

Local SEO Checklist



Glossary

Local SEO Terminology

NAP(OLP) = Name. Address. Phone Number. Opening Hours. Logo. Profiles (Social)

It's important to keep your NAP consistent, correct and up to date wherever it is on the web. Not just on your website, but also on your social profiles, business directories, GMB listings or any citation you build on the web.

Citation = any mention of your businesses NAP on the web.

These need to be kept as consistent as possible to the point of pedantry. 'BS1 6UN' not 'bs16un', 'Road' not 'rd' or '0117' instead of '+44117'.

GMB = Google My Business (google.com/business/)

Not to be confused with the now defunct Google+ Local. GMB is the platform on which you'll upload and verify your office/branch location to help improve your presence in local searches. Typically GMB results appear in maps or the 'local 3 pack' at the top of Google SERPs.

SERPs = Search Engine Results Pages

IYP = Internet Yellow Pages

Review sites or directories where you can build/update your citations. E.g. Thomson Local, Yelp!, Urban Spoon etc.

POTS = Plain-Old Telephone Service

A standard local phone number (0117 or 01225) as opposed to a 0800 or unique call tracking number.

3 Pack

3 pack (also called the snack pack) refers to the 3 local results that appear in local search results along with a maps box, address info, opening hours & directions.

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Schema (<http://schema.org/LocalBusiness>)

Schema comes in many forms (microdata, RDFa, JSON+LD) but in any form it's a semantic markup language (code) that you use to attribute and call out certain bits of info on your website. Search engines are able to crawl text very efficiently but by wrapping text like so `0117 327 0171` It becomes very clear that that particular bit of text is your business phone number or your postcode, opening hours etc.

Check for Schema as well as its validity using developers.google.com/structured-data/testing-tool/

SA / SAB = Service Area / Service Area Business

Backlinks

A backlink is an incoming hyperlink from one website directing/linking to another site.

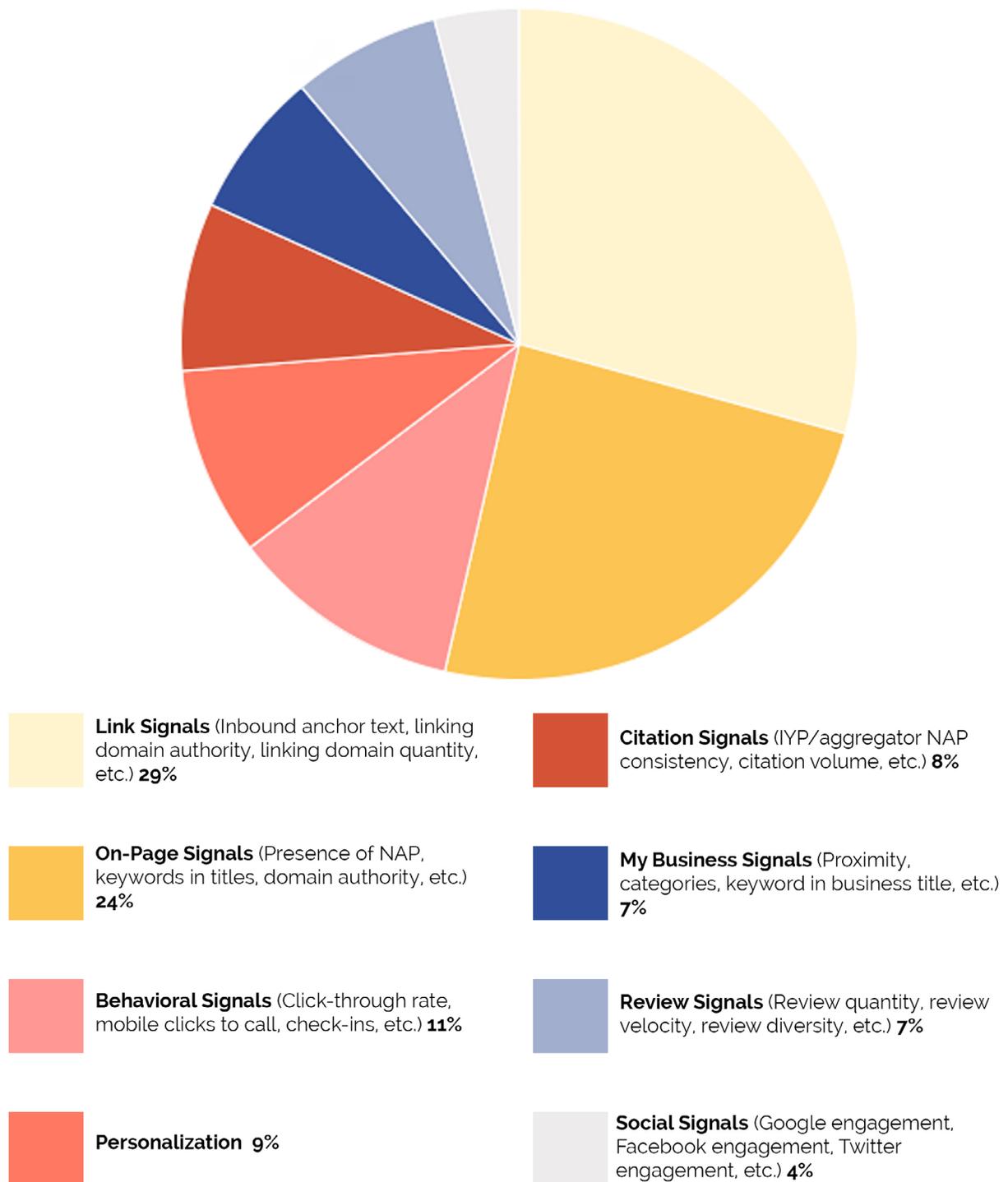
Page Title

Page title or title tags are the elements of a page which provide a concise and accurate description of that page's content. Typically these are the big blue bold links you see in search results.

2017 Local Ranking Factors

MOZ contact 30 top Local SEOs each year (they rang [@MrJonPayne](#) 5 years ago, haven't called him since...) surveying them on which local signals have had the biggest impact on their local rankings that year. The new list is usually published in October, so make sure you search for the 2018 list come autumn.

moz.com/local-search-ranking-factors



Get Your NAP Together

NAP(OLP) can be a pain to iron out and pin down, especially considering that citation consistency and frequency is such an important external location signal. It also just looks more professional if your citations are consistent. Use this space to write down your default/de facto NAP(OLP) to cross reference and update any out of date or inconsistent citations. As a bonus you've got an ironclad copy of your NAP that you can copy and paste when building new citations, or if you need to pass this work to a new member of staff.

Business Name:

Street Number:

Street Name:

City:

Region/County:

Post Code:

Phone Number:

Opening Hours

Mon-Fri:

Sat:

Sun:

*Obviously if you have more than one branch or office, you'll need to make another copy of this page then rinse and repeat.

Qs To Ask Your Boss/Yourself

Before you start going through the local checklist, it's important to get some contextual info and find the root cause of some of the problems before you start. If you're the business owner you should know the answer to most of these questions. Otherwise, if you're new to the business, ask your boss or someone who's been with the business for a while.

- 1. Has your website ever been penalized, or do you think it could have been?**
If a penalty exists you will need to get this cleaned up!
 - 2. Have you ever hired an agency or anyone to build citations for you?**
If they have a list of these citations that can make your audit efforts even easier.
 - 3. Have you ever hired an SEO company to work with you?**
If yes, make sure you dig out any and all reporting or documentation of work done. It's helpful to review this before beginning your audit.
 - 4. Have you ever hired anyone to build links for you?**
Try and dig out the link reports to see if any links were built unnaturally.
 - 5. Have you ever used another business name in the past?**
This makes it easier to search for duplicate location listings if the answer is yes.
 - 6. Is your business address a PO Box?**
Businesses should NOT use PO Boxes, Virtual Offices etc.
 - 7. Is your phone number a landline?**
Best practice would be to have a POTS landline (VoIP setup with a local number works just as well).
 - 8. Do other websites 301 redirect to your website?**
Do you own another domain name that redirects your main domain?
This needs to be evaluated separately in the link audit.
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Qs To Ask Your Boss/Yourself

9. Did you ever previously use call tracking numbers?

Unique call tracking numbers can create a NAP mess. You must re move any in the citation ecosystem where possible.

10. How many branches/office locations do you own? Do you plan to open a lot more locations in the near future?

If you have 15+ business locations and you're going to continue expanding then you'll probably need to manage existing + future citations through a paid tool like brightlocal.com or moz.com/local.

Comments



Onsite or on-page signals are the most important local ranking factors by far. In essence, to excel here you need to make sure your website is not just sending the right local relevancy signals (natural mentions of your locale, location pages, schema etc), but is actually a healthy site. There's no point optimising for local if your site isn't optimised for the web.

ON SITE SIGNALS		(Y/N)
Local & useful content onsite	<p>Is the content on site sending the right local relevancy signals to Google?</p> <p>Is the information & content useful for users or has it been created for Search Engines?</p>	
Optimised page content?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City/SA + Service/keyword in Title tag • City/SA + Service/keyword in H1 (heading) • City/SA + Service/keyword in Content • City/SA + Service/keyword in Alt text • City/SA + Service/keyword in URL • City/SA + Service/keyword in Meta Description • GMB map (usually on contact/branch page) • NAP(OLP) on each page (default footer w. schema) • Local phone number (not call tracking) • Regularly updated blog/news section? (Locally relevant content?) • Local business Schema 	
Misc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong domain authority? (use goo.gl/OxsiSH) • Site design mobile friendly? (use goo.gl/dc8lvT) • Site content mobile friendly? (Videos, images etc.) • Load time of landing page poor? (use goo.gl/rMWRrR) • Page Authority of Landing Page strong? • Dedicated local landing/branch pages? 	

If you're unfamiliar with backlinks and want to learn about why they're important have a read of the Moz Guide.

moz.com/beginners-guide-to-seo/growing-popularity-and-links

Normally emphasis is placed on garnering links from big trusted domains. This is still the case with local search, but links from local bloggers, local press and local trade organisations can be just as valuable.

LINK SIGNALS		(Y/N)
Backlink Profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Does the site have a large number of backlinks & referring domains? Use Majestic or Open Site Explorer	
Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Are the backlinks of low quality?If yes, check that they're locally relevant e.g. bloggers, local publications, local biz directories, local chamber of commerce etc. <p>If yes again, then they're worth keeping/potentially cultivating further.</p>	
Acquisition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Does it look like you're actively acquiring new backlinks through PR e.g. Charity events, talks & conferences, competitions giveaways etc.Or are spammy backlinks being built without your consent?	
Emulate & Improve	<p>Analyse your competitors backlinks (take top results from SERPs or local '3 Pack')</p> <p>Are there any link opportunities you can capitalise on?</p>	

As mentioned previously, it's incredibly important that you have a good number of citations and that they are as consistent as possible. It can be hard to keep track of where these citations are or know where to begin looking, but Moz Local will help you find a large number of citations across the web moz.com/local. It's also free to use - just input your business name and post code.

CITATIONS		(Y/N)
Niche / Specific Directories	<p>Search for your businesses service & location</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E.g. Accountants Bristol <p>Check the dominant directories in SERPs for said service e.g. Thomson Local for accountants; Urban Spoon or Zomato for Restaurants.</p> <p>Is your company visible?</p> <p>If yes, are these listings optimised? Do they have photos, rich descriptions etc?</p>	
Completeness	<p>[MOZ Local] Check citation plenitude for all office/ branches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have citations in all the appropriate platforms & networks? <p>Are the listings verified?</p>	
Consistency	<p>[MOZ Local] Are the citations consistent?</p> <p>E.g. Gasferry rd VS. Gas Ferry Road</p>	
Duplicates	<p>[MOZ Local] Are there duplicate citations?</p> <p>If yes, update & consolidate where possible, otherwise you'll have to delete or close those duplicate listings.</p>	

An up to date and verified Google My Business profile is crucial in order to appear in local Google searches (3 pack) and populating results in Google Maps.
 PRO TIP - If you're ever moving office, don't just create a new GMB profile with a new address and delete your old one. Update your existing GMB profile and verify the new address via phone call or postcard. Otherwise a branded search for your business might return your old profile showing your business as PERMANENTLY CLOSED...

GOOGLE MY BUSINESS		(Y/N)
Ownership	<p>Do you own your own GMB page?</p> <p>Or has it been set up by a 'helpful' punter</p> <p>If the latter, claim it back > goo.gl/LbPGuo</p>	
Optimise	<p>GMB elements that need optimising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verified local business badge • Consistent / correct address • Attractive + formatted long description with useful links • Tagline or slogan in short desc? • Correct + consistent primary business category e.g. Family Law Solicitor as opposed to just Solicitor • Relevant secondary categories e.g. Wills & Probate, Divorce • Photos (Photos of the business, products, staff & day to day activities) populates map + SERPs with nice photos! • Local phone number • Up to date logo that's not too res • Google places photos? <p>Are there duplicate GMB pages?</p> <p>Is there a location or service in the GMB page title? E.g. 'Starbucks - Southville' or 'Starbucks - Coffee shop' (this is a bad thing unless it's legitimately part of your companies title)</p>	

While Review signals are only a small piece of the local search signals pie, they are tremendously important from a user perspective.

brightlocal.com/learn/local-consumer-review-survey

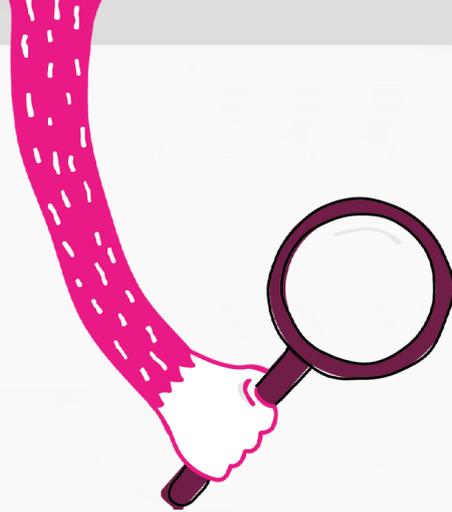
A recent consumer study from BrightLocal found out the following:

- 97% of consumers looked online for local businesses in 2017, with 12% looking for a local business online every day
- 85% of consumers trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations
- Positive reviews make 73% of consumers trust a local business more
- 49% of consumers need at least a four-star rating before they choose to use a business
- Responding to reviews is more important than ever, with 30% naming this as key when judging local businesses

In terms of reviews, GMB are the most valuable as they'll help you stand out from the competition in the 3 pack (it's also not against Google's T&Cs to actively ask reviews, as long as they're from genuine people/customers, not paid reviews). In order for a star rating to appear in GMB you'll need a minimum of 5 reviews. Make asking for reviews part of your after sales / project debrief strategy.

It's also worth noting that you can't fake good reviews. If you're consistently getting negative feedback then answer those reviews (don't ignore them) and work on your customer service.

REVIEWS		(Y/N)
Quantity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do you have any Google reviews?• Are there any negative reviews?• Have they been replied to / commented on by the brand? <p>Identify relevant top 3rd party review sites (Urban Spoon, Thomson Local, Yelp, Cia, TrustPilot ec.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are there reviews / profiles on any of these?• Can you embed these reviews on your website?• If yes, do so and wrap them in review schema schema.org/reviews	



Any questions? Let us know!



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