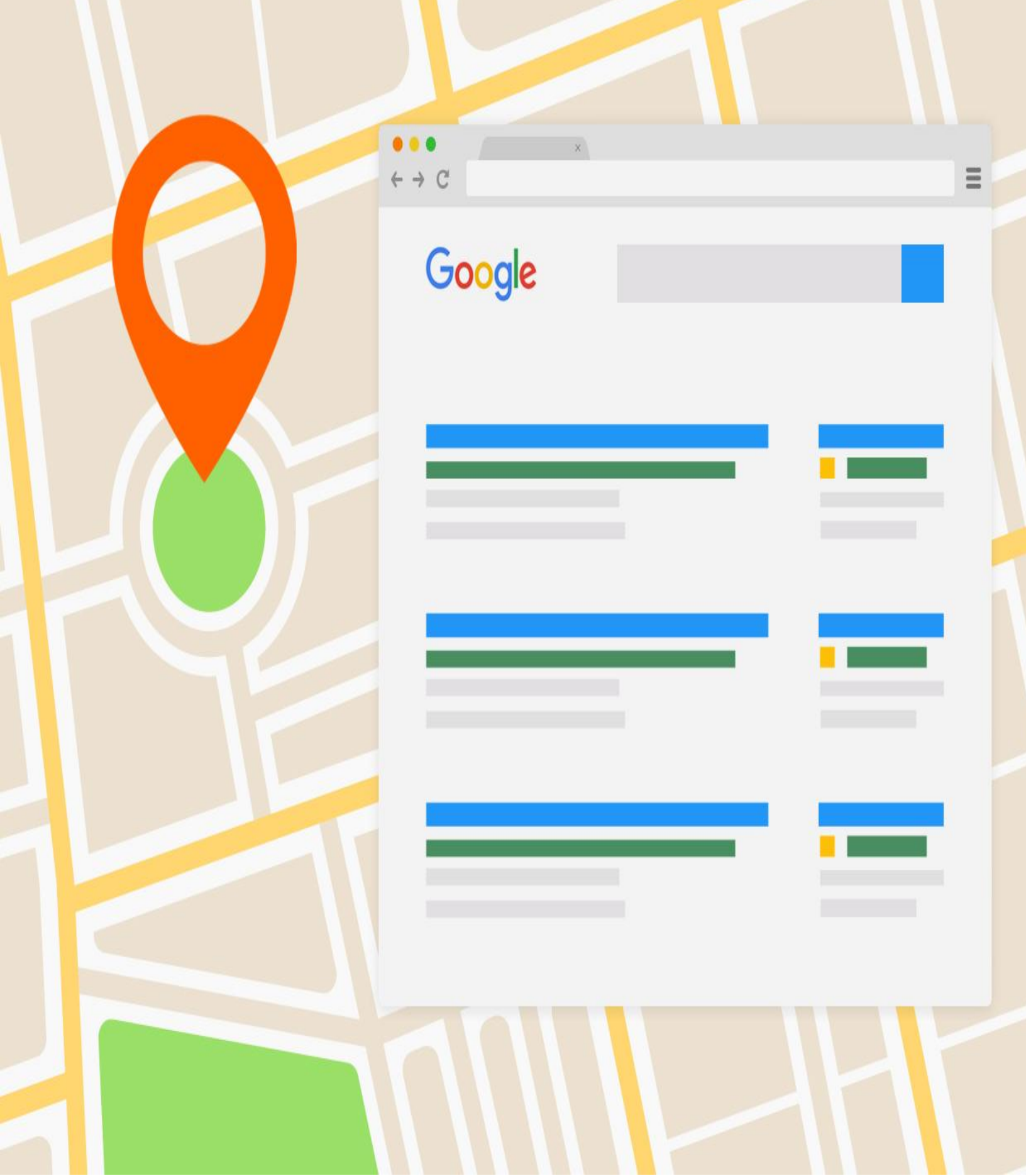


Your Step-by-Step Guide to Local SEO



Once upon a time, reserving a page on the local paper was all you needed to get your business found. Not anymore, now you have to deal with SEO. *This means keywords, rankings, and everything in between.* The problem? You're a local business and don't have the funds to beat out bigger companies spending an ungodly amount of money cornering the keywords market.

Local SEO is the answer to the question you didn't even know you had. Unlike 'regular' SEO, in which various businesses compete for keyword placement, local SEO places more emphasis on the local aspect. In other words, whereas big keyword spenders get the upper hand with organic SEO, the geographic component of local SEO levels the playing field. Without further ado, here's the first step to improve your local SEO.

Local SEO Step #1 Get Your Business Listed

aum

See photos

See outside

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If you want to improve your business' online presence, treat it like its physical locale. Just like having a physical location won't ensure a steady stream of customers, having a website doesn't mean that you'll be found. So, want to be found on local search? **Get your business listed.**

Being the largest and most widely used search engine, your first step is to get listed on [Google My Business](#). This will enable your business to appear on Google Search and Google Maps. Most importantly, *don't forget to optimize your listing with it's:*

- NAP (name, address, phone number)
- Logo
- Hours of operation (including special hours for holidays and special events)
- Description
- Categories
- Accepted forms of payment
- Photos
- Reviews
- Etc.

Why is it so important to optimize your listing? Because [Google uses three things](#) to determine who comes up first on a local search:

- 1. Relevance:** *"Relevance refers to how well a local listing matches what someone is searching for."*
- 2. Distance:** *"Just like it sounds—how far is each potential search result from the location term used in a search?"*
- 3. Prominence:** *"Prominence refers to how well-known a business is. Some places are more prominent in the offline world, and search results try to reflect this in local ranking."*
 - a. As a side note, prominence is based on the information that Google has about a business (links, articles, directories, etc.) and is big factor in our next step.

The more information you have listed, the more that Google knows about you. And if you don't have a physical location but still provide services within a specific area, don't worry! You can always choose to hide your physical address and still get the benefits of listing with Google.

Last but not least, just because Google is the largest, doesn't mean that you should neglect the other guys. As such, don't forget to get listed on similar business listing sites like [Bing Places for Business](#) and [Yahoo Small Business](#).

Local SEO Step #2

Don't Stop with Google, List Everywhere!



Whatever you do, *do not* stop with Google, Bing, Yahoo, or the other 'big' search engine listing directories. There are dozens upon dozens of online directories out there, and to be found on one, you need to be listed in many. In two words, **list everywhere**.

Have you ever heard of Yelp, local.com, showmelocal.com or ezlocal.com? Probably only Yelp, but do you know who has heard of all of these? Google. This is where the prominence we talked about earlier comes into place. Look at it this way, who is Google going to place in the top spot of their searches, a business with listings on Google, Facebook, Bing and Yahoo, or a business with listings in these and in 50 additional directories? If you chose the latter... you are correct!

Prominence is all about how many places your business is found. BUT — and this is a big 'but' — BUT *you have to have the same exact information in every single listing*. More often than not this will be your NAP, AKA your business' name, address and phone number.

What happens if your information is different across listings? You're essentially promoting a fake establishment. You see, computers, unlike us, are logic-driven (much more than us) and depend on exactness. This is why the smallest of mistakes in a line of code can mess up the whole program.

In terms of search engines and online listings, they (search engines) view *Matt's Bar* and *Matts Bar* as two completely different businesses, even though a simple typo led to one being listed without

an apostrophe. The same goes for differing phone numbers and locations; one difference and you're creating a fake listing for a business that doesn't exist.

Local SEO Step #3 Structure Your Site for Improved Local SEO

The screenshot shows the Google Structured Data Markup Helper interface. At the top, there are tabs for 'Enter Page', 'Tag Data', and 'View HTML'. A red dot is positioned under 'Tag Data'. Below the tabs, a navigation menu includes 'HOME', 'SERVICES', 'WORK', 'ABOUT', 'CAREERS', and 'CONTACT'. A 'CREATE HTML' button is visible in the top right corner. On the left, there is a 'Back to Blog' link. The main content area displays a blog post with a date badge for '08 MAY', a title '5 Tools That Will Help You Optimize Your Website for Mobile Search', and a photo of a hand holding a smartphone. To the right of the post is a search bar and a 'Subscribe To Us' form. Below the post is a list of contributors: Bianca Ignacio, Aumcore, Edward Costa, Kristina Petrick, Jacob Smart, Matthew J. Fritschle, Joel Agnes, and Sushil Kumar. On the far right, a 'My Data Items' panel lists various metadata fields such as Name, Author, Date published, Image, Article section, Article body, URL, Publisher, and Aggregate rating.

Structured data markup tells search engines what your data means, and the more structured your site is, the more that search engines will like it. Furthermore, once structured, your content becomes eligible to appear on two categories of Google Search: Rich Results and Knowledge Graph Cards. So, how can you improve local SEO? **Structure your site.**

Structured data markup helps with your website's organization. In the words of [Neil Patel](#), "[s]tructured data, also called schema markup, is a type of code that makes it easier for search engines to crawl, organize, and display your content." In terms of your business, schema markup is what tells Google that a series of numbers, (xxx) xxx-xxx is your phone number.

For local search and local SEO, schema markup allows you to say that this is your phone number, that is your address, this is an image, etc. And as we just covered, search engines like it when your website is structured. This is because structure and organization allow search engines to crawl your site faster and with more efficiency. This, in turn, leads to your eligibility to appear in Rich Results and Knowledge Graph Cards.

Rich Results

Rich results are appear in Rich Cards and are more engaging than traditional results because they have more structure and visual appeal. Content in Rich Cards will also appear on Google Search with a preview of what the markup is describing. Even better, when you use [AMP pages](#) (if you currently don't, get on it!), you become eligible for additional features.

Knowledge Graph Cards

Knowledge Graph Cards are reserved for authority figures for certain content...and for your business. When your content is factual, Google will prominently display it as a Knowledge Graph on Google searches. This means that when someone searches for your business, a Knowledge Graph Card with your business' name, address, number, reviews, photos, and anything else that you marked up will appear on the right-hand side.

Local SEO Step #4 Don't Forget About Meta Tags!

```
<title>Mobile Website Speed Testing Tool - Google</title>  
<meta name="description" content="Test your sites performance  
on mobile with Google and receive recommendations for improving  
performance across all devices.">
```

**Title
&
Description**

Meta tags are HTML elements that reflect your site's content, including your business' title and description. For local search, this means your city and the area your business serves. What does this mean? It means **you can't forget about Meta tags.**

Where do Meta tags reflect your site's content? On search engine response pages (SERPs). Your title tag is what tells Google and your site visitors what the content of the page is about, and your meta description describes the content further. In terms of placement, title tags show up as the blue links in SERPs and descriptions are the text bodies underneath.

For SEO in general, you *have* to include the keywords you are trying to rank for. More specific to local SEO, you *also have* to include your location. How else are people supposed to know where you're located / where you provide services?

Local SEO Step #5 It's Time to Adapt to Our Mobile-First World



We live in a world where mobile comes first. This means that you have to switch your SEO strategy from desktop to mobile, accounting for voice search and all the complexities that come with smartphones. In other words, **it's time to [adapt to our mobile-first world](#)**.

If mobile optimization is important for SEO, it's **extremely important** for local SEO. This is because of the pervasiveness of mobile searches to have local intent. To illustrate this, when are you more likely to search for a bar, coffee shop or restaurant near you, when you're out and about or when you're sitting in front of your computer at home?

For starters, is your website mobile-friendly? If so, good, but is it responsive? Whereas a mobile-friendly website is like a slimmed down version of a desktop site (and does just enough to pass Google's mobile-friendliness tests), a responsive site looks like a website made specific for mobile. With a responsive site, everything from text to images is reformatted from screen to screen. Not only will this greatly improve UX, but it will also function to lower your site's bounce-rate.

A lot more specific for local SEO are your mobile keywords. With the prominence of mobile devices, you have to start accounting for how people are searching. Nowadays that means voice search and the intent that goes behind it. Let's begin with why we're using voice search. Simply put, it's easier to say something than it is to type it. And when we have a personal assistant like Siri shortening the steps between question and answer (ask Siri and receive immediate results vs. opening phone, opening application, typing query, etc.), typing seems downright ludicrous.

Okay, so people are searching with their voices. What does this mean for local SEO? It means that you have to include long-tail keywords with intent that answer question phrases, like "who," "what," "where," "when," "why" and "how." So instead of using "coffee shop nyc," using "where is the nearest coffee shop" will help you out with local search.

Local SEO Step #6 Get on Social Media!



Social media is a blessing for local SEO for one simple reason (there are really many, but this one is particularly important): *anyone who's anyone is on social*. More often than not, a big chunk of your target audience will have at least one social media account, be it Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest or LinkedIn, and you need to connect with them.

Apart from the general 'use social media to increase your brand's exposure' reasons, joining social media is particularly useful for local SEO because you can (and most definitely should)

prominently display your contact information within the profile. And as it just so happens to be, social media profiles with geographic locations appear in Google and other search engines' SERPs.

Back to our main point that anyone who's anyone is on social media, make sure to create a profile everywhere, but also to focus most of your social media energy in the social channel that your audience uses the most. From here, post regularly and **don't forget** to include your location in your posts!

What to Do Next

Finally, re-read steps 1-6 and implement them! After all, what's the point of reading a local SEO guide if you're not going to do anything about it? [Until then, feel free to read the accompanying blog post, drop a comment, and let us know what you liked!](#)

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