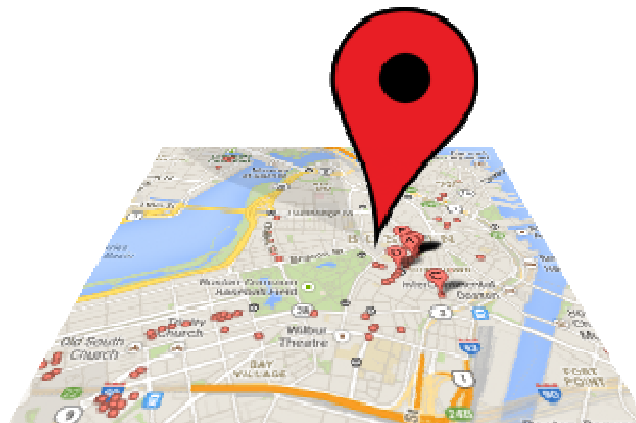


The 7-Step Guide to Getting Visible to More Customers in the Local Search Results

2nd Edition



by Phil Rozek

LocalVisibilitySystem.com

Table of Contents

I.	Legal Stuff.....	2
II.	Why I've written this guide, and what to expect.....	3
III.	Step 1: Lay the groundwork.....	5
IV.	Step 2: Perfect your Google+ Local page.....	10
V.	Step 3: Sharpen your website.....	16
VI.	Step 4: Work on your citations.....	26
VII.	Step 5: Get reviews.....	29
VIII.	Step 6: Clean up.....	35
IX.	Step 7: Pull ahead and stay ahead.....	37
X.	Tools I recommend.....	39
XI.	Blogs / experts I recommend.....	40
XII.	What's next.....	41

Legal Stuff

I don't like fine-print any more than you do. But that doesn't matter much to my lawyer, who started breathing down my neck to include some limitations, stipulations, whereins, forthwiths, and heretofores. She's an ogre, and I really don't want to find out what it's like to get on her bad side, so...

Below is a Terms of Use. I'd sure appreciate your reading through it.

-Phil Rozek

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Thanks for wading through that. Now let's get to the good stuff.

Why I've written this guide, and what to expect

I'm writing this free guide to help both you and me:

You want the phone to ring. You know one of the best ways to do that is to get your business more visible online - more specifically, visible to local people who are searching for what you offer. This guide can help you do that.

If I force myself to articulate something, I understand it a little better. Also, all my clients and other good fortunes have come to me because I try to offer useful stuff without expecting anything.

The local search results - particularly Google's - are tricky and filled with little mysteries. Neither I nor anyone else has them "figured out," and probably never will. For one thing, they're constantly changing. But what I can do is share what I've learned so far, about how a business can carve out some territory on the "local map."

Because I may not know you personally just yet, I'm making **a few assumptions:**

- You don't know much - or anything - about local search or how to get visible there. If you're somewhat familiar with it, great; the guide should fill in a gap or two.
- You don't mind reading stuff that addresses your challenges and questions. I've tried to describe the steps succinctly. You'll see cases where I link to a resource that explains a point in more detail, so we can keep things moving (I really suggest you click on those links). Still, I've got to assume you've got both boots in the stirrups if I'm describing ways you can grow your business.
- You're focusing on *Google*. Of course, it's worth doing what you can do get found in Bing, Yahoo, Apple Maps, and beyond. But it's a matter of priorities. By the way, most of the steps that help you in Google also help you elsewhere.
- It's likely your business is in the US. Most of my clients are American, so of course I'm going to use that as a starting point. But I've also worked with business owners from far and wide. In case you're one of them, I've tried to include non-US-specific where applicable. Fortunately, most of the steps are the same anywhere.
- You have finite resources. There are a couple of low-cost tools I highly recommend, but the only thing you *need* that costs even a little money is a website.

- You have one location or maybe a handful of locations. Even if you have many locations, the get-visible process is very similar.
- You know you can [shoot me an email](#) if something in here puzzles you. (I can't promise an in-depth reply, but if you have a specific question or two, I should be able to take a good crack at it.)

I look forward to hearing how you like the guide.

Enjoy!

Phil Rozek
localvisibilitysystem.com

Step 1: Lay the groundwork

There are a few things to do to set yourself up for great local visibility. The main one is to understand some principles. Let's go over those first.

First of all, if you are at all unclear about what "local search" or "local SEO" is, please take a minute to read this excellent post:

[What is Local SEO?](#) - Mary Bowling

"Local search" is an umbrella term. It refers to any case where someone goes to Google and types in a search that makes Google think, "Oh, this person's looking for a local business." It refers any time someone uses the Apple Maps app on an iPhone to look for a nearby towing company or coffee shop. It refers

But in this guide I'm focusing on Google's local search results. Not only that; I'm focusing on a specific type of search result in Google: The "Google+ Local" results - AKA "Google Places," AKA "Google Maps."

[North Attleborough Animal Clinic LLC](#)
northattleboroanimalclinic.com
Google+ page

A 375 E Washington St
North Attleborough
(508) 216-3517

[Attleboro Veterinary Clinic: Keyes Sarah E...](#)
www.attleborovetclinic.com
Google+ page

B 179 N Main St
Attleboro
(508) 226-8046

[DeWitt Animal Hospital](#)
www.dewittanimalhospital.vetstreet.com
2 Google reviews

C 145 Washington St
Plainville
(508) 695-0261

[Banfield Pet Hospital](#)
www.banfield.com
Google+ page

**Google+ Local results
(AKA Google Places,
AKA Google Maps)**

D 1385 S Washington St
North Attleborough
(508) 695-8787

[Furry Friend Pet Sitting](#)
www.furryfriendpetsitting.com
2 Google reviews

E Leonard St
North Attleborough
(781) 405-8530

[Abbott Valley Veterinary Center, Inc.](#)
abbottvalleyvetcenter.com
1 Google review

F 4232 Diamond Hill Rd
Cumberland, RI
(401) 334-2765

[Central Avenue Veterinary Clinic](#)
centralavevethospital.com
3 Google reviews

G 455 Central Ave
Seekonk
(508) 761-8525

[See results for veterinarians on a map »](#)

(As you may know, [Google has flip-flopped](#) over exactly what to call them.)

There are also the [local organic results](#) - where local businesses can also show up. I'll be touching on these, but focusing on how you can get visible in the maps-style listings, which are usually much more prominent in Google.

[North Attleboro Veterinarians - Local Thebostonchannel](#)

local.thebostonchannel.com/s/MA-North-Attleboro/Veterinarians ▼

Find **Veterinarians** in North Attleboro, MA. Get **Veterinarians** phone numbers, driving directions, business addresses, maps, reviews and more. **The organic results**

- some for local businesses, some not

[Veterinarians - Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)

www.bls.gov/ooh/Healthcare/Veterinarians.htm ▼

Apr 26, 2012 - **Veterinarians** care for the health of animals. They diagnose, treat, or research medical conditions and diseases of pets, livestock, and animals ...

[Veterinary physician - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veterinary_physician ▼

A **veterinary** physician, colloquially called a vet, shortened from **veterinarian** (American English, Australian English) or **veterinary** surgeon (British English), is a ...

[Attleboro Veterinary Clinic](#)

www.attleborovetclinic.com/ ▼

Companion animal hospital providing medical, surgical and dental care. Includes details of the services and facilities, the vets, location and hours.

Now that we're on the same page about what "local search" is, let's go over those principles I mentioned a minute ago.

I'm not going to explain each one to death, because there are a lot of points to touch on. You can contact me if you've got a question or two. (And if you really want to know more, read every post I link to.)

Here are some basic truths you need to know in order to succeed (in no particular order):

Local search is [complicated](#). Getting visible to customers there will take some time, work, and patience. You can't get something for nothing.

Read, understand, and follow [Google's rules](#) and those of every other site you encounter. You are on rented property. You do not *own* your listings. Google, Bing, Yahoo, Facebook, Yelp, YellowPages, and other sites do. Ultimately, you have no choice but to play by their rules. (Well, you don't *have to*, but you'll save yourself a lot of anguish if you do.) The only thing you truly own online is your website.

If you have an e-commerce business, don't bother trying to get on the "local map." For one thing, you'll need a real address. You *could* use your home address, if you wanted to. But the bigger issue is that if you're truly e-commerce, most people aren't searching locally for what you offer. Your customers probably aren't local

If you work from home and *absolutely* don't want anyone to know your address, don't bother. You can "hide" your address from showing on your Google listing and on [most other sites](#), but it will almost certainly show up *somewhere* online.

[It takes time](#) - usually months - to get visible in local search. Put in the work *before* you need customers. It's better to dig the well before you're thirsty. If you can't wait, start paying for the ads of your choice (and put local SEO on the back burner) .

It takes work. A lot of work if you're a do-it-yourselfer. Even if you pay an expert to help, there are some steps you'll still have to be personally involved in.

Set low expectations if you relocate your business every couple of years. The sooner you can nail down your permanent business name, address, and phone number, the better.

You [can't pick the geography](#) you're visible in.

You can't "target" as many keywords as you'd like. Your job is to convey to Google and to [other sites](#) the basic *families* of terms that describe your business or services.

For the reason I just mentioned, keyword-research generally isn't as important in local SEO as it is in organic SEO and in pay-per-click advertising (PPC).

You won't be able to track leads as much as you'd like to. If you have an email-list opt-in form on your site and do a little fancy footwork, you may be able to get a sense of how many customers or leads found you in the local results versus elsewhere. If you get an SEO who insists on [call-tracking numbers](#), show him the door.

Things change all the time, especially in Google: the rules, the different ways the search results appear, and of course the rankings. Local-search visibility is a moving target.

Intimately related to the above point: you will run into many bugs and snafus. Especially in Google. There's nothing you can do about it, except to

stay up-to-date and make educated guesses as to how to fix or avoid the banana peels.

Long-term, you will probably need to find [a way to stand out](#) (see Step #7, near the end of the guide). Simply being a local business may be enough to get you into the local business search results, or - especially in competitive markets - it may not be enough: you're probably not the only blacksmith in town. If you want to get results your competitors can't get, you may have to do things they are too unenlightened or lazy to do.

Cheap is expensive. If you do pay for help, don't seek the lowest bidder. Either you or a better-compensated pro will just have to clean up the mess sooner or later.

There is a lot of [overlap with organic SEO](#). This means - among many other things - that if you hire someone to focus on "organic" and someone else to focus on "local," the person doing the work on the organic side can ruin your local SEO efforts if he/she isn't careful.

Try not to be in a position where you have to rely solely on your visibility in local search for new customers.

Even if you hire outside help with your local-search efforts, there will be [some steps](#) you or someone in your company will absolutely have to do personally.

Someone on your team needs to spend at least a little time keeping up-to-date on local search. If you're not the hands-on, read-the-manual type, make sure someone on your team is. (Although that person is probably you, if you're reading this. Good job.)

Believe it or not, you've already set yourself up for success, now that you have a good sense of what you should and should not do and what you can and cannot expect.

But there are also a few preliminary to-dos. I suggest you do these steps now, if you haven't already:

1. Make sure your business is registered with the appropriate powers-that-be - most notably your state.
2. Use a real address for your business, if you don't use one already. You need to use the address of your office, store, or home. That's it. Don't use a PO Box or UPS store as your address. Don't use a virtual office unless you actually meet customers / clients in-person there. Don't use the addresses of parking lots where you park your trucks, if you run a "service-area" business.

3. Get a separate phone number for your business - or for each location, if you have more than one location. It needs to be a number that (1) you plan to use long-term and that (2) you don't mind appearing all over the web. Ideally it uses a local area code. If you want to use a call-tracking number - [there are risks in doing so](#) - now is the time to decide that. But just realize that you'll be committed to using *that* number everywhere your business appears on the web, for as long as you'd like to rank well (changing your phone number always shakes up your local rankings).

4. Strongly consider discontinuing any YellowPages-style ads, for reasons similar to the above. They use tracking numbers. Unless you know for a fact that you've gotten *paying customers* from leads that come from those ads, and unless you'd rather have those customers than visibility in local search, then you'll want to stop the ads.

5. Make sure you have the ability to make changes to your site at any time, and to fire anyone at any time without being "locked out" of any of your online properties (namely your website and any business listings).

6. Set up Google Analytics on your site. I'm not suggesting you spend a bunch of time each week poring over your website stats. But you'll want to be gathering those numbers from the get-go, so that you can pull up some reports and say - among other things - "OK, so here's where we started, and this is how far we've come."

By the way, I suggest reading these posts:

[The Rudiments of Local SEO](#) - Miriam Ellis

[Top 20 Local Search Ranking Factors: An Illustrated Guide](#) - Miriam Ellis

[Top Local SEO Myths](#) - collaborative

[How Long Local SEO Takes: the Short Version](#) - me

Step 2: Perfect your Google+ Local page

Your Google+ Local (AKA Google Places) page is the vehicle that allows your business to appear in the local (AKA "maps") results.

You can appear here IF you have a Google+ Local page

[Dental Village](#)

www.dentalvillage.net

2 Google reviews

A 7475 W Twin Peaks Rd
#111
Tucson
(520) 579-1500

[John R. Carson, DDS, PC](#)

www.johnrcarsondds.com

4.4 ★★★★★ 24 Google reviews

B 7415 E Tanque Verde Rd
Tucson
(520) 514-7203

[Dr. Jeffrey C. Derickson, DDS](#)

www.drderickson.com

4.6 ★★★★★ 10 Google reviews

C 762 N Country Club Rd
Tucson
(520) 327-5993

[Wong & Valeriano: Wong Brian J DDS](#)

www.drswongandvaleriano.com

3 Google reviews

D 4411 E 5th St # B
Tucson
(520) 795-7200

[Los Amparadores Dentistry PC: Reece H...](#)

plus.google.com

1 Google review

E 3986 N Campbell Ave
Tucson
(520) 795-3418

[George Mantell d.d.s. p.c.](#)

dentist-tucson.com

Google+ page

F 2910 N Swan Rd #107
Tucson
(520) 795-2123

[Dr. Jay Citrin, DDS](#)

www.drjaycitrin.com

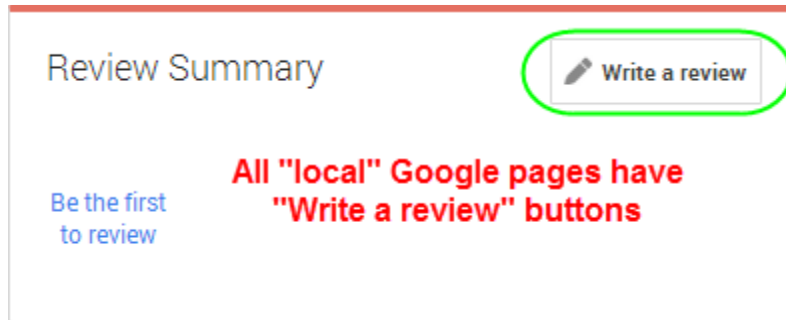
4.6 ★★★★★ 16 Google reviews · Google+ page

G 5601 N Oracle Rd
Tucson
(520) 887-8771

[See results for tucson dentist on a map »](#)

Simply having a Google listing doesn't necessarily mean you'll rank well. But if you *don't* have one or if it's set up incorrectly, most potential customers won't see your business "on the map" (even though it may be visible in the organic search results).

As you may know, there are several types of Google+ pages. The one I'm talking about has a few "Write a review" buttons on it. If you don't see those buttons you're not looking your *local* Google+ page.



What's *the* very next step? Depends on which of these three situations you're in:

1. Creating your Google listing for the first time? Go to google.com/business/placesforbusiness and create a listing using a Google account you will always have access to. (Just start to build the listing; don't finish it until you've read the rest of this page.)
2. Already have a Google listing? You'll need to log into one of two places to make changes to your listing: [Google Places](#) or [Google Plus](#). Long story. If you remember at any time creating two pages and "[combining](#)" them, log into [Plus](#). Otherwise, log into [Places](#).
3. Not sure if you have a listing? You may have one floating around that you didn't even create. You'll want to find it and claim it. Go to google.com/local/business/add and search for your business by name. If you find it, choose to verify it either by phone or by postcard (by phone is faster; the postcard method takes a couple of weeks).

By now you should have access to your listing - as in Google recognizes you as the business owner, and you're able to edit it. Believe it or not, the hard part is over.

Now you have only **two main tasks to do with your Google listing:**

- (1) Make sure it's 100%-compliant with Google's rules, and
- (2) Pick out the right "business categories."

How to be Google-compliant? In a nutshell, **use only your real business info.**

Use your real business name (not a DBA with a bunch of keywords) and use your real street address. If that address is a PO Box or UPS store, get a real address. Oh, and don't create multiple Google listings for the same business - like if you want one for each service you offer.

There are a few other nitpicky rules, but what I mentioned is the stuff you can't botch.

You'll need to read, understand, and follow Google's rules:

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

Google could do a better job of making the rules easy to digest and to skim. You may get some use out of this quick rundown I did:

[The Full List of Google Local Business Listing Crimes](#)

Enough about being Google-compliant. What about picking out the right categories (your other main task for your Google listing)?

This step is pretty straightforward: you just need to pick from Google's list as many *relevant* categories as you can - categories that describe your business.



You may also need to get rid of some non-compliant categories, if your listing has any (I say "may" because it depends on whether you have the old or new type of Google listing...more on that in a second).

Before you do anything else, I suggest you look through the giant list of categories in [Mike Blumenthal's Google Places Category Tool](#). Go through it and find and write down all the categories that best describe your business (the categories are on the left the list, by the way).

Now it's time to go to your listing and actually select the categories.

If you only recently created your listing *or if* you've been signing into plus.google.com to make changes to your listing - in other words, if you have the "new" type of Google listing - your task is simple: choose 1-10 categories that describe your business. Chances are there won't be more than about 5 that fit the bill. That's OK. Pick those categories and you're done here.

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	

<input type="text" value="Heating Contractor"/>	<input type="button" value="Q"/>	Primary
<input type="text" value="Air Conditioning Repair Service"/>	<input type="button" value="Q"/>	X
<input type="text" value="Find a category..."/>	<input type="button" value="Q"/>	X

[+ Add another category](#)

How categories appear in the "new" dashboard

<input type="button" value="Save"/>	<input type="button" value="Cancel"/>
-------------------------------------	---------------------------------------

What if you created your listing before about April of 2013, and you think you have the clunky "old" version of Google Places? First, do the last couple of steps I just described - but realize that you can only pick up to 5 categories. (Eventually Google will automatically "upgrade" your listing to the new type, at which time you'll be able to pick up to 10 if necessary.)

Category: * (The "old" Places dashboard)	<input type="text" value="Loan Agency"/>
Category: *	<input type="text" value="Title Loan Agency"/>
Category: "Custom" categories	<input type="text" value="Car Title Loans"/>

Which categories (up to 5) best describe your business?
Ex: Dentist, Wedding Photographer, Thai Restaurant

Note: You have chosen a custom category

Note: You have chosen a custom category

[Add another category](#)

Now, delete any "custom" categories. Google is in the process of retiring them anyway. *Only* keep a custom category if you already rank well for that service - like if you chose "Mold Remediation Service" as a custom category and you rank on page one of the local results for "mold remediation" or "mold removal." Otherwise, get rid of them.

What if Google doesn't have a category that describes your business? Don't worry about it. There's nothing you can do about it on your Google listing. (The main


thing you'll need to do is beef up your listings on other sites with lots of info on your services; I'll talk about this later in Section 4.)


Two more things:


One: I suggest you fill out your listing with as much info as possible: namely, a nice description of your business, and some photos.

But realize that that stuff will not affect your rankings. It's for potential customers.

Contact Information


 **Minneapolis, MN**
(651) 964-8557 · icedamremovalguys.com

 **Snow Removal Service** · Today 8:00 am – 11:00 pm

 Need ice dams removed from your roof ASAP? We offer same-day ice dam removal to the entire Minneapolis/St. Paul area. Our steam-only technique removes ice & snow safely and effectively. Since 1996.

Description and photos = good

Photos



Two: There's no inherent benefit in having the fancier type of Google listing - the one that lets you write "[posts](#)" and upload videos.

Even if you add a lot of good posts and videos to your page, you probably won't have better rankings as a result. It may help your rankings indirectly if you use the "social" features of your page - like "[circles](#)" and "posts" - to interact with your customers.

So by all means, go ahead and beef up your listing with as much relevant info as you can add to it. But don't do it for rankings, because it won't help with those.

You're doing it because potential customers would like as much info as possible before possibly clicking through to your site or picking up the phone.

Step 3: Sharpen your website

This one's tricky to describe, because websites come in so many shapes and sizes. Your website is the mushiest, most complex part of all of this.

Your site is also (arguably) the most important part. Although you can't be visible on Google's "local map" without a Google+ Local listing, you can still be visible in the *organic* local results if one day your Google listing inexplicably goes "poof." It's the one piece of your online presence that you truly own.

It doesn't need to be pretty. It doesn't need to be expensive. It doesn't even need to be built on Wordpress or on any other platform that's considered "search-engine-friendly."

But it does need to adhere to a few principles, which I'll explain in a minute:

- 1. Focus on as few sites as possible.**
- 2. More information, rather than less.**
- 3. NAP on every page.**
- 4. Optimize for humans, not just for search engines.**
- 5. Avoid having a "static" site.**

If you're confident you know what I mean by each of those points, feel free to skip ahead.

Principle 1: Focus on as few sites as possible

You're more likely to rank well locally - and get phone calls from those rankings - if you've got a beefy, informative site that showcases your business, services, and people. But that's hard to do if instead you've got a bunch of runty, anemic sites - each one created to "target" a different city or service.

Many business owners spread themselves and their resources thin. Their SEOs or marketing "experts" convince them they can get visible for lots of search terms if they have lots of sites. Sometimes this works. Usually it doesn't.

As long as you're not creating a "link network" by linking all your microsites to each other, there's no inherent harm in having a bunch of sites. But the upshot is that almost none of the sites gets much attention from the owner - and never gets much attention from Google or customers. Why should it? There's nothing special about the site, other than maybe a domain name that has a keyword or two and a city name shoehorned into it.

You'll want to marshal your content and any links you might get over time behind one site. Have them benefit one site a lot, rather than kinda-sorta help several sites.

Not to mention your time. It requires a little of your involvement to build a site that (1) helps you rank better locally and (2) compels customers to pick up the phone. You can't just delegate all of it.

Can you take better care of one or two dogs, or 14 dogs? Sure, it's possible to take good care of 14 dogs - but it's a heck of a lot harder, more time-consuming, and more expensive.

You may have good reason to have a couple of different sites - even for the same business. But the more you've got, the less likely you are to have one site that really pulls for you in the local rankings. So the first thing you've got to do is focus.

Principle 2: More information, rather than less

We're trying to give Google as many reasons as possible to rank your business higher than your competitors'. If your site is just like everyone else's, don't expect better results than what they get.

Your site needs meat on its bones. Here are the best ways to do that:

- Create a page for each specific service you offer. You can still have more-general pages: For example, it's fine if you want a page on "Plumbing Services," but you should also have a separate page on water heater installation, another on slab leak detection, maybe one on "emergency service," and so forth. If you're a doctor you might have a page on each of your specialties, or on all the conditions you treat. If you're a CPA you might want a page on small-business bookkeeping, one on corporate bookkeeping, one on tax preparation, and so on. Be granular.

SERVICES

When it comes to customer service and reliability, RJT Painting is dedicated to providing our clients with the highest standard of quality in workmanship and service. Our commitment is to complete every project on time, within budget, and to your complete satisfaction, and we take that pledge very seriously. We offer a full range of services including:

<u>Residential Painting</u>	<u>Commercial Painting</u>	<u>Interior Painting</u>
<u>Exterior Painting</u>	<u>Green Painting</u>	<u>Power Washing</u>
<u>Staining</u>	<u>Gutter Installation</u>	<u>Gutter Cleaning</u>
<u>Carpentry Repairs</u>	<u>Drywall / Sheetrock</u>	<u>Garage Floor Epoxy Coatings</u>

- Avoid “thin” pages. Have at least a couple of small paragraphs on each page. Give Google and potential customers something to grab onto. This is especially important for the “service” pages I just described, because we want those at least to have a chance at ranking well in the organic results.
- If your business has multiple locations, have [a page for each location](#). Do this even if you’re using your homepage as the landing page for all your Google+ Local listings.
- Avoid near-duplicate, cookie-cutter content. Don’t have all your “services” or “locations” pages sound alike.

The community of **Wheaton** turns to All Temp for **Wheaton** heating and cooling, **Wheaton** heat and air conditioning. We’ll take care of your **Wheaton** furnace, **Wheaton** air conditioning, **Wheaton** air conditioner, **Wheaton** cooling, **Wheaton** heating, **Wheaton** furnace repair, **Wheaton** furnace services, and you’ll always get the best **Wheaton** furnace prices, and finest **Wheaton** HVAC services.

Evanston homeowners always turn to All Temp for **Evanston** heating and cooling, **Evanston** heat and air conditioning. We’ll take care of your **Evanston** furnace, **Evanston** air conditioning, **Evanston** air conditioner, **Evanston** cooling, **Evanston** heating, **Evanston** furnace repair, **Evanston** furnace services, and you’ll always get the best **Evanston** furnace prices, and finest **Evanston** HVAC services.

- Provide photos whenever you can. Not instead of written info, but in addition to it. Name the photos in a way that’s relevant to your services, your location(s), or both. Don’t overdo it, though.

Principle 3: NAP on every page

Google needs to be able to recognize that your website and your Google listing(s) and your other listings all belong to the same business. Also, if you want to snag some organic rankings - the ones where some local businesses appear - you’ll need to send a clear message to Google where your business is located.

Every page of your site needs to have the name, address, and phone number - known as the "NAP" of your business. The same ones you use on your Google+ Local and other listings.

Pilates Passion
16483 Bernardo Center Dr.
San Diego, CA 92128
(858) 676-0630

It should not be an image. It needs to be text - words that you can copy and paste - or else Google won't be able to "read" it. Bonus points: [use Schema markup](#) for this.

What if you have multiple locations?

If you have multiple locations and a landing page for each location, try to have only one NAP blob on a given location page. So, for example, the page for your Cleveland office would only have the NAP info for the Cleveland office on it, and the page for your Cincinnati office would only have the NAP info for Cincinnati for it.

If you don't have and don't want a landing page for each location, just have the NAP info for all your business locations on every page. Just throw 'em all together.

Boston	Brockton
One Washington Mall Boston, MA 02108	450 Pleasant Street - 2nd Floor Brockton, MA 02301
617-742-1170	508-588-9490

Principle 4: Optimize for humans, not just for search engines

Certain areas of a website tend to get stuffed with keywords - by business owners and SEOs desperate for rankings. These on-page factors do matter to your rankings, but the best way to get and keep them working in your favor is not to try too hard.

Here are my suggestions for the main on-page factors - the ones that people tend to mess up:

- Use straightforward page names. There's no point in repeating keywords or city names that might be in your website name or in parent pages. Nor

should you include the same keywords or city names in all or most of your page names. Ideally they're not more than 2-4 words long. ([More detail here.](#))

- Your title tags should not be just a parade of keywords. They should be straightforward - as in they shouldn't sound like gibberish if you were to read them out loud. Ideally they're under 70 characters. [Writing good title tags is more an art than a science.](#) They're extremely important to get right. Here's my favorite layout:

Main KW + city | 1-2 KW | business name + city (if not already mentioned)

By the way, a few good examples / variations of title tags are at:

IceDamRemovalGuys.com

FarzadLaw.com

Monterey-Chiropractic.com

- Have an H1 tag (that is, a certain type of page header) on every page, with a relevant keyword in it. I mean "relevant" broadly: if you're a dentist and you want to rank for "dentist," don't have "dentist" or "dentists" in every H1. Some might include "dentistry" or "dental care" or "teeth whitening." Make sure it reads naturally.



- Use a light touch on the keywords - everywhere. Everything on your pages should read naturally to a human. Don't obsess over the wording - like by constantly repeating the exact keyword(s) you want to rank for. Use an especially light touch on the anchor text of any links you have on your site: That should also read naturally. Don't stuff a bunch of keywords or anchor text in a giant footer at the bottom of every page
- Write your [description tags](#) only for human eyes. Realize that Google [doesn't](#) even take your description tags into consideration for rankings. Their only benefit to you is that people see them in the search results. If the description tag for a given page tells would-be visitors what to expect on that

page, and especially if it's a little bit catchy and benefit-oriented, you've done your job.

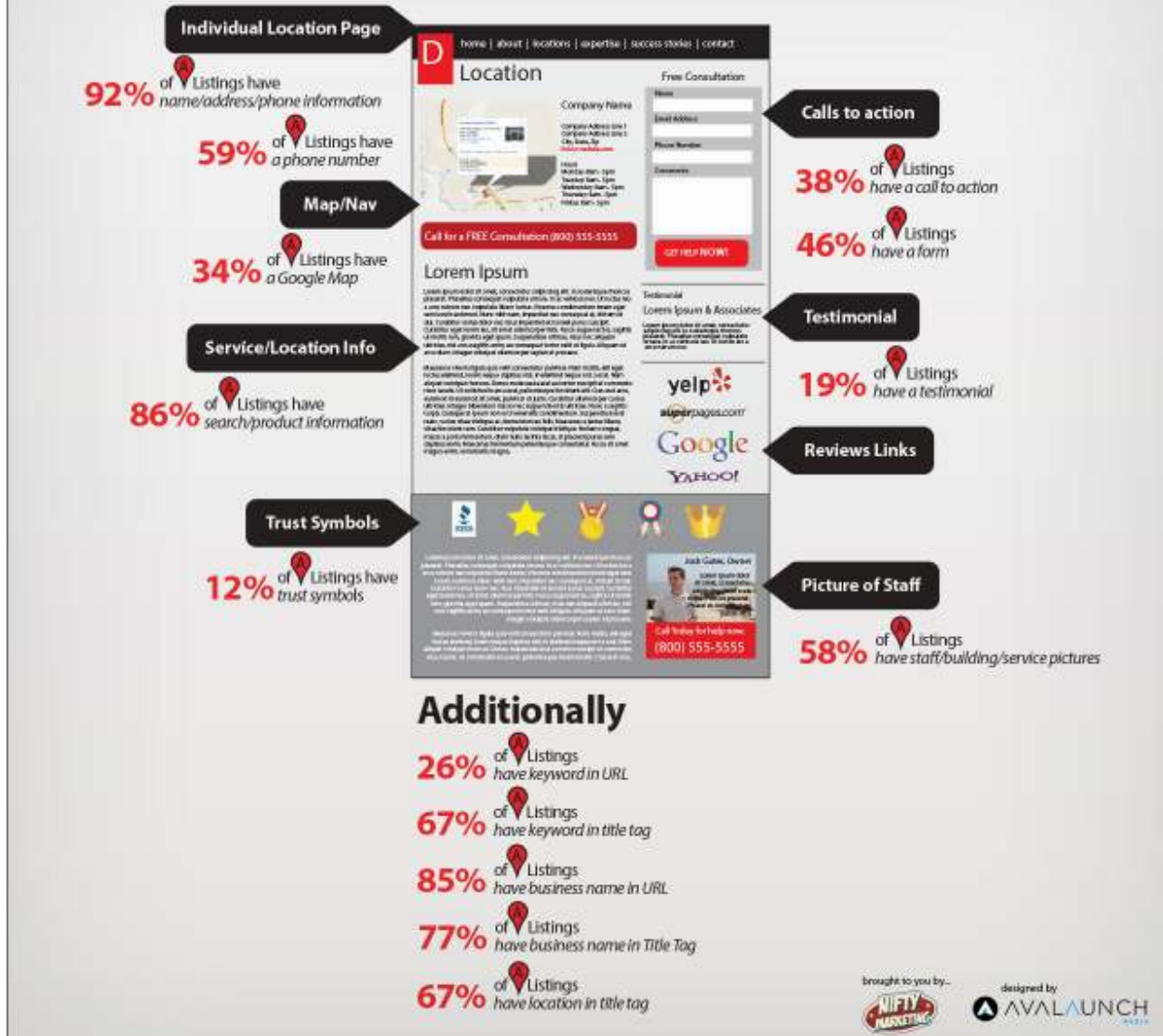
- Get rid of any garbage content. In other words, there shouldn't be any content on your site that's either "spun" or plagiarized. I know you know it when you see it, just as I do (on the off-chance any of that stuff is on your site, it was probably due to misinformation by a hack SEO or marketer). In general, nothing should be on your site that you'd feel ashamed to read out-loud to one of your customers or friends.
- Spend a little extra time to [create unique content for "city pages"](#) - that is, pages that target specific cities in your service area where you'd like organic rankings.

By the way, here's a great post with more detail on the how to make people-friendly pages:

[The Anatomy of an Optimal Local Landing Page](#) - Mike Ramsey

(Flip to the next page for the graphic.)

Anatomy of an Optimal Landing Page



(click to see graphic in original post)

Principle 5: Avoid having a “static” site

Will your site be bigger and better a year or two from now - or will it be [the same as it is today](#)? The most-successful “local” businesses I’ve seen have *grown* their sites over time, slowly but surely.

When I say you should “grow” your site, I mean you should create useful content that’s relevant to your services.

I know that must seem like a cliché you've heard again and again. Many people pay the idea lip service, but few actually execute. The reason is that to do it right you've got to be personally involved, at least a little. That's work.

There's no one type of "content" you need to create. The two main species are: (1) stuff people can read, and (2) stuff people can watch. (Audio-only content - like a podcast - is hard to do right.)

You should go with the medium that's easier for you - either the one you like more or hate less.

It should go without saying that your "content" needs to be purely informative, and useful. As in not self-promotional.

I could go on and on about exactly what I mean by "informative" and "useful," but I think you know what I'm talking about. You know it when you see it.

You also know what is helpful info in the context of your industry. It's what you tell customers who have questions. It's what you explain to employees when you're explaining the right way to do the work. It's what you talk about with friends who own businesses like yours, when you really get to talking shop.

I'll explain in a minute why a "growing" site is important, but there's a good chance you already know why it's important, and just want to know:

How to get started?

With blogging (my personal preference) the very first step is simply to *have* a blog on your site - the one you'd like to be visible in the local results.

It's OK if it's as bare as a frightened chinchilla - for now. At least *have* it - so that you can't get in your own way by saying, "Well, I don't have a blog on my site because I don't have any time now and I'm not sure what to write about." Baby steps.

By the way, I suggest using [Wordpress](#). If you've already got a Wordpress site for your business, setting up a blog on it is a breeze. If you don't have Wordpress, it's something you'll need to nag your webmaster to set up.

The next step after that? Read all the posts mentioned in this superb roundup:

[7 Building Blocks for Starting a Small Business Blog](#) - Matt McGee

If you don't want to do blogging, you could just go the old-fashioned route (well, "old" in internet years) of creating pages with stuff your customers might find useful.

As with blogging, you don't need to write a lot or take the time to get it perfect. Just offer a little free advice - and do so regularly. (Maybe a page every two weeks.)

If you prefer the video route, make the videos as pain-free as possible for you to create. Point your camera (AKA your phone) at yourself and start talking about your craft. Or have someone point it at you. Or download [Jing](#) and start talking into your computer, with maybe a few visuals on the screen. The point is you don't need to hire someone to produce glossy videos for you. If anything, that process will just get in your way.

Oh, and if you do videos, make sure to post them on YouTube and then to embed those YouTube videos on your site.

Now that we've gone over the "what" and the "how" a little bit, let's go over the "why." There are four main reasons to amass a pile of helpful "content" on your site - and to keep piling it on:

1. Potential customers find it helpful. They need a good reason to call *you* rather than your competitors.
2. You're creating lots of little sources of visibility - lots of little streams of traffic feeding into your site. Your posts, articles, or videos will get you rankings for terms that you don't even "target."
3. Google loves fresh content, in that it tends to float new (good) content up in the rankings for a little while. If that content gets popular (for instance, if it gets lot of clicks, links, and maybe social shares), Google might keep it up in the rankings. Good content tends to get an audition of sorts.
4. Links. Over time, some people may link to your helpful pieces. Getting links naturally takes patience, but it's the best.
5. Social shares. Especially if you have a couple of noticeable Facebook "Like," "Tweet this," and Google "+1" buttons on your site, some people may share your content. That probably won't help any of your rankings directly, but it can get your info in front of more people, which will help you with the first four points I mentioned.

The point is your site should get bigger and better over time.

You don't have to do all of it yourself. But you do need to be involved enough that your content looks as though it came from an expert (you) and not from someone who isn't familiar with the ins and outs of your craft.

That probably means *you* at least need to brainstorm ideas for blog posts or videos, sketch out the main "talking points," hand-pick someone to do the legwork, and

personally look at and maybe put the finishing touches on the content before publishing it. So ideally, you're involved in the beginning and end stages.

Last but not least, check out this post if you'd like to see some examples of local-business sites that do a good job of growing by offering helpful content:

[10 Solid Examples of Blogging for Local SEO](#)

Step 4: Work on your citations

It may seem odd, but one *huge* factor in your Google+ Local rankings has to do with your listings on other sites - particularly online business directories. Every time you're listed on one of those sites, you've got what's called a "citation."

Armeno Coffee Roasters Ltd
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ 17 reviews [Rating Details](#)
Category: Coffee & Tea [\[Edit\]](#)
75 Otis St
Northborough, MA 01532
(508) 393-2821
armeno.com/store

Name
+Address
+Phone #
= citation

Citations are [important](#) because, to Google, they are "mentions" of your business on sites that Google generally trusts to have accurate info on local business. Any time the name, address, and phone number of your business are published online together, that's a citation.

Your goal is to list your business on a bunch of these sites, and to make sure your basic business info (name, address, phone number, and website) is accurate and consistent on all of them. If you can do that, the chances are much better that you'll rank well locally.

Working on your citations is a lot of work, partly because you're not just "building" them: Usually you're also fixing listings your business already has, and trying to remove listings that are totally wrong or that are copies or near-copies of each other.

It also [takes time](#): at least a couple hours of work on your part, and *at least* a couple of months for Google to digest the work you've done on all those sites.

Here's what I suggest you do now:

Step 1: Download my citations worksheet: <http://bit.ly/HVFgnX>

If your business isn't in the US, you'll want to refer to these two lists to find the most-important sites in your country, and tweak the list accordingly:

[Local Citation Sources for Australia, Germany, and New Zealand](#)

- Nyagoslav Zhekov

[The Definitive List of Local Search Citations](#) - me

(If you can't access the worksheet, feel free to email me at phil@localvisibilitysystem.com with "Citations worksheet" in the subject line.)

Step 2: List your business on maybe 5 of the sites, just to get a feel for the process. Any 5 will do. The ones in **bold** lettering on the spreadsheet are the most-important sites.

Step 3: Read this: [Local Citation Building Best-Practices](#) - me

Now that you've done a few listings, you'll be better able to absorb and apply the suggestions I make in the above blog post. Or, if you prefer, read it right before you do step #2. In general, you'll want to refer to that post any time you have a question about citations.

Step 4: Submit your listings to or [claim](#) and fix your listings on the remaining sites on the spreadsheet. It's OK if it takes you a couple weeks to chip away at them.

Step 5: List your business on as many more sites as you can. If you're listed accurately on all 25 of the sites on the spreadsheet, you're in pretty good shape.

But there may be more sites where you should list your business, especially if you're in a competitive market. If/when you'd like to find and delve into those additional sites, check out the following resources:

[Citation Building Strategies – The Complete List For Local Businesses](#)
- Benjamin Beck

[The Best U.S. Citation Sources by Category](#) - David Mihm and Darren Shaw

[The Definitive List of Local Search Citations](#) - me

Step 6: Double-check your listings to make sure you've selected as many relevant categories as you can for each listing.

First you have to know what categories are available to you. Refer to this roundup of category lists to make sure you've picked all the relevant categories you can for each listing:

[Business Categories Lists for Major Local Search Sites](#) - me

Step 7: Check on all your listings after a couple of months. Fix any listings that need fixing.

A few notes:

(1) A tool called the [Local Citation Finder](#) can help you find citation sources that matter in your local market. You can find all the citations you need without it, but it can eliminate lots of legwork.

By the way, here's a great tutorial on how it works and how to use it:

[The Ultimate Guide to Whitespark's Local Citation Finder](#) - Michael Smith

(2) If you're using or considering using a tool called [Yext](#), you'll want to read these posts:

[Comparison Between Manual Citation Building and Yext](#) - Nyagoslav Zhekov

[Why Yext Might Not Be the Best Fit for Your Business](#) - Nyagoslav Zhekov

[My Thoughts on Where Yext Fits Into a Local Search Marketing Plan](#)
- David Mihm

[Yext & Local SEO](#) - Mike Blumenthal

Yext is a pretty good tool in some situations, but not in all situations. And it's not a substitute for manual work on your citations.

(3) If you want to avoid dealing with citations as much as you can and would prefer outside help, read this:

[8 Questions to Ask Local Citation Builders \(Before You Hire Them\)](#) - me

Step 5: Get reviews

You need reviews. But chances are that few customers will write them spontaneously for you. So it's likely you'll have to go slightly out of your way to ask them.

I'm talking about feedback that customers, clients, or patients write on sites like Google+, Yelp, Yahoo, CitySearch, InsiderPages, or industry-specific sites like TripAdvisor.

Reviews From Around The Web

[insiderpages.com](#) - [yahoo.com](#) - [kudzu.com](#)

I'm *not* talking about testimonials - like, for example, nice feedback that customers send you in an email or letter and let you post on your site.

Why are online reviews worth the effort?

There's one reason that towers above the others:

Reviews are the main way to build a solid reputation online.

You may know that already. But "reputation" is a vague term most people don't define. I'm referring to two main benefits: If you have a good reputation (1) someone other than you is explaining why you're good, and (2) potential customers can read the reviews and form an opinion as to whether you're a good fit for them.

Reviews don't "build" trust, but they can be the blueprint that the trust is based on. Reviews help form early impressions, which potential customers can try to confirm by going to your website or by calling you if they like what they see.


You should also get reviews for several other good reasons. To name a few:

- They [can help rankings](#) - both in terms of earning them and maintaining them.
- Google+ reviews distinguish your business from others, in that people are more likely to click on a business with reviews than one without reviews.
- Reviews in general help you cultivate sources of visibility on sites other than Google. They're often the main or the *only* [ranking factors on those sites](#).

- You can read your reviews and learn more tell about your business's strengths and weaknesses, and how to improve.
- You can produce a feeling of "Whoaaaa!" in any potential customers who search for your business by name in Google, if you have good reviews on a variety of sites.

[Maryland Mortgage | Maryland Loans | Home Loans in Maryland](#)
www.themandisteam.com/ ▼

Maryland mortgage consultant specializing in home mortgage loans, home ... Review
 'Alliance Mortgage Funding, Inc.' with ReviewBiz local SEO tools from ...
 4.9 ★★★★★ 64 Google reviews · Write a review · Google+ page

 111 Warren Rd, Cockeysville, MD 21030
 (410) 683-1500

**Reviews create a good impression
 for brand-name searches**

[Alliance Mortgage Funding, Incorporated in Cockeysville | Real ...](#)
local.yahoo.com > ... > Financing > Real Estate ▼

Find Alliance Mortgage Funding, Incorporated in Cockeysville with Address, Phone number from Yahoo US Local. Includes Alliance Mortgage Funding, ...

[Alliance Mortgage Funding, Inc. - Cockeysville, MD - Yelp](#)
www.yelp.com > Home Services > Real Estate > Mortgage Brokers ▼

★★★★★ Rating: 5 - 3 reviews

3 Reviews of Alliance Mortgage Funding, Inc. "Top of the Heap! Me= Cautious, You need to Earn my trust, I need to know whats going on. Alliance Mortgage ...

[Alliance Mortgage Funding, Inc. - Local Business Directory](#)
businessdirectory.bizjournals.com > ... > Residential Real Estate ▼

About Alliance Mortgage Funding, Inc. Alliance Mortgage Funding has been serving the mortgage needs of Maryland and Pennsylvania home buyers and ...

[Alliance Mortgage Funding, Inc. Cockeysville, MD, 21030 - YP.com](#)
www.yellowpages.com/...md/.../alliance-mortgage-funding-inc-1543169... ▼

★★★★★ Rating: 5 - 18 reviews

Get directions, reviews, payment information on Alliance Mortgage Funding, Inc. located at Cockeysville, MD. Search for other Financial Services in ...

The most successful businesses I've seen have *some* kind of system for getting reviews. It takes work and patience. But it sure is nice when things click and those first reviews come in.

If you have any reservations about asking for reviews, [read this](#).

You'll need to have your heart in the effort, because getting reviews takes patience. Not only because your customers themselves can present some challenges (more on those in a minute), but also because of Yelp's and Google's "[review filters](#)." In a nutshell, Yelp and Google won't post reviews that they suspect are spam, and Yelp usually won't even post reviews from customers who aren't active, frequent reviewers on Yelp.

Although Yelp's and Google's review filters will seldom or never be an issue for you if you follow the principles I'm going to explain in a minute, here are a few of resources with more detail on how to avoid trouble with the filters:

[Get More Reviews Without Becoming an Outlaw](#) - Joel Klettke

[Checklist for Keeping Google+ Reviews out of the Filter](#) - me

[The Definitive Guide to Avoid the Yelp Review Filter](#) - Trevor Sumner

Let's talk about what your strategy should be.

There are a few methods for asking customers for reviews - and to offer instructions they can use, so as not to waste their time. You'll probably need to try at least a couple before finding one that works well for you, and you'll want to *keep* experimenting.

Here are the methods (in no particular order) that you're most likely to have success with:

- **Asking verbally** - preferably in-person. This is the best time to try to get a little verbal commitment, and to get a sense of how review-savvy a given customer is, so that you know whether he/she might need some instructions on how to leave a review. By the way, a great strategy is to ask verbally *and* to ask customers using one of the other methods (below). A verbal request primes the pump.
- **Sending an email.** The more personal and personalized, the better. No "Dear Valued Customer" gibberish. You should thank your customer, and ask for a review *as a personal favor to you* (not an obligation). Include links to 3-5 sites for your customer to choose from.
- **Printed instructions** (like [the ones I offer](#)). Google+ in particular can be a confusing place to write a review. Even for straightforward sites like InsiderPages and Yahoo you might want to provide a simple walkthrough just in case, and to serve as a tangible reminder to your customer. Instructions also can show your customers that the whole process isn't too involved or time-consuming. You can print out instructions or attach them to an email (or both).

- **[GetFiveStars.com](#)**. It's a paid tool (with a nice free trial) that takes a lot of the legwork out of asking customers by email. It contacts your customers by email and asks them how satisfied they are with your service. If they're ticked-off, the tool encourages them to get in touch with you. If they're fairly happy, it will encourage them to write you a review on one of a variety of sites. ([More detail here](#), if you're interested.)
- **[Grade.us](#)**. Also a paid tool that lets you build a "reviews page": a place where you ask customers for reviews, provide links to your profiles on a handful of review sites, and offer simple instructions for each. ([Here's an example](#).)
- **Sending a letter**. Old-school, but very effective for some types of customers. You'll want to include printed instructions, of course.

Review "buttons" on your site. In other words, icons on your site that link to your profiles on various reviews sites. This isn't a way of *asking* for reviews; it's more passive. That's one reason why you probably won't get a ton of reviews with this method. But you're making it easier for customers to review you spontaneously. Use this in addition to other methods - not instead of them.

- **Asking on Facebook.** Maybe some of your customers follow you on Facebook. If so, there's an opportunity: [some sites](#) - like InsiderPages, Yahoo, and Angie's List - let customers use their Facebook usernames to post reviews. So they don't have to bother creating new a new username on a given site just to post a review.

You'll need to understand and apply a few principles to rack up the reviews:

1. It's a long-term effort. Your early requests for reviews may not be so fruitful. Don't quit (and if you do, realize that you and anyone working for you are the only ones losing out). You need to experiment a little and find what works for you. Rome wasn't built in a day.

2. It's a numbers game. Not all of your customers - probably not even *most* - will leave you a review. Even if you did a world-class job for them and asked as nicely as could be. Your task is to work on your batting average.

3. Diversify everything. Diversify your methods for asking customers, the sites you ask them to go to, when you ask, how many people you ask, etc. That means you need reviews not only on Google+, but also on other sites. It means you don't ask exactly 10 customers every Monday. It means you don't just send all your customers an email.

4. Spread out your requests. Ask customers habitually. It's less hassle and less intimidating than if you wait to ask 20 customers at once, and your reviews are much less likely to get spam-filtered.

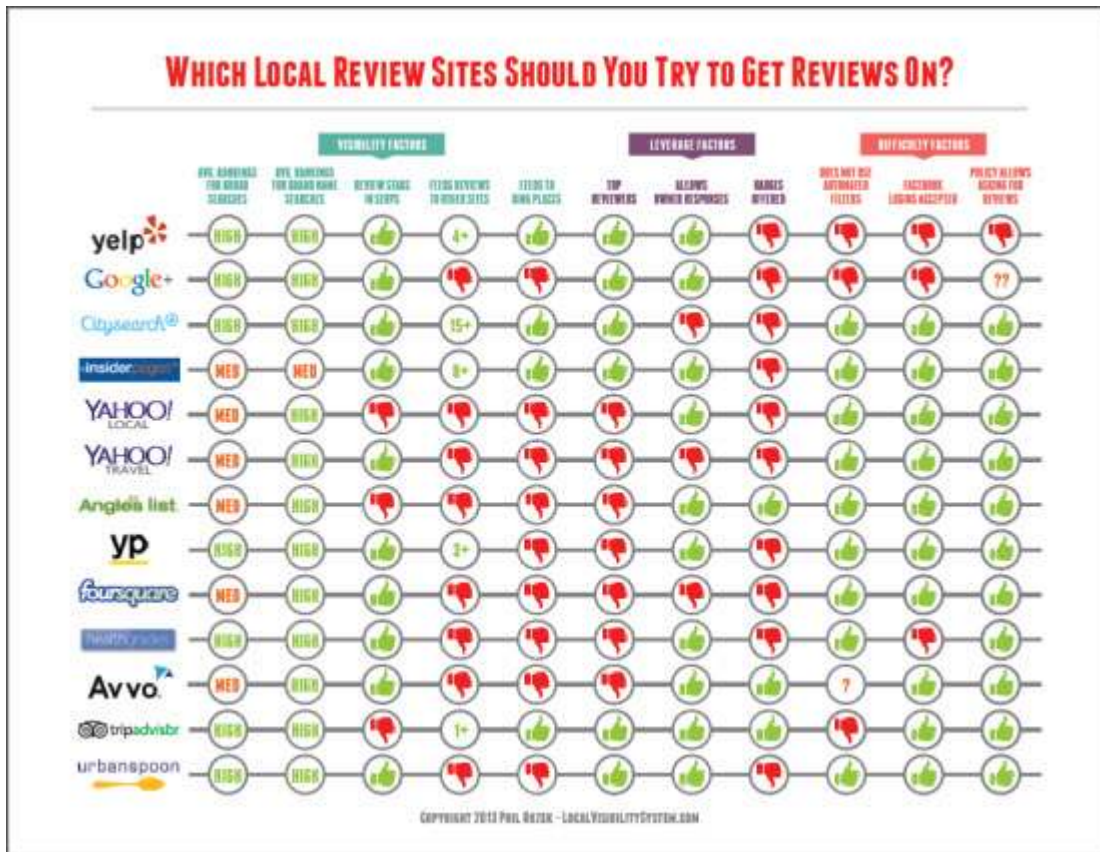
5. Offer instructions *and* choice. Even if you really want a review on Google+ and give your customer instructions for how to write a review there, emphasize that a review on another site would also be great, if your customer prefers somewhere else.

6. Ask questions. You should know more or less how happy your customers are before you even ask them for reviews, because you should be asking things like, "So, how do you like your new such-and-such" or "Anything else we can do for you?" If there's some unresolved issue, priority #1 is to work it out - not ask for a review. Especially when in doubt, just *ask* them what site they'd find easiest to review you on. Ask if they'd find it easier to review you on a site that accepts Facebook usernames (like Yahoo and InsiderPages). If someone absolutely doesn't want to review you on any site, politely and obliquely ask why.

7. Personalize. By that I mean two things: (1) No "Dear Valued Customer" rubbish, and (2) ask for a review as a *personal favor* to you - rather than as something you just expect your customers to do.

8. Thank your customers / clients / patients at every turn. Thank them for working with you. If they choose not to write you a review, thank them anyway for their time and consideration (your relationship with them is not over; just because they didn't review you doesn't mean they won't become repeat customers). And for Pete's sake, if they *do* review you, go out of your way to say thanks, and that you really appreciate it.

What's the next step? Pick 2-5 sites to try to get reviews on. I did a [post](#) - with a handy [comparison chart](#) - that can help you choose.



(click to open PDF in a new browser tab)

If you're in Canada or the UK, here's a post that can help you identify sites where you should try to get reviews:

[The Best Review Citation Sources in Canada and the UK](#) - Adam Steele

If you're *not* in the US, UK, or Canada, probably your best bet would be to focus on Google+ reviews, maybe Yelp and/or Qype, TripAdvisor if applicable, and on whatever site(s) your gut instinct tells you is fairly widely used in your country.

By the way, here are even more resources:

[The Complete Guide to Google+ Local Reviews – and Especially How to Get Them](#) - me

[Principles for a Review Plan: Considerations in Encouraging Customer Reviews](#) - Mike Blumenthal

[The Local Business Reviews Ecosystem](#) - me

[Asking for Reviews \(Post Google Apocalypse\)](#) - Mike Blumenthal

Step 6: Clean up

It's time to do some cleanup on the areas you dealt with in Step 1 (Google listing), Step 3 (website), and Step 4 (citations). If you've got little or no "mess," this should be quick and easy. Otherwise, this will take some elbow grease - but it will be worth it for your local rankings.

What do I mean by "cleanup"? You'll want to look for and probably remove four types of flotsam and jetsam:

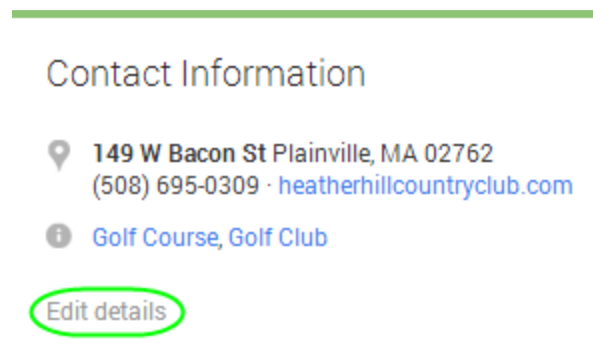
- 1) Incorrect or duplicate Google listings ([more info here](#));
- 2) Incorrect or duplicate citations ([more info here](#));
- 3) Bad inbound links to your site, and
- 4) Broken links (AKA dead links) on your site.

If that's all the direction you need, great. But if you'd like a little more detail on what to do, here goes:

Incorrect / duplicate Google listings. Again, you only want *one* Google listing per location of your business. ([Unless you're a doctor or lawyer](#), in which case it's OK to have a listing for the practice, plus a listing for each practitioner there.)

The easiest way to find unwanted Google listings is to search at maps.google.com for variations of your business name.

If you find a listing you don't need, do not claim it. Instead, visit the Google listing and click on the little "Edit details" on the page. The rest will be clear. It may take a few attempts to get the listing removed, so check on it every week or two.



Incorrect / duplicate citations. Just as you should only have one Google listing per location, any other site where you're listed should only have one listing per location - and that listing needs to be correct. Claim and [remove](#) any excess

listings you find. If they're incorrect and for whatever reason you can't get them removed, at least try to correct them.

Bad inbound links. I'm no expert on bad-link cleanup (although that's a dubious honor). But I can say this: if you ever paid someone to "build" links for you, and it didn't cost an arm and a leg and didn't require any of your time, there's a good chance you've got some garbage links that are causing Google to penalize your site. Easy come, easy go.

You've first got to identify those links. It's not rocket science: check up on your backlinks profile with [OpenSiteExplorer](#) or [MajesticSEO](#), and look for links from sites that are totally irrelevant to your industry, or that are link farms (pages with dozens or hundreds of links to unrelated sites). Contact the owners of those sites - either yourself or through your link-building "expert" - and ask for the links to be removed. See how far you get with that, and try to get any remaining links "[disavowed](#)" by Google

Broken links. I'm talking about links on your site that don't take you anywhere when you click on them. You can find them manually if you have a very small site with just a handful of pages. But it's a lot easier if you use a backlinks-checker, like [BrokenLinkCheck.com](#). Then simply fix the links, so that they point to live pages on your site (or on another site). Or you can just remove any links you don't want on your site anymore.

By the way, every few months you'll want to check again for the above-mentioned clutter (especially the citations). The best way to keep a clean online presence is to work on it in a few "waves" over time.

Step 7: Pull ahead and stay ahead

If you've done the first 6 steps, the chances are decent that you're already ranking well, that your rankings are improving, or that at least the seeds are sown and now it's a matter of time.

But even when you've done everything correctly, [it takes a while](#) to get visible. Doesn't matter if you're doing it yourself or have hired outside help. **I repeat: it takes time!**

The best thing you can do at this stage is [let Father Time work his magic](#). Do not go changing your [name](#), address, or phone number now.

If you absolutely must change your basic business info, at least be diligent about updating all your citations (see Step #4). Even then, expect *at least* 2-3 months to go by before any of your rankings start floating up.

Every month or two from now on, you'll want to do [basic maintenance](#) - including spot-checking your citations to make sure they're OK, and checking on your [ExpressUpdate](#) and [LocalEze](#) listings and re-verifying ownership of them (if necessary). A good starting point is to do a [GetListed.org](#) scan of your business and see what comes up.

Keep your antennae out for more citation opportunities. I recommend using Whitespark's [Local Citation Finder](#) for this.

You'll be amazed at the progress you make just by being solid on the fundamentals.

Also, while you're letting the work you did "sit," it's worth [making sure you're listed on Apple Maps](#) and seeing what you can do to [grow your Yelp rankings](#).

Beyond that, if you really want to get to the very top of Google's local totem pole and stay there, you should find [a way to stand out](#).

I use that term broadly on purpose. You can stand out in any number of ways. Here are but a few options:

- Get more and better [reviews](#) than any of your local competitors have, and from a wider variety of sites. **I can't overemphasize how important this is.** (I've already said that you need to get at least *some* reviews. But there's good and then there's outstanding.)
- Write [great blog posts](#) (or do great videos). (Not sure where to start? Read this post by Matt McGee: [7 Building Blocks for Starting a Small Business Blog](#).)
- [Earn](#) links.

- Take tons of helpful photos that are relevant to what you offer, and feature them on your site and on [Flickr](#). (You may like this post by Chris Silver Smith: [Using Images for Local SEO](#).)
- Hold a small public event at your business. It can be for charity, or some sort of educational open-house. Basically anything but a sales pitch or special offer. Publicize it on [events sites](#), and tell your local newspaper about it.

Those are just a few strategies. You get the idea. You need to give Google as many reasons as possible to rank your business above your competitors'.

When you do what your competitors won't do, you'll get what your competitors can't get.

Tools I recommend

You don't need any tools to do the steps I just recommended. But some are so good that the question is: why would you *want* to go without them?

Most of these tools I didn't mention in the "7 steps," but I highly recommend them:

[GetListed.org](#) (free; useful for Step 4) - Scans the most-important sites where your business should be listed and tells you which of your listings are OK, which need fixing, and which you don't have yet.

[Whitespark's Local Citation Finder](#) (paid; useful for Steps 4 and 7) - Helps you find citation opportunities that matter in *your* specific local market.

[Nyagoslav Zhekov's Citation Building Guide](#) (paid; useful for Step 4) - An ebook-type guide all about citations. Also contains some exceedingly useful bonus materials.

[GetFiveStars.com](#) (paid; useful for Step 5) - A great system for asking your customers for reviews by email.

[Grade.us](#) (paid; useful for Step 5) - Lets you customize a "reviews page" that you can point customers toward. It encourages them to review you on one of a variety of sites, and provides simple instructions for each.

[My one-page handouts for Google+ reviews](#) (paid; useful for Step 5) -

[Link Prospector](#) (paid; useful for Step #7) - In case you try to earn some links as a way of gaining an edge in a really competitive market, this tool can help you with the research phase.

[Whitespark's Local Rank Tracker](#) - A great way to track your rankings, if that's important to you. Unlike most trackers, this one doesn't make you include a city name as part of the search terms you want to track (so, for example, it would let you track your local rankings for "dentist" in addition to "dentist Dallas").

[CrazyEgg](#) - Shows you a heatmap of where visitors to your website click and don't click, and scroll and don't scroll. It can give you crucial insights into what parts of your website people are interested in, aren't interested in, or don't even see.

Blogs / experts I recommend

I've learned a *ton* from my fellow local-search geeks, and you can, too. If you want to stay visible long-term, you'll want to follow them and read what they write (and maybe get to know them).

There are a few other people who write great stuff on local search, so this isn't meant to be an exhaustive list. But it is my best shortlist of the people who frequently and consistently put out great info that you can use to get visible to local customers and to grow your business:

Nyagoslav Zhekov - NGSMarketing.com

Andrew Shotland - LocalSEOGuide.com and AppleMapsMarketing.com

Darren Shaw - Whitespark.ca

David Mihm - Moz.com and DavidMihm.com

Matt McGee - SmallBusinessSEM.com

Greg Gifford - Blog.AutoRevo.com

Don Campbell - Expand2Web.com

Linda Buquet - LocalSearchForum.CatalystEMarketing.com

Mike Blumenthal - Blumenthals.com/blog

I also recommend reading SearchEngineLand.com religiously, particularly the "[Local](#)" section, and subscribing to their daily emails.

What's next?

Start applying the steps! If you're not sure where to start, see how far you can get today on Steps 2, 3, or 4.

Or I might be able to help. You can see what I offer at <http://www.localvisibilitysystem.com/services/>

Either way, I do hope you keep up on my [blog](#), continue to enjoy the free info I'll send you in my emails, follow the smart people I mentioned a minute ago, and continue to absorb all you can about local search.

Feel free to get in touch at any time - with a question or two, or just to say howdy.

Thanks for reading!

To Your Success, Locally and Everywhere,

Phil Rozek
localvisibilitysystem.com