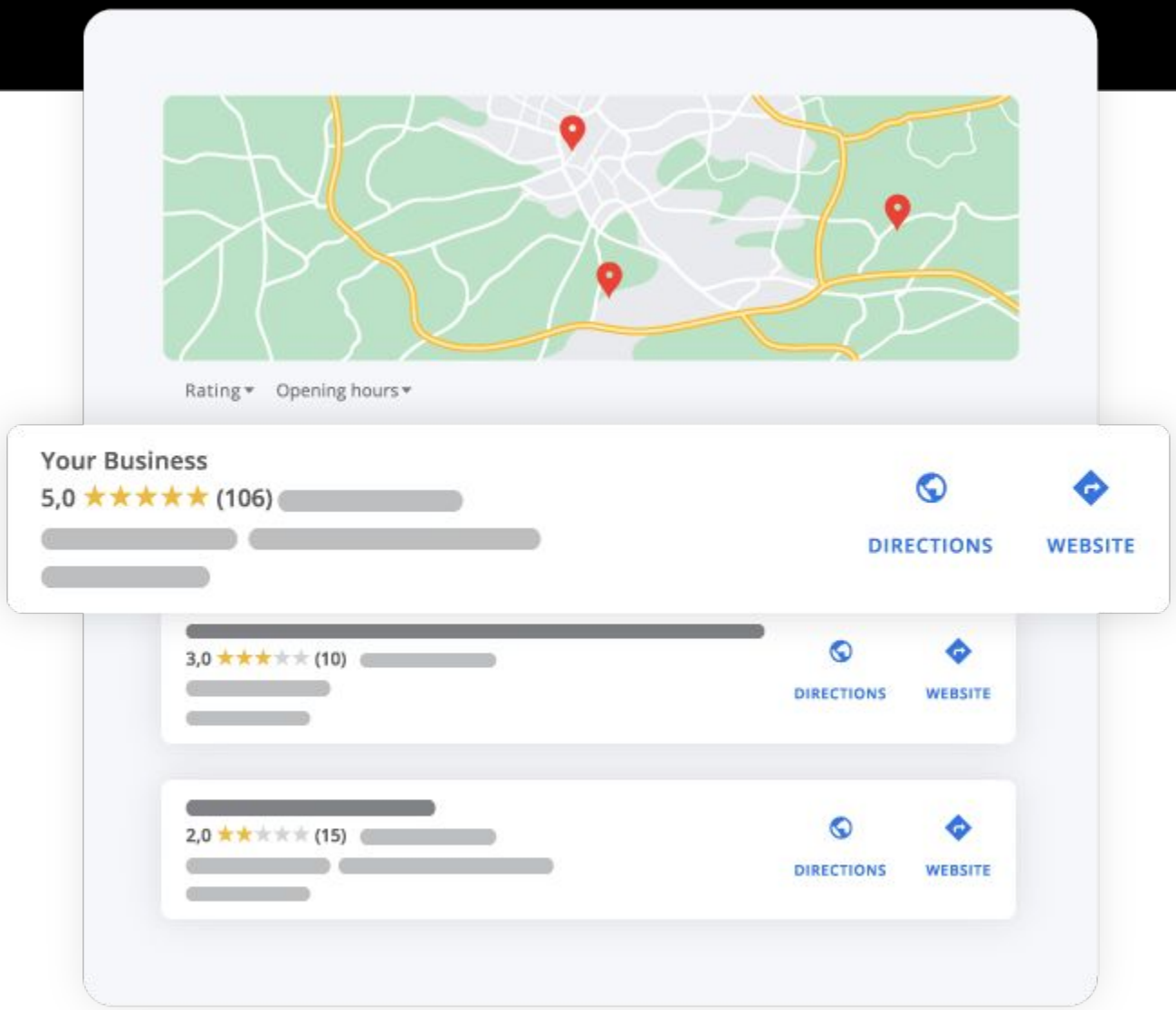
STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD

YOUR GUIDE TO BEING VISIBLE TO LOCAL PEOPLE WHO NEED YOUR STUFF



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Do You Stand Out From The Crowd?

When you make your products and services available to customers in your local area, the number one thing that you need as a business owner is to be visible to these customers.

If people can't find your business when they're searching for help, they won't be able to purchase your products or services.

Think of it like you're opening a retail premises in your local town or city. If you open up the premises on a road with high traffic, you have visibility and people will find you. Whereas if you open up on a back street, with no passing traffic, no-one will see you and you'll struggle to generate sales.

When someone uses a search engine such as Google, the search engine will display the results that it feels are most relevant for the search query. The more you can do to help the search engine feel that your website is relevant, the more visible your business will be.

Thankfully, there are a number of key steps that you can take to improve the visibility of your business in your local area. These are collectively part of something called Local SEO. This is the process of optimizing the ability for your website (and business) to be found in the search engines.

For a search that is performed for a local business, the user will usually be presented with a map and three businesses at the top of the page, with further details and reviews for each. If you want maximum visibility, it should be your mission to have your business appear here.

For the majority of businesses who are reading this, your local area will be very important to you in terms of sales and new business. Visibility in your local area can mean the difference between "okay" and "GREAT" sales.

When your business has great Local SEO in place, you'll be more visible to customers in your local area. This means more visitors to your website, more phone calls, more inquiries, and ultimately more sales.

You can give your business an opportunity to stand out from the crowd.

Our free guide contains action points and tips that will help you to improve the visibility of your business in your local area. You can follow through the guide and take immediate action that will benefit your business.

It's important to note that you won't see an immediate result with any of these changes. That's not how the search engines work. However, the faster you make the appropriate changes for your business, the faster you'll see results. Typically, we'd expect to see positive changes over a 4-8 week period.

1 Google My Business

Google is the largest search engine in the world. It makes sense to focus the majority of your efforts here as it's where most of your visitors will come from. Google operates a system called Google My Business (sometimes shortened to GMB).

A Google My Business page acts as a directory page for your business inside Google. The search engine uses the data from these pages for local search results, so it's really important that you set your page up.

Firstly, you need to make sure you don't have a Google My Business page already. Go to https://business.google.com/create and in the search box type in the name of your business.

If your business appears here, then your business has a Google My Business page already. The message on the page will tell you how to reset your login details or request access from someone else who has set it up on your behalf.

If your business is new and doesn't already have a Google My Business page, you'll be given the option to add your business.

When you first set up your page, you will need to follow the verification process. This will either be via postcard, telephone or email. Once your page is verified, make sure you take the time to complete each section and add good content to your page.

These are the most important areas for you to focus on:

- **Business Name -** Make sure you use your full legal business name. Don't be tempted to add in keywords here such as "Plumber London", if that's not part of your business name.
- **Business Description -** Use this area to describe your business and talk directly to your customers. Get them interested in how you can help them with their problems.
- **Categories -** Select categories that are relevant to your business. Don't select irrelevant categories here.
- **Address -** This should be your business address and you should ensure that you have the same details on your website for NAP consistency.
- **Telephone Number -** This should be your business telephone number and you should ensure that you have the same number visible on your website for NAP consistency.
- **Website URL -** Enter your business website URL here.
- **Opening Hours -** Let people know when you're open / available to assist them.
- **Photos -** This is one of the most important areas on the page and one that people neglect. Add your logo, some pictures of you / your team and photos / images of work that you have done for your clients.

There are some additional options on the page such as creating coupons and short posts on your Google My Business page. We'll talk about these in an email in the next couple of days.

TIP: Set up your Google My Business page and add in good quality content as recommended above. Make a note in your calendar to review your page quarterly.

2 NAP (Name, Address, Phone Number)

One of the most important things that you need to remember to improve how your business ranks in Google's local search results is your **Name, Address and Phone Number (NAP).**

It's crucial that the **NAP** is correct for your business and consistently used across the Internet. This means your website, your Google My Business page, and any other online properties or directory listings.

Google will scan the various online listings for your business as one part of their method of ranking websites. If your business has a consistent Name, Address and Phone Number - this will help you in terms of how your business is ranked in Google.

Forgetting the search engines for a moment, a consistent NAP is also useful for humans. It's not just the search engines who will use the various online properties where the details of your business are listed.

Giving people the correct information so they know how to visit your website, call your business or visit your location (if you run a retail premises), helps them to have a better user experience. If a user finds the wrong information this will lead to frustration and a potential lost inquiry.

Some of the most common reasons for issues with your NAP include:

- Changing your business address - When you update your business address or your business moves to a new location, it's important to properly update the various listings for your business online.
- Having a retail address as well as a registered business address - You should pick one address that is used online and stick with it. It's okay to have more than one address, but just use the same consistent address for your business online.
- Changing your phone number - Just like your address, you should look to use one consistent phone number online. It's easy to make a mistake here if you change your number or perhaps start using a toll-free number instead.
- Using additional phone numbers for call tracking purposes - These are great for tracking inquiries, but care should be taken to ensure you don't use them in your online listings.
- Inconsistencies with the way that your business name is written - This is surprisingly more common than you may think. "Acme Ltd" could be shortened to "Acme" by mistake, which has just created an inconsistency with your business name.

These are just a few examples and getting these wrong can all affect your local SEO. Not only this, but they'll also create a poor user experience when someone is looking for your business as they may have a problem calling you or visiting your location.

TIP: Schedule a periodic check of your online listings to ensure that they're all up-to-date and using the correct Name, Address and Phone Number. This is especially important if you're planning to change your business Name, Address or Phone Number in the near future.

3 Citations

A citation is an online mention of your business's Name, Address and Phone Number (NAP). They form an important part of helping your website to be visible to local customers. As we mentioned in the previous section on NAP, Google will use these citations to establish the credibility of your business when it comes to ranking in the search engines.

There are two types of citation:

- **Full Citation -** This is where your NAP are all present and match. This is the ideal result for your business.
- **Partial Citation -** Only part of the NAP matches here. It's better than nothing, but not an ideal result.

Citations provide value to your business when they exactly match the data used on your website and/or your Google My Business page.

As well as using the data for determining any authority that your business has, Google will also use it to verify the accuracy of the contact details in Google My Business listings. Helping Google to find consistent data across 30+ listings will benefit your business as all of these different citations suggest the NAP information is correct.

Humans will see these citations too. The more places your company details are visible and correct, the more opportunities you have to drive new traffic and visitors to your business.

One of the most common options is to obtain a listing in directories. There are many of these that are national, local and even industry-specific. Some other options include question and answer sites, guest post bylines, profile pages and press releases.

You should always start with directories as these are the easiest. Here's an article from Moz, where they've separated out some recommendations into business categories - https://moz.com/learn/seo/citations-by-category.

It's also possible and best practice to check the citations that your competitors have for their businesses by using a Google search. For example, you may perform a search like:

"Competitor Name" + "Competitor Postal Code" -site:https://www.competitorwebsite.com

The reason we add in the minus sign and the competitor's website address, is so that Google filters these pages out from the search results. You can even do the same search for your own business to look at any citations that you already have.

Now you can go through the first 5-10 pages of results and make a note of any directory websites or opportunities for you to create a citation for your own business. Using the above tactics should get you up and running with at least 30 citations for almost any industry.

TIP: Take the time to check your existing citations and start creating some new ones. When creating citations, make a new email address for this purpose as you will get some marketing emails from some websites that you sign up for. It's much easier to filter these with your new email address.

4 Reviews

Reviews are very important to your strategy for attracting more local customers. You may have noticed the map listings that Google displays for local searches. Look at how the businesses with lots of high-quality reviews stand out here. This encourages people to click!

For local search, your main review source will be on your Google My Business page. This is the primary factor that Google will take into account. It's worth noting that they'll also look at other "authority" sites such as Yell, Trustpilot or Yelp too.

Your customers can leave reviews on these platforms in a text based format, along with a star rating, which is usually out of 5. If they only leave a star rating and there is no accompanying text, this review will have less weight assigned to it in the eyes of Google.

So why are reviews important? The simple answer is that they get traffic to your website. The more hiqh quality and high scoring reviews your business has, the more chances there are of Google showing it higher in their search results.

It's also worth remembering that people use reviews as part of the buying cycle. They want to know that your business is trustworthy and that you're able to supply the products or services that you sell effectively.

You'll be compared to your competitors. This is a simple fact. If you can make sure your reviews are in good order and you have a steady stream of new reviews, you have a good opportunity of getting (and staying) ahead of them.

To get new reviews, you should be asking your customers for them. This is something that you could add into the purchase cycle and even automate after a purchase has been made. You could also add a link on your website for customers to review your business or even one in your email signature.

This is not and should never be a one-off approach. Companies like Google are smart and they have technology that can notice when something isn't right. You need to incorporate asking for reviews into your ongoing business activities. A large spike in reviews over a period of one week and nothing happening again in the future is a big negative.

Reviews to your Google My Business page are the most important for your business. These should be your main focus. The other websites such as Yell, Yelp or similar sites don't need the same number of reviews.

Finally, never let your customers add reviews for your business from your store or office. Because Google know you're at this location, it's easy for them to assume that you're attempting to game the system.

TIP: Send out an email to 10 of your customers this week and ask them to leave a review on your Google My Business page. Pick 10 more customers for next week, and the same the week after. Set up a method for asking new customers for reviews after you've delivered the product or service that you purchased, on an ongoing basis.

5 Website Content

Last, but by no means least - you need to make sure that the content of your website is focused on your local area not just the products and services you provide.

It should be noted that this doesn't mean you need to add in "[service/product name] [location]" everywhere on your site, as the search engines will find this to be a little over engineered. You can be a little more subtle than that.

Remember that your content should always be written for humans first. They're the people who will be purchasing your products or services. Content should be easy for them to understand and engaging enough to keep them on the page.

You can add in references to your location in the title tag, header tags, meta description and the main content areas of your pages. If you have any issues with creating content that is geo-targeted, think about highlighting customer success stories and case studies.

What else can you do? Quite a lot actually...

If your business only serves one location, use your About page to highlight this and make sure your content is targeted towards this location.

If your business has multiple locations, make sure that you have a dedicated page for each location. On this page feature the NAP, store hours and a unique description for each location. You can also add in testimonials from happy customers. It's very important that you don't duplicate content between these pages.

Use a Google Map on your Contact page and location pages (if relevant). This will get you some bonus points from Google!

Think about how you can tie in content from your local area on your website. You have an opportunity to engage users here and also to become a local authority in your industry or niche.

Local area content will typically be about more than just your business. You could have content about local events, industry meetups, local news, employees and other relevant educational content. Google's search engine is smart and it recognises those who really dedicate content to their local area, without just promoting themselves.

You should regularly review your website's content to ensure you're getting the most value from everything that you create.

TIP: Take some time to review the existing content on your website. Is it effectively talking about the location(s) that you serve? If it's not, start planning to make some changes. For future content, try to add at least one new article each month that focuses on your local area.

Start Increasing Your Visibility

You should now have an idea on how you can tackle Local SEO and help your business to have more visibility in your local area. It can seem like a lot of work, but it's the businesses who take action, that really benefit when it comes to visibility to potential customers locally.

As we mentioned in the introduction, it is important to remember that you will rarely see instant results when you make these changes. The search engine algorithms don't work like that, otherwise the results would be of low quality. So try to adopt a mindset that small and regular changes will compound into bigger results over time.

Throughout this guide, we've given you action points and tips that will help you to stand out from your local competitors and be more visible to your local market. Some of your competitors are likely to already be ahead of your business when it comes to Local SEO and that's okay. You can take advantage of citation sources that they've found, as just one example.

You'll also be able to see just how many good quality reviews it takes to show in the map listing that Google displays for local searches. If you can see three competitors who have 100-200 reviews each, with the majority of these being high quality reviews - that's giving you some indication as to the minimum goal you should be aiming for too.

Armed with the information in the guide and the emails that we'll send you over the next week, you'll be in a position to overtake your competition and really stand out from the crowd.

Keep an eye out in your inbox for those emails in the next few days. We've got some extra tips and ideas that will help you.

In the meantime, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch!

To your success!

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