5 Steps to Local Search Success

Google has evolved greatly since the days of traditional website search optimization and continues to fine tune it's results to give users the answers they are looking for. Part of this evolution comes in the form of local search. This differs from organic website search in that the results include local companies, and the search intent revolves around a user looking for a place. These come in the form of restaurants, doctor's offices and hospitals, fitness and kids activity centers, and law offices. According to Google, 88% of consumers who search for a type of local business on a mobile device call or go to that business within 24 hours.

The idea of ranking for your place is similar to your website in that Google looks for signals to help them decide who to rank. For local search, Google's primary ranking factor is how many and the quality of your directory listings, also called citations. Just fixing the top directories isn't enough. You need to continue to find new directories and optimize those listings with the right keywords.

While it may seem daunting to effectively list, manage, and optimize your business for local search, there are 5 steps that will help you simplify the process and dominate local search.

1. Business Listings Audit

The first step in the process is to identify your duplicate, erroneous and incomplete listings. By identifying your existing (and missing) listings, you'll be able to gauge how much work you'll have to do.

To make this process simpler, you simply need to plug in your business information into the our free report tool, which can be found at www.NeedMoreSales.com. The tool will instantly check the major online directories and give you an analysis of your business listings.

The NeedMoreSale-BusinessCreator SEO Grader shows you exactly how your business displays on 100+ online directories.

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2. Systematic Directory Submissions

Once you complete your business listings audit, you can begin the process of creating new listings, fixing erroneous data, and merging duplicate accounts. Each directory will require different inputs, but in general you'll need to put a consistent business name, address, and phone number. It's crucial that this data is consistent across the board to ensure the best results. Studies have shown that directory optimization leads to 6-10x better effectiveness on directories like Yelp (in terms of views and conversions.)

Most of these online directories will require that you verify your business data to make sure you actually work for the business you're claiming. The methods and approval time vary greatly by network. Some may take only a few minutes and a phone call, while other directories can take weeks and require you to receive a postcard in the mail.

Companies like BusinessCreator make this process simple by updating your business's information once and synchronizing it everywhere it needs to be. BusinessCreator's tight integration with the directories allows you to seamlessly manage, update and report on all your listings with only a few clicks, effectively streamlining an otherwise complicated organizational task.

3. Clean Up Google+ Local

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As noted earlier, Google+ Local is hands down the most important local online directory. It powers listings on Google Maps, phones, tablets as well as local results in broad based search queries. Google+ Local verifies much of it's business listing data by reading the information from many other directories, which is why it is important to complete as many online listings as you can.

Unlike many other directories, Google+ Local requires all updates must be done manually. The process for creating, updating and verifying your listings will vary based on how your business is structured, and it is recommended to seek the professional help of a company that specializes in local search optimization, such as LocalVox. This increases overall efficiency and negates the need to manually submit and manage all your Google+ Local pages.

4. Getting Better Rankings by Enhancing Listings with Rich Media

Steps 1-3 focus on creating clean, consistent data across the web. Once completed, you should then revisit each and every listing to optimize them for local search and conversion. While each directory will vary, some of the key activities include:

1. Writing SEO friendly keywords into your business's description

> " La Mela Ristorante is a staple of the world famous Little Italy, New York. Come in Mon-Fri from 11:30am till 3:30pm for our unbeatable $9.95 three course lunch special.

2. Selecting industry specific categories and tags

> ⓘ $$ · Italian Restaurant, European Restaurant · Today 11:00 am – 2:00 am · Menu

3. Uploading rich media like pictures and video to enhance conversion optimization

4. Adding links back to your website for customers to research

> 📍 **167 Mulberry St** New York, NY 10013
> (212) 431-9493 · lamelarestaurant.com

**5. Including hours of operation and payment methods (see image #1)**

From a conversion standpoint, these activities increase the chances of customers choosing your business over another. Rich profiles also come with excellent SEO benefits, as they now can be sorted by search engines to show up in the most relevant results.

5. Monitor and Report

To prevent atrophy from setting in, your listings must be monitored and measured each month to make sure they remain consistent. Events like employees leaving, new locations opening, a change of operating hours or other updates will require changes to your local directories. Reporting on clicks and impressions will also let you know if your directories are adding value to your business by showing you how real customers are interacting with your listings.

SearchCast makes local SEO simple, effective, and affordable.

LocalVox helps businesses dominate local search with our industry leading products and support. With SearchCast, your business will rank on 100+ major online directories and search engines, making it fast and simple for new customers to find you.
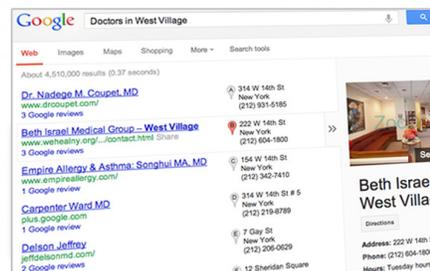
See how BusinessCreator can help your business dominate local search.

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