



# **The SMB's guide to local SEO.**

eBook



**SEO, or search engine optimisation, has been hot on the lips of every digital marketer and small business owner for years.**



**It's an immensely complex but ultimately rewarding digital marketing goldmine, and it's here to stay.**

Local SEO is a sizable piece of the SEO puzzle and it has become increasingly clear that marketers and businesses must ensure their websites are not just optimised for search but optimised for local search, in order to capture their most relevant audiences.

But what is local SEO exactly; how is it different from normal SEO; and how can small businesses harness the power of local SEO for greater sales?

# Contents

## SECTION 1

### **What is local SEO? . . . . . 01**

The three pillars of local search optimisation. . . . . 01

## SECTION 2

### **How to optimise your website for local SEO. . . 03**

## SECTION 3

### **Why there's more to local SEO than just your website. . . . . 04**

The role of Google My Business. . . . . 04

The role of Yelp and other reviews. . . . . 04

The role of social media. . . . . 05

The role of Yellow Pages and other directory listings. . . . . 05

## SECTION 4

### **Finding the best local SEO services. . . . . 06**



# What is local SEO?

**Local SEO is a specific type of SEO. Instead of optimising your website and business for search engines in general, you will optimise specifically for customers within your local geographical area.**

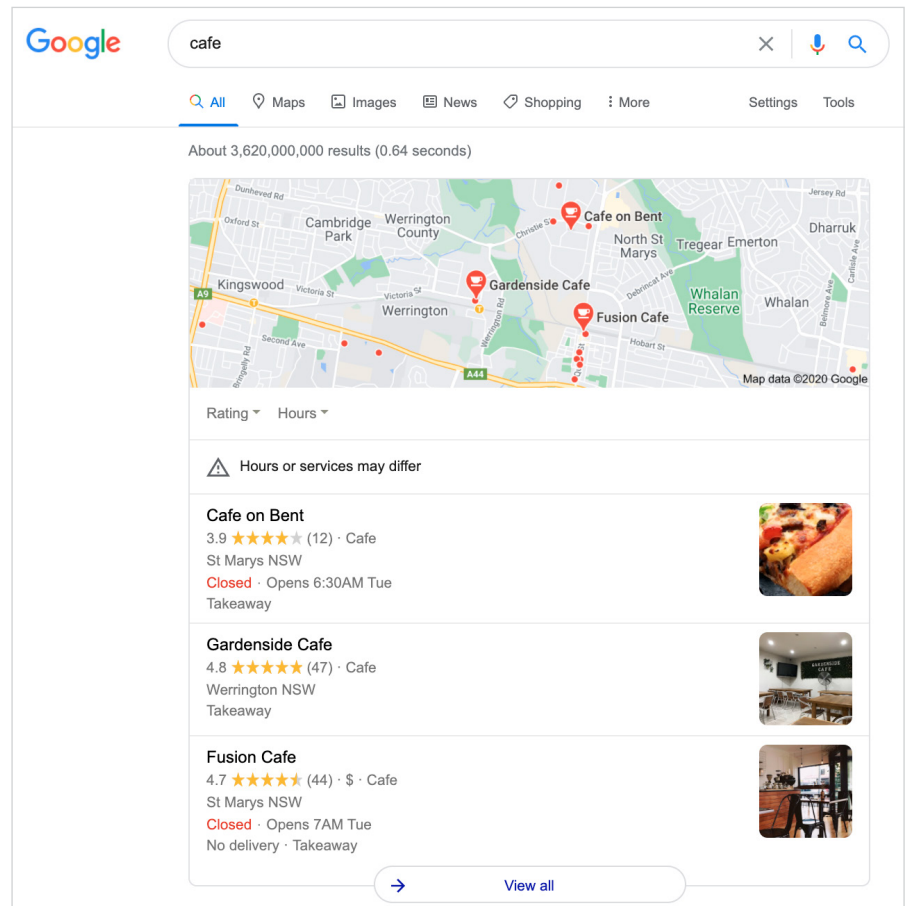
Doing so has become more and more beneficial for businesses as customers increasingly use search terms such as 'hairdressers near me' or area-specific search terms such as 'hairdressers in Byron Bay'. Interestingly, voice search has also been a major driver in the relevance and importance of local SEO, as a massive **58% of those using voice search** do so in order to find a local business.

As a result, the way we search is changing the way Google chooses the top results.

For example, when you simply type in 'cafe' into your search bar, you will be shown a results page filled with cafes. Right at the very top, however, Google will supply you with a map of your area and three cafes pinpointed near your exact current location, including contact details and addresses.

The three lucky cafes residing in those spots are known as the 'local pack' or the 'map pack', and they earn those results in very much the same way that any business earns its high ranking on a results page - with excellent SEO.

It's also worth mentioning that Google isn't giving you information



about your nearest cafes because it thinks you are looking for a job in a cafe, information about how to run a cafe or images of a cafe. It assumes your search intent is to find a place nearby to pick up a great coffee. This is helpful for you as a user but it's also an important clue when optimising your website for search - you have to keep in mind what exactly your audience is looking for when they search.

## The three pillars of local search optimisation.

When thinking about local SEO, it can help to think about the three key pillars that define local

search: distance, prominence and relevance.

Google uses these three factors to help determine which websites rise to the top of local search results, including appearing in the all important 'map pack'.



**Distance** refers to how close your business is to the searcher, based on your and their current location. There isn't much you can do about this aside from ensuring your location details are correct.



**Prominence** refers to how well known a business or website is. Google takes information from all over the internet to determine prominence, including links, reviews and positive ratings. It also factors in your usual rankings, so regular SEO feeds into prominence as well.



**Relevance** refers to how closely the search term is to local listings on Google My Business. We'll cover more Google My Business SEO advice later in this eBook, but for now this simply means you should aim to include a detailed description of your website on your GMB listing.

This is of course a deceptively simple breakdown of how Google determines local search results, but it is a good place to start when you're looking to improve local SEO.



# How to optimise your website for local SEO.

## Optimising a website for local SEO does have similarities with optimising a website for SEO in general.

This includes basics such as:

- Optimising **website speed**
- Including keywords in headings, meta data and copy
- Internal linking and **backlinks**
- Implementing **schema markup**
- Improving your website's crawlability
- Optimising your website for mobile (**82% of mobile shoppers run 'near me' searches**)
- Improving behavioural signals such as click-through rates and time on site

As well as working your way through all of the standard SEO best practices, taking the time to implement local SEO tips can make all the difference.

### ■ Local keywords

Local keywords are often similar to standard keywords, but they involve geographical clues. Instead of 'best mechanics in Adelaide', you might focus on 'best mechanics in West

Lakes' (an Adelaide suburb). During your keyword research, you'll also likely discover that many people are running a lot of 'near me' searches. This might be awkward to include as a keyword, but it's certainly worth the effort as in 2015 Google announced that 'near me' searches had doubled within the space of a year.

Ensure your keyword research includes local keywords so you can implement these throughout your website.

### ■ Local content

As well as local keywords, consider introducing targeted local content. This could be general content such as your favourite eateries in the area or the best sightseeing nearby, or news and discussion about local events.

This will give you a natural way to implement local keywords and will signal to Google that your business is well entrenched in a particular area.

### ■ NAP information

NAP stands for name, address and phone number, and it's vital to have this information listed clearly on your website. Google can use this to check that you are nearby when someone runs a search.

It can also be hugely beneficial to have NAP citations - instances of other websites or business directories that include your business details - for your local search rankings. This is just one of the areas where you can seek to improve your local search rankings outside of your own website.

# Why there's more to local SEO than just your website.

## One of the biggest differentiators between standard SEO and local SEO is that so much of it happens off your website.

We already know that backlinking can be hugely valuable for website SEO. Local search takes backlinking a step further and incorporates even more external factors into determining a relevant local results page.

When it comes to improving local search results rankings in particular, there are several more strategies that occur outside of your own website that can determine your search results.

This includes Google My Business, Yelp, other review sites, social media, Yellow Pages and other online directories.

## The role of Google My Business.

**Google My Business** is arguably the biggest and most important external factor in local search. Given that as many as **56% of local businesses** have not claimed their Google My Business listing, if there's one thing to do beyond maintaining your website, it should be to claim yours.

If you're new to Google My Business, it is a free online directory that allows you to list all of your company information

with Google directly. So, rather than Google having to crawl your website to find details about you, it already has them.

Firstly, make sure your NAP - name, address and phone numbers - are listed and correct on Google. You can also double check the Google map that appears and ensure the dropped pin is in the correct position.

There are numerous other GMB areas where you can and should load your business information:



List your business category (include all that are relevant)



Include your website URL (there is a 'website' space for this)



Load high-quality images regularly



Input your business hours and keep them up to date

Another major factor for Google My Business and its relationship to local search results is business reviews. Positive regular reviews on Google can boost your visibility and you should always make a point of responding to each review - good or bad. Be sure to ask customers to review your business after an interaction to aim to bump up the

number and regularity of your GMB reviews.

And don't forget, Google My Business isn't the only place where customers can leave reviews that Google might use to influence your local rankings.

## The role of Yelp and other reviews.

Google is a major platform for customer reviews but it's not the only one. And it's certainly not the only one that Google counts when it comes to local SEO.

**Yelp** is a major platform where customers can add their reviews of local businesses. The most commonly reviewed business types on Yelp are restaurants, home and local services and shopping, but any business can register their own page.

This is yet another place where you should correctly list your name, address and phone numbers, and one where you can encourage and respond to reviews online.

You can also look at encouraging and responding to reviews on other well-known websites such as Tripadvisor, Foursquare and Amazon.



## The role of social media.

Social media might not be as critical to local search rankings as Google My Business but it does have its role to play. And the benefit here is that setting up social media accounts is not only free, but quick and easy as well.

At minimum, every business should set up at least two of the big five social media profiles, dependent on the nature of your business:



If nothing else, that's two or more places where you can list your business name, product or service, address and phone number, and more places where you can link back to your own website.

Social media platforms provide another avenue through which customers can find you, so even if you don't update them as much as you could, at least they provide a way to direct them to your website or other more active platforms.

## The role of Yellow Pages and other directory listings.

Like Google My Business, Yellow Pages is a major online directory where businesses can **add their own companies** and reap the benefits of being found online at no cost.

There are more than 5.6 million searches made on Yellow Pages every month and it's not uncommon

for Google to use Yellow Pages websites in its results page during searches. Yellow Pages is Australia's number one source for reliable business listings, and is yet another place where you can list your business, NAP details and website address to further feed into your local SEO.

Similarly, there are some smaller online directories where you can add links and details about your website.

- MapQuest
- Bing
- Apple Maps
- Superpages

Keep in mind that when you list your business on any directory (or social media platform), you must also update all of your details any time you move location, change contact details or alter your business hours. Failing to do so can confuse both your customers and Google's search crawlers, so it's best to keep your information updated and accurate at all times.



# Finding the best local SEO services.



**There's a lot to consider when it comes to local search optimisation. Even when you know what you're doing, it takes time to do it well.**

More than 1,300 small businesses in Australia have turned to **Yellow's expert SEO team** to take the reins on their SEO and local SEO. This allows you to focus on your own work while we work our magic on your local SEO, ensuring your brand finds its way up the rankings and gets seen by more customers.

Call us on 132 489 or **send us an enquiry** to find out more about how our local SEO services can literally put you on the map.