

Publications

How to Remove URLs from Google after Obtaining a Court Order

Related Attorneys

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In several previous blog posts, we have mentioned obtaining court orders with the aim of getting links to harmful content, such as Ripoff Report posts, de-indexed from search engines. What we have not written about, to date, is how to use a court order to get links removed from Google.

In short, this entails using Google's [Legal Removal Requests](#) page. The Legal Removal Requests page is easy to use, but Google will not entertain just any removal requests. With a valid court order, however, while not legally required, Google typically honors them and de-indexes the relevant links.

For background, when disparaging content shows up online, the subject of that harmful content generally wants it removed from the internet. In many cases, the solution (or at least part of it) entails obtaining a court order and presenting it to the search engines in order to get the listings removed from the respective search results.

Even in the case of, say Ripoff Report, which does not remove any posts, getting a harmful URL removed from search can be quite effective. Considering the importance of online reputations today, a business can ill afford to have defamatory content among its top search results. Prospective customers (and other parties such as investors) will see that and likely find somewhere else to take their business.

Factor in both the amount of people that Google a company before conducting business with them, plus the fact that Google holds [greater than 67 percent of the search market share](#) in the United States, and it is easy to see why a defamed business (or person) would want to get links to harmful content removed from Google.

Thus, once an attorney is able to obtain a signed court order, he or she should go to the Legal Removal Requests page and select "Submit a Legal Request" and then click "Web Search." From there, on the Removing Content From Google page, they attorney will want to choose the bottom option, "I have a legal issue that is not mentioned above."

The attorney will be given five options, and the second one from the top reads: “I have a court order declaring certain content unlawful (e.g. pursuant to a copyright or trademark infringement suit).” There, Google hyperlinks to an online form that attorneys can fill out and submit for Google’s review of “court orders against third parties who have posted allegedly unlawful content.”

Under “Location of the allegedly infringing material,” the attorney should paste in the URLs pertaining to the defamatory content, one per line. It is also necessary that the attorney explain which section of the court order mandates the removal of those URLs (even if it is fairly obvious). Finally, he or she must also upload a copy of the signed court order and then click “Submit.”

From there, and that is assuming the form has been properly filled out, Google will send an automated confirmation email from removals@google.com. This email explains that the legal request is in Google’s “queue” and the legal team will “get to it as quickly as our workload permits.”

At whatever point Google processes the request (likely anywhere from a couple days to a few weeks), Google may respond with questions or requests for more information, such as – when dealing with a default judgment — clarification of how service was made in the case (to demonstrate how the defendant (s) had an opportunity to learn they were facing legal action). Ideally, Google will simply reply that it has removed the requested URLs from Google.com. It may take a day or two for the removal(s) to be reflected in the actual search results.

When a URL has been removed and the relevant Google search is run, the following message will be seen at the bottom of the search results page: “In response to a legal request submitted to Google, we have removed 1 result(s) from this page. If you wish, you may read more about the request at ChillingEffects.org.”

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