



## I. PIQC: The Company behind LocalOn

David Tolioupov came up with the idea for a company that would develop a new kind of search engine that utilized user input linked-data rather than traditional text parsing. While on Boston College's 2010 Undergraduate TechTrek West field study, David approached venture capitalists and other entrepreneurs to receive feedback on the idea. He also targeted specific classmates to become involved in the project, which is how Nina Stingo and Andrew Moore came on board.

After returning from TechTrek, David and Andrew managed a 1st place finish in BC's Elevator Pitch Competition. That paved the way for the larger team including Shahbano Imran and Nina to develop a formal business case for the Venture Competition. After many late nights and endless hours of brainstorming and discussion, the PIQC team dazzled an audience of experienced businesspeople and venture capitalists alike. Our 1st place finish in the Venture Competition earned us the "big check" for \$10,000 and the recognition we needed to enter negotiations with angel investors. By the end of the following summer, PIQC had well over \$100,000 in angel investor funding.

After much thought about how the search engine could provide value to sharers and consumers of information, it became apparent that small businesses were a good first target. Many small businesses are struggling and either don't have an online presence or have an ineffective one. Because the new search engine could store precise data within a meaningful structure, it would be possible for small businesses to put their inventory information online. Previously, only large companies could afford to put their real-time inventory information online. This caused small businesses to be left out of the picture when consumers were looking to find specific products very quickly. But that's all changing now.

This small business-focused search engine became LocalOn, with SSEO emerging as a separate product based on the similar underlying data storage methodologies.

## II. LocalOn: Leveling the Playing Field for Small Businesses

### **What is LocalOn?**

LocalOn is an online data-sharing network through which small businesses can effectively and proactively reach local customers.

### **What is the mission of LocalOn?**

The mission of LocalOn is to preserve and enhance local communities nationwide by empowering traditional, independently owned small businesses.

### **How do we intend to accomplish that mission?**

LocalOn offers services that will help small businesses compete more effectively with larger businesses and with each other as well. By enabling these businesses to manage an effective online presence, LocalOn will catapult them into today's hypercompetitive marketplace while emphasizing the unique features that make these businesses special to their respective communities. Furthermore, big retail chains will not be allowed to have product listings or advertisements on LocalOn.

We believe that success in the modern marketplace is dependent on doing three key things, all of which are facilitated by LocalOn:

#### **1. Promote Yourself**

Google Suite - Google Maps / Places / Products

- Social Networks - Facebook
- Major Search Engines - Google, Bing, Yahoo!
- Mobile Information Marketplace - Mobile Phone Apps

#### **2. Get a Professional Look Online**

- Professionally designed website that is aesthetically pleasing
- Customizable without technical experience, more than just a template

### **3. Know Your Local Customers**

- Membership Programs
- Newsletters and Coupons
- Community Spending Patterns

### **4. What services will we offer later?**

- Deep and meaningful analytics
  - Trend analysis within a small business' own inventory history
  - Local consumer spending patterns and demand shifts
- Precise geo-targeting of a business' LocalOn consumer membership base
- Prepaid gift card service for small business

### **5. Custom paid services**

- One-off professionally designed websites & backgrounds
- Increasing the total number of members which LocalOn businesses can have simultaneously

### III. Our Target Audience

Our targeted data contributors are those small businesses that currently do not have an effective online presence consisting of a website and targeted marketing efforts through other online channels. These businesses can also benefit from an enhanced understanding of their customers and the ability to provide them with a greater range of rewards and other enticing options.

In theory, we can provide value to any business with quantifiable data about its products and services. What does “quantifiable” mean? It doesn’t necessarily mean numbers. It means that the information can readily be categorized. Let’s look at this from the perspective of inventory and service businesses.

#### **Inventory holding businesses**

For a bicycle shop, people might want to know about the make, model, size, and color of specific bicycles carried and/or available at the current time. Bicycle helmets are also very important, and can be defined in a similar descriptive style. The store might also carry a number of accessories ranging from tires and brake pads to water bottle holders and safety lights that work with particular bicycles. Information about these items can be stored, but these items can also be related directly to the other products that they compliment.

#### **Service businesses**

A common service based small business is a laundromat/dry cleaner. While these businesses do not carry inventory in any meaningful sense, they provide services that can be described and priced in a way that makes sense to anyone who’s been to a dry cleaner before.

#### **So what isn’t quantifiable?**

Businesses with a job-shop type setup that offer highly complex products or services with a lot of variability are not well suited to LocalOn right now. Generally, anything that requires a quote from a highly experienced employee is out of the question. This could include consulting and similar professional services, custom woodworking, or artistic design work. However, something like a custom print shop that offers preliminary prices for different kinds of jobs might work.

## IV. The Pitch: Getting Local Businesses Online

### What is our goal?

Very simply put, our goal is to get local businesses online. This means getting them to use a LocalOn hosted website, make use of the benefits it offers, and making it an indispensable part of their business.

### Preaching the Cause

Although we want business owners to get on the LocalOn network, it is equally important that they not only make a website, but also understand the benefits it offers. These are:

- Creating an easy to manage an attractive web front for their business.
- Boosting their ranking on search results in major search engines like Google, Yahoo, and Bing.
- Giving them exclusive access to local customers through the LocalOn search engine, which only lists small businesses within a customer's area.

### Elements of the pitch

It's important that the pitch you deliver, both on the phone and in person, is personable, professional, and is about the cause, not the product. Here are a few guidelines to keep in mind:

- When dealing with businesses, refer to yourself as a representative of LocalOn Boston, not LocalOn. Simply by making yourself seem like part of a local business, you give yourself a veneer of credibility and appear more grassroots.
- Emphasize that we are building a network, not disseminating a product
- Stress that we are doing this to help small businesses get customers in their stores
- Show that you understand the plight of small business owners by doing research on regional influences and big chains they might be competing with.

## V. Phases of the Pitch

### Phase 1: Phone Contact

The purpose of your initial phone contact is not to get businesses to sign up over the phone with a lengthy, detailed pitch. Instead, aim to get a **face-to-face meeting** with the manager of the store by delivering a concise and enticing pitch that conveys 3 key messages: We are here to help you, we want to do this by helping you set up your very own website, and we are doing this all for free.

Below is a sample template and flow for a phone conversation. Don't try to follow this script verbatim—instead, use it to get a clear idea of the message you are trying to send and how you are trying to send it.

#### Step 1: Reaching a Manager

LocalOn: Good morning/afternoon/evening, my name is **[your name]** and I am a representative of LocalOn Boston. We're a network of small businesses that helps small businesses, like your **[business type]**, bring more customers to their doorsteps and grow within their community. May I please speak with the manager?

#### Scenario 1a: Manager not available

Small Business Employee: Our manager isn't in at the moment

You: When would be a better time to call back? [Take down relevant contact info and call again at the suggested time.]

#### Scenario 1b: Manager is available: continue to step 2

## Step 2: Pitching the Product

Manager: [answers phone]

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I'm with LocalOn Boston, a network of small businesses that offers completely free tools to help small businesses grow and compete with large chains.

Our goal is to help businesses promote themselves effectively—so we created a new way for them to do this using features like a free website, exclusive listing on our search engine, and other benefits. I was wondering if you have some time to talk about the service and possibly schedule an appointment to talk in person?

### Scenario 1: Manager is interested in hearing more about LocalOn.

Manager: [*Expresses interest*]

LocalOn: As I said before, we are a completely free service aimed at helping you compete with bigger chains like [relevant local big chain] and grow your business. To really stand out to consumers, we give you a free, high-quality website that lists **[all of your store inventory / all of the products you sell]**, **[like your assortment of X]**, for shoppers. We also boost your ranking on Google search results, and in effect, bring many more local customers to your doorstep. We offer all these services with little work on your part—setting up the website is simple and intuitive, and all of the promotion on the Internet is then done automatically using our software.

None of the services we're offering will cost you anything or even require that you give us credit card info—it's all free and has no obligations. Is there a time this week when I could stop by [business name] for 10 minutes to show you our service and possibly help you set up the free website?



Manager: *[Expresses continued interest]*

You: [Set up appointment] Thanks a lot for your time, I will see you then and if you have any questions, you can reach me at [your phone number] or visit LocalOn.com.

**Scenario 2: Manager is not interested in hearing about LocalOn.**

Manager: *[Does not want to talk]*

You: Alright, thanks for your time, and please visit LocalOn.com if you change your mind!

## Phase 2: Face-to-Face Meeting

### 1. Meeting Phase

There are two main things you should seek to accomplish when having a face-to-face meeting with a potential LocalOn member: Get them to commit to creating a website and leave them with a clear understanding of how LocalOn helps their business. To get there, you need to both show them a demo of the product, which we will teach you how to do, and establish a rapport between yourself and the business owner—we want to establish an ongoing dialogue with the businesses that shows we are ready and eager to help them if they have issues using LocalOn. Keep these things in mind:

- Walk in with your computer set up and ready to display the demo. This means closing unnecessary background programs, making sure it is fully charged before you head out, having the demo already primed, and bringing your charger with you.

- Be prepared to not have a sit-down meeting. Most of the managers will be extremely busy individuals and just won't have the time or inclination to have a sit-down meeting with you
- Keep the pitch concise. Try not to drone on about the product, and, as cliché as it is, make sure to be a good listener. The manager's decision won't be based on what you think, but what he thinks.
- Stress the benefits of signing up **now** rather than later. If they do it right there while you are in the store, you can help them get the basics down immediately so they can do the rest by themselves. Additionally, signing up earlier means that they already put themselves ahead of the competition with a more attractive website.
- Business casual, not formal. Although we are professional, there's no need to appear corporate when we are dealing with small business owners. Use your judgment.
- Make sure you emphasize that our product has just launched and may have a few bugs, but that we are always available to help the business with anything they need.
- Never refer to anyone on the network as customers—always refer to them as **partners**.

## VII. The Technical Side of LocalOn: SSEO

### SSEO: An Overview

Traditionally, search engines function primarily by compiling text and basic tags from webpages. This information is gathered as part of an automated process using web crawlers. The information is then indexed, much like the process of creating an index for the back of a textbook. Specific keywords and phrases are then combined with information such as the number of incoming links to determine how pages stack up against each other when determining search results.

The problem that this creates is that large websites tend to dominate search results, and it is difficult to combine specific search terms such as “brown Italian dress shoes near chestnut hill, Massachusetts.” Some larger companies maintain proprietary databases accessible on their website that would be able to perform such a search. However, even these capabilities are limited to consumers who navigate directly to the company's website.



The idea behind SSEO is to describe companies' products using an open framework of ontologies. (basically "dictionaries" used for describing things in a certain domain, or type of information) SSEO has a system to convert companies' data to this new format, which the major search engines have adopted.

### **Advantages of SSEO**

Users will be able to perform searches on Google that can be effectively as precise as searches that are now performed on these companies' own websites. Since the major search engines know that this is a better way of searching through data, they will also rank these results more highly than those that are merely keyword based.

### **SSEO**

1. Website is Listed Naturally by its Content in the major Search Engines
2. Secure a high search engine ranking
3. Utilize social networking and mobile channels effortlessly

## VII. Sales Workflow

Phone Contact		
Is the business already listed in HighRise?	Check the contact history to see if there is already an established relationship between a salesperson. If so, speak to that salesperson before contacting the business	Add the business to HighRise
Has anyone contacted the business yet?	Check the business' HighRise history so you are informed about any deals or correspondence	Refer to the phone script for appropriate procedure:
Action: Call the Business		
Were you able to reach the manager and schedule a meeting?	Set a task with the meeting time and location in HighRise, and name representatives other than yourself who will be going.	Make a note of your correspondence and set a task to call the business back when the manager is around
Did you obtain new contact information for the business?	Add/Edit the new contact info under that business' entry in HighRise	
Note on scheduling:	Try to schedule a meeting that you can make. If you later become unable to make the meeting, you must find someone to cover for you. In the event that you are unable to find a time that works during the coming week, tell the business that you will call back to confirm a meeting time. Then find another member of the sales group who can make that time, and have them call to confirm.	
Log the results of your attempt as a new note in HighRise	Specify the person you talked to and a brief outcome	

## VIII. Work Policies and Bonuses

### Work Policies

- Everyone is expected to work 10 hours a week.
  - This includes phone calls and physical meetings.
- Everyone is expected to preschedule time for both cold-calling and meetings.
  - This is not only to help you budget time in advance for your LocalOn duties but also to help us get a sense for what times we are contacting businesses.
- Make sure to report the amount of time you worked and roughly when you worked in an email to [Marketing@piqc.net](mailto:Marketing@piqc.net)

### Bonuses

- Hard work is rewarded in more way than one. Each month, 2 particularly dedicated and successful LocalOn staff members will be rewarded with a cash bonus of \$100 each. Perseverance, success, creativity, and initiative will all be taken into account. However, no matter who is chosen for a bonus in any particularly month, we want to emphasize that we are first and foremost a team and when LocalOn becomes the next big thing, we all have been and will be a part of it.
- Summer internships with LocalOn will be made available to particularly dedicated staff members, so look forward to that as an opportunity to get even more involved with the organization.

## Staff Directory

### Management Staff

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## Timeline

Date	Goals
Jan. 30 <sup>th</sup>	Prepare Marketing Effort
Feb. 1 <sup>st</sup>	LocalOn Closed Beta Launch & Internal Quality Assurance / Bug Testing Target Small Businesses Cold Calling Begins
Feb. 8 <sup>th</sup>	LocalOn Open Beta Launch In-Person Meetings Begin 1 <sup>st</sup> Business Signup
May 15 <sup>th</sup>	500 <sup>th</sup> Business Signup Target Boston's Historic Companies 1 <sup>st</sup> Customer Signup
June 1 <sup>st</sup>	Angel Investment Bring On Summer Interns 1 <sup>st</sup> Business Signup without Intervention
Aug. 28 <sup>th</sup>	Venture Capital 1 <sup>st</sup> Round Investment End of Beta / Public Full Release Redoubling of Large Scale Marketing Effort