

11 Steps to Improve Your Local SEO

You're on vacation, walking around and exploring the sites and suddenly get the urge for an ice-cream cone. What do you do?

You take out your phone. Google "ice cream near me" and are met with a list of locations for the closest ice-cream shops in the area. You choose one and order your favorite flavor on a cone with sprinkles and think to yourself, "thank you Google."

Ok, maybe you don't do the last part... but you should!

Being able to quickly find the location of any business near you is a huge convenience that is easy to take for granted. And it's all thanks to those businesses signing up for a Google My Business page (formally Google+ Local).

Google My Business is a valuable tool for getting your business in front of local customers who are searching for your products and services.

The 11 steps below are key for making sure your Google My Business page ranks above all the rest.

1. Create Your Google My Business Profile

When you think about using search engine optimization (SEO) to benefit your business, you likely focus on getting your website to rank in Google's results using various content and keyword strategies. With local SEO and Google My Business, there's a bit of a twist.

When you search "ice cream shops near me" you'll see a big map at the top of your screen in addition to information on shops listed in the main search results such as the name, address, website, phone number, and reviews for each business.

What many people don't realize is that the information does not come from the a business's website... it comes from their [Google My Business profile page](#). If you don't have a page set up then you are missing out on a valuable opportunity to get in front of customers.

Google My Business pages are free and take about 20 minutes create

*Tip: Make sure to verify your business listing. It's the last step and an important one to ensure you're the owner of your page so that you (and no one else) can make edits to your page in the future.

2. Check For Duplicate Page Listings

You may not remember setting up a Google My Business page in the past, but you'd be surprised how many people don't realize they, or another person from their company, started creating a Google My Business page once before.

The problem with this is Google hates duplicate content in their search results. They want to provide the most accurate search experience for their users and if a user sees the same information twice, it is a waste of Google's resources. Creating duplicate listings is against Google's terms of services and can affect your ability to rank in results.

To see if you have more than one page, you the [Moz Local tool](#). Type in your business name and address in this tool and it will tell you if there are duplicate listings online. If so, then contact Google to get them removed as soon as possible so they don't hurt your rankings.

3. Add Relevant Categories

OK, now let's take a look at the setup of the actual Google My Business profile page.

Setting your page up with relevant categories is a critical step to improving your rankings. Categories are like sections of the Yellow Pages. The more sections you are in, the more likely your business information is to get in front of prospects.

The more relevant categories you choose, the better. But, make sure that the categories you choose are *actually* relevant to your business, it's against Google terms to include irrelevant categories.

While this step is critical, it's not extremely easy. Another tip is to review the categories other top-ranking local businesses have selected in their profiles and use the same ones.

4. Make Sure Contact Information On Your Website Is Accurate & In Text Form

Go to your website's contact page and confirm all of your contact information is listed on the page.

It's important that your business Name, Address, and Phone Number are listed as text- not as an image. Google needs to be able to easily read and verify your contact information and they can't do that if it's listed as an image.

In order to ensure they are only showing credible business information, Google compares the information listed on your website and the information on your Google My Business profile page. If your website and profile aren't displaying the exact information, they'll think it's inaccurate, which can hurt your search rankings. Make sure that your website and profile are 100% consistent.

5. Be Sure Your NAP Information Online Is Consistent

NAP is simply an acronym for **N**ame, **A**ddress, and **P**hone number.

As I mentioned above, it's important to have the same contact information listed on both your website and your Google My Business page.

But that's not all...

Google also compare the contact information on your website to information listed on other websites across the entire internet.

Your NAP must be the same on every single webpage that lists your contact information. Mainly we're talking about business directories since those are the types of websites most likely to display your contact information publicly online.

To check for inconsistent NAP, again go use the [Moz Local search tool](#). Simply type in your business information and the tool will quickly tell you if you have any problems.

6. Check For Missing Citations

A citation is the mention of your NAP on another website.

We already noted the importance of consistency across all your online citations. However, there's still another step.

It's possible your website isn't being listed on important directories that could give you more citations and could help raise your rankings in Google. To check if you're missing important citations, you can start by using the Moz Local search tool. If you find there are opportunities, then simply add all of your business information to the websites.

7. Ask For Customer Reviews

Most businesses struggle to get customer reviews online. This is because it takes effort on your customers' end to write the review.

The problem is that reviews are extremely important to building credibility for your business, which Google likes.

Unfortunately, there is no easy solution here. All you can do is continue to ask your customers for reviews (using email, phone calls, and in-person) and make the process as easy as possible for every customer to write a review for you.

Of those 3 methods, I've found that asking via email — along with a link to the review page — is the most effective method, because your customer doesn't have to find your profile, you're leading them right to it.

Getting positive reviews will likely be a slow process, but over time it adds up and will give you a real competitive advantage that is difficult to replicate.

8. Have High Quality Content On Your Website

When Google updates their algorithm they continually incorporate more signals, including the content on your website.

Your website plays an important role in how high your Google My Business profile will rank in the search results. If you think about it from Google's perspective this makes a lot of sense. Google's goal is to send searchers to the most relevant webpage for their search.

Websites with more content provide more value and are likely a better fit for searcher's questions. Make sure to review all of your key webpages and make sure they have at least 500 words of relevant content.

9. Get High-Quality, Relevant Links

Links from other high-quality, relevant websites are hugely important to SEO and have also become important for Google's local ranking algorithm.

This means that while having an optimized Google My Business profile page and relevant citations are important, they're not the only factor. You also have to invest in tactics to get high quality, relevant links. This is not always easy to do and requires some effort. But, if you're publishing and promoting great content then other websites are going to want to link to it. This may be more time consuming, but will create lasting effects that will be a huge help for your business.

10. Get Active On Social Media

There's been a lot of debate about whether social media activity is one of the signals Google uses to rank businesses.

Regardless of whether you agree or not, there's no denying the fact that social media is a great opportunity to create more exposure and buzz about your business.

Social media is also a great way to promote the content you've created and get high quality links back to your site.

11. Optimize Your Website For Mobile

Searches are officially done more on mobile devices than on desktop. One of the major reasons for this is the increased searching for local results, which is the entire point of this article.

People are looking for businesses on the go. And even at home, I don't always want to wait and turn on my computer so it becomes much more convenient to search on my phone.

Back in April 2015, Google updated their algorithm to include mobile-friendliness signals in their ranking algorithm. But many businesses still haven't adapted. It is imperative to create a mobile optimized website in order to compete in the local search results.