



# THE CONTRACTORS GUIDE TO LOCAL SEO

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Investing in SEO, (Search Engine Optimization), is one of the best and most effective ways you, as a contractor, can reach your customers. SEO involves optimizing your site and web presence. It is the foundation for your site getting found by prospective customers on the internet.

But, if we go one step deeper in the SEO strategy, we discover another tactic called Local SEO. Local SEO helps you market to customers in your local community or defined area at the precise moment they're searching for the goods or services you provide.

It's a powerful and effective way to reach customers, grow your brand, and increase sales! So how do you get started? What do you need to know and what do you need to do to make Local SEO work for you? We've put together this Contractors Guide To Local SEO to serve as a resource for you. Let's get started!

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# CHAPTER 1: INVEST IN YOUR WEBSITE

Your website is your most valuable online asset. It isn't just the face of your business, your website IS your business. When potential customers search and click on your site, they're looking for a solution to a problem or a need. Potential customers need only 30 seconds (or less!) to form an opinion about your business based on your website. If your site doesn't communicate quickly how your business can fill a need or solve a problem, if the page is slow to load, or if it's difficult to find what they need, guess what? They'll click off your site and go to another business. *Probably to your competitor's website.*

So, how do you convince people to stay and then entice them to learn more or buy your product or service? By investing in a good website.

A good website must have form and function. It must be optimized to look good on every device: desktop and mobile devices. This is critical! Have you ever pulled up a website on your phone and the text was so small and the graphics took a long time to load and the images didn't look right? That site may look good on your desktop computer but it has not been optimized for smartphones. As a result, you probably clicked off and started your search again. According to Google, more than half of all online searches are done on a mobile device. A good website must be optimized to perform well with working links and easy navigation.



Here is a tool from Google to check if your site is mobile friendly:  
<https://search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly>

A well-optimized site is one with good design elements. Photos, videos and other multimedia are good to add, but be sure they're optimized as well. Make sure they are of a proper size so as to not slow down the load time.

Moving on to content. No one has time to read endless paragraphs on your home page. Consider breaking up your homepage and other content such as blogs and articles headers and subheads to make the content easier to read. If visitors can skim your page and get a good idea what your business is all about they're more likely to stay longer.

## CHAPTER 2: GOOGLE MY BUSINESS

Google My Business (GMB) is an excellent and free Google tool to position your business right where your customers are searching. Although it is free — it does require a substantial effort upfront as well as regular monitoring & optimizing to ensure your content is valuable, relevant, and accurate.

The first thing you must do is go to [google.com/business](https://google.com/business) and create a login. Then, you can claim and verify your business. Once you've done this, you can begin to start building your profile. Fortunately, Google has many features that will enable you to share key information that your customers are searching for.

Think of your (GMB) profile as a mini version of your website...because it is!

Of course, you want to make sure your business information is accurate: name, street address, website URL, email, and phone number. But consider things from the customer's perspective. They're looking for a description of your business, what products or services you offer, any special offers, discounts or sales, etc. With GMB, you can add all of this information and more to your profile.

If you're wondering why Google would give this opportunity to businesses for free, it's because they want the customer to stay on Google and not click away to another site. You can use this to your advantage by optimizing your GMB profile so you appear higher in Google's search results!



### OPTIMIZING YOUR GMB PROFILE:

It's not enough to just have a listing on GMB. To really stand apart from your competitors, you now must optimize your profile listing so Google will rank your business higher on search results.

Once you've created your GMB account, you'll find your "Dashboard" where you can access the tools to update your profile.

One of these tools is "Posts." Think of posts similar to a social media post or even an ad that you might run on a social media platform.

In this "Post" section, you can promote an event, share a picture of one of your products, or a picture of an employee working with customers, your newest product or service, a special offer, your latest blog post or article, and more.

When using photos and video to optimize your listing, be sure to always use high-quality photos and videos that are the right size (not too large as they will load slowly and not too small as they will appear grainy and low-quality).

GMB also has a “Booking” button feature which is especially good for contractors and other businesses that rely heavily on scheduled meetings with clients. You can find this on the GMB dashboard and sync it with any meetings app you currently use.

Another great feature on the GMB profile is the Question and Answer section. Here, customers have the chance to ask you a question about your product or service. Of course, this requires engagement from you, so you'll want to be sure you're monitoring your profile (more on this later) and answering questions as they come in. You can also be proactive about the Q&A section by providing answers to some of the most common questions you and your business are asked. (Note: there are guidelines to follow so see GMB for details).

“OPTIMIZING YOUR GMB PROFILE GIVES YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO PERSONALIZE YOUR BUSINESS OR SERVICE AND LET CUSTOMERS KNOW MORE ABOUT YOU.”

Optimizing your GMB profile gives you the opportunity to personalize your business or service and let customers know more about you. The final step in using GMB is monitoring.

Monitoring your free GMB profile is essential. Why? Because although the updates feature is free, just about anyone can make updates to the content and affect how your listing appears. This can negatively affect not only your search results but also your business reputation. It's good practice to have someone at your business or organization check in with your GMB listing a few times a month (or even once a week) to ensure your information is accurate (and to correct any misinformation.)



## CHAPTER 3: REVIEWS MATTER!



No matter how well you craft and market your brand message, customer reviews —good or bad — are what people really think about you and your business.

Customer reviews are here to stay. Word of mouth travels fast, but now it's easier than ever for customers to share their bad experiences using sites such as Google, Yelp, Angie's List, BBB, Nextdoor, Facebook, etc.

People are talking about you and your business so it's up to you to take control over reviews. So let's talk about the two kinds of reviews and how you can make the most out of customer feedback.

### THE DREADED NEGATIVE REVIEW

The best way to prevent a bad review is to create a good customer experience. But sometimes, even with the best efforts, we fall short of customer expectations and the customer takes to the fastest social outlet to let everyone know about it. This is why it's important to have a strategy in place for handling a bad customer experience on the spot (in person) and also one for handling a bad customer review online.

Do your employees know what to do when things go wrong? Are they empowered to make things right? What tools do you have in place to fix a customer situation - or better yet, to prevent a bad experience from happening in the first place?

**“SEEK FIRST TO  
UNDERSTAND  
AND THEN BE  
UNDERSTOOD”**

-DR. STEPHEN R. COVEY

When you get a negative review online, rather than reacting defensively, take a beat and try to see things from the customer's perspective. The old adage, “seek first to understand and then be understood” is a good rule of thumb. Also, keep in mind, you are writing the response not only for the person complaining, but also for other potential leads. They want to see how your company reacts when something goes wrong. Make sure to apologize and explain everything you've done to try to fix the situation.

Next, respond. No matter what the situation is, your best bet is to acknowledge the person behind the complaint and respond with empathy. Oftentimes, customers who have had a bad experience just want to be heard. Give them that opportunity. And then apologize. The customer isn't always right, but they should always be treated with dignity and respect. This will go a long way toward building good customer relations and building loyalty to your brand and your business.

## POSITIVE REVIEWS

It doesn't seem like this needs any further explanation, because the reviews are positive, right? But there is gold in positive reviews — if you know how to leverage them to your advantage.

Satisfied customers can be your biggest advocates. They are loyal to your business and the product or services you provide and with a little acknowledgement and appreciation, they will sing your praises.

Don't hesitate to ask for a good review! Of course, you should never pay anyone to leave a review on any review site anywhere. However, you can absolutely ask satisfied customers to take the time to leave you a review or a comment on your social channels or on review sites like Google or Yelp.

A final thought on reviews: monitoring is key.

How will you know about negative reviews if you aren't monitoring the Internet? Bad reviews can get ugly fast and can invite more and more people to share their bad experience and add fuel to the fire. But, if you can get out in front of a bad review, and show a good faith effort to listen, empathize, and respond, your customers (and your business) will appreciate it (and they'll likely tell other people about your business turned a bad experience into a good one.)

One way to monitor what's being said about your business is to set up a simple (and free) Google alert for your business name. It's free and easy and can help you keep tabs on what people are saying about you. ([www.googlealerts.com](http://www.googlealerts.com)) There are also a number of review monitoring services available.



## CHAPTER 4: BUSINESS LISTINGS

Years ago, business owners would market their business using Yellow Page listings, newspaper and other print ads, mailers, brochures, telemarketing, and TV/radio ad buys. Today, while many of these options may work for some businesses, the best place to focus your efforts is in online listings. If you're not there, you're missing out on a huge business opportunity.

How you're listed locally online is an important detail when it comes to marketing your business. After all, about 70% of the US population (and roughly 2/3 of the world's population) are online. You need to be where your customers are — and online listings.

If your business isn't online, and properly listed, then people can't find you. It's as simple as that. The good news is most online listing indexes are free. You just need to devote some time and effort to making sure the information is updated and accurate.

When your listing is optimized and maintained (through updates and monitoring), it will serve as a major business driver to your website. Which means more clicks, more customers, more sales, and more money.

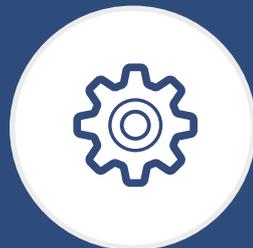
Bottom line: *Your local SEO listing matters.*

### THE RIGHT WAY TO LIST YOUR BUSINESS ONLINE

We talked about the Google My Business tool earlier and how important it is to have a robust, updated profile so customers can find you and your business in their search.

Another strategy to increase your visibility is to do a citation listing. This combines the best of the older, more traditional marketing efforts we mentioned earlier including the Yellow Pages, print ads, and radio/tv ads into one listing.

While you don't have to list your business everywhere, it does make sense to stick with the major platforms like Google My Business, Yelp, and Facebook. They are the go-to sites and certainly the most popular. As for other local sites, see what makes sense for your business or industry and then tackle those one by one. Ultimately, you want to be sure your business has good visibility and is customer-responsive.



## CHAPTER 5: HOW TO TELL IF IT'S WORKING?

All of this information is great to have, but how can you know if your time and effort is actually producing results? There are key indicators you can use to gauge how well your local SEO efforts are working. Specifically, you want to look at your site's rankings, site traffic, and conversions.

### RANKINGS

One of the first things to look at is how well your business is ranked in Google search results. If you're not appearing on the first page of Google, chances are your local SEO efforts need some tweaking. There is software available to help you track your rankings. I recommend Brightlocal, MOZ and SEMRush.

### TRAFFIC

Traffic is defined as the number of people visiting your site and it's one of the key performance indicators of how well your website is performing. Google Analytics is a great way to track the traffic coming to your site as well as to determine whether you're getting a good return on your investment. A good ROI is good for business and ensures you're spending your precious marketing dollars wisely.

One of the best features of Google Analytics is the ability to measure and track where your traffic is coming from. Are they coming to your website from an organic search? As a result of a paid ad? Or perhaps they're coming to your site from a post on a social media channel like Facebook, Twitter or Instagram. Google Analytics can tell you all of this information and give you some insight into where your customers are and, ultimately, where you should be spending your time and money.

### CONVERSIONS

Having a superb local SEO web presence is great, but it's only half of the equation. To make sure your business and your website are on track, you must track conversions - or the flow of the customer from viewing your listing, clicking on your site, and taking action.

While the vast majority of your traffic will not convert to paying customers (this is common across every industry), there are ways to analyze your conversions to see why people aren't converting. Then, you can take steps to identify and eliminate those probable "pain points" and encourage your potential customers into that elusive sales funnel. In simple terms - tracking your conversions helps you see the barriers that are making people ignore or leave your site so you can adjust your strategy, remove the barriers, and make it easy for them to stay and convert into leads or customers.

## CHAPTER 6: DIY VS SEO PROFESSIONAL. WHICH IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

It's our hope that this information will be helpful to you as you navigate how to list your business using local SEO tactics. There certainly are many low-cost or no-cost resources out there that will help you hit the ground running when it comes to posting, monitoring, tracking, and adjusting your local SEO to remain competitive.

So the question for you, the business owner, is this: do you have the resources and the time to handle this on your own? Do you have someone in-house with the marketing and SEO skills to ensure your local listings are done right, optimized well, and earning you a good return on your investment? If not, and if your budget allows, consider hiring an agency to handle all of your SEO posting, tracking, monitoring, and reporting needs.

An agency with a team of SEO professionals in your corner will take the worry of constant monitoring, tracking, and adjusting off your plate. You can have peace of mind knowing the online side of your business is well taken care of and you can focus on the thing you do best: running your business.

If you would a free website audit and SEO consultation, contact John Leutermann at Big Rock Marketing.

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