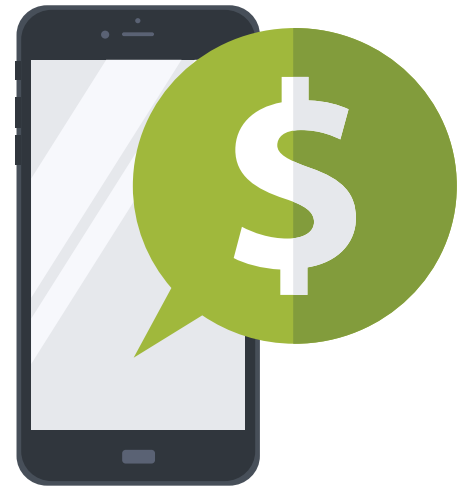


THE ABC'S OF LOCAL SEARCH

Building Blocks for Creating a Successful Search Strategy

Today's consumers are turning to their smartphones and other mobile devices to find products and services in their local area. In fact, Google has observed that 4 in 5 consumers conduct local searches, and on smartphones 56 percent of searchers have local intent¹.

If your brand cannot be found in local search, your customers will likely move on to one of your competitors. This makes having a solid local SEO strategy even more critical to driving more prospects through your doors.



What exactly do you mean by local marketing?

In a nutshell, we're talking about gaining visibility for a business in a specific geographic area by using search engines and online directories. Local marketing provides a scalable way to market to your customers wherever they're looking for a product or service. And today's forward-thinking marketers are tapping into location data to unlock the power of local marketing.

Thriving brands are winning by properly executing an effective local digital marketing strategy that includes a focus on local SEO. National-to-local is a growing shift in the market where large brands are focusing their efforts to connect with their customers on a local level.

Because local SEO requires a distinctly different approach from national, we've put together the following list of top building blocks for creating a winning local SEO strategy:

A. LOCATION ACCURACY

According to a recent comScore2 study, what consumers are looking for when conducting a local search is your business address, phone number, hours of operation, and driving directions.

Unfortunately, many of these local searches are ending in frustration for consumers, because according to a SearchEngineLand article3, 18 percent of business listings have missing or inaccurate phone numbers, while 43 percent have a missing or inaccurate address.

And when customers can't find or contact your business locally, you are losing sales to your competitors and losing trust in your brand.

In order for your brand to scale locally, it's critical that you ensure the quality, local accuracy, and local relevancy of all business listings across Google, Yahoo, Bing, Foursquare, Facebook and more.

As a large national brand with hundreds or even thousands of locations, it can be difficult to manage such dynamic and abundant data—but doing so is absolutely crucial, because everything you do online will suffer if you are working with inaccurate or incomplete data.

So what does it take to ensure location accuracy for your brand?

To improve the accuracy and completeness of your data, consider creating a centralized database that includes easy importing and uploading procedures.

And whichever system you choose, you'll want it to:

- Include batch upload and update capabilities
- Track all data changes
- Run data through automated address standardizations and verification steps
- Regulate who has access to the data
- Provide synchronization capabilities with information stored outside of the system
- Feature automated batch geocoding capabilities and enable users to replot locations for ultimate accuracy
- Format data for easy export to external systems
- Increase the accuracy of your individual location listings by ensuring the accuracy of your location data



B. CREATE LOCAL LANDING PAGES

Maintaining accurate data in the right locations are key, but to bring shoppers to stores, brands must provide the customized, relevant content today's consumer demands. In fact, a 2013 Cisco report⁴ found that online content is the most-utilized source of information to help shoppers make buying decisions.

While hours, location, directions and product/service descriptions are essential; consumers also seek additional information like reviews, customized location-specific offers, videos, and photos.

The Cisco report also found that personalization of digital content is critical, with 70 percent of respondents stating that personalized shopping experiences would encourage them to make more purchases – and customized promotions and offers were the most favored personalization service.

In order to deliver highly relevant and customized information, you must have a unique landing page and mobile presence for each and every one of your locations.

Creating optimized local landing pages for every location allows you to take control of your brand and increase conversions by maximizing your user experience.

How should you customize your local landing pages?

For starters, you can provide consumers with each location's:

- Name, address and phone number
- Store hours
- Unique store descriptions
- Parking and transit information
- Special events
- Promotions
- Customer testimonials

By creating local landing pages that are optimized using SEO best practices, you will rank well on search engines and enable customers to have a more personalized experience with your brand.



C. TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR DATA

According to a recent report by Infogroup⁵ 52 percent of consumers using local search services have visited a closed business and 44 percent have had a social outing ruined by outdated business listing information.

Because inaccurate or incomplete listings can cost you customers as well as trust in your overall brand, you must take control of your data.

But how?

You can begin taking control of your message and owning your brand by creating indexable local pages. Next, you'll want to distribute your information to major top search engines with the help of a solid syndication strategy.

Finally, you should centrally manage all of your brand's individual location listings from a single database. This will help to ensure that your listings are always correct, consistent and discoverable online.

Additional steps to control your data include:

- Making sure that the platform managing your data locations checks your data for accuracy—locating and resolving duplicate listings and missing data.
- Owning your brand on various social listings to ensure whatever medium the customer searches on; they are able to find you.
- Merging and optimizing your orphaned Facebook's pages and building consistency for your brand.

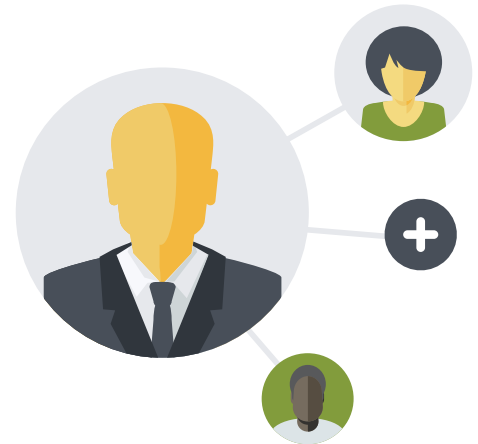


Remember, you don't have to go it alone.

A proven third-party provider that focuses on local marketing can provide the expertise you need to implement a successful local SEO strategy. More sophisticated providers will also offer automation capabilities for centrally managing content and distributing it to multiple pages all in one step.

Once you have a solid local SEO plan in place, you'll soon see an improvement in your digital presence and start winning the highly competitive race to attract retail consumers.

When considering your options, keep in mind that Placeable provides a simple but powerful way to: improve the quality and richness of your content, automatically publish changes to unique local landing pages, and seamlessly deliver information about your locations to third-party sites.



Sources:

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3. The Most Common Problems With Local Business Listings, March 2013, Search Engine Land
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