



# The Beginner's Guide to Local Search

Simple strategies every small business owner can use to boost their local search ranking and get found by more customers.



# The Beginner's Guide to Local Search

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# What is Local Search?

When customers use smartphones to look for nearby products or services, make sure they find your business.

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## What is Local Search?

A local search takes place when potential customers look online or on their smartphones for nearby businesses. Search engines use geographic information to provide results based on the customer's

location. The more frequently and consistently your business information appears on reputable sites, the easier it is for local customers to find your business.

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### Search is the new phonebook

You probably remember a time not so long ago when a listing in the yellow pages was all you needed to ensure that local customers could find your business. Today, however, an overwhelming number of

people are using smartphones and mobile web searches to find everything from plumbers and taxi cabs to dog groomers and landscapers.

### What does this mean for *your* business?

Suppose you own a sandwich shop. Naturally, you want people to find your shop when they're hungry. Similarly, if you repair automobiles, you want to be the go-to resource when a potential customer needs

someone to replace a battery or repair a flat tire. Your goal is to make it easy for potential customers to find your product or service at the very moment they need it most.

Find & fix your business listings—and boost your local search ranking!  
**Get started** with Manta's free Online Marketing Report.

## That's where local search comes in

When potential customers use the internet to locate a product or service nearby, it's critical that your business appears in those results. A robust online presence makes that

possible. Best of all, you can play a role in boosting your local search results—without spending a dime.

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**146%** Searches on mobile devices containing the phrase “near me” skyrocketed by 146% in the last year.

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### Good to Know

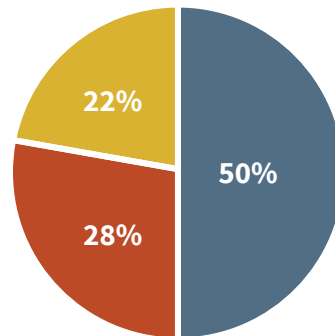
What's the difference between a regular internet search and a local search? Local searches match the customer's geographic data—the physical location of their

smartphone or computer—with the location information of nearby businesses. The results of local searches vary depending on where each search is conducted.

## A missed opportunity

Although it doesn't cost anything to boost your Google presence—and it requires only a small amount of your time—a [Manta poll](#) found that small business owners are not taking advantage of

this powerful marketing opportunity. The results indicated that 50% of small business owners say they don't have the time or money to boost their Google presence, and 28% don't believe it's necessary.

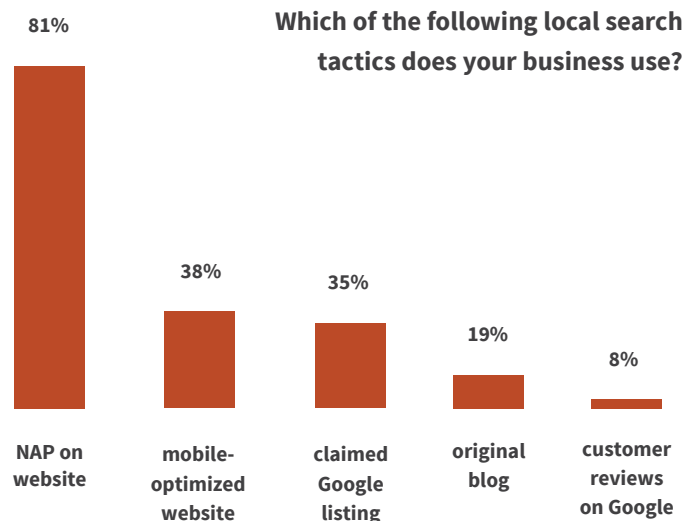


**Why don't you want to boost your business' visibility on Google?**

- I don't have time or money
- Don't need a Google presence
- Satisfied with organic search rankings

Another [Manta poll](#) revealed this lack of commitment. When business owners were asked which local search tactics they have implemented, this is how they responded:

According to these results, business owners are not making local search a priority, and they're missing out on a valuable opportunity to get found by more customers.



## Still not convinced?

If you're still on the fence about the [benefits of local search](#), consider this:

**4 in 5**  
consumers

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use search engines to  
find local information

**18% of**  
local searches

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on a smartphone led to a  
purchase within a day vs.  
7% of non-local searches

**50% of**  
consumers

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who conducted a  
local search on their  
smartphone visited a store  
within a day

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# The Local Three Pack

The most important position  
on a Google search results  
page literally puts small  
businesses on the map.

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# The Local Three Pack

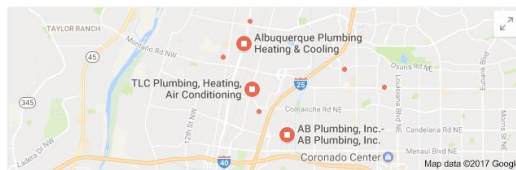
When it comes to showing the results of a Google search, the [Local Three Pack](#) takes center stage. Google's Local Three Pack displays a map and listings for three nearby businesses in a box at the top of location-based search results pages. This makes it easy for searchers to find what they're looking for.

If you're counting on local search to generate leads and reach new customers, the Local Three Pack is where you want to be. Why? Most people don't take the time to look past the top few search results, and rarely will they venture beyond the first page of Google. Basically, that box at the top of the page is like having your business listed on front page of the phone book, alongside only two other businesses.

**24/7 Emergency Plumbing - Affordable Service Plumbing - asph.com**

**[Ad]** [www.asph.com/Emergency/Plumbing](http://www.asph.com/Emergency/Plumbing)

If you require emergency plumbing services 24/7, we're here to help. Contact Us.  
Fast Response. A+ BBB®. See our Online Coupons - Military/Senior Discounts - Re-Piping Services  
Services: Installation, Service, Repair...



Rating ▾ Hours ▾

**Albuquerque Plumbing Heating & Cooling**  
4.0 ★★★★★ (36) - HVAC Contractor  
6145 2nd St NW · (505) 349-4946  
Open 24 hours

WEBSITE

DIRECTIONS

**TLC Plumbing, Heating, Air Conditioning**  
4.1 ★★★★★ (113) - HVAC Contractor  
5000 Edith Blvd NE · (505) 761-9644  
Open 24 hours

WEBSITE

DIRECTIONS

**A.B. Plumbing, Inc. - AB Plumbing, Inc.**  
4.0 ★★★★★ (20) - Plumber  
2931 Vassar Dr NE · (505) 892-4228

WEBSITE

DIRECTIONS

[More places](#)

**25 Best Plumbers - Albuquerque NM - HomeAdvisor - HomeAdvisor.com**

[www.homeadvisor.com](http://www.homeadvisor.com) · Pro Ratings & Reviews · New Mexico · Albuquerque ▾  
Hire the Best Plumbers in Albuquerque, NM on HomeAdvisor. We Have 634 Homeowner Reviews of Top Albuquerque Plumbers. Get Quotes and Book ...

**TLC Plumbing, Heating & AC in Albuquerque & Santa Fe Emergency ...**

<https://www.tlcpumbing.com/> ▾  
TLC Plumbing & Utility's ABQ plumbers & HVAC Techs are available 24/7 for any repair your home or business might need. Call 505-761-9673 for a free ...  
Contact TLC · Residential · Career Opportunities · Santa Fe

**Albuquerque Plumbing, Heating & Cooling**

<https://www.abqplumb.com/> ▾  
Albuquerque's Premier Plumbing, Heating & Cooling.

**Paid:** Identified by the green Ad icon, these are businesses that are paying for a Google AdWords campaign.

**Local Three Pack:** These are the top three local search results.

**Organic:** These results appear because of their relevance to the search terms.

Don't have time to track down every listing on the internet? Manta can **update your listings** automatically on 70+ online directories so you can get back to business.

## All the business info customers need

Listings in the Local Three Pack include all the information customers need to find nearby businesses:

- Reviews
- Address
- Phone number
- Location on map
- Hours
- Website
- Directions

## The right place at the right time

Appearing in Google's Local Three Pack increases the likelihood of getting calls and clicks at the moment nearby customers are shopping for a product or service that you offer.

Although you can take steps to increase your Google presence, there are no guarantees that you will achieve this coveted placement. That's because every search varies according to what Google knows about the person initiating it, and where they are located when conducting the search. However, these strategies can increase your ranking and boost your chances of landing the Local Three Pack:

- Complete a Google My Business profile
- Respond to customer reviews
- Build a consistent presence on business directories across the internet
- Create a mobile-friendly website
- Post local content that's relevant to your customers
- Use keywords
- Localize your landing pages

# 90%

9 in 10 smartphone owners use their phone to get directions, recommendations or other information related to their location.

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## Good to Know

Higher rankings in local search translate to more customer visits, which can increase sales and generate revenue.



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# Google My Business

Manage your small  
business' information  
across all Google platforms  
from a single dashboard.

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# Google My Business

Now that you recognize the value of optimizing your business for local search, you just need to get started. Fortunately, Google makes it easy with [Google My Business](#), a free platform where business

owners can claim and update their listings. From a single dashboard, you can manage how your business appears everywhere on the search engine and other Google sites.

## Claim your Google My Business listing

Start by setting up your Google My Business profile. Be sure to complete all fields, including your address, phone number and business hours. This will help your business show up in:

- Google search engine results
- Google local search results
- Google Maps results
- Google reviews

The information in your business profile will automatically be updated across all Google products. Google uses it to determine your location and connect it with the location of potential customers in local searches.



## Good to Know

You can manage up to 10 business locations from a single Google My Business profile. For more than 10, use the [Google My Business locations dashboard](#).

## Using the Google My Business dashboard

With Google My Business you can add or update the following information about your company:

- Business name, address and phone number (NAP)
- Business hours
- Geographic information for each location
- Photos of your location and staff, your logo and videos
- Description of your business
- Business category

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It's important that your NAP information is consistent on all online directories. This makes it easier for the search engine to find and verify your business listing as it crawls and indexes the massive amount of information on the internet. Just as you would consistently represent your business on stationery, signs and other branding materials, it's important that everything is consistent on the internet as well.

- If your business is located at 123 South Water Street, don't use 123 S. Water St. on some sites.
- If your business name is John Jones Financial Planning LLC, don't forget to use the LLC in every reference.
- Susie's Cupcake Factory shouldn't be referred to on some sites as Susie's Cupcakes, and so on.

**You get the idea!**



### Good to Know

Since Google indexes your NAP information from various sources across the internet, consistency helps increase your online visibility.

## Verify it!

When you set up a Google My Business profile, Google requires you to verify the business and ensure that you are the company's verified representative. This can be done by phone or postcard. Either way, you'll receive a code, which gives you control of the listing.

## Need to transfer ownership?

If an employee or someone else in the company already claimed your Google My Business listing, you can request to transfer ownership. Or, you can arrange to have that person add you to the account as a listing manager.

## Boost Your Google Listing

Here are a few pro tips for getting the biggest boost from your Google My Business profile:

**Tip #1:** Use a unique business description to increase visibility on the search engines.

**Tip #2:** Make the most of your profile by adding a hyperlink in the description.

**Tip #3:** Choose the correct business category to make sure you're matched with the right types of search traffic.

## Say no to duplicate listings

If you have more than one listing for the same business location, this can negatively affect your local ranking. The same is true of outdated or inaccurate information. To remedy the problem, simply merge or close out the duplicates. Here's how:

1. Delete the old listing.
2. Send a message to the support staff at Google My Business via Facebook or Twitter. Or, you can start a chat, ask for a phone call or send an email.
3. Ask them to move the old listing (include the URL) to the current listing (include URL).

## Let photos tell the story

High-resolution images can do wonders for your business profile, so don't be afraid to include them. Great content improves the user experience, which helps to ensure that Google will position your business ahead of the competition, and photos are the fastest way to get customers' attention.

Once you've added photos to your Google My Business profile, they will automatically

be added to Google Maps and search results. We live in a visual world, and people naturally identify with captivating images. Start by adding photos of:

- Employees
- Your company logo
- Storefront exterior or sign
- The interior of your location
- Products or completed projects



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# Customer Reviews

Online reviews build your small business' online reputation and boost your ranking on search engines.

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## Customer Reviews

A smart way to increase your online presence is by encouraging and managing online customer reviews. These online reviews not only help people decide where to do business—they also boost your search ranking!

Google reviews appear on your Google My Business profile, with a one- to five-star rating based on the number of positive ratings you receive. In addition to Google, customers can leave a review on Facebook, Yelp and other social media sites.

The screenshot shows a Google My Business profile for "Lindey's" located at 169 E Beck St, Columbus, OH. The profile has a 4.4-star rating based on 247 reviews. A "Write a review" button is visible in the top right corner. Below the rating, there are three reviews listed:

- Wendy Y.** (2 weeks ago): 5 stars. Review text: "Going to Lindey's was part of my 48th birthday present from my husband. We went on recommendation of a friend who adores the place. IT WAS PERFECT! We had an elegant 5 course meal which included appetizer, soup, salad & main course then ... [More](#)". There is a "Helpful?" button below the review.
- Ray Floyd** (2 months ago): 5 stars. Review text: "I took my wife here on our first date. She really enjoyed it and this was a rewarding experience for her. I enjoyed the services provided to me, and the food was of good quality. If you order the wing platter..make sure you tell them to ... [More](#)". There is a "Helpful?" button below the review.
- Paul Hoy** (2 months ago): No star rating visible. Review text is partially obscured.

On the right side of the profile, there is a "Sort by: Most helpful" dropdown menu and a "Typically spend 1-2 hours" bar chart. At the bottom right, there is a "Send" button.

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“ Customer reviews are a trust indicator. If you get customers to review and talk about your business, you add trust. But that trust has to be legitimate; it can’t be fake.”

— Harlan Beverly,  
University of Texas  
McCombs School  
of Business

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## The voice of the customer

Not sure how to get good reviews? Start by asking your most satisfied customers. When you know someone is happy with your product or service, that’s the best time to request it. You can ask customers when they’re about to leave your office or when you’re leaving an appointment. Some businesses ask for reviews during customer phone calls, or they make the request in newsletters and invoices.

Although most people are inclined to leave a review when they’ve had a bad experience, that doesn’t mean they aren’t willing to share their positive experiences as well. It’s usually just a matter of bringing it to their attention.

## Your response matters

Too often, business owners are afraid of reviews—especially bad ones. While it’s understandable that a bad review can be upsetting, it doesn’t help to ignore the situation. A better approach is to respond to all reviews—both the good and the bad. This shows that you value customer feedback, and it provides a way to connect with existing and potential customers.

## Do's & Don'ts of Responding to Reviews

Before you respond to online reviews, pay close attention to the following do's and don'ts.

### Do's

Find your happy place before you respond.

Respond consistently and quickly; if you wait too long, it gives the impression that you're not responsive.

Stay calm and courteous.

Begin by apologizing for the reviewer's unsatisfactory experience.

Take the conversation offline by providing your phone number and email.

### Don'ts

Attempt to publicly debate the person who left the review.

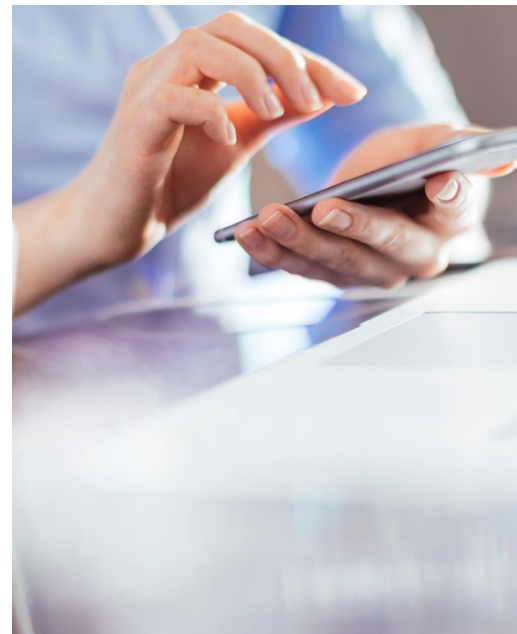
Over-apologize. Simply state that you're sorry about their unsatisfactory experience with your business.

Ignore a bad review, hoping that it will go away. This can be more harmful than the initial review.

## Ready to respond?

Many small business owners fail to respond to reviews simply because they don't know how, or they think it may be too time-consuming. This easy, five-step approach should help:

1. Sign in to your Google My Business account.
2. Click "Manage location" to select the proper location.
3. Look for the "Reviews" option and click "Inbox."
4. Select the review and click "View."
5. Write your response and then click "Submit."



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# Business Listings

Increase the online visibility of your business while sending a message to Google that your business is trusted, relevant and worthy of attention.

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## Business Listings

The importance of establishing a robust online presence cannot be overstated. According to Google, local searches lead 50% of mobile users to visit a store within a day of their search. Your goal should be to make your business as visible as possible. In addition to establishing your Google My Business profile, you can:

- Set up your business listing on secondary search sites like Bing and Yahoo
- Claim your listings on social media sites like Facebook and Yelp
- Claim your listings on local business directories like Citysearch and Superpages
- Claim your listings on maps and mobile apps like MapQuest and Foursquare

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By taking these steps, you can increase the online visibility of your business while sending a message to Google that your business is trusted, relevant and worthy of attention.



### Good to Know

How many sites on the internet display your business information? At Manta we track more than 70 websites that have business listing directories. To maximize your local search ranking, it's essential for all of these listings to be correct.

## Local results may vary

Keep in mind that any search will yield varied results. For instance, if someone uses their smartphone or other mobile device to search for a bakery, a list of nearby bakeries will appear. But the search results may also include other business listings and profiles where those bakeries appear, such as Yelp, Facebook, Manta, and more.

For this reason, you should extend your presence to as many of these sites as possible. But don't get too fancy when describing your business. Keep it simple so potential customers understand what you do.

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“ Business listings are the modern-day version of hanging out your shingle. If you don't ‘put your sign out,’ no one will know what you do.”

— Harlan Beverly, University  
of Texas McCombs School  
of Business



## Secondary Search Sites

Google may be huge, but it's not the only player in town. Various secondary search sites, such as Bing, Yahoo and Yelp, also play a significant role. At the same time, social media sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook are also participating in the local search game. Many of these sites also include a platform for consumer reviews.

## Citations

A citation is any mention of your business on another webpage. It may or may not include a link to your website, if you have one. When your business name—with or without your phone number and address—appears on a well-established site, it improves your credibility. This could help you rank higher in local search results.

## Local Listings

A business listing is a structured citation. It occurs when your business name and address appear in an online directory, such as Manta, yellowpages.com or your local chamber of commerce.

Not sure where to begin? These tips will help:

- Make sure your business listing is included in the online directories of any industry association or chamber of commerce where you are a member.
- Add your business listing to local directories like whitepages.com and yellowpages.com. This is especially important for businesses that don't have a website since it gives the search engines another way to find you.
- Avoid business listings that charge a fee for adding your business information. Exceptions to this rule include the Better Business Bureau, industry associations and your local chamber of commerce or a similar local business directory.
- Include a web link that leads back to your business website, whenever possible. Google recognizes these connections, and then uses that information to gauge the relevance of your website.

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# Local Keywords

Make sure your site contains  
the words and phrases  
customers use to search for  
a business like yours.

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## Local Keywords

Gone are the days of puffing up your search ranking by stuffing your web pages with every possible keyword that comes to mind, a practice that Google can easily detect and dismiss. Today, with more people using mobile devices to find businesses, the focus is shifting to more location-specific searches. Keywords are still important. But the search engines are more sophisticated, so you need to adopt a more up-to-date strategy to improve your search ranking.

### Think like the customer

To select the right keywords, you need to first understand your target audience of existing and potential customers. Begin by conducting research about your customers and compiling a list of search terms they might use.

### It's personal

In the past, searches were not as personalized as they are today, so they didn't vary much based on the location of the person initiating them. But now that Google is more focused on local searches, the results favor businesses with local listings near the person who's conducting the search. Remember that Google provides results based on the searcher's location, so everyone sees different results.

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### Worth the Wait

Be patient! Your efforts to improve your local search ranking will take some time, as Google and other search engines crawl the web and update their indexes. It takes about three to six months to see the results—but the return on investment is high.

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Don't have time to track down every listing on the internet? Manta can **update your listings** automatically on 70+ online directories so you can get back to business.

## Stay ahead of the competition

Small business owners often struggle to compete with bigger, more recognizable brands. By adopting a keyword strategy that uses less-competitive search terms, you will be in a better position to attract potential customers.

- 1 Add location-specific keywords to compete with national brands.** This includes the city, state or neighborhood where your business is located.

### EXAMPLE

bakery in German Village  
Columbus Ohio

- 2 Use long-tail keywords to reach your target audience.** It's hard to be competitive with single-word or short-phrase keyword searches, especially if you're a small business. But you can overcome this challenge by developing longer, more specific action phrases that customers are likely to use.

Because long-tail keywords are more detailed, they improve your local rankings for the most applicable searches. With long-tail keywords, you won't draw as much traffic, but the traffic that comes your way will be more focused and committed.

### EXAMPLE

24-hour donuts German Village  
Columbus Ohio



## Good to Know

Long-tail keywords can improve your overall search-engine optimization ([SEO](#)). Even when someone searches for your business from a faraway location, these detailed keywords will make it easier for them to find you.

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# Local Content

Give customers what they're looking for by posting relevant content on your small business website.

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## Local Content

Content refers to any writing, photos, videos or blogs published on your business website and social media profiles. Posting high-quality content that is relevant to your customers will boost your local search results and your social following, and it will keep customers coming back to your company website.

### Keep these tips in mind:

- Form a trusted relationship with your customers as they move through their purchasing journey.
- Be there when potential customers are searching for your products or services online.
- Engage web visitors and social media followers with useful, relevant content.
- Convert visitors and followers into customers and then nurture long-term relationships.

Above all, make sure your website is mobile-friendly. A site that is not mobile-responsive is a sign of poor quality.



### Good to Know

Customers are more likely to engage with and share high-quality content that provides value. Take it to the next level with useful content that includes local events, news or advice.

## What is good content?

Although it may be tempting to weave as many keywords into your content as possible, that's not the smartest approach. Instead, write high-quality content that provides value and naturally engages the reader. The goal is to keep them coming back for more. To get started:

- Add your business name, location, phone and hours of operation to the pages of your website.
- Create high-return content, such as an About Us page, a helpful FAQ page and a separate page for each service offering.
- Publish a blog on your website so you can position yourself as an expert in your field and share that expertise with your customers. Feature topics that are relevant to local customers, and include your city, state or neighborhood in the text and title of your blog.
- Make sure your content is concise.
- Use plenty of high-quality graphics and images.



### Good to Know

Keep text and images separate. Placing important information, such as your NAP, into an image means that it will not be accessible.

“ If you are purely a local business, your strategy should focus on the content you provide on your ‘shingles’ (business listings).”

— Harlan Beverly, University of Texas  
McCombs School of Business

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## Localize your landing pages

Another way to boost your local search ranking is to make sure your website includes mobile-friendly landing pages. A landing page is any web page that visitors land on when they visit your website. In most cases, it will be your home page. But it could also include category pages and product pages.

Here's what you can do:

1

List the city where you do business in the title and content of your home page (in addition to the name of your business). If you're located in a neighborhood, that's even better.

GOOD: New York City

BETTER: Greenwich Village

2

Include a separate landing page on your website for every city you serve. And make sure the name of that city appears in the page title (in addition to the name of your business).

3

Ensure that your landing pages are optimized for mobile devices. You want the website to display correctly on hand-held devices like smartphones and tablets.

Make sure your business info is correct everywhere on the internet. Check Manta's **free Online Marketing Report** to find out which listings you need to claim and update.





## Create category pages

Sometimes, customers know what they're looking for. They just aren't sure where to find it. A category page is a separate landing page for each product or service category your business offers. Category pages can help you rank higher in search for terms that are associated with specific products and services. For instance, a landscape designer might have separate category pages for Outdoor Kitchens, Patios, Flower Gardens and Pool Decks; each of these pages would serve as search-optimized landing pages for customers looking for those services.

Here's what you can do:

1

Don't duplicate the content. Instead, write original content for each category page—even if the products or services are similar in nature. Duplicate text not only makes it difficult for Google to determine which page should rank higher, but original content does a better job of improving your search ranking.

2

Link internally to related categories and products. This increases your chances of selling more by showing your customers similar products and services.

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# Mobile Searches

Most customers are searching for you with their smartphones. Make sure your business is easy to find.

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## Mobile Searches

There are a lot of reasons why everyone seems to be gazing at their smartphones these days. One might be that they're looking for a place to eat or shop, or they're trying to locate a particular product or service. Their search results will vary based on the location of their smartphone. Safety issues aside, searching on a mobile device has all but replaced the phonebook and landline. Here's how small business owners can get on board with this new approach:

### 1

Add geo-location data to your business listings. This puts your business on Google Maps, for instance, which can then use your geotag to help target potential customers when they're in the area and looking for products and services you offer.

### 2

Include a click-to-call button on your website. This makes it easy for customers to call you directly from their smartphone without having to re-enter your number.



## Mobile Search Terms

### Near me search:

This occurs when potential customers use a smartphone map app, Google or Bing to search for a nearby product or service. The results are determined by their smartphone location data.

### Geotagging:

This is what happens when you add geographical location data to your content, social media updates and other pieces of media.

### Geolocation metadata:

This data, which makes it possible to tag content with its location, allows your business to show up in near me searches on smartphones.

### Click-to-call buttons:

When added to your website, this button allows customers to conveniently tap their smartphone to connect with your business. With one, quick call, they can schedule an appointment or inquire about hours and specific product or service details.



## Good to Know

WordPress and other major content management platforms let you add a click-to-call button to your website by installing a call-button plug-in. If you have a custom-built HTML site, simply download and embed a button's source code from companies like Twilio or eVoice.

## Manta helps customers find your small business.



News & Advice



The Academy



Claim Your Listing



Free Marketing Report

Manta empowers small business owners to succeed on their own terms by helping them stand out, connect with customers and grow their companies. Our solutions include a small business directory with millions of unique monthly visitors, valuable content and a suite of products to

manage critical business needs. We strive to inform and inspire through learning opportunities, proprietary research, and a robust online community for dialogue and collaboration. Thousands of business owners join Manta each month. Visit [manta.com](http://manta.com) to learn why.