

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE

TO

LOCAL SEO



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WARMING UP

Fact is that you'll find an assortment of "Ultimate Guides" for everything on the internet these days, but unfortunately, and quite to the opposite of what the publisher claims, most of them suck. The following structured collection of information we've put together isn't just what we've learned through our own experience over the years. It's a curated compilation from every quality piece we've read and put to action over the years, combined with our own in-house experience working with clients.

And if you find something missing here, please be so kind and leave a comment below and we'll add it to this piece. We want this to be a real number one guide for everything Local SEO related.



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This isn't just a manual intended for beginners to help them complete their local SEO campaigns. No, it will hopefully be a convincing piece about how much real local SEO work is necessary for a business to succeed in topping the local search results. Yes, this is for you small business owners that are investing 200+ USD a month in YellowPages hoping for ROI for your business.



If you don't feel totally comfortable with SEO, please consider hiring professional SEO agencies to help you achieve your goal. It's true that outsourcing the task will be more expensive, but fact has shown time and again that the ROI trumps the expenses.

**WHY IS A LOCAL SEO ANALYSIS
NECESSARY
BEFORE GETTING STARTED?**





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WHY IS A LOCAL SEO ANALYSIS NECESSARY BEFORE GETTING STARTED?

- To pinpoint the elements on your landing page/website that are incomplete or poorly optimized.
- To get an overall understanding of the value of your business in search results and how it can be improved.
- To get an idea of the competition, the difficulties ahead, and the amount of work necessary to surpass them.

As in every serious matter in life, you need a plan of action before actively starting your Local SEO campaign. Just keep reading and you'll see why it is so essential to have a thorough analysis of a business' local web performance before moving ahead.



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WHO IS THE TARGETED AUDIENCE FOR THIS GUIDE?

This guide is aimed at agencies that do Local SEO for their clients or local businesses owners who want to do the basics themselves. In our experience, most of the clients and local business here are brick and mortar businesses with a modest web presence, that are in need of raising their position in the Google SERPs. Please be aware that Google's local search algorithms are constantly changing and what may produce results today, might not work tomorrow. However, this guide is intended to be as thorough and as white hat as possible. There are always some who try to cheat the search engine algorithms, but as search engines evolve and get smarter over time, they'll be caught.

So, first things first, let's start with the promised audit before putting the tactics to action and topping them with results. Let's bring it on!



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SO WHAT IS THE METHODOICAL PROCESS OF A LOCAL SEO CAMPAIGN?

1. Run a complete Local SEO Analysis
2. Brainstorm and Choose the Best Plans of Action
3. Carry Out the Chosen Strategy
4. Analyze the results over the next few months
5. If something is not yielding results, return to the drawing table and move to a new tactic

Since Google's Local algorithms are constantly changing, you have to adjust your approach through repeated iterations of trial and error to find the best plan of action that works for your business.

In addition, as [Neil Patel states in his quick 45 minute local SEO audit](#), most of the necessary work on business websites is **cleanup work**. In many cases, we need to correct what previous SEOs and former employees have implemented and thought to be good SEO tactics back in the day, but are now harming a business' ranking.



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SO BEWARE, GOOGLE HAS BECOME SMARTER, AND SO SHOULD YOU.

Download the Audit Worksheet, Before You Start
Yet another worksheet? Well, yeah!

This worksheet is what we use in-house and we've reviewed and tested it time and again. Whether you are an SEO agency or business owner, in our experience, compiling this info before implementing your Local SEO campaign is paramount.

Before launching the project, you need to know where you stand. What problems are clearly evident? What problems need more investigation? This worksheet when filled out, will enable you to start your campaign with open eyes.

[Here is the Local SEO Analysis Worksheet for Download](#)



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THROUGH YOUR SEO ANALYSIS, YOU NEED TO ADDRESS EACH TAB SEPARATELY:

- Business Info & Current NAP
- Unanswered Questions
- Competitor Analysis
- Citation Building
- Guide Checklist



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Overview

- Chapter 1: Optimizing Google My Business Page
- Chapter 2: On-Page Search Engine Optimization
- Chapter 3: Using Schema Mark-up Properly
- Chapter 4: Authority Citation Building
- Chapter 5: Strategies for Customer Reviews
- Chapter 6: Competitive Analysis and Winning Strategies

CHAPTER ONE: **HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY OPTIMIZE GOOGLE MY BUSINESS PAGE**





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Google My Business, formerly known as Google Places, is the launching pad for all Local SEO audits. In the My Business Dashboard, you will find a lot of information that help you to start on the right foot. Since Google's business guidelines tend to change frequently, the dashboard will help you to ensure that all of your information on the business page is accurate and follows the guidelines.









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Update on August 7th: Google officially announced that the Google+ pages are detached from the local results as you can see here:



Map data ©2016 Google

NYU College of Dentistry 2.9 ★★★★★ (90) · Dental School 345 E 24th St · +1 212-998-9800	 Website	 Directions
Pearl Dental NYC 5.0 ★★★★★ (14) · Dentist 67 Wall St #2508 · +1 212-344-9317 Closed today	 Website	 Directions
Emergency Dentist NYC 4.7 ★★★★★ (83) · Emergency Dental Service 100 E 12th St · +1 646-336-8478 Closed now	 Website	 Directions



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As you can see the links to Google+ and phone numbers have been removed. Let's briefly consider the possible effects on rankings:

- As local SEO experts are still testing the results of this aftermath, we still have to wait and see. However, here are a few points we deem right:
- It is still very important to fill out your Google My Business Page completely, as it will continue to affect rankings!
- Having a correct business NAP info, categories, and business hours, along with quality images in the business profile is more important than ever.
- Even though Google is distancing itself from Google+, it is still very important to keep your complete Google+ page intact and up to date.

Let's get down to the actual work.



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1. Find Your Primary Google My Business Page/Make Sure There Are No Duplicates

Action: It is obvious that you need to find the actual My Business Page to start the work. For a variety of reasons, many companies have made duplicate pages over the years. If you are working for a client, ask them to provide you with the main page they like to use.





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Since this page will be your active battlefield for a while, record and confirm it. Having a duplicate My Business page can torpedo an entire Local SEO campaign. To make 100 percent sure, you can use the [Google My Business Page Finder](#) to help you find potential duplicates.



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You should also use <https://plus.google.com> to double check the existence of any duplicate pages. Just head over there and search for the business name amongst the Google+ pages. The results will show any potential duplicates. If you come across any duplicates, record them to notify Google later to delete them.

Target: Find and record the main Google My Business Page for all the later Local SEO work that will follow. Locate and delete possible existing duplicate pages.



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2. Page Verification

Before continuing with the next steps, it is essential to ensure that the Google My Business Page is verified. Until this step is completed, your optimization options are very limited. Therefore, we put it as a top priority.



Action: If you haven't verified your business before, you need to find the associated Google page and click on the *Is this your business?* link located at the bottom to go through the verification process.



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After logging in to your dashboard, there should be a Verified sign next to a checkmark next to your business name. If you can't find the checkmark and verification sign, you'll have to click to see the different methods that you can use to show Google that you are the legitimate owner of this business.

In many cases, this can easily be done either via a postcard or through an automated phone call to your business. **Please note: The postcard can take one week or two before arriving.** After receiving your claim code, you have to enter it into your dashboard.

Target: Make sure the Google My Business Page is verified by Google.



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3. Attach the My Business Page to Your Domain Email Address

While there are a ton of reasons why you should take this step, in our opinion the number one is just for legitimacy. To show that you own MumsShoes.com, you have to ensure that the attached email to the Google My Business Page is

Mum@MumsShoes.com instead of mumsshoes@gmail.com.



Action: Get the appropriate email address of your business domain from your Internet Service Provider or Use [Google Apps](#).

Target: Let go of that general @gmail.com email and register your Google My Business Page with an email associated with your business' domain.



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4. Make Sure Your Business Name is Correct

As you'll see, throughout the guide, we try to keep everything across the web as consistent as possible. Whether it is your business name, address, phone number, or email, it is paramount to keep everything as clean as possible and it starts on the Google My Business Page. Google's algorithms feature a trust factor that will be negatively affected if there are different names for a business across the web.

To Google, this simply looks untrustworthy and spammy, resulting in severe penalties to your rankings.





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According to Google, your name should reflect your business' real-world name, as used consistently on your storefront, website stationery, and as known to customers. For further info, please have a look at [Google's name guidelines](#). Basically, Mum's Shoes shouldn't be named Mum's Best Shoes in Downtown NY. Additional keywords in the business name not only confuse Google about the actual business but looks also spammy and should be avoided at all costs.



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Back in early 2014, Google allowed for a short period of time to use a Descriptor Word in the business name, but this feature was taken away swiftly and you have to use your real world company name again.

Action: If your business name was entered incorrectly, you should change it on the dashboard. Needless to say that a change in business name requires a new verification process.

Target: Make sure that your business name on Google My Business dashboard is accurate and without any spammy keywords.



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5. Make Sure You Have the Correct Address

Action: Verify that the address on your page is complete and accurate. Please resist the temptation to add pointless stuff like cross streets, more accurate directions, or descriptions without a real business being at that address.

According to [Google's address guidelines](#), P.O. boxes are not allowed, so please make sure the specified address is local.

Important Note: If you need to put a suite number or mailbox in your address, put your physical address on Line 1 and suite number or mailbox on Line 2. There are some terrible instances where people failed to do this correctly and consequently had a negative effect on their rankings.

Target: Verify that your company's address on your Google My Business page is fully accurate and correctly listed across the web.



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6. Make Sure Your Phone Number is Correct

The local phone number for your office location should be the listed one on your Google My Business page. Avoid using 800 numbers or other toll free numbers and ensure that the area code is included in your local phone number and it reaches directly to your business.

Action: Verify that the local phone number for your office is listed in your dashboard.

Target: Make sure you've listed your correct local phone number on Google My Business



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7. Make Sure Your Website URL Is Correct

Action: Make sure that the listed website URL is the home page of your real business website. Especially single location businesses need to put this practice to action.

If your business is present at multiple locations, direct each My Business page to a specific landing page designed for that location. However, that landing page should be on a totally different domain or a social media profile. In such cases, it is better to keep to the home page of the company. At the end of the day, you should offer a great user experience. A user clicking on a company's Google+ page is likely looking for a landing page with the business' location information on it.



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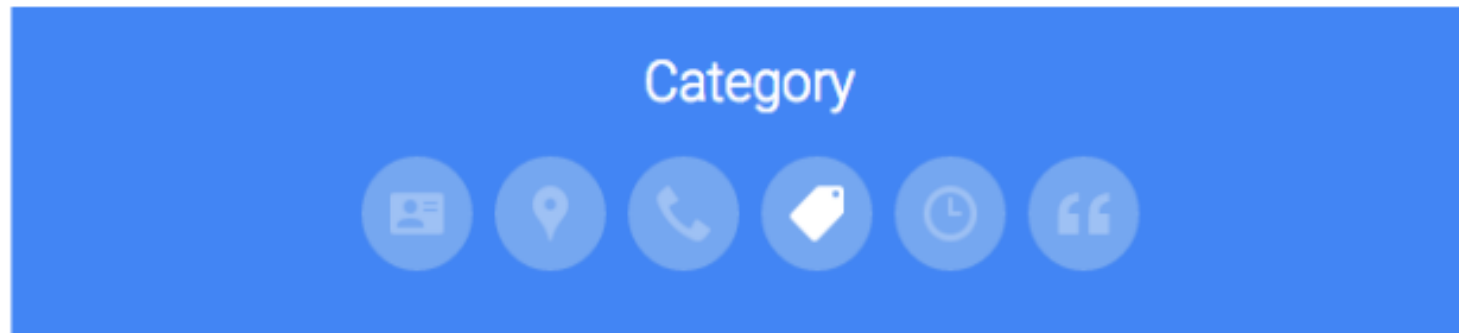
Target: Verify that your landing page URL or website URL listed on your My Business page is the most relevant to the business location.





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8. Make Sure the Correct Categories Are Listed for Your Business

This step is arguably the most critical of the entire Google My Business chapter. Listing a company under the wrong category can be damning to a business' online presence.



Categories describe what your business is, **not** what it does or what it sells.

 Correct examples:	 Incorrect examples:	Hide
Italian Restaurant	Pizza & pasta	
Pet Supply Store	Pet food and toys	
Wedding Photographer	Photos for events	



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Action: According to Google, you should be listing what your business is rather what it does. And you should do it honestly. Meaning that should find the relevant categories and use them, avoiding spam at all costs.

Again as Google puts it, the primary category is the one that most accurately portrays your business.

Finding a primary category is critical and should not be neglected. All other categories should be extensions of the primary category.

Target: Finding the most relevant and appropriate categories to add to your My Business page.



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9. Make Sure the Hours of Operation Are Listed Correctly

Action: Enter the correct operation hours of your business on this page. If you have seasonal hours, don't forget to come back here and change them accordingly. It can take up to 24 hours for updates to operation hours to show up correctly.

Hours: Monday	8:30AM–5:30PM
Tuesday	8:30AM–5:30PM
Wednesday	8:30AM–5:30PM
Thursday	8:30AM–5:30PM
Friday	8:30AM–5:30PM
Saturday	Closed
Sunday	Closed

Target: Show the correct business hours on your My Business page.



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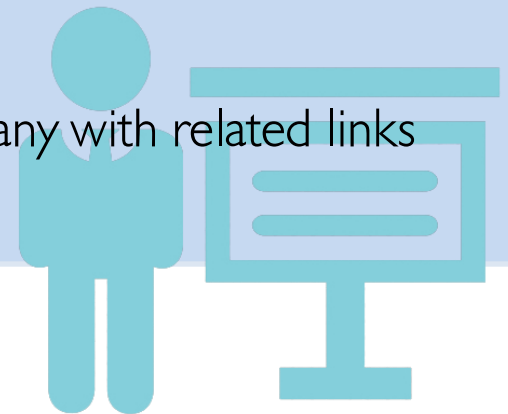
10. Creating an Introduction for your Business

Now is time to write what your business is really about. You need to add a brief description of what you do and what your business is about. The description must be unique and conform to the guidelines.

Action: Describe your business in about 150 to 300 words. Make it naturally readable and avoid spamming it with keywords.

For better CTR: If you offer different services, insert hyperlinks to the related sections of your website. While the links are no-follows, they facilitate your visitors' access to your website.

Target: Writing a 150-300 word description about your company with related links to corresponding sections on your website.





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11. Ensure Your Profile is 100% complete

Target: To have a 100% complete My Business profile page. If it's not already, find the gap and fill it.



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12. Make Sure Identity Photos Are Correctly Uploaded

The business photos part of Google My Business has different sections with the first being your identity photos. The 3 crucial photos for your appearance in search results are as follows: Profile, Logo, and Cover Photo.

Action: Give Google the proper identity photos. These photos heavily impact your Click Through Rates. If a user sees unrelated photos next to a map of a business, it could discourage him/her from even clicking on it. Uploading a quality logo file is highly recommended. But if you own a brick and mortar business or a restaurant, maybe a picture of customers or your shop would make more sense.



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Don't use tiny photos. Your cover photo should properly describe your business and be high resolution enough to support full screen.

You should definitely do some searches and check the photos that come up with your business (just search your business on Google Maps). If you find any photos that are not correct, you can delete it so Google can choose another one.

Target: Ensure that the most accurate and high quality-identity photos are uploaded for your business.



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Create a Virtual Tour by Using a Trusted Photographer (optional, but recommended)

In our experience, Google likes to see you using one of its [trusted photographers](#) to create a virtual tour of your business. At the end, it will be added to your My Business page, enabling visitors to have a look at your real world business.

While there aren't hard facts pointing to any ranking boosts, we can hardly believe that having a virtual tour wouldn't have benefits for your business. Unfortunately it comes at a cost, but don't shy away if you have the budget for it.



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Action: Click the Add virtual Tour link on your Google My Business page and you'll be guided to schedule a Google Trusted Photographer to take care of this.

Target: If you have the budget, create a virtual tour of the inside and outside of your business with a Google Trusted Photographer.

CHAPTER TWO: **ON-PAGE SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION**





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On-page optimization is essential in Local SEO. If you are revamping your website, I would put this at the top of my list to do simultaneously, as there is never a better time.

While it is common best practice to incorporate on-page SEO on an early stage, time and again, we have experienced websites handed over to us without any optimizations. So if you are working on your website right now, don't delay on-page optimization for a later time.



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[According to MOZ](#), on-page signals have the most impact on Local SEO rankings. So this is very important.



On-page Signals (21.0%)

(Presence of NAP, Keywords in Titles, Domain authority, etc.)

Important notice before starting: Type the URL of your landing page in Google search and check if you are already indexed by Google. If it isn't the case, it needs further investigation before going forward. It could be some penalties or other problems that need to be addressed first.



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1. Google Analytics and Gogle Webmaster Tools

I strongly believe that authorizing a website with Google Webmaster Tools/Analytics from the beginning will help us a lot in the long run. These 2 tools a packed with a lot of useful information and therefore I tend to check them at the start.

With Webmaster Tools, you can see whether your website is indexed properly, whether there are crawl errors, and you will be informed if there are penalties against your website. They also have an updated keyword search tool to help you see keywords that aren't available elsewhere.



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I would also sign up for Bing Webmaster tools but Google is by far the most important one.

Action: Check your authorization in Google Analytics and set it up if it isn't already. Then head to Google Webmaster Tools, log in and add your site for both the www and non-www version. Don't forget to add an entry for the https version of your website if one exists. Then select your preferred site from inside Google Webmaster Tools.

Add a property

Enter the URL of a property you'd like to manage. [Learn more.](#)

Continue

Cancel



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Target: Make sure your website or your client's website is registered in Google Webmaster Tool and Google Analytics and that you have full access to it. Ensure that the landing page is indexed and that there are no penalties or other issues with the website in Google Webmaster Tools.



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2. Plan Your Site Structure in Advance

Before anything else moves forward, you need to plan for the structure of your website. What is your target and what is your goal with Local SEO? Some of the main parameters that need to be determined beforehand are as follows:

- Does the company have just one location or multiple locations in the real world?
- Do you have a separate page for each service that you offer?
- Do you intend to target different cities with the same keywords, even though the company has no actual real presence in the cities?

Action: If the business is located at just one place, the homepage should be the center of information. The whole structure of sub pages for different services must be shown there.



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If a business is present at multiple locations in the real world, you need to optimize the location specific landing pages. Many say that Google has run smart enough to understand what multiple locations on the same page mean, but we believe that having specific location pages is the optimal format. For ideal structuring, each location would have a city name in its URL.



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Serving Multiple Cities with Just One Location: Let's assume that your company is located just in one city (or area for that matter), say Los Angeles, but you aim to rank not only for LA Ghost Busters but also Bakersfield since it is nearby. Plan ahead for this and make sure you know how you want to structure the site to present this concept ahead of time.

Target: Sketch a diagram of the structure of the website for your Local SEO campaign (redesigning existing structure, adding new pages, etc.)



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3. Make Sure the NAP Is Correct on Landing Page or Website

For your Local SEO campaign, it is paramount to have the correct Name, Address, and Phone Number on our landing page and website. Please keep in mind that if you don't correctly and consistently enter your NAP, it will pretty much negate every effort you put into your Local SEO.

Action: Ensure that your Business Name is listed correctly without any extra keywords. Also, ensure that your address is entered accurately and the phone number is local. 800 phone numbers or tracking numbers will damage your Local SEO.

Basically, everything on your landing page/website should be an exact replica of what you have in your Google My Business profile. Also, make sure that it is written in text so Google's crawlers can "see" it and not an image.



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{ N.A.P }

Name. **Address.** **Phone Number.**

Target: Have the exact NAP as in your Google My Business on your website (both main content or footer are OK). In Chapter 4, we will take this one level up by clarifying the NAP with schema markup.



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4. Make Sure Title/Meta Tag Descriptions Are Optimized

To implement this section best, it is recommended to get the Mozbar extension for your browser. It shows you important domain/page metrics and enables you to easily view different tags like titles, metas, and headers.

Having the correct title tag is maybe the most important part of on page optimization for Local SEO. Make sure that City, State, and your keyword are in the title tag. While incorporating all these 3 things into your title tag, avoid making it look spammy.

[This article](#) on title tags is very useful.



A meta description is the few lines of information that are shown beneath the title in SERPs. Your description should include city, state, and keyword but still be catchy. You can also put your phone number in there, but remember that if people call you directly, it won't be tracked by analytics.

The screenshot shows the Moz On-Page Elements tool interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs: On-Page Elements (selected), General Attributes, Link Metrics, Markup, and Http Status. Below the tabs is a table with three columns: Tag/Location, Content, and # of Characters. The table contains the following data:

Tag/Location	Content	# of Characters
Page Title	Best Chicago SEO Company, Expert Services by Straight North	59
Meta Description	Looking for the best Chicago SEO services company? Look no further, Straight North is focused on generating sales leads and increasing e-commerce revenue.	154
Meta Keywords	Not found	--
H1	The Best Chicago SEO Services Company • Finished!	49
H2	Search Engine Optimization Done Right • Get a Free, Instant SEO Audit for Your Website • Why You Need an Expert SEO Agency Like Straight North • 1. Local Search Optimization • 2. Mobile Optimization • 3. All the Expert SEO Talent Right Here, Under One Roof • Straight North SEO Services • Get a Free, Instant SEO Audit for Your Website • Marketing Resources • From Our Twitter • Straight North Blog • Lead Generation Insights	425



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Action: Optimize the title and meta description of your web pages. If you are using a content management system like WordPress, using a quality plugin like [Yoast SEO](#) is highly recommended.

Target: Incorporate your city, state and keyword in your landing page or homepage title tag and meta description. Make sure that it looks professional and not spammy. Put your phone number in the description if appropriate.



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5. Optimize Your Header Tags

Ensure that your header tags are in line with the overall on page optimization target. Your header tags, including the H1, but also H2, and H3 should follow a clear structure and hierarchy to outline your information. If you can avoid looking spammy, blend your city, state, and keyword in the H1 tag. Avoid using many H1 tags at all costs, as it will broaden your targeted keywords and lower your chances to rank.

Action: Blend your city, state, and keyword into your H1 header. You can also throw a keyword, city, or state in an H2 or two in the content of the page.

Target: Make sure your Header tags, particularly H1, adds value to your Local SEO by incorporating your city, state, and keyword.



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6. Create Unique and Catchy Landing Page Content

Creating unique, insightful, and relevant content about your business is key to a successful Local SEO campaign. While the content needs to properly describe and revolve around the keyword, it should also encourage the visitor to take action.

But avoid being spammy at all cost. To create helpful information for your customers, you need to know what your customers are after when they are coming to your landing page. Write about 300 to 500 words distributed into subheaders and put as much CTAs as possible into it.



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Following are some great resources that help you create exceptional content for your landing pages:

- [Landing Page Best Practices](#) - Wordstream
- [16 of the Best Landing Pages](#) – Hubspot

We usually write about the services the business offer and its USPs, include a review from a local customer, and add something about a landmark in the local area.



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Action: Create some great and unique content about what your business does and try to keep it locally focused. Ensure that it is in line with the services you offer. You can also hire a writer if need be.

Target: Having 300 to 500 words of unique content that describe your business and entices your visitors to action. It should also relate to the local area.



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7. Enter your Business Hours

Ensure that your business hours are easily sighted on your landing page. [According to Google](#), 54 percent of smartphone users are looking for business hours when doing a local search.

Action: Make sure your business hours are listed in text so that Google's crawlers can easily find them. Using schema markup is also highly recommended and we'll tackle that in Chapter 4.

Target: Show your correct business hours on your homepage/landing page.



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8. Include Testimonials and Customer reviews

The best way to convey trust to new visitors is to include customer reviews. Use some of the reviews that old customers have sent you over time and show them prominently on your landing page. Please make sure that these reviews aren't fake.

A tip: Show some proof that the reviews are made by real persons, by including their social profile, title, and the like. [31% of customers are more likely to spend more on a business that has excellent reviews.](#)



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is also highly beneficial to include links to your review profiles on prominent sites like Facebook, Google+, Yelp, Angie's List, etc.

Action: Put 1 to 2 customer reviews on the landing page. In Chapter 4, we will add schema markup to optimize them for increased visibility. Links to your profile on well-known review sites is also very helpful.

Target: Include testimonials and reviews to convey trust and increase consumer confidence.



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9. Image Optimization for Size and Ses

It is crucial to optimize your images for both speed and search engines. This can greatly affect your ranking and how users interact with your website.

Search engines can only crawl the alt text tags of your images. Consequently, if you don't have them, they'll silently ignore them and you are deprived of what value you could have added through them to your Local SEO.

In the case of image sizes, obviously there isn't one optimal size for all your images but they definitely should not be more than 1 MB each. It is recommended to compress your images with one of the many plugins and apps out there that do a good job about it. Having uncompressed images on your page will negatively affect your page loading time and this, in turn, will make a great number of visitors leave your website before it is actually loaded. Google has also declared that slow loading times will have an adverse impact on a website's ranking.



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Action: Edit your image alt tags through your editor or CMS and make sure to include city, state, and keyword in them, if it won't look spammy.

There are many easy ways to optimize image sizes for the web. You can do this by using a plugin like Kraken.io or Smush.it, use a dedicated website for optimizing images or do it all alone with a software like Photoshop. Here are a few resources that help you get up and running:

[How to optimize images for SEO](#)

[How to Compress Images to Improve SEO & Performance](#)

Target: Fill out the alt text tags for all your images. Optimize the size of your images for the web.



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Responsiveness

Search engines have more and more focused on mobile friendliness and dedicated results for mobiles. As mentioned earlier, according to Google, more than 54 percent of local searches are initiated from a smartphone. Google has also declared that not being mobile friendly, will adversely affect rankings in search results. So if your website is not mobile-friendly, it's really past time to give it a revamp.

Responsive design is a concept where the website resizes itself to the size of the viewer's screen. With a responsive website, you don't need an additional website for mobile phones. Here you can read about Google's preference for [responsive websites](#).



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Action: If your website is not mobile-friendly, you may need to revamp your website or create an entirely new one that is responsively designed. If you are on a budget, there are also tools that [help you make a website mobile friendly](#).

Target: Make sure your landing page and website are mobile friendly.



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11. Speed Up Your Website

Google has declared that its ranking algorithms take site loading speeds into account. In addition, slow loading web pages will anger visitors to the point that they leave the page before it is even loaded. If your site is loading extremely slowly, you won't get leads as nobody has enough time to stick around till the web page is loaded.

Action: First, you need to test your website speed with an online tool like [GTMetrix.com](https://gtmetrix.com). Test your homepage and any relevant landing pages separately. Your website should load in less than 3 seconds, but the faster the better. Implement the recommendations by GTMetrix based on priority and impact.



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Please note that cheap hostings can slow down your website immensely, especially when under the pressure of many visits per second. If your business depends on your website, consider moving to a quality hosting. However, even a [smaller hosting provider could do a high end job in comparison to shared hosting.](#)

[Here is an article summarising the best hosting providers in 2016.](#)

Target: Optimize your landing pages/homepage to load below 3 seconds when measured with GTMetrix.

CHAPTER THREE:

PROPER SCHEMA MARK-UP FOR LOCAL SEO





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[Schema.org](https://schema.org) launched in 2011. It's a way for search engines like Google, Bing, and Yahoo to collaborate together to understand important information about websites.

Implementing Schema Markup for your website's Local SEO helps you to stand out from the pack. It helps search engines understand key pieces of information about your website like what it is about, its hours of operation, reviews, restaurant menus, movie showing times, event and much more. Let's get down to it.



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Local Business Markup

We have already discussed the importance of having the Name, Address, and Phone number of a business correct on the website to make it properly understandable for search engines. Marking the location and contact information with schema markup takes the whole process a step further and makes it crystal clear for search engines.

Schema markup has no visual effect on your website and visitors won't see or know about its presence. Only search engines will read and understand them.



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Let's say you need to markup the location and contact info for a local pet store called "Lucy's Sweet Pets". The schema markup for Lucy's shop would look like this:

```
<div itemscope itemtype="http://schema.org/FoodEstablishment">  
<span itemprop="name">My Chocolate Explosion</span>  
<div itemprop="address" itemscope itemtype="http://schema.org/PostalAddress">  
<span itemprop="streetAddress">27 Colmore Row</span>  
<span itemprop="addressLocality">Birmingham</span>,  
<span itemprop="addressRegion">West Midlands</span>  
<span itemprop="postalCode">B3 2EW</span>  
</div>
```

But to the user, the snippet looks like this:

My Chocolate Explosion

27 Colmore Row, Birmingham B3 2EW, United Kingdom



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Regarding business types like <http://schema.org/FoodEstablishment>, there are a lot of different options based on the type of business you are working on. It is OK to just use schema.org/localbusiness but if you can find a more exact match for your services, you should definitely use it.

However, the list can be very broad, which is why listing as a Local Business is better than nothing. You can view the whole list [here](#).



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Event Markup

[Event markup](#) is something that not many businesses use and it is a great opportunity to take advantage of to show up in local SERPs for upcoming events. In addition, more space will be dedicated to your results in SERPs and this will increase your CTR. With schema markup for events, you can virtually advertise any legal event from classes and workshops to festivals, sports events, concerts and a lot more. When properly marked up with schema, an event will display like this in the SERPs:

Tokyo Concerts & Tour Dates - Eventful

eventful.com/tokyo/events/categories/music ▼

Concerts in Tokyo July 2016 [updated daily]. Comprehensive list of Tokyo concerts plus free personalized alerts for **concerts in Tokyo**, 13.

Mon, Jul 25 C-kay[Space Baghdad ...

Mon, Jul 25 T'n'k - Music Kitchen at Ucess ...

Tue, Jul 26 Youth Banquet !!! powered by ...

Def Leppard · Exo · Jim O'Rourke



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Head over to schema.org/event and choose the type of event you want to markup with schema.

Here is structured data we have made for an imaginary (yet realistic) event:

```
"@type": "MusicEvent",  
"name": "Bruce Springsteen",  
"startDate": "2016-10-10T19:30",  
"location": {  
  "@type": "Place",  
  "name": "Madison Square Garden",  
  "address": "New York City"
```

Schema Markup is another good option to add to your Local SEO efforts to surpass your competitors. It will show under your company name and is a best practice for advertising your services.

CHAPTER FOUR: **AUTHORITY CITATION BUILDING**





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Citation building is the incarnation of Local SEO. There is always much argument among SEOers about citation building and whether it is necessary or not. When should you start building a citation profile? How many citations are too many? We normally begin building citations for a company after setting up the Google My Business profile and completing the on-page optimization for the website/landing pages.

At that point, the company is normally seeing some results and citation building gives it momentum to achieve better results. You should take into account that citation building takes time, particularly if you are doing it manually (which we strongly recommend). In this chapter we'll study some vital questions about citation building and walk over the top 25 citations and how you should build and personalize your profile for each one of them. Keep in mind that Google's algorithms have a trust factor and the cleaner and more authoritative your citation profile is, the more chances you have to end up in higher SERPs as a trusted business.



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Is it necessary to build citations manually?

Having full control over your citations enables you to fill the gaps, personalize, and avoid misunderstandings and at the end get a better trust factor from major search engines. Therefore, it is important to keep track of your citations, especially for potential future changes. Over the years, we have made a spreadsheet that helps us a lot in the long run to do quality. You can [download it here](#). Feel free to share it if you like.



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There are services like Yext that help you to automatically submit for a yearly fee, but if your subscription isn't continued for the next year, depending on the publisher's policies. Here are a few reasons why we always choose manual citation building over automatic submissions:

- No yearly ongoing fees
- If fees aren't paid, you won't lose your listings
- The ability to completely personalize each verified citation listing
- Complete control with verified citation listings



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Nonetheless, there are some services, like Moz Local, that are recommended for specific tasks. Moz Local costs only 84 USD annually and will get your company listed in the main four data aggregators: Localeze, Acxiom, Infogroup, and Factual. Getting listed in a few of these aggregators directly would cost you the same and by using a service like Moz Local, you are guaranteed to get in with no extra work. We'll go over these a little bit later in this chapter.



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Citation Audit: First things first

Before building a new citation, run an audit on the business' citation profile. This isn't just necessary for long standing-businesses, but also for new ones. While there aren't any manually built citations on a new business, it is more than likely that its information has already seeped through and is passed around by the aggregators. Now, if the NAP isn't correct, you want to make sure it is corrected to avoid any adverse effects on your Local SEO.



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When conducting the initial citation analysis, we use the following tools:

[Moz Local](#): A great (and also free) tool for checking the top sites (e.g. Google, Bing, Acxiom, etc.)

Brightlocal: Based on our experience, this is one of the best tools out there for Local SEO. It has a great citation analysis functionality and helps you to see the citations of your competitors. There is a 30 day trial period. This tool is great for agencies.

[WhiteSpark](#): It checks the top 50 citations for your company and can find relevant citations for your business.

[Yext](#): They also offer a free service to get a quick analysis.

After doing the audit with the help of these tools, you'll have a pretty good understanding of what work lies ahead.



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Here are the top things you should check for in the citation audit

- Inaccurate NAP info in listings
- Duplicate listings

Tip: Get insights into your competitors' citations with BrightLocal.

Using [BrightLocal](#) you can learn what citations your competitors have and devise a strategy to best them. By running a BrightLocal report you can easily find what your top competitors are doing citation-wise. Add all the citation you need to a spreadsheet for later use and save them as they will be the ones you want to focus on after going through our top 15 list.



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Let's Start Building

After running the audits, you now have an idea of the direction you want to take. As you move forward, there are 3 main types of citation that you need to cover:

- 1. Top National Directories:** We'll go over them in a minute. They include Facebook, Youtube, BBB, etc.
- 2. Top Industry Relevant Directories:** Depending on your niche and business, you can easily find them by searching your main keywords to see what directories pop up in SERPs (e.g. findlaw.com for lawyers, wellness.com for health niche, etc.).
- 3. Local Relevant Directories:** This can include your local city's chamber of commerce, business directory, etc.



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The Best 15: The Top Citations that give you an Edge

We have created our top 15 citation list to help you get an edge in your authority citation building for Local SEO. All of these websites are high-authority and their citations have helped our clients to surpass the competition. After building these citations, you should move forward and expand your presence, but having them will help you come a long way.

Please note that these citations are high quality on high traffic websites. Many SEOs, including us, are reluctant to give their primary email address for registrations to avoid spam emails later on. But having a branded email for the verification process will make it a lot easier and your chances rise dramatically to get listed.



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In this section, we'll look at the following about each of these authority citation websites:

- Citation Name and Domain Authority
- No Follow or Follow Links (Yes, some do follow options exist)
- Profile Tips and How to Personalize it
- Timeframe to Live Listing



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1. Bing Places

No Follow

Da: 97



Everybody knows that Bing is second only to Google as a search engine. Therefore, it is crucial to properly verify and personalize your business with Bing.

Verification Process: By Postcard or Phone (Up to 2 weeks)

How to: Bing's verification process is similar to Google. Go to bingplaces.com and create a Microsoft account if you don't have one. After logging in, search for your company by name or phone number. If it doesn't show up, you'll need to go through the steps and create a new business. If it shows up, claim and verify it following the procedure.



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Make sure you have a 100 percent full profile. This includes NAP, Social Media Profiles, hours, URL, etc. Considering Bing's authority, invest enough time and effort to give it a personal touch and make sure you have quality photos uploaded.

Timeframe: Listings usually take up to 72 hours to go live, upon successful verification.



Ardor Seo

2. Yelp

No Follow

DA: 94



Yelp enjoys a very high authority and is very important for many service based businesses like restaurants. Since it is a primary source for customers to analyze and review businesses, having a completed profile is paramount.

Verification Process: By Phone and typing code



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How to: Head over to Yelp for Business owners at biz.yelp.com and search for your company. If it shows up, go through the process to claim and verify it.

If your business doesn't pop up, scroll to the bottom of the page and go over to Add Business to Yelp. Complete the process by adding your information.

If you are a restaurant, business hours and a menu are the most important information along with quality and descriptive photos. Timeframe: Verification by phone within 24 hours – typically live within 72 hours.



Ardor Seo

3. Facebook

No Follow

DA 100



In addition to being a social network, Facebook is also a high authority citation website, where your accurate NAP info should be present.

Verification Process: A few minutes – currently, Facebook doesn't have a verification process, but you should select the option that states you are a real establishment or business venue.

How to: On Facebook, go over to the Create a Page option. Select Local Business, Company, Organization, Place, or Institution. Complete your profile 100 percent by following the steps. Make sure you enter your complete address, phone number, and website URL.

Make sure you are selecting the right categories as they are key on Facebook. Also, ensure that your [business images are high quality and professional.](#)

Timeframe: Live instantly



Ardor Seo

4. YouTube

No Follow

DA: 100



YouTube is very helpful in Local SEO. YouTube lets you include your NAP and website URL in the description.

Verification: None, but associating your YouTube account with your My Business/Google+ Account is helpful.



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How to: If you haven't already a video about your business, you need to create one first. If creating a film sounds hard, try creating a slideshow and converting it into a video format. Upon posting your video on YouTube, ensure that the following is included in the description field:

- NAP (accurate as possible as discussed before)
- Website URL (make it a full URL with http:// and YouTube will convert it into a link afterward)
- Description of your company – while avoiding being spammy, try to throw some local keywords in

Ensure that your location is accurately geotagged in the advanced section. This can greatly help.

Timeframe: Instantly live after video is uploaded and saved



Ardor Seo

5. Yellow Pages (YP)

No Follow

DA: 89



Yellow Pages still matter and have some authority as a top citation. But we don't recommend using their paid services.

Verification: By phone – you need to enter a verification code

How to: Go to yellowpages.com and find the Get Your Free Listing section to start the process. The procedure is somewhat similar as with the other authority citation websites. Search for your company, if it exists, claim it. Otherwise, create a new listing for your business. Add as much info as possible to your listing. After phone verification is complete, you'll get a YP citation.

Timeframe: Live in up to 72 hours upon phone verification.



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6. The 4 Top Data Aggregators: Acxiom, Infogroup, Factual, and LocalEze



Getting listed with these 4 top data aggregators will help you to get listed on some smaller sites. Therefore, it is best practice to start with these guys early.

The problem is that getting listed manually by these aggregators can be really tough and some of them like LocalEze won't accept less than paid listings. Paying an annual [84 USD to Moz Local](#) can save you the hassle of outreach to each and every of these giants.

Time Frame: Using Moz Local, it will take about 4 to 8 weeks to get listed on all of these aggregators.



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7. Yahoo!

No Follow

DA: 100



Yahoo is as bad as it can get when it comes to manually built citations. They seem to have come to an agreement to not approve a listing until one pays for their Yahoo LocalWorks which is essentially Yext. Nonetheless, it's still worth the trouble due to its high authority and impact. If you don't manage to get verified by Yahoo right away, it is still likely that your listing gets filtered into yahoo eventually.



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Verification: By Domain Email or By Phone after submitting your listing.

How to: To get verified by Yahoo, you need to get a Yahoo ID first. Go over to [Yahoo Small Business](#) and search for your company. If found, start the process of claiming your business, otherwise, create a new business by going through the steps. The verification is quite easy, but it's the approval that appears to take forever.

You can check this every other month to ensure it has been approved.

Timeframe: According to Yahoo, it's 60+ days till you get approved. Seems senseless, but do it just in case.



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8. LinkedIn

It is vital to have your business listed on LinkedIn.

It is a powerful social media and citation source and can link to employees all over the internet, giving a boost to your visibility.



Verification: None. It's enough to just submit your profile.

How to: Go over to LinkedIn and head to [Add a Company](#). To certify that you are an official rep of the company, you need to just add the company name and an email on company domain (e.g. youremail@yourcompanydomain.com; youremail@gmail.com won't work). Then you get to enter NAP and company info.



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You should put adequate time into personalizing your LinkedIn profile. Use a custom cover photo and a quality logo. Make sure your cover photo is measured at 646x222 pixels.

Timeframe: Almost instantly upon creation



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9. Angie's List

No Follow

DA: 89



Verification: Email

This website is mostly for paid subscribers; therefore, you won't get much presence unless you pay for it. But there is a free minimal version where you get your NAP and categories listed.



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How To: As with the other websites, you need to first search and see whether your business is already present in their database. If not, you need to register your business with Angie's and verify that you are an authorized representative of the company.

As discussed earlier, Angie's list is a paid service, and without paying for premium listings, you won't be able to create a complete profile. It is worth mentioning that some service businesses with paid subscriptions to Angie's have found it very beneficial.

Timeframe: A couple of days to go live after submitting



Ardor Seo

10. Manta

No Follow

DA: 84



Manta is a high impact citation site with a focus on listings for small businesses.

Verification: Phone call and verification code.

How to: Go to Manta's website and on the top click Add Business. Complete your business info and submit. A short time after, you'll receive an email telling you how to verify your listing through phone.

Timeframe: Almost instantly after entering the 4 digit code to verify you are the owner.



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11. Better Business Bureau (BBB)

Both Follow or No Follow

DA: 95



Better Business Bureau is one of the most authoritative business institutions available and therefore is essential to get a quality citation with a complete profile with it.

With BBB you have the option of getting listed for free but since a BBB accredited business gets a highly sought after do follow link, it may be worth to pay the price to get a full membership. After all, this can be what helps you leave the competition behind.



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While Google is very sensitive about paid links, it seems that such an arrangement through a membership with BBB will help you get more authority.

Verification: You can verify your listing through Email, phone, or postcard after it is approved

In order to be eligible for BBB listing, your company needs to be at least 12+ months old.

Timeframe: Up to 2 weeks for free listing, longer for official approval



Ardor Seo

12. FourSquare

No Follow

DA: 89



After losing ground in the competition among business directories, Foursquare has tried recently to rebrand itself. Nonetheless, it is still an authoritative source where you should get listed.

Verification: Immediate verification and listing through the premium plan (20 USD), or verification by post card through mail.



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How to: Click on <https://foursquare.com/venue/claim> to start the process of claiming your business. If your company is not already listed, sign up by clicking on the add business link. If you don't want to pay the 20 USD, choose the postcard option. Upon receiving the postcard, use the code on it to verify your business. As with the other sites, it is important to have a complete profile with all the information possible including pictures and social media profiles.

Timeframe: It takes up to 2 weeks to get verified through postcard by email



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13. Merchant Circle

No Follow

DA: 85



Merchant Circle is one of the oldest directories and is still very important.

Verification: Email

How to: Sign up here and add your NAP and any relevant business info. Upon submitting your request, you'll receive an email and need to click on a link to get verified.

Timeframe: Instantly live after verification



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15. Mapquest

No Follow

DA: 94



While getting listed in Mapquest is still very important, their partnership with Yext has made it very difficult to get listed for free. Basically, they are pretending to be a paid only directory and therefore it is difficult for a new business to get listed.

Verification: By sending an email to the support team.



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How to: Search for your business. If it is already listed, claim it by following the process. If not, do as follows:

Submit a support ticket by clicking on [this link](#) and make sure you have all the following information in your request:

- Business Name
- Address
- Phone Number
- Website URL
- Up to 6 Business Categories
- Location coordinates in form of Latitude and Longitude

In a few days after sending the request, you receive an email stating that your company has been added to their directory.

Timeframe: Up to 2 days to get live after confirmation email is received

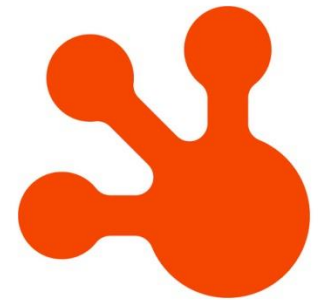


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15. Hotfrog

No Follow

DA: 66



Hotfrog, while old, is still a relevant citation site. The steps to create a profile are straightforward and the subscription is free. In addition, you have many options to personalize your company information.

Verification: Email



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How to: The link for adding a company to this citation website is at the bottom of the landing page. You need to put your business information in the subscription form and will receive shortly a verification email with a link that by clicking gets you verified and immediately listed. Make sure you put all the required information into the website to get your profile 100 percent complete.

Timeframe: Instantly after verification

Don't Stop Here

After completing our top 15 best citation websites, continue your quest for more citations and listings. If you intend to compete for difficult niches, every ounce of value matters.

CHAPTER FIVE: **BEST PRACTICES FOR GETTING CUSTOMER REVIEWS**





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Over time, business reviews by customers have become more and more important for a successful online presence. There are 2 sides to this. First, there is the matter of Google's algorithms and the trust factor that is given to a particular business based on different parameters including customer reviews. Basically, fewer reviews, qualitative and quantitative, means lower rankings. Second, and at least equally important, is the fact that with low-quality reviews, you won't be able to convert searchers into customers. Let's take an example. Look at the following picture of local results for Google for the search term “mexican restaurant melbourne” . Which of these companies would you choose?



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Rating ▾

Mamasita

3.9 ★★★★★ (190) · Mexican
Stylish Mexican restaurant & tequila bar
1/11 Collins St



El Sabor Mexican Grill & Bar

4.2 ★★★★★ (15) · Mexican
Bright digs for classic meals & tequila
500 Victoria St



Touché Hombre

3.5 ★★★★★ (66) · Mexican
Tacos & tequila in bustling, trendy spot
233 Lonsdale St





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Although they're on similar ratings, customers are more than likely to go to El Sabor than the other two for their higher ratings.

Long story short: Without quality reviews, good rankings won't do you much good. Therefore our plan of action for Local SEO always revolves around getting into the page one pack for our keyword AND having at least 5 positive reviews.



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Where Can You Get Reviews for Your Local Business to Boost Up Your Local SEO?

A diversified portfolio of good reviews spread over quality sources is key to a successful review campaign in Local SEO. Getting all your reviews from just one place, even if it is high-authority like Yelp and Google, it isn't necessarily the best thing.



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But if you have limited resources and a quantitatively low amount of review is what you'll get at the end, we recommend to stick to a few primary review sites depending on your industry and niche:

- **Yelp**
- **Facebook**
- **Trip Advisor**
- **Google+**
- **Industry Specific Review Sites**
- **Yahoo! Local**
- **BBB**
- **Yellow Pages**
- **Angie's List**
- **Citysearch**
- **Merchant Circle**
- **Judy's Book**



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Since the first 5 sites of this list are the most important with the greatest impact, we'll focus on them.

Google+ Reviews

Google+ belonging to Google, it's obvious that every successful review strategy needs to be built on Google+ reviews. Reviews on Google+ are the cornerstone to Google's algorithms and even if you get 100+ quality reviews on Yelp or the like, people won't know because the stars don't show in Google's search results under your company's name.

The sought-after stars



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The stars that appear in Google's results under a company's name show a business' average rating out of five stars aggregated out of all reviews you got on Google+.

To avoid low-quality results, Google first shows the stars after you've received at least 5 reviews.

Roomchang Dental Hospital ★

Website

Directions

4.3 ★★★★★ 20 Google reviews

Dentist in Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Google doesn't show 5 stars unless you have at least 10 reviews with 5-star ratings. One can only conclude that Google's algorithms are designed to anticipate at least one less than 5-star rating among 10 reviews.



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So What Is the Importance of Google Reviews?

[According to Backlinko](#), review signals add up to 10 percent of Google's ranking factors. But the real impact on your business is a lot more. Without the shiny golden stars under your business name, you will achieve a dramatically lower click through rate and consequently fewer customers.



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The Most Successful Ways to Encourage Customers to Write Google Reviews

1. Customer Handout

A Google Review requires a Google+ account and there are those customers who aren't tech savvy enough to find their way around that. A simple handout with clear step by step instructions is a great way to encourage them to write a review. In addition, it will remind your happy customers and increases your chances of getting a review.



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2. Email with Link to Review Page

If you have a customer's email, why not sending him/her a personalized email asking for a review with a link to the page and some useful instructions? This can even be a great step in your marketing campaign to engage more actively with your customers. Just avoid sending too many emails to customers simultaneously because getting too many reviews in a short period of time can seem suspicious to Google and you may get flagged as spammy.



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Below is a template email. Feel free to customize it to your needs.

Hi [Customer Name],

Thank you for trusting us with your business. We would love to hear your feedback.

We would appreciate it greatly if you could spend a minute to leave us a review on Google+. If possible, click on the below link to proceed.

(Your Google+ URL with a &review=1 trailing it.)

Thank you. Looking forward to seeing you soon!

Your Customer Support Team,

[Client Name]



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3. Review URL on Your Website

Another way to get quality Google Reviews is by placing the URL to your Review Page somewhere prominent on your website. As mentioned before, the link should consist of your Google+ URL plus `&review=1` in the front of it.



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Yelp Reviews

Yelp is the next authority site where you should get reviews for your business. In fact, most people go there to read reviews about companies, especially restaurants.

When aiming for Yelp reviews, keep the following points in mind:

1. Have a link to Yelp on a prominent place on your website to make it convenient for people to add a review.
2. Concentrate on veteran Yelp Reviewers. Yelp filters many reviews because the reviewer has only this one review, the reviewer profile is too new, or the reviewer hasn't done any actual business with the company.
3. Unlike Google, [Yelp's review policies](#) clearly prohibit the solicitation or purchase of reviews. So avoid doing it.



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TripAdvisor Reviews

When it comes to the tourist industry, TripAdvisor is vital to keep up with the business and win new customers. TripAdvisor is actually one of [the most influential websites on the Internet](#) for reviews and trip ideas.

So if your business revolves around tourism including restaurants, hotels, or anything related to traveling, you definitely need to have a profile on TripAdvisor to enable your customers to give reviews.



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Improving Your Ranking on Trip Advisor

According to TripAdvisor, there are 3 main parameters that affect the ranking: Quantity, quality, and freshness of received reviews. Please note that spamming TripAdvisor's algorithms can have a hugely adverse effect on your rankings.

A recent study published on Revinat.com estimated that around more than 80 percent of the popularity index was determined by the rating score that you received and quantity and other factors added only about 15 percent of your score.



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The Bottom Line

Higher rankings on TripAdvisor can primarily be achieved through providing exceptional services

Try to get reviews from those customers that are highly delighted by a great customer experience.



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Facebook Reviews

Since Google started to show stars below a rich snippet for Facebook reviews, Facebook has become a top review site that shouldn't be ignored whatsoever.

[La Rotisserie | Facebook](#)

[www.facebook.com](#) › [Places](#) › [Hong Kong](#) › [French Restaurant](#) ▼

★★★★★ Rating: 4.4 - 112 votes

La Rotisserie, Hong Kong, Hong Kong. 3237 likes · 134 talking about this · 920 were here. **La Rotisserie** - the first ever-traditional French rotisserie...

With more than 1 billion users, Facebook has become as authority and important as can be. There are actually many companies with a ton of reviews on Facebook and hardly any reviews on Google+. With Google showing Facebook's rating stars in its SERP, it is past time to get Facebook reviews if you don't have any.



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Industry Related Review Sites

There are many review websites that solely focus on a specific niche like for lawyers, universities, doctors, car dealerships, dentists, etc. It is very important to find some of the most important ones in your industry and getting some quality reviews.

[As a bonus, here is a full guide to online reviews.](#)

CHAPTER SIX: **COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS AND WINNING STRATEGIES**





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A competitive analysis gives you a lot of insight about your competition and how they are handling their SEO business. It helps you to find gaps and opportunities to stand out of the pack but also enables you to imitate proven tactics to gain ground and have better chances to compete.

The following tips and techniques scratch just the surface and are by no means in depth guides for a thorough competitive analysis, but nonetheless, they are good starting points that show you the path you will be heading in the future if you choose to tackle more advanced categories of search engine optimization.



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Here are a few points you'll learn when implementing a competitive analysis:

- Identifying your top competition for your chosen local keywords.
- Learning the sources and quality of backlinks that your competitors have and finding gaps and opportunities to build on.
- See the citation profile your competitors have built and finding opportunities for your own business
- Learning the quantitative margin necessary to be able to enter Search Engine Results.



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Find Your Top Competitors

This is a quite straightforward process. Just search for every combination of keywords you are targeting and see who is ranking for them.

Let's assume you are running a dentistry in Minneapolis (or your client is) and you are targeting different combinations of the keyword Minneapolis Dentists. These variations could include Minneapolis dentist, dental services Minneapolis, dentist in Minneapolis, dentist minneapolis, etc.

With a few exceptions, a Google search for the above-mentioned keyword combinations brings up quite constant results. Write down the more consistent results for later use.



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Learn Your Competitors' Backlink Profile

Everybody knows that backlinks are a primary factor in Google's algorithms. But large numbers of low-quality backlinks don't help a website's ranking anymore. Quality backlinks from authoritative websites that indicate a true endorsement for a certain topic or industry is what can help a website's ranking. When it comes to Local SEO, having relevant backlinks from local websites is definitely a good idea that helps your Local SEO campaign.



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- How competitive is the industry you are aiming to rank for? Looking at the quality and quantity of the backlinks of your competitors will give you a lot of information. Try to find out whether the backlinks are just spammy ones, high quality, or easy to create ones on local business directories?
- How many backlinks have your competitors on different root domains?

Here are some of the top tools we use in backlink analysis

- [Moz Open Site Explorer](#)
- [SEMrush](#)
- [Ahrefs](#)
- [Majestic SEO](#)



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Having all of these tools is not feasible for every business except for SEO agencies. While using one of them gives you enough information to get you up and running, looking through the different information will show you some missing links that one tool covers and the other doesn't.

For an analysis, we need to enter every competitor in a tool and write down every piece of information we get about their backlinks including the domains that have given them backlinks, the Domain Authority and Page Authority, and the number of follow or no follow links that each domain has given a particular competitor.



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It isn't very difficult to reach this pack when putting some effort into your Local SEO campaign. But just getting some (even quality) backlinks isn't enough for a successful campaign. A smart combination of links, on-page SEO, reviews and much everything else we covered in this piece is required for a successful campaign.



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3. Competitor Traffic Analysis

Learning about the traffic your competitor gets and the keywords they are targeting and ranking for is also a great way to get insight into your competitors' SEO efforts. [SEMrush](#) is a great tool and gives you tons of information that you can learn from.

Here are a few key metrics that you should look at when analyzing a competitor's traffic:

- Top keywords
- Volume of organic traffic
- How is the organic traffic spaced among the top keywords



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Having the above-mentioned information will help you a great deal in devising a strategy for ranking for similar keywords.

SEMrush offers you much more functionality. You can check the following resources for detailed instructions on what you can do with this great tool:

[5 Ways SEMrush makes me look like an SEO Wizard to Potential Clients](#)

[22 Stealth Competitor Research Tactics with SEMrush](#)



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4. Competitor Citation Analysis

To get an early estimate of where you stand compared to your competition in terms of citations is to run a citation analysis.

But don't try to get every citation your competition has. After all, everything they do isn't necessarily the right thing to do or doesn't apply to your business. Avoid spammy citations or anything that appears irrelevant. As a rule of thumb, I would check out the top citations they have and see if it helps my business to get a citation there.



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Another way to see the potential opportunities that you are missing is by using [Brightlocal's Citation Tracker](#). You can run this tool on your website and then head over to the Potential Citations tab where you find possible citation opportunities that you are missing and see which of your top 5 competitors has already a citation on that website.

Filter Citations:

Citation Source	A	B	C	D	E	Citation Authority	Citation Value	Free/Paid Listing	Status	Actions
yahoo.com				Y		100 / 100	Very High	Free Listing		Get Citation <input type="checkbox"/>
linkedin.com						100 / 100	Very High	Free Listing		Get Citation <input type="checkbox"/>
citysearch.com				Y	Y	85 / 100	Very High	Free Listing		Get Citation <input type="checkbox"/>
whitepages.com				Y	Y	82 / 100	Very High	Free Listing		Get Citation <input type="checkbox"/>
dexknows.com					Y	77 / 100	Very High	Paid Listing		Get Citation <input type="checkbox"/>
insiderpages.com						73 / 100	Very High	Free Listing		Get Citation <input type="checkbox"/>
yellowbot.com						70 / 100	Very High	Free Listing		Get Citation <input type="checkbox"/>
chamberofcommerce.com				Y	Y	67 / 100	Very High	Free Listing		Get Citation <input type="checkbox"/>



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Competitor Review Analysis

As discussed earlier, reviews are key in turning impressions into clicks and eventually customers. In many cases, top rankings without proper reviews convert much less than 4th or 5th place with the great shining stars.

A successful Local SEO campaign needs a minimum of 10 reviews to start returning your investments. But in some hyper-competitive industries like restaurants and lodgings, a few hundred reviews are needed to stand out from the pack.

Gathering a few hundred reviews is a hard goal to achieve and requires dedication and hard work, but rest assured that in most cases reaching the 10 to 20 mark is enough.