



# A GUIDE TO LOCAL SEO





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# WE ARE SIMPLIFYING LOCAL MARKETING.

LET'S START WITH GETTING  
YOU BETTER SEO.

## DRIVE MORE LOCAL TRAFFIC TO YOUR BUSINESS.

### DRIVE LOCAL VISITS

Get seen by the people searching locally for your products and services, so they visit your site and convert.

**78%** of local-mobile searches result in offline purchases.<sup>1</sup>

### OWN THE SEARCH RESULTS

With an optimized website and updated local listings, you can rule your key search results and keep competitors at bay.

**61%** of marketers say growing their organic presence is a top priority.<sup>2</sup>

### AMPLIFY SEARCH MARKETING ROI

Ongoing optimization improves your website, which can have a big impact on your paid search results.

**89%** more clicks when both an organic and paid search result appear on page 1.<sup>3</sup>

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## CHAPTER 1

# WHAT IS LOCAL SEO & WHY LOCAL SEARCH IS IMPORTANT

**SEJ**  
EBOOK

**Brian Harnish**  
SEO Consultant at Site Objective



# Local search engine optimization is a branch of SEO that is focused on the optimization of a website for...well... local search, of course!

Local search encompasses all those nifty search terms that scream local, such as:

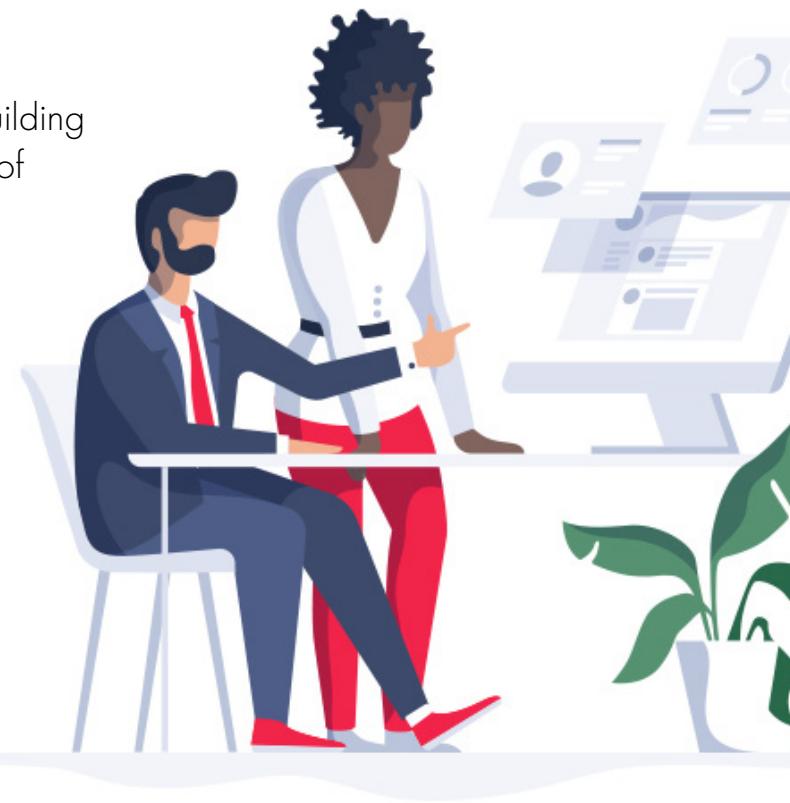
- lawyers near me
- doctors near me
- lawyers in [city name]
- doctors in [city name]

Basically, local SEO is a strategic process that focuses on emphasizing the optimization efforts of local brick-and-mortar businesses.

Content, on-page optimizations, and link building all with a focused, localized intent are part of these efforts.

The focus changes, however, when it comes to localizing link acquisition.

The focus changes to making sure all potential local signals across Google's local search landscape are consistent and correct. If they are not, or you accidentally provide different information for the same business, you could potentially experience situations where your local results display something different than what was intended.



## WHY LOCAL SEARCH IS IMPORTANT

Here are a few stats that prove how important local search continues to be for businesses:

- **50 percent** of people who did a local search on their phone went to a physical store within one day.
- **34 percent** who did their search on a computer or tablet did the same.

- **18 percent** of local mobile searches lead to a sale within one day.
- **60 percent** of American adults conduct searches for local services or product information on tablets and smartphones.
- **50 percent** of searchers on their mobile phones who conduct local searches are looking for things like a local business address.
- **78 percent** of local-based searches on a mobile device end in purchases being made offline.
- **71 percent** of people who have been surveyed have said they search for the location of a business in order to confirm its existence before going there for a first-time visit.
- **1 in 3 searches** on a smartphone was conducted just before arriving at a store.
- **97 percent** of consumers looked online for local businesses in 2017, with 12 percent looking for a local business online every day.

# WHO BENEFITS FROM LOCAL SEO & WHY?

## Lawyers & Law Firms

If you've never done SEO for lawyers, here's a little secret: one of the biggest benefits of local SEO for these clients is that Google shows a call button directly in the local search results on mobile phones.

So when a potential client pulls out their phone and does a search for “[type of] attorney,” they will see targeted results for their particular location.

When done right, local SEO will push the attorney to the top of the search results for that location, and the dominant call to action will be the “call us” button.

The reason why this is such a huge benefit is that anyone who has been in an accident or has another issue will be on the phone attempting to find attorneys who offer free consultations.

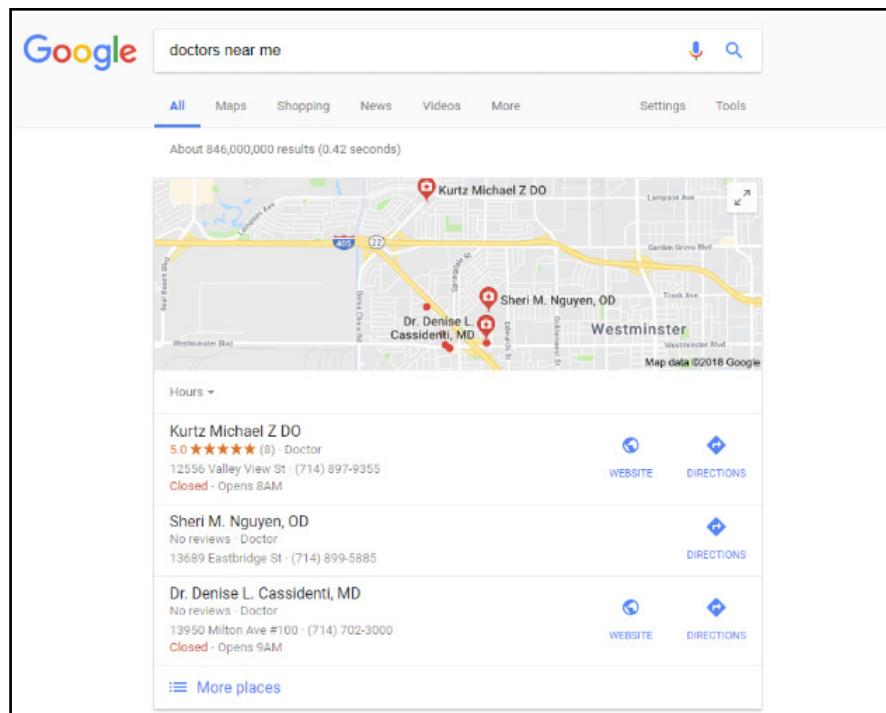
This one avenue offers a way to get in front of those consumers exactly when they need an attorney.

## Doctors & Medical Practices

When someone is searching for a doctor, in my experience, it has been that someone is always searching for a doctor nearby or a doctor “near me.”

Most people don’t want to go out of their way or travel several hours to visit a doctor. They want a nearby doctor who can see them on a regular basis.

If you reference the screenshot on the right, using the search “doctors near me”, there are several benefits of this large local pack result.



This local result provides the doctor's name up front, along with an instant "directions link," which brings up a map application on a user's phone.

When it comes to doctors, people are more comfortable calling to set an appointment, and they are most likely looking for an easy way to look up directions to the doctor's offices.

## Plumbers

One of the next businesses to benefit from local SEO is plumbers.

Think about it: when someone has an emergency involving plumbing, are they going directly to the store? No, they usually go to Google to search for [plumber near me].

The Google search results provide an easy way for someone to call a plumber directly, read reviews, and access local plumbers immediately if they have such an emergency.

## Restaurants

These businesses achieve the most benefit from local SEO because of the immediacy of customer reviews and local address information prevalent in the search engine results pages (SERPs).

This immediacy of information leads potential customers to restaurant businesses in the least amount of time.

In addition, it allows people to see, quite efficiently, the restaurants providing the best quality food and service in the neighborhood.



# WHO WON'T BENEFIT FROM LOCAL SEO?

While, as SEO professionals, we would love to see everyone benefit from local SEO and sell these services to more clients, the reality is that some businesses just don't lend themselves well to local SEO efforts.

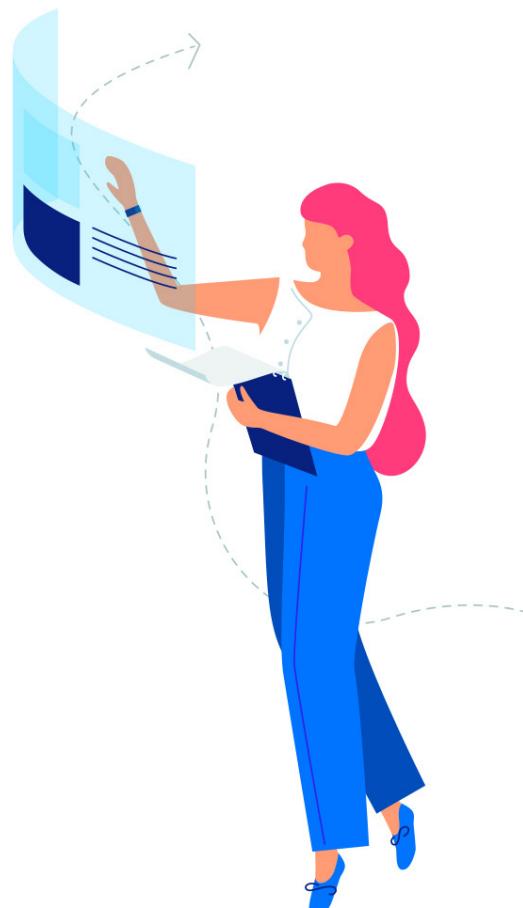
Businesses like online-only ecommerce shops, local authors, businesses that don't want to share their local information, and private online sellers who want to keep their information private are likely not great candidates for local SEO services.

## WHAT ARE THE IMPORTANT PARTS OF LOCAL SEO?

When it comes to local SEO, it isn't all that different from organic SEO – keyword research, content, links, and on-page technical SEO. It just has a local focus.

These elements are important to get right for your website and its industry overall in order to outperform the competition in the SERPs.

When optimizing for local search, however, these parts contain more of a local focus on searches people are performing in the immediate area surrounding the business (e.g., local city names).



# KEYWORD RESEARCH

Keyword research for local SEO has not changed all that much, although some aspects are a little bit different.

Now, statistics show that people have more access to devices like smartphones, Amazon Echo, and Google Home. These devices pave the way for voice search to be one of the primary avenues of executing local searches.

It's easier to say "find a doctor near me" or "find a plumber near me" for most people than it is to type. Thus, it isn't surprising to see a rise in local queries based on conversational voice search.

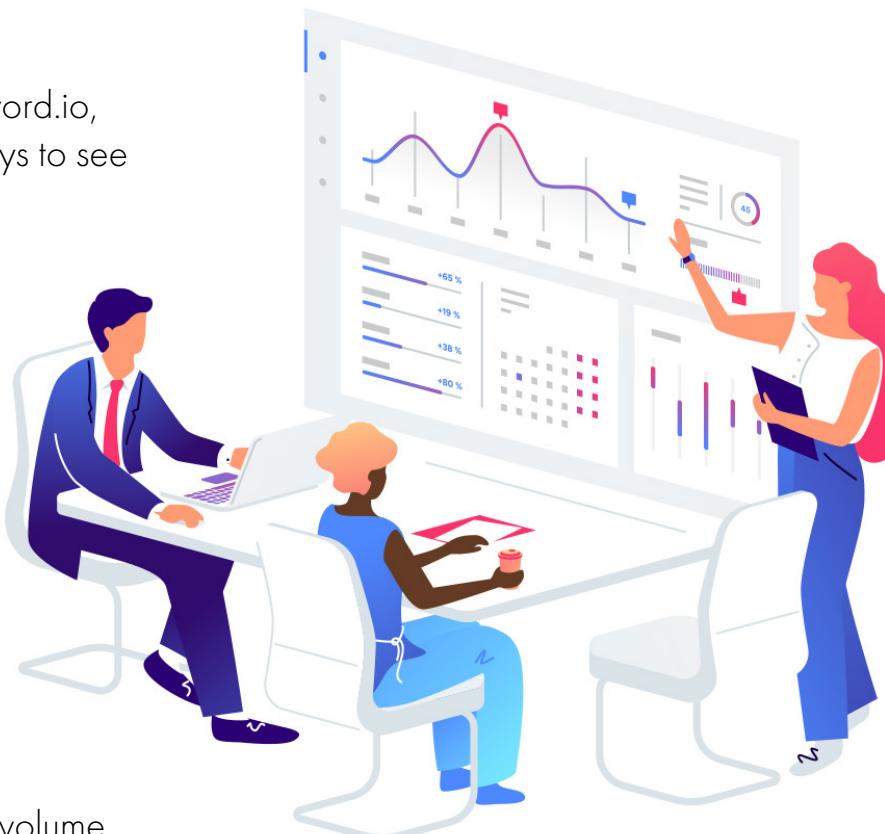
If your industry is service-oriented, try out keyword variations that include questions.

SEMrush's topic research tool, Keyword.io, and AnswerThePublic all provide ways to see questions people are searching for, along with their search volume.

This is an excellent way to target keywords that have local intent.

If your industry is a local brick-and-mortar, service-related business, like a restaurant or an attorney or lawyer, try keyword variations that have a conversational tone and focus.

You may be surprised by the search volume you can achieve when you do keyword research in this way.



# THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTENT TO YOUR LOCAL SEO EFFORTS

Content with a local focus has a significant importance on local SEO efforts.

Depending on your industry, content with local focus, depth, breadth, and knowledge tends to do well.

However, just writing long-form content won't necessarily always produce the best results.

It all depends on the nature of the results of your query, and whether this content fits the user intent behind the query the best. It's not about whether it has the highest word count for the query.

Writing custom local content with all of these factors will help you achieve the quality content Google wants to return for certain local results.

What should you not do when it comes to content?

Wikipedia-type content is the worst type of content you could write.

You know the kind. The kind that quotes National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) or city guides data that is available everywhere on Wikipedia.



The reason why this is the worst type of content is that not only is the content usually thin, the value that it brings and the value of the research put into the content is usually just as thin.

Thin content adds little value to your SEO efforts.

## LOCAL SEO LINKS

For local SEO, links are a little bit different than organic SEO.

First, you must consider Google's Webmaster Guidelines when acquiring all links. You don't want your link acquisition efforts to result in a manual action (i.e., penalty) from Google.

If you build links that violate any of Google's Webmaster Guidelines, Google will eventually detect them. The next thing you know, your entire website could disappear from the organic search results.

## A BRIEF PRIMER ON LOCAL SEO LINK CATEGORIES

In local SEO, there are various link categories that make up a quality local SEO link profile. These include:

- Citation / NAP sites.
- Local directory websites.
- Industry-related local sites.
- Local partner sites.
- Local chamber of commerce sites.
- Local newspaper sites.

# Citation / NAP Sites

These sites are where you submit your money site to in order to increase its local search presence.

These citation sites are usually NAP-focused.

What does NAP mean? It means the name, address, and phone number of your business that you wish to appear on these sites.

The function of these citation sites is to increase your citation / NAP presence on Google.

# Local Directory Websites

Next, it is recommended that you focus on local directories as the general link categories.

Building out these local directories will help you increase your website's link authority for local searches.

# Industry-Related Local Sites

Think about any local sites that might offer local link opportunities, including:

- Newspapers.
- Schools.
- Universities.
- Government associations.

These industry-related local sites will usually help increase the value of your local link profile significantly, and will usually help add the authority and uniqueness that Google rewards.

# Local Partner Websites

These sites are usually local partners of the business.

Google forbids excessive link exchanges, but enlisting the aid of your business partners locally to achieve links isn't a bad thing.

You just don't want to do link exchanges excessively in a scheme to manipulate Page Rank.

It can be challenging to figure out what counts as excessive, but it is possible to achieve through the right testing.



# AN EVOLUTION OF GOOGLE LOCAL ALGORITHM CHANGES

Since its earliest days, Google has regularly updated its algorithms.

Here are some updates that have shaped the current iteration of Google's local search algorithm:

## May 1, 2007 **Universal Search**

In 2007, there was a massive update to Google's overall algorithm – not just local.

The reason why this is being included here is because of its significant impact on local SEO.

It wasn't a typical algorithm update. Instead, Google took the standard search results and combined them all with things like video, local, images, news, as well as other verticals.

This change completely and utterly changed the SEO landscape forever, and the old undynamic 10-listing SERP was officially dead.

## April 1, 2010 **Google Places**

While places pages were released and pushed out in the month of September 2009, they had originally been a part of Google Maps.

This launch rebranded the Google Local Business Center, consolidated the places pages with local SERPs, and added local advertising options, among many other features.



## February 27, 2012

### The Venice Update

This particular update was rolled out as part of their monthly update.

You may have noticed if you search your phone for certain local things, or your computer, that Google has automatic, targeted local items. We can thank the [Venice update](#) for this.

The main purpose of this update was to tighten up and implement more aggressive localization in local search data that was ultimately displayed to the consumer.

This update improved two things:

- Ranking for results like local search results, by focusing on the ranking of sites by using their main SERPs as a local signal.
- Improved local results.

The new system was designed to target and find results from a searcher's locale with greater reliability. This supposedly allowed Google to "better detect when both queries and documents were local to the user."

## October 4, 2012

### The August / September 65-Pack Update

This was a group of updates containing approximately 65 updates that were rolled out throughout August through September.

These included more condensed, 7-item SERPs, changes to how local results were assessed for the searcher, updates to "page quality," and knowledge graph expansion.

More interesting local-based changes included things like universal search's traffic map for traffic-based queries, as well as user-intent based changes meant to show better results that are based on a user's intent behind their search query.

## August 20, 2013

### The Hummingbird Update

While this particular update was announced September 26, it was actually released about a month earlier.

Many have compared the **Hummingbird update** to **Google's Caffeine algorithm update** from 2010 due to its speed and precision being improved.

Hummingbird was basically a core algorithm update that was meant to power changes to things like the knowledge graph, as well as semantic search for a long time to come.

Hummingbird was designed to augment conversational search with improvements, which Google mentioned as an example of what it was designed to improve.

Google's best explanation was that it was supposed to improve focus on the actual meaning and intent behind words used when searching.

In other words, it was meant to improve results to the point that it would "help Google go beyond just finding pages with matching words."

## July 24, 2014

### Pigeon

The **Pigeon update** was a major shakeup in the local SEO world.

This algorithm change was focused on providing more useful, relevant, and accurate local search results.

These new local results changes were visible within the Google Maps results as well as Google web search. Google's core changes were behind the scenes and it impacted local search results significantly.

Google said it improved the algorithm to include better ranking parameters specifically targeting distance and location.

## December 22, 2014

### Pigeon Expansion

This particular expansion of the Pigeon algorithm rolled out to the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia.

This is the first documented update of Pigeon being implemented as a global change to Google's algorithm across all of their search properties in all of their locations.

## September 1, 2016

### Possum

Google never confirmed this particular update. But, at the time there was a major shake-up in local SERP results, suggesting a major update occurred.

There is no direct confirmation of this either, but there is data that seems to suggest that this particular update had also applied to organic results.

Joy Hawkins suggested "that this update only impacted rankings in the 3-pack and local finder (Google Maps local results)."

# WHAT'S THE FUTURE OF LOCAL SEO?

Current statistics, data, and trends suggest that local SEO is headed toward a paradigm shift in significantly improved context and understanding.

The proliferation of devices, like smartphones, Amazon Echo, and Google Home, suggest a trend towards the creation of devices that have more conversation-like approaches that equal or exceed human understanding.

It could even be suggested that these devices implement higher-quality, faster, and overall improved algorithms to serve enhanced voice search results to the user.

Google is always adjusting and updating its algorithms. It remains to be seen what will happen, but hopefully it will help improve all search results.

## SUMMARY

The goal of this ebook is to give you a solid foundation on local SEO.

Hopefully, this book will give you an incredibly solid foundation. This way, you can move forward with your own local SEO endeavors.



CHAPTER 2

# TOP 25 LOCAL SEARCH RANKING SIGNALS YOU NEED TO KNOW



**Kevin Rowe**  
Founder & CEO at Rowe Digital



# Getting a local business to rank well in search results has never been more difficult.

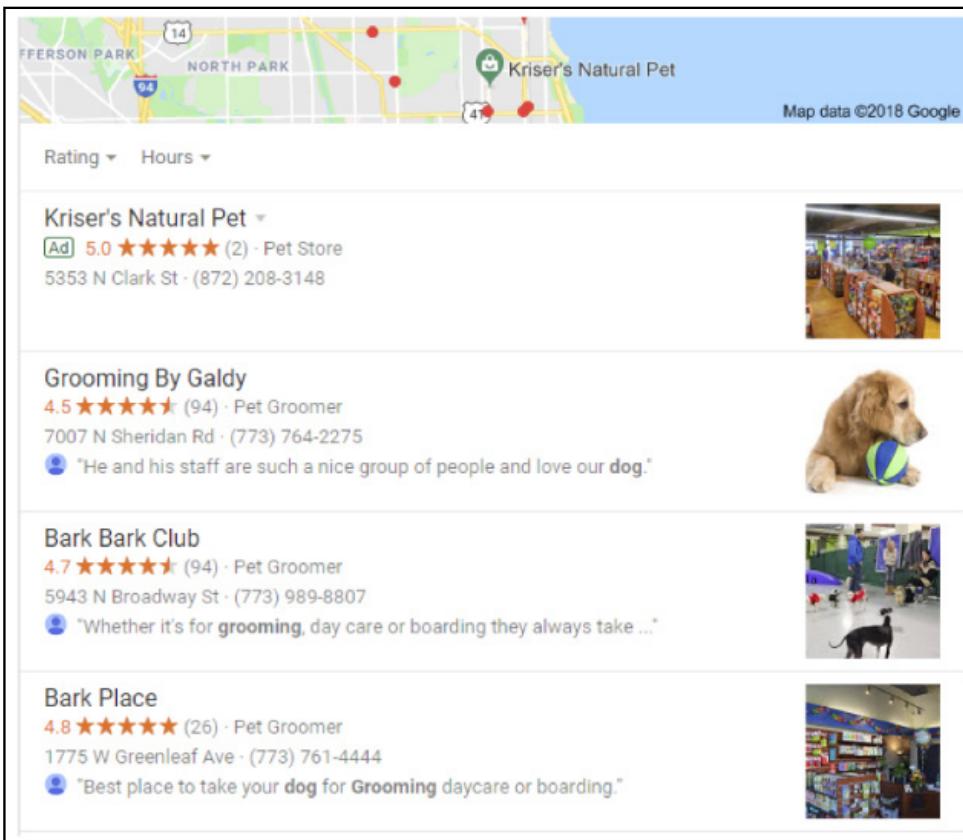
This is due to two reasons:

- A massive increase in the number of mobile devices (meaning more people are turning to their phones to find businesses near them)
- An increasing number of businesses recognizing the benefits of local SEO.

There is also Google's Local Pack, which pushes down the first website search result below the fold.

For the uninitiated, the Local Pack is the top section of the search results in Google that highlights three local businesses related to a search.

This section has been cut down from seven businesses and may also contain ads, as evidenced in this screenshot:



This is incredibly useful for mobile users.

They can quickly find a business near them and see hours, phone number, reviews, and more – all without ever clicking through to a website.

For businesses, it means local SEO has never been more critical.

To get found, you need more than good content.

You need local SEO and, ideally, you want to be included in Google's Local Pack.

So, what are the best strategies to improve local SEO as a whole and increase your chances of being included in Google's Local Pack?

As with most SEO questions, the answer isn't cut and dry.

While I can't give you the easy answer (hint: there isn't one), I can outline many of the factors you should be looking at if you want to rank well as a local business.

# WHAT ARE THE TOP LOCAL SEO RANKING SIGNALS?

Below, I have broken the most critical local SEO ranking signals into two sections:

- **The Basics:** This covers the most foundational ranking signals. If you want any chance at all of ranking well for local SEO, these are the factors you need to address.
- **The Nitty Gritty Local SEO Ranking Signals:** This details the more in-depth ranking signals. These are the signals to address if you are looking to move to the very top and knock a competitor out of the coveted Local Pack.

All signals included in the list are backed by statements from Google or by research. When possible, I have included links to those studies or statements.

Keep in mind, many of these signals deserve their own post, which isn't possible here. In those cases, I have included additional reading suggestions so you can learn more.

## THE BASIC LOCAL SEO RANKING SIGNALS

Want to make sure all your bases are covered on doing a full local SEO audit? Start here.

## 1. Google My Business

If you haven't claimed your [Google My Business](#) page, do it now. It only takes a few minutes and is free.

Here is where to claim your Google My Business page. This is one of the simplest and most effective ways to start improving your Local SEO.

## 2. Google My Business Categories

Within your Google My Business account, make sure you have chosen the correct categories.

For best results, use as few categories as possible and make sure they are as accurate as possible.

For example, don't use "takeout restaurant" if you are a pizza restaurant where most customers dine in.

**Category**

Categories describe what your business is, not what it does or sells.

**Primary category**

Pizza Restaurant

---

**Additional categories**

Restaurant X

---

## 3. Photos on Google My Business Page

Take photos of your location, your products, your staff, even your customers (with permission, of course).

Photos help lend credibility to your business and serve as a local ranking signal.

## 4. Bing Places for Business

Google is the most talked-about search engine, but Bing still claims a decent market share (somewhere around [33 percent](#), depending on who you ask.)

Make sure you take the time to [claim your Bing Places for Business account](#).

## 5. Online Directories/Citations

Make sure you have claimed other popular online directories, too. These include:

- [Apple Maps](#).
- [Yellowpages](#).
- [Foursquare](#).
- [Yahoo's Localworks](#).

Citations don't have as great of an impact on rankings as they once did, but are still important. (You don't want to be the only local pizza joint that hasn't claimed these listings!)

## 6. Listings on Review Sites

In addition to the online directories listed above, there are multiple review sites with listings you should claim.

These include:

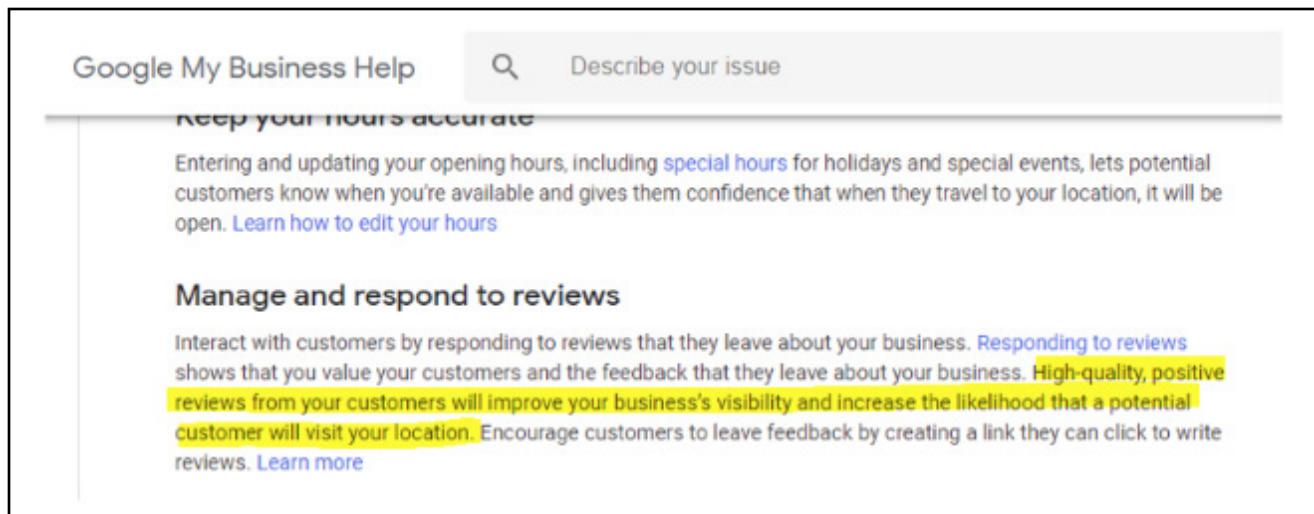
- **Yelp.**
- **Glassdoor.**
- **Angie's List.**
- **BBB.**

It appears that reviews directly on Google carry the most weight.

## 7. Number of Positive Reviews

In addition to claiming your listing on review sites, you want to make sure the majority of your reviews are positive.

**According to Google,** high-quality reviews improve your business' visibility.



The screenshot shows a section of the Google My Business Help page. At the top, there's a search bar with the placeholder "Describe your issue". Below it, a button says "Keep your hours accurate". A text box explains that updating opening hours helps potential customers know when the business is available. It includes a link to "Learn how to edit your hours". Another section titled "Manage and respond to reviews" discusses responding to customer reviews. It states that responding shows value for customers and that high-quality reviews improve visibility and attract potential customers. It encourages leaving feedback by creating a link. A "Learn more" link is also present.

Keep in mind that it is against Google's review policies to ask for reviews in exchange for something or set up review stations. You can see all their **review policies here.**

Yelp and other review sites have similar policies.

## 8. Reviews with Keywords & Location

The language reviewers use matters, according to a Local SEO Guide [study](#).

When reviewers use the city or keywords, it sends signals to Google that you are a trusted local business.

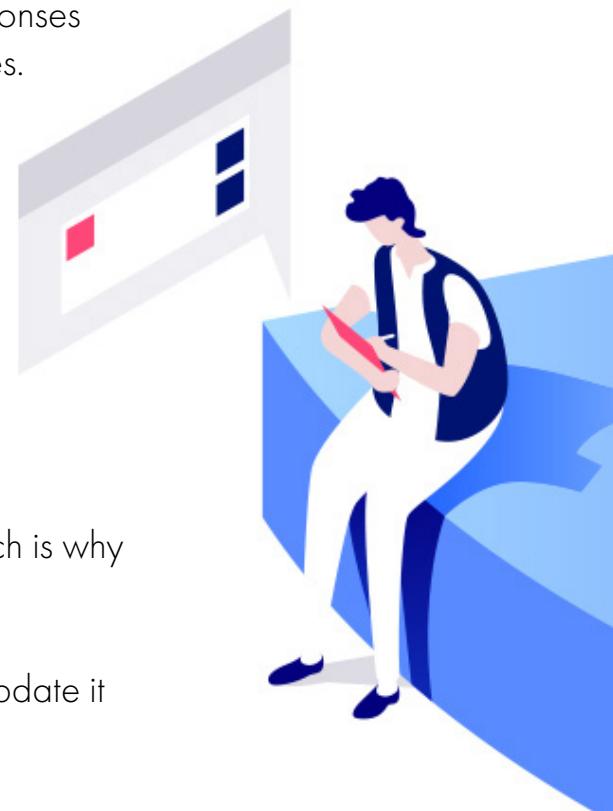
## 9. Reviews with Responses

The same Local SEO Guide study mentioned above showed that the number of reviews with a response also contributed to local SEO.

## 10. Percentage of Negative Reviews Not Responded To

In a double whammy, the number of reviews with responses counts, but so does negative reviews with no responses.

These last few signals make it clear you need to have a plan in place for following up to all online reviews, but particularly for Google.



## 11. Create a Facebook Business Page

Many people use Facebook as a search engine, which is why this has its own number on the list.

Make sure you at least create a business page and update it with your website, hours, and a description.

Social signals may have a limited impact, but [they do have an impact on social SEO](#).

From Google:

## Social profiles for local businesses

When people search for your business on Google, they may see links to your business's social profiles included with your other business information in the [knowledge panel](#) in Search. [Google gathers business information from a variety of sources and may include it to give customers a more detailed overview of your business.](#)

Social profile information is automatically added to listings for eligible businesses. There are many factors that influence whether these links will appear in your listing, including:

- **Consistency.** Use the same name to represent your business in both your listing and your social profiles.
- **Authenticity.** If available, verify your profile using the social media site's verification process. This helps Google determine that the social profile is managed by an owner or authorized representative of the business. Note that not all sites have verification processes available to all of their users.
- **Structured data.** Use [social profile markup](#) on your official website to specify which social profiles link you'd like to appear in your listing.

## 12. Social Listings

Claim other social listings on popular social sites (e.g., Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram). Do this even if you don't plan to be super active on those sites.

Pin a tweet or post inviting users to call/visit your website/follow you on whatever social platform you are most active on.

People expect a [fast response from businesses on social](#), so be sure to leave a note or other contact info if you won't be manning the channel.

## 13. Consistent NAP

Make sure your name, address, and phone number are consistent across all the listings above including review sites, maps, and social media.

Above all, Google wants to make sure they are providing accurate information.

Ensuring that your business name, address, and phone number are exactly the same makes it easy for customers to connect with your business when it shows up online. Don't, for example, have your business name as Rowe's Famous Burger Joint in one place and Rowe's Burger Joint LLC in another.

## 14. Mobile Responsiveness

Google's mobile-first indexing has now rolled out. This means Google looks at your mobile site first, not your desktop site.

You should be on top of this already, but if you aren't now is the time. [Google's mobile-friendly](#) test can get you started.

# THE NITTY GRITTY LOCAL SEO RANKING SIGNALS

If you have all the basics covered, it is time to look at some of the more in-depth local ranking signals.

Making adjustments in these areas will take you beyond the "good enough" stage of local SEO and give you a real shot at making the Local Pack.

Keep in mind, most of these are not quick fixes, they may even require a massive shift in strategy.

## 15. Structured Data Markup

There are several ways you can use structured data markups for local SEO, including for:

- Multiple departments.
- Hours.
- Address.
- Menu.
- Website.
- Phone number.

These are [highly recommended by Google](#). You can add markups using [Google's guide](#) or a tool like [Schema](#).

It is also worth noting there is some lack of clarity on whether [including GPS coordinates within structured data](#) is helpful.

## 16. Click-Through Rates from Search Results

Turns out if you are doing well in SEO, you will do well in Local SEO. Go figure.

Focus on making sure your meta titles and descriptions make sense so users find what they expect when they arrive at your site.

## 17. Localized Content

Make sure you are consistently publishing content where you can organically including your key term and location.

For example, write about local events, share efforts to raise funds for a local charity, etc. Whatever makes sense for your brand.



## 18. On-Page Location Keyword Optimization

For example, don't just optimize for "air conditioning repair." Optimize for "air conditioning repair Chicago."

## 19. Title + Meta Description

Use your key term and location in your title and meta descriptions when possible.

This one goes hand in hand with the signal above, but is important enough to be worth mentioning separately.

## 20. High-Quality Inbound Links

No surprise here; links from sites Google trusts are good for SEO.

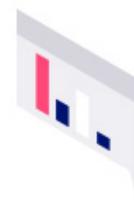
In fact, a solid link profile all around is good for local SEO.

## 21. Diversity of Inbound Links

Another no-brainer.

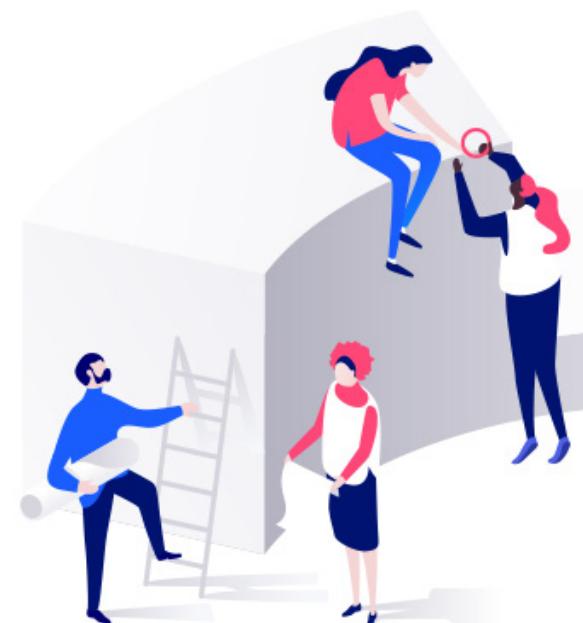
You want a range of inbound links that are relevant, authoritative, and were gained organically.

These next few signals are ranked as the top local organic factors by [Moz's 2017 Local Search Ranking Factors survey.](#)



## 22. Inbound Links from Local Relevant Sites

Links from local news sites, community blogs, and so forth prove that your site is trusted by your neighbors.



## 23. Inbound Using Local + Keyword in Anchor Text

A wide range of inbound links from well-optimized sites is great, but the holy grail is an inbound link from a high-authority site using both your city or neighborhood and main key term.

## 24. Proximity to the Searcher

While you can't optimize for physical location, it is a strong ranking signal, which is why claiming your Google my business and having consistent Name, Address and Phone (NAP) data is important.

## 25. Domain Authority of Your Website

According to Moz Local Search Ranking Factor, domain authority (not to be confused with the Moz metric of the same name) ranks sixth in the top 50 Local Pack Finder Factors.

Increasing your domain authority isn't a quick or easy process, but it can pay off handsomely.

# CONCLUSION

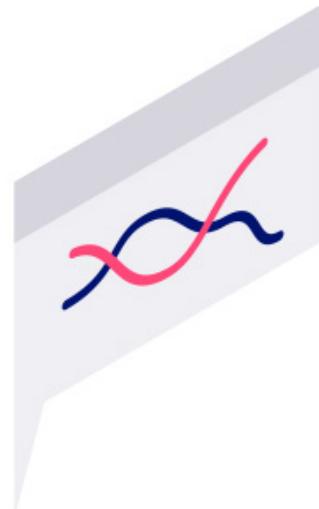
What do all these local SEO features mean for your local SEO strategies?

Here are two major takeaways:

- The single most important thing you can do to increase your local SEO ranking is to claim and optimize your Google My Business account. Several ranking signals are related to not just having a GMB listing, but optimizing it by choosing the correct categories, adding pictures, getting reviews, responding to reviews, and so forth.
- The second most important thing you can do for local SEO is to focus on a holistic SEO strategy for your website. Build a solid link profile, create useful content with both local and key terms, and make sure your meta descriptions are optimized.

Local SEO is a competitive field, but for most businesses, there are still plenty of areas where they can improve.

The list above will help you increase your local SEO ranking, increase your chances of being included in Google's Local Pack, and, most importantly, help your customers find you.



## CHAPTER 3

# WHAT IS A LOCAL BACKLINK & HOW TO FIND THEM



**Wells Yu**  
SEO Manager at EventBrite



# What Is a Local Backlink & How to Find Them

But how do you find links for these types of businesses?

This chapter will help you figure out how to get your local link building campaign started.

# WHAT IS A LOCAL BACKLINK?

The traditional thought process when we think about **link building** is that we want high authoritative domains to link back to our websites and we want as many of them as possible.

However, that way of thinking might not always be relevant for a small or medium-sized local business.

If you're tasked to build links for a local brick-and-mortar store, it's important to understand what you're looking for when building those links.

Local backlinks are done with the intention to build relevance for a website towards its locality.

Local SEO professionals fixate on:

- Correcting NAP (Name, Address, Phone Number) information.
- Building up a list of citations.
- Creating hyperlocal content.
- Building links.

These tasks are all done to serve the purpose of establishing a presence within the SERPs for local terms in the local pack with Google My Business, and the organic search results for geotargeted keywords.

So, a local backlink should serve the following criteria:

- Link back to your website.
- Provide the opportunity to speak to your local audience.

Those who influence your specific local market might not command a highly authoritative site. They might be small themselves.

However, because they have influence in your small market, getting a link from them might be more valuable than from Forbes, Huffington Post, or The New York Times.

While it is always great to get these type of links, we must understand the limitations that local businesses are dealing with – and, more often than not, the lack of budget to produce the type of content that these big publishers are looking for.

It's amazing to reach for the stars, but we need to understand the parameters we're working with.

A local business will only do business in the confines of the local space it's in, so doing business in San Francisco and getting traffic from New York might prove to be worthless to the business in the end.



## START WITH CITATIONS

Citation building, finding general directories, and correcting the information you are currently in will help you get started.

Citations are great because they offer the ability to place your NAP information somewhere and allow you to put a link down on some fairly decent websites that are not spam and might even be seen by some random searches if the query is low enough in competition.

The idea behind this process is to get into the habit of getting the business' name out there in as many sources as possible.

Services that allow you to tackle citation building include:

- Yext
- Moz Local

These are both good platforms that I have used and can also be great auditing tools.

# WHERE DO THE OPPORTUNITIES LIE? – ANYWHERE YOU CAN FIND THEM!

"Who would link back to a sandwich shop?" - Anonymous SEO Specialist

There is a general idea floating around that local link building might not be beneficial, might not be natural, or (in some cases) might seem impossible.

But that is why those who do local SEO need to be more creative than those doing SEO for a giant brand.

Link opportunities are much more limited. You're fighting to rank for hyperlocal keywords, which tend to not have a lot of search volume, and you will be working with websites with low authority to start.

To answer the anonymous quote above, here are some types of local links you can build for a sandwich shop:

- Local newspapers or media outlets that do features on local eats.
- Local bloggers who have a small following but that entire following is within your locality.
- Local event pages that write content about what to do in a locality – tourism sites, downtown directories, chamber of commerce.
- Other local businesses that also have websites and are open to having a local partners page or businesses-we-love page.
- Local charities that the business owner could sponsor or volunteer for that offers a featured volunteers page.

The opportunities are vast.

If you're doing SEO for a local space, it's important to understand where the limits of that local space are and make that space your new Earth.

Everything you do to promote this business exists in the confines of the radius you set forth.

Understanding your limitations will allow you to think more creatively and effectively find opportunities in that space, which will ultimately lead to the most value for the business website you're working on.

## OPEN UP A LINK TOOL & START FINDING PROSPECTS

For as long as I can remember, I've used Ahrefs for anything related to backlinks. However, any good SEO tool should work for you.

To start building your list of prospects, you first need to understand where the business stands within its space and how competitive it will be to rank moving forward.

Start with the terms that you believe will offer the most value to your business. Then see what businesses currently rank on the first page of the SERPs.

Collect the list of websites and see what backlinks they have acquired in the past.

Compare what are mutual links among them, and what are the different links they have acquired.

These are direct competitors so most of the links will be related to the specific business you're working on.

Compare the lists you collected with the backlink profile of the site you are currently working on and see where you are lacking.

Remove all duplicate links your website has in common with the competition and then go after the links that you do not have but your competition does.

Do this link building as well as possible. If you're able to acquire all the links that the competition has acquired then you're able to stand on a more level playing field as far as links are concerned.



## HOW TO FIND MORE LINK OPPORTUNITIES

If you're caught up with your assumed competition for your space in search in respects to backlinks, then the natural next step for you is to get more links than your competition.

Explore other local businesses and where they have acquired press. Doing this will help you get some insights on how other businesses not in our industry have built links in the same local space.

By looking at popular businesses in general within our local space we can start to find some low hanging fruits of opportunity to build links, find local writers, local blogs and sites in general that want to (or have supported) local businesses in the past.

A method I have used is finding businesses with a lot of traction and putting their website through a backlink analysis tool.

One way you can find a high traction business is through review sites like Yelp.

Go to Yelp and search within your city and filter by the most reviewed business. These businesses might not be related to your value proposition at all, but they offer a wealth of information on promotional opportunities for your site in the local space.

The screenshot shows the Yelp search interface with various filters applied. The 'Sort By' section is highlighted with a red box around the 'Most Reviewed' option. Other visible filters include price levels (\$, \$\$, \$\$\$, \$\$\$\$), operating status ('Open Now'), and service types ('Order Delivery', 'Order Takeout', 'Online Booking'). The 'Features' section includes options for 'Offering a Deal', 'Online Booking', 'Order Delivery', and 'Order Takeout', with 'More Features' available.

The top reviewed business for San Francisco was for the Tartine Bakery. If you throw this site into a backlink analysis tool, you might be surprised with the results you find.

According to Ahrefs, this website has over 3,000 backlinks. I'm more than willing to bet you that not all of these are related to food.

So, if you're working with a small restaurant that is dealing with food, then you now have a goldmine of potential backlinks that are local to your space, even if you aren't providing the same type of food.

The screenshot shows the Ahrefs dashboard with the URL [www.tartinebakery.com/](http://www.tartinebakery.com/) entered. The left sidebar has a red box around the 'Referring domains' section. The main content area is titled 'Referring Domains' and shows a table with 3,714 results. The columns include 'Referring domain', 'DR', 'Ahrefs rank', 'Backlinks', '/dofollow', and 'First seen'. The table lists several well-known websites.

Referring domain	DR	Ahrefs rank	Backlinks	/dofollow	First seen
reddit.com	84	45	2	1	5 Mar '17
ameblo.jp	83	58	5	5	1 Mar '17
nytimes.com	82	73	3	3	27 Jul '17
theguardian.com	81	113	1	1	3 Sep '17
forbes.com	80	122	1	1	15 Jun '17
huffingtonpost.com	80	128	6	5	2 Mar '17
draft.blogger.com	78	225	1	1	9 Jun '17
npr.org	77	277	1	1	27 Feb '17

Do this method with the businesses that have gotten the most reviews and businesses within a handful of different verticals to get a variety of potential links.

When you're going through these lists, you will find links that are completely unrelated or unobtainable. But that's OK.

The whole point of this exercise is to find the few diamonds in the rough and build connections with those in the local area who have some influence when possible.

CHAPTER 4

# 9 TYPES OF CONTENT THAT WILL HELP YOUR LOCAL SEO



**Anna Crowe**  
Features Writer & Product Marketing Manager at Search Engine Journal & Hello Anna Co.



Ranking for local SEO used to be pretty straightforward. You'd add your NAP to the footer, build a few directory links, and voila! You were on your way to the local 7-pack.

Somewhere along the line, the 7-pack reduced to a 3-pack and local directory links are no longer enough.

To move up the ranks in local SEO, you need content.

Say you're the lucky owner Blue Star Donuts (yes, it is my dream to own a donut shop one-day #lifegoals), it's unlikely you're going to be able to compete with big chains for keywords such as "best donuts". But you may be able to rank for a term like "best donuts in Portland."

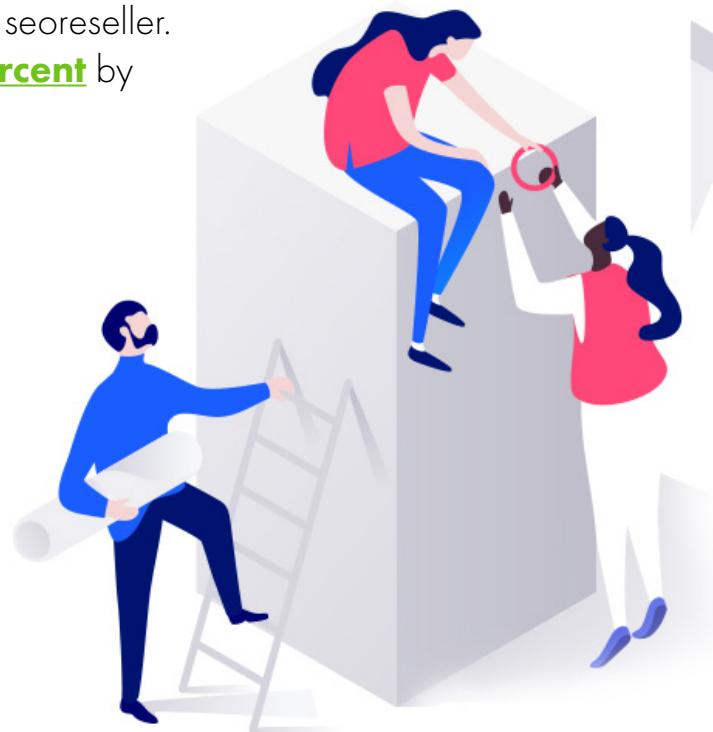
Don't believe me? Just look at what the team at seoreseller.com did. They increased traffic almost **300 percent** by creating custom local content.

And, they aren't alone.

Search Geek Solutions saw a **300 percent** increase in organic visibility for Bloomfield Dental Designs by developing local content.

Content is a super effective way to rank for less competitive, local keywords.

So unless your local business has achieved Beyonce and Jay-Z status, you'll want to keep reading.



## 9 EXAMPLES OF CONTENT FOR LOCAL SEO

Do I really have to create content for each of my locations?

I always find myself answering this question post-content audit because my clients dread the whole content creation situation.

And, secretly, I kind of dread it, too — watching the mind-blowing moment ([watch this GIF](#) for full effect) when my clients realize the content they worked so hard to produce isn't cutting it.

Still, not creating content for your locations is risky. No one is going to come to your party without an invitation.

The solution: Become a [\*\*local content machine.\*\*](#)

It isn't enough to be unique.

You have to be local.

Your local content needs to be relevant and useful. Every piece of content needs a reason to be on your website.

Here are some different types of content that will help your local SEO.



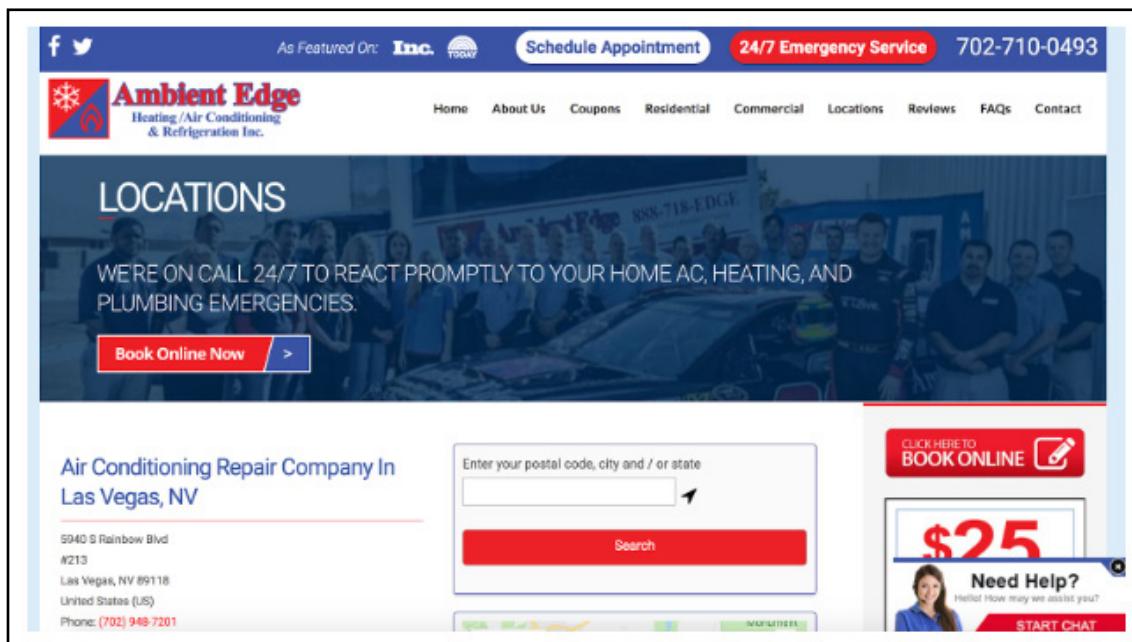
# 1. City-Specific Landing Page

Here's a fun challenge: Can you rank for local keyword terms without a location webpage?

While you might succeed after a few sleepless nights, it's much easier to rank in the local SERPs if you've got a location webpage.

If you're a multi-location local business, take a note from Ambient Edge, an air conditioning repair company with multiple locations.

They created a separate page for each location. Here is a look at their [Las Vegas location page](#).



Di Bruno Bros., an Italian marketing, is another great example:

The screenshot shows the Di Bruno Bros. website with a dark header. The main navigation menu includes links for GIFTS, CHEESE, CURED MEATS, SPECIALTY FOODS, EXPLORE, APERITIVO, LOCATIONS, MENUS, and CATERING. The APERITIVO link is highlighted in red. Below the menu is a large banner image of an Italian market with meat hanging from hooks and shelves filled with products. The text "ITALIAN MARKET" is overlaid on the banner. At the bottom of the page, there's a breadcrumb trail: HOME / LOCATIONS / ITALIAN MARKET. The main content area has a title "ITALIAN MARKET" and a paragraph describing the store's history and offerings. A small call-to-action button "Live Chat Now Available" is visible on the right.

And, Roto Rooter joined the game too. Here's their [New York location page](#).

The screenshot shows the Roto-Rooter New York website. The top navigation bar includes links for Schedule Service, Locations, Residential Plumbing, Commercial Plumbing, Water Damage Restoration, Coupons, and Plumbing How-To. The main banner features a photo of a house and a smiling technician. The text "PLUMBING & WATER CLEANUP YEAH, WE DO BOTH" is displayed, along with "TRUSTED FOR OVER 80 YEARS, WE'RE EXPERTS IN DRAIN CLEANING, PLUMBING AND WATER DAMAGE RESTORATION." A large red call-to-action button says "Open 24 / 7, Call Now 212-687-1726". The footer contains links for About Us, Reviews, All Services, Water Restoration, Contact Us, and Financing. A breadcrumb trail at the bottom left shows Plumbing / Locations / New York / New York. A blue button at the bottom right says "Why Choose Roto-Rooter?"

Now, if you want to go one step further, you could create location-specific webpages like Goodyear does. [Here is one](#) of their Long Island locations.

FREE DELIVERY TO INSTALLER | UP TO \$185 BACK<sup>†</sup> ON SELECT SETS OF 4 TIRES & INSTALLATION »

**GOODYEAR**  
MORE DRIVEN

TIRES | OFFERS | LEARN | AUTO SERVICES | ABOUT US

STORES CART

## MARBREN TIRE

**TIRE & SERVICE NETWORK**

32-16 Hunterspoint Ave  
Long Island City, NY 11101  
4.1 miles miles away

718-784-0404 Get Directions >

★★★★★ (6)  
Read Reviews > Write A Review >

Hours today: 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Look For Other Stores >

— Hours & Details

Monday	8:00 AM 5:00 PM	Friday	8:00 AM 5:00 PM
Tuesday	8:00 AM 5:00 PM	Saturday	8:00 AM 2:00 PM
Wednesday	8:00 AM 5:00 PM	Sunday	CLOSED
Thursday	8:00 AM 5:00 PM		

Credit cards accepted:

[STORE WEBSITE](#)

— Returns & Returns

But, then you can visit the store website here: <https://www.marbrentire.com/>.

Because local SEO is nothing to mess with, I'd recommend sticking to a strategy like Ambient Edge or Di Bruno Bros.

If you're a smaller local business, building separate websites for each location is overwhelming and may dilute your authority.

Keep it simple with one page per location.

## 2. State or Regional Landing Page

It's hard to get any client excited about creating more content. But, when you're competing in the local SEO space, content could make or break your move from Page 2 or 3 to Page 1.

If creating multiple city-specific location pages sounds like a daunting task, start with the city or region of your locations.

Take [New Life Appliance Repair](#), for example. They created county-specific webpages, then city-specific pages.

A screenshot of the New Life Appliance Repair website. The top navigation bar includes a phone number (949) 929-3198 and email (cabellolegacy@gmail.com). The main menu items are Home, Services, Service Areas, Testimonials, Blog, Coupons, and Contact. Below the menu, a large green header banner reads "Appliance Repair in Orange County, CA". Underneath the banner, a section titled "All Locations We Service" lists cities served: Aliso Viejo, Costa Mesa, Huntington Beach, Irvine, Santa Ana, Laguna Beach, Mission Viejo, Newport Beach, San Clemente, Laguna Niguel, and many more. A warranty statement follows, mentioning a 100 Day warranty on labor and an entire year warranty on parts. Three small images are displayed below the text: a silhouette of a person on a cliff overlooking a sunset, a dense residential area with houses built into a hillside, and a coastal landscape with a beach and mountains in the background.

This is one of the best examples of local content silos I've seen.

And, they aren't alone.

[Incfile](#), a LegalZoom type of company for solo entrepreneurs (but better), built state-specific pages.

(Full disclosure: Incfile was a client while working with First Page Strategy.)

Before building these state location pages, the team did a deep dive into buyer personas to understand their audience.

They determined that state location pages would make the UX better for their customers. And, it worked. Incfile not only increased organic traffic, but improved conversions.

## 3. FAQ Pages

FAQ pages are this close to being my one stop shop for everything local SEO content.

With voice search changing the way people search, the industry is seeing a shift in how people consume content.

Think about it: **Nearly a third** of mobile searches are related to locations.

And, according to BrightLocal, **58 percent** of consumers have used voice search to find local business information in the last 12 months.

Let me prove it to you.

Do a Google search for [what vaccinations does my dog need to be boarded?].

You'll see that **Pet Hotel Hadley** has optimized their FAQ pages and are now a featured snippet.

The screenshot shows a Google search results page for the query "what vaccinations does my dog need to be boarded?". The search bar contains the query. Below the search bar, there are filter options: All, News, Shopping, Images, Videos, More, Settings, and Tools. The search results indicate approximately 13,000,000 results found in 0.56 seconds. The top result is a snippet from a page titled "What Vaccines Do Dogs Need | Affordable Pet Care | banfield.com". The snippet includes a link to the website (www.banfield.com), a brief description of the service (Vaccine Information to Keep Your Pet Healthy! Free Exam with Visit. New Clients Welcome. Request An Appointment. Preventive Pet Care. Free Pet Exam. Located Nearby. Services: Preventive Care, Dentistry, Spay and Neutering.), and the address (33255 US Hwy 19 N, Palm Harbor, FL - Open today - 9:00 AM – 7:00 PM). Below this, another snippet is shown in a box, also from Pet Hotel Hadley's FAQ page, detailing vaccination requirements (DHPP, Rabies, Bordetella) and noting that Bordetella must be given 2 weeks prior to boarding. A link to the FAQ page is provided. At the bottom of the snippet box, there are links for "About this result" and "Feedback".

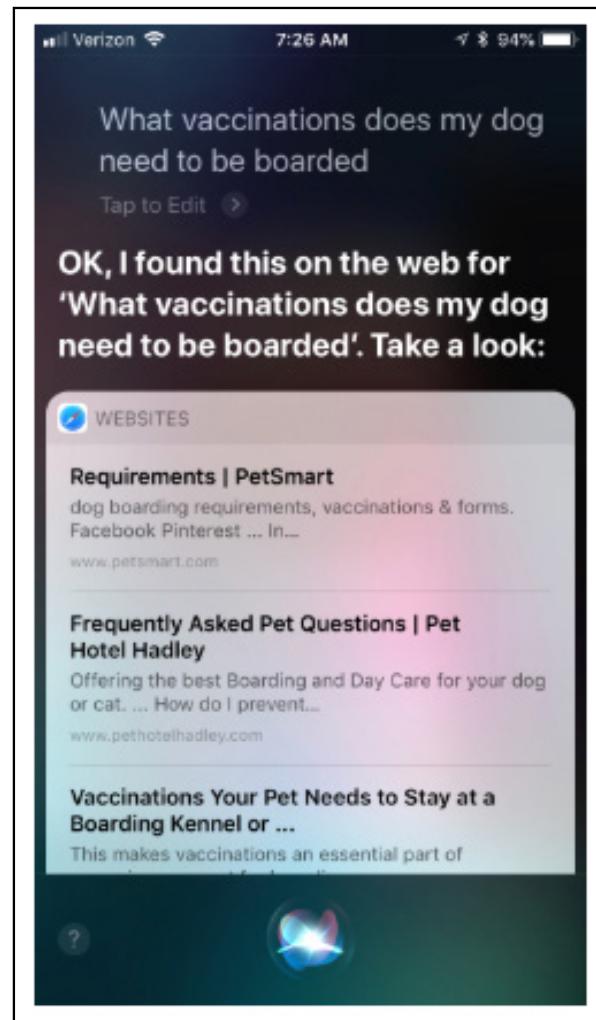
This featured snippet is now one of the second result when I ask Siri the same question.

That's why FAQ pages can help boost your local SEO.

Here's another good example.

Do a Google search for [is there an age limit for getting waxed].

You'll stumble upon **Waxing in the City's** featured snippet.



Google is there an age limit for getting waxed

All Shopping News Videos Maps More Settings Tools

About 35,900,000 results (0.69 seconds)

**Is there an age limit for getting waxed?** Waxing is for everyone—guy or gal, young or old! Speaking of young, if you're under 18, please bring a parent or guardian on your first visit as we need **their** consent.

**FAQ | Waxing the City**  
[www.waxingthecity.com/info/faq.html](http://www.waxingthecity.com/info/faq.html)

[About this result](#) [Feedback](#)

## 4. Specials

Specials and discounts are the crème de la crème for local business owners.

In today's smart shopper age, everyone is an extreme couponer (guilty).

Give your customers what they want by personalizing specials to local residents.

Hotels are known for this.

Take the Trade Winds Resort in St. Petersburg, Florida. They offer a **13 percent discount for Florida residents.**

The screenshot shows the homepage of TradeWinds Island Resorts. At the top, it says "TradeWinds Island Resorts, One of America's Top Beach Destinations." The header includes links for "OUR RESORTS", "EXPLORE", "ACCOMMODATIONS", "EAT & DRINK", "PACKAGES", "WEDDINGS", and "GROUPS". There are also icons for "LIVE", "CAMERA", and "800-360-4023". A large banner in the center features a photo of a family on the beach and the text "FLORIDA RESIDENT Special Offer". Below the banner, there's a booking form with fields for "arrival" (Aug 14), "departure" (Aug 16), "guests" (1), "group code" (FLREZ18), and a "Check Rates" button. To the right, there's a "Labor Day Package" section with details about a 3-night stay and buffet tickets. At the bottom, there's a "SUNSAATIONAL SAVINGS FOR FLORIDA RESIDENTS" section with a small photo of people.

And, the Monterey Bay Aquarium has a "**locals only**" section on their site with discounts and special events.

Plan Your Visit > Admission Tickets > Special Offers >

# Locals Only

To show appreciation for our local community, we offer a variety of special promotions to residents of Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz counties (valid identification required).

All offers are valid on site only. Guests of local tri-county residents must pay regular admission prices.

**Evenings by the Bay**

June 30-Sept. 1 (Saturdays)  
6-8 p.m.  
Linger later on Saturday nights this summer and enjoy reduced admission prices, live music and amazing food! Join us from 6 to 8 p.m. on Saturdays between June 30 and September 1. Locals pay special admission prices of \$25 per adult (including

By offering a location-specific discount, you're appealing to your local audience. You're making them feel special.

It's an intense race to the top of the local SERPs. No discount is too small.

## 5. Host Local Events

Every Friday, almost like clockwork, I dig through my Facebook events to see what's happening this weekend. There's always a festival, free yoga class, or some charity dog wash going on.

As a marketer, I love seeing local businesses use Facebook events to drive awareness. But, what I don't love is not seeing the event on their webpage.

Whomp whomp!

If you're hosting a local event without announcing it on your website, you're losing out on some major local SEO mojo.

Here's how Core Power Yoga [announces their Austin events](#).

The screenshot shows the Core Power Yoga website. At the top, there's a banner with the text "FLOW, SWEAT AND SAVASANA – WHENEVER, WHEREVER WITH COREPOWER YOGA ON DEMAND". Below the banner, the Core Power Yoga logo is visible. To the right of the logo, there are two orange circular buttons labeled "SEARCH" and "MENU". In the center of the page, a large orange box contains the text "SUMMER OF YOGA: AUSTIN". Below this, a subtext reads "This summer, all you need is a little flow, friends and sunshine! Check back often, new events will be added all summer." and a "SEE ALL REGIONS" button. The main content area features three event cards:

- Chakra Series** (JUN 16 / 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM) - Join the Domain Studio for a Chakra themed series. Class will be led by [redacted]. Regular class pricing applies.
- Inversion Workshop** (AUG 26 / 10:30 AM - 11:45 AM) - Join the Triangle Studio for a 75 minute Stand for Summer themed Inversion workshop. Class will be led by Kaytee. Free for Block Tag Members. \$30 drop-in.
- Glow Flow C2** (AUG 29 / 5:30 PM - 6:30 PM) - Join the Triangle Studio for a Glow Flow themed C2 class. Class will be led by Erin. Regular class pricing applies.

Or, follow STORY. They [host weekly happy hours at a local brewery](#).



### Sign up for Newsletter



### Recent Posts

[Our New STORY is...Out Of Office](#)

[Otherland Candle Co.'s Founder Will Skip Work for Painted Pools and Frozen Gummy Bears](#)

[Poolside Chat: Hella Cocktails](#)

[The Making of Out of Office STORY: Flor Carpet Tiles](#)

Or, how my buddies over at The Wonder Jam host [in-person workshops](#).

more clients  
for your  
**1-person  
business**

### More Clients for Your 1-Person Business

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 14 | 1PM-4PM

There are more one-person businesses than ever before in human history.

Health Coaches, Designers, Photographers, Videographers, Writers, Consultants, Social Media Managers, Acupuncturists, Tattoo Artists and more!)

In this three-hour workshop, we'll cover proven techniques to help keep your brand on the minds of your audience and build a strong, simple sales process to keep the revenue flowing into your bank account.

On the flip side, you could rent out your location as [an event space like WeWork](#).

**wework** Locations • Plans Mission Enterprise Labs [Contact Us](#)

## Find NYC Event Space

WeWork evolves space into an experience. Our intelligently designed event venues offer ample solutions when you're weighing the options on where to host your next NYC function. From huge workshops to intimate demos, mixxy holiday socials to buttoned-up corporate events, hosting at one of our locations will make your event one to remember.



Got an event in mind? Tell us about it. [Get in Touch](#)

[Green Bench Brewery](#) does this, too.

**Green Bench BREWING CO.** [JOIN THE SAUVAGE CLUB!](#)

[THE STORY](#) [TAP ROOM](#) [UPCOMING EVENTS](#) [BOOK YOUR EVENT](#) [CONTACT](#)



### Event Planning Options

[RESERVE A TABLE](#) [MONDAY RENTAL](#) [PRODUCTION SPACE](#)

With several options to choose from, the event spaces at Green Bench Brewing Co. can accommodate everything from a small Birthday Party to a 100 person Company Holiday Party to a 300 person Wedding. We can provide accommodations including food truck catering, live music, audio visual capabilities, outdoor movie theater/projection screen and more, to create an event to be remembered. We offer a wide range of formats to fit any budget or occasion. We are also happy to custom design events to meet any needs you may have.

All prices include sales tax. Gratuity is not included and is suggested at 20% of the bar tab. For parties of 20 people or more, the card on file will be closed with an automatic gratuity of 18%.

If hosting events isn't your cup of tea, keep scrolling for your next option.

## 6. Partner with Local Events

Is the idea of hosting a local event too overwhelming for you – like the first time you tried to order off the dollar menu at McDonald's? Then consider partnering with a local event.

Like **Suncoast Credit Union did with Swantoberfest**. They sponsored the event and provided a discount for the VIP experience.

The screenshot shows the Suncoast Credit Union website. A modal window is open, advertising the "Suncoast Credit Union SwantoberFest". The modal includes a logo for the event, a brief description, and details about VIP discounts. The main page background shows a "Salute to Service Monday" promotion and general community information.

And, it works. I work with Jason Hennessey Consulting on **The Law Offices of Anijdar & Levine**. Some of the best backlinks they have received were from local sponsorships.

Here they are at the **Riptide Festival**.

**Riptide Music Festival**

TICKETS LINEUP EXPERIENCE TRAVEL INFO SPONSORS

**SURPRISE SAMPLES**

Enjoy complimentary snacks & free samples, courtesy of [Coya](#).  
If it's Goya... It has to be good!



**FREE GIVEAWAYS**

Pick up festival freebies like beach chairs, towels, sunscreen and more, courtesy of [The Law Offices of Anidjar & Levine](#)!



And, again at the [Sheriff's Cup](#).

**ANIDJAR & LEVINE  
ACCIDENT ATTORNEYS  
(800) 747-FREE (3733)**

On behalf of the Sheriff's Cup Golf Tournament, we are proud to announce that the Sheriff's Foundation of Broward County and the Broward Sheriff's Office are hosting the 7th Annual Sheriff's Cup Golf Tournament, presented by Lipton Toyota and ADT on Monday, April 9, 2018 at the Weston Hills Country Club.

The tournament is designed to promote agency camaraderie, while raising funds for local charities. Money raised will benefit not-for-profit community programs within Broward County. For further details, please see our About Us tab.

**Buy your Raffle Ticket before or the day of the tournament!**

1 for \$20  
6 for \$100

**Win:**

\$149 Contour Day Spa Journey To Eden gift certificate

Tuition for one child for American Heritage Summer Day Camp 2018

South Florida helicopter tour for up to three people or four 30 minute flight lessons for one person

Two \$500 travel vouchers for domestic or international travel with priority seating and one free bag each on Spirit Airlines

**Camaraderie • Competition • Charity**

Presented by: **ADT** **Lipton Toyota**

And, again at the [55th Christmas on Las Olas](#).

## 2017 Special Features will include:

- ~ Anidjar & Levine P.A. presents Snow Mountain - benefiting South East Police Motorcycle Rodeo - sledding down a two story ice covered slopesnow mtn
- ~ Las Olas Lights up the Night - tba
- ~ Benedetti Orthodontics Performance Stage on 6th Avenue - stage of choirs and performances
- ~ Truly Nolen Performance Stage on 10th Avenue - local school choirs
- ~ eTags.com - featuring raffle prizes and holiday giveaways located near Louie Bossi's
- ~ ONE BEAT CPR + AED'S ENCHANTED VILLAGE featuring 8th Ave Show Stage, Photos with Santa, Kids Fun Zone at 8th Ave Intersection!
- ~ Coral Springs Auto Mall Movie Magic - featuring Frozen!
- ~ Over 60 food, beverage, & holiday booth

For more information, click on the [event link](#).

If you don't have the budget to sponsor local events, then talk about the local events.

For example, New York-based digital agency LaunchMetrics put together a report on [digital trends at NY Fashion Week](#).

The screenshot shows the LaunchMetrics homepage with a navigation bar at the top. The main content area features a large image of models on a runway. Overlaid on the image is the word 'BLOG' and a title in white text: 'New York Fashion Week: 3 Digital Trends to Remember This Season'. Below the title is a horizontal line.

And, The Mountain talks about how they got involved with [a local college to help campers develop STEM skills](#).

 THE MOUNTAIN®

BLOG MY MOUNTAIN NEW OUTLET APPAREL EVERYDAY HOME ARTISTS & INFLUENCERS

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GO STEM! The Mountain Visits a Group of Campers at Our Local College

Posted by Michelle Hendelman on 9th Aug 2018

We love being part of a small community tucked away in the Monadnock region of New Hampshire's southwestern corner. Even though we are a small business, we try to make a big impact in our local community and surrounding area. Really, we see giving back as our one of our core responsibilities, so when the GO STEM! Summer Camp at Keene State College asked us to give the final presentation to their campers once again this year, we jumped at the opportunity!

Or, consider offering local experiences like [Airbnb](#).



All experiences

  
**WORKSHOP**  
 Make your own glass blowing art  
 \$45 per person  
 5.0 ★★★★ 3

  
**COOKING CLASS**  
 Chef Nite experience with Chef Rashad  
 \$80 per person  
 5.0 ★★★★ 3

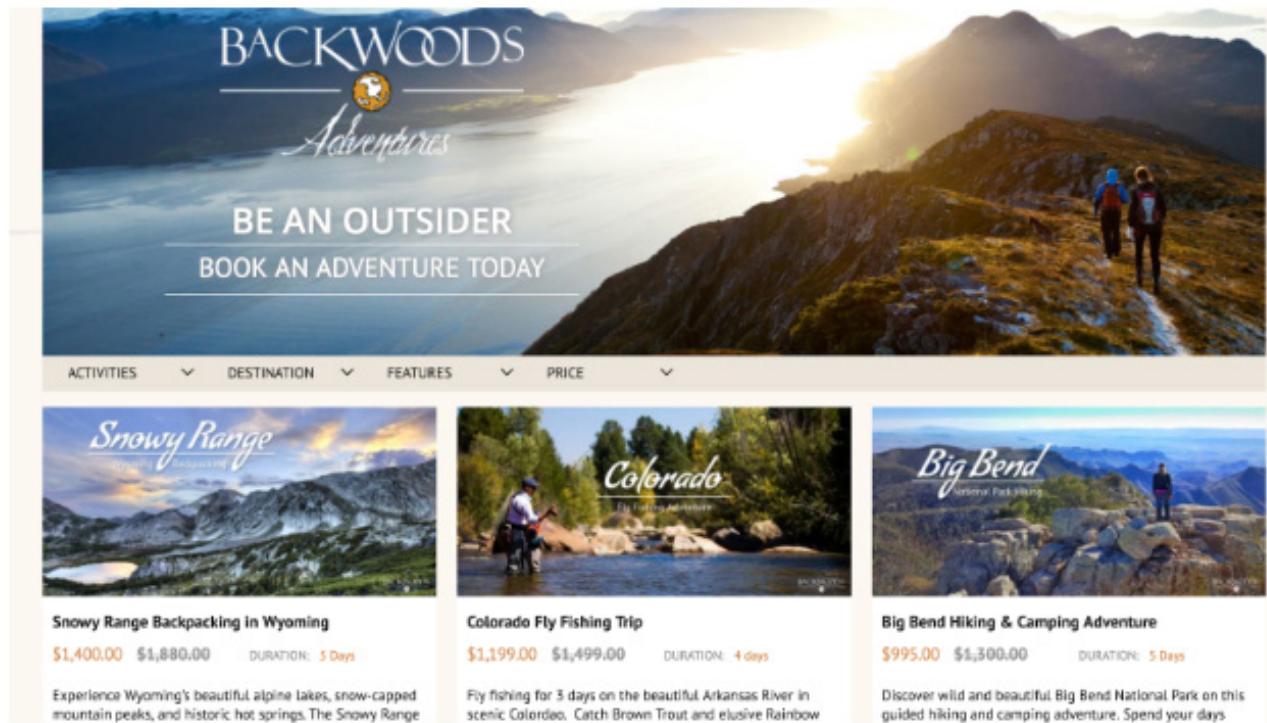
  
**BIKE RIDE**  
 Cycle the hidden gems of Orlando Area  
 \$150 per person

  
**GAMING SESSION**  
 Virtual Reality & Jedi Training  
 \$25 per person


[Terms, Privacy, Currency & More](#)

And, [Backwoods](#).



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**Snowy Range**  
Wyoming Backpacking

**Colorado**  
Fly Fishing Trip

**Big Bend**  
National Park Hiking

**Snowy Range Backpacking in Wyoming**  
\$1,400.00 - \$1,880.00 DURATION: 3 Days  
Experience Wyoming's beautiful alpine lakes, snow-capped mountain peaks, and historic hot springs. The Snowy Range

**Colorado Fly Fishing Trip**  
\$1,199.00 - \$1,499.00 DURATION: 4 days  
Fly fishing for 3 days on the beautiful Arkansas River in scenic Colorado. Catch Brown Trout and elusive Rainbow

**Big Bend Hiking & Camping Adventure**  
\$995.00 - \$1,300.00 DURATION: 5 Days  
Discover wild and beautiful Big Bend National Park on this guided hiking and camping adventure. Spend your days

## 7 . Blog Content

Blog content is where the magic happens. If you're a local business looking to compete in the local SERPs having an active blog will help improve rankings.

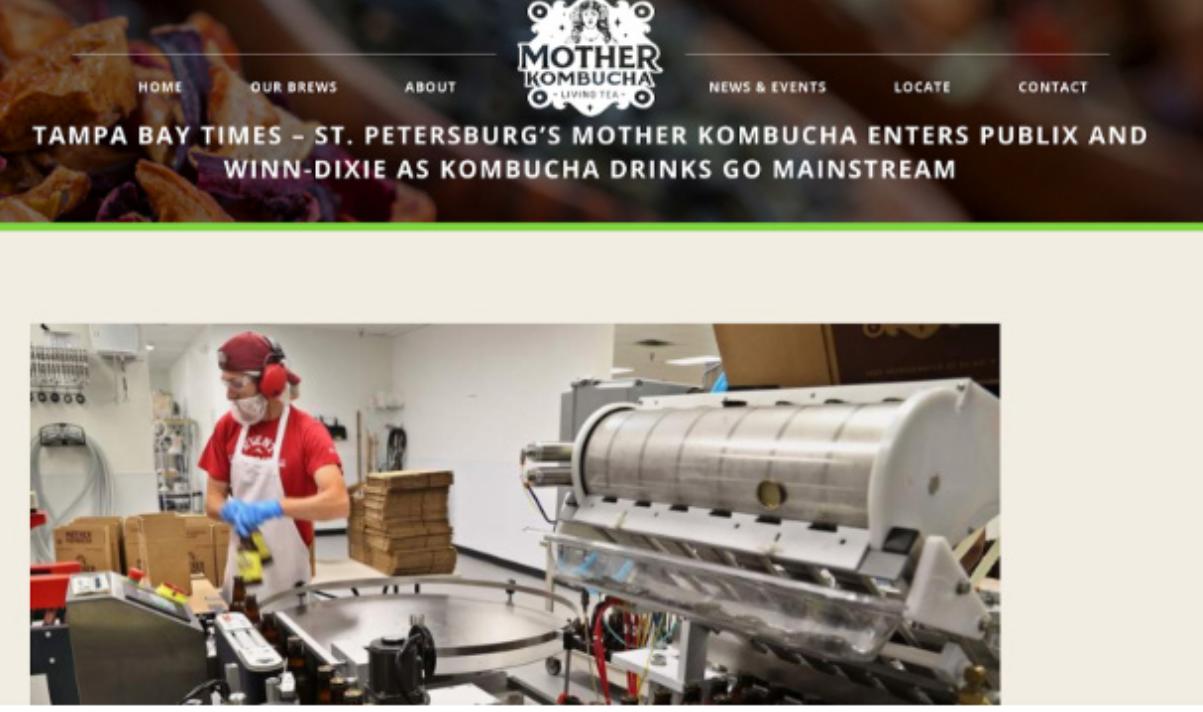
Not sure what to write? Here are a few ideas to get you started:

### New Location Announcement

Jeni's Splendid Ice Cream wrote a blog post on their [new Wrigley location](#).

The screenshot shows the Jeni's website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for ORDER ONLINE, GIFTING, WHERE TO BUY, SCOOP SHOPS, COOKBOOKS, ABOUT, and BLOG. The BLOG link is highlighted. Below the navigation, there is a large, light gray rectangular area containing the word "BLOG" in bold capital letters. Underneath this, a blog post titled "We're open! Jeni's Wrigleyville" is displayed. The post is dated April 11, 2018, and is attributed to Beth Stallings. To the right of the post, there is a sidebar titled "RECENT POSTS" which lists several other blog entries. Below the sidebar, there is another section titled "CATEGORIES" with two listed items. At the bottom of the page, there is a photograph of the exterior of a Jeni's ice cream shop, which is a brick building with large windows and a prominent orange sign that reads "JENI'S ICE CREAM".

[Mother Kombucha](#) does something similar by announcing new stores that are carrying their products.



The screenshot shows the homepage of Mother Kombucha. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for HOME, OUR BREWS, ABOUT, NEWS & EVENTS, LOCATE, and CONTACT. Below the navigation is a banner with the text: "TAMPA BAY TIMES - ST. PETERSBURG'S MOTHER KOMBUCHA ENTERS PUBlix AND WINN-DIXIE AS KOMBUCHA DRINKS GO MAINSTREAM". The main content area features a photograph of a worker in a red shirt and a white apron, wearing a face mask and gloves, operating a large industrial stainless steel machine, likely a bottling or packaging line. In the background, there are boxes and more equipment.

## Pricing

[Kanopy Insurance](#) published a blog post on how to find cheap insurance for California residents.



The screenshot shows a blog post from Kanopy Insurance. The header features the Kanopy logo and a blue navigation bar with links for INSURANCE QUOTES, RESOURCES, BLOG, and ABOUT. The main title of the post is "3 Proven Ways to Find the Cheapest Car Insurance in California". Below the title, there are social sharing icons for LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Google+, and Email, along with a "5 SHARES" button. The post begins with a paragraph: "It doesn't matter who you are or where you live, saving money is a universally desired end-goal." It continues with information about California's high car insurance rates and ends with a summary of three ways to save money. The bottom section of the post is titled "First, What Car Insurance Is Required in California?".

## Laws

[\*\*Jeffcot Law answers questions\*\*](#) about marijuana laws in Ohio.

MEDICAL MARIJUANA LAW

### So You Want to Open A Medical Marijuana Dispensary in Ohio

JULY 18, 2017



**TOM JEFFCOTT**  
COLUMBUS LIQUOR ATTORNEY

Tom's first exposure to this niche area of law started in law school when he interned at a small law firm that focused on liquor law and criminal defense. The unique legal challenges of representing bars and restaurants drew him in immediately, and he knew he wanted to pursue liquor law as a career.

## Product Announcements

[\*\*Evergreen Home Heating and Energy\*\*](#) shares how a new Trane product is going to improve Seattle home heating.



### Trane Releases New Heat Pump Designed For Seattle Homes

## Interviews & Testimonials

[Asana](#) interviews their clients that acts as a testimonial.

The screenshot shows a blog post on the Asana blog. The header includes the Asana logo and navigation links for 'Sign Up' and 'Log In'. Below the header, the title 'CUSTOMER STORIES' is followed by the main title 'Providence is the city that runs on Asana'. The author is listed as 'By Vivek Sri' and the date is 'Jan 11, 2016'. There is a small icon indicating 0 comments. The central image is a portrait of Mayor Jorge Elorza, a man with dark hair, wearing a suit and tie, set against a solid blue background. Below the image is the caption 'Mayor Jorge Elorza'.

## 8. 'Best of' Guides

When it comes to creating a "best of" list, I'd like to quote rapper T.I., "You can have whatever you like."

With a "best of" list, you want to build a guide that gives your readers whatever they like about a topic.

For example, the Coffeebar created [\*\*these amazing coffee guides.\*\*](#)

The screenshot shows a mobile-friendly guide page. At the top, there's a navigation bar with icons for search, user profile, and cart. Below it is a button labeled 'LET'S GET STARTED'. The main content area has a yellow header with the number 'No.1' and the title 'Mind Your Grind'. The text below explains the ideal grind size for pour-over coffee, mentioning French presses, espresso machines, and Chemex. To the right of the text is a stylized illustration of a teapot with steam rising from its spout. The background of the page is orange.

Movoto designed this [\*\*Moving to Lakeland, Florida guide.\*\*](#)

MOVOTO Search by Neighborhood, City, Zip... 🔍

Buy Sell Find an Agent Mortgages More Saved Homes 📞 | Join | Sign In

24 Things You Need To Know About Lakeland Before You Move There

We're more than just that place between Tampa and Orlando.

**1. Lakeland's Swans Are True Royalty**

Eric Mohrman

**SAVING MONEY**

PetYen built New York City-specific [pet-friendly neighborhood guides](#).

HOME WHAT IS PETYEN? PET SERVICES

**petyen**

EVENTS VENDORS BLOG CONTACT

Do you know where to find the best dog park in Brooklyn? Or where to go for the tastiest dog treats in Manhattan? Our neighborhood guides help you navigate the city when your dog is your co-pilot.

UPTOWN MANHATTAN

MIDTOWN MANHATTAN

DOWNTOWN MANHATTAN

NORTH BROOKLYN

SOUTH BROOKLYN

NORTHWEST BROOKLYN

And, the Restoration Hotel developed [this interactive map webpage](#).

≡ MENU

## THE RESTORATION

BOOK NOW

**NEIGHBORHOOD**

Located on Charleston's iconic King Street, The Restoration is at the center of it all. Dozens of boutiques, galleries, small artisan businesses and local hot spots are just a few steps away from our historic property.

ALL

**THE WATCH ROOFTOP KITCHEN & SPIRITS**  
Visit Site ▶

**FIG (RESERVATION NEEDED IN ADVANCE)**  
Visit Site ▶

**HALLS CHOPHOUSE**  
Visit Site ▶

## 9. Press Pages

Press pages are like the Wendy's of fast food. You know they are there, but you rarely pay attention.

When I came across [WeWork's press page](#), I couldn't help but marvel at the images of each location they had.

This local content makes me drool.

### Images

Get official images for press and promotional purposes.



Miguel McKelvey: Co-founder / Chief Culture Officer



Miguel McKelvey: co-founder / Chief Culture Officer



Rebekah Neumann - CEO and Founder of WeGrow



WeWork Corrigan Station - Conference Room



WeWork Common Area



WeWork New York City HQ

Photo credit: WeWork

You could also consider partnering with the press on a press release like Dale Adams, general manager of Gila River Arena at Westgate Entertainment Center in Glendale did [here](#).

Peoria's Hometown Newspaper

# Peoria Times

85° Clear Advanced Search GO

Home News Sports Features Opinion Advertising Services Classifieds FCP Visions Career & Education Health & Wellness

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Calendar

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

today's events

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Popular Commented

Stories

Voter  
registration deadline nears

Story Comments

Posted: Friday, July 28, 2017 12:00 am

By CAROLYN DRYER, Editor | 0 comments

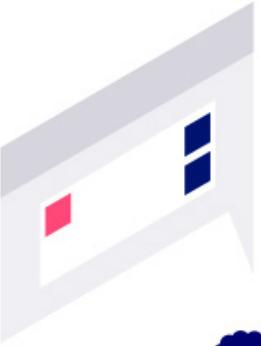
When your competition is in the heart of downtown Phoenix, your work is cut out for you. Dale Adams, general manager of Gila River Arena at Westgate Entertainment Center in Glendale, is well aware of the challenge he faces each and every day.

But that is what drives him to wake up every morning, get his fitness routine under his belt, and make the move from his home to the arena. He's been doing that since July 1, 2016, when his company, AEG, won the contract to manage the venue that not only hosts professional hockey games, but concerts with top-of-the-chart entertainers, like Tim McGraw and Faith Hill, whose July 21 concert sold out seven minutes after the box office opened.



# START CREATING LOCAL CONTENT NOW

Once upon a time, local business owners had tunnel vision for NAP and directory links when it came to local SEO. But what about content?



For years, so many local business owners developed an innate fear of creating local content. But, times are changing.



Content is crucial if you want people to find your local business online and visit you IRL.

Search engines have seriously upped the ante on all things local.



Sure, you still want to have the correct NAP and build directory links. But if you want to grow revenue and your business, you need to create hyperlocal content.

## CHAPTER 5

# WHY NAP & USER EXPERIENCE ARE CRUCIAL TO LOCAL SEO

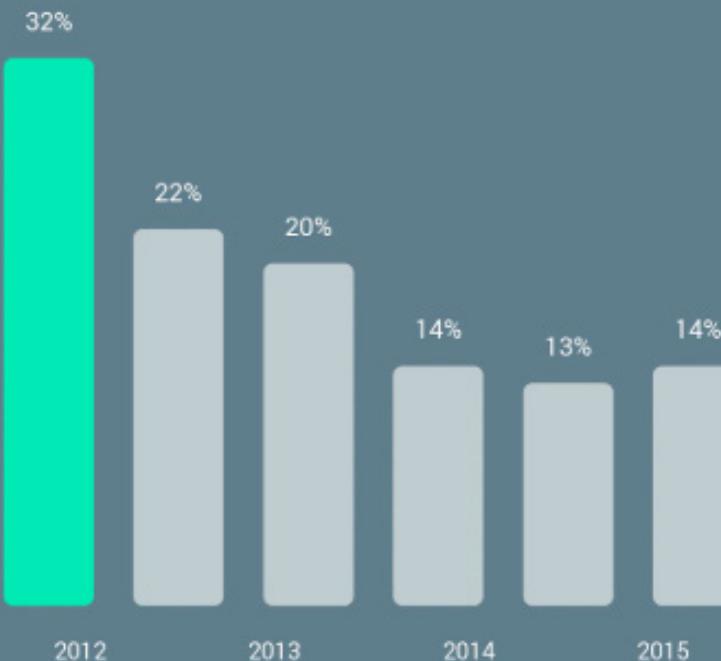


**Dan Taylor**  
SEO Account Director at SALT.agency



While it's no secret that mobile usage surpassed desktop usage in 2015, another fact that often goes unnoticed is the change in user behavior in terms of the number of devices they use.

According to [Google's Consumer Barometer](#), the number of users who just use a single device to complete a journey has decreased from 32 percent in 2012, to just 14 percent in 2017.



### One-Screen Usage

Percentage of people who use one screen - a computer, smartphone or tablet.

**Question asked:**

Which, if any, of the following devices do you currently use?

**Source:**

The Connected Consumer Survey

**Base:**

Total online and offline population

**Filters Applied:**

All; United Kingdom

[www.consumerbarometer.com](http://www.consumerbarometer.com)

Source: Google Consumer Barometer (UK Trends)

This poses new challenges for local businesses, as users move between devices their search and discovery experiences will differ as parts of the Local Pack and local algorithms are weighted differently, namely the proximity of businesses to a user location.

As the guide has already established, NAP consistency is an important part of Google's local and Local Pack algorithms, and building citations with a consistent NAP to your Google My Business listing and listed online addresses can influence your local rankings.

However, having a consistent NAP is also important to the user journey as online directories and social bookmarking sites aren't just used by Google, they're used by humans too.

## WHEN THE USER JOURNEY STARTS

A lot of people consider the user journey and brand experience to start when the user makes the first inquiry or spends significant time on a company's website.

However, the journey starts a lot sooner.

Think with Google data shows that there are **five touchpoints** that, more often than not, lead to a purchase/affirmative site action:

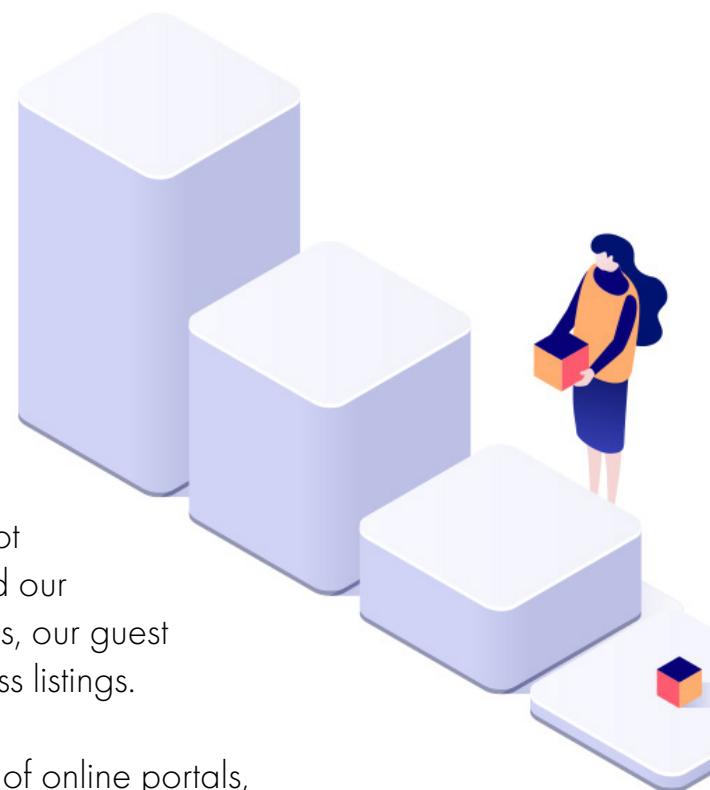
- Used a search engine.
- Visited a store or other location.
- Visited a retailer website or app.
- Visited another website or app.
- Used a map.

The user journey starts when they first see your brand either in search results listing, in the Local Pack, on a map, or at your physical brick-and-mortar store.

Local search is a crucial part of this journey and is even more important given that up to **78 percent** of local-intent mobile searches result in an offline store visit within 24 hours.

This is where the consistent NAP becomes important, because users need consistent information in order to progress their journey. A lot of the time we make an assumption that users find our local businesses and brands through our websites, our guest posts and outreach, and our Google My Business listings.

Users, however, find our brand through a variety of online portals, including the directories where we build our citations and listings.



## INFLUENCING THE USER JOURNEY AT A SEARCH STAGE

When users are performing their first searches, this is your first opportunity to make an impression and be a part of the user journey.

If you're appearing prominently in the Local Pack or within the SERPs, you want your users to click through to content that both provides value and satisfies their user intent. Lazy Local Pages Help Nobody

In a lot of cases, when a website "localizes" it means the generation of local content and local pages. These are executed with varying degrees of effort, care, and detail, but ultimately lazy local pages help nobody.

A lazy local page is in effect a doorway page, a thin page that offers little value to the user and has the sole purpose of trying to rank for local search terms.

Google doesn't like doorway pages (due to them offering poor user experience) and rolled out a doorway page "ranking adjustment" algorithm in 2015.

The **Possum update in 2016** also went some way to tackling poor quality and spam, but this is a tactic that has been persisted with and in a lot of verticals they are still effective (until something better comes along).

Google's official support documentation defines **doorways** as:

Sites or pages created to rank highly for specific search queries. They are bad for users because they can lead to multiple similar pages in user search results, where each result ends up taking the user to essentially the same destination. They can also lead users to intermediate pages that are not as useful as the final destination.

Even if you rewrite all the content on these pages making sure they're not duplicate, but they all carry the exact same message just with a different city targeted, they offer no value at all.

Google can see through this, and users will be left dissatisfied.

## Creating Good Local Value Pages

Admittedly, it's a lot easier for companies that have physical brick-and-mortar stores in the locations that they want to target to create local pages with high value.

But this doesn't mean that it can't be done for companies offering an intangible product or service with a local focus.

**Google's Search Quality Rater Guidelines** define content in two parts:

This is the way you should look at local search.

- The main content.
- The supporting content.

When someone in London searches for [plumbers in london], Google has to break down the query into both main and supporting sections, as well as look for intent.

- "plumbers" the main part of the query, the intent is that the user is looking for a plumber/plumbing service.
- "in london" the supporting element, the user wants the plumber to be local.

From this, Google retrieves relevant results with weighting and personalization given to the local intent of the query.

The main content of your website should reflect the product/services that you offer, with supporting content elements adding value and topical relevance around the location.

This can be implemented in a non-commercial way through the blog, as guides, or as resources.

## NAP CONSISTENCY

As mentioned before, NAP consistency is important as the directory listings and citations we build aren't just used by search engines. Potential customers find them, too.

An inconsistent or inaccurate NAP can lead to frustrated users, and potentially lost leads.

## Common Reasons for Inconsistent NAP

From experience, inconsistent NAP can be caused by a number of human errors and business changes, including:

- Changing business address and not updating previously built citations, directory listings, etc.
- Having a different store address to the company registered address and using both online.
- Generating different phone numbers for attribution tracking purposes.

Not only can all of the above cause issues for your local SEO, they can also cause a number of user experience issues – and poor user experience leads to loss of sales and damage to your brand.

User experience also extends beyond the Local Pack and SERPs to your website, how the local journey is managed, and whether it can satisfy all local intents.

Being able to track and accurately report on the success of marketing activities is vital.

However, there is a case for “over reporting” and “over attribution” in some cases, especially when it comes to local SEO.

## Google Local Pack: User Experience & Attribution

Google’s Local Pack runs on a different algorithm to the traditional organic search results, and is heavily influenced by user location when making the search.

Google My Business has an attribution problem, and more often than not a lot of clicks from GMB listings are classified as direct traffic rather than organic traffic in Google Analytics.

The way around this is to use a parameter:

?utm\_source=GMBlisting&utm\_medium=organic

The parameter won't cause NAP/citation consistency issues, so there is nothing to worry about there.

Having a consistent NAP means you're more likely to appear within the Local Pack, and if you're in the Local Pack, **studies have shown** that you're likely to get a high percentage of clicks on the results page.

If you're likely to get a lot of clicks, it means you're going to have a lot of users expecting fast-loading pages and prominent information to satisfy their search intents.

## Directory Attribution

This is a more common problem that I've come across working agency side, as well as one I've been asked to implement while working client side.

In order to track marketing efforts, I've known organizations to generate unique phone numbers for every directory that they submit the business to.

- **The pros:** You can fairly accurately gauge an ROI on your marketing efforts.
- **The cons:** You end up with a lot of published citations with an inconsistent NAP.

Also, a lot of directories like to generate Google My Business listings based off of the data you input, as a sort of "added service."

This leads to multiple Google My Business listings being generated for individual locations, with different phone numbers and sometimes different map pin locations.

This is bad for user experience, as they're faced with multiple choices for one location with only one being correct. Such as this example for an online blinds retailer:



**Hudson Blinds & Shutters**  
4.7 ★★★★★ (7) · Blinds Shop  
9.0 mi · 01274 717952  
Open · Closes 5PM

**Wooden Shutter Specialists**  
No reviews · Curtain shop  
9.0 mi · 6 Otley Rd · 0800 999 7722  
Open · Closes 5PM

**Hudson Blinds & Shutters**  
No reviews · Blinds Shop  
9.1 mi · Tong Park Studios, Hollins Hill Farm · 0800 881 8855  
Open · Closes 4PM

It's the same company in the same retail park but displaying two different phone numbers and two different closing times.

If a user sees both of these, it's confusing and means they have to take an extra, unnecessary action in order to engage with your business.

## Avoiding Spam Marketers

Another common reason I've seen businesses use false numbers on directory listings (when building them for SEO purposes) is to avoid the spam phone calls that follow. While using a false number prevents the spam calls from reaching you, it also prevents genuine customers as well.

We often forget that a lot of things we do "for SEO" can also affect users and their experience with your company.

# GETTING LOCAL RIGHT

Local searches often represent higher than average conversion rates, as customers seeking out a local product or service are likely to pursue and complete their actions.

That being said, a lot of local businesses are still not taking full advantage of the opportunities in front of them and tying in performance and user satisfaction.





*This sponsored chapter was written by SEMrush. The opinions expressed in this article are the sponsor's own.*

## Local SEO: 5 Simple Steps to Win

For a local business, SEO isn't about improving your online visibility globally: it's about being visible and accessible to the right audience, one that is located near you and has a clear user intent when it comes to online searches.

Funnily enough, by narrowing down your efforts, you will be able to get more customers. This tactic will allow you to reduce the cost per lead and increase your conversion rate.

In this chapter, we are going to share some tips on how to minimize your workload, while winning more eager-to-buy clients, and improving your online visibility locally:

- Use Geo Modified Keywords
- Win Local Featured Snippets
- Manage Local Citations
- Improve Your Website Performance
- Track Your Local Rankings

### Use Geo Modified Keywords

We all know keyword research is an essential part of any SEO strategy, and let's not go over how it should be done again.

What we'd really like to bring to your attention is that you can make your keyword research more precise by using geo modified keywords – queries with local intent (i.e., when users search for establishments nearby).

Another reason why it's so important to use geo modified keywords is because of Google's Venice update:

"The Venice update showed that Google understood that users (at times) wanted search results relating to products and services with a closer geographical proximity to them by increasing the frequency and volume of local hybrid results."

Start by making a list of the keywords you want to rank for and geo modify these keywords by adding a location in the beginning of the query.

Geo modified keywords will have a significantly lower search volume. However, this shouldn't put you off, because your potential customers in your neighborhood are more likely to enter geo modified queries or click on the search result containing a geo modifier.

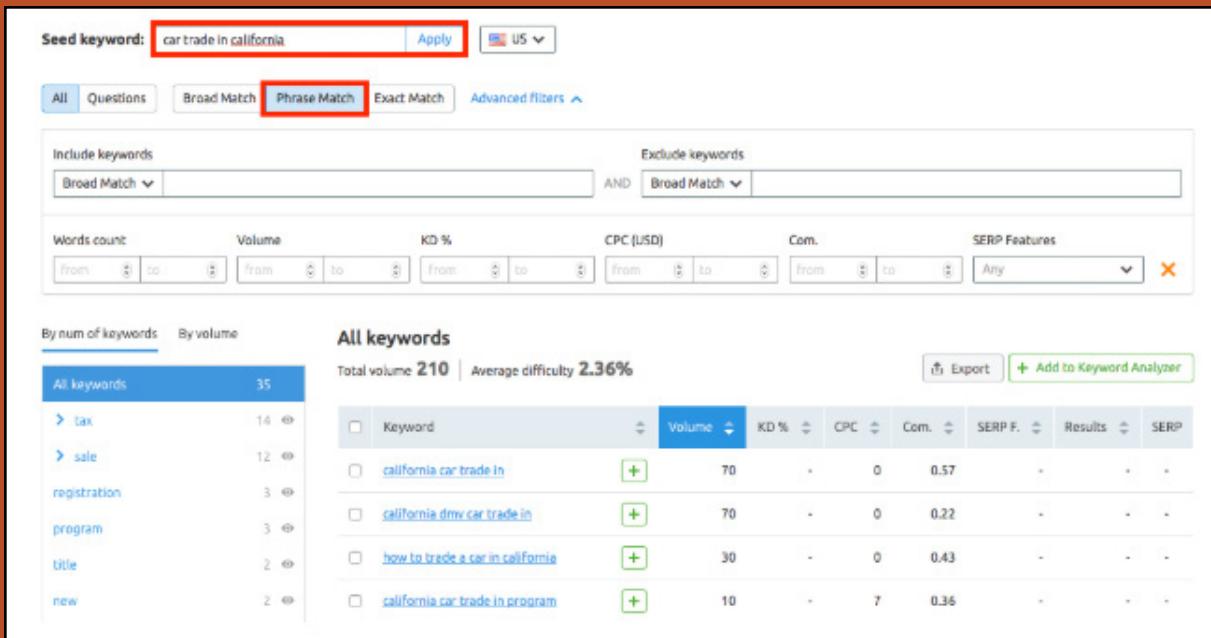
By narrowing your targeting, you'll eventually achieve a higher click-through rate and conversion ratio.

SEMrush's Keyword Magic tool can help you to find the best keywords, and improve your local rankings.

This tool supports 118 countries with over 7.7 billion keywords in total, which makes it the biggest keyword database in the market.

## How Does Keyword Magic Work?

First, enter your geo modified keyword and filter the results by Phrase Match:



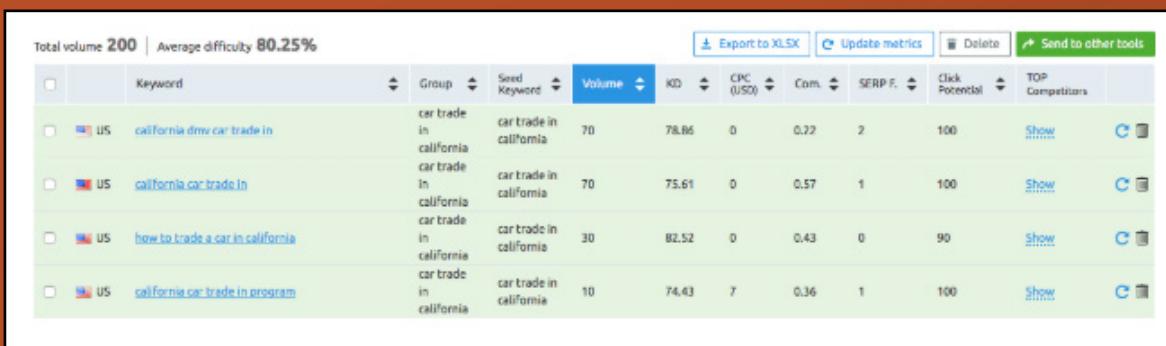
The screenshot shows the SEMrush Keyword Magic tool interface. At the top, there's a search bar with "Seed keyword: car trade in california" and an "Apply" button. Below it, a dropdown menu shows "US". A red box highlights the "Phrase Match" tab, which is selected. Other tabs include "All", "Questions", "Broad Match", and "Exact Match". Advanced filters are available below these tabs.

The main results area is titled "All keywords" and shows a total volume of 210 with an average difficulty of 2.36%. It includes a table with columns: Keyword, Volume, KD %, CPC (USD), Com., SERP Features, Results, and SERP. The table lists several keywords related to car trading in California, such as "california car trade in", "california dmv car trade in", "how to trade a car in california", and "california car trade in program".

The tool will provide you with a list of keywords for your query showing their volume, keyword difficulty (KD), cost per click, and other vital metrics.

If a word's data is missing (see above), hit the "+" button to send it to Keyword Analyzer – a kind of a keyword repository where you will be able to study your keywords more thoroughly.

In Keyword Analyzer, click on Update metrics to refresh the keyword data. Evaluate your selected keywords in terms of volume, difficulty, click potential, and top competitors:



The screenshot shows the SEMrush Keyword Analyzer interface. It displays a table of keywords with updated metrics. The columns include: Keyword, Group, Seed Keyword, Volume, KD, CPC (USD), Com., SERP F., Click Potential, and TOP Competitors. The table shows four rows corresponding to the keywords listed in the Keyword Magic tool: "california dmv car trade in", "california car trade in", "how to trade a car in california", and "california car trade in program". Each row includes a "Show" link and a "C" icon.

# Win Local Featured Snippets

A featured snippet is a special search result that is designed to give a quick answer to a specific query.

Featured snippets always appear as a top result, so they are a great potential source of traffic that also gives you credibility in your field.

And guess what? There are featured snippets for queries with local intent!

## How to Identify Queries That Trigger Featured Snippets

Most keywords that trigger featured snippets are questions, prepositions, and comparisons. As this study shows, only 7 percent of generic keywords have featured snippets.

The Keyword Magic tool can be used for identifying featured snippet opportunities: even though “position zero” is hard to get to, your efforts will likely be rewarded with a dramatic traffic increase.

Let's say you own a garden store and want to get featured for a certain query. You can type in, for example, “Ohio seeds”, select Featured Snippet in the SERP Features filter, and here you go:

The screenshot shows the SEMrush Keyword Magic tool interface. At the top, there is a search bar with "Seed keyword: ohio seeds" and an "Apply" button. Below the search bar are several filter tabs: All, Questions, Broad Match, Phrase Match, Exact Match, and Advanced Filters. Under the Advanced Filters tab, there are sections for "Include keywords" and "Exclude keywords", both set to "Broad Match". In the "Words count" section, there are dropdown menus for "from" and "to". In the "Volume" section, there are dropdown menus for "from" and "to". In the "KD %" section, there are dropdown menus for "from" and "to". In the "CPC (USD)" section, there are dropdown menus for "from" and "to". In the "Com." section, there are dropdown menus for "from" and "to". To the right of these filters is a "SERP Features" dropdown menu with "1 selected" and a red box around it. Below these filters, there are two sorting options: "By num of keywords" and "By volume". The main results area is titled "All keywords" and shows a table of keywords with their volume, difficulty, CPC, and competition. The table includes columns for Keyword, Volume, KD %, CPC, Com., SERP F., Results, and SERP. A red box highlights the "SERP" column. The table shows several entries related to "grass", "plant", "best", "dayton", "lawn", "time", "tomato", and "tree". The total volume is listed as 670 and the average difficulty is 58.46%.

You may find other queries like “when to plant grass seed for Ohio”, which can give you an idea of what your target audience is interested in, so you can create relevant content.

## Analyze the Featured Snippets of Your Competitors

These snippets will be the key to your success.

You should find out who managed to get into the featured snippet for your preferred keywords, and what answers they provide. See how long the answer is, and how it is structured.

To do this, click the SERP icon next to the keyword to see a snapshot of the featured snippet.

## Manage Local Citations

A citation is any mention of your business data; these occur in business listing directories like maps, apps, search engines, GPS systems, digital assistants, social networks, and other services that collect, organize, and keep information about businesses.

Google My Business, Yelp, Foursquare, TripAdvisor, Facebook, Apple Maps, Yahoo, and Bing – these are all examples of free business listing directories.

Having your business listed in multiple directories increases your chances of being seen by the right people and trusted by the search engines.

The key here is to make sure that your business is listed, and the NAP information (Name, Address, and Phone number) is consistent and updated across all directories.

Citations are a local ranking factor. Google uses multiple directories to cross-check the validity of your business data, so distributing consistent information across the web will help you appear higher in local packs.

Most business directories also use algorithms that check multiple sources to weigh the accuracy of their data. You have to regularly check if your business info stays correct and updated.

Checking this manually can be tricky, especially if your business has more than one location.

SEMrush can also help here with its new Listing Management tool. Just enter your business information:

# Listing Management

Get your business data correctly distributed to dozens of authoritative directories.

Business name      ZIP      Street address ⓘ      Phone number

OH Pizza and Brew      43215      US      250 N 3rd St      +1 614-940-8687

[Check listings](#)

Click Check listings, and see if your data is correct across a number of directories:

### Your Business Online Presence

Correct data: 14      With issues: 2      Not present: 33      Unavailable: 0      Potential listings ⓘ: 49      Distribute info

Directory	Status	Name	Address	Phone
Google	✓ Correct data	OH Pizza and Brew	250 N 3rd St, Columbus, OH, 43215	+1 614-940-8687
Yahoo!	✓ Correct data	OH Pizza & Brew	250 N 3rd St, Columbus, OH, 43215	+1 614-940-8687
Bing	✓ Correct data	OH Pizza and Brew	250 N 3rd St, Columbus, OH, 43215	+1 614-940-8687
Facebook	⚠ With issues	OH Pizza and Brew	250 N 3rd St, Columbus, OH, 43215	+1 614-335-9351
Foursquare	✓ Correct data	OH Pizza and Brew	250 N 3rd St, Columbus, OH, 43215	+1 614-940-8687
Yelp	✓ Correct data	OH Pizza & Brew	250 N 3rd St, Columbus, OH, 43215	+1 614-940-8687

The Listing Management tool covers 50+ directories including Yelp, Foursquare, TripAdvisor, Facebook, Apple Maps, Yahoo, Bing, Alexa, and many more.

# Improve Your Website Performance

Most online searches are conducted from mobile devices. That is especially true when it comes to local queries, so optimizing for mobile should become your priority.

Follow Google's guidelines for creating a mobile-friendly website. Also, there's a great SEJ article about optimizing websites for local search on mobile.

Take a look at the mobile version of your website through your customers' eyes. Take a user journey to see if all interface elements are functional, navigation is easy, and all necessary information is accessible in a couple of taps.

SEMrush's analysis of 150,000 random websites showed that 82 percent have issues significantly affecting their performance. Your website most certainly has issues dragging its speed down.

So, the next step of optimization should be fixing technical mistakes: ensuring nothing slows down page loading, viewport tags are correct, and AMP (if you have it) is implemented properly.

Also, it wouldn't hurt to fix universal issues, like crawlability, site architecture, and content structure.

Once again, the SEMrush toolkit can help you here with the Site Audit tool. Select Mobile User Agent when setting up, so the tool will go for a mobile version of your website:

**Site Audit Settings**

The screenshot shows the 'Site Audit Settings' interface. On the left, there's a sidebar with sections like 'Domain and limit of pages' (optional), 'Crawler settings optional', 'Allow/disallow URLs optional', 'Remove URL parameters optional', and 'Schedule optional'. The main area is titled 'Configure crawler settings' with a note '(You can skip this step)'. It includes a 'User agent' dropdown menu with options: SEMrushBot-Mobile, SEMrushBot-Desktop, SEMrushBot-Mobile, GoogleBot-Desktop, and GoogleBot-Mobile. A red arrow points to the 'User agent' dropdown. Below it is a 'Crawl-delay' section with three radio button options: 'Minimum delay between pages' (selected), 'Respect robots.txt', and '1 URL per 2 seconds'. At the bottom, there's a checkbox for 'Send an email every time an audit is complete.', a 'Start Site Audit' button with a checkmark, and a 'Allow/disallow URLs →' link.

You can go through the list of all issues, fixing them one by one, or the top ones, and then use thematic reports to prioritize the overhaul:

**Thematic Score**

The thematic score report displays six categories with their respective scores and details:

- Crawlability:** 82% (View details)
- HTTPS:** 93% +1% (View details)
- International SEO:** 77% (View details)
- Performance:** 86% (View details)
- Internal Linking:** 71% -2% (View details)

**Top Issues:** ⓘ

- 4 pages returned 5XX status code**: 0% of total issues
- 5 hreflang conflicts within page source code**: 0% of total issues
- 28 issues with incorrect hreflang links**: 0% of total issues

[View all issues](#)

# Track Your Local Rankings

Did you know that two people divided by just a few miles will get different results for the same query?

Proximity is very important in local SEO, and having the ability to manage your search engine performance in an exact location is extremely beneficial.

National-level data is useless for a local business. Even city-level data will soon become obsolete in most urban areas.

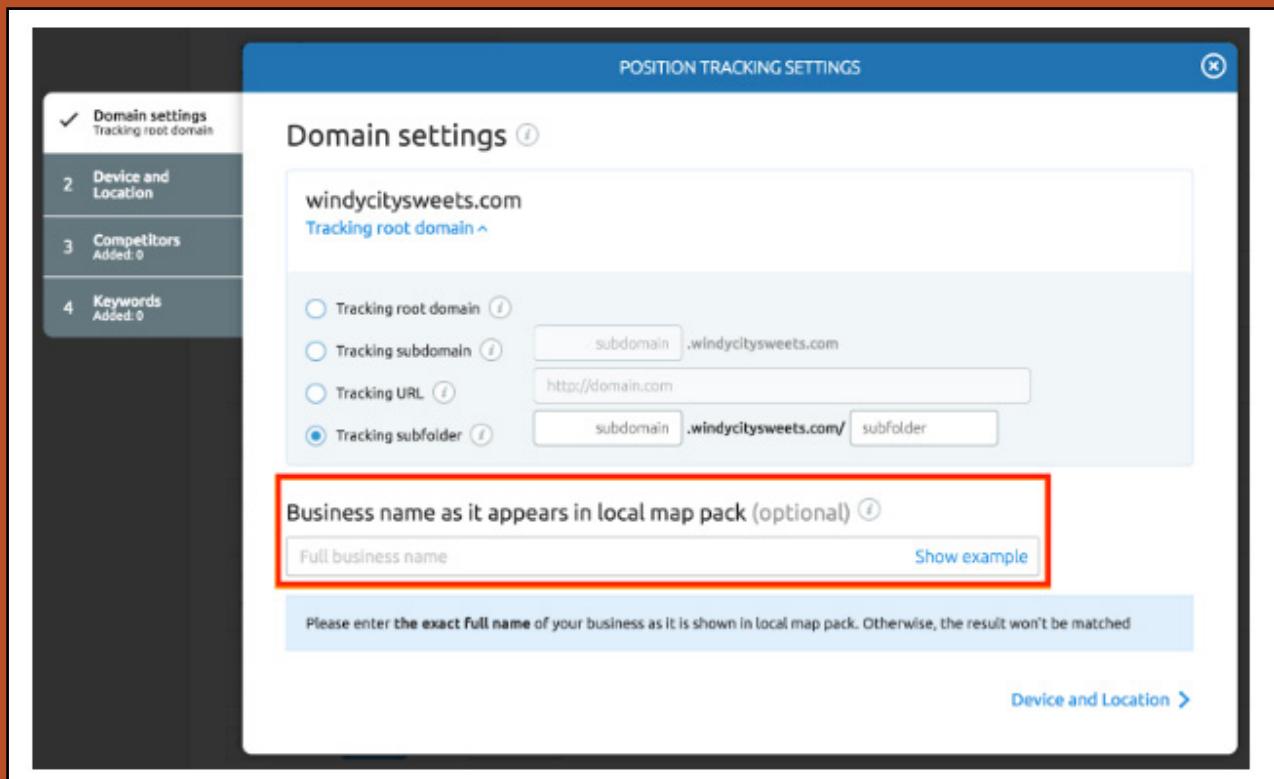
Following that trend, SEMrush features targeting by ZIP code in its Position Tracking tool.

Now, when you're adding a location to your tracking campaign, you can just start typing your postal code, or the name of your street, and get a drop-down list of suggestions:

The screenshot shows a user interface for setting up a tracking campaign. At the top, there's a blue header bar with the text "NEW DEVICE/LOCATION" and a close button (an "X"). Below the header, a message states: "You will not be able to change search engine, location, language, and device settings after you start your tracking campaign". The main area is titled "Search engine" with a "new" badge. Underneath, there are two buttons: "Google" (which is highlighted in blue) and "Baidu". A call-to-action button labeled "Choose location from a list" is visible. Below this, a search input field contains the number "123", which is highlighted with an orange border. A dropdown menu lists several locations, each followed by a "postal code" label: 3123, Victoria, Australia; 6123, Western Australia, Australia; 4123, Queensland, Australia; 01239, Saxony, Germany; 01237, Saxony, Germany; 12353, Berlin, Germany; 12351, Berlin, Germany; and 12300, Penang, Malaysia. At the bottom of the dropdown is a grey button labeled "Start tracking this device & location".

Another feature of the Position Tracking tool that is a must-have for local business owners is the ability to track your SEO results not only for your domain but also for your business name.

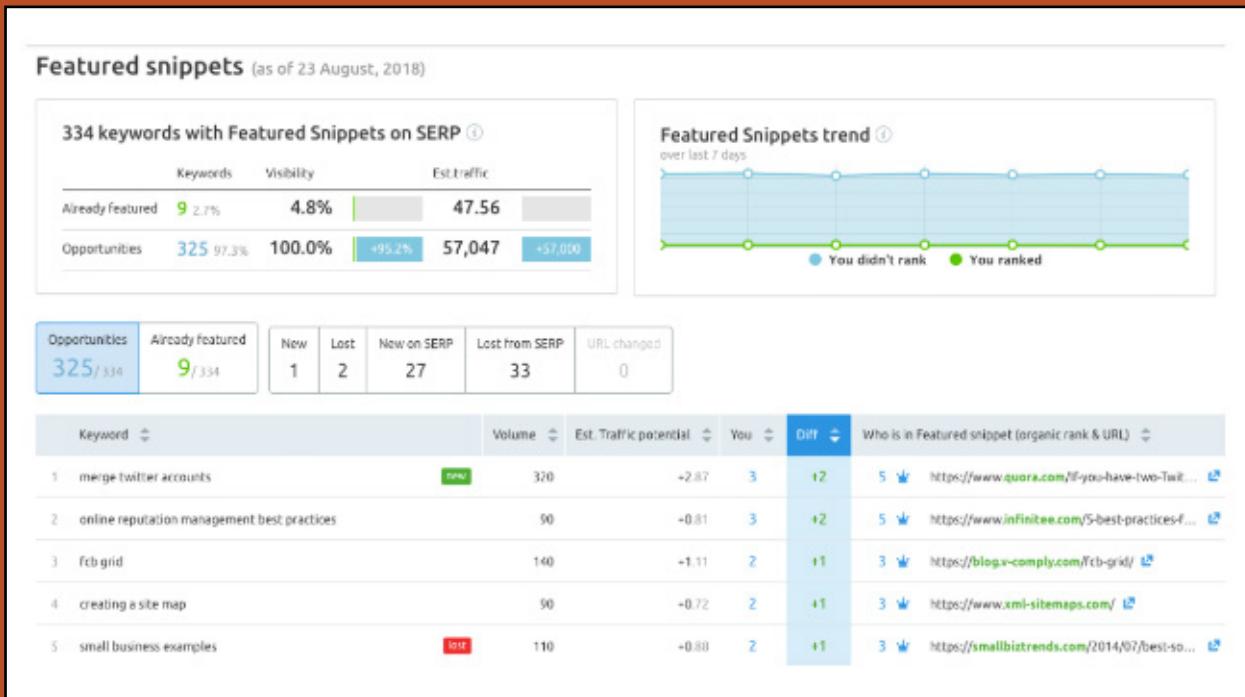
The thing is that Local Packs – the heart of local SEO – do not always provide website links, which really complicates rank tracking. Adding the business name solves this problem for you, just make sure you spell the name exactly the way it is in your Google My Business account.



Now, remember the keywords triggering featured snippets that you have found with the Keyword Magic tool? Go ahead and add them to your tracking campaign.

Proceed to the Featured Snippets tab of your report.

This tab will pave your way towards winning Featured Snippets, showing you the best opportunities:



The data is collected daily, so you will always stay ahead.

## Summing Up

Here's how you win at local SEO:

- Find geo modified keywords with local intent. Pay attention to question queries, as they might get you into the local featured snippet.
- Manage your local citations. Make sure your NAP is consistent and present in the most authoritative directories. This is a local ranking factor!
- Optimize for mobile, make your site fast-loading.
- Track the results of your SEO efforts in your exact location, and make adjustments.

## CHAPTER 6

# WHERE & HOW TO GET THE RIGHT REVIEWS FOR YOUR BUSINESS



**Pratik Dholakiya**

Founder at The 20 Media



# Online reviews play a huge part in the modern customer's journey

Earning reviews is a necessary part of any modern marketing strategy.

But where should you get started if you want to take control and make the most of the consumer's voice?

Let's talk about the top review platforms, and the best way to leverage them.

# 1. GOOGLE MY BUSINESS

**Google My Business (GMB)**, the most recent incarnation of what was previously called Google Places and Google Local, is the starting point for any online review marketing strategy.

Ratings here determine your star rating in Google Maps results, as well as in the Google Local Pack, the list of Maps results that show up when users perform a local search.

Reviews are the **most important factor** in determining where local businesses show up in Google search results, and Google My Business is the source the company trusts the most for these reviews.

And if you think this doesn't affect you because your business is online instead of local, you're wrong.

In one study **that involved 30,000 sites**, investing in reviews increased organic traffic from 5,500 to 8,000 in nine months.

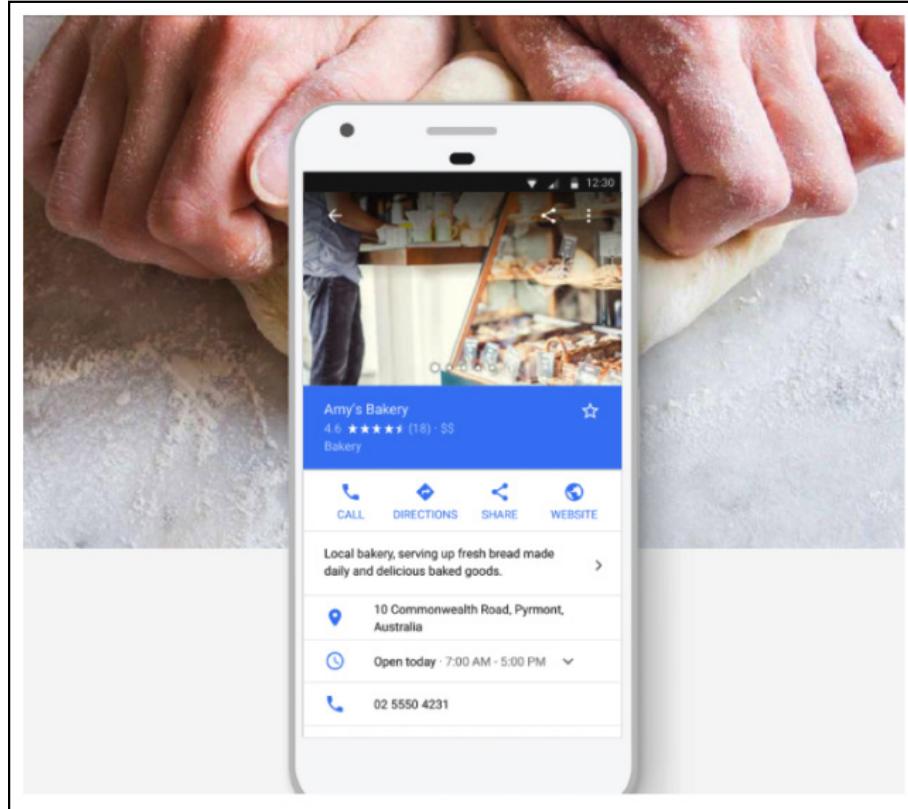
But knowing that your Google profile needs reviews and actually earning them are two different things.

It should go without saying that an excellent product and superb customer service are a must here.

A strong emphasis on customer service should be reiterated, since bad customer service is **more likely to lead to a review** than positive customer service is.

In addition to thoroughly vetting your customer service and developing the best product you can, there are additional steps you can take to get the most out of Google My Business.





Let's start with the obvious: you should set up a Google My Business profile, rather than let it sit unclaimed:

- Go to <https://www.google.com/business/>.
- Select or create the Google account you want to be associated with your business.
- Enter your name and address to search for your business.
- Click on the appropriate location.
- Click "Mail me my Code." Google needs to verify your ownership of the physical location of your business. This is the simplest way to do it.
- Add high-quality photos to your profile, with an emphasis on what aspects of your business and your products can be communicated most effectively through visual media.
- Update all fields and descriptions and deck out your profile with the same care you would apply to your own website.

Now you will need to encourage your customers to leave you a review, and the most effective way to do that is to provide them with a direct link to the place where they can review your business. Here's how:

- Go to the **PlaceID Lookup Tool.**
- Put your business name in the "Enter a location" field.
- Click your business name. If you have trouble, enter your location.
- On the map, beneath your business name and above your location, is your Place ID.
- Copy your Place ID and paste it over "<place\_id>" in this URL: **[https://search.google.com/local/writereview?placeid=<place\\_id>](https://search.google.com/local/writereview?placeid=<place_id>)**.
- Visit the link and it should take you to a page where a Google review form will pop up.

This is the link you will need to share with customers at common interaction points to encourage them to leave a review, especially during interactions where you have reason to believe you have a satisfied customer on your hands.

### A Few More Tips for Getting GMB Reviews

- **Integrate your Google My Business review link into your email marketing campaigns.** Use your email signature to ask your customers to leave reviews.
- **Segment your audience and look for correlations** between quantifiable interactions and customer lifetime value, and request reviews from those in your audience who are the most likely to be long-term customers.
- **Make it a part of your training to teach all customer-facing staff to ask for reviews from customers**, especially where customers seem to be satisfied.

- Where providing a direct link isn't possible, **have ready-made materials to teach customers how to leave reviews.**
- **Write personal emails that request reviews.** The context of the personal email should make it clear that the email is not mass produced.

## 2. INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC REVIEW SITES

While industry-specific review sites don't directly impact your star ratings in Google Maps and Google's local search results, they do impact your rankings in search results, and star ratings in non-local search results are often visible before clicking through.

On top of that, **97 percent** of customers say they're influenced by customer reviews.

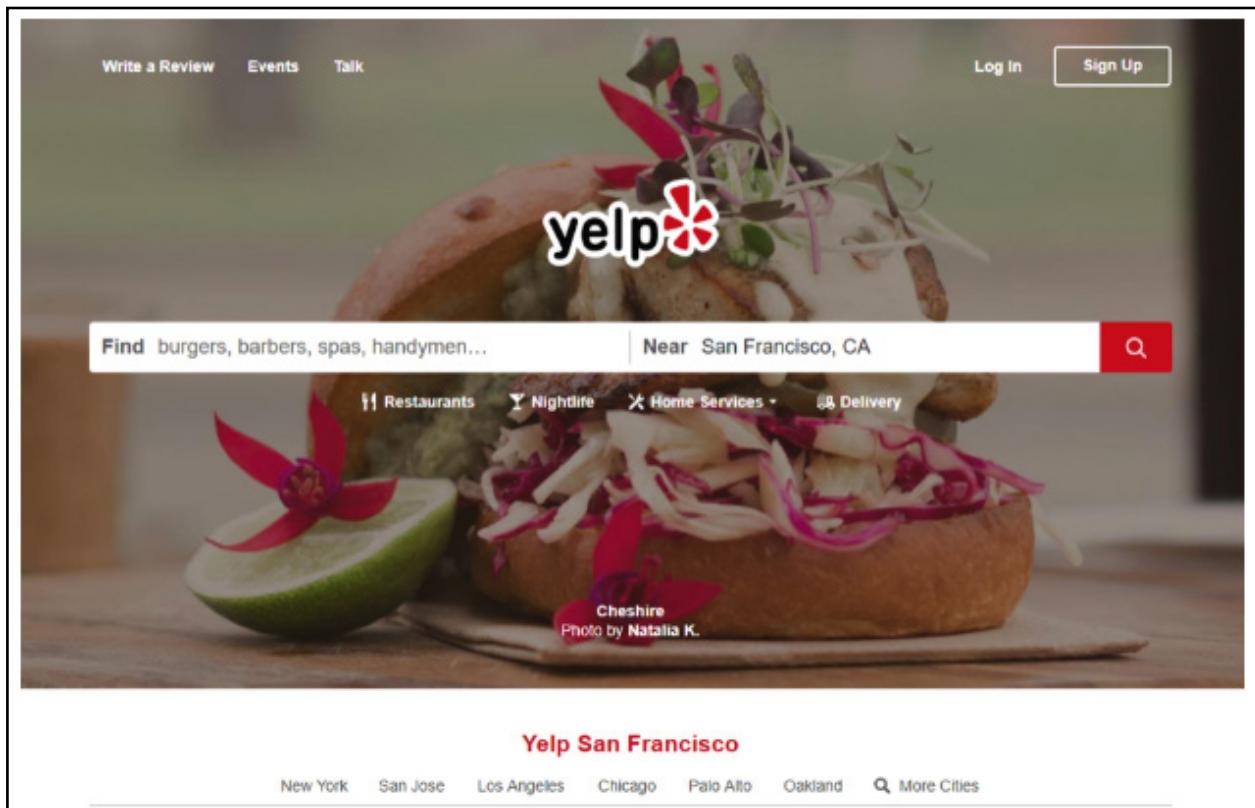
On every measure, the more reviews available, the better, which is why you want to earn as many reviews in as many places as possible, provided your products and customer service are meeting the expectations of customers.

Irate or irritated customers are the most likely reviewers – and they can do serious damage to your brand reputation.

So it's important to make an effort to encourage reviews from a more representative sample of your customer base.

Industry-specific review sites are sites built for or usually used within specific industries, such as Yelp for restaurants and TripAdvisor for hotels.

You can use the tips discussed above for earning Google My Business reviews and simply apply them to these other platforms.



You can find a list of industry-specific review sites [here](#) and [here](#), but you can and should also find industry-specific review sites by performing Google searches for:

- [your industry name] reviews/ratings
- [your competitor name] reviews/ratings

The list of industry-specific review sites you will come across will be far larger than any list of review sites you should point customers to in a single email or interaction.

It's important to be focused in deciding which review sites to send customers to.

If you feel it's important to send customers to a wide range of review sites to avoid low numbers or poorly representative scores on some sites, this is best accomplished by rotating your review links rather than by overloading customers with too many options.

# 3. PRODUCT-REVIEW SITES

Product review sites are third-party sites designed to help companies earn reviews while vetting them for accuracy.

Because customers are more likely to leave a review when they know it will be vetted and published by a third party, and since customers are more likely to trust these reviews than those selected and perhaps manipulated by the company itself, reviews on these sites are more likely to lead to conversions and positive brand sentiment than reviews on your own site using your own native system.

Of these, Trustpilot is arguably the go-to starting point – sort of the Yelp of product-review sites – in large part because Google trusts them enough to [include their product ratings](#) in the Google Shopping ads.

The platform is “open,” meaning that the reviews aren’t modified or moderated to give brands a biased positive score, so they are likely to positively influence both brand perception and search engine rankings in the long term.

One of the most helpful features a third-party review platform can bring to the table is the ability to incorporate reviews directly on your site (here’s [how to do that](#) with TrustPilot specifically).

A good product-review site will also include the Schema markup necessary to get your star ratings listed in the Google search results, and have enough trust built with the search engine to increase the likelihood that those star ratings will be visible.

Taking advantage of product-review sites allows you to take ownership of the story surrounding your brand and be a part of the conversation.

If you’re concerned about the fact that authentic reviews will inevitably point an imperfect picture, consider the following stats from [Bazaarvoice](#):

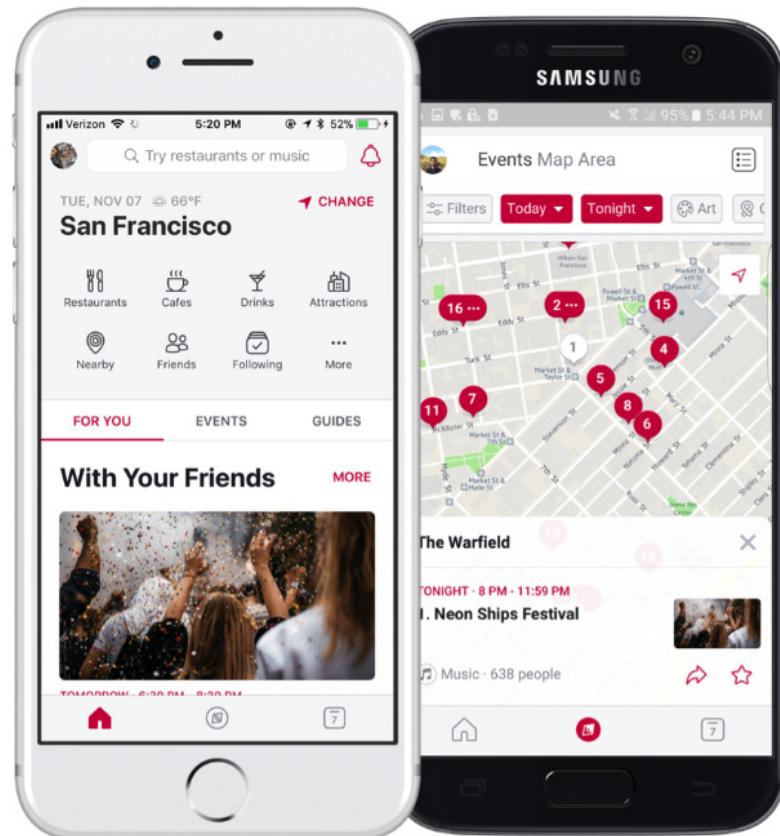


- Product page visitors who read and interact with online reviews have a 58 percent higher conversion rate.
- When a site goes from having zero reviews to having 30, it can result in a 25 percent increase in orders. 100 reviews can result in a 37 percent increase.
- As we discussed above, review volume has a stronger positive impact on sales than review score, with scores in the 4.2 to 4.5 range typically performing better than higher scores (which generally have fewer overall reviews).
- Adding user reviews typically leads to a 15 to 25 percent increase in organic search traffic.

## 4. SOCIAL MEDIA

The introduction of **Facebook Local** has solidified the need for brands to consider social media not only as a marketing outlet but as a place where customers review businesses.

Everything we discussed above applies to social media as much as it does to Google My Business, industry-specific review sites, and product review sites, but there are a few additional things to take into consideration:



## Share Customer Reviews

Social media isn't just a place where reviews are earned; it's a place where reviews can be shared. The key is to do so tactfully.

When you share, retweet, post, and pin reviews your customers have left, it's important to do so in a way that is more about that individual customer and less about the brand.

Social media is a place where people go to keep up with their friends and loved ones, so it's important to respect the platform for its proper use.

## Respond to Online Reviews on All of Your Platforms

This plays an important part in how your customers feel they will be treated, but this is doubly true of social media.

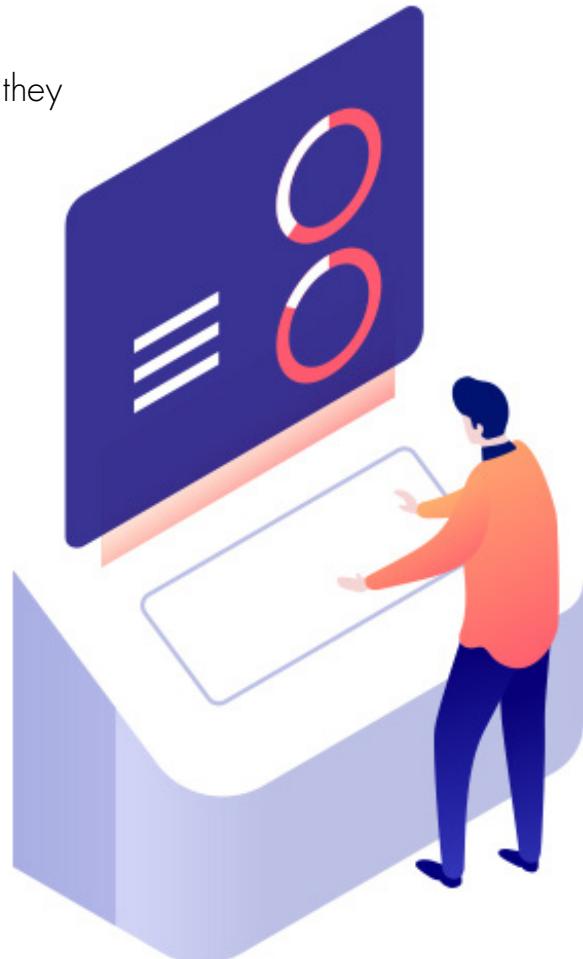
The word "social" is there for a reason. Customers expect you to be part of the conversation.

It's important to be proactive – but not defensive – in responding to negative press.

Also, it's important to recognize that social media responds better to actions, stories, and events than it does to words.

## Resolve Customer Issues Publicly on Social Media

If you're asking a customer to please contact customer support and take the conversation offline, onlookers will wonder what you're trying to hide.



There are obvious lines that shouldn't be crossed, such as revealing personal information, but publicly acknowledging a customer's needs and treating them respectfully are important actions.

Although you should never give in to unreasonable demands, you should demonstrate how customers can expect to be treated by you.

# CONCLUSION

User reviews play a crucial role in modern brand perception, and no marketing strategy can be considered successful without successfully addressing them.



While brands can't control the content and sentiment of reviews, they can encourage a more representative and beneficial dialog by working with their customers to increase the number of reviews and the diversity of opinions.



These actions have been shown time and again to increase sales.

Do not neglect what you have learned here if you hope to master the art of branding in the years ahead.

## CHAPTER 7

# HOW TO COMPLETELY OPTIMIZE YOUR GOOGLE MY BUSINESS LISTING



**Samuel G. Hollingsworth**

Director of Search at Elevation Ten Thousand



To achieve digital marketing success by leveraging a location-based strategy, most seasoned SEO professionals start at the same place: creating a Google My Business listing.

And for good reason.

Google My Business (GMB) – the free tool from Google that helps business owners manage their online presence across the search engine and its growing portfolio of utilities – offers the greatest impact for brands seeking local exposure.

Features like Google's Local Search results (shown in the screenshot below), which break out with a list of nearby businesses and much of the pertinent information needed to find a specific business (e.g., address, business hours, category, reviews) and potentially buy something, further emphasize the need for a GMB listing for both new and established businesses.

The screenshot shows a Google search results page for the query "midtown nyc pizza". On the left, there are five vertical cards, each representing a local business. From top to bottom, they are:

- NY Pizza Suprema**: 4.5 stars, 983 reviews. Long-standing Madison Square Garden-area staple offering pizzas whole & by the slice. Located at 413 8th Ave.
- Don Antonio**: 4.4 stars, 569 reviews. Classic & creative Neapolitan-style pizzas plus cocktails, beer & wine in a casual-chic setting. Located at 309 W 50th St.
- My Pie Pizzeria Romana**: 4.6 stars, 107 reviews. Quaint pizzeria making Roman-style pies with flour imported from Italy, along with classic desserts. Located at 690 Lexington Ave.
- Previti Pizza**: 4.4 stars, 147 reviews. Counter-serve pizzeria in a historic building serving pizza, focaccia slices & bottled beers. Located at 123 E 41st St.
- Capizzi**: 4.4 stars, 274 reviews. Small, family-owned brick oven pizzeria serving

On the right side of the screen is a map of Midtown Manhattan, specifically the area around Times Square and the Garment District. The map highlights several pizzerias with red dots and labels them: NY Pizza Suprema, Capizzi, Famous Amadeus Pizza, Little Italy Pizza, Vezzo Thin Crust Pizza, Patsy's Pizzeria, My Pie Pizzeria Romana, and Angelo's Pizza. The map also shows the Hudson River, the Lincoln Tunnel, and various streets and landmarks.

Google's Knowledge Graph also utilizes verified Google My Business information to help generate details for its database about businesses and related entities that are relevant to specific searches.

Once a new listing is created, a Google Maps location is then generated that synchronizes with traditional Google Search for easy access and searchability.

It certainly helps that the clear majority of organic searches come from Google (**around 90 percent** for worldwide search engine market share), further illustrating the value of a GMB listing.

Use this guide to ensure you've completed your Google My Business listing correctly, and optimized all possible facets of the tool to get the most leverage for your business on Google and third-party platforms that use the Google Maps API to generate location information for users.

# BASICS OF GOOGLE MY BUSINESS

If digital marketing is a somewhat new endeavor for you and your business, there are some basics to recognize to ensure you fully understand Google My Business and the value it offers.

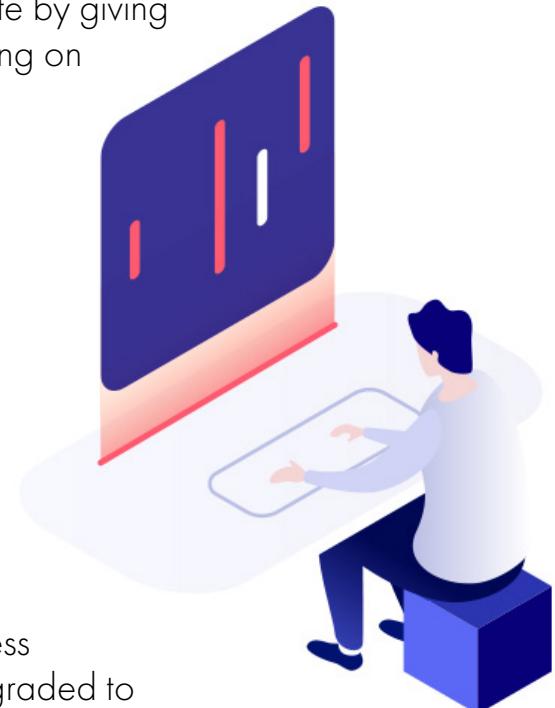
First off: yes, using Google My Business is free. And, no, a GMB listing doesn't replace your business's website.

Google My Business complements your existing website by giving your business a public identity and presence with a listing on Google, the most popular search engine in the world.

The information you provide about your business can appear in Google Search, Google Maps, and on Google+.

If you've previously used certain Google tools to complement your business, or your business has been operating for a while, chances are your business is already listed on Google My Business.

Google Places for Business and the Google+ Pages Dashboard were the best ways to manage your business information previously, but both have automatically upgraded to Google's universal platform, Google My Business.



# STARTING YOUR GOOGLE MY BUSINESS LISTING

First step to getting your Google My Business listing up and running is to actually conduct a Google search to ensure your business doesn't already have a GMB listing.

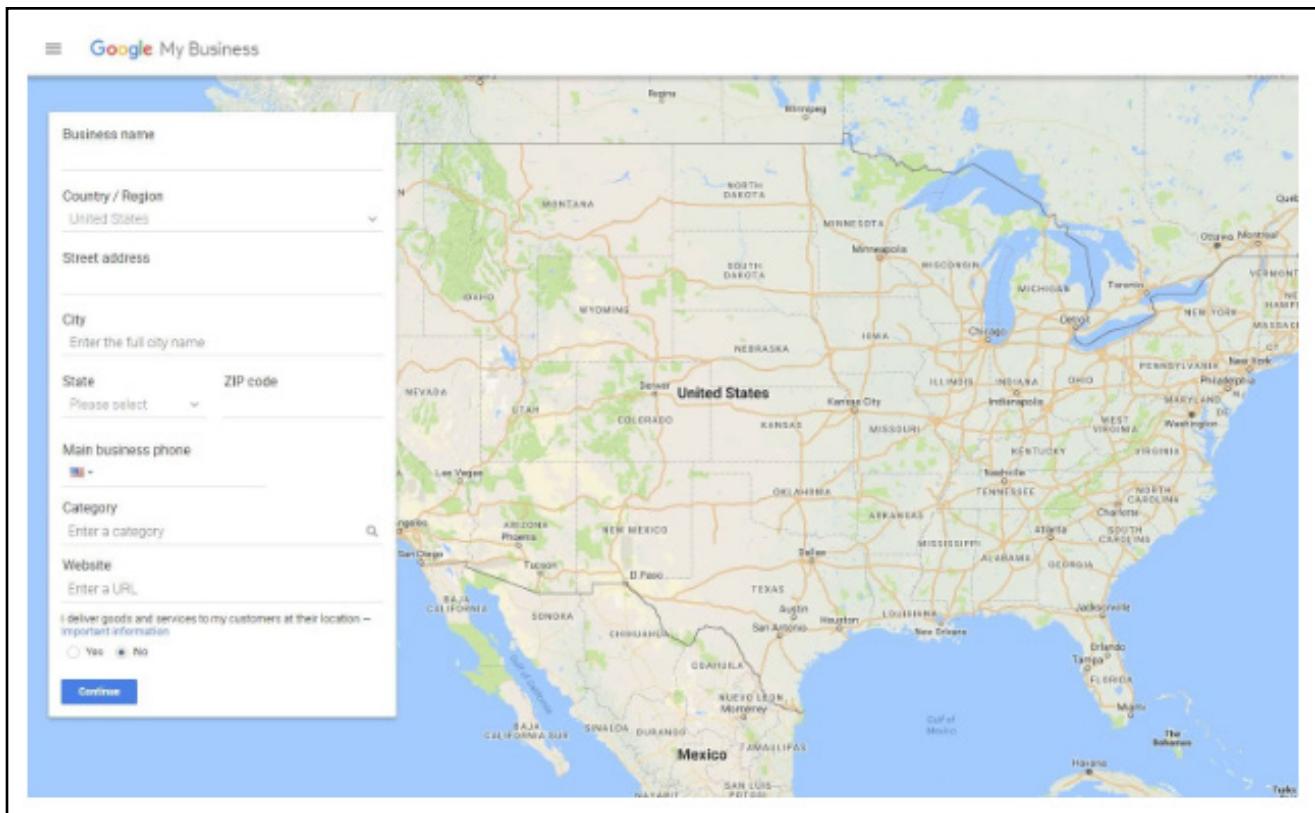
If your business has been around for a while (several years or more), it's likely it already has a GMB listing and you just need to claim it.

Once successfully claimed, you can manage the information just as if you started the GMB listing yourself years previous.

Head over to the [Google My Business page for adding and claiming GMB listings](#) and enter your most important business information (business name and address) to ensure your business doesn't already have a listing that you need to claim.

If there is already a listing for your business, it will notify you.

It may also notify you that someone else already claimed your business. If that happens, [follow these steps.](#)



Fill out the remaining input boxes with your business details, ensuring everything is accurate and grammatically correct (capitalize your business name, street names, etc.).

Be sure to find the best relevant category for your business (there are a lot of variations to choose from).

The last option listed asks if the business being created delivers goods or services to customers at their location. This is valuable for many businesses that operate away from their brick-and-mortar headquarters and, typically, at the home or business of the customer (cleaning services, construction companies, pest control, other home services, etc.).

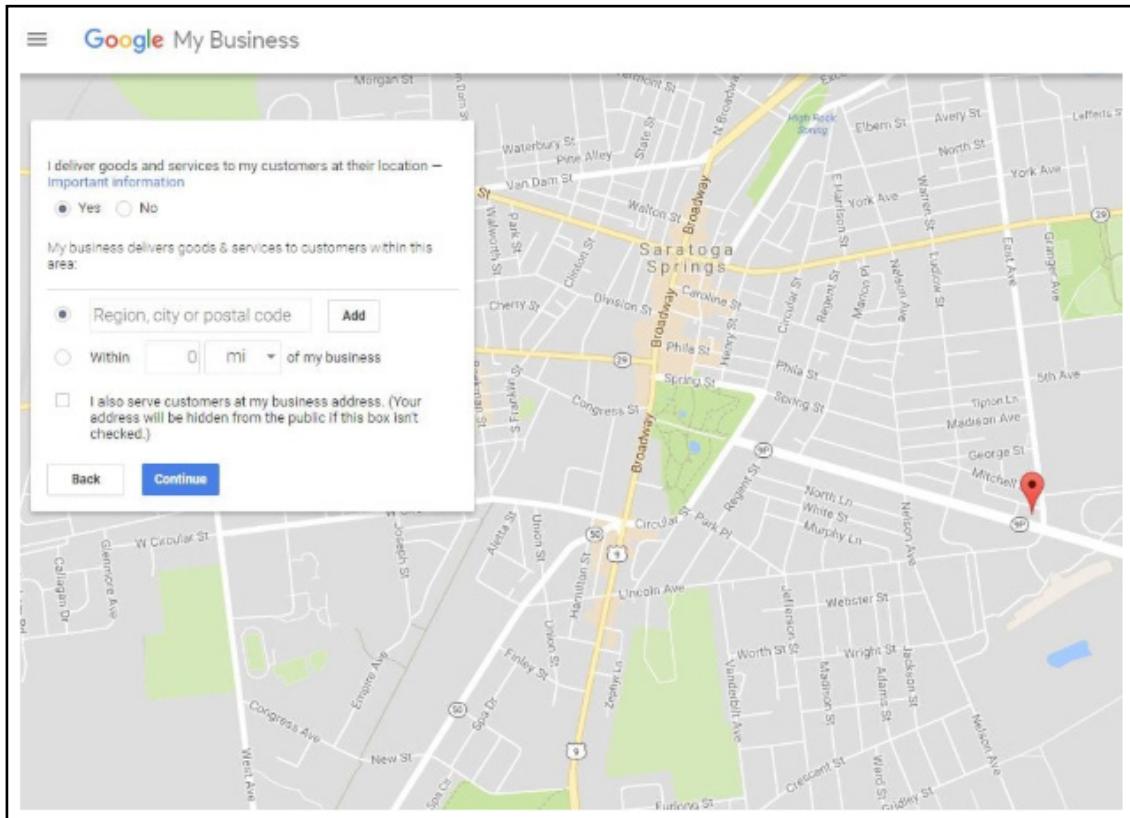
## ADD OR EDIT SERVICE-AREA BUSINESS DETAILS

To [add or change your service area details](#):

Sign in to Google My Business and make sure you're using "card view." If you're viewing your locations as a list instead of cards, switch to card view by clicking the cards icon on the right side above your locations.

- Choose the listing you'd like to manage and click "Manage location."
- Click Info from the menu.
- Click the "Address" section.
- In the window that appears, select "Yes" next to "I deliver goods and services to my customers at their locations."
- Enter your service area information. You can set your service area based on the ZIP codes or cities that you serve, or in a given area around your location.

- Select the box next to "I serve customers at my business address" if you want your complete address to appear on Google and your business location is staffed and able to receive customers during its stated hours.
- Click Apply to save your changes.



# VERIFYING YOUR GOOGLE MY BUSINESS LISTING

Once you have submitted your business info and your service area (if applicable), you'll need to verify your listing. This is crucial for the visibility and performance of your business listing.

It's probably easiest to verify your listing by mail. By doing so, Google knows the address you've provided as a business address exists and you receive mail there.

This helps Google weed out the false listings that will only misdirect users and derail the usefulness of Google Search and Maps, among other tools.

It's important to recognize that Google won't display your business or its edits until the business is verified.

You also can't access any page insights/analytical information or business reviews. Verification typically takes less than a week, in which Google will send you a verification code postcard that, once you receive, you verify with the enclosed code and your business will officially be live.

# PUBLISHING YOUR GOOGLE MY BUSINESS LISTING

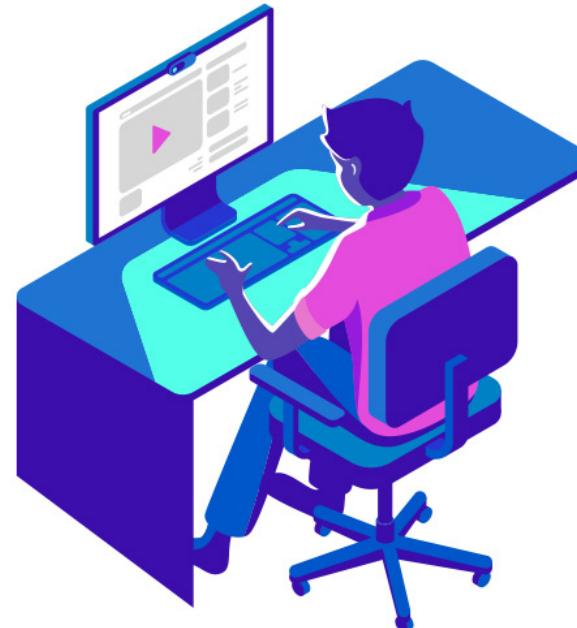
It's important to use all resources Google My Business offers within its listing details to get the most out of your business locations.

Some basic but crucial tips for optimizing your listing:

## Enter Complete Data for Your Listing

Local search results favor the most relevant results for searches, and business offering the most detailed and accurate information will be easier to serve in search.

Don't leave anything to be guessed or assumed; make sure your listing communicates with potential customers what your business does, where it is, and how they can acquire the good and/or services your business is offering.



## Include Keywords

Just like traditional website SEO, Google uses a variety of signals to serve search results, and including important keywords and search phrases to your business listing will be incredibly helpful, especially since your business website is listed directly within your GMB listing.

## Keep Business Operating Hours Accurate

It's important to enter your business hours, but equally important to update them whenever they change.

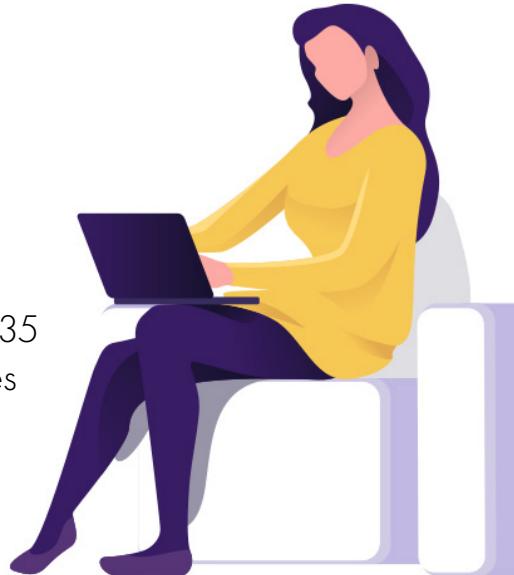
Google offers the ability to customize hours for holidays and other special events, and it should always be used to keep your site accurate and users happy.

## Add Photos

Photos help business listings' performance more than most business owners and marketers probably expect.

Businesses with photos on their listings receive 42 percent more requests for driving directions on Google Maps and 35 percent more click-throughs to their websites than businesses that without photos, according to Google.

(Keep reading for more GMB photo tips.)



## Manage & Respond to Customer Reviews

Interacting with customers by responding to their reviews illustrates that your business values its customers and the feedback that they leave regarding it.

Positive reviews are going to have a positive effect on potential customers when researching your business, but they also increase your business's visibility in search results.

Encourage customers to leave feedback by [creating a link they can click to write reviews for your business.](#)

# PHOTOS FOR YOUR GOOGLE MY BUSINESS LISTING

The most important piece of imagery in your GMB listing is obviously your profile photo. There likely won't be an image that gets more exposure, and there likely isn't one that will have more of an impact either.

Your business profile photo should not be the brand logo itself, but of something appealing and encompassing of the brand, what it stands for, and/or what it offers.

Other types of images that should be added to your GMB listing are:

- **Logo image:** Google recommends businesses use their logo to help customers identify your business with a square-sized image.
- **Cover photo:** Cover photos should really showcase a brand page's personality. It's the large photo featured at the top of the brand's Google+ page, it will always be cropped to fit a 16:9 aspect ratio.
- **Additional photos:** Other, different kinds of photos are used to spotlight features of your business that customers consider when making purchasing decisions. These photos will differ and are dependent on the kind of business you manage.  
These photos may include the goods and/or services your business offers, business staff working and/or assisting customers, the interior and exterior of the business, and other general photos that summarize the business and what it can do for its customers.

All photos should follow Google best practices:

- Format: JPG or PNG
- Size: Between 10KB and 5MB
- Minimum resolution: 720px tall, 720px wide
- Quality: The photo should be in focus and well-lit, and have no alterations or excessive use of filters. The image should represent reality.

# MONITORING YOUR GOOGLE MY BUSINESS LISTING INSIGHTS

Over the last several years, Google has made tremendous strides with available analytical data for Google My Business listings.

Now called Insights, Google offers businesses a different way to understand how customers interact with business listings, including:

- How customers find your listing
- Where customers find you on Google
- Customer actions
- Direction requests
- Phone calls
- Photos

## How Customers Find Your Listing

This section of Insights shows how customers found you in a "Direct" search (they searched for your business name or address) versus a "Discovery" search (they searched for a category, product, or service that you offer, and your listing appeared).

These sections have the following labels in bulk insights reports:

- Total searches
- Direct searches
- Discovery searches

## Where Customers Find You on Google

This section shows how many customers found you via Google Search or Google Maps.

Beside “Listing on Search” and “Listing on Maps,” you’ll see the number of views your listing received from each product in the timeframe you’ve selected. According to Google, “Views” are like “impressions” on other analytics platforms.

To see how many people found you on a particular product on a particular day, place your cursor over the appropriate segment of the graph on the day you’re interested in.

These sections have the following labels in bulk insights reports:

- Total views
- Search views
- Maps views

## Customer Actions

This section shows what customers did once they found your listing on Google.

“Total actions” gives the total of the following types of actions that customers took on your listing:

- Visit your website
- Request directions
- Call you
- View photos

The following labels are available as reports in this reporting section:

- Total actions
- Website actions
- Directions actions
- Phone call actions

## Direction Requests

This part of Insights uses a map to show where people are that are requesting directions to your business.

Your business location is identified on the map and some of the most common spots that people request directions to your business from are shown.

It even breaks the total number of direction requests down by city or neighborhood.

## Phone Calls

This section shows when and how often customers called your business via your listing on Google.

At the top of the section, "Total calls" gives the total number of phone calls for the selected time frame.

The graph offers the ability to view trends by phone calls by either day of the week or time of day. This lets marketers and business operators know when customers are most likely to call after seeing your GMB listing.

# Photos

Lastly, GMB allows you to examine how often your business's photos are being viewed with the "Photo views" graph and "Photo quantity" graph.

There are also lines on the graphs that compare your business's photo data with photo data for other businesses similar to yours.

Section of this reporting component includes bulk insights for:

- Total owner photos
- Owner photo views
- Total customer photos
- Customer photo views

*This sponsored chapter was written by ReachLocal. The opinions expressed in this article are the sponsor's own.*

# Make Your Local Website Voice Search Friendly!

*Sponsored Chapter by Liz McEconomy, Director of Marketing at ReachLocal*

**R**emember when “marketing” and “digital marketing” were two separate entities? You know, the days when having separate “online” and “offline” strategies were the norm?

Oh, how times have changed.

Forget digital marketing – omnichannel marketing is today’s new normal and has opened countless doors for brands of all sizes to bridge their brick-and-mortar and ecommerce efforts.

What was once “online vs. offline” is now “online-and-offline”.

Omnichannel marketing has introduced businesses and consumers alike to the notion of reducing friction at every touchpoint. No matter where your customer is on their buying journey – they want to access your information seamlessly.

Brands at the top of their game are not only answering the needs of their customers immediately – they are doing it in a way that’s consistent and personalized.

Want to get there? Then you need to put one thing into your marketing planning list: voice search and all it entails.



It's the 2019 equivalent of being mobile-friendly – the longer you wait, the further you'll get behind.

Don't lose your advantage! Stay ahead by thinking about voice search in the context of the always-evolving customer journey.

Consider the following:

- 65 percent of smart speaker owners say they wouldn't go back to life without a smart speaker.
- Voice commerce sales are expected to reach \$40 billion by 2022.
- 52 percent of smart speaker owners want information about deals, sales, and promotions from brands.

All of this leads to one overarching truth: those who have Google Home and Alexa in their home want to keep them and, if they aren't already, will be shopping through them in no time.

Saturdays now include pancakes, plus a side of getting your holiday shopping done early. All without viewing a single screen (because, you know, it's Saturday)!

So what next? How can marketers get ahead of the game?

Call upon your web editors, copywriters, SEO pros, and content geniuses.

It's time to invest in a website that will answer back when your customers are trying to reach you.

## Follow the Path (and Guidelines) to Voice-Optimized Content

It might feel like Google has a stronghold on marketers' campaigns, but you have to give 'em credit for the helpful information they provide, including their guidelines for content identified as "speakable" by structured data:

- You need headlines that are short, sweet, and informative (a copywriter's dream scenario)



- You should stick to 20-30 seconds of content per section (or two or three sentences)

It isn't as easy as crafting the perfect sentence and calling it a day, though.

With Google, you need to get your content officially registered as TTS (text-to-speech) to get featured on Google Home.

Don't forget about these critical final steps once you've completed the hard research and content work!

## Voice Search Changes the Game for Local

Voice search becomes even more interesting when it leaves home.

Searches get closer to becoming purchases when location becomes involved.

Local search marketing experts have long investigated how businesses can provide information to customers on-the-go.

It's common knowledge that local listings are the pillar of a strong local marketing strategy, painting a clear path to your customers' stores on both search engines and navigation systems alike.

Voice search brings us AI technology that can process spoken search queries in the context of the user's location.

The result?

In addition to telling you what time they're open until, Siri shares a map to get there and an image of the storefront.

What does this mean for businesses?



You need landing pages with location references, reliable local listings with clean and consistent data, and integration with core directories to be sure your information is reliable and accurate across the board.

## Voice Search Is Here to Stay – So Get Talking!

There has been a ton of debate on privacy infringement and smart speakers.

You may have heard the report of a woman who had a private conversation recorded by her Alexa device, and it was randomly sent to another Alexa owner in Seattle.

OK, so you and your friends discuss vacation plans over dinner, and the next day ads for flip-flops pop up on your phone.

Is that enough to stop you from using these devices?

With purchases for Alexa reaching the \$20 million range as of Cyber Monday last year and Google Home devices selling every second since their release last fall, it doesn't look like it's stopping most folks.

## Bottom Line

The sooner you align your marketing with the most important steps of the customer journey for your business, the sooner you'll reap the benefits.

If it isn't already on your priority list, start making headway by considering how consumers search for your business online and make the connection to complete sentences and more contextual searches that could happen on voice search.

Get started on this in the remaining months of the year, so you don't get left behind in 2019.

Otherwise, you'll be asking, "Alexa, can you buy us more time?"



## CHAPTER 8

# 9 ESSENTIAL LOCAL SEO & LISTINGS MANAGEMENT TOOLS



**Maddy Osman**  
SEO Content Strategist at The Blogsmith



# An online presence is important for both local and global businesses, especially those with physical locations.

It may seem slightly counterintuitive for a local business to focus time on developing their online presence, until you realize that this is precisely where their customers are making buying decisions.

Businesses that want to optimize for local SEO can make a big impact with the right focus, as well as the right tools.

Listings management with these local SEO tools encompasses a wide range of features that include:

- An automated listings finder, which allows users to determine additional directory listing opportunities (and ensuring consistency across all existing listings).
- The ability to automatically update all listings information with a click.
- Review management, which notifies businesses of new reviews. Some of these tools also include functionality for directly replying to customer reviews within the user interface.
- Analytics tools.

Some tools on this list narrowly focus on one of these features (such as ReviewTrackers, which specializes in review management), while others offer an all-in-one solution.

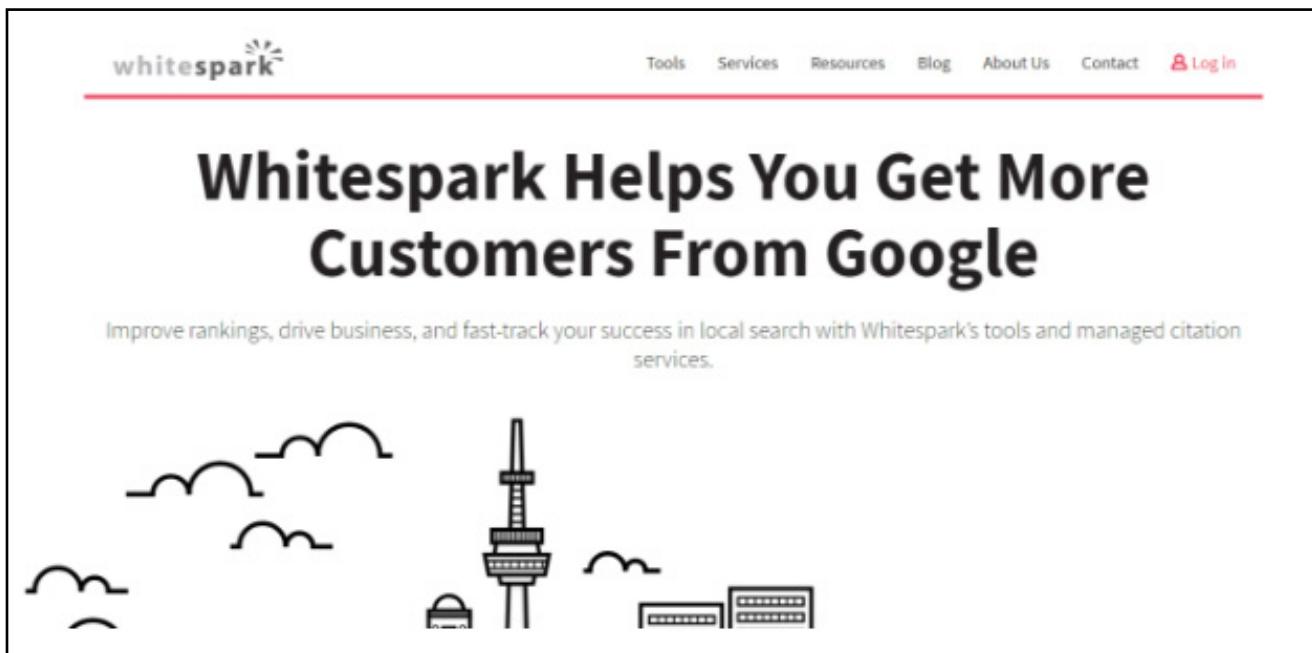
Some of the best SEO tools on the market, such as Moz and SEMrush, have adapted their all-in-one SEO tools to include listings management as an optional add-on feature.

Ultimately, the tool(s) you pick for local SEO are a function of your unique needs.

The following represent the best options for each aforementioned listings management feature – as well as several all-in-one local SEO solutions.

# LOCAL SEO & LISTINGS MANAGEMENT TOOLS

## 1. Whitespark



The screenshot shows the Whitespark homepage. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for Tools, Services, Resources, Blog, About Us, Contact, and Log in. The main headline reads "Whitespark Helps You Get More Customers From Google". Below the headline is a subtext: "Improve rankings, drive business, and fast-track your success in local search with Whitespark's tools and managed citation services." A small line drawing of a city skyline with a prominent tower and buildings is positioned at the bottom of the main content area.

Whitespark got its start as a web design agency, but now also offers SEO software tools that help businesses with local search marketing.

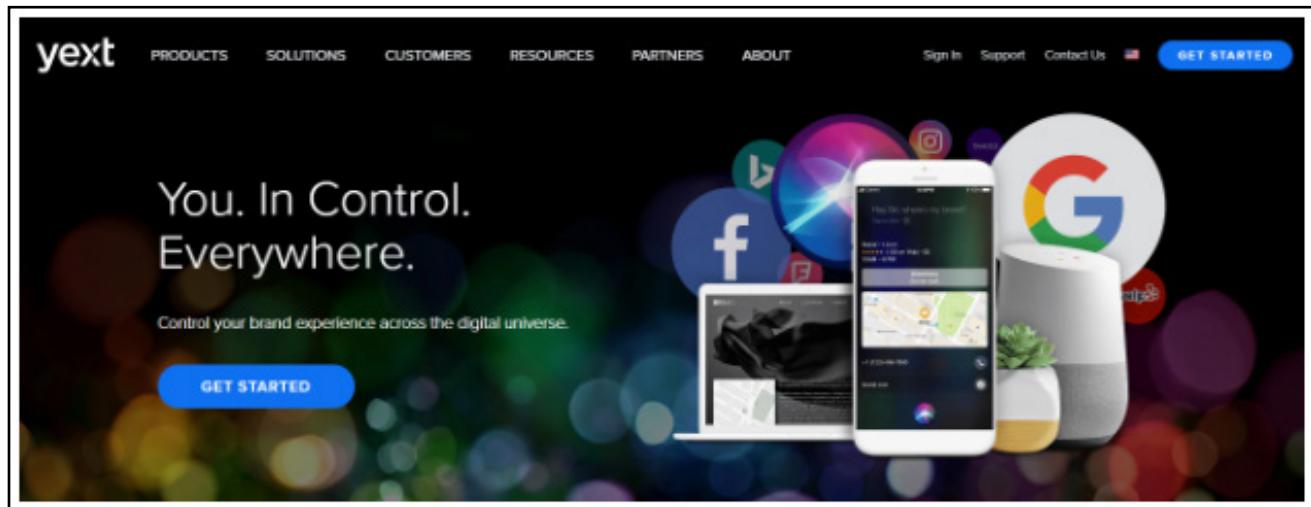
The **Citation Finder tool** is Whitespark's most popular offering. It helps you find the citation opportunities you're missing so that you can improve relevant local search rankings.

The tool is free to use for three searches/day and limited search results — perfect for those who are still exploring the tool. As of the publication of this ebook, paid subscriptions start at \$17/month for 20 searches/day and unlimited search results.

Other notable Whitespark local SEO tools include:

- **Local rank tracker**, which uses your precise location settings to give insight into your overall SEO performance. Similar to Ahrefs' Rank Tracker, it lets you know how you stack up against your competitors and how you rank across popular search engines — as well as how you rank in different result types. Although Ahrefs gives you data regarding how you rank in terms of 13 different features (such as featured snippets and site links), it is more technically-focused. On the other hand, Whitespark is more tailored for business: it also allows you to track your social activity (Ahrefs only allows you to track tweets).
- **Reputation builder**, which makes it easy to prompt customers (via email or SMS) to share a review on your review sites of choice (Whitespark supports over 45 online review websites). This feature also calculates your NPS (Net Promoter Score), a business indicator of your customers' experiences with your business.
- **Review monitoring**, which alerts you if and when you get a bad review, so that you can immediately take action.

## 2. Yext



Yext provides a variety of products and solutions that can help your brand improve local SEO. Yext integrates with hundreds of directories to ensure that your business information and data are always up-to-date.

Some of Yext's most popular local SEO tools include:

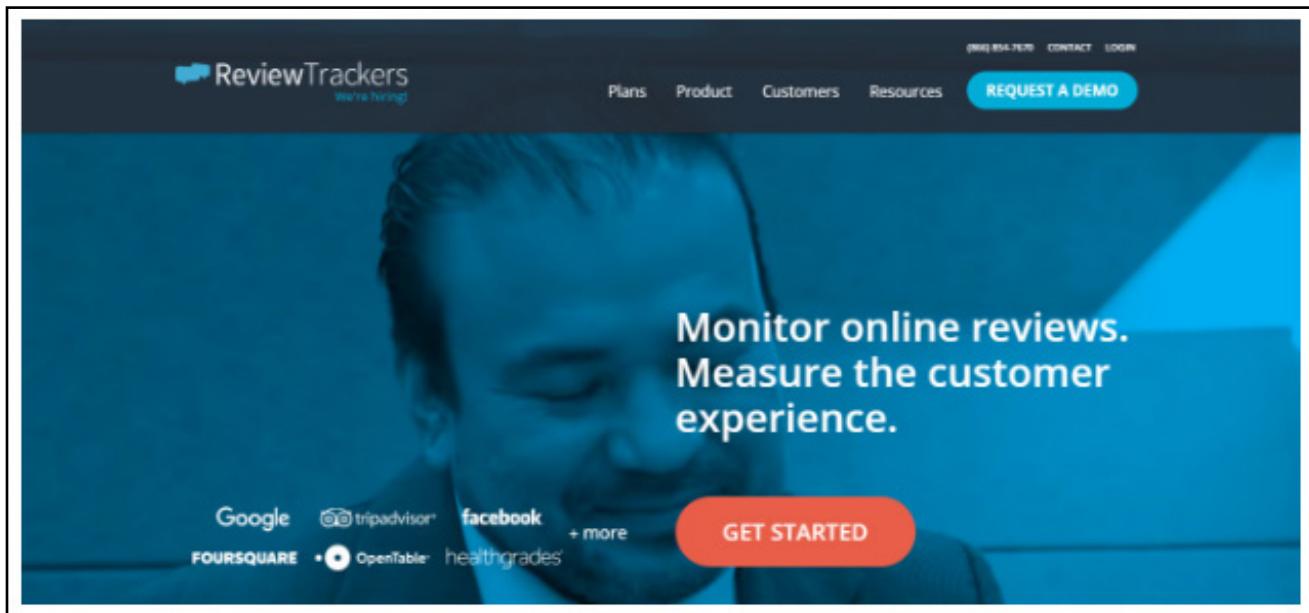
- **Knowledge Manager:** A single source of answers to common questions that consumers ask about your business, including your staff, store hours, locations, and promotions. Some of this data is automated and some of it you can add yourself.
- **Yext Pages:** An easy system for updating listings, ensuring that the information provided is accurate. Yext Pages integrates with the Knowledge Manager to help give customers more information about the brand to help guide them down your sales funnel.

- **Yext Listings:** Take control of the information you share about your business with search engines and digital services, such as Facebook and Yelp. You can use this feature for scheduled and real-time updates, analytics, finding listing improvement suggestions, and setting up integrations with other tools. The Yext App Directory integrates with applications like Zapier, HubSpot, and Zendesk.
- **Yext Reviews:** A system for generating reviews from your customers that you can then add to your website. It also makes it easy to monitor and respond to reviews in the PowerListings Network.

Additionally, Yext's services and solutions include:

- **Analytics:** Collecting insights, activity, and data for easier reporting.
- **Duplicate listing prevention.**
- **Data cleansing** to keeps facts consistent.
- **Google My Business** and Listings management.

### 3. ReviewTrackers



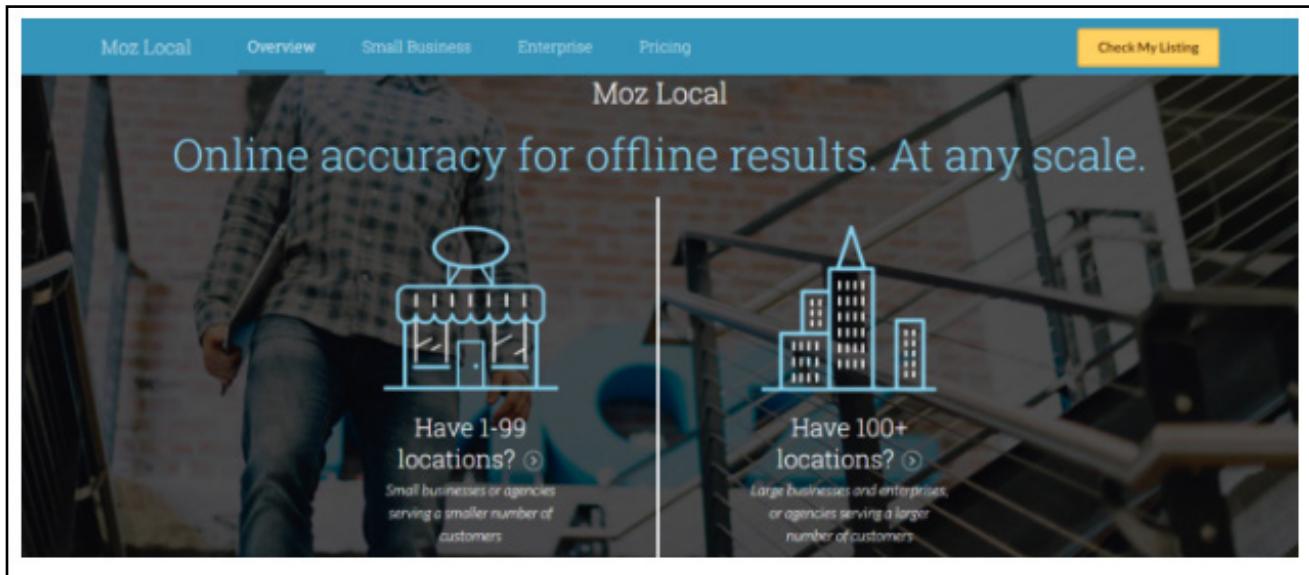
ReviewTrackers is a customer review software tool that sends alerts regarding customer feedback on various review websites, making this information available in one useful dashboard.

Using ReviewTrackers, you can solicit feedback from customers, monitor reviews from various sources (e.g., Google, TripAdvisor), and track location performance.

ReviewTrackers is used by brands like Subaru, Midas, and American Family Insurance.

At the time of publication, single location plans start at \$59/month, while multi-location plans start anywhere from \$10-\$50/month per location.

## 4. Moz Local



Moz Local is perhaps the most popular local SEO tool on this list. After being in business for over 10 years and trailblazing the SEO software market, you can trust in both their data and methodologies.

Moz Local works for both small and enterprise businesses, ensuring that online listings are correct and consistent, which helps to boost website visibility. Using this tool, you need only put together a listing once – Moz automates the rest of the process for you.

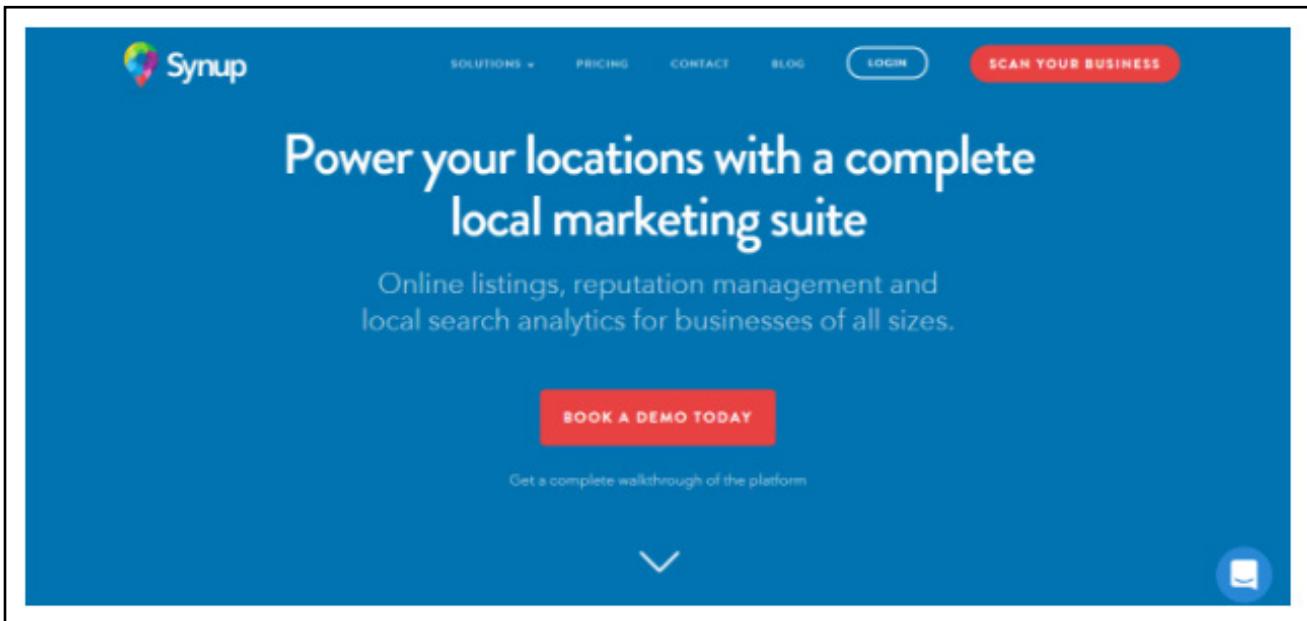
Moz works by sending your listings data to major search engines, apps, directories and business aggregators. The beautiful thing about this process is that if you ever need to edit your listing, it's as simple as logging back into Moz Local to make a change – there's no need to edit your listing on each directory individually.

Using Moz Local, you'll receive alerts when you receive new reviews on major platforms so that you're empowered to reply to your customers in a timely manner. Moz Local syncs with Google My Business and allows you to directly respond to Google reviews.

Apart from the features that help boost your brand name in local search, Moz also gives you location-centric reports to help you track your growth and determine key consumer interactions on your listings.

At the time of publication, pricing for Moz Local starts at \$99/year — just note that this pricing doesn't include access to their other popular SEO software tools.

## 5. Synup

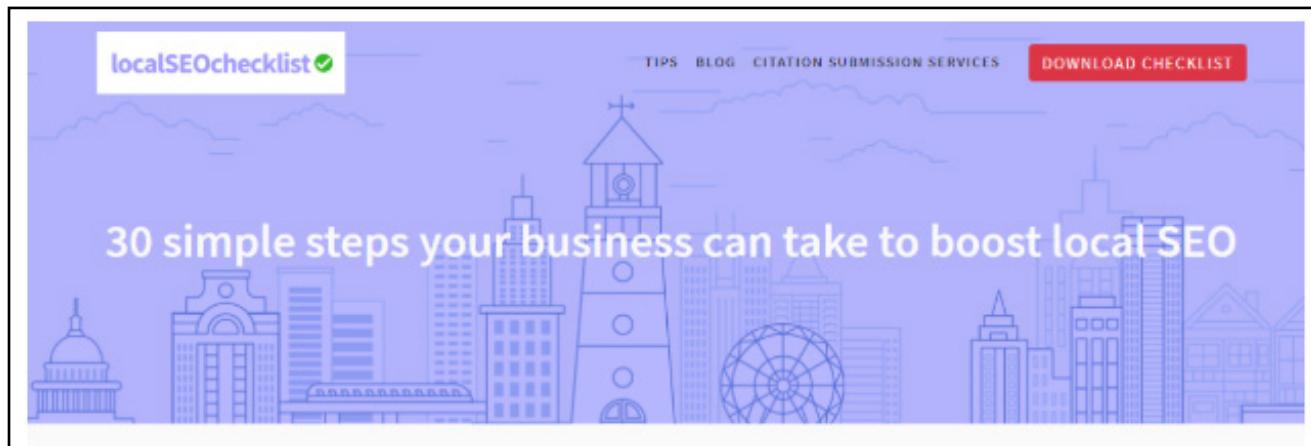


Synup is an all-in-one marketing software suite specifically tailored to help with local SEO. This all-in-one solution allows you to manage your listings, monitor your analytics, and create reports.

Specifically, Synup facilitates unlimited listings updates and notifies you immediately when new reviews have been created about your business. Synup crawls over 200 local search engines and directories to catch inconsistencies.

At the time of publication, Synup costs \$30 per location for the first 25 locations, with pricing scaling down as you add on more locations.

## 6. Local SEO Checklist



Unfortunately, none of these tools can fix glaring technical local SEO issues on your website, which is where Local SEO Checklist comes in.

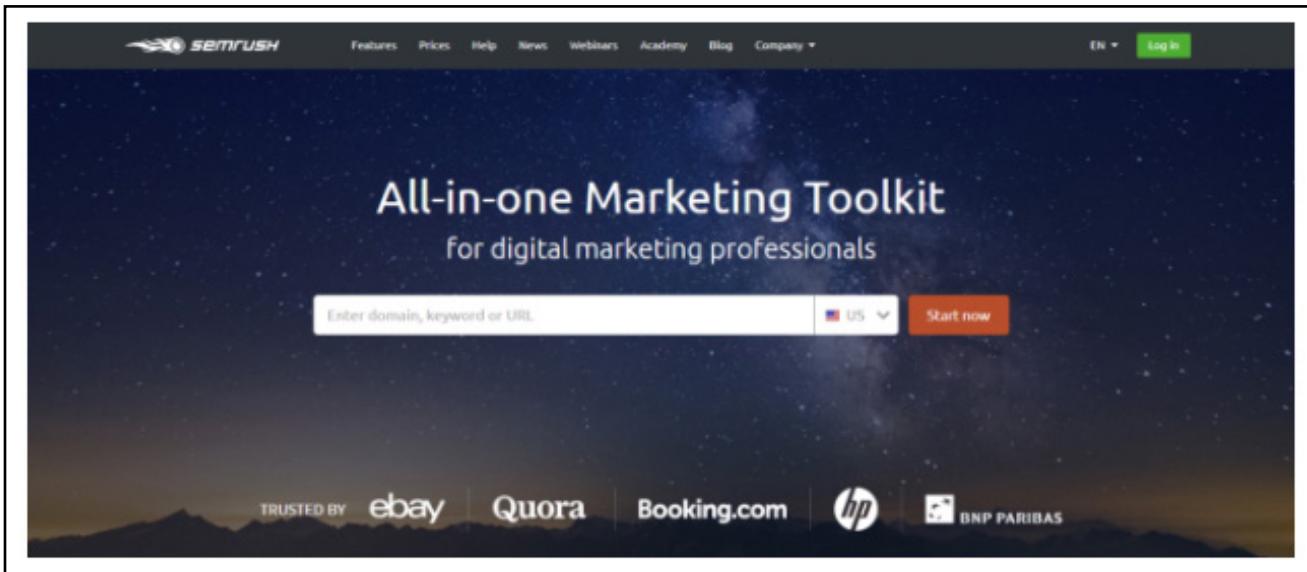
Powered by Synup, the free Local SEO Checklist details the various ways you can optimize your website for local search.

Aside from the checklist, you can also use this website to:

- Check if your Google My Business listing follows the correct guidelines.
- Check if your website has the right schema markup for content.
- Use the free scanning tool to audit how your business listing appears across 48 different websites.

**Search Engine Journal also offers a local SEO checklist for you to follow along with.**

## 7. SEMrush



Favored by brands such as eBay, HP, and Quora, SEMrush is a popular SEO and search analytics software tool.

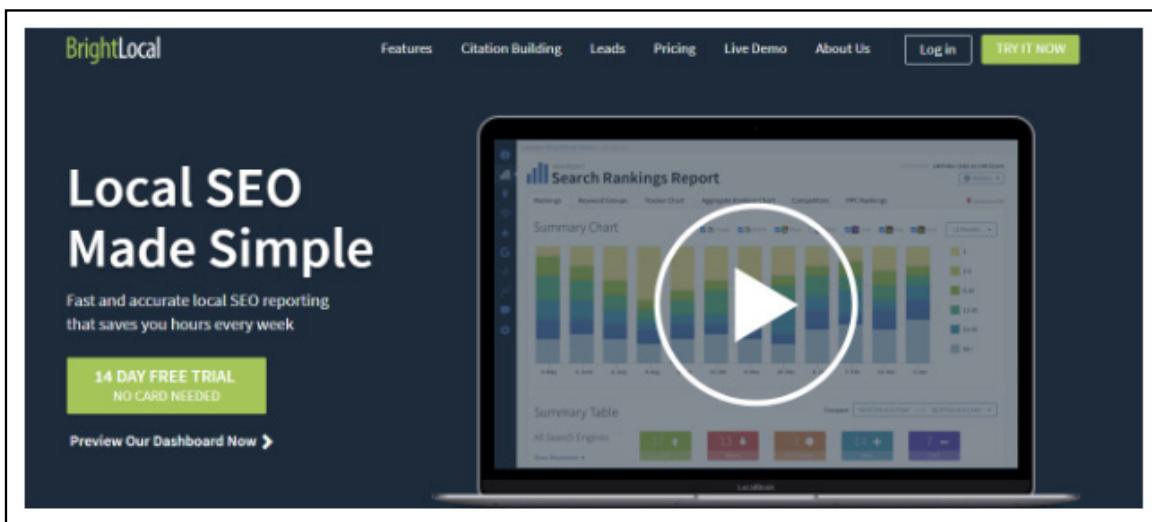
SEMrush provides users with website traffic information, keyword information (most ideal for paid search needs) and other SEO data that includes useful competitor information. Perhaps SEMrush's most popular tools include their keyword research tool, backlink checker, and competitor analysis.

SEMrush recently introduced their own listings management tool, launched in collaboration with Yext.

Based on initial perceptions, it seems quite easy to use. You have to first input the data and find your location. The tool will present a list of your listings and their status for each directory website. After you make any necessary edits, SEMrush will take care of the rest – automatically updating your listings accordingly.

To sign up for this new SEMrush feature, you'll need an SEMrush plan (which starts at \$99.95/month), then add \$20/month per location.

## 8. BrightLocal



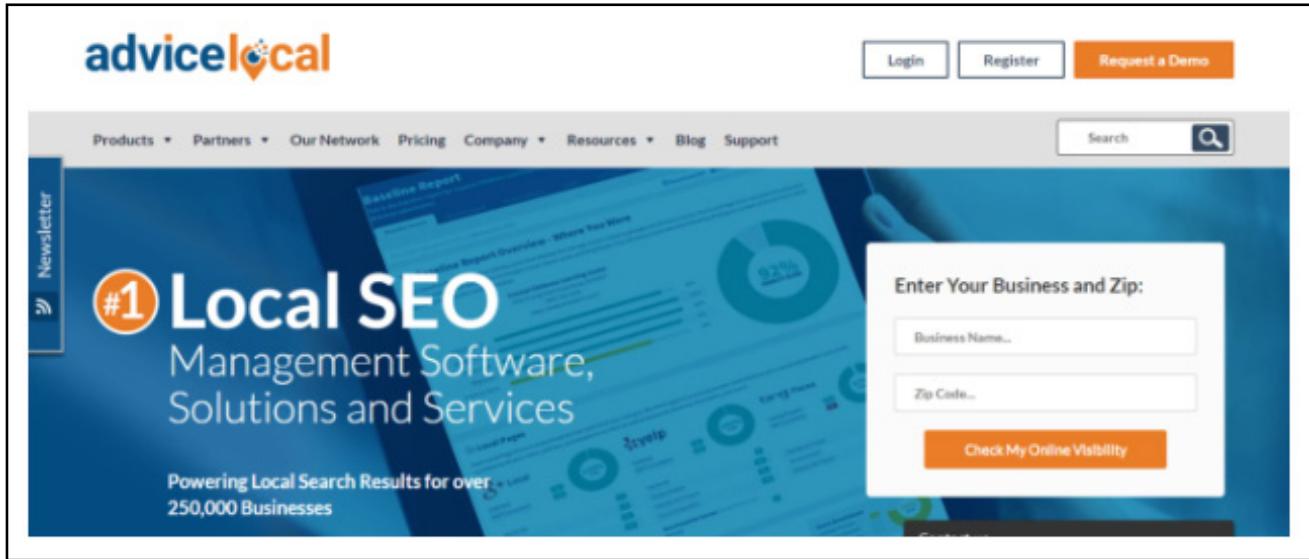
BrightLocal is one of the most popular local SEO tools, used by more than 62,000 agencies, businesses, and freelancers for analytics and reporting functions.

Top features of Bright Local include:

- Customized location dashboard to easily monitor data.
- Lead-generation tools to manage and reply to your leads in one place. The lead generation widget allows your visitors to create a personalized, branded local search audit for their business. Also available for marketing agencies: priority listing in the marketing agency directory. This feature helps you with visibility in up to four surrounding cities, alongside the BrightLocal stamp of approval.
- Track organic, local, and mobile rankings.
- Scan and audits directory sites to determine where updates may be necessary.
- Google My Business and NAP audits.
- Alerts for new online reviews.
- Social analytics (Facebook and Twitter) and Google Analytics dashboard integrations.
- White label solution for agencies.

At the time of publication, prices start at \$29/month for a single business.

## 9. Advice Local



Advice Local is another listings-management tool that can compete with the likes of Yext for the most number of directories supported.

That said, Advice Local's advantage over Yext is that you can [manually build out local citations while Yext uses an API](#). However, because of this, it takes a bit longer for Advice Local to get above an 80 percent score for local directory submissions and the information supported is limited to the basics of NAP (name, address, phone number).

Additionally, like Moz, Advice Local is a complete all-in-one local SEO solution (unlike Yext, which is more directory-focused).

At the time of publication, plans start at \$15/month.

## CHAPTER 9

# A GUIDE TO LOCAL SEO FOR ENTERPRISES



**Adam Dardine**  
Digital Manager at NordicClick Interactive



# If digital marketing channels were items on a grocery checklist, paid search and traditional SEO would be the meat and potatoes.

Local SEO, unfortunately, is too often the afterthought food that many “shoppers” at large enterprises forget to purchase.

With the continued rise in mobile, local SEO is more important than ever because the two are synonyms.

A recent study from Stone Temple states that **63 percent** of all Google searches are mobile.

## Why do enterprises view local SEO as a grocery checklist?

In short, local SEO fails when businesses lack a well-structured plan.

Common misconceptions include, "If I complete A, B, and C, then my local presence will improve" or "If we're doing traditional SEO, local will fall into place."

Wrong.

In order for local SEO to succeed, businesses must define what success looks like and develop and an ongoing plan that is scalable.

While businesses of any size can fall susceptible to the "grocery checklist" mentality, it's the large enterprise businesses that have the greatest risk of catching the disease.

# LOCAL SEO PROS & CONS OF LARGE ENTERPRISE

Regardless of channel, large businesses have built-in advantages over small competitors including but not limited to:

- Money.
- People.
- Access to industry tools.
- Specialization.

While these built-in resources certainly help, if ignored, the cons of larger companies with over 100 locations will outweigh the pros – especially with respect to local SEO.

# 4 OBSTACLES LARGE ENTERPRISES FACE WHEN PLANNING A LOCAL SEO STRATEGY

## 1. Ignorance Is Bliss

If there's never been a defined strategy across the organization, it may be difficult to earn buy-in from others.

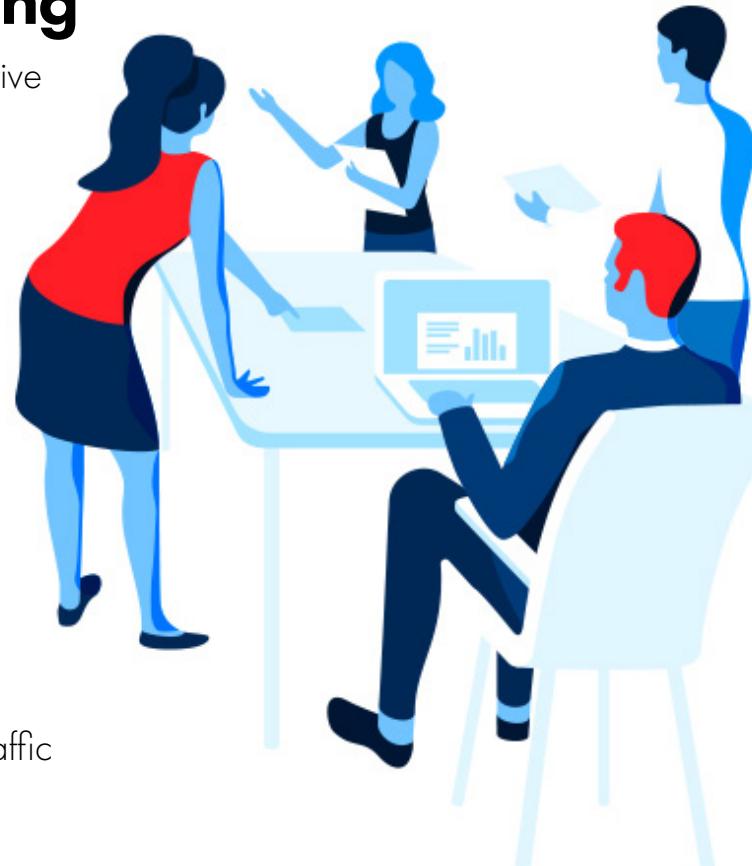
## 2. Slow Decision Making

Large enterprises are generally not as adaptive and flexible as small companies.

Consequently, tasks that should be no-brainers, like claiming local listings, can draw out for months.

I've seen business regret not having urgency with regard to claiming listings. Something as simple as changing phone numbers can result in local traffic falling off the map due to data inconsistencies.

In drastic cases, unclaimed and outdated listings have caused Google My Business traffic to plummet by more than 50 percent.



### 3. 'Bystander Effect'

Lack of defined roles coupled with the fact that the enterprise has many people on the marketing team will lead to the diffusion of responsibility and a lot of finger pointing.

A common local task that falls victim to the "Bystander Effect" is review management.

Who should be responsible for responding? Customer service? Store managers? Regional managers?

The truth is, there is no right answer – pick one but make sure the job gets done. And make responsibilities clear.

### 4. Volume

Volume is arguably the biggest obstacle to overcome.

Let's use the new **Google Q&A feature** as an example: 100 locations x 3 questions/month x 5 minutes per response = 25 hours/month. And that's a conservative estimate that only accounts for one small component of local SEO.

The good news is that a well-defined plan not only overcomes the obstacles listed above, but produces a successful and scalable local SEO strategy.

Before we expand on actionable local SEO plans, it's important to point out often overlooked first steps:

- **Obligatory Digital Marketing Goals:** Define what success means for local SEO. Common objectives include increases in:
  - Foot traffic.
  - Views of store locator pages.
  - Clicks on Google My Business Listings.
  - Phone calls made to the store.

- **Establish Roles and Responsibilities:** Just like any other team effort, local SEO requires a team. To use a sports analogy, Aaron Rodgers needs his offensive line to follow through on their assignments just as much as a local SEO provider needs store managers to provide an above average customer experience.

Below are five local SEO practices that will help you reach your business goals. Each section has been broken into:

- **Basic Practices:** (In most cases, these should be implemented, but thought of as more of a baseline. In some sections, the baseline doesn't exist, so I've listed what not to do instead.) Essentially, some enterprises do the basics and either think they're done or choose to stick their head in the sand (See Local Link Building, Review Management, and Citation Management in the steps outlined below for examples).
- **Competitive Edge Practices:** These will separate your business from the competition – if for no other reason than most, stick with the basic approach.

# 1. ON-PAGE LOCAL SEO

## Basic Practices

- Include city and state in the title tag of all store locator pages.
- Ensure store pages are indexed by search engines and display prominent clickable mobile elements like phone numbers.
- Implement local Schema markup on all store locator pages.

## Competitive Edge Practices That Require Ongoing Management & Planning

- Create and implement a plan for local content opportunities – these can be incorporated on a blog or directly on store locator pages to help differentiate hundreds of similar store pages.
- For example, if you manage a store that sells baseball hats in Minnesota, create a blog post about a new hat collection and talk about how it can help shade the sun while you're out enjoying all 10,000 of the state's beautiful lakes during the short summer. That said, the content doesn't necessarily even have to be about the products you sell. In fact, focus most content around anything but selling your product. Make it about something that's useful and helpful to your customer/audience.
- Take a disciplined and consistent approach to adding new content to your store pages. Content ideas include unique store photos, videos, store manager profiles, or other local city information that is related to your business.

Dick's Sporting Goods does an excellent job of creating unique store pages by adding short localized paragraphs to each location.

#### About The Dedham Store

When mind, body and equipment come together, nothing holds you back. Discover game-changing equipment and the latest sports apparel and footwear at DICK'S Sporting Goods in Dedham, MA. Find everything you need for your active lifestyle from industry-leading brands, like Nike, Under Armour and The North Face. Visit our golf pro shop for expert club fittings and advice on equipment. Take your next outdoor adventure at Wompatuck State Park with state-of-the-art hiking, biking and camping equipment, and root on your New England Patriots and Boston Bruins with replica jerseys, fan merchandise and tailgating essentials. Located near Boston, the DICK'S Sporting Goods in Dedham, MA carries team sports gear and equipment for every sports season.

# 2. GOOGLE MY BUSINESS

## Basic Practices

- Create and submit a **Google My Business listing**.
- Update NAP (Name, Address, Phone) for all stores.
- Upload a storefront image for all locations.
- Select two to three relevant business categories within your profile.

## Competitive Edge Practices That Require Ongoing Management & Planning

- Enlist in a tool like Get Five Stars or Moz Local. These tools have enterprise-friendly features that enable managers to receive notifications whenever a user leaves a review, among many other local management features. Next, create a few generalized templates that service reps can reference when responding to customer feedback.
- Create a monthly calendar to use optional but helpful features like Google Posts and Google Q&A. Establish guidelines for how often Google Posts are used.
- Change store hours to reflect store closings and special holiday hours. Google My Business allows managers the option to bulk upload store hour changes.
- Establish a culture that consistently analyzes the competitive landscape in the local pack. Regularly check local rankings for important keywords using tools like MobileMoxie or Bright Local Competitive Analysis. These tools are great because they allow you to check local rankings without searching a location modifier (e.g., sushi restaurants in Austin).

- Report spam on Google Maps. Be a tattletale on others that are spamming GMB. Common culprits are keyword stuffing or adding location directly in the name of the business.
- Append unique UTM s to your local directories, GMB included, and analyze traffic directly in Google Analytics. Although GMB provides data directly in the interface, I find it useful to have the data included in GA reports. I use `utm?source=local&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=store-name`

# 3. LOCAL LINK BUILDING

## Basic Practices

- Don't ignore local link building because of the sheer volume of locations or for fears of having limited impact. Many large enterprises make this mistake.

## Competitive Edge Practices That Require Ongoing Management & Planning

- Large brands are involved in the community but fail to maximize their involvement from a linking perspective. Take inventory of all PR events and set up an outreach process to make sure you receive a link back. Local link building has no checklist. Get involved in your community. Sponsor events. Support other businesses. Host networking events. Most beneficiaries will gladly link back to your local branch store page, some just need a reminder.
- If you're really stuck on where to start, here are a few inspirational ideas from Whitespark – **Brainstorm Sponsorship Opportunities**
- Brands think too big. Local SEO is, well, it's local! It's small. Don't get bogged down thinking nationally and overwhelmed by the crazy number of locations you manage. Start small and gradually build out a process for other locations. Better yet, once you experience success in a local market, let that local manager become your internal advocate.

# 4. CITATION MANAGEMENT

## Basic Practices

- Create a Google My Business profile.
- Many enterprises submit store citations using an automated tool but utilize the “set-it-and-forget-it plan.” (I recommend automated citation tools, but it’s not a “set and forget” checklist item.)

## Competitive Edge Practices That Require Ongoing Management & Planning

- Use Yext or Moz Local to create, verify, and optimize listings for multi-location brands. These are scalable tools perfect for businesses with over 100 stores. They help push citations, clean up duplicate data, adjust incorrect data, and defend online presence.
- Assign designated resources to actively monitor and update information. Always look to improve the listings. Problems will undoubtedly occur, and you want someone to be able to make the appropriate brand decisions when they come across questionable content.
- Create citations for TripAdvisor, Yelp, or other industry-specific platforms that are not automatically generated with a tool like Moz Local.

# REVIEWS

## Basic Practices You Should Avoid (Too Many Already Do These, Don't Be One of Them!)

- Choose to ignore customer feedback.
- Reactively and randomly respond to customer reviews.
- Have no company-wide proactive review acquisition plan and just hope that customers will leave reviews.

## Competitive Edge Practices That Require Ongoing Management & Planning

- **Ask all customers to leave reviews (without incentives).** This can be managed through an internal CRM system or automated tools like Get Five Stars. Review acquisition is a simple numbers game. The more you ask, the more you receive.
- **Grade.US:** Google Profile Link Generator is a quick and easy tool that generates a link directly to your Google profiles, enabling you to embed this on your email request or even directly on your store locator pages.

# SUMMARY

When in doubt about local SEO, focus on tasks that provide value and solve problems for customers.

That's it.

This is an obvious point, but the underlying principle is valuable and too many don't do this.

In general, consumers are lazy and selfish (like we all are).

It's our job to make life as easy as possible.

- Ensure hours are correct.
- Ensure the phone numbers are right.
- Make sure you not only have citations, but that they're consistent.
- Answer Google Q&As.
- Respond to complaints and identify how you can improve your offering.

Customers are more likely to support, seek out, and refer brands that they truly care about.

CHAPTER 10

# ESSENTIAL SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES



**Alexandra Tachalova**  
Founder at Digital Olympus



# How many people do you think use Facebook actively every month?

Your estimate might actually be low.

Let's talk about the numbers:

Statista reports that the number of Facebook users in the U.S. (as of July 2018) had reached a whopping **210 million** users.

Combine this with the fact that the overall U.S. population is around 327 million, and you can derive that 2 in 3 U.S. citizens are actively using Facebook.

At this point of this guide, now that you know the value of the organic search, you may be looking for other ways to promote your local business.

Facebook (and other relevant social media platforms) can substantially help your local business grow.

If you do it right.

This begs a natural question:

How exactly can your business benefit from being present on social media channels?

We did some homework, so you can get an idea of how exactly local businesses are taking advantage of social media marketing.

Before you decide whether you're ready to dive into the world of social media marketing, let's dive a bit deeper into why you should.

# ■ WHY LOCAL BUSINESSES SHOULD INVEST TIME & MONEY IN SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING?

You're probably already crazy busy promoting your business.

Adding even more marketing tasks might seem a bit like overkill.

Nowadays though, neglecting to incorporate social media into your marketing plan can cost you – not just in terms of new potential customers who don't know you (and who your competitor is happy to collect!) but also in terms of retaining your existing customers.

By building a relationship with your clients, your chances of retaining them increase, and so does their potential lifetime value.



Now let these other compelling arguments convince you even more:

### **'Hey, Guys... Does Anyone Know a Good...'**

Folks on social are constantly asking their friends for recommendations for almost everything, ranging from local restaurants to car repairing services.

Social media platforms (as the marketing machines that they are) hone in on these conversations.

## **Facebook Recommendations**

For example, Facebook offers users a dedicated feature that allows them to ask for recommendations in an area where they live.

Once a user seems to be asking for local tips in a status update, a special algorithm is fired that recognizes recommendation requests.

Based on the answers of Facebook friends in the comments, the feature then pulls up the exact locations of businesses mentioned.

This means the local business will be tagged automatically, visible for the user who asked the question, and anyone else who sees the post.

Similar features have been rolled out on other social media platforms.

So, what happens if you aren't there? Crickets...



## **'WORST SERVICE EVER!'**

Even if you aren't active on social media, people will talk about your business.

Customers share their feedback, good and bad, and you need to be aware of it.

If it's good, GREAT! You can capitalize on that satisfied customer, by leveraging their praise to get more customers or have your happy ones come back for more.

If it's bad, GREAT! You can control the conversation by showing your excellent customer service skills. Turn the grumpy complainer into a blazing fan by really listening to their issue and solving it.

It usually isn't about making a mistake – mistakes are inevitable for any business.

Really, it's about how you correct it.

And a bonus? You get to learn more about what your customers really think, and improve your business accordingly.

Know what happens when you aren't there?

Complaints go viral, and your competitors may offer to help out your customer. Because they were listening.

## CUT YOUR AD COSTS BY LOCAL ADVERTISING

Social media platforms were not built for their users, but for advertisers.

Location is one of the many specific demographic aspects you can target your ads on.

If you laser target your ads on the people who are based in your area, their interests, and



some other demographic details, you will achieve the highest customer potential with the lowest costs.

Furthermore, by tweaking the targeting and the content of your ads, you learn more about ideal leads than any survey can tell you, for a fraction of the cost!

And what if you don't use these ads features? You keep firing aimlessly, while your competition targets the golden nuggets.

## LET THE FANS SPEAK FOR YOU

Social media marketing lends itself perfectly for building a passionate community around your brand.

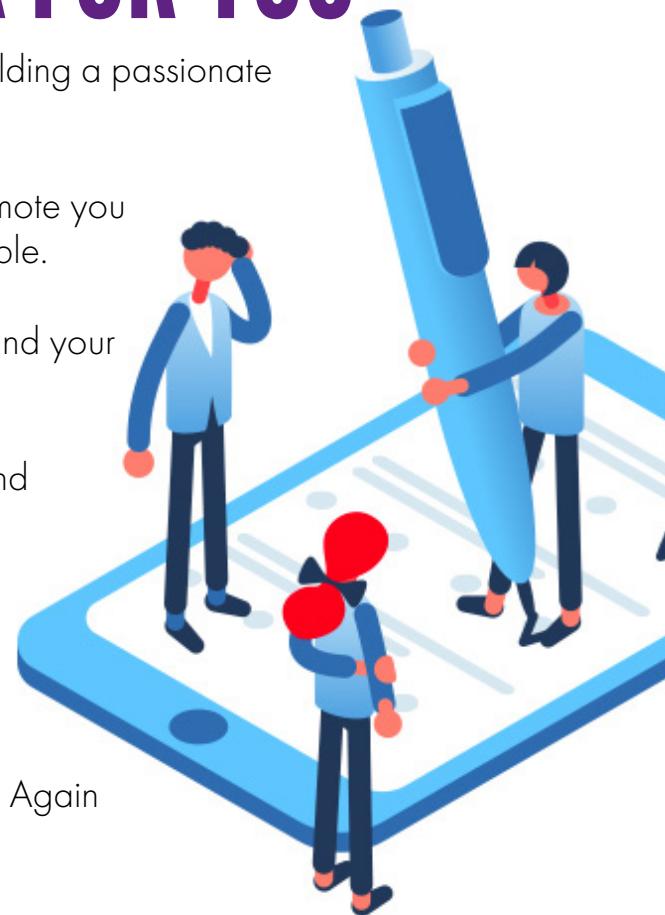
There's no better way to encourage people to promote you than helping them to connect with like-minded people.

This is more than just owning the conversations around your products or services.

You're also creating long-term relationships with, and between, customers.

Happy customers will take care of word-of-mouth marketing for you – and even part of your customer service.

Also, they will come back to you for more business. Again and again.



## Some Ideas to Illustrate Community Building

Suppose you own a shop in craft supplies and want to become more visible to potential buyers.

You could showcase finished projects from your customers on Pinterest and Facebook, and invite people to ask questions and tips from the makers.

This will get the ball rolling in people sharing their crafty accomplishments, struggles, and dreams, all around your products!

Another great example is building a community around detoxing and weight loss, for a local juice bar.

People can inspire and support each other in their health goals, while you can share the latest juice recipes and congratulate everyone on their progress.

You might organize meetups in your bar, before or after workouts. All done quite easily with the functionality social media provides you.

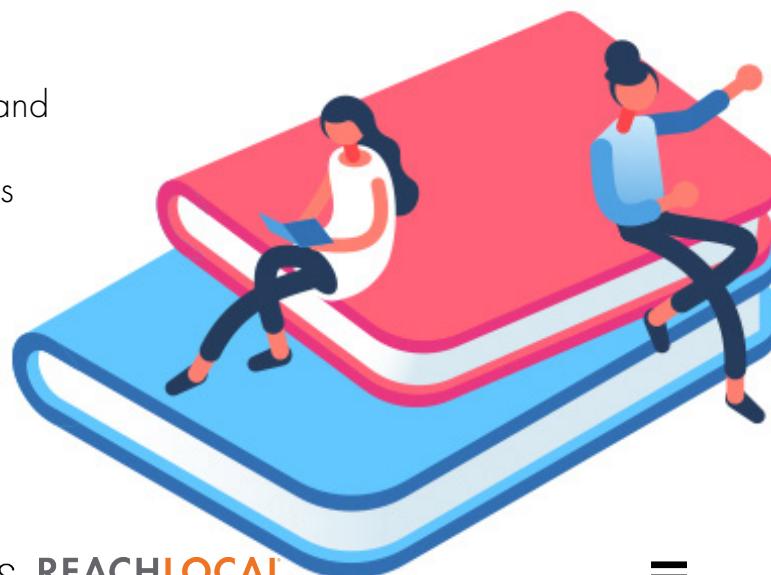
If you don't have a community, you are definitely missing out on establishing yourself as a strong brand, with fairly low-cost effort. A community is an asset that will pay itself back multiple times.

## EASY PROMOTION OF NEW PRODUCTS & SERVICES

While spreading the news about new products and services through traditional local channels still has its merits, getting the word out through social media can give your campaign a huge boost.

Through social advertising, your community and your own page, you have several options to "show what you've got." And you can do this with images, text, and video.

It's amazing when you can actually show your product in action from all angles!



Moreover, you can let your fans spread the news for you. If you have shareable content, they will pass it on.

If you have followers that are raving about your new thing, let their positive reviews shine!

The more their love for you gets the spotlight, the more attractive you will be for others.

Not using social media marketing for your new products? Then you're giving your customers a very limited experience in getting a taste of what's to come.

## FREE MASS PUBLICITY

Throughout this chapter, you might have been rolling your eyes, thinking, "Does this mean I have to spend all my time reacting to everyone on social?"

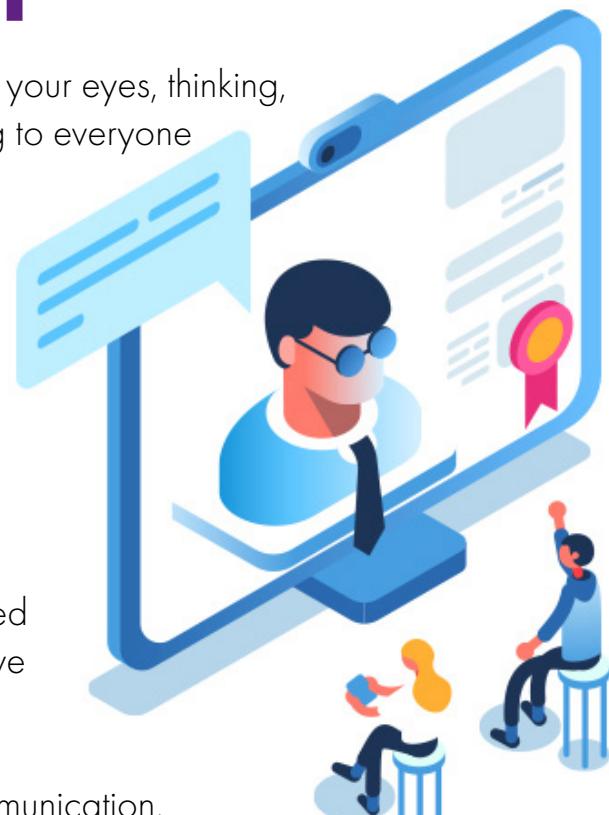
I hear you. And, no, you don't.

Though you should pay attention to what your customers tell you about their experience, you don't have to bend over backwards for every voice out there.

Some social influencers have become so accustomed to companies quivering in their boots for any negative tweet or post, they assume they are all powerful.

However, if you remain authentic, open in your communication, and use a bit of clever banter, you will often find yourself on the winning side of things.

People are getting quite fed up with spoiled insta celebs and will gather behind you. And if you get lucky (or is it luck if you play it smart?) – you can end up being featured in the mass media.



## The White Moose vs. Elle Darby

A great example of this is the **online feud** between Irish restaurant The White Moose Cafe and YouTube blogger Elle Darby.

Darby asked (through cold email) for a free room in exchange for a review. To which The White Moose reacted by sharing her email (with personal details hidden) in a post criticizing the current favor demanding an attitude of bloggers.

Reactions from both sides went back and forth for a while, while others chimed in, sharing and commenting on their posts.

Meanwhile, The White Moose was selling feud-related merch and producing one popular social media post after another.

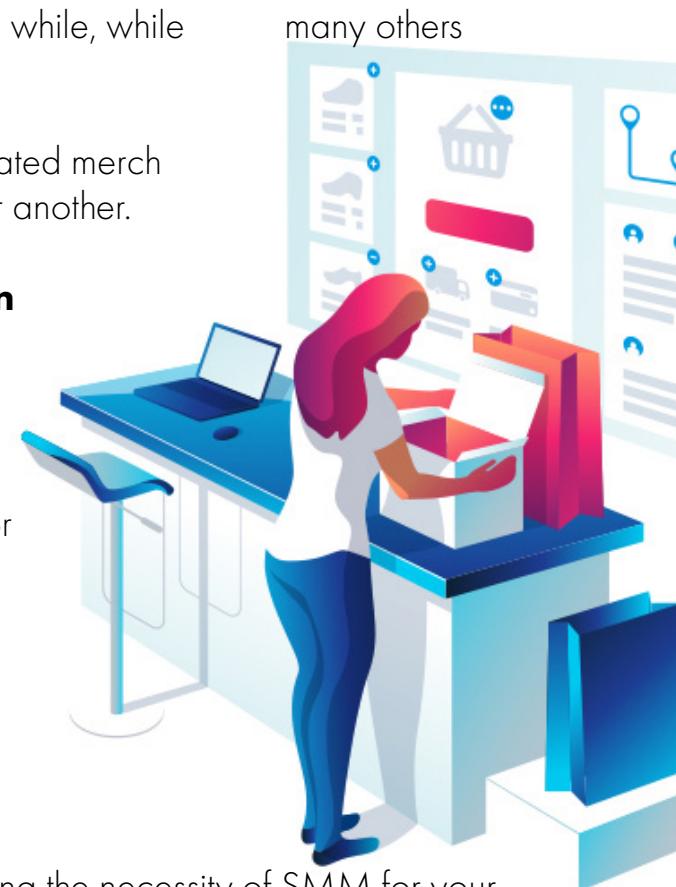
**Oh, and they got featured in 114 articles, in 20 countries, reaching about 450 million people. For free.**

Though getting this kind of publicity depends on a lot of factors, I believe that being alert and ready for these events creates opportunities.

Or, as Louis Pasteur says: "Fortune favors the prepared mind."

If you aren't ready, someone else might be.

Now that I've hopefully convinced you into accepting the necessity of SMM for your local business, here's how to start:



## WHICH SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS ARE BEST FOR YOUR BUSINESS?

Face it, you can't do everything at once.

Well, some companies can (thanks to amazing tools and teams).

To start, however, you should focus on one or two channels first.

Need help selecting the right social media platforms for you?

Here are some tips to decide which networks to focus on.

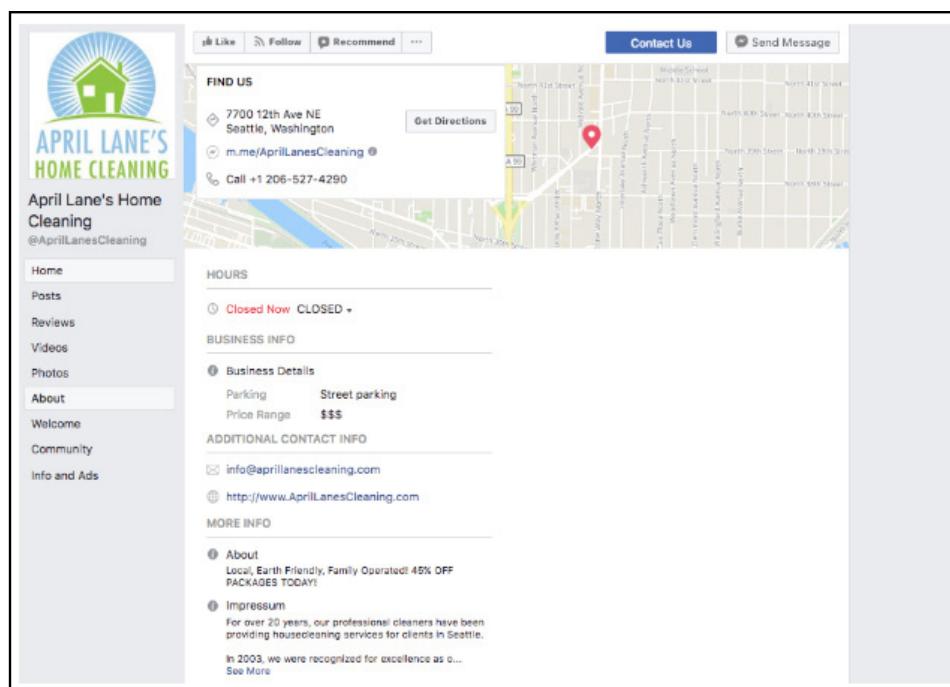
# TYPE OF CONTENT

This can vary, from images and videos to written content.

Let's imagine you're providing plumber or dental services, in which case it's hard to post a few photos per day (compared to restaurants and shops that prefer to focus on visual content).

This means that Instagram won't work for each and every local business, as opposed to Facebook.

I believe that a local business should have a company page on Facebook (see image below) where a potential customer can find all necessary info (i.e., working hours, location, site, and services you provide).



# WHERE & WHEN IS YOUR AUDIENCE MOST ACTIVE?

Having a page on a channel doesn't mean that you need to produce posts on a daily basis.

For instance, if your audience isn't really actively engaging on Facebook, then posting a few times per month should be enough.

However, if you've found out that your current and potential customers are actively engaging with your competitors and industry niche pages, then it's a green light for you, too.

Another thing that's worth checking is Facebook groups. With the help of Facebook closed groups, you can find:

- The most urgent and viral topics.
- What sort of content resonates best with your audience.
- What influences their buying decisions.

The same goes for other social media channels. So research other local businesses on Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, Reddit, and Pinterest.

Here you can find an overview of the [\*\*most popular social media channels\*\*](#) by the number of users.

# WHAT IS YOUR BUDGET?

Take into consideration the number of hours you can invest in this and/or the budget you have.

Nowadays, successful social media managers spend a good amount of time on creating social media posts – but even more hours engaging with their audience.

Conversations and engagement are the main keys to social media success.

Likes and shares won't help your community grow as much as comments and interactions.

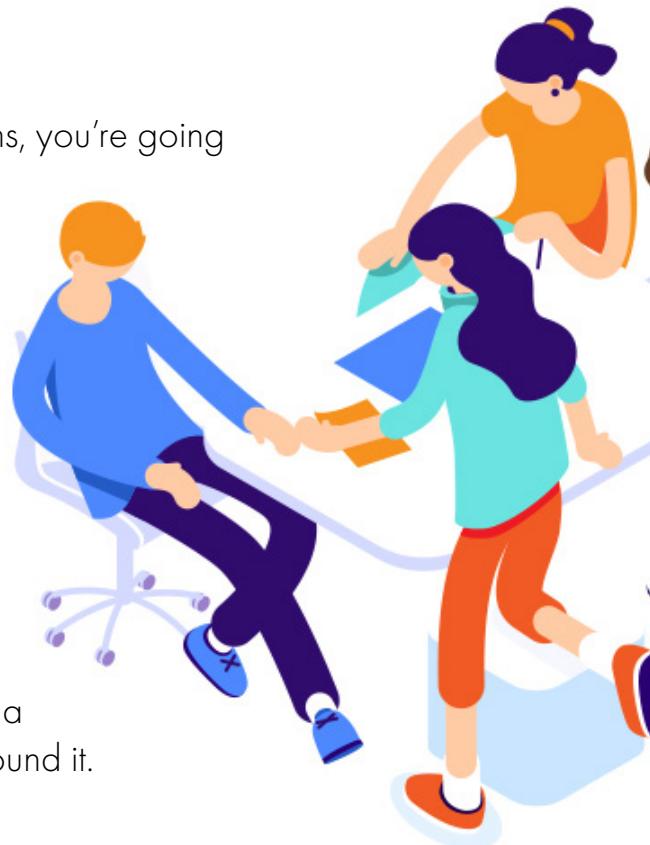
This is why you need to understand whether you have enough resources to be present (e.g., cover just the social media basics, post something from time to time) or active (all the basics, posting daily, plus interacting with and quickly responding to people) on social media.

# CONNECTING YOUR OFFLINE CUSTOMERS WITH YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Once you've selected the right social media platforms, you're going to face another painful issue: your audience is still split between the online and offline world.

This is where all brands are struggling more or less, with clients who are constantly consuming their products but are not a part of their social media community.

You need to connect users who are consuming your products/services offline with your online activity. They can help you grow your presence, leave positive reviews, and connect your business to a location because they are connected to the area around it.



So, how does that work?

Here are a few ideas on how you can do it:

- Ask them to check out your business on social media by giving them a printed card with all your details.
- Make a photo corner where they can make a photo/selfie and showcase of other clients that have already participated in. Remember, social media marketing is 1,000x more effective when it's about your happy customers (not YOU). So put them in the spotlight!
- Create a giveaway.
- Give people a discount on their current purchase/bill if they join your online community.
- Invite them to a special sale that will be running exclusively for your community.

## TAKEAWAY

Being online for businesses has become very, very local.

Everyone on social media is being located, by the things that they like and the things that they do.

Social media marketing can be an effective, fairly low-cost way to create greater visibility for your local business.

So be one of the things that a lot of locals like on their news feed, and more of them will follow.