



Image: Canva

When you spend money to have a website built, you want to know it's gaining traction on the search engines and that the people you want to visit it can find it.

You do all the right things:

- Build to current standards
- Include graphics
- Add an analytics code to track activity
- Enter meta data
- Post on social media with links to your pages
- Monitor your site traffic via automated reports
- Create gated content, and more.

Then it happens - you get an alert that your website has a spike in traffic. Yippee! It's working - or is it?

Spotting A Negative SEO Attack

Here are some tips to help you spot a negative SEO attack on your site and the impact it could have on your site's ranking.

1. Sudden top in ranking and traffic due not to the change in a search engine algorithm, but based upon something you've done or forgot to do (like update WordPress plugins or themes).

How to Spot a Negative Website SEO Attack

2. Changes to your robot.txt or sitemap file that you didn't make.
3. An increase in spammy backlinks or lost/removed quality back links (check those referral metrics in your analytics)
4. Cloned website content (ugh!)
5. Seeing mass negative reviews (that's why it's important to manage your [own review site listings](#) and not rely on a list-service).
6. Negative rankings for a previously-high ranking page.
7. Google sent you a penalty notice (the worst!)

How To Prevent It

Now that you know what to look for, you need to know how to prevent it from happening. Here's a short list.

1. Ensure only authorized people have access to your website admin.
2. Leverage a [backlink audit tool](#), and monitor your [spam score](#) to detect suspicious changes in your backlink profile.
3. Check your website [SEPR score](#) at least monthly to determine if it's dropping or if there's something wrong with your backlink profile.
4. Monitor online reviews for legitimacy.
5. Perform duplicate content audits on a regular basis, then archive, combine, or remove duplicates. (Tip: [Copyscape](#) and [Grammarly](#) help identify duplicate content.)
6. Setup and monitor the site's [Google Webmaster Search Console](#)

What to do if negative SEO is happening?

Remember in high school when a bad rumor started and the person involved had to basically create a campaign to disavow the falsehood? The same thing has to happen with search engines. Here are some tips to help you disavow the negative SEO on your site.

1. Don't panic.
2. Tighten your website security by changing its password.
3. Disavow any irrelevant links and check your content for any [scraping](#).
4. Consult with the hosting provide for additional insight and guidance.
5. Boost your SEO efforts to demonstrate to the search engines that you're doing the right things.

Want to know more about SEO?

Check out our resources below.

- [Why Website Image File Names and Alt Tags Matter for SEO](#)
- [Down and Dirty SEO Checklist](#)
- [Is your content SEO friendly?](#)
- [12 Days of SEO](#)
- [SEO for CPAs: The Accountant's Handbook](#)
- [The SEO Six-Pack for CPAs and Small Business Owners](#)
- [SEO Tips and Tricks to Getting Found Online eBook](#)