THE ULTIMATE LOCAL SEO GUIDE

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

"The ONLY local SEO guide you need to succeed online."

ds digital shift

WHAT IS LOCAL SEO, AND HOW CAN YOU USE IT TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS?

Do you want a booming Internet business with skyrocketing popularity?

Do you want your clients to find you the instant they make a Google search?

Are you looking to become a powerhouse in your industry?

If so, look no further!

If you want to grow your business, local SEO can be the answer to all of your questions. Perhaps you've just started building your company's presence online, but you have no idea where to start or how to attract visitors to your shiny new website. How can you do that?

The answer: Local SEO!

By utilizing Local SEO to your advantage, you can get your business name to show up first in Google search results. Now, if you've been on the Internet before, you know how big Google is. It is practically the president of cyberspace! If you want your business to become successful online, you'll need to get Google on your side.

Let's take a look at exactly how we can do that.

A) WHAT IS LOCAL SEO?

SEO stands for Search Engine Optimization. Local SEO is the process of optimizing all of your online resources so that you can be found in localized searches. For example, if your business is a restaurant, you want to be sure that the name of your restaurant shows up first in all local restaurant searches.

By following this guide, you can learn about how to implement the best Local SEO strategies and resources to gain much more traffic and attention to your website. By honing in on your target

customers, and by attracting new customers through a variety of online techniques, you can guarantee that your name will start popping up in all the right locations.

These strategies will affect a large number of areas on the Internet. In order to help you better understand each and every area, let's break it down and look at some of them individually.

Let's bring up the president of cyberspace again: Google.

Here's what a typical Google search looks like:
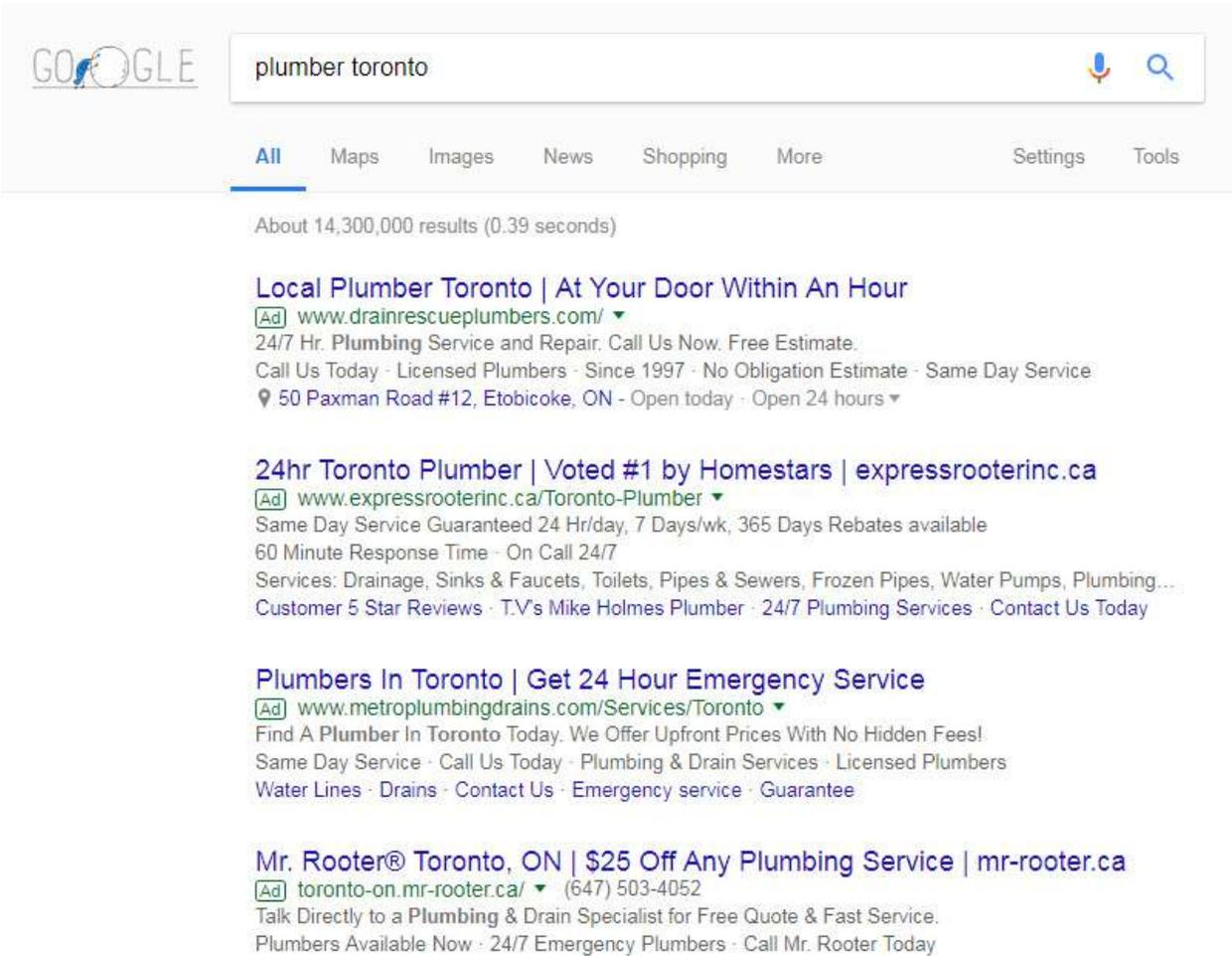
What's that above the fold? Why is that search result a different colour? That, my friend, is a paid advertisement. And it is very important!

That ad is displayed that way for a reason. Google has been putting more and more ads into local search results. That's why, when you Google something, the first result to come up will be a paid advertisement with a different coloured background. Remember what this looks like, as it will come in handy in the future.

Let's take a look at what the organic searches look like after the ads:
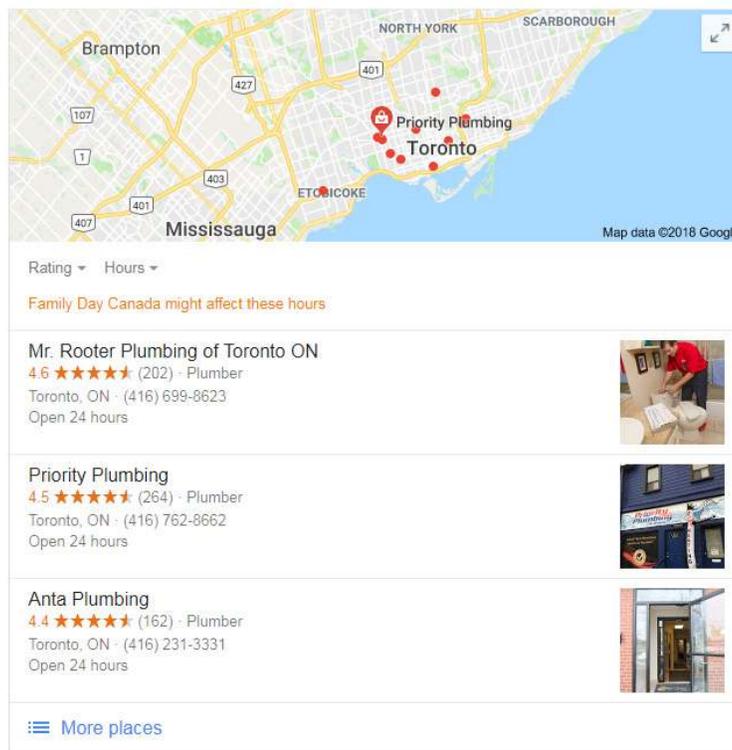
These searches can be commonly referred to as:

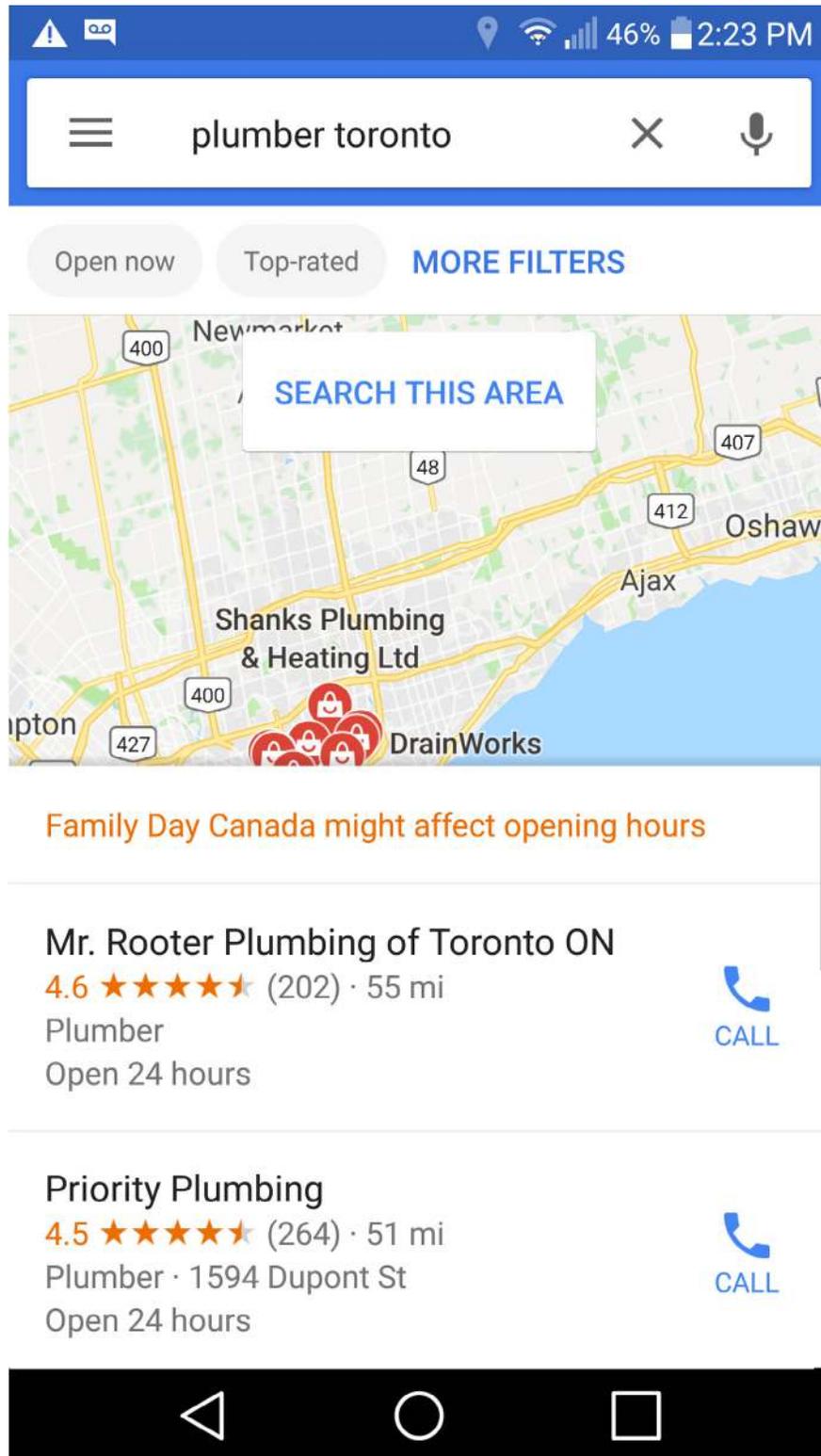✔ Local 3 Pack

✔ Snack Pack

✔ Map Pack

Wow, that's a lot of nicknames! Let's just stick with "Map Pack" for now. A map pack has 3 listings, followed by the organic searches underneath it.

The map pack is influenced by Local SEO, so you'll want to use this to your advantage. However, it isn't the only place touched by Local SEO.

Local SEO also directly impacts Google Maps searches:
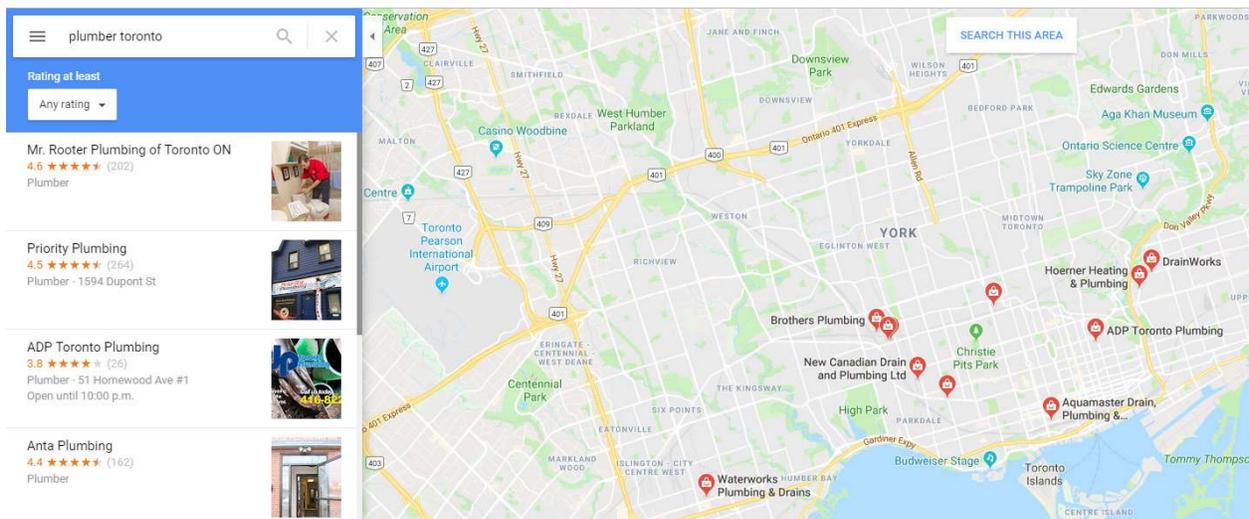
And mobile Map searches:

And even searches without a geo-modier like when a homeowner in Toronto searches for a plumber:

There are plenty of ways to get localized results and have your relevant business show up first.

This goes to show that localization is everywhere on the Internet! This should make it easier to implement Local SEO strategies that will benefit your business. Whether your business is a brick-and-mortar store, or you simply provide a service to your local area, this guide will help you make sure that your company is showing up where it needs to on the Internet.

Let's dig deeper!

B) WHAT INFLUENCES LOCAL SEO?

Now you understand what Local SEO is, but what exactly influences it? How can you change it to get your own results to show up first?

We can think about it in 2 separate parts:

✔ What influences the map/3 pack rankings and other map results?

✔ What influences organic listing rankings?

Now that we are looking at this in 2 distinct areas, let's take a closer look at each one. We'll look at some hard data while we're at it, too!

Local SEO Pack/Map Rankings Factors:

There was a recent case study done by Moz on Local SEO and its influences:

Local Pack/Finder Ranking Factors
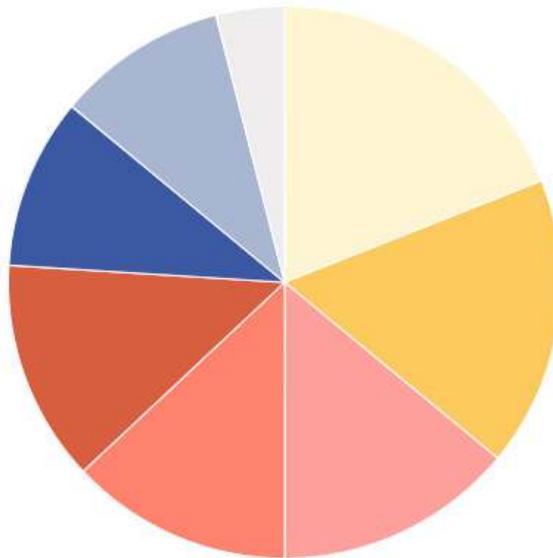
1. **My Business Signals** (Proximity, categories, keyword in business title, etc.) **19%**
2. **Link Signals** (Inbound anchor text, linking domain authority, linking domain quantity, etc.) **17%**
3. **On-Page Signals** (Presence of NAP, keywords in titles, domain authority, etc.) **14%**
4. **Citation Signals** (IYP/aggregator NAP consistency, citation volume, etc.) **13%**
5. **Review Signals** (Review quantity, review velocity, review diversity, etc.) **13%**
6. **Behavioral Signals** (Click-through rate, mobile clicks to call, check-ins, etc.) **10%**
7. **Personalization 10%**
8. **Social Signals** (Google engagement, Facebook engagement, Twitter engagement, etc.) **4%**

As you can see from the image above, the #1 ranking factor is My Business signals. This means that you will need to optimize your Google My Business listing. Don't worry, we'll cover more on how to do this in the sections below.

As you go down the rest of the list in that image, you might notice that links are very important to gaining Local SEO relevancy as well. Another strong influencer is onPage signals from your website, its reviews, and citation signals.

This formula has been referred to as a "blended algorithm". Not long ago, map results were far less influenced by your website's ranking signals, but now the two factors are certainly intertwined. They are of equal importance to generating Local SEO relevance.

If your business is not ranking in maps, you may need to add stronger signals to your website.

But how exactly do you do that?

Let's talk about it!

Organic Listing/Website Ranking Factors:

Organic results are those you'll find under the maps after searching for something on Google. These are the results that appear naturally, without the influence of paid advertisements.

Let's look back at that same Moz study shown earlier. Here are the top ranking factors for organic listings:

Localized Organic Ranking Factors
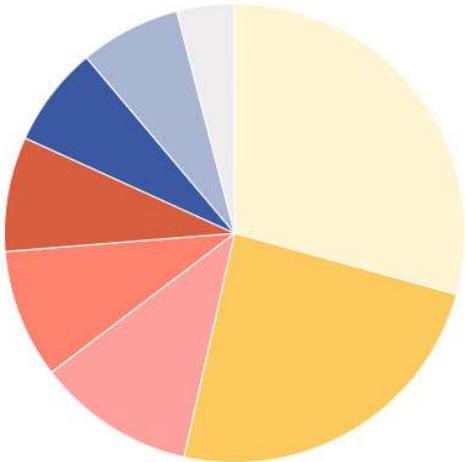
1. **Link Signals** (Inbound anchor text, linking domain authority, linking domain quantity, etc.) **29%**

2. **On-Page Signals** (Presence of NAP, keywords in titles, domain authority, etc.) **24%**

3. **Behavioral Signals** (Click-through rate, mobile clicks to call, check-ins, etc.) **11%**

4. **Personalization 9%**

5. **Citation Signals** (IYP/aggregator NAP consistency, citation volume, etc.) **8%**

6. **My Business Signals** (Proximity, categories, keyword in business title, etc.) **7%**

7. **Review Signals** (Review quantity, review velocity, review diversity, etc.) **7%**

8. **Social Signals** (Google engagement, Facebook engagement, Twitter engagement, etc.) **4%**

As you can see, the #1 ranking factor here is link signals. Links are crucial to organic ranking, and you'll need to have plenty of relevant links on your website in order to generate better search results for your business.

You will see OnPage signals on this list as well, which is comparable to the first list for map ranking factors. OnPage signals refer to the optimization of your website with keywords and content that will flag your website for relevancy on your page.

Behavioral signals, personalization, and NAP citation signals are also on the list pictured above. If you don't know what those are, don't fret – we'll cover them in detail later on in this guide!

C) WHAT IS GOOGLE MY BUSINESS OPTIMIZATION?

You can consider your Google My Business listing as the central command base of operations for all of your business data. This is what you will use to track all relevant information, and it will help you keep a close eye on your relevancy.

Google My Business will display your data on Google in the maps and the knowledge graph.

A quick note: This service used to be called Google Local, and it was also part of the Google Plus+ platform. You may have been familiar with it under one of these two titles, however more

recently the name has changed to Google My Business. It is now a separate and individual service for business owners.

In the 2017 Moz study on Local SEO ranking factors, you may remember that Google My Business signals are the #1 most influential factor for map results rankings. This means that if you do not have a Google My Business page, you should sign up for one immediately! Having a healthy Google My Business page can greatly increase your traffic and ranking relevancy.

Do you need a Google My Business Page?

Here's how to get it:

First, visit this link and click Start Now.

Quick note: To appear more professional, use your business domain email as your login, rather than using a gmail or yahoo email address.

What's the name of your business?

Business name

By continuing you agree to the following Terms of Service

NEXT

Next, you will be taken to an online form where you can enter your business information. Be sure to enter the same NAP (Name, Address, and Phone Number) information that is displayed on your company's website.

Pay close attention to the category section. You'll want to choose your category carefully, as this allows customers and Google's bots to know exactly what your business does and what kind of audience it caters to. This will influence the kind of results your business will show up in.

Keep in mind that Google does allow you to use multiple categories, so you can choose as many as you think are relevant to your business purpose and duties. Try to be as specific as you can!

← **What kind of business do you run?**

Correct category selection helps you attract customers who are searching for businesses like yours in your area. Select a category that best matches your business. Learn more

Business category

🔍 Plumber

NEXT

Next, you'll need to verify your account. This is a standard security procedure that most websites go through in order to make extra sure that you are the one signing up for the account.

There are several ways that you can verify your account:

✔ Via postcard. Google will send a verification code to your physical address.

✔ Via email. You will receive an instant verification code via email. As long as you use the same login details in your Google Search Console for your My Business account, this is a valid verification method.

✔ Via phone. Google will send a verification code to your phone through an automated voice or text message.

Not all options may be available to you. The most popular and secure way to verify your account is through postcard, so you can wait for it to arrive in the mail. Your eligibility for the three verification options is dependent on what kind of business you have.

There is more detailed instruction for the entire sign-up process on their support page [here](#).

Check, double check, and triple check that you have filled out every section possible with the most detailed information you can manage. Upload photos of your business or services when you can, and fill out all the different categories.

Once you're done filling out and completing all of your information on the Google My Business profile, you can move on to the next step:

Getting Local NAP Citations!

D) HOW DO YOU GET LOCAL NAP CITATIONS?

Oh no! A citation? Isn't that a bad thing?

Not in this case!

When it comes to NAP, you'll want to get as many citations as you can.

But, what exactly is NAP?

NAP stands for Name, Address, and Phone Number. This is becoming a common acronym in the online business world, so you may want to add it to your memory bank. Other common and similar acronyms are NAPW (Name, Address, Phone Number, and Website), and NAPU (Name, Address, Phone Number, and URL).
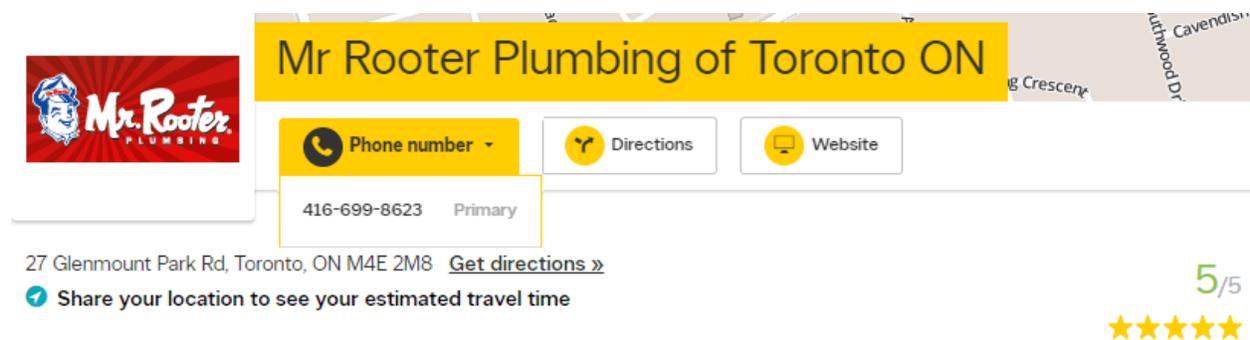
Why are NAP citations important?

They are important for several reasons:

✔ Citation signals account for 13% of ranking factors. This was shown in the Moz study.

✔ These directories are used to search for businesses. They aren't just used by Google to show search results; people actually look through the directory for specific businesses!

✔ These directories are relevant to Local SEO. They count towards localized terms, making them important for your region or area.

✔ NAP citations will give you relevant links. This link can be used on your site after you create a listing.

IMPORTANT WARNING: Having inconsistent citations can cause ranking issues!

How is this possible?

This is possible because small changes, like address or phone number changes, can completely mess up the directory and search systems. This is why it is vitally important that you keep your citations consistent across all platforms and listings.

But why is this so important?

In essence, a citation is a direct online reference to your NAP. While it doesn't have to link to you directly, it is still seen by Google and is used as part of an algorithm to determine your local relevancy.

Columnist Myles Anderson of Search Engine Land believes that citation inconsistency is the #1 issue affection Local SEO ranking. The more your NAP varies across different listings, the harder it is for Google and potential customers to find you. Google will also find you much less trustworthy when this occurs.

So, the big question is: How can you make sure that your information stays consistent across all of your listings?

How To Audit And Optimize Your Businesses' NAP Consistency

Unfortunately, the best way to do a thorough search and ensure that all of your listings are consistent is to do it manually. Pull up all of your NAPs and cross-check them to make sure they all look the same.

For a quick and easy check, you can use Moz Local.

Here's how Moz Local works:

✔ Enter your business name in the input bar to the left.

✔ Use your zip code to the right.

✔ Click Check my Business Listing.

After you hit search, Moz Local will show you all of the listings corresponding to your website. It pulls from all the main local indexing platforms, which are authority resources with the most impact to your Local SEO relevance. Moz will then display any and all inconsistencies it finds.

If you do find an inconsistency, keep track of them on your own and make a note to correct that NAP as soon as possible. This may require contacting the owners of the website where your incorrect NAP information is posted.

Moz local works to post all of the best results, but the results are limited to the top indexing platforms. If you have citations on lesser sources, you need to check those manually. If you do want

to search for this automatically, we have created a citation audit and cleanup service to do a comprehensive search for you.

An alternative to Moz local is to use our citation audit service. We offer affordable prices and professional experts who will guarantee a thorough search.

Once you are happy with your auditing results, you can work on building your own NAP citations! This is where it gets fun!

How To Build NAP Citations

There's no one right way to build NAP citations. In fact, all businesses are different, so you'll want your citations to be as custom and personalized to your own company as possible. You can start by thinking about your industry and area of service. These are generally the best places to begin when creating your own citations.

The top 2 lists to start with when creating your own directory listings are:

✔ Top Local Citations By City

✔ Top Local Citations By Category

These lists contain the most relevant and largest directories that you want to be listed in based on who your target audience is. It's easy to create citations for these listings; simply fill out your prole,

including your business description, accurate NAP, hours, photos, reviews, and more.

It can be difficult to create citations all on your own, which is why we've created our own service that will do all of the work for you! Our service is called Local SEO, and you can access it at any time.

Now, let's focus on optimizing your website!

E) WHAT IS LOCAL SEO ONPAGE OPTIMIZATION?

Local SEO OnPage optimization is the process of customizing and optimizing your actual website for Google search result relevancy. This is an important (even vital!) step in coming out on top on your local Google results page.

Think about your website. How many pages does it have? Keep in mind that each and every page needs to be optimized with relevant keywords that your target audience will likely be searching for on Google. Our article on local keyword research explains this in much deeper detail, so be sure to keep an eye out for it!

Let's discuss the most important things you need to do in order get your website ranking locally. Check out the strategies below and follow them to the best of your ability!

1. Set Up Your Website to Rank Landing Pages

The structure of your website should be fine-tuned for the audience you're serving. Does your business serve multiple cities at once? If so, you need to make a specific landing page for each and every city.

A lot of modern businesses have one location, or no physical location at all, and yet they serve entire areas across multiple cities. In order to get multiple landing pages as easily as possible, you can set up URLs like this:

- ✔ yourdomain.com/city-name-1/

- ✔ yourdomain.com/city-name-2/

- ✔ yourdomain.com/city-name-3/

This is the best way to ensure that each individual landing page will still rank organically in its local area. That way, you have all of your bases covered without having to worry! You won't even break a sweat!

2. Optimize Meta Descriptions, Title Tags, Headers, And Content

Meta descriptions are the short, 20-30 word descriptions that show up under a Google search result. Title tags are hidden keywords that will help your content show up first on a Google search. And of course, having the best headers and content on your page will actually bring traffic to your site.

These are all optimization elements that can be accessed through OnPage.

3. Display Your NAP In Schema Format

What the heck does this mean? Well, you want to display your NAP information in schema format, which is a format that Google can easily read. This simply means that you list your name, address, business hours, and other relevant information in a listed form, with each individual item on its own line. This makes it easier for your customers to track!

4. Embed A Google Map

Embedding a Google map on your site will help your users see the visual location of your business, and they can more easily find you when they need to.

5. Add Many Calls To Action!

Not sure what a call to action is? Pull out your dictionary today! See, that bolded sentence is a call to action. This is a short statement that commands the reader to take action for something, whether it's clicking on a page or contacting your business for an appointment. A CTA should be clear and prominent on your page. Many businesses use CTAs such as "Request a free quote!" or "Click here to sign up!", which are always visibly seen on the front page.

6. Add Testimonials

Customers love reading previous reviews and testimonials about your site. This will give your users the confidence that you are a reliable and legitimate company.

7. Be Mobile Friendly

Everything needs to be accessed by phone these days. If your site isn't mobile-friendly, you are scaring away potentially hundreds of new customers. Google has been making major shifts in focus towards mobile-friendly websites lately, and if your site displays correctly on a phone, you are more likely to draw people in.

Now, let's talk about a simple yet crucial strategy: Building links!

F) HOW DO YOU PERFECT LOCAL LINK BUILDING?

When it comes to building strong SEO, link building is one of the most important and natural ways to do this. This is just as relevant to Local SEO as it is to other types of SEO. You can use the same techniques across the board, as long as you are consistent.

One of the biggest ways to generate local links is to create content that's relevant and valuable for your audience. Are you a local subcontractor? Post weekly blogs about your services and offer quick tips for homeowners who need a DIY fix. Do you grow organic vegetables? Publish content frequently about the benefits of eco-friendly farming, and how it can impact the community.

Your links should target not only your audience but existing blogs and resource listings. Now, you just need to know how to find them.

Finding Local Listings To Get Linked To

Here's a strategy you may not have implemented before: Finding locally targeted leads.

But… how the heck do you target local leads?

You can start by taking a look at this:

Whitespark has created a list of the top 50 local citation sites by country for you to refer to. This is an amazing place to begin generating leads.

If you still aren't finding everything you need there, you can mine Google for more leads.

Don't worry – we'll show you exactly how to do that! These valuable trade secrets are now in your hands!

Here are the queries you can use for business listings and directories:

- ✔ [location] business listings

- ✔ [location] business directory

- ✔ [location] directory

- ✔ [business type keyword] business listings [location]

- ✔ [business type keyword] business directory [location]

- ✔ [business type keyword] directory [location]

Here are the queries you can use for trade organizations:

- ✔ [location] [business type keyword] alliance

- ✔ [location] [business type keyword] council

- ✔ [location] [business type keyword] association

- ✔ [location] [business type keyword] society

The Top Strategies For Gaining Local Links

Here is the best way to gain local links. Once you've produced results to your liking using the queries above, make sure to input them all into your own personal spreadsheet or notepad. Organize them by priority, listing which ones are most important to connect to first. Deciding priority typically depends on influence and relevance to your local niche or area.

Here's what you need to do:

✔ Be proactive in reaching out so that you can get your business listed in the most relevant directories possible. (Remember that you can use our citation-building service!)

✔ Join the largest, most active trade-based organization relevant to your business.

✔ Become partners and sponsors to charities, schools, non-profit organizations, or other local services. Offer your office space, donations, or time to host events and give back to the community.

✔ Spearhead large events in your local area.

✔ Use our Google mining techniques to get interviews with local figures, such as journalists, local bloggers, elected officials, and newspaper writers.

✔ Create an alliance with local bloggers and businesses in your area, deciding on the most relevant connections and building them up from there.

✔ Establish a mentoring program for your local area, to serve the community or your schools.

✔ Apply to be a speaker at your alma mater, or allow yourself to be interviewed by students.

These are just a few of the things you can do to get started as a major influencer in your local area. As soon as you do any of these things, be sure to pitch them to a local newspaper as soon as possible. You can even get a link from the Wall Street Journal if you're lucky! These will help to generate .edu, .org, or even .gov links, which are invaluable in the online world.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Home   World   U.S.   Politics   Economy   **Business**   Tech   Markets   Opinion   Life & Arts   Real Estate   WSJ. Magazine

Qualcomm Raises Bid for Chip Maker NXP to $44 Billion

Walmart's Online Sales Come Under Pressure

Coca-Cola's Game Plan: Reformulate and Expand

Trump Administration Seeks to Stimulate Private Space Projects

LAW BLOG

Lawyer Offers Scholarship to Teens Who Admit to Drunk Driving

But wait, it gets better!

Not only will following the above list grant you plenty of important and inspiring links, but you will also see an increase in your local visibility, building you a highly positive reputation in your local community.

Having an active presence in your community is as important as having a great reputation on your blogs and [social media](#) platforms. Both of these things combined create the magic formula that will have new customers searching for you over your competitors every time.

And now, the thing that all businesses crave: The local review.

G) HOW DO YOU GET LOCAL REVIEWS?

The local reputation of your business can be life or death for your company. It's so important, we just can't emphasize it enough!

So, how can you guarantee that you'll get more positive reviews from more customers?

First, think about how important it is to have good reviews. Have you ever visited a restaurant's Yelp page? Which restaurant would you rather go to: The one that is teeming with complaints and has no online profile, or the one with a well-established blog, five stars, and glowing reviews?

The answer is quite obvious!

According to a recent customer review survey, over 87% of people are just as confident in online reviews as they are in personal recommendations. Not only can positive online reviews give you a good boost in your community, but they can actually influence your search ranking results.

How is that even possible?

Well, get this: Another recent study done by [econsultancy](#) found that positive reviews can increase search relevancy by 18%. That's quite significant!

So, having positive online reviews can grant you three super important gifts:

✔ Customer's vote of trust!

✔ Chance for increased conversions!

✔ A major search rankings boost!

Now that you understand the benefits of having positive reviews… how exactly do you go about claiming them?

Claiming Your Business Profile On Major Review Sites

The first logical step to getting good reviews is to claim your business profile on major review sites.

Have you ever visited a restaurant on Yelp, and at the top of the page you see: "Is this business yours? Claim it now!"? You need to claim your business in order to take credit for the good reviews, and to help customers stay connected with you.

Here's a good place to start: Hubspot published a list of the top 19 consumer review sites here, which of course include popular sites like Google My Business and the Better Business Bureau. But before you go crazy on all of the websites, think about which ones will increase your value the most.

Some review sites are better for certain industries than others. Are you a retailer? Try looking at Amazon first. Do you sell baked goods? Yelp is a good place to go.

Quick note: You can check your onboarding or customer service reports to track how many customers found you via which website, so you can track which review sites are the most relevant or most heavily tracked for you.

If none of these options work, then go back to the basics: Google reviews. This shows up alongside your Google My Business page, giving you a star rating. You can also look at your Facebook page, which gives you the same star ratings across all reviews.

On most [social media](#) platforms, you can simply wait for consumers to comment, which will gain you many reviews. Through other sites like Yelp, just put in your business information so customers can find you and leave comments.
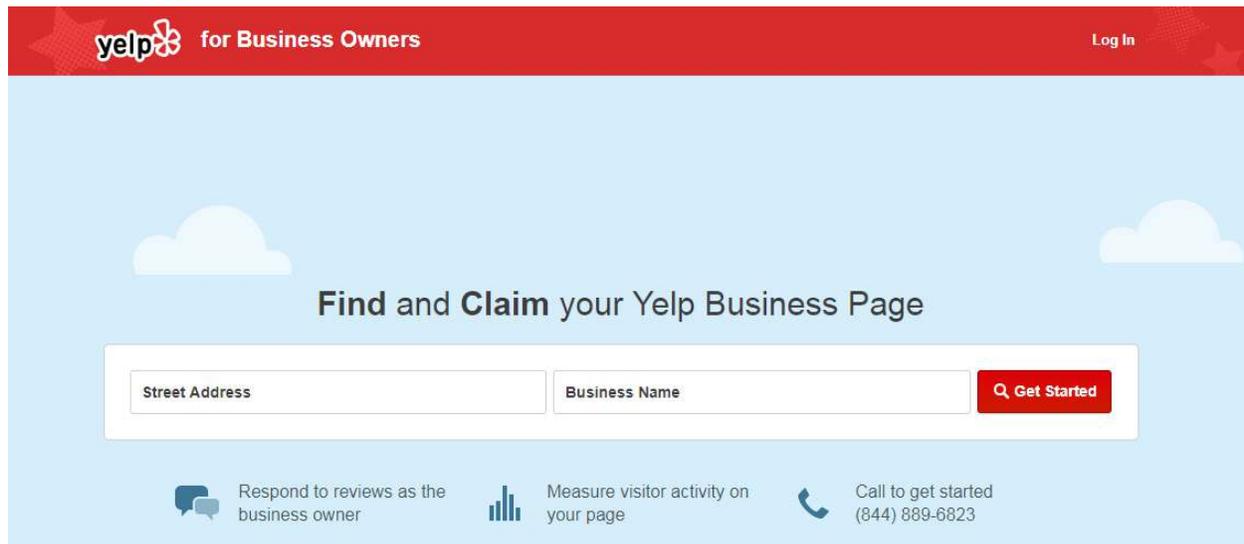
If your business isn't already on Yelp, the website will prompt you to create a business profile. You may have to play a little bit of the waiting game before Yelp's moderators can verify your business, but after you receive their email, you can start seeking out customer reviews.

Why Is Site Verification Important?

As mentioned earlier in this guide, going through the verification process is important because it allows you to add security and credibility to your profile. Plus, after you verify your account, you can edit your information and directly reply to any user reviews that you wish.

Now that you know how to establish your online business prole... how do you go about building your online reputation?

This process can sometimes feel like walking on needles, but it will all be worth it. Here's a strategy we've come up with to help you increase the quantity and quality of your online reviews.

How To Increase The Quantity Of Your Quality Reviews

In all honesty, you can gain reviews just by asking for them! It doesn't hurt to reach out to your customers and ask them to write an honest comment. But if you want a step-by-step process on gaining the best and most frequent customer reviews, follow this simple guide here:

✔ Collect positive reviews through automatic widgets, email letters, email signatures, business links, and social media posts. Linking to your website can incentivize people to leave a review for you, and the more reviews there are, the more likely new customers are to leave a review too!

✔ Resolve negative reviews before they are published by getting customers in contact with your support team. You might need a customer service support center to get those negative reviews taken care of as quickly as possible.

If you need help with any of these things, please reach out to us! We are happy to assist you with your needs.

The more positive and high-quality reviews you have, the higher your chances are of receiving more and happier customers! You can proudly display your reviews on your website as well, so that people are more inclined to give you their business!

The Bottom Line

Well, there you have it: All of our strategies and guides on how to best promote Local SEO for your business. We've given you the tools, and now you have the knowledge and the techniques you need to be successful!

With these strategies, you can get started right away. And if you have any extra pointers, suggestions, comments, or questions, let us know right away using the comment section below! We are always happy to help you out!

Feel free to email, tweet, blog, and pass this eBook around the web, but please don't alter any of its contents when you do. Thank you!

ds digital shift

✉ **info@digitalshiftmedia.com**

🌐 **digitalshiftmedia.com**

📞 **(855) 482-4242**