Google+ Local
Secrets To Ranking

Local Marketing
experts

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About The Author

Chris Ormiston is the founder and creator of Local Oxygen LLC, a worldwide and local SEO company. LocalOxygen.com focuses on local companies with both SEO and Local listings. He speaks all around the country on SEO and Social Media Marketing and is considered one of the leading experts in the world.

The SEO part of Chris's marketing agency has achieved top rankings for some of the world's most competitive keywords and has generated millions of dollars in revenue for clients based on expertise in SEO Optimization and Ranking techniques. Now in the offline marketing world, by using Local Oxygen they have never missed front page rankings for the keywords or phrases that drive their businesses.

This document is not intended to be a comprehensive source to rank your Google+ Local, but contains elements and processes that have proven to be quite effective in getting top positioning with local map listings on Google, Bing, and Yahoo.

Google+ Local

So you want to list your business when people type in keywords related to your products or services? This can be quite confusing, but with a little direction you can claim your listings on the major search engines. Realize, there is no easy way to do this work, it takes a sustained effort over a period of time and specific processes to realize top listings. However, if you have the dedication and the right process to make this work the payoff can be extraordinary.

Here are some interesting statistics to consider.

* Google Carries 65.4% of all Searches ([Source](#))
* The top position of Google Brings in 34.35% of all visitors ([Source](#))
* The average cost per click for PPC is $3.79 ([Source](#))
* Local Search Traffic comprises 27% of total search behavior ([Source](#))
* 97% of Consumers Use Online Media to Shop Locally ([Source](#))

So Let's run the numbers..

comScore reported that Google had 14 Billion Searches in March, 2012. 25% of ALL commercial Internet searches are conducted by users looking for local merchants (Kelsey-Bizrate 2004). So what does this mean?

March 2012

3.5 BILLION people performed an online or mobile search to find a local business last month.

Ranking on Google+ Local

The way Google+ Local (or Google Local) works is that it combines a local term such as a state, city, or town name, and a general term such as florist, or chiropractor and recognizes that this is a local search. Google then presents somewhere from 7-10 local listings depending how popular the terms are. These are sometimes referred to as "Google's 7-Pack". The following is an example of Google's 7-pack:

Notice this displays the top seven listings when I typed in "tempe dry cleaner". This is an important tool for people to quickly find businesses right in their area.

Ever since Google began placing their local places at the top of the search engine results, SEO experts have been scrambling to figure out how to get their customer's websites placed in this unique and specialized listing. This has proven to be a daunting task in many respects. With the new verification processes that Google has implemented, traditional SEO strategies are not able to be used, however there are some methods we have used and have gotten very good results. Many of these can be found in a great document by David Mihm where he covers local ranking factors. You will find this document Local Search Ranking Factors extremely detailed and quite confusing unless you are a professional marketer. I will try and simplify the process step by step here to make this a handy guide for doing your own local listings.

The Heat Map Test

The reason you want to be at the top of local listings can be demonstrated by this heat map below. The red areas are where most people looked on the page.
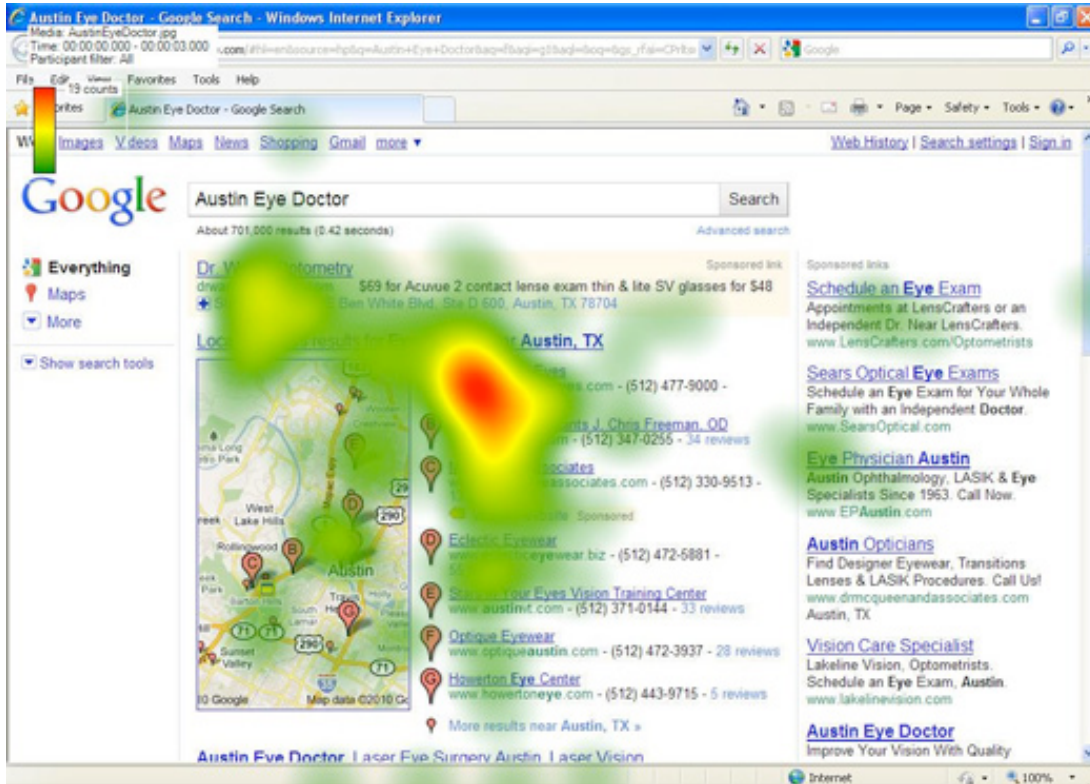
So you can see that when this type of listing is presented, the user's eyes naturally go to the top of the local listings with the top PPC listing being the second most popular visual spot. This particular PPC listing is currently going for about $3.50/click and costs this position approx $3,080/month. So you can see how valuable the top listing of Google+ Local is based on the second most popular position.

Google has gone to great lengths to protect this area to only allow local listings to show up. The problem is, there are often more businesses than the top 10 spots listed. This presents a dilemma for the local service companies such as Chiropractors, or Florists to be listed in their areas. Luckily we have figured out some strategies that may help you with getting to the top of the list.

Google, Yahoo, and Bing are all very smart. If you are applying tactics and strategies that you think are going to outsmart them, you are just fooling yourself. Even if it works now, eventually, it will catch up with you and you will be penalized later. The strategies we will be covering in this document follow all of the rules that have been prescribed by Goole. We recommend to simply follow the rules set forth by Google exactly as they were intended and you will be rewarded with top rankings. The biggest problem that most companies face is that they simply don't know the processes that Google follows to list and rank their local listings.

One thing to remember is that all of the major search engines rely on other sites that they trust to feed them information. Some information is trusted more than others, which helps the search engines make better decisions on what to place on their search pages. The following is an illustration that shows the interdependency of the top search engines and important "feeder" sites for obtaining local listings.

The following is an illustration on how reviews are shared between local maps and review sites.

The dashed lines indicate information sharing that does not happen consistently. Note that sites in blue do not share information.

Reviews Sharing Patterns

Google Maps
Google Places
maps.google.com
(380M)

Yahoo!Local
(65M)

Mapquest
(78M)

Local.com
(32M)

Bing Local
(48M)

YP.com
(26M)

CitySearch
(34M)

YELP
(18M)

SuperPages
(18M)

Insider Pages
(5M)

Merchant Circle
(9M)

Judy's Book
(273K)

DEX
(5M)

SearchPlacementPros.com
April 2011

7
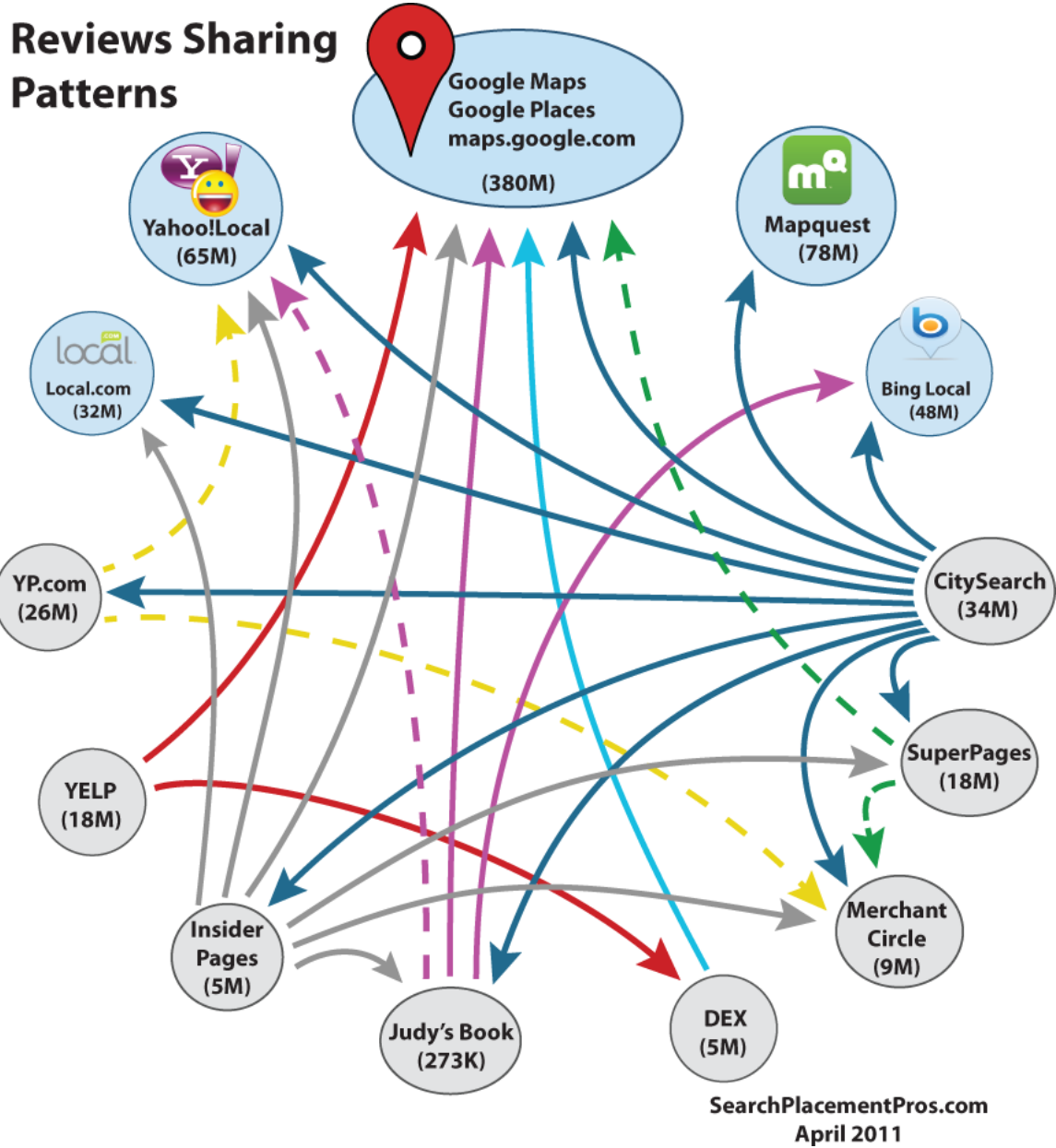
Strategy #1

Create a Company Profile Document

Consistency is key when creating your profiles on the different local listing sites. To be consistent, you need to have a central document that you copy and paste from.

Research your competition by typing into google.com the types of keywords and locations you are trying to rank under. Such as "Tempe dry cleaning", "Tempe, AZ dry cleaners" etc… and see how they structure their phone numbers. It is most always in the (123) 123-1233 format, however if it's different…match what they have exactly, then keep it consistent everywhere…even on your own website. It is critical that your company name and phone number match exactly (capitals, commas, dashes, ampersands, etc included)

You will need to include the following items in your document because each of the local listing sites will ask you the same general information. Use the following as a template for your document and store it in a safe place so you can retrieve it later:

- Company Name
- Phone *(Use a local phone number. Google doesn't like non-geographical numbers like 1-800 numbers)*

- Address
- Address2
- City
- State
- Zip
- Company Email   **Example**: support@yourcompany.com
- Owners Name
- Type of Business
- Major Products or Services
- Hours of Operation
       Example: Mon-Fri 9:00am - 5:00pm
                        Saturday & Sunday Closed
- Business Description (200 Characters or less)
- Specialties: (exclusive products, areas of expertise)
- Affiliations: (BBB Member, Sites License#, Contractor Lic#, etc...)
- Coupons & Specials
- Payment Options (visa, MasterCard, Personal Checks, Financing, etc..)
- Links to Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter
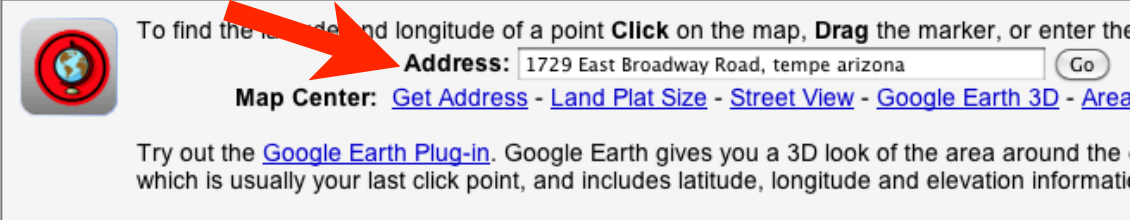
Strategy #2

Post 10-15 Geotagged images

Next thing we want to do is post 10-15 images online and geotag those images too.

Remember Geotagging is simply placing location information with the image you put on the Internet. This helps mapping programs such as Google+ Local, Yahoo!Map and Bing Maps know where the picture is placed in time and space.

Don't freak out about this fancy geotagging lingo. This is actually very easy to do. You simply indicate where the picture was taken when you upload it to Panoramio, flickr, or Photobucket. It's really no more complicated than that. Take a look at a demo of what this looks like.

First you figure out your latitude and longitude by clicking here. Then you just put in your business address and it will give you the numbers.
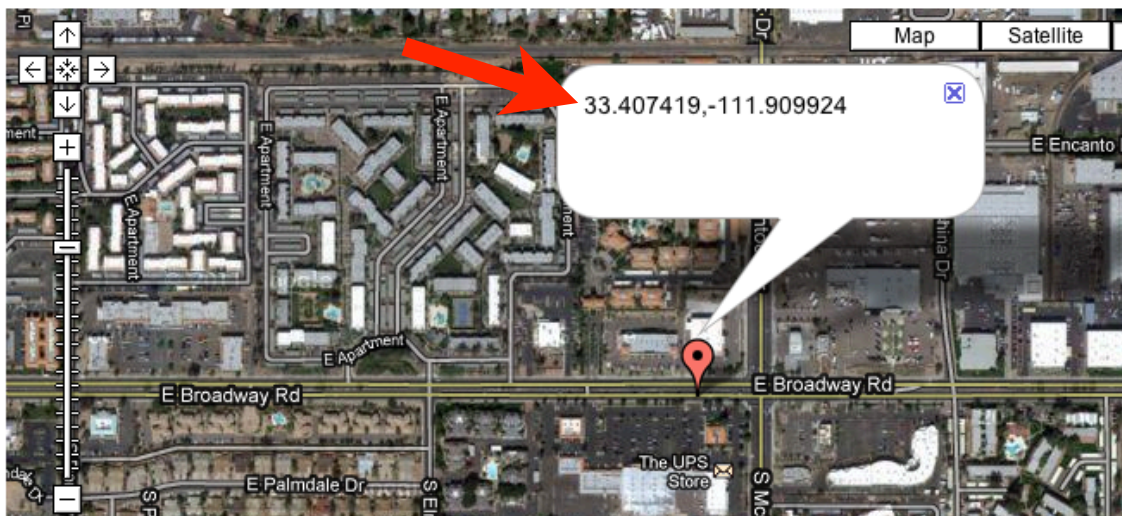
Then you just enter those two numbers into the photo sharing site and you are now geotagged.   Flickr also has an address placement built in. See this!
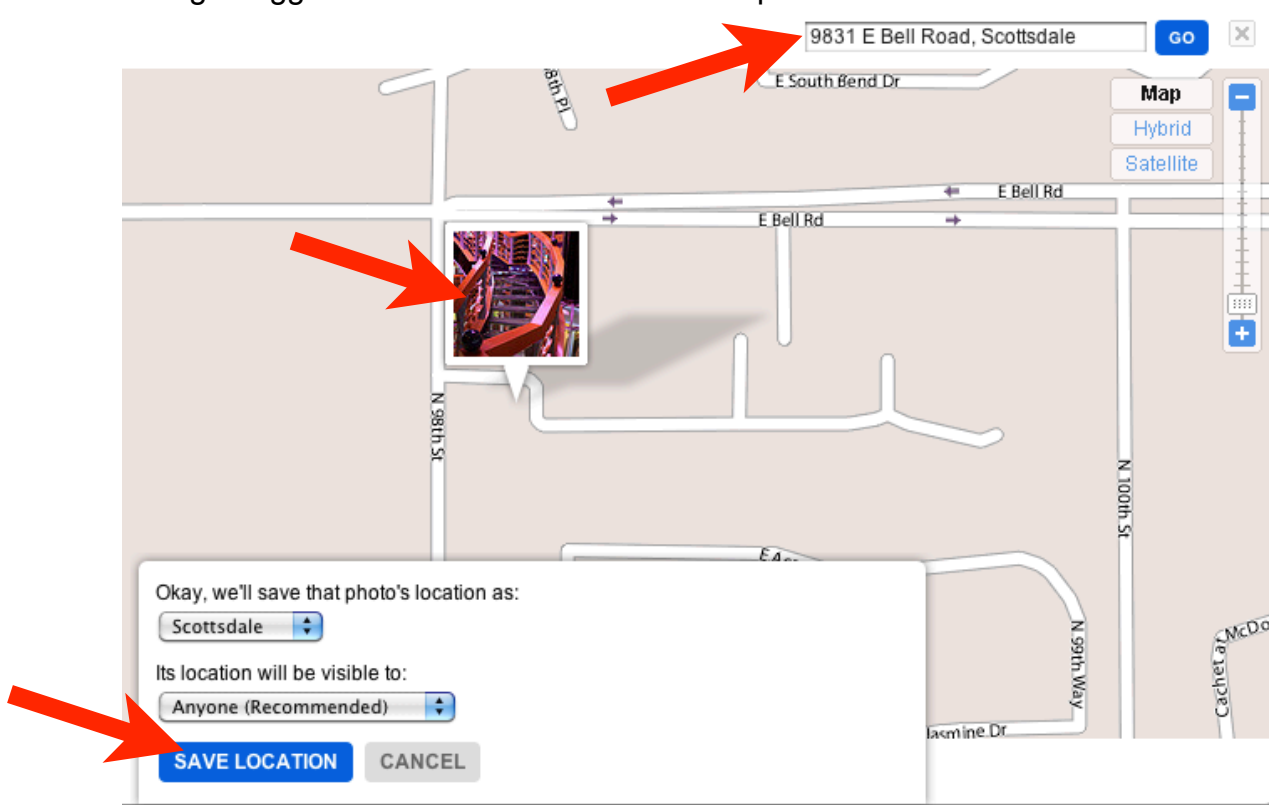
The three places you want to place your pictures online are Shutterfly, Flickr, and Photobucket. Other places you can post them are Snapfish, Picasa (owned by Google), and on your blogs.

All of these have the ability to post your images and apply a geotag to them. You will want to post around 5 images for each location. Follow these guidelines

1. Sign up for each account using the document you created in Strategy #1.
2. Make sure all 10-15 pictures are different; don't use the same 5 pictures for each location.
3. Name each picture using the keywords you are targeting. (example: dry-cleaner.jpg, tempe-dry-cleaner.jpg, dry-cleaner-tempe-az.jpg, etc…)
4. Name each picture on the website (picture title) using the same keyword as the picture name (without the dashes).
5. Geotag each picture with your address

Strategy #3

Post a Geotagged Video

Geotagging is the process of adding location information to things like videos or photos. Many cameras automatically do this and you may not even know this is happening. The geotag information is kept in the meta information associated with your photos.

First question is: How do I create a video for my company? I don't have a budget for this, and I'm not a professional videographer. No worries, there are several great resources for creating videos. We can create you a 30-second - 2-minute video describing your company, products, and services including the contact information such as phone, address, and website. We have a very low cost and we love to do these videos.

Other resources include Masher.com, OneTruemedia.com, and Animoto.com. Here is another great article on how to make a great online video that works.

The reason you need to geo-tag your video is because Google has begun to include video on their Google maps. This places your company in both time and location on Google Earth. That alone is pretty cool and literally puts your company on the map. So when you search Google+ Local, or http://maps.google.com, Google will display that video for your address. This essentially makes Google a better search engine by providing rich content based on your company location. Any time you help them to become better, you will be rewarded.

Most important, Google looks for this to include with your Google+ Local profile. Companies with video and pictures tend to rank higher than those without. So do this to make sure you have every competitive advantage.

Click here for a great How-To on how to Geo-Tag your company video.

In addition to geo-tagging, you want to optimize your video for your company name. For an illustration on how to do this click here. This can be a bit complicated, but follow the instructions here and you should get it done just fine.

I have included an example of what a geo-tagged video looks like on Google Earth. You can see there are other videos around it as well as many photos that are also geo-tagged. That will be our next strategy.
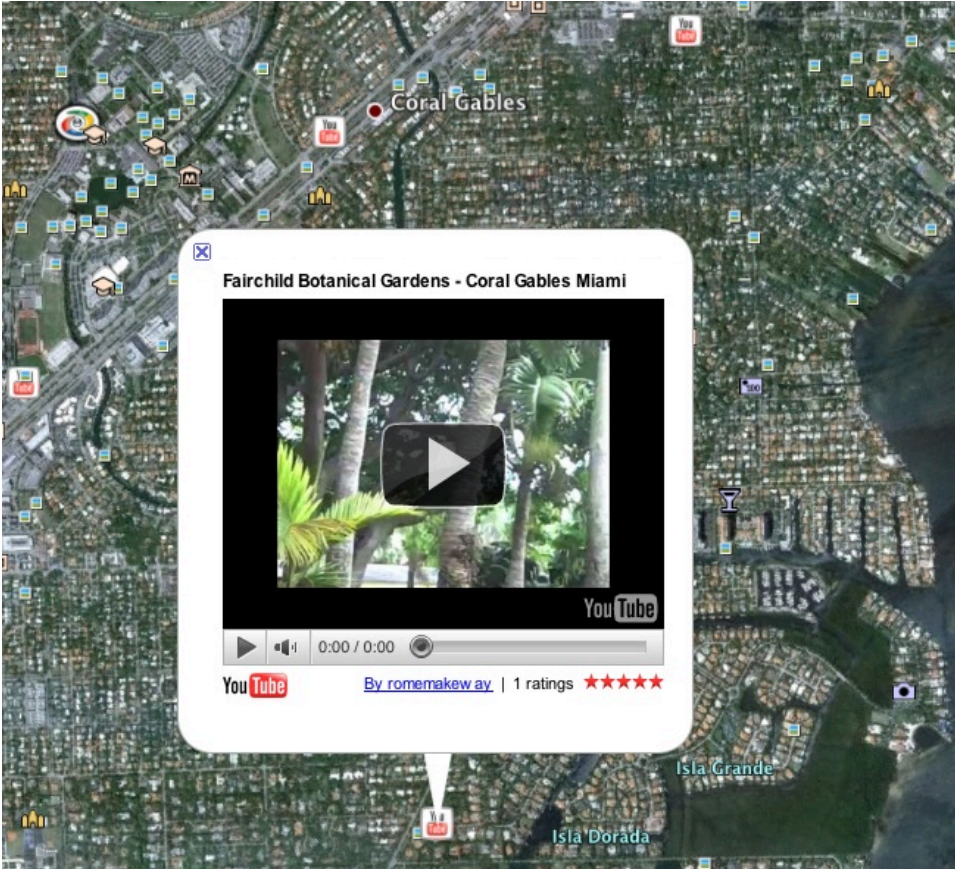
So get out there and create a company video right away.

Strategy #4

Sign Up For Other Local / Review Accounts

We have found that when you sign up for Google+ Local to claim your page Google immediately goes out to other locations to verify and validate your business listing. This makes it important that Google finds your listings out there when it looks for them. Items such as your address, phone number, and business name are all checked across multiple listings. This helps Google know if your company is legitimate and will get you listed sooner.   You will need to know that consistency across your listings is key.

Note the following when filling out your profile:

- You shouldn't use trackable phone numbers, because they are different from your registered business number.
- Your Business Name should be exactly the same in all of the listings. If you have a company name such as Barker & Sons, make sure it is listed exactly the same each time. If you list your company name as "Barker and Sons", Barker & Sons LLC" etc…these will show an inconsistency and hurt both your verification and your rankings.
- Your Address should be exactly the same in all of the listings.
- Your phone number should be represented exactly the same as well. Look at the competition in your area. If they list their phone numbers like this (602) 123-1234 vs. 602-123-1234, make sure you follow what they have done and list it using the same format.

Use the document that you created in Strategy #1 to fill out the following profiles in this order (after uploading and geocoding your video and images):

1. MerchantCircle.com
2. DexKnows.com (paid Listing – get cheapest listing possible)
3. SuperPages.com
4. Yelp
5. YP.com
6. Judy's Book
7. Insider Pages
8. CitySearch
9. Local.com (Look to the bottom left to sign up)
10. Yahoo!Local
11. Bing Local

NOTE: DO NOT SIGN UP FOR Google+ Local YET!

Strategy #5

Sign Up For Google+ Local

Ok, finally you can now sign up for Google+ Local. The prep work you did is critical to getting authority status in Google+ Local. Make double sure you copy and paste the text from your master document that contains your company name, phone number and address exactly the way it is in all of the other locations. Upload or link your YouTube video and 5 of your images to your Google+ Local account. Fill out everything you can. Create a nice bio about your company and make sure you can fill out everything you can in this profile.

- If your business name does not contain your business type, or keyword you are targeting, add one keyword or phrase to give potential customers a good idea of what you do – before they even click on your listing. (Example: "Delta Medical | Chiropractic Services")
- Add three more targeted keywords naturally in your business description. Make sure you don't exceed three because this turns into "keyword stuffing" and you may get flagged (penalized) for this.
- Make sure to avoid all hype and marketing buzzwords, as well as any hard sell tactics. These send off alarms to the search engines and will prevent you from getting ranked high.
- When selecting categories to describe your business, choose at least one of Google's default options.
- Use a local phone number. (Google doesn't like non-geographical numbers.) Also don't use call tracking numbers unless this is a local number that will be used for every location on the Internet including these profiles for the map/local listings.
- Always update your page whenever you change address, domain names, E-mail addresses, or telephone numbers.

Don't create multiple Google+ Local pages with the same information. That's the fastest way to confuse the search engine robots as well as the humans / potential customers. If it's a different business, it should have a different set of local information.

That's It…easy eh? *No*, but take pride in knowing you did it the right way to

rank on Google+ Local and the other mapping sites.

Strategy #6 — Get Ratings, Reviews and Citations from Customers

Some of the most popular rating and review Websites right now include:

- Bing Local
- City Search
- Google Maps
- Insider Pages
- Merchant Circle (Fill out entire profile including images, blog etc)
- Superpages
- TripAdvisor
- Yahoo Local
- Yelp!

Consumers and brands alike are trying to make the most of these Websites. Search engines also use these sites to determine which companies deserve an increase in online visibility. Listings on these pages will increase your web exposure. As these different sites grow in size and popularity their search visibility increases as well. If you are listed in these rating and review websites, your potential customers have a much higher chance of finding you. This is where ratings and reviews come in.

One critical piece to raking well on not only Google+ Local, but also Yahoo, Bing and many others depends on the number of positive ratings and reviews that you receive from your customers. If you remember the "Reviews Sharing Pattern" image I created to show how these review sites are related, you will quickly see almost every one feeds into Google. All roads lead to Google. This is key to ranking quickly on Google+ Local.

You also need to create as many profiles and citations as possible. The following are a list of many locations that either create listings in various map locations, or that Google has shown a propensity to pick up as a citation or referral for your local listing. Signing up for all of these locations is recommended. Note: these are listed alphabetically, not in order of importance.

Ranking on Google+ Local

Local Maps
AOL Local
Ask Local
Bing Local (should already be done)
CommunityWalk
GeoURL
Google Maps (should already be done)
Mapquest
Yahoo Local (should already be done)

Search Engines
AllTheWeb (now Yahoo)
AltaVista
AOL
Ask
Bing
DMOZ
Google
MSN
ScrubTheWeb
Yahoo

Local Listings
411.com
Amazon.com
AssistGuidelivepage.apple.com
ATT.com
Axciom
Backpage.org
Best of the Web Local
CBSlocal.com (New York)
Centerd.com
City.com
Citysearch
CitySquares
City Visitor (UK)
Cityvoter
Craigslist
DexKnows (paid)
D&B
DiscoverOurTown
EbayClassifieds
ExpressUpdate
free411.com
Go Toll Free
HelloSanDiego.com (San Diego Only)
HopStop.com
HubPages
iBegin
InsiderPages
Judy's Book (Free)
Judy's Book (paid)
JustClickLocal.com

Kudzu
LAOkay.com (for Los Angeles)
LivingSocial.com (coupons)
Local.com
LocalEze.com
Local Database
Local Data Company (also in UK)
Local Search
Magic Yellow
MatchPoint
Menuism.com (restaurants)
MerchantCircle
Metrobot
Mojopages
MySpace
Pinpoint Pages
Praized
Scoot
Search Bug
SuperMedia
Superpages
Switchboard
Topix
Tupalo
Urbanspoon (restaurants)
US City
Wahanda
Where.com
Whitepages.com
Wordpress
YellowBot
Yellowee.com
YellowBook
Yellowpages.com
Yellowpages.aol.com
Yell.com (UK)
Yelp
YP.com
ZoomInfo

Social Network Channels
Bebo
Blogger.com
Delicious
Facebook
Google Orkut
Myspace
Ning
Stumbleupon
Twitter
Windows Live Spaces

Ranking on Google+ Local

Business Sites
BizJournals
BizNik
Cylex (In German)
Das Ortliche (in German)
Entrepenuer Connect
GoldBamboo.com (Health Related)
Hotfrog
InfoUSA
Intuit Business
LinkedIn
MacRae's Blue Book (Industrial Only)
MeineStadt.de (German)
MerchantCircle
PartnerUp
Thompson Local
Qype (German)
Tyloon
YellowMap (German)
ZoomInfo

Video/Image Channels
AOL Video
Bing/MSN Video
Dailymotion
Flickr
Picasa
YouTube
MetaCafe
Snapfish
Photobucket
Yahoo Video

Blog Directories
Blogdigger
Bloglines
Collecta
Feed Burner
Google Blog Search
Icerocket
Moreover
My Yahoo!
News Is Free
PostRank
SkyGrid (sign in with twitter)
Syndic8
Technorati

The Following Pull your info for their services:

Mobile Maps
Apple iPod/iPad Maps
Blackberry RIM
Google Maps
OnStar
TeleMap
TomTom
Yahoo Mobile

Phone Assistance
Google Goog-411
KGB InfonOO
LSSI
TellMe
V-Enable

For Chiropractors and Doctors
LocateADoc.com
ChiroWeb.com
AllChiropractors.com
ChiroFind.com (call 1.877.824.4005)

Review Sites
epinions.com
angieslist.com
viewpoints.com
lunch.com
rateit.com
buzzillions.com
reviewcentre.com
yelp.com
searchreviews.com
amazon.com
walmart.com
bestbuy.com
target.com
http://answers.yahoo.com/

Strategy #7

**Do your Research!
Get More Links Than
Your Competition!**

This is the part everyone hates doing, however, if done correctly will set you apart from your competition and allow you to sail past them straight to the top. What you are looking for are the companies that are your direct competition and that consistently rank well. Rand Fishkin, CEO and cofounder of SEOmoz wrote a blog about a surprisingly simple way to improve your rankings in Google Local. Check out his blog here. The basic premise is outlined as follows using our example of tempe dry cleaner as a local search phrase:

First:
Click Here Google.com
Search the location and type of business in various ways. This is important because people think and type what they are looking for different ways, and you need to rank well for all of them. So what you are looking for are companies who already do this. Then you want to do what they do…just better. Try something like this when searching in Google:

- tempe dry cleaner
- dry cleaning in tempe
- dry cleaner tempe, AZ
- tempe, AZ dry cleaner

Remember, what you are looking for is the companies that consistently come up when you type these iterations.

Next what you want to do is click on the following review links when you locate these companies.

What this tells you is where Google is looking for reviews. Cool trick eh? Google is literally telling you where you need to post reviews.

Many times, it takes less than 10 reviews to beat your competition. Encourage your customers to post reviews. You can do this by giving cards away that explain where to post them that will benefit you the most.

Don't try and post more than the one set of reviews yourself, and surely <u>don't post them from your own office</u>. You can do one set of reviews (one on each of the review sites) from your home or another location, but you never more than that from your own computer or any single computer. IP's (the unique set of numbers that can be traced to your computer) are traced and it will be known you did this. Use the system the way it was intended, by having your customers post their own reviews. If you have trouble with this, we can provide this service for you as well. We are able to post reviews based on systems we have established.

HOT TIP

Another good place to find where to post information about your company, products and services is after you click on the reviews…scroll down, and you will see several links like:

More from around the web »

and

Del Rey **Cleaners**
Del Rey **Cleaners**. T
Broadway Rd **Tempe**
www.yelp.com/biz/de

More (14) »

Another great way to know where to post information. Remember…use your exact phone, address and company name when posting information around the web. This will pay off in a big way as these are picked up from around the web.

HOT TIP

Want to get your items found quickly after you post them? Use the "Ping" service at Pingler.com

Final Hints

1. Your phone number format is CRITICAL when signing up for the different review and map sites. Make sure you research your competition to see how they post their phone numbers (111) 123-1234 or 111-123-1234. It seriously matters.

2. Make sure your company name is identical for each of the review and map profiles. Otherwise…they can't tell who is who. Also encourage your patients or customers to do likewise. Post their reviews using your EXACT business name that you used for your profile accounts.

3. You will notice in the illustrations above that the second link in the

Ranking on Google+ Local

"Google 7-Pak" has 38 links where the top rank only has 20. You may think this is odd, but what you have to remember is that reviews and links are not the only factors taken into consideration. You also need many citations and your website SEO plays a HUGE role in ranking your Google + Local … believe it or not. The way your links are designed, and how this matches up with your website can make a big difference between being 1st or 2nd place.

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- ✓ Complete Spreadsheet Report Delivered In 10 to 14 Business Days!

- ✓ The Spreadsheet Report Contains Submission URL's and an Average Of 40 To 60 Instant, Live Listing URL's.

- ✓ We Ping All Live Listing URLs For You!

- ✓ Access To A Custom Email Account We Create So That You Can Monitor The Business Directory Accounts And Confirmation Details.

- ✓ Use The Completed Spreadsheet Report And The Email Account Registration & Confirmation Details As PROOF For Your Clients.

- ✓ BONUS: We Now Submit To Up To 10 Additional "Hyper-local" And/Or "Hyper-niche" Directories! (If They Are Available)

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