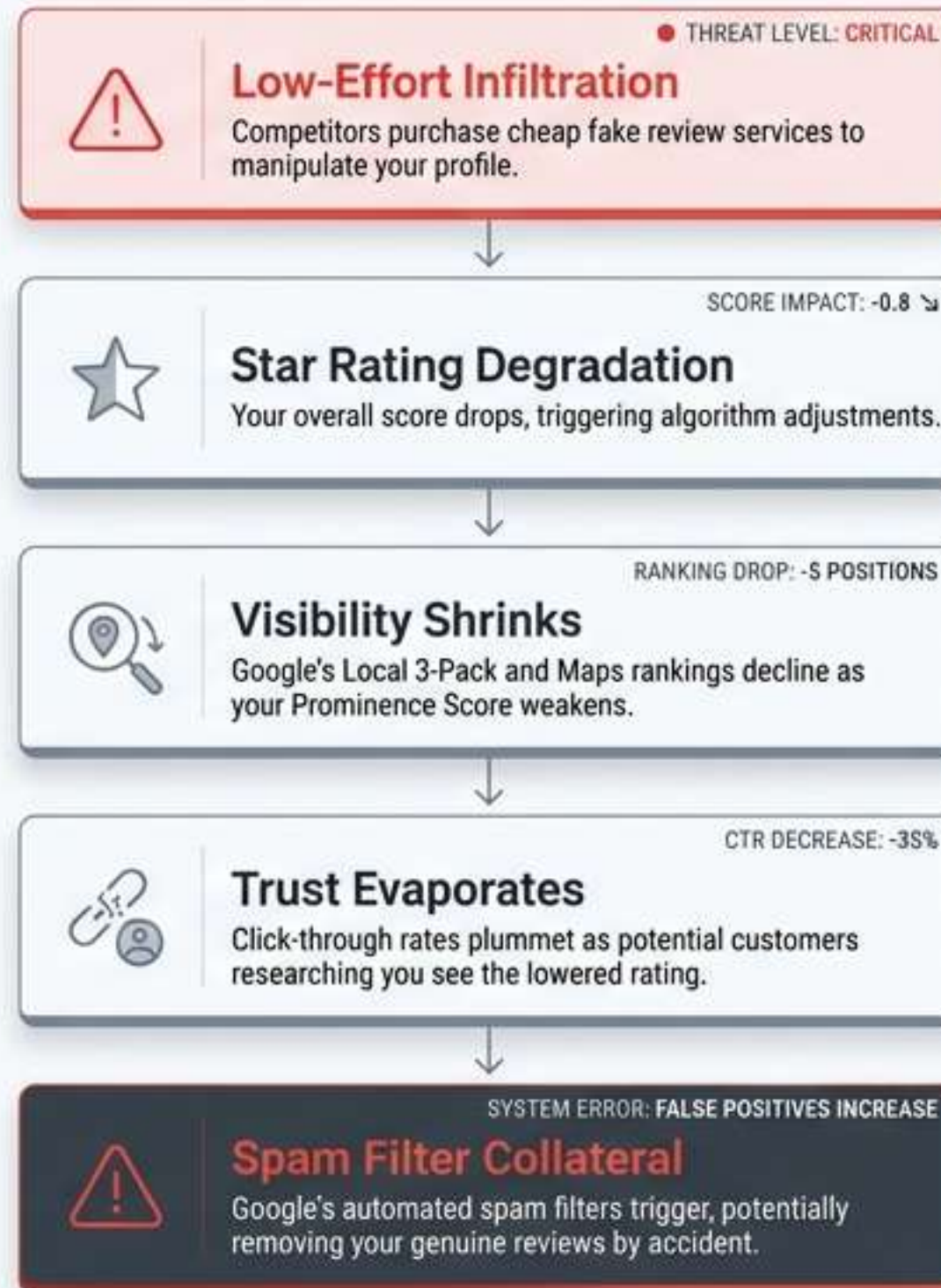


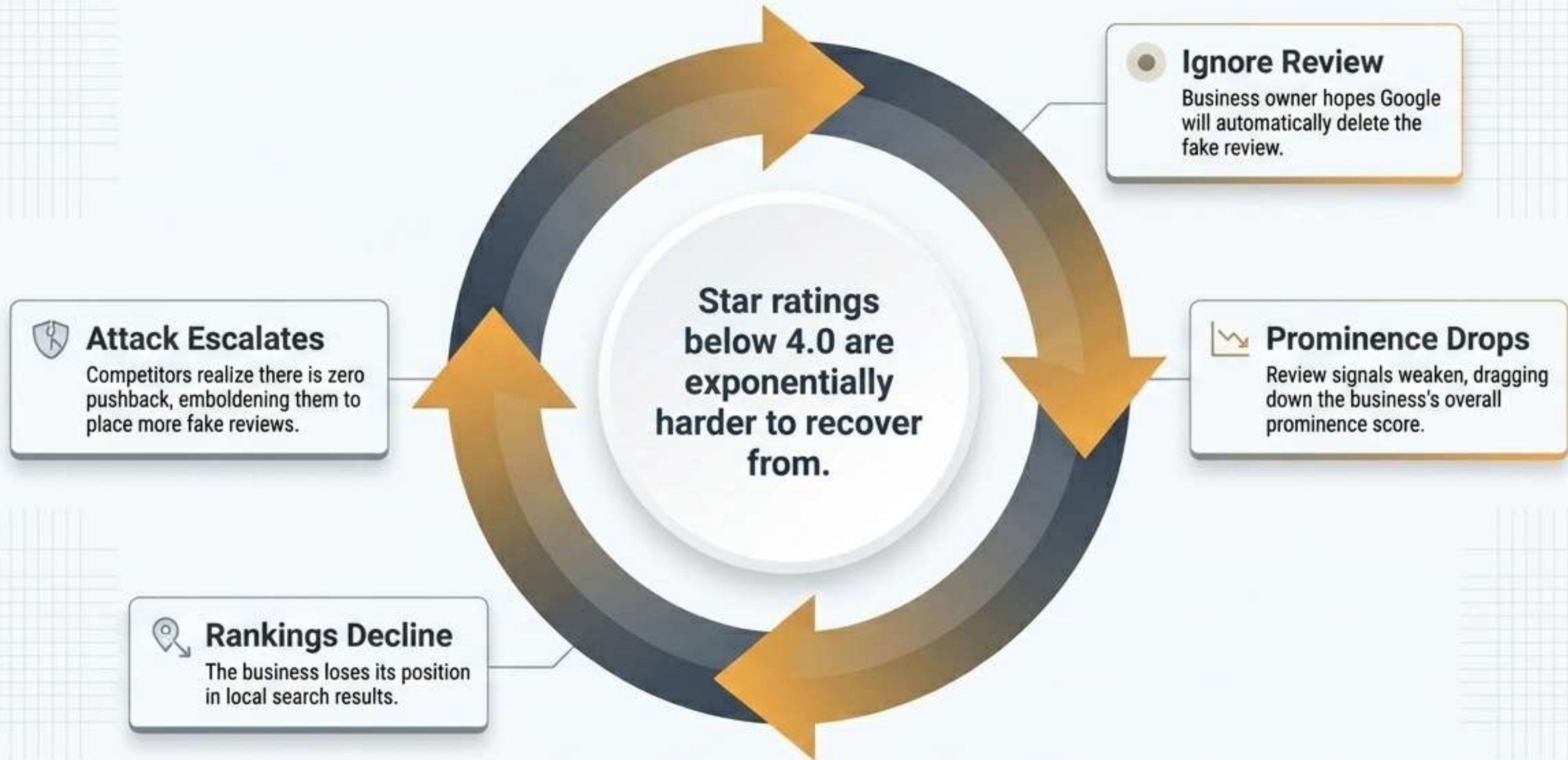
Google Review Incident Response Playbook

Platform: Google Business Profile (GBP) | Policy: Prohibited & Restricted Content Violations. | [read more](#)
<https://tomatotreedigital.com/blog/how-to-report-competitor-fake-reviews-on-google/>

The Threat Cascade: Anatomy of a Competitor Attack

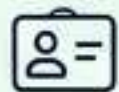



The Feedback Loop of Inaction

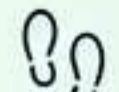



Threat Identification: Diagnostic Matrix

✓ The Authentic Customer


 **Identity:** Has a profile photo and verifiable name.


 **History:** Rich review history across multiple businesses over time.


 **Footprint:** Direct match in your CRM, booking records, or customer list.


 **Content:** Specific details about their visit, transaction, or staff interaction.

✗ The Competitor Attack

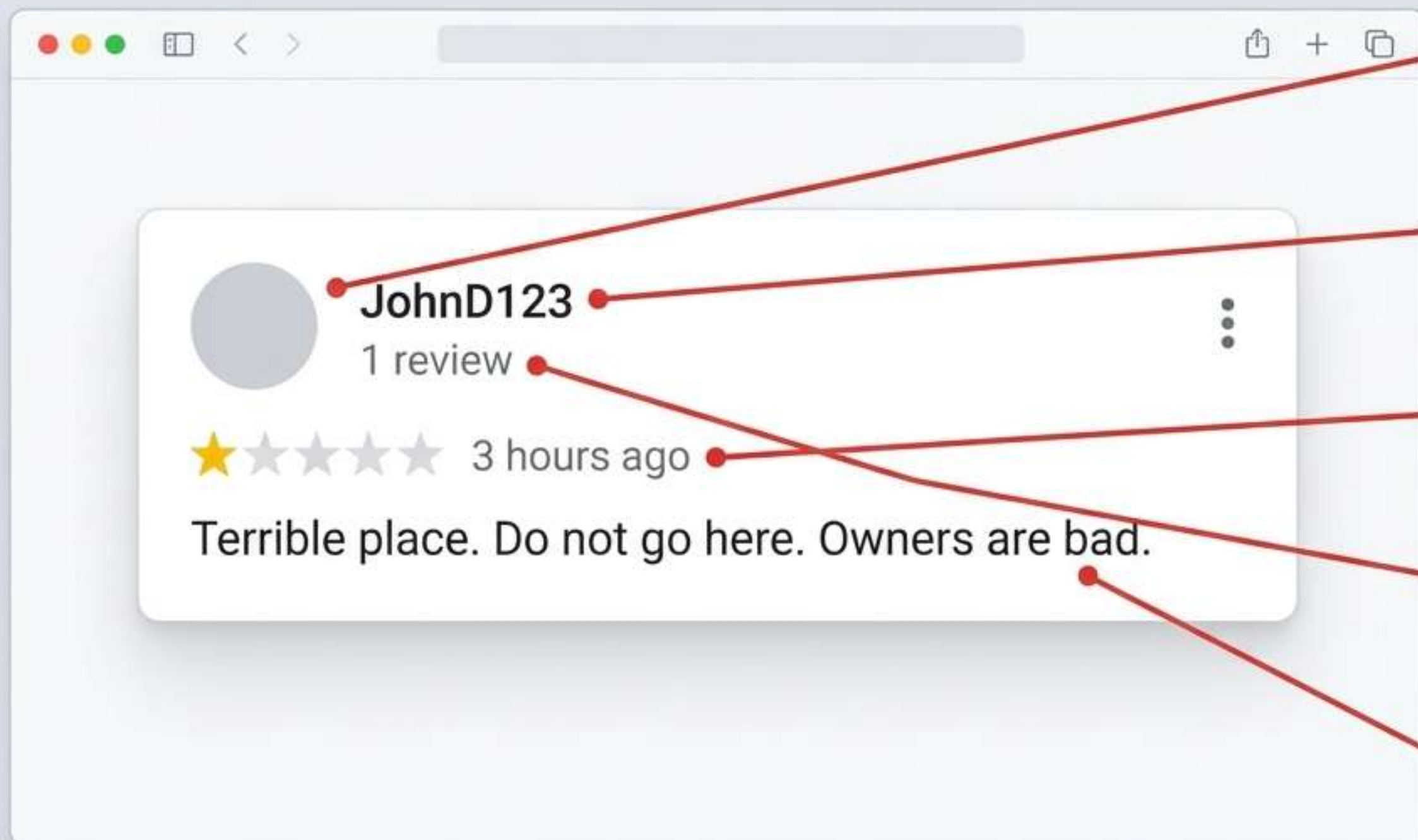
 **Identity:** Blank avatar, generic or obscured name.

 **History:** Zero previous reviews. Account created the exact same day the review was posted.

 **Footprint:** Absolute zero record of them in your CRM or sales system.

 **Content:** Generic complaints without specific details, or mentions of conflict of interest.

Anatomy of a Fake Review



No Avatar

Blank profile picture is a primary algorithmic flag.

Gibberish Name

Often generated by automated review farm scripts.

Account Age

Created the same day the review was published.

Zero History

'1 review' total indicates a burner account.

Vague Claims

No specific employee named, no specific service mentioned. Designed to trigger keywords without verifiable details.

Response Channels Matrix

Premium
enterprise software

System style
readout

Noncolor
metric

Maps Flagging

Method:

3-dot menu -> Report Review

Speed:

7-10 Business Days.

Evidence Required:

Low (Automated system check).

When to Trigger:

Immediate, frontline defense.

GBP Dashboard ★

Method:

business.google.com ->
Reviews -> Flag icon.

Speed:

7-10 Business Days.

Evidence Required:

Low/Medium.

When to Trigger:

Highest Success Rate.

Always use this as the primary direct reporting channel.

Legal Request

Method:

Google's Legal Support Portal.

Speed:

Highly variable (requires manual legal review).

Evidence Required:

High (Proof of false, defamatory statements).

When to Trigger:

Last resort. Only for explicitly false statements causing measurable harm.

The Escalation Timeline



Command Errors: Mistakes to Avoid

Aggressive Response:

Replying angrily to the fake review.



Status: Pending Human Action

Algorithm Reaction:

Validates the interaction. Draws more attention. Action remains under review.



Status: Threat Validated

Reporting Without Evidence:

Blindly clicking the 'Flag' button.



Algorithm Reaction:

Dismissed. Google's system requires strong signals (profile age, timing) to trigger removal.



Giving Up After One Try:

Accepting a rejected first report.



Algorithm Reaction:

Case closed. (Solution: Escalate to Help Community with documented evidence).



Mass Flagging via Friends:

Asking 20 friends to mass-flag the review.



Algorithm Reaction:

Account flagged for review manipulation. Legitimate reports are now ignored by the system.



Fortification: The Dilution Equation



A high volume of genuine 5-star reviews dilutes the algorithmic and psychological impact of a single fake review. A strong, active review presence is your most effective effective long-term shield.

The Strategic Shift

Alert Red Resolution Green



Removal is Reactive.

Relying on Google to delete reviews puts your reputation at the mercy of slow, 7-10 day automated systems and manual community escalations.



Dilution is Proactive.

Consistently generating genuine 5-star reviews puts you in control. It renders competitor attacks algorithmically powerless before they even happen.

Core Insight: Your best defense against a fake review isn't a perfect reporting strategy—it's an overwhelming volume of legitimate customer truth.

Alert

Navy Gray

Command Center Setup: 2026 Tooling



Early Warning Systems

Set up Google Business Profile review alerts to notify you the exact minute a new review is posted. Immediate detection is critical.



Evidence Vault

Always capture screenshots and timestamps of reviewer profiles before reporting. Google may hide the review later, destroying your evidence for escalation.



Surveillance Tooling

Deploy localized SEO tools like BrightLocal or Whitespark to monitor your complete review profile and automatically detect unusual velocity patterns indicative of a coordinated attack.