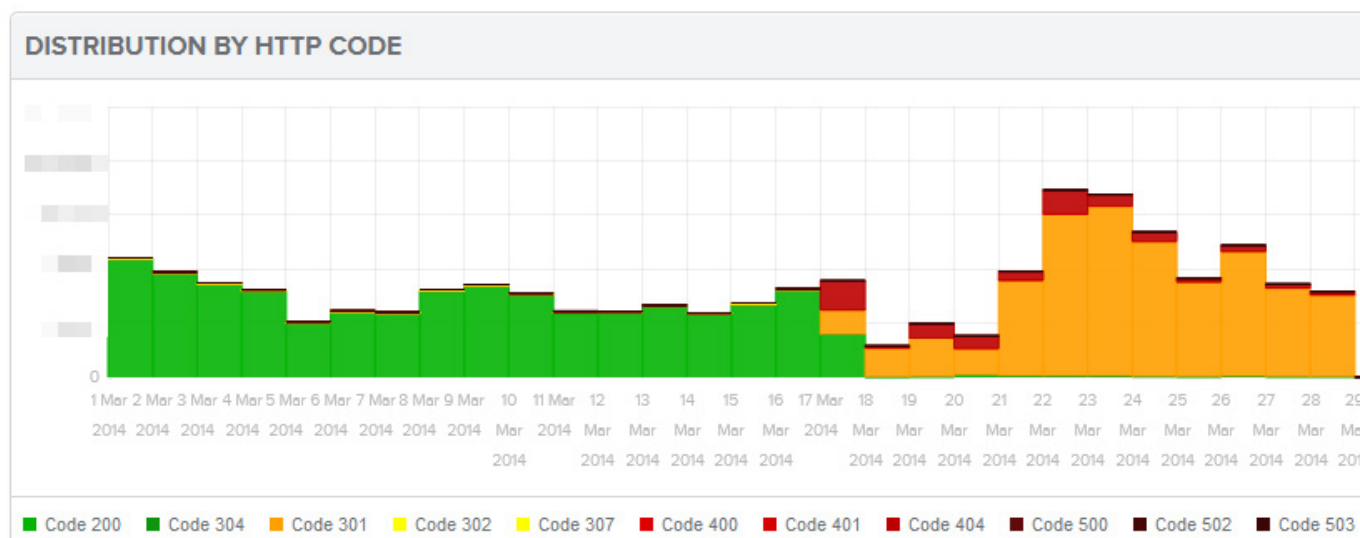
In BlaBlaCar's original site version, even expired Trip pages were still returning HTTP 200 (OK) status codes, which caused two important problems:

- First, Google crawled an extremely large number of trip pages (Google Webmaster Tools even issued a warning saying “the number of URLs detected by Googlebot is extremely high”) and the number of indexed pages was very high
- Second, these pages were sometimes positioned in Google's search results, which created a bad user experience.

To prevent these problems from migrating to the new site as well, Jérôme and his team implemented some changes to stop Googlebot from crawling pages that aren't valuable to BlaBlaCar's SEO, and otherwise waste crawl resources.

As a first step, they tagged some of these pages as “noindex” to reduce the number of expired trips making it to Google's search result pages.

Other expired Trip pages were redirected to new “Axis” pages, listing trips between two cities offered by all drivers on various dates.



Redirection of Trip pages to Axis pages, in Google crawl

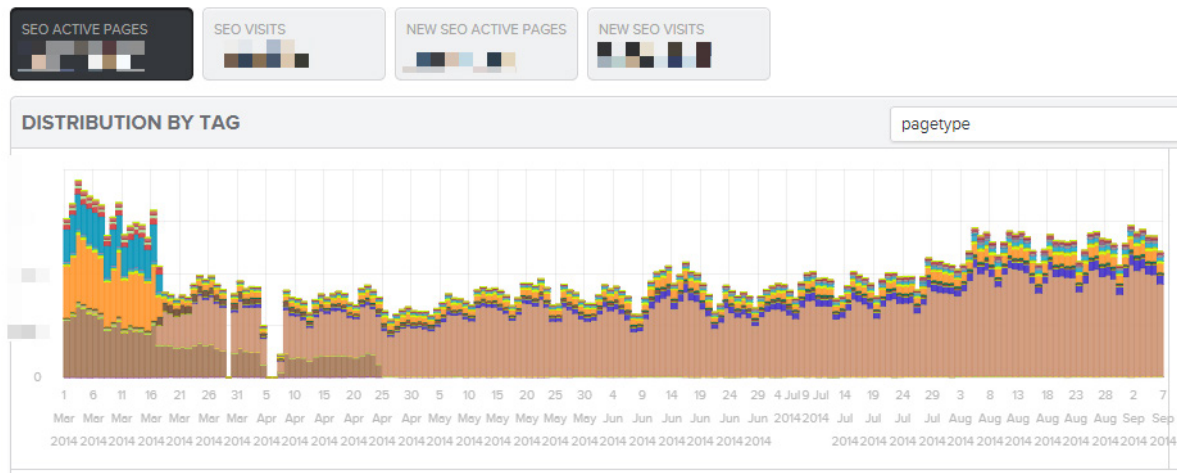
Later, BlaBlaCar took the larger step of preventing all crawl of expired Trip pages, as well as other pages or sections that did not generate any organic traffic.

Migration Success with Close Data Monitoring

Ultimately, the site migration went well. With careful monitoring of web server log files, the BlaBlaCar team was able to keep an eye on the process and catch any problems as soon as they happened, before they got worse.

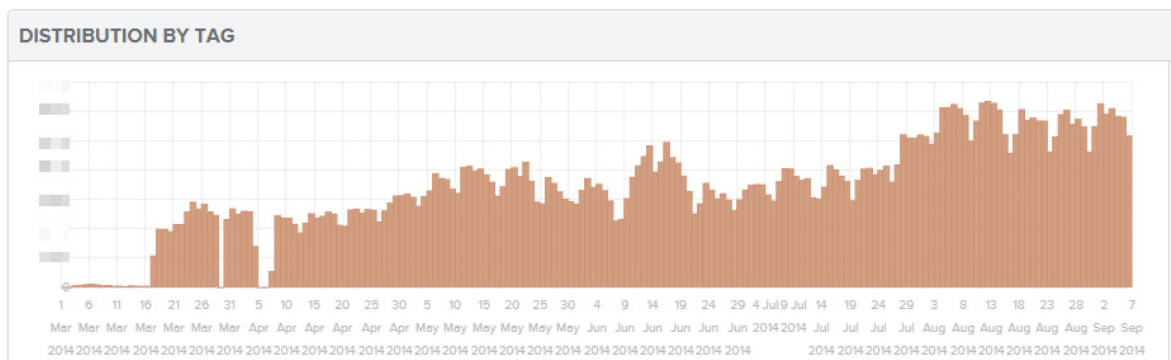
REDIRECTION SUCCESS

The transfer between old trip pages and axis pages went well. The graph below shows active pages (pages which generate at least one organic visit over the 30-day period included in the analysis), Trip pages in orange, Axis pages in light brown.



(the few days without data correspond to missing log files)

Organic visits on Axis pages doubled since the migration:



Clearly, the migration's redirects were successful in transferring Google's crawl from the old site – and old structure – to the new URLs. BlaBlaCar was able to smoothly transition their crawled and indexed pages, and therefore their organic traffic, to their new site without losing hard-won SEO value.

Constant Visibility & Real-Time Advantages

BlaBlaCar was looking for a one-time solution to assist in their website migration process. What they found in Botify was even better.

“We were doing this in a “one shot” mode, for very specific purposes, without monitoring changes over time.

But, constant visibility, in near-real time, has great advantages, I couldn't go back and do without it.

When a change on the website impacts Google's crawl or organic visits, I can detect and measure the effects the very next day in Botify Log Analyzer, as well as potential side-effects.”

With Botify's unprecedented combination of Log File Analysis and Website Crawler, search engine optimization can reach new depths of detail, driving significant, measureable results.

For BlaBlaCar, it means not only achieving a seamless site migration, but long-term benefits of in-depth search engine and structural insights.



Bla Bla Car



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