

If you are reading this, you probably have a problem. Maybe a disgruntled former client wrote a hit piece, a local news site picked up an unflattering story, or your Glassdoor profile is bleeding stars. You've been told you need "Reputation SEO."

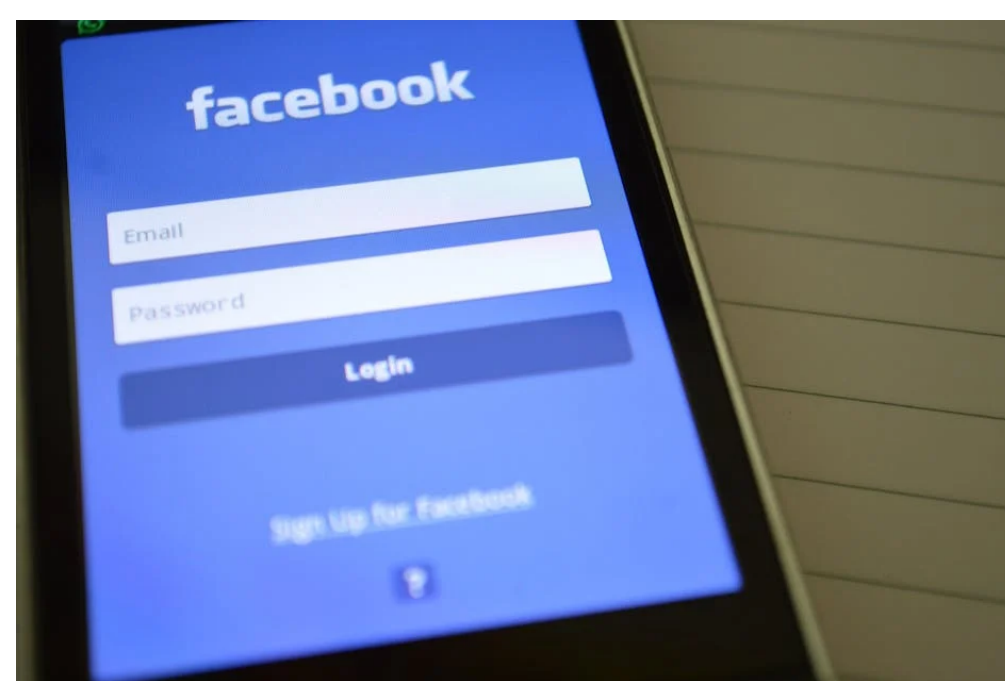
Then the pitches start. "We'll get you to page one in seven days." "We'll bury that negative review with backlinks." I've spent 12 years cleaning up these messes, and I'm here to tell you: half of what you're hearing is dangerous nonsense. Before we spend a dime, let's run your situation through my **page-1 sanity test**.

The first thing I ask every client is: **What exactly are we trying to outrank?** Because if [trustpilot.com](https://www.trustpilot.com) you don't know what's sitting on page one, you're just throwing money at a bonfire.

What Push-Down SEO Actually Is

Push-down SEO—often called Online Reputation Management (ORM)—is the strategic process of creating, optimizing, and promoting high-authority, positive or neutral content to displace negative search results from the first page of Google.

It is not magic. It is not deleting content (unless it's legally actionable defamation). It is a war of attrition. You are trying to move a high-authority asset (like a news story or a ranting blog post) from position #3 to position #11. To do that, you need to own positions #1 through #10 with properties you control.



Content vs. Links: The Reality Check

People love to debate whether "content is king" or "links are queen." In ORM, that debate is a distraction. The truth is simple: **Content gives Google a reason to rank you; links give Google the confidence to do it.**

If you create a new "About Us" page on your domain, it's going to rank for your brand name eventually because it's on your own site. But if you want a third-party property (like a LinkedIn article or a Medium post) to outrank a negative forum thread, that content needs authority. That authority comes from **link building for ORM**.

The Role of Content

Content is your foundation. You cannot rank empty pages. In ORM, your content strategy must focus on:

- **Branded properties:** LinkedIn profiles, Twitter/X profiles, Crunchbase pages, and personal portfolios.
- **Press releases:** Used sparingly to establish a "fresh" narrative.
- **High-authority guest posts:** Positioning your brand as an industry thought leader.

The Role of Link Building

Link building is the fuel. If you publish a Medium post and it gets zero backlinks, Google will likely treat it as noise. By pointing high-quality, relevant links at that Medium post, you artificially inflate its PageRank, making it a viable contender to push that negative search result down.

Competitor Squatting on Branded Search

One of the dirtiest tactics in the game is "competitor squatting." This is when a competitor realizes your brand name is trending and creates content specifically to rank alongside or above your actual website. They might write a "Review of [Your Brand]" article that is heavily biased.

If you are being squatted on, you don't need "generic" SEO. You need a surgical strike. You need to build a "digital fortress" around your brand using:

1. **Owned Assets:** Making sure your primary social media channels are perfectly optimized.
2. **Neutral/Positive Platforms:** Contributing to industry directories that have higher domain authority than the competitor's blog.
3. **Aggressive Internal Linking:** Ensuring your main site has the highest possible authority so it remains at #1, preventing the "sandwich" effect where a negative result appears between your home page and your service pages.

Trustpilot and Review Sites: Context and Limitations

We need to talk about review sites. Clients often ask me, "Can you just get this 1-star Trustpilot review deleted?"

The answer is almost always no. Trustpilot, Yelp, and Google Business Profiles are "walled gardens." They are high-authority sites that Google loves. If you have a negative review on a site like this, you have two options:

Strategy Pros	Cons	Direct Mitigation	Addresses the root cause of the review. Time-consuming; requires client cooperation.
Review Dilution	"Pushes down" the 1-star review by getting 50 happy clients to leave reviews. Requires a robust customer success process.	SEO Suppression	Pushes the entire Trustpilot profile off page one. Hard to do if the site has massive domain authority.

Stop listening to vendors who claim they can "fact-check" reviews or force platforms to delete content. That is a lie. If a review doesn't violate a TOS (Terms of Service), it stays. Period.

Vendor Vetting: Spotting the Scammers

I have audited hundreds of "reputation" campaigns. Most are garbage. If you are hiring an agency, use this checklist to catch them in a lie.

Red Flags to Watch For

- **"Guaranteed" Results:** No one, and I mean no one, guarantees a #1 spot in a specific timeframe. Google updates its algorithm daily. Anyone promising this is likely using "black hat" tactics that will get your brand penalized.
- **Vague Deliverables:** If they say "we'll improve your reputation," ask them for a list of URLs they intend to rank. If they can't give you a list, they don't have a plan.
- **Jargon Shielding:** If they start throwing around terms like "synergistic link velocity" or "proprietary suppression algorithms," ask them to explain it in plain English. If they get frustrated, they're hiding incompetence.
- **Fake Review Promises:** If they offer to "write" reviews for you, fire them immediately. Not only is it unethical, it's illegal in many jurisdictions (FTC guidelines are clear on this).

The Page-1 Sanity Test Checklist

Before you commit to a strategy, ask yourself these five questions:

1. Is the content being produced actually helpful to a reader, or is it just "keyword-stuffed" filler?
2. Are the links being built coming from reputable sites, or are they from "link farms" that will disappear in three months?

3. Do I own the accounts being used to push down the negative content?
4. Is the vendor showing me the negative URLs they are targeting, or are they only showing me vanity metrics like "total backlinks"?
5. Am I prepared for this to take 6-12 months?

ORM is a marathon, not a sprint. If you find yourself wanting a quick fix, remember: those are the same quick fixes that leave brands with a permanent "spam" label in the eyes of Google. Do it right, build high-authority assets, and focus on genuine brand signals. Anything else is just digital house-painting while the foundation is rotting.

