

# How to Tell If Your Brand Protection Program Is Working

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**Most brands measure their protection programs by counting takedowns. Thousands of removed listings look like serious enforcement.** On paper, everything's working. But customer complaints about counterfeits continue. Unauthorized sellers keep coming back. Authorized distributors report declining sales and increased price pressure. Something doesn't add up. Takedown counts tell you what your team is *doing*, not whether those efforts actually protect your brand or improve your business.

## \$2T+

Annual counterfeit goods sold globally **Human-Verified**

Every takedown reviewed by a person **<2% False Positives**

Human review protects legitimate sellers **Performance Partnership**

Costs covered by recovered assets

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## What's wrong with activity metrics?

Listings detected. Reports submitted. Accounts suspended. Takedowns completed. These metrics prove teams are working, but they don't show whether that work matters.

High takedown volumes can coexist with growing counterfeit problems. Removing 1,000 listings monthly sounds impressive until counterfeiters create 1,200 new listings in the same period. You're running hard just to stay in place.

Activity metrics also drive the wrong behavior. Teams chase numbers by targeting easy removals instead of impactful ones. Removing ten low-volume sellers generates better reports than disrupting one major operation. That's a problem – because the major operation is the one actually hurting your brand.

### The activity trap:

A [brand protection](#) program reporting 5,000 takedowns per quarter might sound like it's delivering value. But if counterfeit availability hasn't changed, customer complaints haven't dropped, and authorized channel sales haven't improved, those 5,000 takedowns are just busy work with a good-looking dashboard.

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## What actually indicates a program is working?

Effective brand protection delivers measurable business outcomes. These outcomes reveal whether your program protects your brand or just creates impressive activity reports. Here's what to look at instead.

## Counterfeit availability trends

The most direct measure: are fewer counterfeits available now than six months ago? Track counterfeit listings on major platforms over time. Not listings *removed*, but listings *present* at any given moment.

Effective protection shows declining counterfeit presence. Month over month, fewer unauthorized sellers operate. Search results show fewer fake listings. The total counterfeit availability trend moves downward.

If counterfeit availability stays flat or increases despite enforcement activity, your program isn't working. You're removing listings at roughly the same rate counterfeiters create them, achieving equilibrium rather than progress.

## Time to detection

Detection speed directly impacts how much harm occurs before enforcement kicks in. How quickly do you identify new counterfeit operations after they appear? Days? Weeks? Months?

Effective programs detect new counterfeits within 24-48 hours of appearance. This rapid detection prevents counterfeiters from establishing operations, building seller ratings, and capturing significant sales before removal.

## Repeat offender rate

What percentage of removed sellers return under new accounts? If most removed sellers reappear within weeks, your enforcement creates minimal deterrent effect.

Strong programs show declining repeat offender rates over time. Removed sellers don't return because continuing operations has become unprofitable or risky. When repeat offenders do appear, you identify and remove them faster than previous instances.

High repeat offender rates indicate sellers view your enforcement as a manageable cost rather than a serious threat. That should worry you.

## Customer complaint trends

Track customer complaints about receiving counterfeit products, finding unauthorized sellers, or questioning product authenticity. These complaints directly reflect whether protection efforts actually shield customers from counterfeits.

Effective protection shows declining complaint volumes over time. If complaints remain steady or increase despite enforcement activity, customers still encounter counterfeits regularly. Your protection program isn't reaching them where they shop.

## Authorized channel performance

Monitor sales through authorized distributors and retailers. Strong [brand protection](#) should improve authorized channel performance as counterfeit availability decreases and price competition from unauthorized sellers diminishes.

Look for improved price stability as unauthorized competition decreases, and fewer distributor complaints about unauthorized sellers undercutting their prices.

If authorized channel sales decline or stagnate while you're investing in protection, counterfeits and unauthorized sellers still capture significant market share. Your enforcement isn't translating to business results.

## Search result quality

Search for your products on major marketplaces and Google. What appears in top results? Authorized sellers, counterfeits, or unauthorized distributors?

Effective protection improves search result quality over time. Top results increasingly show authorized sellers rather than counterfeits. Customers searching for your products find legitimate options first.

If counterfeit listings still dominate search results despite enforcement, your program isn't addressing the most visible and damaging violations. You might be removing listings, but not the ones customers actually see.

## Enforcement success rate

What percentage of submitted takedown requests actually result in removal? Strong programs maintain success rates above 90%. This indicates well-documented claims that platforms trust and prioritize.

Declining success rates suggest platform skepticism about your reports, possibly due to false positives or poor documentation. If platforms reject increasing percentages of your requests, your enforcement credibility is declining.

Track not just overall success rate but time to completion. Effective programs complete most enforcements within 48-72 hours. Longer timelines indicate platform deprioritization or process inefficiencies.

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## How do activity metrics compare to outcome metrics?

The distinction between activity and outcome metrics is where most brand protection programs fall short. Here's a direct comparison.

| Dimension              | Activity Metric                       | Outcome Metric                                      | Why the outcome matters more   |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Volume</b>          | Listings removed per month            | Counterfeit availability trend (net change)         | Removing 1,000 means nothing if 1,200 new ones appear                            |
| <b>Speed</b>           | Reports submitted per week            | Time to detection (hours from appearance)           | Fast reporting is wasted if detection takes weeks                                |
| <b>Deterrence</b>      | Accounts suspended                    | Repeat offender rate (% returning)                  | Suspensions that don't deter are just paperwork                                  |
| <b>Customer impact</b> | Infringement reports filed            | Customer complaint trend (counterfeits received)    | Reports filed don't tell you if customers are still getting burned               |
| <b>Revenue</b>         | Estimated counterfeit value disrupted | Authorized channel sales performance                | "Disrupted value" is theoretical. Authorized sales are real.                     |
| <b>Quality</b>         | Takedown requests submitted           | Enforcement success rate (%)                        | High submission volume with low success rates signals credibility problems       |
| <b>Visibility</b>      | Marketplaces monitored                | Search result quality (% authorized in top results) | Monitoring platforms means nothing if counterfeits still dominate search results |

Look at the pattern. Every activity metric has a corresponding outcome metric that tells a completely different story. A program can score well on every activity metric and still fail to protect your brand in any meaningful way. I've seen it

happen more often than not.

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## How do you shift to outcome-based measurement?

Transitioning from activity metrics to outcome measurement requires several changes. None of them are complicated, but they do require discipline.

**Establish baseline metrics.** Before changing anything, measure current counterfeit availability, customer complaints, authorized channel performance, and search result quality. These baselines let you track whether changes produce improvement.

**Set outcome targets.** Define what success looks like in business terms. Reduce counterfeit availability by 50% over six months. Decrease customer complaints by 30% quarterly. Improve authorized channel sales by 20%.

**Review metrics monthly.** Track outcome metrics with the same attention currently given to activity metrics. Monthly reviews reveal whether programs trend toward targets or need adjustment.

**Connect enforcement to outcomes.** When you remove a major counterfeit operation, track how that impacts overall availability, customer complaints, and authorized sales. This reveals which enforcement actions produce meaningful outcomes versus busy work.

**Adjust tactics based on results.** If outcomes don't improve despite high activity, the tactics aren't working. Shift resources from volume-focused removal to network disruption, supply chain investigation, or [legal escalation](#).

### Important:

Don't abandon activity metrics entirely. They still have a role as operational indicators. The problem is when they're the *only* metrics on your dashboard. Think of activity metrics as inputs and outcome metrics as outputs. You need both, but you judge success by outputs.

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## What does good performance actually look like?

Effective brand protection programs show specific outcome patterns over 6-12 months. Here's what you should expect to see if things are working.

You notice **counterfeit availability decreasing steadily**, with each quarter showing measurably fewer listings than before as the rate of new operations slows and deterrent effects build.

As monitoring systems develop and team expertise grows, **detection speed improves**, and new counterfeits are identified and addressed faster, reducing the time from appearance to removal.

**Repeat offenders decline** as removed sellers either don't return or return less frequently and get removed faster when they do.

**Customer complaints drop** because fewer customers encounter counterfeits, with complaints shifting from common occurrences to rare incidents.

**Platform relationships improve** as marketplace enforcement teams become more responsive, processing times decrease, and success rates remain consistently high. These are all signs of recognized credibility resulting from accurate reporting.

**Team efficiency increases** as resources focus on high-impact enforcement against organized operations rather than spreading across low-impact work, improving per-dollar enforcement impact.

If you're not seeing these patterns after 6-12 months of investment, something needs to change. Either the strategy is wrong, the execution is poor, or your vendor is optimizing for the wrong things. Possibly all three.

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## How does Axencis approach outcome measurement?

Axencis establishes baseline measurements before enforcement begins – counterfeit availability, customer complaints, authorized channel performance – so you can track actual impact over time rather than just activity volumes.

We maintain false positive rates below 2% through human review, protecting platform relationships and ensuring high enforcement success rates. Our approach targets entire seller networks simultaneously, creating the declining repeat offender rates that indicate real deterrent effects. We adjust tactics based on which actions produce measurable business outcomes, focusing resources on organized operations rather than low-impact volume work.

## Not sure if your current program is delivering real results?

[Request a risk assessment](#) to see the metrics that actually matter. You'll receive a detailed report showing:

- **Risk Map** – Visual snapshot of where counterfeits are doing the most damage to your brand
- **Top Counterfeit Products** – Which SKUs are being copied and sold the most
- **Marketplace Breakdown** – Which platforms see the most activity and how it affects you
- **Recent Detection Volume** – Real numbers showing how active the problem is
- **Action Required Index** – Prioritization scores showing where urgent action delivers biggest impact
- **ROI Estimate** – How much you're currently losing and could potentially recover
- **Timeline to Action** – How quickly you can expect to see results
- **Strategic Roadmap** – Prioritized action plan based on impact potential

This assessment reveals whether your current program is addressing the outcome metrics covered in this article, or just generating impressive activity reports while counterfeits continue damaging your business.

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## Key takeaways

- **Takedown counts are inputs, not outcomes** – High removal volumes can coexist with growing counterfeit problems if new listings outpace enforcement.
  - **Counterfeit availability trend is your north star** – Track net counterfeit presence over time, not just listings removed. That single metric tells you more than any activity dashboard.
  - **Repeat offender rates reveal deterrent effectiveness** – If removed sellers return within weeks, your enforcement is a manageable cost for them, not a real threat.
  - **Authorized channel performance is the ultimate test** – Protection that doesn't improve sales through legitimate channels isn't protecting your business.
  - **False positive rates matter for long-term credibility** – Programs with high false positives lose platform trust, resulting in slower processing and lower success rates over time.
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## **Frequently asked questions**

### **What's the most important metric for measuring brand protection effectiveness?**

Counterfeit availability trend - the net change in counterfeit listings present across platforms over time. This single metric tells you whether enforcement is actually reducing the problem or just keeping pace with it. A program removing 1,000 listings while 1,200 new ones appear is going backward regardless of what the takedown report says.

### **How long should it take to see results from a brand protection program?**

Effective programs show measurable outcome improvements within 6-12 months. You should see declining counterfeit availability, faster detection times, and lower repeat offender rates within the first two quarters. If these trends haven't emerged after a year of investment, the strategy or execution likely needs to change.

### **Why are high takedown numbers sometimes a bad sign?**

High takedown volumes can indicate that your program is trapped in a reactive cycle - removing listings at roughly the same rate counterfeiters create them. This creates the illusion of progress while the underlying problem stays the same or grows. Effective programs show declining takedown needs over time as deterrent effects reduce new counterfeit operations.

### **What's a healthy enforcement success rate?**

Strong programs maintain takedown success rates above 90%, meaning platforms approve and act on the vast majority of submitted reports. Rates below 80% suggest platforms are skeptical about report quality, possibly due to false positives or poor documentation. Declining success rates over time are a warning sign that enforcement credibility is eroding.

### **How do false positives affect brand protection programs?**

False positives - incorrectly flagging legitimate sellers - damage platform relationships and reduce enforcement credibility. Platforms that receive reports with high false positive rates deprioritize future submissions, leading to slower processing and lower success rates. Human-verified enforcement maintains false positive rates below 2%, preserving platform trust and ensuring fast action on legitimate claims.

### **Should I track activity metrics at all?**

Yes, but as operational indicators rather than success measures. Activity metrics like takedowns completed and reports submitted show that work is happening. Outcome metrics like counterfeit availability trends and customer complaint rates show whether that work is producing results. You need both, but you judge program effectiveness by outcomes.

## How do repeat offender rates indicate program quality?

If a high percentage of removed sellers return under new accounts within weeks, your enforcement creates minimal deterrent. Strong programs show repeat offender rates declining over time because continuing counterfeit operations has become unprofitable or too risky. High repeat offender rates mean sellers view your enforcement as a manageable cost of doing business.

## What's the connection between brand protection and authorized channel sales?

Effective brand protection should improve authorized channel performance over time. As counterfeit availability decreases, price competition from unauthorized sellers diminishes and authorized distributors see improved sales and price stability. If you're investing in protection but authorized channel performance hasn't improved, counterfeits and unauthorized sellers are still capturing market share despite your enforcement activity.

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## Sources

- [OECD/EUIPO - Trade in Counterfeit and Pirated Goods: Mapping the Economic Impact](#)
- [Amazon Brand Protection Report 2024 - 15 million counterfeit goods seized](#)
- [Business Research Insights - Brand Protection Software Market Report \(2024-2033\)](#)
- [Straits Research - Global Brand Protection Market Size \(\\$2.67B in 2024\)](#)

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## Are you measuring enforcement activity or actual brand protection?

Most programs report impressive takedown numbers while counterfeit problems persist. Axencis measures what matters - declining counterfeit availability, faster detection, and improved authorized channel performance. Human-verified enforcement with less than 2% false positives.

[Request a Brand Protection Assessment](#)

### About the author

Alex Zaika is part of the team at Axencis, specializing in brand protection strategy and enforcement measurement for enterprise brands. Alex's analysis draws on direct experience helping organizations shift from activity-based reporting to outcome-driven protection programs. For questions about measuring brand protection effectiveness, [get in touch](#).

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