



# Public Website: VA Search – Local Listings

September 2020

# Agenda

- TBD
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# The State of Local Search

90%

of consumers  
use search to  
find local  
information  
(includes Google, Bing,  
Yelp, etc.)

46%

of Google  
searches are  
for local  
businesses  
(includes searches  
via Google maps)

1.5B

searches are  
conducted on  
Facebook  
daily  
(3.5B on Google)

88%

of consumers  
trust online  
reviews as much  
as personal  
recommendations

39%

of smart  
speaker users  
use it to search  
for local  
business info

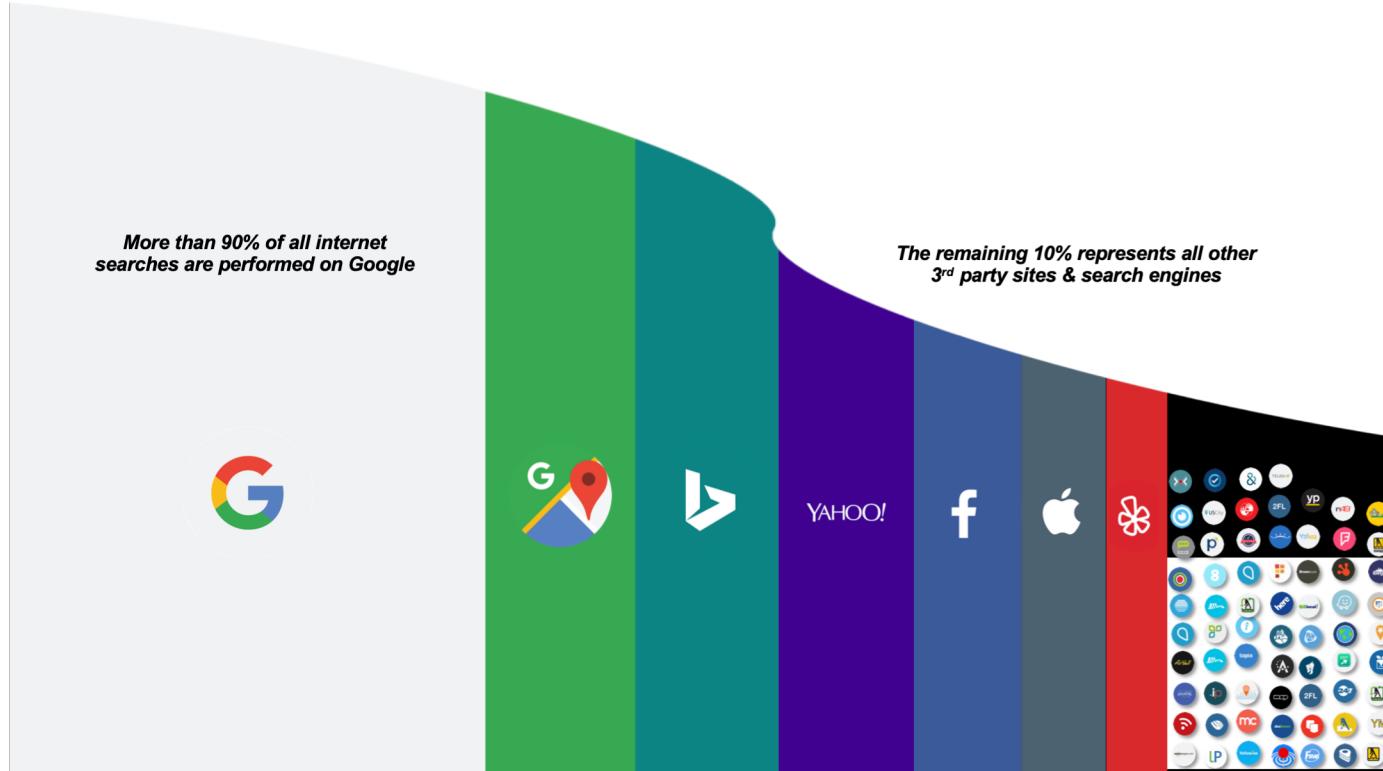
# What is Local Search? (It's not just Google)



# And they feed each other ...



# Still, the king of the mountain is ...



# How Google shows local search results

## The Local Pack

The three Google listings that appear beneath the map when someone searches for a business in and around a location (e.g., *maine va clinic*)

A screenshot of a Google search results page for the query "maine va clinic". At the top, there's a COVID-19 alert message. Below it, the Local Pack displays three cards:

- A Saco VA Clinic**: Located in Saco, ME. It's open from 8:00AM to 4:30PM. It has a "Website" and "Directions" link.
- B Portland VA Clinic**: Located in Portland, ME. It's open from 8:00AM to 4:00PM. It has a "Website" and "Directions" link.
- C VA Main Bangor**: Located in Bangor, ME. It's open from 8:00AM to 4:00PM. It has a "Website" and "Directions" link.

Below the Local Pack is a larger map showing the locations of these clinics across Maine and New Hampshire. The map includes labels for cities like Portland, Saco, and Bangor, and surrounding areas like Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

## Google Knowledge Graph

The box containing photos, reviews, operating details at the top right of search results when someone performs a branded search for your business (e.g. when they search your business name)

A screenshot of a Google search results page for the query "atlanta va medical center". The Knowledge Graph box on the right side contains the following information:

- Atlanta VA Arcadia Clinic**: A medical clinic in North Decatur, Georgia. It has a 4.3-star rating from 41 Google reviews. The address is 250 N Arcadia Ave, Decatur, GA 30002. It's open from 8:00AM to 4:00PM and closes at 4:00PM. The phone number is (404) 329-2222.
- Events**: An event titled "Fri, Aug 28 - Veteran Food Assistance" is listed.
- COVID-19 alert**: A message stating that if you think you have been exposed to COVID-19 and develop a fever and symptoms, such as cough or difficulty breathing, call your healthcare provider for medical advice.

## Google TOC Listing

An expanded "table of contents" listing with links to key sections of the entity's Web site (algorithmic based on data quality)

A screenshot of a Google search results page for the query "atlanta va medical center". The TOC Listing on the right side contains the following links:

- Phone Directory**: Provides a search interface for phone numbers.
- Directions**: Offers driving directions from the South and West on I-85 North.
- Jobs & Careers**: Links to job opportunities.
- Services**: Strives to improve the health of men and women who have...
- Locations & Directions**: Contact your local VA facility.

At the bottom of the TOC listing, there are links to "More results from va.gov" and "www.va.gov / find-locations / facility / vha\_508 \* Atlanta VA Medical Center | Veterans Affairs".

# How is VA doing in Local Search?

## Atlanta

Google search results for "atlanta va medical center". The top result is a COVID-19 alert from the CDC. Below it is a snippet for "Atlanta VA Health Care System" with a map and a "See outside" link. The main listing for "Atlanta VA Medical Center" shows a building image, directions, and a Google review section. A sidebar lists "Phone Directory", "Directions", "Services", "Locations & Directions", and a COVID-19 testing center notice.

## New Orleans

Google search results for "new orleans va medical center". The top result is a COVID-19 alert. Below it is a snippet for "New Orleans VA Medical Center" with a map and a "See outside" link. The main listing for "Va Medical Center New Orleans: Gaines Camryn W MD" shows a map, directions, and a "Rating" section. A sidebar lists "Website", "Directions", and "Online care".



Across the Local Listings universe (Google, FB, Yelp, Yahoo, MapQuest, etc.)

- 75% have name mismatches
- 50% have phone number mismatches
- 9% have address mismatches
- 100% locations are missing reviews

Source: Yext Knowledge Scan (August 2020)  
<https://www.yext.com/knowledge/10mvwg/VAClinic#overview>

# What makes a “good” Google search result?

The screenshot shows a local search result for "IHA Howell Primary Care". Key features highlighted include:

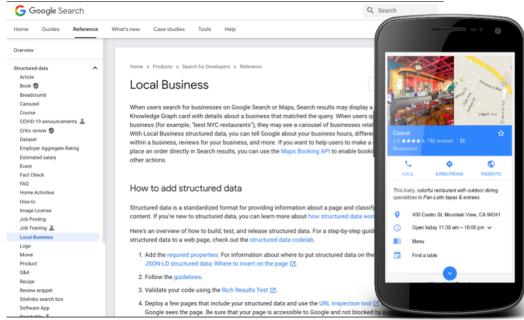
- Photo Gallery**: Two images showing the exterior of the building and a street view.
- Specific Category**: A callout pointing to the text "Medical clinic in Howell, Michigan".
- COVID Info & Online Care links**: Links to COVID-19 info and online care services.
- Facility Description (with search optimized keywords)**: A detailed description of the practice's mission and patient-centered care.
- Appointment Booking URL**: The URL [inquierer.com](http://inquierer.com) for appointments.
- Reviews**: 2.4 stars from 30 reviews.
- Contact Information**: Address (202 W Highland Rd, Howell, MI 48843), hours (Open - Closes 5PM), phone (517) 234-6540, and website (ihacares.com).

The screenshot shows a search result for "Ahmad Mizyed, MD". Key features highlighted include:

- Profile Information**: Name, address (5325 Elliott Dr Second Floor, Ypsilanti, MI 48197), hours (Open - Closes 5PM), phone ((734) 712-8000), and appointment booking (ihacares.com).
- Questions & answers**: A section for users to ask questions, with a link to "Ask a question".
- Facility Description**: A bio for Dr. Mizyed, mentioning his membership in the American College of Cardiology and interests in advanced heart failure and transplant cardiology.
- Image**: A photo of Dr. Mizyed and the IHA logo.

# How do we get there?

## Structured Data



Google Search interface showing a search result for "Local Business". The result includes a Knowledge Graph card with a photo of a restaurant interior, the name "Pan-Latin Tapas & arepas", a rating of 4.5 stars, 760 reviews, and a distance of 31m. Below the card, there's a snippet about how to add structured data.

**How to add structured data**

Structured data is a standardized format for providing information about a page and classifying content. If you're new to structured data, you can learn more about [how structured data works](#). Here's an overview of how to build, test, and release structured data. For a step-by-step guide to structured data as a web page, check out the [structured data cookbook](#).

- Add the required properties. For information about where to put structured data on the [JSON-LD structured data](#), Where to insert on the page.
2. Test your code.
3. Validate your code using the [Rich Results Test](#).
4. Deploy a few pages that include your structured data and use the [URL Inspection tool](#) to see if Google sees the page. Be sure that your page is accessible to Google and not blocked by a robots.txt file.

Google: <https://developers.google.com/search/docs/data-types/local-business#structured-data-type-definitions>  
Schema.org: <https://schema.org/MedicalClinic>

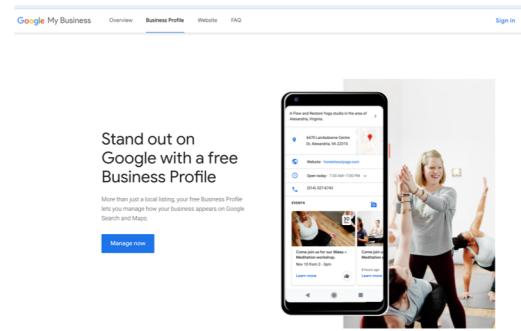
### Pros:

- We control, relatively easy to implement

### Cons:

- Google, Bing specific
- DEPO has to manage listings data

## Google My Business



Google My Business interface showing a business profile for "ACE Yoga & Meditation Centre". The profile includes a photo of a woman in a yoga pose, the address "400 Castro St, Mountain View, CA 94031", operating hours "Open today 11:30 am - 10:00 pm", and a "Find a table" button. A mobile phone screen shows the same profile.

**Stand out on Google with a free Business Profile**

More than just a local listing, your free Business Profile lets you manage how your business appears on Google Search and Maps.

[Manage now](#)

Manual Bulk verification:

<https://support.google.com/business/answer/4490296?hl=en>

API: <https://support.google.com/business/answer/6333473?hl=en>

### Pros:

- We control, relatively easy to implement
- Should pair with structured data

### Cons:

- Google-specific
- DEPO has to manage listings data

## Local Listings Service



### Pros:

- Covers entire search space (FB, Alexa, etc.) with direct integrations
- Real Time updates; duplicate
- Performance dashboard

### Cons:

- Cost: est. ~\$250K per year annual (\$200 per location/entity)
- Data implementation required

# Why is local search important?

Findability

Accuracy,  
Reliability

Operational  
Efficiency

Satisfaction  
& Trust



Increase the use of self-service tools, focusing on services most important to Veterans

Decrease the time users spend waiting for an outcome

Consistently deliver a satisfying, reliable, and secure online experience.

# Next steps

- Address any top-line questions to make sure the business case presentation is well-articulated and illustrated
- Present to DEPO and VHA key players to ensure there is understanding of the problem space – and a desire to pursue a solution.
- Key questions to be addressed with strategic leaders:
  - Is centralizing management of Google My Business listings organizationally feasible/acceptable
  - Is there more value in a third-party listings service to justify the OpEx investment?