

Triage Rank and Traffic Drop Checklist

Have you ever been surprised by a rank or traffic drop? Make sure you are the first to know and quickly create a solution to fix any issue.

Issues you can directly address

- Validate that your reporting data is accurate – check multiple sources.
- Validate that all analytics tags are active.
- Check to see if your CMS had any recent updates that could have broken a template, reverted copy, or caused redirect issues.
- Run a site audit to check to make sure all appropriate pages are indexed or that they are not blocked by robots.txt.
- Check Google Search Console to see if there are any errors in your sitemap.

Issues colleagues may have caused

- Did someone remove important internal links? Customize your site audit crawl to check for changes in internal inbound links.
- Was a URL or directory structure changed? You can customize your site audit crawl to look at a specific directory to see all issues associated with that one.
- Check your backlinks report to identify if a authoritative domain removed a backlink.
- Check site traffic by channel to see if organic traffic is proportional to other channels – for example is paid traffic up but organic is down? Collaborate with your paid team or other digital teams to understand which keywords to target for effective use of resources.

Issues based on competitor market share and content strategies

- Are new competitors showing up in the SERP or taking more market share? Check Share of Voice (SOV) to understand if new competitors have shown up for each content category. View the trend line to understand which competitors to narrow in on.
- Are competitors outperforming from a content perspective? Using SOV see what content is winning in the SERP over yours – is their content a different type (category vs. blog), better-optimized, longer-form, or more-helpful?

Issues based on consumer behavior changes

- ❑ Has their vocabulary changed? Run keyword research to understand related terms with the highest demand.
- ❑ Has search volume dropped? Check search volume trend line to see if the demand for the keywords has dropped over time.
- ❑ Is this drop aligned to seasonality? Review year-over-year traffic to see if this dip aligns to normal site behavior – recommended to go back multiple years.

Issues based on the search landscape

- ❑ Check your Clicks and Impressions report from Google Search Console to see if clicks are dropping but not impressions. There could be new SERP elements showing up, such as ads, Quick Answers, or Local 3-Pack that are taking more of the clicks even if your rank has not changed.
- ❑ Has the page load time increased? Run a [speed test](#) to see if your page speed has declined. Search engines will prefer faster loading pages over yours. You can also run a site audit to see what issues caused your site to slow down, such as large image sizes.
- ❑ Has your average rank or rank for a specific category been continuously dropping? – meaning the search engine started preferring different pages.
- ❑ Final check would be a [major shift in algo changes](#) – see if anything happened in the world of search by reading the [BrightEdge blog](#) or the Google Webmaster Blog.

About BrightEdge

BrightEdge, the global leader in enterprise organic search and content performance, empowers marketers to transform online content into business results such as traffic, conversions, and revenue. The BrightEdge S3 platform is powered by a sophisticated deep-learning engine and is the only company capable of web-wide, real-time measurement of content engagement across all digital channels, including search, social, and mobile. BrightEdge's 1,700+ customers include global brands and 57 of the Fortune 100. The company has eight offices worldwide and is headquartered in Foster City, California.