MOZ
LOCAL

Local is the New Front Door

How optimizing for local search will benefit your business — and why you can't afford to ignore it.

Great place!

Local search has exploded as a major force in commerce. Smartphones, PCs, and GPS-enabled and voice-assisted devices are driving the way consumers discover your business in their moment of decision. From searching for physical addresses, online reviews and business information, local searches can deter or guide prospects to your front door. Successful businesses know that they need to seize this moment or risk losing business.

⭐ *Consider these data insights:*

80%
of U.S. consumers have used a search engine in the past week to find local business info[1]

76%
of people who search on their smartphones for something local visit a nearby business within 1 day[2]

28%
of those searches for something nearby result in a purchase[2]

If location data isn't up-to-date, potential customers won't be able to find your business. And with local search always evolving, online location data management — of your locations, business reputation, and analytics — is a constant challenge. But with care and attention, this data can become one of your most valuable assets in capitalizing on attracting new customers and winning their business.

[1] Source: Local Search Association, *The Digital Consumer Study*
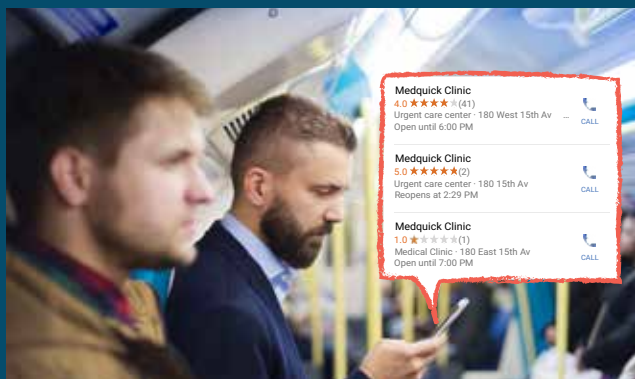[2] Source: *Think with Google*

Table of Contents

Why location data is important.

With a mobile device, potential customers can search for a business or a product from anywhere: the train, a car, the sidewalk.

Micro-moments

"My cough has grown worse and now I have a fever. I should probably go to a walk-in clinic and get checked out."

Accuracy is Critical

If location data isn't up-to-date, this patient will arrive to find an empty building.

It's at this exact moment in time that your location data must be accurate for achieving top ranking results that provide an online experience optimized to ensure your business can be discovered and chosen by your prospective customer.

More insights

Micro-moments: The Point of Decision

"Best electronics store in Boston"

"Where's a good hotel?"

"Health clinic nearby"

"Deep dish pizza near me"

These are the kinds of micro-moment questions consumers are typing, tapping, and speaking into their devices in search of things they want to know, do, or buy.

Whether they've been thinking about these topics for weeks or are acting on sudden impulse, consumers are at a point of decision when they turn to the Internet for immediate answers.

Experts agree!

"The reality of local marketing is that your accurate and prominent presence on search engines, particularly Google, will have more impact on delivering new customers than almost any other digital marketing activity. Not doing everything a local business can do to be highly visible there is to leave a great deal of opportunity on the table.

Local search marketing has become must-do activity for any business that has a local presence. Listing accuracy and listing distribution are the foundations of any local campaign that will help you do that."

Mike Blumenthal

Local marketing industry expert, Co-founder and Chief Review Officer at GetFiveStars

Managing the accuracy of your listings — it really matters.

Whether you're a national brand with hundreds or thousands of listings, or a local business with one to dozens of locations, investing in local search helps ensure the overall effectiveness of your marketing investment to acquire new customers and maximize your return.

National Brand Marketing Leader

Deploy local search as a strategic investment in your national marketing strategy's bottom funnel.

Protect your substantial investment in paid marketing by securing the last mile of the customer journey – driving consumers to your business locations.

Local Business Owner

Use local search alongside your paid marketing to ensure that it's not wasted.

Drive prospective customers to your business location(s) by making sure that they find your business at their moment of need.

Why You Can't Afford to Ignore Local Marketing

The rapid growth of local search has created a marketing channel that businesses can't afford to ignore. Ultimately, the impact of your marketing strategy will be judged on sales, and you need to provide prospective customers with information that successfully engages them and helps them find and choose your business.

Not doing local marketing is like forgetting to flip your "Open" sign around for half a business day.

Local searches affect every B2C marketer, according to Forrester Research.

"We know it's a digital world, but the physical world is still the one consumers live in. For the majority of businesses, most sales are still transacted in a physical location. Marketers should look to increase local visibility for:

Brick-and-mortar establishments. Whether you are a small, medium, or large business, if you have a physical location, making sure it can be found is paramount.

Individual agents. Financial services, insurance, and healthcare firms often have physical locations, but they also have employees, or agents, that are based in "the field." These agents have an opportunity to be found locally and showcase what makes them unique and different from competition.

Store-within-a-store. Restaurants within casinos, bank branches in your supermarket, and specialty departments within hospitals can also increase their visibility with local search."

Collin Colburn

Forrester Analyst serving B2C marketing professionals Brief: Attract Customers Through Local Search, Forrester Research, Inc., August 22, 2016

The Challenges of Local Search Marketing: Why It's Hard to Do on Your Own

Consumers expect to find you on their digital platform of choice when they're ready to buy. Effective consumer marketing has always been about finding and engaging prospective customers where they are when they're making a purchase decision. And today, they're on digital devices. Digital marketing is the practice of using technology to achieve your marketing objectives, and today's consumers expect your business to have an omni-channel presence — meaning,

they can find you across a range of digital device types and online services, from smartphones to tablets to desktops to laptops to smart home assistants to in-dashboard navigation systems.

They're doing these local searches across a growing spectrum of online discovery engines. There is also a growing number of ways this data is displayed (top search results, featured snippets, maps, reviews, local packs, images, carousels, etc.) that vies for consumer attention The search market is moving from being dominated by Google to being dominated by Google, Facebook, Apple Maps, and Bing.

The online experience you provide these consumers is your new front door. To successfully engage them across these services your business needs to deploy key data that includes:

- Complete, accurate, and up-to-date contact information (name, address, phone, website)
- Reputation information (consumer reviews, responses, data accuracy)
- Compelling supplemental media (images, social links, video) for each business location

73% of consumers say they lose trust in a brand if its local business listings contain inaccurate information. This includes:

- Inaccurate listings
- Incomplete listings
- Missing listings
- Duplicate listings
- Lack of reviews
- Lack of owner responses to reviews

All of these symptoms of data neglect impede the path of a prospective customer at the exact moment when they are searching for fulfillment of their needs. And if your business has invested in well-executed paid search marketing to capture this consumer's attention, that investment is compromised.

Online presence

You must maintain a presence on each of these properties:

☑ **Google**

☑ **Bing**

☑ **Apple Maps**

☑ **Facebook**

These are the most important!

Bad Information Gets In the Way

All efforts to achieve high local search engine rankings are undermined by mismatching data, which entities like Google don't feel they can trust. Inaccurate, incomplete, and duplicate local business listings can result from business moves, rebrands, mergers or acquisitions, and even automation as bad data on one platform populates across the web.

Missing listings result when a business is unaware of the most important platforms on which it should be represented. Negative reviews with no response from the business can pile up unnoticed by the company, seriously harming its reputation.

Inconsistent or duplicate information:

Medquick Clinic
4.0 ★★★★☆ (41)
Urgent care center · 180 West 15th Av ...
Open until 6:00 PM
CALL

Medquick Clinic
5.0 ★★★★★ (2)
Urgent care center · 180 15th Av
Reopens at 2:29 PM
CALL

Medquick Clinic
1.0 ★☆☆☆☆ (1)
Medical Clinic · 180 East 15th Av
Open until 7:00 PM
CALL

Negative, out-of-date reviews:

Tiffany J.   10/17/2011
★☆☆☆☆
This place sucks! Do not go here if you want actual care. Go to the hospital. It's worth the wait.

Kevin N.   8/16/2010
★★★☆☆
Very easy to get an appointment but the address was wrong on Google.

The longer your location data is left unmanaged, the more blocked the consumer path to your front door becomes.

Four Reasons Why Addressing These Challenges is Hard

1. **Time and consistency.** Effectively managing your location data requires the deployment of accurate data across online search (like Bing, Google, Facebook, Apple) and regular maintenance of it so that it is consistent. Attempting to do this manually is a labor- and time-intensive process.

2. **Instant access to search engines.** An individual marketer typically does not have instant access to the online search engine accounts to enable instant updates of location data.

3. **Access to data aggregators.** An individual marketer typically does not have access to data aggregator services that help distribute location data and increase its authority in the eyes of search engines.

4. **Fixing duplicate entries.** Attempting to manually identify and eliminate duplicate entries can be overwhelming. It is a burdensome task and a poor use of your business' resources: *Moz research shows that 44 person-weeks per year would be required to manually manage duplicates for a large brand.*

Creating Your Local Search Strategy: Getting It Right

No national brand or local business would willingly risk the loss of rankings, reputation, and revenue via neglect. With such fundamental assets at stake, the need for a thoughtful local search marketing strategy is clear.

What a Good Local Search Strategy Will Help You Avoid

The micro-moment when the person felt sick and searched for a walk-in clinic nearby
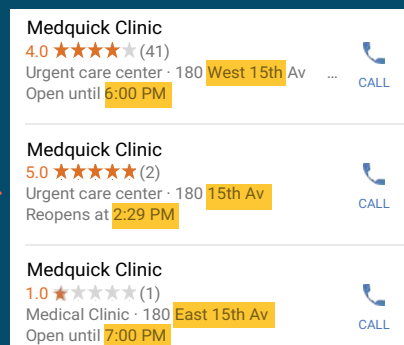
Search results provided incorrect or duplicate location information, hours, and reviews.

The person had the wrong information and found an empty building.

The Value of Automation

Some components of this strategy, like content development or seeking link opportunities, may require exceptional creativity. But others, like the management and monitoring of local business listings and their associated reviews, can be largely automated, freeing up your company's brightest people for more creative tasks.

Automating management and monitoring can free up your time

Local Search Marketing Goals

National Brand Marketing Leader

For a national brand managing hundreds or thousands of locations

Deliver a consistent local search business discovery experience for consumers — and consistent local search marketing performance by your business — across many locations and geographic regions.

For franchise businesses, successfully engage franchisees in best practices of local search marketing.

Local Business Owner

For a local business owner managing one to a dozen locations

Ensure that the amount of time required to maintain a successful local search strategy is realistic and sustainable amidst many competing priorities.

Ensure that your local search strategy is and remains affordable.

Why local matters

National Brand:

Millions of dollars in marketing budget goes towards moving prospects down funnel. Without a local marketing strategy those dollars are potentially wasted at the micro-moment.

Local Business:

Every marketing dollar counts. Local marketing can ensure they aren't wasted, and customers find you in the micro-moment so your business can thrive.

Location Data Management

The foundation of your local search strategy is Location Data Management (LDM), the practice of optimizing and managing your location data as a business asset to:

1. Provide the most current and accurate data to be displayed when your business is referenced.

2. Provide the signals to Google and the other online search engines as to why your business is the most relevant when consumers search for a given category of service or product.

Effective location data management means establishing a solid base and then maintaining it. The maintenance piece is just as important.

For example, have your business hours not changed over the past year, or did you just forget to update them? Actively managing your location data ensures that your business presence performs optimally on the digital platforms consumers have chosen.

Location Data Management Strategy Checklist

Here are the key steps to creating a successful location data management strategy for your business:

☐ **Ensure that you have a corporate SEO strategy and align your Local SEO strategy with it.**

There is an important relationship between these, as the domain authority that your corporate website achieves helps power the local search performance of your local business listings.

Your location data needs to be featured on your own website. Google, Bing, and data aggregators need this data to be there as part of their confirmation process. And it's where consumers will land when they choose to view the website for a given location during their local search experience.

☐ **Gather location data for all of your business locations, consolidating it into a single repository.**

This location data should include:
- Name of business
- Address
- Phone number
- Website
- Store hours
- Review ratings
- Links to your social profiles
- Fax number
- Alternate phone numbers
- Visual content (like photos) that engages consumers by showing them your location, its facilities, customer experiences, etc.
- Links to other media like videos and menus

☐ **Audit your location data to ensure it is accurate, up to date and free of duplicate entries.**

Use this data to update your Google My Business and other key listings. If you don't already have a GMB account, open one, then create and verify your listings. Update other listings you may already have on services such as Yelp.

☐ **Determine whether you will manage LDM in-house or hire a local search agency to do it for you.** If you opt to manage LDM in-house, select a Location Data Management platform that is focused on distributing your data to and managing it across the local business data platforms that most impact local search results — search engines, select directories, data aggregators, apps, and mapping services.

Avoid LDM platforms that require payment for distributing to low impact directories, which drive neither appreciable consumer traffic nor local SEO ranking.

A platform that verifies successful distribution of location data, tracks its accuracy and health, and detects and enables efficient elimination of duplicate data can increase your local ranking performance by maintaining Google's trust in your brand.

☐ **Protect your business' reputation by monitoring and managing consumer reviews.** Customer reviews have emerged as an increasingly important factor in determining whether potential consumers will visit your business as search result pages now list review data. Key factors to focus on include ensuring that your business has positive reviews, recent reviews, reviews on the most important review sites, and your responses to these reviews.

☐ **Measure, prove, and improve.** Track Key Performance Indicator (KPI) metrics to learn what's working and how you can improve the visibility and performance of your local listings. Customer-action metrics like clicks-to-call, clicks-for-driving directions, and clicks-to-website are especially important because they can help you measure the effectiveness of your local marketing efforts by telling you what action consumers have taken once they've found your listings.

National and regional brands should be able to segment reporting on KPI metrics by sales or geographical region, identify top performing locations to learn what's working, and identify bottom performing locations that require improvement. This will create a virtuous cycle of continuous learning and improvement that will help you bring your local search strategy to optimal performance.

☐ **In the event of a business merger, acquisition, or move**, use your Location Data Management Platform to update your listings so that consumers will continue to find and visit your locations.

This is the key takeaway

The online experience you provide to consumers conducting local searches for businesses is your new front door.

The key to opening that door lies in taking maximum control of your location data to ensure that consumers continually encounter the best possible digital experience, increasing the likelihood of conversions. Doing this effectively can strengthen your brand, build competitive advantage, and win more customers.

Make Local Your Advantage

Moz Local maximizes the marketing power of local search for your business, so you can bring more customers through your front door. Created by the leader in SEO, Moz Local was designed with enterprise brands, local businesses and digital marketing agencies in mind. From industry-leading active location data management and local SEO analytics to our enterprise Success Assurance Program, Moz Local is designed with one thing in mind: making local your advantage.

Win more customers, ensure overall marketing effectiveness, optimize your online presence and improve your local performance with Moz Local.

Get the Moz Local advantage: Impact.

19%
increase in
Listing Health

27%
increase in
Listing Accuracy

57%
increase in
Listing Reach

1100 2nd Avenue, Suite 500
Seattle, WA 98101
enterpriselocal@moz.com
moz.com/local

Learn more about Moz Local at **www.moz.com/local/enterprise**
Check your listing for free at **www.moz.com/local**