

Local SEO Tips from Darren Shaw's MozCon 2012 talk

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In my experience, most SMB websites can dominate with only 2-3 super-quality links in markets with average competition

Couple of easy sponsorship searches--

site:.edu portland oregon sponsors

site:.org portland oregon sponsors

Also do the same searches in Image Search.

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1) In NY State and some other states Pennysavers need content to maintain their lower editorial tax status via a vis newsprint. Most of these have great hyper local sites that are in need of content. Arrange for your client to write for the local pennysaver and be sure to include a citation at the end of each article.

2) (Via [Dana DiTomaso](#)) Many LGBT sites maintain lists of LGBT friendly businesses. A great untapped citation source.

3) Use SEOMoz to mine your existing links and contact the link owners to upgrade them to citations. These are your most friendly local sites.

4) Google+ Local allows for business pages to leave reviews (not just individuals). Review other businesses that you have done business with and request that they do the same.

5) MyMaps has fallen from visibility as a citation source but they are still effective IF you can drive some views and traffic to them. Create MyMaps of various related local services on your site and embed on a visible page on your website. Of course include your business on the Map.

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Honestly, the best tip and trick (and I think people will really like it) is to use custom searches in Google+ to find people with powerful accounts in a specific location.

Then you can incentivize them to come to your place of business (even if you can't incentivize them to review you, can find people who leave a lot of reviews and the changes are high.)

Here is an example.

1. On Google+ set the search to people and pages.
2. Throw a location in a search phrase "los angeles"
3. Optional: add another search phrase "vegan"
4. You get a list of power users of Google+ that you can incentives or get to know in order to get them to come to your place. Where they already have a Google+ account you can see if they have integrated their reviews yet and if so, you have just found a way to target the best review crowd with the highest probability of sharing.
5. You can save the search to see if there are new people that pop up.

#winning

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The theory is simple: Google+ Local pages are indexed in a way Google Places pages never were. The title is indexed. The description is indexed. The reviews are indexed.

This is huge. You need to now think of everything on your places page like you would a website. Every word counts.

Think about it.

All things considered, also like a website - hell, like a Facebook page - you can build backlinks to it and rank it. Logically speaking. Comparably speaking. You could do this.

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1) Tracking rankings for geo-modified keywords? Unless you're checking from your potential customers' (or your client's potential customers') browser location, you might be under-reporting and making optimization decisions based on incomplete data. In Google, you can set the browser location in the left rail. There's a shortcut: add parameter "near=" in your

search url and it does the same thing. Hello automation! Try

it: www.google.com/search?q=plumber&near=buffalo,+ny

Now try searching "plumber in buffalo, ny", no quotes. Different results yes? For one guy it's the difference between being page 1 and not (Zenner). Hope you see the same results in Canada...

Pro-tip: if your Google+ Local (née Places) analytics and webmaster tools search queries report show scant or no instance of geo-modified queries, and traffic, leads, success etc is happening, you should definitely be monitoring rankings this way. My own test on a set of 200+ clients showed a 50% improvement in clients with first page visibility when we use near= and just root terms (not geo-modified). This harmonized better with other performance metrics for those clients.

2) Ask clients about listing/feed vendors they work with. Often 3rd party feeds can really mess up NAP consistency because of sheer volume, not authority of where they publish. Example: NIADA publishes car for sale listing for their member dealers on a LOT of sites. Each listing carries the dealers name, address, and phone so potential buyers can, well, buy from them. This creates a new structured citation with each new car listing that goes up. Fix the feed, prepare to win.

3) Sort of obvious but I'd make sure I was listed in mojo pages, local.com, and even see about advertising with Advance Internet. The first two have partnerships with a ton of newspapers to be the local directory for the newspaper site - a big reason why showed up in your citation sources study. Advance Internet is a sleeper few people talk about - they run both their directory AND the newspaper sites. So there's a content machine underpinning every Advance Internet site and it's pumping out only locally focused content.

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Tip 1: Get your friends, family and employees to vote up "positive" reviews in Google+ Local because reviews are sorted by "most useful" and the review ranking algorithm is based basically on those reviews that got voted on the most. Try to do it from unique IP's.

Tip 2: Create a "submit a review page" on your site like this one:

<http://heatherbarranco.com/submit-review/>

Tip 3: Reward for check-ins on: Google+, Facebook, & Foursquare - put visible sign on business walls, napkins, washrooms, etc

Tip 4: Blog about local events and be sure to let those people holding the events know you have written a post, so you can get some easy backlinks, citations, and deepen your local networking.

Tip 5: Give away digital coupons to local businesses. It's a sneaky way to get a back link too from local sites, which the search engines like. Don't ask local businesses for backlinks, send them an email offering them discount or digital coupon they can add to their site for their customers. People love to give their clients/customers added value and discounts from other local businesses.

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Tip 1: It looks like getting your 5th Google Review is the magic number where those reviews may start to help with rankings. Your mileage may vary based on the review density in a given geo-cat.

Tip 2: If you want to use tracking phone numbers on your website while avoiding NAP consistency issues, put the tracking number in an image in a flash movie (don't use text because Google might be able to find it) and put your real number in a <noscript> tag so browsers that don't support JS (aka bots) will see the real number.

Tip 3: I have seen a number of SEOs recommending sites add both hcard and schema to their sites to get max bang for the buck. In some cases I have seen this confuse Google and kill display of structured data in the SERPs. My advice is go one way or the other.

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Learn to use Mapmaker. It can help you to get your edits live more quickly and is probably the second most trusted source of information (after owner edits) for business listings.

This is a good reference for getting the lay of the land:
<http://tek.io/Loi79l>

Then move on to this for more specifics:
<http://bit.ly/JwZqCs>

Google also has other helpful Mapmaker stuff:
<http://support.google.com/mapmaker/?hl=en>
<http://www.youtube.com/user/GoogleMapMaker>
<https://sites.google.com/site/mapyourworldcommunity/>

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Tip 1: Develop content that is purely catered to something in your community. Host the content on your site, and promote the crap out of it by pitching it to the local press.

Is your locality legendary for something? Is it notorious for something?

Find out what makes your locale different, build great content around it, and promote it.

Tip 2: Mapmaker is your friend. If you are experiencing competition in areas from those who are not your competitors, edit them out of your categories in Mapmaker. As the domain authority of your website is becoming an increasingly important factor in Google Local, it can be tough to compete with the big boys here - so get rid of them.

I had a client that was getting outranked by [brand name removed] locations, because for some reason, their secondary categories were listed in the wrong category. Because the major brand destroyed our site in terms of domain authority, Google would always rank these listings above our client. I simply went in, "corrected" it, and poof, a day later, we were back on top. Your edits will most likely not be rejected, as you are merely improving information.

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Tip1: Encourage reviews and social mentions of your listings on third-party sites. This will help Google index and associate them faster to your Google+ Local listing giving you additional citations strength.

Tip 2: Invite local/relevant bloggers to try your services (for free, or simply as a recommendation).

Tip 3: Consider getting paid listings on high quality websites that offer do-follow links to paying customers (Best of the Web, Whitepages, Citysquares, potentially Yelp).

Tip 4: If writing guest blog posts, include your business name, address, and phone number in the byline. The best would be if these are marked up with schema.org.

Tip 5: Offer to host local events, such as meetups, anniversaries, teambuildings, in the exchange of a mention (citation).

Tip 6: Participate in or organize local meetup groups.

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You should assume Google is counting your click-through rate in your favor or against you in the local rankings. It's not proven, and it IS an assumption. But we know Google can tell what % of people click on your Google+ Local listing and website. Given how businesses with more Google reviews tend to rank more highly, and given how hard it usually is to unseat top-ranked business (which also get the most clicks), I always treat CTR as a local ranking factor.

Here's what I suggest for getting the best CTR you can:

1. Get 10 Google customer reviews as quickly as you can, so that your average rating shows up in the local 7-pack.
2. Write a few different title tags for your homepage (or whatever your landing page is), then ask as many people as you can which one they think is the most compelling, and then use that one as your title tag. The catchier and more relevant, the more people will click on it.
3. If you don't have a website yet, try to get a domain that includes your single-biggest keyword. It'll show up in the 7-pack in bold lettering, which sticks out.

In general, just forget about Google and "optimization" for a minute and think about what a potential customer would be most likely to click on. The irony is this human-centered strategy seems to get you the farthest with Google.

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Add a site-wide link to your clients' Google+ Local page in their header or footer along with the other social icons. We saw a client start getting pack rankings shortly after doing this, when they weren't ranking before.