How to attract more
local customers: A complete
guide to local SEO

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Are you ready to achieve more local visibility? Let's jump to step number one.

Step #1 – Ensure that your NAP is consistent across the top-ranked directories

- Let's look at how you can set NAP up.

- The first step you need to take is fill the NAP in an easily crawlable HTML text format in your website's footer (that's where web users mostly expect it).

- Don't include the NAP info as an image because the information inside them isn't crawlable for search engines.

- You also need to take care of your NAP format for getting credit for it from Google My Business.

- Let us also brief you on the email address, phone number and business category information you'll provide about your business.

- Your public email address should be on your own business domain rather than a generic email service provider like Gmail.

- Also, use your own domain email as the login for your Google My Business listing. It will add credibility and send a clear message that you're indeed the owner of the business.

- Your main published business phone number should preferably be a non-800 number. It's recommended to use your local area code.

- In Google's words, "your business category should describe what your business is and not what it does".

- You can change your business category for your Google My Business listing from your dashboard.

- Next we would strongly recommend you to conduct a local SEO audit.

- It should include research on your Google Business My Page listings, your local citations, social media presence, etc.

- The local search ecosystem is complicated. If you have previously tried to enhance your web presence by filling in your business information on various listings, your research can become a daunting task.

- If you don't want to do such a thorough analysis, then at least conduct an NAP accuracy and consistency analysis.

- You need to check that all the data points of your business on every local citation align perfectly.

- Even the format in which you mention your business address should stay the same.

- Because even a small discrepancy in this information can lead to a drop in your local authority.

- You can find accurate information about your business by just Google

"your business name + BBB."

- BBB will give you an overview of your business along with any additional phone numbers and web addresses.

- As you scroll down, you'll even get a list of your alternate business names.

- Start with claiming your business profile on prominent review websites and top ranked local directories by submitting accurate information. You can start with Yelp, TripAdvisor, OpenTable, and UrbanSpoon.

- This local directory optimization will also benefit you because you will be found when a user specially searches for local businesses in your industry using the keyword 'reviews.'

- The results for your location will vary. Find the top ranking directory for your location and optimize your business listing for that particular directory.

- Such strategic optimization of a select few listings will yield good results in less time.

- We're almost done with the NAP consistency and accuracy check. But would you like to give your listings an extra edge?

- Then serve your business information to search engines in the standardised method they have requested from you.

- We're talking about using the schema.org local business markup for helping the search engines easily identify the info you feed.

- You can use the markup to give your business information including your address, phone, operating hours, website and accepted payment types.

- Matthew Barby has put in the hard work to craft the code you can use in your website's schema markup. You just need to change the bold entities below with your business details.

```
<div itemscope itemtype="http://schema.org/LocalBusiness">
<p itemprop="name">COMPANY NAME</p>
<p itemprop="address" itemscope itemtype="http://schema.org/PostalAddress">
<p itemprop="streetAddress">ADDRESS LINE 1</p>
<p itemprop="addressLocality">CITY</p>,
<p itemprop="addressRegion">REGION</p>
<p itemprop="postalCode">POSTCODE/ZIP</p.
<p itemprop="telephone">PHONE NUMBER</p>
<meta itemprop="latitude" content="LATITUDE" />
<meta itemprop="longitude" content="LONGITUDE" />
</div>
```

● We're done with NAP, but consumers now expect more detailed information about your business. They want to know your hours of operation and your prices.

● Although it can be tedious, try to provide maximum information about your business. It'll give a minor boost to your SEO and make your customers happier.

● The first important information is general details about your business.

● Casey recommends you to use at least 250 words (preferably 400 words) in your Google My Business introduction.

● It should be unique content to let your customers know in detail about your business.

● For your Google My Business listing, you'll see a profile completeness bar at the top of your dashboard. You can get it to 100% by taking action based on recommendations it provides you.

● If you're short of time, then you can use a paid tool like Moz local.

● It simplifies your work by distributing accurate and consistent business listings to major aggregators like Infogroup, Neustar Localeze, Acxiom, Factual and Foursquare.

● To get started with Moz local just you need to upload your location data in their excel sheet template.

● You can watch the video below to understand how Moz local works.

● You can also use Brightlocal for checking accuracy and consistency of your NAP listings. It can even help in tracking your competitor citations and going after them.

Step #2 – Build credibility for your business

● Would you like to get the top spot among those carousels (local pack listings)?

● Then you need these 3 things.

1. Local NAP citations (which we already discussed in step #1).

2. Local Reviews – in quality as well as quantity.

3. Claiming your business on Google My Business.

● First, let's discuss cultivating good local reviews for your business.

● Good reviews can make your business stand out in search results prominently with the rich snippet. This will increase your CTR.

● Let's look at how you can get more positive reviews.

● Start with changing your mindset about reviews. They aren't a one time thing, but an ongoing process.

● Next, zero in on the directory where you want to collect more reviews for your business. Read the terms and conditions of the website to find out if soliciting customers for reviews is okay with them.

● Yelp does not permit you to ask for reviews from your customers. They believe it sacrifices their integrity. But you can use Yelp badges on your website to let customers know about your Yelp presence.

● On the other hand, Google encourages you to remind your customers about reviews and to encourage feedback.

● "Remind your customers to leave feedback on Google. Simply reminding customers that it's quick and easy to leave feedback on Google on mobile or desktop can help your business stand out from sites with fewer reviews."

Note: For any directory, we strongly advocate against buying reviews.

● Then, you can place links to 2 or 3 listing presences in these five places:

● i. On your About page, you can ask your visitors to check you out on review websites.

● Or, create a separate page on your website explaining how to post a review.

    ii. You can also add links to your listings in your website's header or footer.

    iii. You can also add one or two links in your email signature.

    iv. Inform the customers you serve offline about these review websites through flyers. You can use Whitespark's free handout generator for printing flyers that show your customers how to post reviews on Google.

● You just need to fill your business details, and click on the generate button.

● You'll then have a pdf ready that you can give to your customers.

● v. Offer discounts to your current customer base (maybe you've built an email list) for posting reviews.

● You can also use a paid service like Get Five Stars for sending automated feedback requests to your customers. It integrates with 45 online review websites including Google, Facebook, Yelp, TripAdvisor and more.

● If you want more strategies to get reviews, you can check out detailed article on getting 5 star reviews at Quick Sprout.

A quick note about negative reviews

● Dissatisfied customers are more likely to come online and post about you. But don't get depressed or ignore the review. Here are the 3 steps you need to take.

i. Start with a sincere apology and try to fix the issue.

ii. Take the issue offline. Example – Yelp lets business owners email customers for resolving issues.

iii. Request that the reviews website remove a defamatory or fake negative review. If you aren't allowed to do so, then you'll have to rely on getting more 5-star reviews.

● Let's discuss how you can setup your Google+ Local listing.

● If you haven't claimed your business on Google My Business, then here is a video tutorial to walk you through the process.

● In step 1, already emphasized adding unique, in-depth information about your business. We've also hopefully shown the importance of keeping your NAP consistent with other listings.

● Here are a couple of more important recommendations about Google My Business.

1. Upload as many high-quality pictures of your business as possible.

● Generic photos won't convince your customers, whereas accurate high-quality photos will increase your CTR.

2. Get as many reviews on Google as possible because it'll lift your search rankings.

● Finally if you find your business has duplicate listings, you can use Google's Map Maker for removing them.

Step #3 – Create local content for earning links, social media following and press mentions

● Good old content marketing. It can help you in increasing your social following as well as earning backlinks.

● For getting your local SEO campaign off the ground, creating local content can do wonders. You can get local press mentions as well.

● So you can start making your content locally relevant, by including your city or neighborhood names in the title in your content will help. But you should aim to add value to your local community

● You can include details about upcoming events in your locality. Or start a blog and post about local industry gatherings, news, etc.

● Here are 4 examples to make things more clear to you.

1. You can dedicate a website section to posting reviews from your customers. Look how beautifully Dr. Jeffrey Donaldson, a plastic and reconstructive surgeon in Columbus, Ohio does it by publishing video reviews on his website.

2. You can create a neighborhood guide like Airbnb has done for some its most popular locations.

● The process they followed was very simple.

❏ Hire a local photographer to shoot the area. (They even feature the photographer in their guide).

❏ Give key information about the location. Look at their Hell's Kitchen guide. They tell you that 'public transit is easy.' They even show the time it'll take you to reach JFK Airport, Times Square and Wall Street.

❏ Integrate the most popular and current local listing data on the page.

● You can also craft a similar guide for your locality. You don't need a hefty budget. Just click the photos yourself with a good quality camera.

3. You can also post BuzzFeed style listicles about your locality.

4. You can even turn your product/service collaterals into content.

● Once you have a few ideas, you can create local content. But as you might know, creating content is just the start. Without proper marketing and distribution, you're only going to get lost in the sea of content.

● That's where social media can help.

- G.Michael Salon in Indianapolis is the number one salon in the city. And they invest a whooping 33 hours every week on social media marketing.

- The kind of content they publish includes before and after hairstyle makeovers, contests, and local charity support.

- Through social media, they have connected with fans beyond their locality. And now they are recognized as a formidable brand. Just look at their results.

- Finally, you should also perform traditional outreach (and other link building methods) after content creation and promotion. This will help in strengthening your website's authority.

- Google has updated its local pack to include just 3 results instead of 7.

- And reportedly, link signals played a major role in getting you in those 3 spots.

Bonus: How to create an optimal local landing page?

Creating a landing page for your products as a local business can get tricky. Here is an infographic by Avalaunch Media to help you craft a high-converting one.