



Things That Sink Rankings and A Solution Case Study

If your site's previously stellar ranking suddenly takes a nose dive, what are the possible causes and how can you remedy things?

The Problem

Core updates

Google is not a static entity. Its algorithm must adjust over time if it is to meet Google's goal, that of providing the best search results to users. User preferences change, and so the algorithm must change.

For this purpose, Google releases updates. An adjustment to its main algorithm is called a core update, and when one is released, it could mean the undoing of some sites that before were doing just fine.

Negative SEO

Sometimes a drop in ranking has a nefarious root. There is such a thing as negative SEO, wherein people send shady, negative or confusing links to a site to confuse Google. Links for plumbing in Ottawa, for example, sent to a site for plumbing in Sydney, might impact that site's relevance with Google and result in lowered rankings.

Over reliance on a traffic channel

One thing you do NOT want is to be reliant on any one channel, even SEO. Relying on Facebook ads could be your downfall should your account get shut down, while relying solely on Google means that you could fall victim to a core update that could take months and changes to hundreds of site pages to recover from. You want your traffic coming from multiple sources.

Under SEO traffic, there is further differentiation between branded and non-branded traffic. If you get a lot of organic traffic but most of it is dependent on your brand, you may want to look at getting more different search queries that will lead to your site.

The Fix

When a drop in ranking is significant enough to affect business and revenue, it's best to turn to the experts for help.

The first things a good SEO agency will do is a full analysis to uncover the cause of the ranking drop.

SEO Leverage, for instance, do a complete site audit and are able to show you, among other things, what traffic channels you depend on, and how reliant you are on SEO.



For a client whose site saw a 70 percent ranking drop, they ran a complete link audit which ruled out negative SEO as the cause. They then did an audit on the entire site.

Among the things they found needed fixing were:

Site speed - If your competitors are faster than you on Google, this is one way to catch up.

Huge slider images - These used to be "the thing". No longer. People favor quick information over flashy visuals.

Article structure - Lengthy introductions and a conversational style don't sit well with Google. Get down to the facts above the fold and let the user determine quickly whether your article will give the answer they're looking for.

Internal linking - Articles in a site should support and link to other articles in a cohesive way.

They then ran a process on the site that is standard for all their clients, a framework called ERICA.

E - Evolution. Where is the site headed? What are the company's main KPI's? And what is the evolution of competitors' sites? What are their KPIs?

R - Research. People need to create content with a purpose, and this takes research, more than people typically think. It's about finding out what Google wants and giving it to them, as well as determining where one is in the competitive landscape.

I - Interlinking. This affects internal and external links. Internal links in particular are often undervalued. Internal links tell Google if an article is important to you and give them some reason to rank it.

C - Content. It's not just about creating new content, but about updating existing content as well.

A - Action steps. Every strategy call with SEO Leverage ends with action steps for the client, for their team, and for the SEO Leverage team.

Need help with your SEO? Get in touch with the team at [SEOLeverage.com](https://www.seoleverage.com)