Australia's largest university delivers >100% organic traffic growth to all of its websites

MONASH University

"Encouraged by our successes with SEMrush software, I was asked to rollout SEMrush to the rest of the university including all the faculties. With the help of SEMrush, we empowered every single marketing team within the university to do what was done for the central sites."

Shefali Joshi
Marketing Optimisation Analyst
Monash University

About Monash University:

Founded in 1958 Monash University is a public research university based in Melbourne, Australia. The university has a number of campuses, four of which are in Victoria and one in Malaysia. Monash also has a research and teaching centre in Prato, Italy, a graduate research school in Mumbai, India and a graduate school in Suzhou, China. Monash University courses are also delivered at other locations, including South Africa.

In 2016, its total revenue was over $2.2 billion dollars (AUD), with external research income around $282 million. In 2016, Monash enrolled over 50,000 undergraduate and over 22,000 graduate students.It has more applicants than any other university in the state of Victoria.

SEMrush

Business challenge

Monash University is a public research university based in Melbourne, Australia. Founded in 1958, it is the second oldest university in the State of Victoria. It has 10 faculties that encompass hundreds of schools and institutes. Their website is equally large counting over 65k pages. With each faculty and school running their own subsites, SEO is an essential part of university's marketing, however, for a long time it wasn't there.

Over 2 years ago entire SEO was outsourced to a third party and Monash could not see any results. Shefali Joshi, Responsible for SEO at Monash University, recalls: "We had a lot of faculties complaining that they were not receiving any traffic to their course pages from Google's search results. There was no impact on our traffic. Our course visibility (on Monash study site) was almost non-existent on Google."

Solution

The management decided to bring the whole SEO project in-house. They asked Shefali to look for a proper product and to manage the whole project on her own. "I belong to the central marketing team, we manage two of the biggest sites monash.edu and study.monash site. I needed a tool that would enable me to manage this huge project. SEMrush was the best one as per our criteria, so we started with the Business plan for a month or two. It worked really well and then we figured that the Enterprise plan would really benefit us and all of our faculties, so we switched."

But where did they start? "The first thing we did was **competitive research**. Top level domain of our study website - study.monash - was not even featured among other competing universities. We had no online visibility," - says Shefali. "Immediately we understood that the problem was with the top level domain. A decision was made to move study website from study.monash domain to monash.edu/study as 'study.monash' domain had little authority and rankings as compared to monash.edu. It was a massive step and we could do it because we had intelligence from SEMrush."

"*The first thing we did was competitive research. Top level domain of our study website - study.monash - was not even featured among other competing universities. We had no online visibility,*" - says Shefali.

"*A decision was made to move study website from study.monash domain to monash.edu/study. It was a massive step and we could do it because we had intelligence from SEMrush.*"

SEMRUSH

" *All the actions taken ensured the organic traffic more than doubled: It grew from 460k to over 1M in only 12 months, which makes it more than 100% growth.*"

Then Shefali ran **technical audit with SEMrush Site Audit tool**. Being the biggest university in Australia, Monash has more than 65,000 pages, and hundreds of sites, subsites, and subdomains. "First, we pushed for HTTPS implementation(got all the pages from http to https). We also had other issues like redirect chains and loops, multiple urls and missing canonicals, missing alt tags, lots of broken links - 'page not found' errors. You fixed 1 issue and a 1000 others got resolved!" - continues Shefali. Fixing most of these issues has resulted in positive user experience, better crawlability of our pages, improved rankings and reduced bounce rate.

Another crucial part of optimizing Monash's website's online visibility was keyword research conducted with SEMrush. Shefali recalls: "I used keyword research very heavily. We found content gaps and started generating content on our website filling those gaps."

A good example would be an ATAR calculator and ATAR related terms. "Prospective students are looking to calculate ATAR score because they're trying to understand which university they got selected to, or if they got enough scores to get accepted to their chosen course. SEMrush showed us that people actively search for 'ATAR Calculator', 'How can I calculate ATAR' and other 'ATAR' related terms. Even though this is such a crucial aspect for potential website visitors, Monash did not have this information at all, or an ATAR calculator," - highlights Shefali. Upon introducing such calculator Monash got students flowing to their website.

All the actions taken ensured the organic traffic more than doubled: It grew from 460k to over 1M in only 12 months, which makes it more than 100% growth.

What happened next was beyond Shefali's expectations: "Encouraged by our successes with SEMrush software, I was asked to rollout SEMrush to the rest of the university including all the faculties, Monash College, Monash Malaysia, Library and other Monash departments. This project included giving SEO/content optimization workshops, setting up SEMrush projects and tools and organising SEMrush training. As a result 100+ people were trained and 30+ SEMrush projects were set-up and now we have a whole community of SEMrush users. So they all rank now for course related non-branded terms, even the faculty sites, its very nice because they have complementary content and all lead to each other. **With the help of SEMrush, we empowered every single marketing team within the university to do what was done for the central sites**."

SEMRUSH

Results

▪ Content gaps identified and filled.

Having analysed top searches related to higher education in Australia, Monash could see that they missed important information on their website, e.g. ATAR calculator and ATAR related searches. Its addition brought very targeted audience to monash.edu.

▪ Monash gains online visibility.

Monash University more than doubled their organic traffic to their current and prospective student(study) platforms from 460k to 1M+ visitors.

▪ Technical errors fixed with SEMrush.

Monash made some essential moves to eliminate technical issues such as insecure protocol, lots of duplicate contents, broken links etc. which ultimately led to improved user experience, better crawlability of our pages and higher rankings.

More stories at

Trusted by:

LUSH FRESH HANDMADE COSMETICS   ebay   Booking.com   Quora

vodafone   hp   skyscanner   PHILIPS

SEMrush is a leading digital marketing suite that enables users to be front-runners in their industries. Trusted by more than 3,000,000 marketing professionals worldwide and 4,000+ partner agencies, SEMrush ensures customers are well equipped to increase their revenue and achieve online visibility for any business.