A Handbook on

Local Search Engine Optimization -
Do It Yourself

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Introduction to **Local Website Optimization** – *Do It Yourself*

There is a lot of noise about SEO not being important anymore or that it has changed completely. While there is a little bit of truth in every claim, as a digital marketing agency, we have advised our clients and professionals to choose the middle and more realistic path. It is practically not possible to ignore SEO nor is it necessary to worry about every algorithm update rolled by search engines. Instead, adding value to one's website on an ongoing basis and making sure that information is relevant and available to a local audience will ensure that search engines will rank you higher in a particular geographical region.

In this eBook, you will learn what local website optimization is, what you need in order to optimize websites locally and the various steps of utilizing certain proven and tested factors to optimize locally.

Whom is this **eBook** written for?

This eBook is specially written for business owners who seek to optimize their websites locally. Whether you run a small, medium or a large business, it is prudent to make use of the opportunities that local website optimization provides. This document is especially useful for companies that have good business websites but are still trying to learn how to optimize their websites locally.

How To use this **eBook**

The document elaborates various factors that are necessary to optimize websites locally. The eBook, without wasting time, gets down to the task of teaching readers how to optimize websites locally using a factorial approach. Each factor is elucidated with examples and a step-by-step guide helps readers of this eBook to optimize their websites locally on their own to a large extent. The eBook does not list the factors in a linear structure and readers can flip through the pages as they want.

Know **Where** You stand & use **Local SEO** to your Advantage

Whether you are a business owner who does not have a website yet or you are somebody that is running a successful business but looking at various ways to appeal to a local audience, this eBook will help you to enhance existing and fine-tune planned websites. No matter how large or small a business is, each can be placed under the following categories.

1. Businesses that do not have a website
2. Businesses that have a website but are not optimizing locally
3. **Businesses that optimize locally but are not doing the right way**

What do you need for **Local Website Optimization**?

Some of the most important details that you need to optimize your website locally are a well designed website for each local location, a blog for each website, social media accounts, focused Google+ campaigns, reviews and testimonials, feedback cards and handouts, images and multimedia and SEO tools, some of which are available online as well.

Keep all these details with you before starting the optimisation process:

Your **Website URL**	**Email address** & **phone number** at which to reach you	**Official** / **legal name** of your business	**Full physical street address** of your location. Please include suite #, if applicable. *(Note: Using P.O. boxes, UPS boxes, or "virtual offices" for any of your locations is NOT allowed in Google)*
Is that the only location of your business? If not, please list the addresses of your other locations – as well as any old addresses.	Please also indicate which locations, if any, are not physical addresses where you actually meet customers.	Roughly how long has your business been located at that address?	**Office phone number** *(should use a local area code)*

Important factors to optimize

Google+ & **Social Media**

Mobile & **Responsive** Websites

Important **Factors** to Optimize

Websites

Reviews, Testimonials & Hyper Local Citations

Content & **Publishing**

What is the benefit?

The primary factor in optimizing websites locally is to fix existing websites or enhance what is already built. Though websites are built with a global audience in mind, optimizing them for a local audience takes a little effort.

Company ABC specializes in funereal flowers. It has been exporting flowers and wreaths abroad, while also allowing people to order online from their store. Though the company has an office in Location X, their website was not optimized to bring more people from the city they are located in. Fixing their existing website to add their contact details and including their address helped boost local sales while keeping international sales at a consistent figure.

<u>Steps to do it</u>

❶ **Title Tag:** Inclusion of your location name in your page's title tag is important.
   Example:

```
<title>Olly Knight Photography | Wedding Photographer Kent</title>
```

   You must include it on important pages of your website. NAP (Name, Address and Phone Number) must be inserted as TEXT where applicable.

   Essex Cosmetic Dentists Essex Dentist in Essex ... - South Ockendon
   www.streetfarm**dental**.com/ ▾
   Essex Cosmetic **Dentists Essex** Dentist in Essex cosmetic dentistry UK **Dentist**
   Essex. Cosmetic Dentists In Essex, specialising in all aspects of cosmetic dentistry ...

   It is also important to design web pages for each of your locations.

❷ **Keywords in Title & URL:** The right keywords must be inserted into the title of the page and into the URL. The right keywords and key-phrases bring targeted visitors to the website. As part of local optimization, it is very important to insert your location into the title and URL. This ensures that the keyword is associated with the location of your business and people will be able to find your business locally. Your contact details must be updated each time there is a change, so that it reflects online in a timely manner.

❸ **Schema and Structured Data:** Data structuring is a crucial part of optimizing websites locally. Schema.org helps you to make your website more relevant locally when people search on Google, Yahoo and Bing. You need to create a universal code for all the 3 search engines and remove redundant codes. Google in particular recommends structured data so that it can understand the markup on your pages and display rich snippets.

Example from https://schema.org/LocalBusiness , http://microformats.org/

Original HTML

Google.Org
Contact Details:
Main address: 38 avenue de l'Opera, F-75002 Paris, France
 Tel: (33 1) 42 68 53 00, Fax: (33 1) 42 68 53 01
E-mail: secretariat (at) google.org
URL: www.google.org
Members:
- National Scientific Members in 100 countries and territories: Country1, Country2, ...
- Scientific Union Members, 30 organizations listed in this Yearbook: Member 1, Member 2
History:

With Schema.org:

```
<div class="vcard">
  <a class="fn org url" href="http://www.commerce.net/">CommerceNet</a>
  <div class="adr">
    <span class="type">Work</span>:
    <div class="street-address">169 University Avenue</div>
    <span class="locality">Palo Alto</span>,
    <abbr class="region" title="California">CA</abbr>
    <span class="postal-code">94301</span>
    <div class="country-name">USA</div>
  </div>
  <div class="tel">
   <span class="type">Work</span> +1-650-289-4040
  </div>
  <div class="tel">
    <span class="type">Fax</span> +1-650-289-4041
  </div>
  <div>Email:
   <span class="email">info@commerce.net</span>
  </div>
```

```
<div itemscope itemtype="http://schema.org/Organization">
   <span itemprop="name">Google.org (GOOG)</span>
Contact Details:
   <div itemprop="address" itemscope itemtype="http://schema.org/PostalAddress">
     Main address:
       <span itemprop="streetAddress">38 avenue de l'Opera</span>
       <span itemprop="postalCode">F-75002</span>
       <span itemprop="addressLocality">Paris, France</span>,
   </div>
     Tel:<span itemprop="telephone">( 33 1) 42 68 53 00 </span>,
     Fax:<span itemprop="faxNumber">( 33 1) 42 68 53 01 </span>,
     E-mail: <span itemprop="email">secretariat(at)google.org</span>
Members:
- National Scientific Members in 100 countries and territories: Country1, Country2, ...
- Scientific Union Members, 30 organizations listed in this Yearbook:
   <span itemprop="member" itemscope itemtype="http://schema.org/Organization">
     Member1
   </span>,
   <span itemprop="member" itemscope itemtype="http://schema.org/Organization">
     Member2
   </span>,

History:
</div>
```

❹ **Pages:** For each service you offer, ensure that you have a separate page dedicated to it. Ensure that these services are available at the location for which the website is designed. You may also include a FAQ page (frequently Asked Questions) that is customized for a particular location.

Source - http://www.scottsflowersnyc.com/

Funeral Floral Arrangement in NYC
NYC Same Day Flower Delivery
NYC Sympathy Floral Arrangement
NYC Indoor Office Plants
NYC Weekly Flowers
NYC and Manhattan Event Flowers
NYC Gourmet Baskets
NYC Wine Gourmet baskets
NYC Holiday Gourmet Baskets
NYC Fruit & Gourmet Baskets
NYC Fruit baskets
NYC Wedding Flowers

❺ **Images and Multimedia:** It is recommended that you publish contextual images on every single page. These images must have an alt tag that is related to the keywords that you are targeting on your website. For instance, for every product image that you publish, a relevant alt tag will help in bringing more visitors.

What is the benefit?

Google has begun to increasingly stress on the importance of social media. When it comes to local optimization, social media is all the more important. Friends and acquaintances tend to be clustered in and around a certain geographical location. Boosting your social media activity and optimizing it for a local audience will help you to gain more street cred. In particular, you need to focus on Google+, as Google tends to favor those businesses which have been actively using Google+ accounts and updating them.

Company LMN never had any experience with social media. They did not have an active Facebook or Twitter account. After consulting with us, they began to request their customers who lived in their location to write reviews. As the number of local reviews increased, they also started to see more foot falls at their store.

Steps to do it

❶ **How to Register your business on Google Plus**
Like Facebook you can also setup an official corporate page for your business. Your Business Page gives you another page that can be indexed by search engines and neatly showcases your business, allowing you to make regular updates to your wall, and linking your business page to any content that you've created using the rel="publisher" code.

| Step 1	Step 2
You need to have an original profile from where you can create a page. So if you have not yet registered a Google plus individual profile. Then do it 1st with proper information. By default the profile that is creating the business page becomes the administrator of it. However you can add others to manage this page later on.	From your login go to Home -> Pages - > Create a pages
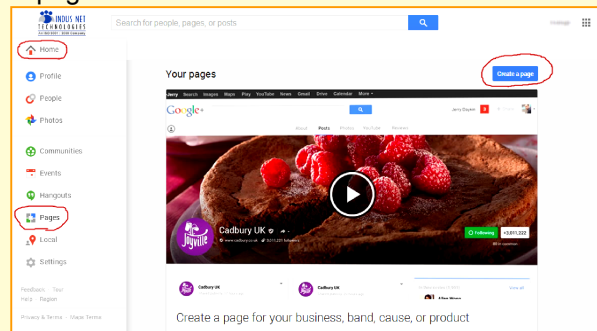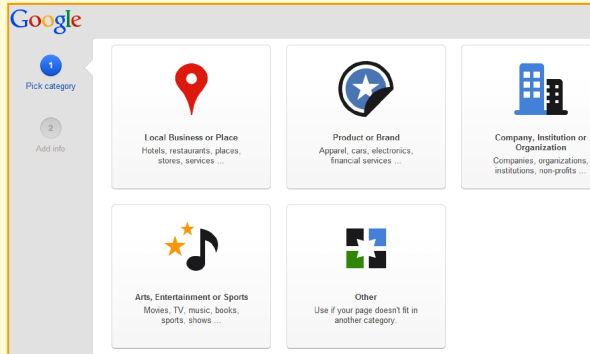
❷ **Incorporate +1 button**

Ensure that +1-es are inserted into the URL and on Google+ Business Page. It helps Google to know that your p[products and services are acknowledged in a positive manner. Google too prefers to display results of those companies which have consistently high number of positive local reviews and a +1-es.

❸ **Google+ Reviews**

Google+ Reviews number must be displayed too, so that people know how popular your local business is. Google+ Local Reviews help you to gain trust, confidence and a favorable attitude among visitors.

What is the benefit?

Reviews and testimonials, especially those written on Google+ need to be optimized. If you do not have enough reviews, Google may view you negatively, when it comes to that geographical location. Even if you receive a high global traffic, you may not be able to attract a local audience. In order to appear in local search results, you will need to increase the number of reviews and testimonials written by people who reside in your location.

A furniture store sought to increase the number of customers who visited its newer outlet in a different suburb of a city. While its older outlet was popular with everyone, the newer outlet was not that popular. Increasing the number of reviews written for the newer outlet helped the company to increase footfalls.

Steps to do it

❶ **Ask for Reviews**

Asking for online reviews isn't a shameful thing. Marketers have always used feedback cards to request for reviews under the guise of feedback. By encouraging your customers and clients to leave reviews on your Google+ page, you can increase the number of Google+ reviews. They not only help you to appear often in local search results, but also help boost the Google+ platform.

❷ **Utilize Testimonials**

If you already have emails and letters that were sent to you but not written on Google+, write back to the customer and ask their permission to post the same on Google+. If they agree, you will get to use testimonials that were just lying inertly.

❸ **Promote Your Google+**

Ask your customers and clients to add your business to their circle and write about you. Include your Google+ profile on handouts, pamphlets and even business cards. It is perfectly alright to promote your Google+ page in order to receive more reviews.

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❹ **Insert Keywords into Reviews**

Ask your customers to include the name of the product or service for which they are writing reviews. Insertion of the right product name and product category (same holds good for services) is enough to ensure that the review is keyword-optimized.

❺ **Encourage Internal Recognition**

Ask your employees to request customers and clients to leave feedback on Google+. Educate them about the importance of Google+ reviews and help them to help clients and customers to write reviews on Google+.

❻ **Hyper Local Citations**

If you are able to find and contact local associations and organizations, you will seem more reliable and trustworthy. In order to receive hyper local citations from these associations and organizations, you will need to engage in public relations exercise. This is more important than getting citations from Yellow Pages or other classified magazines. Try and speak to local media or associations which help in getting citations.

What is the benefit?

'Content is king' is a clichéd brevity that annoys a lot of people. However, we need to stress that content is very important when it comes to local website optimization. Onsite blogs that are specifically targeted to a local audience, optimizing the publisher and authorship tags, optimizing content to suit local audience and ensuring that your content is always updated helps Google to understand that you are a local authority in your own right. This helps you to appear often in the results of local search queries.

A music school that has branches across the country decided to begin blogging. The school blogged extensively about different approaches to learning various instruments, modulating one's voice, theories of music and history of important stalwarts. Though their blog received a lot of traffic and raving reviews for the content were given, the company hardly saw people in specific cities dropping into their office. By localizing their content and by designing different websites for each of their locations, they could target people in specific geographical locations. Their blog posts later tended to focus on local interests instead of general posts. This helped the music school to augment its enrolments.

Steps to do it

❶ **Blogs -** Every location needs to have its own blog. If you cannot update the blog at least weekly yourself, you will need to hire content writers so that interesting blog posts are published in a timely manner. Writing about local topics or topics that are customized to local needs will help in bringing more local organic results.

❷ **Content -** Content needs to be optimized for a local audience as well. The Penguin 2.0 update lays emphasis on rich content. Each page must contain contextual titles and meta-descriptions. The target keywords and H1 tags must be used appropriately. Linking to other sections of the same website or to another website for a different location must be followed. This will help in building an extensive linking network.

❸ **Publisher -** Google places a lot of importance on social media. With that in mind, we must bear that Google Plus features the publisher tag which helps your company's Google Plus page to be displayed next to articles and pages. Authorship of the writer too boosts your Google Plus cred.

What is the benefit?

More people have begun to use mobile devices because of their portability, ease of use and comfort. Chances are, a large percentage of people are looking up information on their mobile phones in order to find businesses nearby. Thanks to GPS, people can locate businesses nearby without having to worry too much about keying in addresses. In order to ensure that more people using their cellphones find you, you need to optimize your mobile websites and keep them responsive as well.

A chocolate manufacturer recently opened a store in a mall. However, they were unable to attract people who were living nearby. By creating a mobile friendly website that also featured geo-identification, they were able to appear in search results of people who were in the vicinity. This greatly helped the company to increase footfalls.

<u>Steps to do it</u>

❶ **Mobile Optimization -** Creating mobile websites that are optimized to be used on cellphones and tablets are very important. Ensure that your website and its content are optimized to appear neatly on mobile devices. You may need to reduce your content and engage in highly targeted keywords so that precious real estate is not wasted. Mobile devices are likely going to be the most important source of local traffic. They warrant special attention from anyone who is looking at optimizing websites locally.

❷ **Responsive Websites -** Content Responsive design is a method in which a website adjusts to the screen size of different devices. As there are a number of devices which have different screen sizes, it is not easy to design a different website for every dimension. A responsive website makes sure that it appears correctly and aesthetically on all devices. This ensures uniformity of content. People usually search of local businesses on their cellphones and tablets, when they are on the move. Designing responsive and mobile optimized websites help to increase local traffic.

❸ **App Development -** Developing mobile applications is a novel way to increase location search optimization. Using GPS technology will help nearby users to locate your business, which may not be possible on a website.

Tools to help you on Local Website Optimization?

1. **http://getlisted.org** - This best of all free local tools shows you where business listings exist for your company on key local platforms and where they don't. It helps you to determine exactly where you need to list your business next. Over the years, I've used this tool for local SEO more than any other. It surfaces five important pieces of data about your business:

2. **http://blumenthals.com/Google_LBC_Categories** - Tool to provide you assistance in searching and picking the correct categories for your Google Places for Business or Google+ Page for local listing.

3. **http://www.51blocks.com/online-marketing-tools/free-local-analysis** - Measure Top Local Ranking Factors

4. **http://www.51blocks.com/online-marketing-tools/google-local-toolbox** - LOCAL SEARCH RESOURCE TOOL. This tool will generate 4 Local Search Resources: KML Location Code, HCard, Scheme, and GeoTags

5. **http://www.5minutesite.com/gen_keywrds.php** - Generate Local Adwords & Keyword Lists

6. **http://www.whitespark.ca/review-handout-generator** - enables you to enter your business data and create a PDF handout that can be given to customers at the time of service with the goal of encouraging them to review you online.

7. **https://www.whitespark.ca/offline-conversion-tracker** - Keep track of your customers online and offline completely free

8. **http://schema-creator.org** - Structured data is a way for search engine machines to make sense of content in your HTML. Google and other search engines created a structured data standard called schema.org.

9. If you're like most web designers or SEOs, you might find **schema.org** a little difficult to grasp at first. That's why we created Schema Creator—to help you quickly build and get started with schema.org microdata.

10. Google Gadgets Driving Directions Widget For Your Webpage - **http://www.google.com/ig/directory?synd=open&url=http://www.google.com/ig/modules/driving_directions.xml**

11. Want to be sure your local competitors aren't swiping your content? Simply cut and paste your copy into this tool from Small SEO Tools and it will surface usage of your text from around the web - **http://smallseotools.com/plagiarism-checker/**

Afterword

Unless a company runs online entirely or caters exclusively to an international audience, every business has the potential to optimize for a local audience. Going local can have a positive ripple effect on bringing international customers and clients too, as noticed in a number of business analysis documents. The Internet makes it easier today when it comes to optimizing company websites for a local audience.

Though Internet has always been a global tool, it is increasingly being used as a way to connect with people and businesses locally. One of the most important reasons for this local revolution is mobile technology and GPS. People have begun to use GPS-enabled devices in order to locate businesses nearby. By ensuring that websites and mobile applications are optimized for local search, one can ensure that the success of a company is ensured, locally.

A careful strategy towards local website optimization can help businesses of all sizes to attract clients and customers who are based nearby. As mentioned earlier, successful local businesses tend to attract clients and customers from a larger geographical region, including internationally. If you have any questions regarding local website optimization or SEO, do contact us with your queries and we would be glad to help you.

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