

SEO Handbook

by: Jacques Vrolijk the Local SEO Expert in London

Optimizing for Local Search



Local Marketing Online

Local marketing has been around for a very long time, starting with billboards and adverts in the paper to the Yellow Pages. These days our lives are far more integrated with the internet and Google has become the go to place to find what we are looking for.

Nothing is more important to brick and mortar businesses than being part of the local community and really standing out from their competition. Last century it was done by naming your business: AA Plumbers so you would be the first in the yellow pages listing these days more is needed to be on the first page of Google.

According to a recent survey by Boostability.com, as much as 82% of all people begin their search online for the products and services that they need. Most of the searches are coming from mobile devices and places like Google and will automatically display localised content. If you've taken the time to ensure that your business will show up in the searches.

The purpose of this guide is to show you exactly how to do just that; effective use of Google My Business (the old Google Places), Google Maps and even in Google Plus can all combined together to guarantee that when people search for your business that they will find exactly what they're looking for.

Google My Business is the great equaliser and once you have set everything up correctly and to ensure that your business follows these guidelines is a guaranteed way to dramatically increase leads, interested customers and clients and boost your sales.

Please take the time to look over the information and then use it to optimise your results. Once you do, you too can compete and succeed in your local market, even against some of the real giants!

Warmest Regards,

Jacques Vrolijk

Optimise Your Google Interface

Without question, one of the best ways to dominate your local market is to take the time to interface with Google and make sure that the following tools are focused on your business:

- Google Maps
- Google My Business
- Google Plus

All three of these tools can be combined to create a powerful effect for the local brick-and-mortar business and take your location from obscurity to one of the most relevant and highly focused, lead generation machines, directing people right to your front door!

The purpose of this guide is to show you exactly what you need to do for each of these three major components mentioned above. When it comes to local search results, this is how you fully optimise the three in such a way that build upon each other. This will begin to drive massive amounts of traffic as well as interested people right into your business and marketing funnel. Here's how.

Google Maps And Beyond

Before we directly delve into some of the best ways to optimise your entire **Google local profile information** which includes Google Maps (i.e. Google +, Google My Business etc.), we are going to work a little bit backwards.

Experience taught me that this makes most sense to business owners when they are trying to optimise their Google maps listing.

It is important that you understand that optimising your local profile across Google is what matters for your Google local map location to begin to appear in searches. Google maps are reliant on other Google tools.

Once you understand how important it is to make sure all of your information is similar across several of Google's local marketing tools, everything will fall into place correctly, and you will be able to optimise everything across Google's networks seamlessly.

In each section we will discuss the exact steps necessary to do everything that we are about to list for you. So don't get too excited, or overly concerned. Optimising Google starts with one page, one location and one step at a time.

When you combine all of these factors everything will work together to assist your business to reach as many people as possible.

Here are the steps necessary to get your business listed on Google Maps and begin showing up everywhere:

1. Claim and optimise your **Google My Business** listing as explained in that section.
2. Create and establish a **congruency between all profile pages** with the same name, address and phone number information (NAP) by using citations as explained in the last section of this Handbook which is easy to accomplish if you do it daily.
3. Creating and maintaining actual **REAL reviews** from customers and clients located across the area of service that you are going to be providing.
4. Following all of the **best practices of Google** as well as providing the correct and accurate information for listings and citations.
5. Utilise **pictures and videos** connecting with your business to further **provide credibility**, good content to your industry and drive interest as well as clicks and conversions to your business.

If you read and apply all of the information in this guide, you will be performing all of these tasks, both individually on the Google listings, as well as generating the correct number of citations to both manage and maintain high search engine visibility.

How It All Works



Everything you see above in this diagram works together to help your business rank locally. In order to optimise Google Maps, Google My Business and Google +, everything will work best when you integrate it all at the same time.

This is because Google wants to be your
one stop shop for local rankings.

The more you cooperate with Google, the bigger the rewards are. We will review how to do all of this in each section in the guide and if you just devote 1 hour a day to this process you can rank with the top people in your industry.

Google My Business Optimisation

The very first step when it comes to optimising your **Google My Business** listing is to meet all of the quality guidelines. Since many businesses do not follow these, this is one way to immediately get a leg up on them.

You will be able to locate the **Google My Business** (GMB) quality guidelines listed underneath the help section of your **GMB** listing or you can also have a look here:

<https://support.google.com/adwords/answer/107528?hl=en>

Here are the takeaways from the **Google My Business** quality guidelines:

- You must have a legitimate, fully operating local business that you are in control of and that you are authorised to manage the Google My Business listing.
- Your business must be accurately represented in a real and truthful manner.
- Your location **MUST** be precise, accurate and will send someone right to your front door of your business.
- You must be able to verify this with a physical address.
- Chosen categories **MUST** reflect what your business currently is not what you want to list it as.

Your Google My Business Listing Completely Filled Out

<https://www.google.com/business/>

You should strive to make your Google My Business listing as accurate and as fleshed out as possible. Again few businesses do this and leave much information blank.

I recommend adding as much content as possible because Google is extremely good at helping your local business appear in the search engines for people who want to contact you, but they can only do so with what you provide the search engines.

Google wishes to give its users the best possible experience and in most circumstances any user that contacts your page will have a much better experience if there is sufficient information for the potential client or customer to decide if you are what they are looking for.

Not only should you fill out the required fields but all of the optional fields as well and completely populate all information to enhance any and all user experiences when they visit your Google My Business page.

Essentially, taking into consideration the totality of several competing Google My Business pages, the page that has the most abundant and robust content typically outranks the others that did not take the time to add all of the necessary content.

More compelling listings containing more content will also deliver higher click through rates, more leads and better conversions.

Pick The Right Category For Your Listing

Google has devoted a lot of time to ensuring that **Google My Business listing** are sufficiently categorised correctly so that users can quickly locate and find the business and services that they need.

Typically, Google will show the first several categories to help users decide the best listings to examine specifically when it comes to displaying local search results.

Additional categories will be displayed when the user clicks to see more information, but the first several choices are the most important and should be a complete reflection on the actual business services and/or practices.

Obviously, the categories you choose will make or break your business especially if you rely heavily on Google My Business for your local traffic.

Another important piece of advice when choosing categories for your Google My Business account is to understand that the categories you choose **must accurately describe your business** as much as possible.

If you do not choose the right categories, you can run into conflict with Google's algorithm that make sure that what people are searching for is what they will see represented in their search.

This also helps people find exactly what they want when they search for your products and services as well as increasing conversions from all of this traffic.

Good, Powerful and Simple Descriptions

When creating descriptions for your Google My Business page, you must put yourself in the user's shoes, think like them and describe what makes you unique and the better choice than your competition.

For example, you may have chosen the category of bookstore, but what you are actually is a used bookstore so your description should immediately inform the visitor and give them a reason to click on other information about your business or to contact you or visit you.

Your goal is to create **a short but powerful description** which should be to convey your unique selling proposition immediately so that people visiting will realise exactly what it is you have to offer and follow through with you.

Keep in mind Google is already using your categories and geography as well as your location to determine when your business will show up in local searches.

This means your description is essentially a critical component to converting leads into sales. Keep it simple and effective! Let people know exactly what it is you can do for them.

Another reason for short, powerful descriptions is to keep in mind as many as 82% of all searches are from mobile devices. Simple works on mobile so get to the point and provide what people are looking for.

Get Positive Customer Reviews

Google appreciates customer reviews so much that typically they will show up and get top placement.

Make no mistake REAL and positive reviews MUST be part of your local marketing. NEVER pay for fake reviews! The search engines are getting very good at detecting fake reviews.

Smart marketers do NOT try to game the system rather they have mechanisms to reward honest reviews and in doing so get the people who are posting these to do so honestly.

So if you want your GMB listing to begin to perform better, getting regular reviews from a variety of your customers or clients are an absolute must.

Every time clients or customers visit your store, hand them a business card with your Google My Business URL and asked them to take a moment to fill out a review and say something nice about the business.

You should also have a hyperlink to your Google My Business listing on your website and encourage people to write reviews when you send them different types of e-mails, a weekly newsletter, or even consider running a contest to see who can write the best review.

Google My Business with Google +

Google works best when you integrate their platforms together into a massive marketing platform. Google actively encourages businesses that have a **Google My Business** listing to also have a **Google + account** in interlink them together.

Integrating the two together will allow you to perform additional marketing. This includes creating posts that customers can actually read and participate with, the ability to respond and interact with customers and clients, respond to reviews and more.

The two together also allows you to utilise Google + with additional robust marketing tools, create multiple marketing channels, create powerful video presentations that can be shared in hangouts, and the list goes on and on.

We will discuss **Google +** in the next section so that you can see the benefits and experience them as well as support your Google My Business page.

Optimise Your Google + Page

Google + is a unique and powerful marketing platform, in and of itself. When you add Google + to your local marketing, this is like supercharging everything that you do and giving you some of the top marketing tools on the planet to do so with.

It is important that you set up your Google + account accurately and optimise it as well as utilise the tools that are provided so follow these steps and then combine this information with your Google My Business account:

Publish Awesome Content Regularly

Creating excellent content has always been a fantastic way to make Google stand up and take notice of everything that you do. By simply doing weekly posts about your business, posting testimonials, involving people directly in your ongoing story, you can attract lots of followers and interested people just using your Google + account.

Get your Google + Page Custom and Branded URL

<https://support.google.com/business/answer/2911778?hl=en>

The way Google operates is that you already have an existing Google + Page for your current address but it is not yet yours or optimised; it is incomplete and waiting for you to stake your “claim.”

Taking the opportunity to claim this page with your business listed on it will allow you to fully customise this page and then once you do will allow your business to begin to show up on Google Maps.

The effect of having both pages working together cannot be overstated. Google gives additional importance when you use their tools as opposed to other local marketing tools, so why not utilise this tactic to increase the local

searches? Cross-linking both pages validates each other and will further increase your importance when it comes to local searches as well as doubling the opportunity for you and your business to appear before the eyes of your clients and customers.

Tell A Simple But Powerful Story

The “about us” section in your Google plus page is an excellent location to tell a short but powerful story about you and your business.

The first few words should clearly define what your business is and have your most powerful keyword when doing so because this information will end up as your meta-tag data that will be shared throughout the search engines.

Try to have a compelling headline that explains exactly why someone should click on this information to discover more about your business.

Optimise the first 50 characters of all posts – Any and all posts that you do on Google + need to be optimised as well. Most marketers are aware of the importance of optimising the first 50 characters of all posts, because this information is automatically converted into searchable and clickable link so that people can decide whether or not they wish to read more about your posts.

This means you should include your main keyword in a short title that tells people exactly what they will be reading. Doing so will greatly increase the click through rate. You will experience and can drive additional traffic from your Google + page to your Google My Business page as well.

Google + Advertising

Eventually it is possible when you have at least 1,000 followers on Google + to use plus post ads in order to boost the posts that you do, and drive more user engagement from followers and those who discover your page.

Plus post ads are similar to Google AdWords and works on utilising and displaying your posts to other like-minded individuals based on following, keywords and discovery.

This is also similar to Facebook ads, where you are able to boost your posts in order to get more involvement and engagement from people that are in your

newsfeed. This kind of advertising is actually affordable and if you have a reasonably large conversions such as a unique product or service that people are looking for, it may be well worth £ 20 a day to reach these people and turn them into clients and customers.

Depending on the type of engagement that you're looking to have, plus post ads may be exactly what you're looking for to immediately jump start and continue an on-going engagement campaign where customers and clients begin to find you. Remember that you must build to your first 1,000 followers on Google + before you can make use of this advertising service.

Google + Tips To Grow Fast

Similar to your Google My Business listing, your Google + page should be filled out completely and accurately to maximise search engine results.

It is also important to reflect this same information across multiple Google platforms because this form of congruency adds to your search engine gravity.

Here are some simple tips to further maximise the effectiveness of your **Google + account**:

- Make sure your business location is 100% accurate on Google maps.
- Add your main website link to your Google + page and also include a link to your Google My Business page.
- Ask customers and clients to add a review to your Google plus page and get them to click +1.
- Make sure that you list your hours of operation, local telephone number, local address and any other directional-based information to help clients and customers find you quickly.

Most of these suggestions are absolutely critical to getting the most out of your Google Plus page and allowing integration between Google Plus and Google My Business.

Remember that the search engines will “spider out” the links that are represented on your Google pages so interconnecting them is another great way to get a direct citation and/or thumbs up from Google.

Google Maps and How To Optimise It

In order to make your Google maps location show up more, your first step in optimising and making your Google maps appear is to link your Google plus page and your Google My Business page directly to your map location.

Having your business appear in Google maps will increase the number of overall citations that your business has. The better the quality of the citation the more relevant it is to help you rank especially with other local citations that combined together to create an effective support mechanism to make your page(s) appear more frequently when localised searches are done.

Getting your business to rank locally requires one other important aspect to your marketing; the number of HIGH QUALITY citations equal to or greater than the current ranking competition. So one of the ways you can determine the number of citations that you need is by researching your competition, and then using their citations as a kind of metric or guide for ranking in your local arena.

The good news is, this makes the entire process of outranking your competitors a simple aspect of observation, recording the results and then matching them or outperforming them with more quality citations.

A final point that we want to make here is that Google has extreme bias towards physical locations. This means that if you actually have a physical location. In that specific area, you are more likely to outrank your competitors who do not.

Physical location is critical in the appearance of Google maps, so if you truly wish to increase traffic and visibility, you may actually have to setup a new brick and mortar location in that area!

While it is possible to eventually rank your business based on your geographic location, if you want more traffic from an exact location, finding a way to get a local brick and mortar business in that area and that area is going to be the best that so that you can prove this to Google and claim ownership.

Good Citation Locations

Citations are mentions of your business (**NAP**=Name+Address+Phone number) in local, regional and national search engines, directories and other local websites. Citations are essential to send ranking signals for local searches and are the best way to push traffic in your direction.

Yelp is just one example of a good place to have a citation for your local business. Notice how the main information is about the name, address and phone number as well as the food served? Appearing in the local searches is what makes citations so powerful and drives traffic directly to the restaurant.

One more thing here that is important to note – citations are powerful social signals to localised search engine results. The more listings you have the more “mini – traffic machines” you have working on your behalf so get as many of these gems as you can. Your goal should be to get as many citations like this for your local business.

Here are some of the best places to get citations from. To create a citation on any of these sites you can just Google the name and follow the sign up procedure. Many of these services also have paid inclusion and ad support if you want to consider these services:

- Bing
- Yelp
- Yahoo!
- Yellow Pages
- Yahoo Local

Once you have signed up to these now you can add more. Try to do at least 1 a day. I'll send you a list of citation sites soon.

Remember citations are critical to your business rising in the search engines. It only takes a few minutes a day to do this and just for the traffic boost is worth your time.

Conclusion

Everything you need in the local market to grow your business has been included in this guide. Put Google to work, focus on combining Google Maps, Google My Business and Google + to work together to create powerful gravity for your business.

Understand that the more information Google has about your business the more you will begin to dominate in the searches in your local market. This is because Google wants to be the dominant driving marketing in your area. No one tool (i.e. Google Maps) will work as efficiently without including the other tools Google offers.

Don't forget about the citations too! The citations not only deliver more traffic and get you found more often, but work to boost your Google presence across multiple platforms and get you found more often.

There you have it! Everything you need to know on how to dominate in your local market. Please stick to your daily work and in time you will be one of the top businesses appearing at the top of local searches for your industry.

Warmest Regards,

Jacques Vrolijk

seo@localseoexpertlondon.co.uk

P.S. If you'd like me and my team to take care of this entire process for you, we can help for a small one time investment.