

The Ultimate Guide to becoming a Local SEO PRO

Hi and welcome to the ultimate guide to Local SEO. You're about to embark on the first step of your journey to becoming a Local SEO expert, as we share the latest, cutting edge techniques to take you from beginner to pro. The good news is, you don't need to have any prior knowledge of Local SEO to become a local search master, as with our easy and fast unique learning format, we'll break down every important aspect into easily digestible sections.

In this course, you'll learn ALL the essential factors that make up a good Local SEO strategy, including keyword research, Google Maps, the importance of Google My Business and more. You'll learn how to optimise your website to push it onto the first page of Google, how behavioural signals can affect your local search score, and how to get more in-bound links and NAP citations to push you up the ranks.

With our help, you'll know everything you need to about Local SEO, and will be armed with solid strategies, so you can improve your approach and increase your local search position.

Using high quality video explainers, you can watch as we demonstrate core techniques, so you can see in real time how to set everything up for success. You'll access animated videos that will break down the most important aspects, and help you quickly learn, so you can put everything we teach into practice.

All you need to do is be ready to learn, hungry for success, and determined to succeed. If you meet those three criteria, and you complete this course, you will have the right tools for great success. Whether you're a local business owner, looking to attract more visitors to your website, or a marketer who wants to promote local brands, with this comprehensive course, you'll learn PRO techniques and strategies that will dramatically improve your Local SEO approach.

Why is Local SEO important?

Did you know that four out of five consumers now perform local searches? If your business doesn't have a solid Local SEO strategy in place, you'll be losing out on 80% of your potential customers.

On top of this 46% of *all* Google searches are now done with local intent, so it's crucial to adopt an effective Local SEO strategy if you want to maximise the chance of your business being discovered.

As 72% of all local searchers will go on to visit a business within five miles of their location, you'll miss out on a lot of custom if users can't find you, or don't know you exist.

Local SEO isn't just about making sure your address information is correctly displayed, or you have a listing on Yelp or Google My Business, although that's important. It incorporates a combination of equally important factors, from keywords, to building inbound backlinks and optimising your website for local search, right through to your online reviews and social media content and engagement.

In this video, we will go into the most essential things you need to know to adopt a good SEO strategy. We will help you lay down strong foundations, that you will build on later in this course, in more in-depth explainer and animated videos. Be prepared to put in a little effort, but if you don't get where you want to be straight away, remember, NEVER be discouraged, as it takes everyone a little time to see success.

If you are prepared to learn and apply the information we share, you WILL be successful, providing you're determined to do well. With this course, you are at an excellent advantage, as we've drawn

on our years of SEO experience, to create materials that will ensure your ultimate success. Ready to get started on your journey to becoming a local search master?

Keep watching as we take a dive into the MOST important things you need to know...

What is Local SEO?

Local SEO is the art of optimising the online visibility and discoverability of your business, to customers in your physical location. It also helps online potential customers to find out where your business is located, in real life. Local SEO has a lot in common with normal SEO, but includes the promotion of your location information, which you will need to optimise your strategy around.

When Google ranks websites for Local SEO, it examines normal SEO ranking factors AND a set of unique Local search factors. You need to score highly in BOTH, to do well in Local search.

Google's Local search ranking factors:

- Where a person is searching from
- The amount of Name Address Phone Number citations your business has
- Whether you have a Google My Business listing
- Your Google My Business Profile Keywords
- How many positive or negative online reviews your business has
- What keywords are used in your online reviews
- How many "check-ins" your business has received (and how long people stay at your location)
- How many times your local business has been shared on social media
- Your brand's Google Maps star rating
- Other behavioural factors like purchases

There are also some other key things you will need to do if you want to be successful with Local SEO, that you wouldn't have to bother with if you had a purely online brand. For best results, you must optimise for the Google MAP Pack, get visible on relevant local review sites, and use research tools like Yelp and Google Suggest to select the best keywords to pair with your location word.

Ultimately, your goal should be to rank high in local search. You can achieve this by following the tips and strategies in this video, and on this course. Doing this will help you tweak your approach, so that *every* time someone searches for a business like yours in your area, you appear at the top.

Google MAP Pack and Organic Local Search Results

When Google users make a local search, typically a keyword followed by a location, like "plumbers London", Google returns three different types of results:

- Sponsored Ads
- MAP Pack Results
- Organic Search Results

In this video, we'll be explaining how the last two types - MAP Pack, and Organic Search - impact your rankings, and laying out the factors you need to optimise to improve your local search score.

What is the Google MAP Pack?

Google uses the MAP Pack to return results back to you based on your nearness to their location. It displays the location of these results in the form of a map and pulls the top three nearest your location. The MAP Pack is a superb chance to generate tons of calls or website visits, as Google displays a call icon with results if users are on a mobile, or a website icon to desktop or laptop searchers.

How to rank well with the Google Map Pack

There are several key factors you need to optimise if you want to rank well in the MAP Pack.

Google My Business – Google pulls info from your Google My Business profile to analyse your proximity, categories, and keywords, like the keywords used in your business title. It's important to put the *most* important keywords in your title as well as your description. You should also try and keep the photos on your Google My Business profile fresh and updated.

Links – Google assesses your inbound anchor text, as well as your linking domain authority, and quantity.

Reviews – Google will look at the quantity and quality of reviews you have, as well as their diversity, and the speed with which you acquire new reviews. Reviews have never been so important to rank well on Google. To put you in 1st position, Google needs to see that your customers are happy, and that you are the right match for local searchers. Google also considers reviews on Trip Advisor, Yelp, and Facebook, as well as Google My Business reviews.

On-Page – Google reviews your NAP data (Name, Address, Phone Number), looks at the keywords you have in your titles, and assesses your domain authority.

Citations – Google will analyse your IYP (Internet Yellow Pages) listing, as well as the amount of accurate Name, Address, Phone number citations your business has on other websites.

In this video, you'll learn what each of the MAP pack ranking factors are, and why they are important to your Local SEO strategy. You'll also discover how to boost them, so you can appear higher in search results.

Google has confirmed that to rank well in the MAP pack, you also need to do well in organic search results. This means you need to score highly on Google's traditional ranking factors too, so as well as improving your local search markers, you *must* follow normal good SEO practise as well.

Analyse your MAP Pack performance

To track how you are performing in the Google Map Pack you can use the free tools Local Viking or Local Falcon, which let you get granular with your search results, so you can see where you really rank. This is important, as your MAP Pack ranking can change depending on the information entered, even sometimes from street to street.

What are Organic Local Search Results?

How to rank well in Organic Local Search Results

If you want to appear higher in local organic search results within Google, there are some important factors you need to optimise.

Links – Google checks your inbound anchor text, your linking Domain authority, and your linking domain quantity.

On-Page— Google looks for the presence of Name, Address, Phone number data, checks the keywords in your titles, and reviews your domain authority. To score you highly, Google needs to be able to easily find clear contact information on all your website and business social media profiles. If you have a local business, pay special attention to your contact and how to find us pages, and *always* make sure you include both on your website.

Behavioural — Google assesses your clickthrough rate, looks at your mobile to call rate, and analyses your check ins.

Google My Business — Google reviews your business’s proximity, your stated categories, and your keywords, including the keyword in your business title.

Citations — Google weighs up your Internet Yellow Pages (IYP) listing and looks at the amount of Name Address Phone Number (NAP) citation mentions your business has.

More on ranking well in Organic Local Search

If you have a local business, the most important thing to remember is that although you want to rank high in the Map Pack, Organic search is still important.

To optimise your organic local search rankings, you need to optimise your normal search ranking too, just as you do if you want to boost your MAP pack ranking. That means you must do all the things you usually would if you were looking to boost to your search results, only with the addition of your location information.

Make sure your website speed and image compression are optimal, your title and metadata are accurate and relevant, and your keywords are carefully chosen. Optimise your website layout so people can easily find the information they need and create high value content with high authority backlinks.

In this course, you’ll learn how to optimise your website for both local and traditional search, so you can rise higher in local search results and get discovered by more people searching for brands in your sector and area.

Keyword Research

Google Keyword Planner

Google’s Keyword planner lets you search large amounts of data for niche locations, so you can see which keywords will help you appear higher in local search.

Google Keyword Planner is most helpful if you’ve already picked a selection of keywords and want to discover which will perform better, based on data insights. If you’re stuck for keywords, Google has another handy tool you can use, the Start with a Website feature. To access it, you first need a Google Account, then you’ll need to sign in to Google Ads. Once you’re there, open the Google Keywords Planner, and select Discover New Keywords. You’ll then see two choices, Start with Keywords, or the Start with a Website.

Click on the Start with a Website tab, then enter the homepage address of a local competitor, and you’ll immediately see numerous Google keyword suggestions. These will all be based on the keywords your competitor is using on their page. This is an easy and fast way to get high performing, relevant keywords that will help your business stand out and get discovered in local search.

Yelp Suggest

Yelp has a handy suggest tool that works similarly to Google Suggest and you can use it to find appropriate keywords that will get your business found when someone performs a local search.

To get started, just need to type in a keyword a local customer might enter to try and find a business like yours. You'll then be shown a whole bunch of keywords, including keywords that won't necessarily contain the word you entered. For example, if you typed in "London wedding planner", Yelp might suggest "London events organiser", "South London receptions", or "London parties".

This gives you great food for thought and allows you to expand your keyword choice in ways you might not of thought of.

Google Suggest

You can also use Google Suggest tool, which is available directly via the Google search box to find relevant keywords for your business. With Google Suggest it's important to ensure you use terms *local* customers will search for, as otherwise you'll get much more general results. Type "plumbing" into the google search box for example, and you'll see a huge list of results come up underneath, ranging from near me searches, to Wikipedia, and global information sites. By typing in "plumbing Boston" instead, you'll see more relevant keywords to potentially use.

Voice Search

Don't forget to choose keywords for Google Local Voice searches, as these are important too. 20% of ALL Google mobile searches are now voice searches, and typically, these tend to be longer than keyed in terms. Think "vegetarian restaurants in Peterborough open now" as opposed to "vegetarian restaurant Peterborough", when you are picking keyword terms to include in your content, profiles, and pages for local voice search.

To find voice search keyword suggestions, first search your keywords using the Google Search box. Collect the results into a list, then pair these results with question modifiers, like "who is" or "how do". You can then Google Search with these question modifiers to get an idea of more potential related questions people have already searched for.

For example, say your main keyword is "dog grooming" and you entered it into Google and have collected a list of search suggestions that Google threw up. One of Google's suggestions was "dog grooming kit" so you asked Google "where can I find dog grooming kit" and got a bunch of related suggestions that included "where is the closest dog groomer", "where can I find dog grooming" and "where can I go to get my dog groomed".

As most voice searches are largely made using questions, doing this will help you find what people are likely to search for when they conduct a search using questions. You can use this to find different question phrases people are searching for, that you can use for voice search keywords.

Structuring your website for Local SEO

Create a Contact Page

If you have a local brand, you must have a dedicated contact page, as people now want detailed information about your brand, including your contact details.

On your contact page, you should display:

- ✓ Your name
- ✓ Phone
- ✓ Email
- ✓ Your business's full address

Your name phone and address details together are also commonly referred to as NAP data, though your email isn't. We will explain NAP data and why it's so crucial to local search in more detail shortly. Make sure your website contact details are clearly displayed, current, and accurate, so people can get in touch with you without any issues.

Make your phone numbers clickable

As over 30% of all local searches are done via mobiles, it's important to be as accessible as possible to searchers who want to connect with your brand. An easy way of doing this is to make your phone numbers clickable for mobile versions of your website. This saves people having to take the extra step of copying your number and switching apps when they want to call you. The searcher will then get an automatic prompt when they click on the link, that will ask them if they'd like to place a call. Make sure you make your phone numbers clickable via text links and not graphics as Google needs to be able to crawl the data. You also should display your phone number at the head of every page of your website, as mobile devices are now the primary means by which users conduct local searches.

Add a location Map to your site

As 86% of local searches look up a business's location using Google Maps, it makes sense to add a map with your location to your website. That way, people can immediately see where you are located, without having to leave your site to look you up.

Embedding a Google Map on your About or Contact Page gives you a two for one, as you can show your website visitors where to find you AND let Google know where you are located, which will help with your local search score. To embed your Google Map, just search for your business location on Google Maps, then click on the dropdown menu at the top corner of the screen and select embed. You'll get an embed code which you can copy and paste into your site's html to display your location on your website.

Incorporate Schema

Schema.org was created to provide a common language between websites and search engines like Google and Bing. It helps search engines understand what your website is about, so they can rank its relevancy when returning results for local search. If you add the most relevant Schema mark-up for your local business, to your website, you'll be letting google know you are a local business and not a big global brand. Including Schema markers can help you confirm the nature of your business as well as its location to Google, and this may give a slight boost to your position in local search.

To add Schema to your website quickly, you can make use of the many free online Schema tools that take the information you enter and generate html code. You can then copy and paste this code to the html <head> section of your website. Google's Structured Data Helper and Data Highlighter, will let you easily add in Schema mark up data to your website, or you can use the free JSON generator offered by the Schema App.

Once you've added in your Schema information, you can also use Google's Data Helper tool to test how it displays.

Google's Add structured data tool helps you add any type of structured data to a html website. The structured data you generate using the tool will be eligible to appear as a graphical search result, which can help you reach many more people. If you have a local restaurant or are a local food producer for example, you could use the Add Structured Data Tool to turn your recipes or meal ideas into rich results. Don't forget to test your data in Google's Structured Data Testing Tool after you enter it, to check there are no errors.

Keywords

Make sure your location keyword appears high up on every page, ideally in your headline. Optimise your homepage's title tag, ensuring it includes your location and 2 or 3 high performing keywords that are niche relevant.

Don't forget your metadata, as this helps you boost your clickthrough rate. Never overstuff your meta description with keywords though, instead make it catchy and short, and include one mention of your location. When you sit down to write your meta description, imagine you're giving an elevator pitch to someone, to convince them to visit your website or give your company a try. You can check out Google Ads in your local niche to get good examples of short persuasive copy that will work, including keywords. If you decide to use one, don't copy word for word, instead rewrite them so they are totally unique.

Ensure your website is mobile optimised

Did you know 9 out of 10 smartphone users perform local searches while they are out and about?

If you have a local business, it's important to make sure your website displays and navigates well on mobile devices, as many people will look up your information while they are on the move.

If you're building your website yourself, free tools like WordPress or Wix make it easy to get a sleek looking mobile optimised website, though you still need to check how your chosen template performs on smartphones and tablets.

If someone else is building your website, let them know that it's critical your site functions well on mobile devices, as if it doesn't, people will lose patience fast, and *you'll* lose custom.

Check for errors

As with any SEO strategy, to score highly with Local SEO, you need to make sure your website is online and error free. Consider improving your internal linking structure to make it easy for people to navigate to what they need and check your website and pages to make sure they're online and don't have any bugs. You can use free tools like Screaming Frog to check your website's images, links, scripts, and apps, to see if you have any missing H1 or meta tags, or 404 errors.

NAP – (Name Address, Phone Number) Citations

NAP, or Name, Address, Phone Number citations are places on the web where three pieces of information about your business appear:

- Your Business Name

- Your Business Address
- Your Business Phone Number

Google crawls these NAP mentions when it gauges your local search ranking, and they are hugely important to your local SEO ranking factor. To score highly with this factor, you must make sure your NAP info appears on as many reputable websites as possible and is accurate for every site it appears on.

NAP citations are so important to Google that mismatched NAP data contributes to 41% of all ranking issues! Only real, physical location data counts, when it comes to Google's assessment of NAP, not PO Boxes, or virtual offices.

Make sure your NAP data is displaying on all the important local business sites such as Yelp and Trip Advisor. You can do this by claiming a profile there and filling out your information, so your NAP data will be accessible to Google when it crawls the relevant sections of the site. Don't just stop there though, get your NAP data listed on as many high authority places as you can. The more places it appears, the more authority Google will assign to your business, and the better your local search ranking will be.

Google checks all your NAP mentions them to assess your brand's location and to make sure your business information is accurate. If Google sees a lot of correct NAP citations for your brand, they will give your business more priority in search, as you will appear to be who and where you say you are.

Nap Citations can be tricky to build up and create but, there are some useful tools that will help make the job easier, as well as some strategies you can adopt, to achieve more NAP mentions.

PRO TIP: The easy way to review your NAP citations

Tools like Loganix help you find out where your NAP data appears online, making it easier to see how many citations you have, and where your information is listed correctly.

If you've not done this before but have had a business for a while, you'll likely find you have a lot of incorrect listings.

Identify all the places where you have outdated or incorrect NAP data, and make sure you update each one if you can. You'll be able to change your own NAP information easily on sites like Yelp, but if you've been mentioned on a local community page by someone else, you'll have to contact the owner of the page and ask *them* to update your info.

Tools like Yext make updating your NAP data a whole lot simply, by automating the process, so you don't have to manually re-enter your NAP information on every single site. As Yext is integrated with hundreds of sites, you can enter your NAP data once and let Yext update it on all sites it appears on.

PRO TIP: Get more local citations and links

To build up NAP citations on relevant local sites, use Ahrefs Link Intersect tool to enter the URLs of several local brands and generate a report which shows you what sites are linking to them. You don't have to search brands in your niche, any local brands will work, as all you are trying to do is find sites that reach out to your community.

Look through these results to find websites with citation opportunities, where you can display your NAP data. Typical sites include local community pages, the Chamber of Commerce where many local businesses are listed, and local news or reviews sites. Other sites could be suppliers or producers, local figures, or bloggers. Some of these sites might also let you feature your link too.

Once you have drawn up a list of sites where you can feature your NAP, follow up by reaching out and asking if they'd consider listing your business's NAP data.

DON'T MAKE THIS ROOKIE MISTAKE: Never post your NAP data as an image, including on your own website. Though it might look attractive, search engines won't be able to crawl it and you'll miss an opportunity to rank. When you include your NAP data on your site, make sure it's on the header or footer of every page too.

Behavioural signals

When it comes to local search ranking factors, Behavioural signals refer to the data Google collects about the interactions people have with your local brand. Though it may be hard to define exactly *what* Behavioural Signals impact your Local Search Ranking, they are a vital part of the SEO puzzle, if you want to rise to the very top. It's estimated that having the right Behavioural Signals contributes an 11% boost to your overall Local Search position.

Behavioural Signals, like the number of check-ins to your business, now play more and more of a role in Google's Local Search ranking. This is because Google has one of the largest user data collections in the world and it's using this data to build an improved, more realistic model of Local search, by examining a more accurate picture of brands and searchers, including their offline behaviour.

Many Local Search experts believe Google is increasing the importance of Behavioural Signals to its search engine placement, as it creates a more precise picture of brands, based on data collected from real world activity, rather than web pages and text.

It can be tricky to identify every single Behavioural Signal that truly matters to Google's Local Search Rankings. Even among search professionals there is much debate about which meaningfully impact your score. Despite this, there are some generally agreed upon signals that are widely believed to impact your local search position. By learning what these are, and how you can optimise them, where possible, you can improve and enhance your Local Search Score.

Search Location

Google attributes a higher score to businesses closest to a Searcher's location. It also applies a relevancy radius to every local business, and this varies in size, depending on sector. Brands like coffee shops and restaurants have a tighter radius, as there is more competition, and so they typically serve a smaller area. A tennis court or cycling park would have a much larger radius, particularly if it's the only one of its kind around for several miles.

If your brand location falls outside the relevancy radius Google assigns you, you will find it more difficult to be discovered with Google Search.

What you can do to improve it: There's not much you can do to improve this factor if you already have a location, and don't or can't move. But if you're thinking of starting a new business, or moving to a new location, Google's relevancy radius may be a factor you might want to check and consider.

Branded Search Volume

The number of times people in or near a location search for your brand name is one of the MOST important Behavioural markers for Google, when it comes to Local Search. Businesses that pay attention to both offline and online marketing strategies and keep them consistent, usually fare better in Branded search as many Branded Searches are performed by people who have first heard of you by Word of Mouth, or offline advertising.

Because of this, your Branded Search volume provides Google with an excellent snapshot of how popular your business is in the Real World.

What you can do to improve it: To increase your branded search score, you need to first increase your businesses offline visibility, so people hear about you and then get online to find out more. Hosting special community events, or nights, putting up posters, or sending direct mail flyers could all encourage local searches for your brand.

The best strategy is to create great products and services that people will LOVE, so they tell others and spread the word about your brand. You can also help get the message out by letting people trial your products or sample your service for free and can hand out samples in your local high street, or location, or pass out discount cards or flyers.

Click Through Rate

Your Clickthrough rate (or CTR), refers to the number of times people have clicked on your listing or link to be taken to your website or page. Google hasn't given away any specifics about this ranking factor, and there has been a lot of debate about how much it affects your Local Search Score. Evidence from respected search engine experts such as Rand Fisher from Moz.com demonstrates it does have impact though.

When it comes to Local Search, Google sees clickthrough rate as an indication that searchers in a specific location see your business as relevant.

What you can do to improve it: To boost your organic clickthrough rate for local search, you need to make sure you have area specific title and tags, and appealing, relevant meta description on your webpages.

Getting a significant number of positive Google My Business reviews will also help, as more people will click through to visit your business page if they see other people rate your brand highly.

Personalisation

Thanks to Google services, many of us are always signed into our accounts on *every* device we own and the behavioural data we generate is being collected and analysed by Google. Google tracking collects a whole lot of information, including the websites we've visited and interacted with, our locations, and invoices sent from brands to our Gmail accounts.

Whenever we make a local search, Google takes this information into account, before it returns the results. Brands we've previously interacted with online, nearby businesses, and businesses we've purchased from, all get priority in the tailored search results we see.

What you can do to improve it: Every searcher sees a different result, so you need to concentrate on getting as many people as possible to look up your brand. Focus on engaging with your customers, so they regularly visit your page, and encourage them to spread the word to friends and family, so you attract more area specific visits, and generate data that Google will use to inform future search results.

Knowledge Panel Interactions

Knowledge panels are displayed in Google search results whenever users look up people, places, information, or things. They give searchers a brief overview of a topic, usually by outlining the most important essential information and can include contact details. Google automatically creates Knowledge Panels, using information drawn from several different sources around the web, including your Google My Business Profile.

When local users search, Google now displays a higher percentage of Knowledge Panel results, which has resulted in a lower number of click throughs to branded websites – under 50% currently. The actions local searchers perform within these Knowledge Panels give a serious boost to your brand in Google's eyes, as the company views them as a more serious indication of interest in your brand than a website visit.

If you have filled out the contact number option on your Google My Business profile, it will appear as a clickable icon in search, within your business's Knowledge Panel box. This gives mobile searchers the option to call you via the Knowledge Panel using Google's mobile click to call option, to request driving directions, or click to book. When they do, Google collects this data and counts it as an endorsement of your business from searchers in that location.

The most important Knowledge Interaction is when people request driving directions, as this shows Google they have a serious intention to visit that location. Google will evaluate the number of people from geographic locales who make Knowledge Panel requests for your business. The information Google collects will go towards assessing your brand location relevancy, which affects where you rank when users make a local search.

What you can do to improve it: To ensure as many people as possible make Knowledge Panel interactions with your brand, ensure all your online information is filled out, particularly the information in your Google My Business profile. This will ensure Google has plenty to work with when it creates the Knowledge Panel results people see. You can also offer people the option to book online if possible, as this option will be displayed in the Knowledge Panel, if your business offers it.

Visits to your offline location

Due to Android and iOS user tracking through Google Maps, as well as Google's online search and click through tracking, the brand now has an almost total picture of both our online and offline behaviour.

Google collects location data on all users who have Google Maps installed, whether they've searched for a business or not. If they visit a brand offline, they will be counted in the stats that show up in the Popular Times section on the Knowledge Panel.

Google also collects data on the length of time people stay at your location, as well as whether there are more or less people checked in to your location than usual.

Google can track many people using Google Location Services, installed on most Android phones. If the option is not disabled and someone visits your Google My Business listed business, their visit to you will be counted by Google. Google also offers people the opportunity to mark places that are important to them, through its labelled places feature. If, for example, if you are a local hairdresser, and someone tells Google you are one of their important places, Google can track them whenever they visit that location, providing their location tracking has not been switched off.

Google offers up all this data to its advertisers, so they can assess whether online advertising leads to real life visits. Most experts believe it is highly likely that Google also uses this information for its local search algorithm too, to assess a local business's popularity and relevance.

What you can do to improve it: To improve this factor, you should try and encourage as many people to visit your real-world business location as possible. Incentivise people to come to your offline location with special sales, discounts, events, and appealing marketing. Try sharing enticing snapshots of your business on your social media feeds and website and show people footage and images of your location. You could also offer a gift or discount to real world customers, so that if people come to you to purchase, instead of buying from you online, they get rewarded.

Offline transactions

Google collects data on the purchases people make offline AND online, through mobile payments like Apple Pay. Due to its recent partnership with several major credit card companies, it also now tracks 70% of all purchases made with a credit card.

Though there is no exact data, the number of mobile payment and credit card transactions your business receives is *highly* likely to impact the way Google views the popularity of your local business. This will impact on how Google positions you in local search, as it is considered an extremely high-quality, personalised signal, and is the ultimate endorsement of your brand. Though it likely only plays a small part, the importance of these personalised transactions will increase over time, as more people pay through their smartphones, and Google expands its tracking to monitor more transactions.

What you can do to improve it: If you can boost this signal, you likely already have a thriving brand, as it means plenty of people are buying from you! The only thing you can do here is ensure you create a strong business, using a combination of solid products and services, fair prices, and an effective marketing strategy. This is ultimately what will encourage as many people as possible to make a purchase with your brand.

So, spend time on nurturing customer relationships to retain custom, as well as reaching out to win more. And of course, you must optimise both your local and general SEO approach, to make sure your business details are easily discoverable in the first place.

Link Building

Inbound links are hugely helpful if you're trying to improve your local search ranking, as each one tells Google you are a trusted local business. They can also help to boost your domain authority, so you should persist and attempt to obtain as many as you can, as they will help you to raise your Local search ranking with Google.

If you're struggling to win more in-bound links, there are some things you can do to improve your chances. Here are the five BEST ways to win more inbound links, so you can rise to the top of local search results.

Top FIVE places to get more inbound links

- 1) Ask people you already know** - Sit down and make a list of everyone you have a working relationship with, from your suppliers, to neighbouring businesses in your area. Once you've

done this go to their website and look for pages where they could link to you, or where they already have other links listed from local or relevant companies.

You might look for pages where they have listed local resources, or supplier pages where they post the URL of brands who manufacture certain products. After you've done this, get in touch by reaching out with a short, polite email, to politely ask them if they would post a link to you on their website in the relevant place you've identified. It's easier to do this with people you know, as you'll have a relationship with them. Don't skip suggesting where they can post your link, as you'll be more likely to get a yes, if you make it easier for them.

Short sample email template you could adapt and use to get more inbound links:

Dear [INSERT THEIR NAME],

I'm [INSERT YOUR NAME], from [INSERT YOUR BUSINESS], a [INSERT WHAT YOU DO] in [INSERT LOCATION]. As you're serving the [INSERT LOCATION] community like us too, I'm reaching out to ask if you would consider listing my business on the [INSERT THEIR SUITABLE WEBSITE PAGE] of your website?

My link information is [INSERT YOUR URL LINK] and will direct people to the [main page] of my business website, where they can [INSERT WHAT THEY CAN DO, SHOP, BROWSE, BOOK ETC...] The link text should be [INSERT YOUR LINK TEXT].

Of course, I'd be happy to post a well-placed link back to your site on my own [INSERT PAGE WHERE YOU POST LINKS] page to give you some reciprocal promotion. If you'd like me to list your business, please send me the link data you'd like me to post. If you need any other information from me, please get in touch at [INSERT YOUR EMAIL].

Thanks so much for considering my request,
[INSERT YOUR NAME]
[INSERT JOB TITLE]
[INSERT WEBSITE ADDRESS]

- 2) **Your Chamber of Commerce** - Don't forget your local Chamber of Commerce as this is a great way to get your link on a high authority website. It's easy to do if you have a real-world location, although you will have to sign up for membership. The steps you need to take vary, as they depend on each Chamber, and some do require annual fees.

It's worth doing what you need to do to become a member of your Chamber of Commerce, as along with a link for your local brand you nearly always receive a NAP citation too. Google sees Chamber of Commerce inbound links and citations as *extremely* relevant, as they're a high authority, trusted site.

- 3) **Sponsor a local event** – If you act as a sponsor for a local event, you'll nearly always wind up with a link on the event website and will often be able to list your NAP information too. If it's a regular, long-time, or established event, even better, as this means the website your data appears on will have more authority in the eyes of Google.

- 4) **Your Local News website** – Local papers and community news sites always need fresh, relevant content. If you have a local brand, they are a great way of getting in-bound links from a trusted source. Do you have anything new going on with your brand? When you do, you should pitch it to your local newspaper, whether you are re-opening after a revamp, or hosting a special event. Make sure you inform people a few days ahead of the event and take time to craft a short but compelling press release, that lets reporters know what's going on, and why its relevant to the local community.

If your local newspaper does wants to run a story on your business or mention your brand, ALWAYS ensure they have your URL, so you can get that all-important in-bound link.

- 5) **Guest blogging** - Engage with online members of your local community who have a blog or website and build up a relationship. Once you've created some trust, politely ask if they'd consider offering you a guest blogging spot. Make sure you have a couple of article ideas ready to pitch, and offer them a spot in return, if you have a blog. Achieving a guest blog spot is *much* easier to do, if you've taken some time to reach out and chat to people first, so communicate with local businesses on social media, and in the comments of their blog, to create a rapport. Being actively engaged also helps cement you in people's minds as a relevant local authority figure. Post local news, network on local sites, and provide useful resources and links and people will soon start seeing you as a valuable member of the local community.

BONUS TIP to get more in-bound links: Use BuzzStream to identify local influencers

If you're finding it difficult to get relevant backlinks, and you're prepared to pay a small monthly fee, BuzzStream can help you quickly identify and connect with influential local online figures. It lets you search for local influencers, then contact and track them from one place, plus it generates reports on your outreach campaigns, so you can keep on top of your link placement.

BONUS TIP to get more in-bound links: Do personal outreach to local influencers

If you have a local business, draw up a list of local figures who might be happy to come and pay you a visit. You can then contact them via Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook, asking them if they will come down. You don't have to offer cash, but make sure you are polite, explain why their visit would be relevant, and offer them an incentive to visit you. You could offer them a free lunch, free hairstyle, or promotion on your social media, if you have a big following. If do they agree to pay you a visit, make sure you take lots of images and even video, which you can then share on your social media. Remember to tag in the influencer too, so they can also repost and share, with their own following.

Social Media

Social signals like shares and follows don't have a direct impact on your Local search score, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't engage, as social media's still important to local search for a couple of other reasons. Viral social posts that pick up a lot of traction may make more of a direct impact on your local search rank than other posts, though this largely is because when you go viral, you tend to get mentioned quickly on other, local sites.

The main thing you need to ensure you do is optimise your social profiles, as this data is what Google assesses your social presence for, when it comes to Local Search.

Social media is a crucial piece of the puzzle when it comes to getting Name Address Phone Number (NAP) citations, as every mention of your NAP data is ranked by Google. This includes NAP citations found on your Facebook Business Page and LinkedIn Profile, as well as on other social profiles.

Sign up for as many online social business profiles as possible, to give you as many possible chances to include your Name Address Phone Number (NAP) data and URL in your bio, as well as anywhere else relevant. Try to sign up for Facebook Business Page, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn, and Pinterest even if it is just to list your Name Address Phone Number (NAP) information.

If you don't have the time to post regularly to every social channel you've signed up for, pin a post to the top of your profile, to let people know where to find you and where you are more active. The best strategy for posting content is to focus on 1 or 2 social media profiles, so you can post regularly and often.

Facebook and Instagram will be the most important to concentrate on, but if you have to pick just one, make it Facebook. Keeping social channels current doesn't have to involve making a huge extra effort. If you have a food business for example, you could create appealing galleries showing your food offers and then create engagement Ads to push posts to people who live within a 3-mile radius of your local business. This can be a powerful way to reel in more customers and we explain how to use this technique in detail in our Facebook Ads courses.

Even if social media doesn't impact your local search position directly, it will help you build your following. This will indirectly win you more mentions on local websites.

Your main goals with social media for local search are to engage with potential customers, build trust in the local community, and network with other local business's and influencers. Do this and you will organically win more mentions and citations on local sites, including on local news sites. The more mentions your brand gets, the higher your local search score will rise. You'll also maximise your reach and attract more local interest, which will indirectly improve your local search position.

The other way your social media will help boost your local search rank is when other people link to it, as the links you've added to your social profiles add to your website's authority in search, although this will only give you a small boost.

Google My Business

If you're a local brand, having a Google My Business Profile is *not* optional if you want to rank highly in local search.

According to Moz.com's Local Search Ranking Factor Study, your Google My Business Profile is number 1 factor when it comes to ranking in Google's MAP Pack. It's not enough just to have a listing, *every* section of your profile should be filled out and you should try to gather as many reviews as you can. You need to post content regularly to your profile and share relevant news and updates about your brand.

One of the best ways of creating content for your Google My Business Profile is by posting images that show off your brand, and its location. You can create inspiring galleries that feature your menu, dishes, or products, show off your team members, and give potential customers a peek behind the scenes at your business.

Your Google My Business profile is also important as it display whenever users search on Google Maps for local nearby brands. When you consider how many people look up the location of a local

business on Google Maps, you can see why you MUST ensure your Google My Business profile is properly optimised.

Two top tips for optimising your Google My Business profile:

Keep all your info consistent – Google scores you on this, and your score affects how you rank, so make sure the details you put into your Google My Business profile lines up with the information on your website. Your info should also match any NAP citations you have on other websites. Make sure your business's address is spelled the same way *everywhere*, as Google finds it confusing when different versions or abbreviations of your address or name appear.

Fill in everything – You get points for every section of your profile you complete, so make sure EVERYTHING is filled out. Don't forget to enter details into the category selection section as well, including secondary categories. Secondary categories affect the keywords and search terms your business can rank for, but a lot of people make the mistake of leaving them out. Fill out the Services and Products section too, to let Google know what you do, and what *you* have to offer.

In this course we'll be taking a deep dive into Google My Business and will be showing you how to optimise and enhance your profile for best local search performance. It's one of the most important things you can do to improve your business's local search position, and with our animated guides and over-the-shoulder explainer videos, you'll have everything you need to improve this local search factor, so you can boost your SERP score.

Other online profiles

As well as Google My Business, you also need to claim and optimise several other important online profiles, as these will often be displayed first in local search results.

The top three profiles you need to make sure are optimised for your local business are:

- ✓ Trip Advisor
- ✓ Yelp
- ✓ Facebook Business Page

You should also ensure you are on any key local review sites, so when people search locally, you will appear. To find out the local review sites you should be appearing on, try searching for "target location" reviews or "your niche + target location" reviews.

You don't have to post to them regularly but sign up for profiles on social media sites like Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and TikTok, so you can post your Name Address Phone Number (NAP) data, which Google can then crawl. This will be counted as part of your Name Address Phone Number (NAP) citations, so even if you never post to most of the profiles, it's still worth doing. Make sure your location features in your bio and add live links where possible. All the content you post to your social media channels should be in the same voice and style, to ensure brand consistency, including your graphics.

You can also incorporate relevant hashtags that include your location on Twitter and Instagram. Try searching trending topics using your local area, or add your location on to your hashtag, such as #brandingbradford or #sussexhair.

Google now considers the NAP mentions in the profiles you have on social media when it analyses your local search score, so it's vital to claim as many online profiles as possible. Always include this Name Address Phone Number data, as each mention counts as a citation, including mentions on social sites like your Facebook Business Page.

Remember, the more local sites you can appear on as a local business, the more chances you will appear in search results, and the more chances you will have of people discovering your brand.

Reviews

Did you know that research has discovered 81% of potential customers read reviews and look at business ratings?

Online reviews can make or break your business, especially if you are a local brand, and research has shown consumers to turn away and look elsewhere if you have negative reviews, or not many reviews. On the other hand, if you get lots of positive reviews, this has a positive effect on consumer trust. It's also a good idea to respond to both positive and negative reviews, as researchers at Moz.com discovered this can help build trust and show engagement.

Replying to a negative review might sound contradictory, as you don't want to appear you are arguing with customers who didn't have a good experience with your brand. If you take an apologetic and concerned approach, or even offer a solution though, it can take the sting out of the negative feedback. This will demonstrate to other people that you care and want to make things right.

Three top tips for getting more reviews

Ask – At the end of all relevant online content, ask your customers and visitors to leave you a great review, if they've interacted with your local business and haven't already commented. If you have a database of customer email addresses, you can cross reference these with visits to your establishment, and send out automatic emails, asking people for their feedback. Make sure you ask customers to consider leaving a review when they are in your location and tell your staff members to remind customers to do this. In this course, you'll be learning an ultra-efficient way to get reviews on Trip Advisor, by ordering official Trip Advisor cards that ask people for an online review of your brand, which you can hand out to your real-world customers.

Offer an incentive – Obviously, you can't, and should *never* try to bribe customers to leave you good feedback, but you *can* encourage them to comment on their experience with your brand. To do this, you could run a competition, where everyone that posts a screenshot of their review gets entered, or you ask people to email you with a link to their review, in exchange for a discount off their next purchase.

Make it simple – People won't leave you a review if they don't know how or where to give their feedback, so tell them exactly where you want them to go. If you're talking to them online, in an email or on social media, you can include a direct link they can click to leave you a review.

You can do this for your Google My Business Reviews by logging into your GMB account and generating a short link, which you can pass on to your customers. If you are trying to get offline customers to get online and leave you a review, consider handing out cards with your review URL, or ask them for their email and then send them a review request later.

Blogging for Local SEO

Blogging is a crucial way to give a big boost to your search engine rankings but there are some guidelines you should follow if you're using it to enhance your Local SEO approach.

Post local content

Blog about topics that are relevant to your local audience, especially local things that have relevancy to your niche sector. To help generate content ideas, keep up with local and community news, and think of ways to spin it to relate back to your brand. These might not always be obvious, but by using a bit of creativity, you can find fresh angles from which to generate blogs. For example, if you hear that your area is coming out of or going into lockdown and you run a cleaning business, you could run an article talking about the importance of hygiene in the COVID-19 era.

You can also interview local figures to get their take on your brand or ask relevant local experts for their insight and opinion, then feature them on your website. Don't forget to take plenty pictures and video too, as you can post short clips and images to Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, or TikTok, or longer videos to YouTube.

Host your blog on your website

To get the biggest benefits from SEO, you should host your blog on your own website or domain, *not* on a third-party hosting service. As well as the obvious benefit of having your own web address, which looks much more professional than having a free URL, hosting your own blog boosts your Google rankings, as the keywords and links in your content factor into Google's analysis of your site.

When Google assesses your site to see how relevant your brand is to local searchers, it looks at factors like your link authority, content relevance, and keyword relevancy when it decides how to position you in search. By having your own blog, you'll up your website's chances of appearing higher. This is because when you post backlinks, and include keywords in your blog content, these will be factored into your site's overall SEO score.

Include your location in your posts

You should include your local city and neighbourhood in your content as much as you can, as well as any unofficial names or nicknames for your area. Not everyone uses the same name to search for your location, so cover all bases by incorporating all versions into your content. You can also include nearby towns or cities, as some people will travel to you, if your brand appeals, or you offer a unique service.

Create fresh content

When you're running a local business, often you'll have different pages that basically say the same thing, just so you can rank for several locations. If you are doing this, you must make sure every page is unique, otherwise you'll end up with a poor Google score for having duplicate content.

Take the time to revise versions of your articles and website landing page copy, so that each one differs. Using this technique, you can even reach out to places you aren't physically based in and rank for them in organic search results. This could be useful if you also have an online business, where customers can order products from you. It could also help you reach out to more customers, who will make the trip to your location.

Remember, you *won't* be able to rank in the MAP pack for places where your business isn't located, as you need a Google My Business profile for that.

If you're struggling for local content ideas, consider showcasing customer testimonials, happy experiences, or success stories. Feature special events or profile a typical day or night at your location. *Always* include relevant images with every blog you post, preferably multiple images, as this will help break up text blocks and add interest.

Don't forget keywords

Every new blog you post is opportunity to get discovered in local search, so make the most out of every single article. Just like with the rest of your website copy, you need to optimise your blog header, URL, title tags, and meta tags for local search, as well as your sub-headers and body copy.

BONUS TIP for LOCAL SEO: Your offline activity can boost your online ranking

Although most of your Local SEO approach will be conducted on the web, you shouldn't forget to reach out in real life too, as this can help boost your online score. Ask your customers or visitors for reviews, build relationships with nearby brands, suppliers, and distributors, and get for their contact and website details, so you can link up online.

Let all your customers know that you're online by including your website and social media details on your offline promotional material and encourage people to interact with your brand on the web. To encourage offline customers and visitors to interact with you online, you could run special online competitions and events, which you promote at your physical location. You can also promote your website and other online contact details on your printed Point Of Sale (POS) material, like invoices and receipts. Don't forget to hand out business cards to all your offline customers and clients that feature your online information too.

Thanks for watching!

Keep watching for more great content on Local Search, including specific guides and deep dives into every essential aspect. By watching, learning, and then applying our pro tips and insider techniques, you'll discover you can give a big boost to your Local Search Score.

Remember to keep us updated on your progress, as you start incorporating our advice into your Local SEO approach. We LOVE to hear from our students, and our passion is to continue to create more great content, so you can perfect your online marketing and SEO skills.

If you've enjoyed this guide to the foundations of Local SEO, we'd love it if you'd be our hero and leave us a positive review.

We read EVERY single one of our reviews and want to hear how our content has helped you learn, so please consider leaving us feedback, if you appreciate what we do.

Thanks so much for watching,

Ing. Tomas Moravek