11 Fantastic Tools and Strategies to Recover From Link Penalties

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1. Majestic SEO

This is an intelligence tool that'll provide information on your website's traffic, perform a competitor link analysis and conduct regular link audits of your website.

- To get started: You just need to plug your domain URL, choose either fresh index (updated daily and includes data from the last 90 days) or historic index and click on the search button.

Note: For investigating your website, use historic index. Because Google will also penalize your website based on historic data.

- You can access a lot of information about your website on the summary page tab.
- You'll get a backlink history chart. Then there are charts for your anchor text distribution.
- And a breakdown of your backlink composition – frames, text links, redirect and images.
- You'll also see a page-level analysis with backlinks and referring domains data on your top pages.
- If you want a deeper analysis of a specific metric, than you can head over to that section.
- Two important metrics used by Majestic for identifying the quality of a link are – trust flow (the proximity of links to trustworthy and authoritative sources) and citation flow (essentially link juice).
- Here is a detailed explanation by Adam on the trust ratio (= Trust Flow / Citation Flow) of a website.

2. Ahrefs

This is another link analysis tool with a large database of links that are updated regularly.

- You just need to plug your URL into the tool to get your inbound links report.
- In the report, you can sort the backlinks by their Ahrefs rank (or domain authority). Or sort them by their anchor texts.
- Ahrefs also has nifty filters to segregate site wide, nofollow and do follow links.
- So how can you use the tool to identify if a backlink is toxic?
- The first step you can perform is to use the links function to find all the new links acquired by a site.

- You can even find the recent performance changes of your website in SERPs – the keywords for which you gained and lost traffic.
- In case you suspect hundreds of links from a link network having the same IP range, you can check the referring IPs tab under Inbound links.
- If you discover a bad backlink, Ahrefs even has a disavow tool to disavow links. You just need to sync your webmaster's account with Ahrefs.
- You can even carry a bulk upload of bad backlinks by creating a text file mentioning them and using 'Upload Disavowed Links.'

Warning: Google expects you to contact webmasters for removing the bad backlinks before using the disavow tool. So don't go on a disavowing spree on every suspicious backlink. And always take some corrective action before using the tool.

3a. Google Webmaster Tools

This is a powerful free tool that acts as a communication medium between Google and webmasters.

- When signing up, you need to first verify that you're the owner of your entered website.
- Once verified, you'll see a dashboard with important information about your website.
- The 'Site Messages' section is the place where Google informs you about any website errors, spam actions and security vulnerabilities on your website.
- You can set up a daily digest of the messages received. Or set up notifications whenever malicious activity happens on your website (or even for manual penalties).
- On the search traffic tab, you'll get an overview of the traffic driving keywords and your overall search visibility.
- If you've been hit with a site-wide or partial match penalty, you'll get notified about it in manual actions.
- Lastly, you can also check and download 'links to your site.' The links aren't frequently updated, so you will not see all the backlinks to your website here.

3b. Google's Disavow Tool

The most important feature in Google Webmaster Tools for link penalty recovery is "Disavow backlinks."

- You cannot directly submit a website through disavow. First you need to show Google that you're serious about cleaning your link profile.
- So on receiving a spammy backlink, you should first request the webmaster to remove the link to your website.
- If after a couple of emails, your efforts are unsuccessful, then you can disavow links using this 3-step method.
- The first step is to download all the backlinks to your website

1. On the Webmaster Tools home page, click the site you want.
2. On the Dashboard, click Search Traffic, and then click Links to Your Site.
3. Under Who links the most, click More.
4. Click Download more sample links. If you click Download latest links, you'll see dates as well.

Note: When looking at the links to your site in Search Console, you may want to verify both the MN/ and the non-www version of your domain in your Search Console account. To Google, these are entirely different sites. Take a look at the data for both sites.

- Next you need to create a text file containing the links you want to disavow. Here is an example structure you need to follow.

Bad link resulting from suspected negative SEC attack

http://www.sample.com/negative-seo-link.html

Multiple bad links were detected from the following domain

domain:spamsite.coll

- Finally you need to upload the text file using the disavow tool.

1. Go to the disavow links tool page .
2. Select your website.
3. Click Disavow links.
4. Click Choose file.

- Here are 3 additional tips on how to use the disavow tool effectively.
  - Don't include the http://www. prior to a domain
  - Don't include anything after the domain extension. Eg: .com, .co.uk (unless you're only disavowing a specific URL).

- Put each domain on a new line and add comments to the file so Google knows why you're disavowing them. Prefix all comments with a # symbol.

4. Google Analytics (GA)

This is another powerful free tool by Google for monitoring your website's traffic and overall health.

- First ensure that your analytics tracking code is installed and tracking your website properly.
- Just head over to the admin area. Choose your account and property. And finally click on Tracking Info > Tracking Code.
    1. Ensure that the Javascript snippet (tracking code) matches the code for each page on your website.
    2. The tracking ID is in the format UA-XXXXXX-Y. The first set of X refer to your account number.
    3. And Y refers to your property number.
- If you hired an SEO Agency and now suspect that they use a shady link network for building your backlinks, then the UA-code can come in handy.
- You can plug a back linking website's UA code at Domainiq.com/reverse_analytics and find out if any other websites are using the same Google Analytics ID.
- If there are other spammy looking websites with the same Analytics UA, you can instruct the SEO Agency to get the links to your website removed from the link network.
- GA can also come in handy to check if your website has been hit with Penguin. You can use the next tool in the list for matching Google algorithm release dates with your traffic drop.

5. Moz's Google Algorithm Change History and Fruition

If you've been hit with a manual penalty, you will directly get a message in your webmaster's account.

- But you won't be notified if an automated algorithmic update hits you (big or small).
- This Moz resource comes to your rescue. It can help you diagnose algorithmic issues.
- You just need to match the range of dates of your organic traffic drop with algorithmic updates.
- But the resource only includes the updates that are announced officially. Speculated unofficial updates are not a part of it.

- For gauging major SERP ranking turbulence and sneaky updates, you can log on to Mozcast.
- “The hotter and stormier the weather, the more Google’s rankings changed.”
- Finally if you don’t want to do a manual cross check, you can directly plug your website into Fruition’s Google Penalty Checker tool.

6. WebMeUp Backlink Checker

Are you looking for a free backlink profiling solution with a user-friendly UI? Then WebMeUp is the perfect tool for you.

- It has a comprehensive index (although much smaller than Ahrefs and Majestic SEO) and its data is easier to comprehend than the other backlink intelligence tools.
- You get nice looking pie charts breaking down your backlink domains and IPs along with the percentage of dofollow links. A natural link profile has both dofollow and nofollow links from varied sets of IPs.
- It delivers an easy to understand pie chart of your anchor text distribution so that you can check for over-optimization issues.

7a. Link Detox

If you’ve already been hit with a penalty, then you should buy a subscription of this specialized bad link removal tool.

- Even if you’re suspecting negative SEO attacks, you can use the tool to maintain a clean link profile.
- It shows a risk score for every backlink (pulled from 22 different sources). And classifies them into 3 categories – suspicious, healthy and toxic.
- Although you’ll need to manually investigate these links, the above report is a good indication of your overall link profile.
- You can use the link detox screener to manually review each link.

7b. Link Alerts

This tool is also a part of Link Research Tools. As the name suggests, it sends email notifications when you (or your competitor) receive a new backlink.

Its link data is collated from 24 different backlink sources. It also has a hands-off mode to detect link based negative SEO attacks.

8. Cognitive SEO

Another professional backlink analysis tool that identifies your links as unnatural, suspected or OK.

- It also gives visualizations to easily spot low-quality and high-quality inbound links.
- The tool can be very handy when you get hit with a penalty. Because you can export unnatural links from a report directly into a disavow file.

9. BuzzStream

Meet BuzzStream – a CRM system that facilitates quick and efficient outreach.

- It can record your prospects, send emails using templates and monitor the response rate of your pitches.
- You can also personalize the email templates before sending them.
- It even has a free email research tool to find anyone's email by generating a list of Google searches that are clickable and open in a new tab.

10. Rmoov

This is another brilliant tool to make your link removal email outreach efficient and scalable.

- Here is a video tutorial of Rmoov to get you started.
- The tool also keeps a record of the links that have been cleaned up. And once the outreach has been completed, it automatically generates a disavow tool.

11. Remove'em

This a link auditing tool that identifies bad backlinks by collating links from Moz, Ahrefs and Majestic SEO.

- Once the tool flags bad backlinks, it automatically send emails with link removal requests.
- Here is a tutorial showing how the tool works. It monitors the responses and finally generates a report. You can then submit the unremoved spammy links in a disavow file.