

How to Conduct a Local SEO Audit in 45 Minutes

NEILPATEL

neilpatel.com

- Most people think that auditing a site in order to improve its search performance is difficult.
- If you don't know what to do, it can be a daunting task. But fear not – this article will walk you through it!

Before You Begin Your Local SEO Audit

Before you get started with your local SEO audit, make sure that you.

- Check your business name reach and NAP (name, address and phone) visibility.
- Study the city and geographical location of your business.
- Take a deep dive into your business website or blog.
- Extract useful data through competitor analysis.

Step #1: Conduct an extensive keyword analysis

- To conduct a keyword analysis and discover which keywords are bringing organic searches and visitors to your site, follow this simple process:
 - i). Go to SEMrush.com.** On the homepage, input your site URL (e.g., nutritionsecrets.com). Then click the “search” button on the right.
 - ii). Analyze organic keywords.** You'll then see your organic keyword performance results. Pay attention to the organic keywords and their positions (where the keywords are currently ranked).
 - iii). Check the top organic results pages.** You want to know which other competitors are ranking ahead of you. Simply input one of your keywords into the search engine.
 - iv). Dig deeper into local searches.** Now, let's do it in the context of local SEO keyword search.
- The purpose of digging deeper into local searches is to find out if there are local businesses competing for your keywords. You're interested in both organic results and paid search (AdWords).
- To be effective at this, let's assume that you're a “social media consultant in Houston.”
- All you have to do is input that keyword phrase into the search engine and you'll see your local competitors.
- If you find competitors running Google ads consistently, it's a sign that local consumers are searching for the keywords and will be more likely to buy a product, opt-in to an email list and read informative content.

- Make sure your site meta data has relevant and geo-modified keywords. Do the title tags and meta descriptions on your site contain the right keywords – i.e., “your keyword + state” or “seo expert New Jersey”?
- There are two ways to check this. They include:
- **Manual check:** You can manually look at the source code of your site. All you have to do is right-click on your page and select “view source code.”
- **Use a tool:** You can also use the Screaming Frog SEO spider tool to check your meta data.
- To be on the safe side, when analyzing your metadata, make sure that the title contains fewer than 55 characters and the description contains no more than 155 characters.
- You can easily use this [character count tool](#) to get a quick and accurate character count.
- Your title tag must be relevant and contain the keywords that you’re targeting, plus the geo-modified keywords (i.e., keywords that contain the state, city or country you’re located in).
- **Geo-modified vs. geo-targeted keywords:** Most SEOs think that these two terms mean the same thing. But that’s not quite right.
- Geo-modifying a keyword simply means that you are adding qualifiers such as the city, state, or country name to your primary keyword. Some examples of geo-modified search phrases are:
 - ❑ web developer in Minnesota
 - ❑ Los Angeles plumber
 - ❑ Vancouver construction company
 - ❑ make money online in India
- On the other hand, geo-targeting a keyword simply means that you aim or target groups of keywords to a specific market or audience based on geography.
- For example, you could easily geo-target the keyword phrases below to customers in the United Kingdom, or US:
 - ❑ social media digital agency
 - ❑ work at home income opportunities
 - ❑ digital marketing services
 - ❑ graphic design packages
- During a local SEO audit process, it’s ideal to take a close look at both geo-modified and geo-targeted keyword phrases, because local consumers in a particular city or state usually search for them.
- For example, if you want to hire a professional graphic designer in Texas, you could use any of these search terms:

- ❑ professional graphic designer service
- ❑ professional graphic designer TX
- ❑ best Texas graphic designers
- ❑ best professional graphic designers
- ❑ graphic design solutions online
- Remember that you can geo-target a particular keyword or group of keywords to a location that'll improve your conversion rate.

Step #2: Search business in Google and other search engines

- One of the simplest things that you can do is to search for your business name in Google to determine its visibility. There should be an alignment between your search results and business name.
- You're basically linking your business name and characteristics with your organic search results.
- Here's how this works: If you're in Georgia and need to eat at a nearby restaurant, you wouldn't be interested in a restaurant in Texas or Iowa. What you want is a restaurant in the city where you're staying.
- And, if you own a restaurant like that, you want to make sure people like me get directed to your website, right?
- So, in conducting a local SEO audit, start by searching your business name in all of the search engines, but especially Google. Make sure to search for your "business name + city."
- At a glance, you can see that the local search result for "Bob Hamilton Plumbing Kansas" returned some local listings alongside the knowledge graph.
- The next thing you'll need to do is to check if the business name is attached to a Google+ profile. Is the Google+ page link showing up in the organic search listings?
- It's vital that the Google+ page link shows up when you search for the business name, because it shows the level of reach, influence and relative prominence of the business brand in your locality.
- The reason is simple: Consumers should be able to reach a business through the website, via the physical address or by any of its social media profile pages.
- **Making a case with branded search:** Search users usually look for a particular business using branded keywords (e.g., Brian Dean SEO). If you want your business to be visible when branded local searches are available, you need to claim your listings in Google My Business.
- When you claim your listings on Google My Business, you enjoy these three benefits:

- You show up in local results
- You give customers accurate information about your business and products
- You build lasting relationships with your target audience members
- Claiming your listing will often solve the problem of branded local searches not returning your business website or Google+ pages.
- When you claim your listings, Google will sync your business with the knowledge graph so that you can also help local searchers learn more about your business.

Note: If your business isn't showing up on the knowledge panel of organic search results for your business brand name, there are several ways you can fix this. Mike Blumenthal's post walks you through them.

Step #3: Scan the Google+ Local Page to access page health

- You should analyze everything connected to Google, including Google+. It's all connected.
- When you improve your site's search performance, that in turn leads to more revenue for your business.
- In a bid to reclaim Google+, one feature that makes people particularly excited has been given top priority: Google+ local business listing.
- In order to make your local SEO site audit a success, it's important to scan your Google+ local page and assess its "page health."
- Some of the specific concerns you should look out for include:
 - Spammy descriptions
 - Listings not properly shown
 - Poorly chosen categories
- Follow these tips to improve the health of your Google+ local business page:
 - i). **Write user-friendly descriptions:** Make sure that your description, which acts as part of the Google+ local business page copy, is user friendly. People should want to click on the results to learn more about your business just by looking at the compelling descriptions.
 - Finally, write descriptions solely for humans, not for search engines.
 - ii). **Don't stuff keywords:** In your description, there's no need to stuff keywords. Just as with your website copy and content, keyword stuffing won't help. It can actually harm your page's ability to rank highly in organic branded search results.

iii). Assign the appropriate category: No matter what type of business you're running, there's a suitable category for it. As a rule of thumb, your primary category should reflect your primary business (e.g., John Conti Coffee should be categorized into Foods and Beverages).

- ❑ Many local businesses are accidentally placed in irrelevant categories in addition to the primary classification. If that's the case, pinpoint and remove those other categories.
- ❑ To find the categories assigned to your business in local business listings, go to [Google map maker](#).
- ❑ In the search box, input your business name and click the blue search icon at the right side. You'll be able to see the categories.

iv). Track your reviews: Reviews are powerful because they prove what your customers really think about your business. In fact, Search Engine Land found that 72% of consumers trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations from people they know offline.

- ❑ Another important thing you must do is to ensure that the contact information (e.g., address, website, hours and days of operations, etc.) is clearly stated.
- ❑ Give a concise description of the business. You could take it a step further and mention specific benefits, as well – for instance, “7-minute drive from the airport.”

Step #4: Audit the company website or blog for duplicate content

- The only duplicate content pages that get penalized are spammy ones that provide a bad user experience.
- But, don't just take my word for it. Google has stated as much. In the Google Search Console Help Center, you'll learn that Google's well aware of non-malicious duplicate content, such as:
 - ❑ Discussion forums that can generate both regular and stripped-down pages targeted at mobile devices
 - ❑ Store items shown or linked via multiple distinct URLs
 - ❑ Printer-only versions of web pages
- To find these duplicate content pages on your site, follow these simple steps:
 - i). Go to [SiteLiner.com](#). In the search box, type your site URL. Then click on the blue “Go” button.
 - ii). Analyze the duplicate content.

Step #5: Review the social networks you're active on

- Social signals are powerful influencers as far as SEO is concerned.
- Direct impact comes from signals such as:
 - ❑ Number of people that like your brand on Facebook
 - ❑ Number of Facebook shares
 - ❑ Number of Twitter followers
 - ❑ Number of tweets mentioning your brand name or including a link to your website
 - ❑ Number of people that “have you in their circles” (Google+)
- Indirect impact comes from social signals such as:
 - ❑ Increased inbound links and citations due to improved online visibility
 - ❑ Increased positive reviews (Google Local, Yelp, etc.) due to happier customers
 - ❑ Decreased bounce rate, higher time on site and more repeat visitors to your website
- When it comes to determining your social influence, you need speed. When you find that your social influence is lagging (e.g., your Facebook page isn't showing up in the top 10 organic listings), you need to optimize it or rebuild it.
- Being active on social media networks can help your business locally. It isn't that Google will look at the links you shared on Facebook and rank you highly.
- But, content that gets shared a lot on social media may be seen as more valuable content, says Eric Enge of Stone Temple Marketing.

Step #6: Brand citation check for link building opportunities

- Brand marketing goes way beyond building links to improve your search rankings. It's about making a positive difference and bringing satisfaction to customers.
- Brand citation is a scenario where another site mentions your website, business name or personal name without linking to your site or social profile.
- Why are brand citations and mentions important? These 4 reasons will explain why you should strive to get cited by other sites:
 - i). **Social signal leverage:** Brand mentions can be used to leverage social signals.
 - ❑ Though the links you acquire from social media are nofollow and consequently will not affect search rankings, you can piggyback on mentions, comments, etc.

- ❑ And reach out to those who cited your brand and request a dofollow link.
- ❑ Brand citations or implied links are the future of link building. You want to check to see how many implied links your business name or brand is getting.

ii). Effective measurement of brand authority: The traditional method of building links is no longer feasible to Google, due to blackhat SEO manipulations. But, when a brand is mentioned across authority sites, it's a signal that people like and trust it.

iii). Reduces the risk of link manipulations: It's much easier to control branded implied links than anchor texts. Citations on industry blogs or pages are usually relevant and contextually woven into the content.

- ❑ As long as the website is in context with the referring content, the link will be search-friendly.

iv). Brand citation is important for local SEO: If you or your target clients or customers are centered in a particular geographic area, local SEO is ideal for you.

- ❑ Citations can be an important local SEO factor, because of the role they play in helping local businesses find their place in the social and search sphere.
- ❑ This in turn helps customers to find a particular business on their mobile devices.
- ❑ Google actually uses the NAP (name, address and phone number) to determine the location of a particular business on Google Maps.
- ❑ This helps the customers find exactly what they're looking for when they conduct local searches.
- ❑ You can easily use the [Moz local](#) tool to find a particular local business, as well as opportunities to improve a particular listing.

Step #7: Conduct a backlink/penalty analysis

- User experience is vital, but links are still the most important algorithm ranking factor.
- Without the right links pointing to your web pages, you may not be able to improve your search performance (e.g., traffic and rankings).
- Moz's [Open Site Explorer](#) shows you the spam score of your backlinks. This makes it easy for you to determine the true nature of your links and to decide whether to nofollow some links.
- The spam score of the site above is 3. According to Open Site Explorer, 4% of sites with a spam score of 3 were penalized by Google.
- You want to measure the ratio of the backlinks to the referring domains. For NeilPatel.com, the number of backlinks is huge, but the referring domains number less than 600.

- This may not be good for SEO – although the links appear natural and not spammy.
- Last, but not least, do the anchor texts look natural? If you have too many commercial keywords in your anchor texts, this may be a sign that your anchor texts are over-optimized, which can also lead to Google penalties.
- Don't lose sight of the purpose behind your local SEO audit. It's to help you uncover errors on your site (both on-page and off-page) so that you can re-optimize and drive more organic traffic to your blog or pages.