NATIONAL POSITIONS'
LOCAL RANKING
SECRETS

21 STRATEGIES FOR CRUSHING YOUR COMPETITION IN 2019

NATIONAL POSITIONS
PROFITABLE INTERNET MARKETING

As a local business owner, I know how hard it is to run a business. There is an ongoing battle to remain relevant amongst growing competition and never-ending innovation. The breakneck speed of innovation can often be daunting, but it is also the key to unprecedented success.

In this guide, I'll outline some of our tried-and-true digital marketing strategies that can have a major positive impact on your local business in 2019.

Most of these digital marketing secrets come from my experience and that of the incredible team at National Positions. The insights included have been gained from managing hundreds of local SEO campaigns at National Positions as well as white label accounts that we manage for other enterprise agencies. Many of the ideas I'll be presenting to you have taken months, if not years, to uncover.

There is an overabundance of content online and it's hard to know what valuable gems will make the greatest impact — but you have my assurance that every "digital secret" revealed in this eBook has been well-tested for its efficacy and impact.

I am confident that you will find these insights helpful in growing your local business — just as our clients have.

About the Author — Bernard May

Bernard May is the founder and CEO of National Positions, an internet marketing company established in 2004 and headquartered in Westlake Village, CA. May is a Forbes Agency Council Member with over 25 years of marketing experience in the areas of entertainment, internet security, and finance. From enterprising entities to small local businesses, May's valuable strategic insights into the marketing world have garnered over 100,000 article views in over 50 Forbes publications.
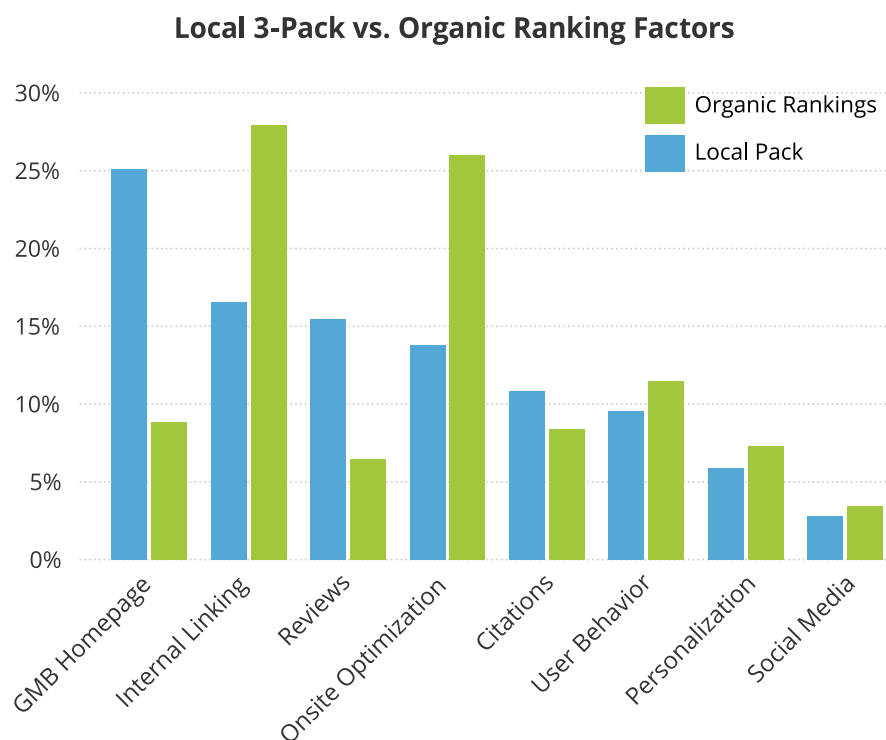
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Unlocking the Local Google Algorithm

Before diving into the much-awaited digital marketing secrets, I want to point out a fundamental distinction that will impact your perception of SEO and how it applies to your business.

Your SEO efforts must be divided between your website and your Google My Business profile.

Google My Business, often known as the 3-Pack because of the three local business listings that show up in local search results, is critical to your overall success. You'll see that efforts applied to your GMB listing can have a profound impact on your organic results.

I'll also show you just how important your website is and how both GMB and your website undeniably play a role in generating your overall results.

Local 3-Pack vs. Organic Ranking Factors

Legend: Organic Rankings, Local Pack

Categories: GMB Homepage, Internal Linking, Reviews, Onsite Optimization, Citations, User Behavior, Personalization, Social Media

The Hard Truth

There is a hard truth that you either know already — or you're about to learn. And once you know it — it's impossible to forget.

Are you ready? Take a deep breath. Here we go…

Location matters.

Your location will have a big impact on search results. If you want to rank for a major city — but your business is **NOT** located in that city — your chances of ranking for those city terms become much harder. With that information out of the way, let's dive into the 21 ways to grow your local presence online.
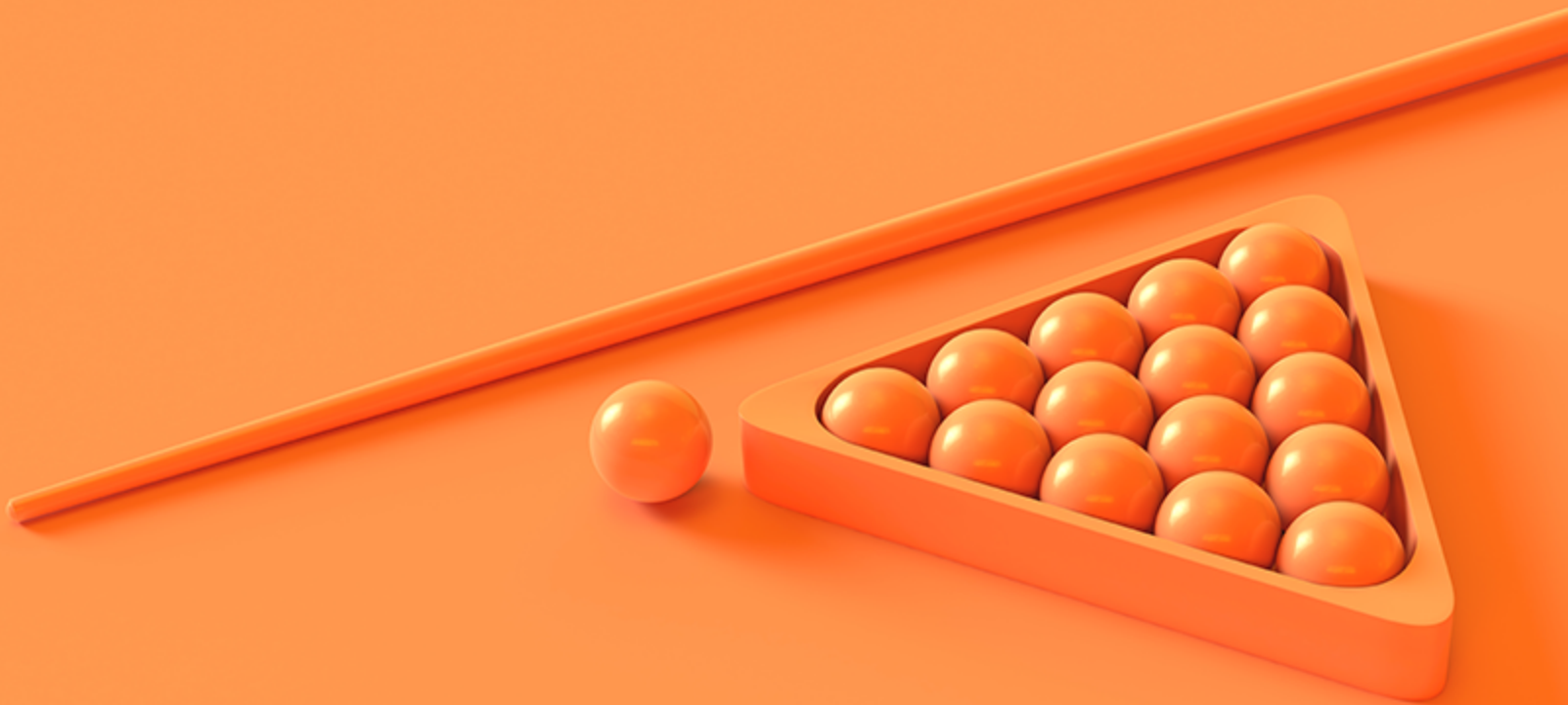

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SECRET 1

USE YOUR COMPETITION TO GET AHEAD

Use Your Competition to Get Ahead

Imagine if you could find out exactly what Google thought was the best digital marketing solution for your local market. Well, you can. All you need to do is perform a Google search for your most important keywords and you'll see exactly which websites are generating the top placements in the search results.

My number one recommendation for you is this: find out who your top competitors are and then figure out what it will take to reverse engineer what they are doing — how they are ranking in those top spots.

In theory, if you were able to replicate your competitors exactly, you could generate the same results. Of course, we don't want to just copy our competitors — we want to do better, to be better, to create a better strategy. But — understanding why Google has chosen them for the top spots in the search results is a good first step.

Once you have identified the top sites for your searches, you can start building out your plan of action to try and beat out your competition. Below is a handy competition checklist that we use at National Positions to get an overall idea of why a certain site is dominating the search results.

THE COMPETITION		
How is their user experience?	What are their top backlinks?	How long is their content?
Reviews – how many and what ratings?	Is their Google My Business profile complete?	How is the quality of their content?
How many backlinks do they have?	How are their title tags and meta tags?	How is the overall website experience?
How is their load speed?	How is their local schema?	Do they have internal links?

To beat your competition, you need to know what makes them tick. This checklist gives you a roadmap to uncovering your competition's success. It will take some time, but remember, there is no magic bullet. Make Google work for you — find your competition, use this checklist, and begin building your strategy.

TAKING ACTION

Identify your 3 top competitors online (use that Google search!) and leverage tools such as SpyFu, SEMrush and Screaming Frog to start reverse engineering their strategies.
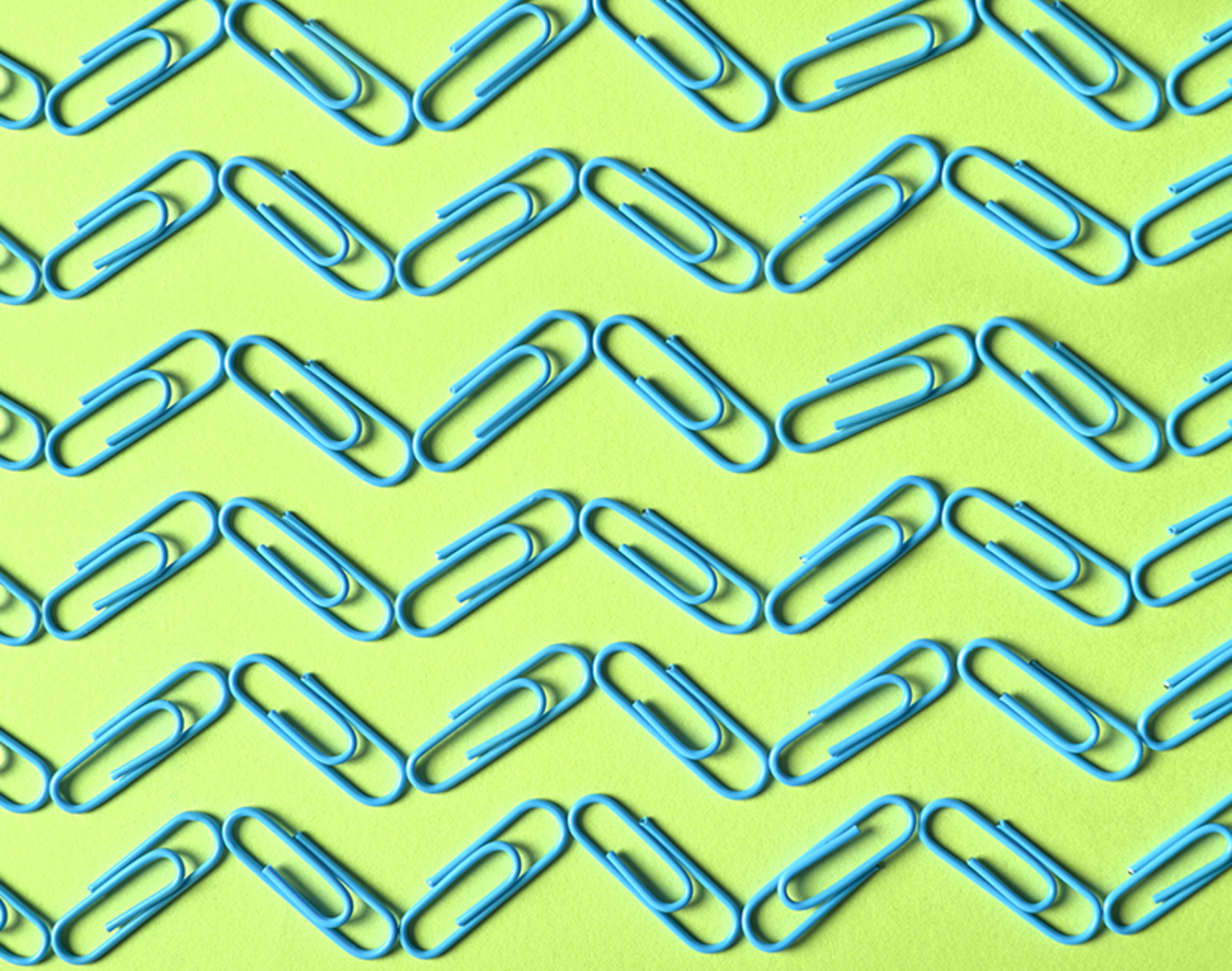
SECRET 2

POWER UP YOUR BACKLINKING

Power Up Your Backlinking

You've heard it before, but I'll say it again: backlinking is the single most important ranking factor — still. Many things have changed over the years, but the power of "quality backlinking" hasn't.

Linking continues to be part of the Google algorithm and a valuable strategy in 2019. Why? Because Google still looks at links as a vote of approval from other sites that link to you online.

Your focus should be on the **quality and relevance** of your links — not the quantity of links. It is far more valuable to have three high-quality links than ten low-quality links.

Local businesses should consider two major themes in their link building activities: local links and industry relevant links.

Google rewards links that are especially hard to fake, such as links from news organizations and educational establishments. Links like these **hold more authority in the eyes of Google** and are well worth your effort.

Although these links may seem unattainable, they are easier to secure than you might imagine.

Going Local With Linking

Local links offer some of the most interesting link building opportunities in 2019. Consider sponsoring a local charity to show that you're involved in your community (and reap the reward of securing a link from their site).

You can also secure placement in a quality, local directory (which links to your site) in your neighborhood in exchange for help that you have provided your community.

We are seeing some success in scholarship sponsorships, charitable donations, and local news as excellent and unique ways for local businesses to generate top-quality links. Think outside the box when it comes to link building — this is where the magic happens (and the traffic comes from).

Jumpstart Your Linking Strategy

○ Research links of competitors using tools such as **Moz Pro Link Explorer**, **Ahrefs**, **LinkResearchTools**.

○ Acquire obvious links from industry directories, hyperlocal directories, and niche directories (for example, **Whitespark** and **BrightLocal**).

○ Ask your vendors and partners for links.

○ Build content and **promote around the web** for content backlinks (blogs, articles, etc.).

○ Be a leader in your community.
  • Host local events or educational seminars at your location (**sponsorship links**).
  • Promote events to media contacts and third-party websites like Eventbrite.
  • Offer scholarships or internships to local students via guidance counselor outreach (**promoting and linking on their website**).
  • Search for local web-savvy non-profits that will provide you with a link for a donation.
  • Partner with charities on press releases around your involvement in the community.

TAKING ACTION

SECRET 3

NEVER IGNORE YOUR REVIEWS

Never Ignore Your Reviews

As a local business, reviews (and your reputation) are invaluable assets. Positive reviews encourage people to do business with your company and have a massive impact on your overall ranking results. We can no longer simply depend on "word of mouth" referrals, can we?

In fact, soliciting positive local reviews is one of the most effective ways to improve your overall local ranking results.

> **National Positions is an excellent SEO company with a great team!**

> **Since working with them, our revenue has increased dramatically.**

> **By far the most legitimate internet marketing company around!**

According to the **2018 Moz Local Search Ranking Factors report**, reviews are thought to have a **15% impact** on how the search engines rank your site.

Beyond your search ranking, reviews are often the first thing people will see when Googling your business. It's a powerful first impression that you cannot ignore.

Which Review Sites Are the Best?

As we know, Google is the dominant search engine, so collecting Google reviews via your Google My Business page should be your prime focus. Think of GMB as your most powerful directory.

But on which other review sites should you focus your attention?

To uncover the most important review sites for your business — start with a Google search. Search for the biggest terms for your local business, then see which review sites pop up on the first page. These are sites that you should put all your efforts into.

In the example to the right, the search for a dentist in Westlake Village shows Yelp as an important review site.
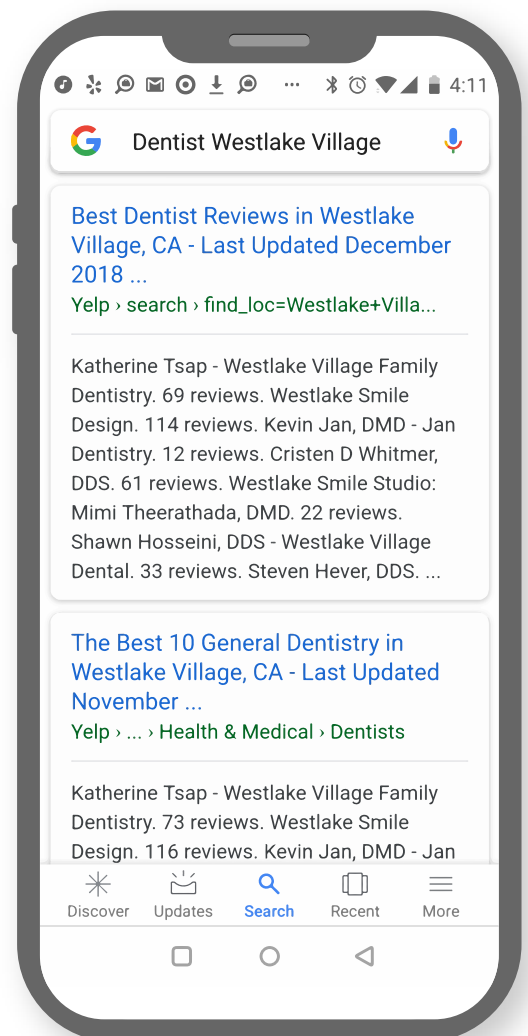
There very well may be some valuable directories out there that you're not aware of — yet. (You just might be surprised — in a good way.) Conducting a similar search for a DUI lawyer in Los Angeles returns directories such as **Yelp**, **Avvo**, **Justia**, and **FindLaw**.

G DUI lawyer Los Angeles

Best Dui Lawyer in Los Angeles, CA - Last Updated December 2018 - Yelp
Yelp app · Installed

Reviews on Dui Lawyer in Los Angeles, CA - The Law Offices of Hart J Levin, The Law Office of Damian Siwek, The H Law Group, Gold ...
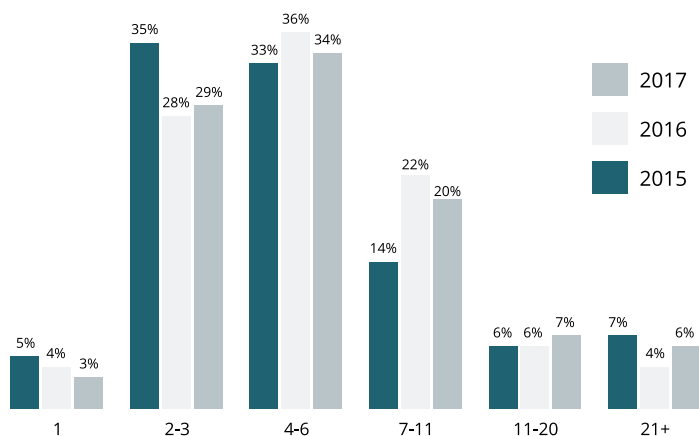
Find the best DUI & DWI lawyer in Los Angeles, CA - Avvo
Avvo.com › ... › California › Los Angeles

TIMELINESS OF OUR REVIEWS
(Google likes recent reviews)

VOLUME OF YOUR REVIEWS
(10 is better than 2)

STAR RATINGS
(the more stars, the better!)

REVIEW ENGAGEMENT
(responding to reviews, both positive and negative)

Business Reviews & Customer Trust

Legend:
2017
2016
2015

1: 5%, 4%, 3%
2-3: 35%, 28%, 29%
4-6: 33%, 36%, 34%
7-11: 14%, 22%, 20%
11-20: 6%, 6%, 7%
21+: 7%, 4%, 6%

Reviews Fuel Action
Reviews have a big impact on how much consumers trust your business. As you will see from a **2018 BrightLocal report**, most consumers read on average 4 to 6 reviews before deciding to interact with your business.

*All data sourced from BrightLocal study. Read original study **here**.*
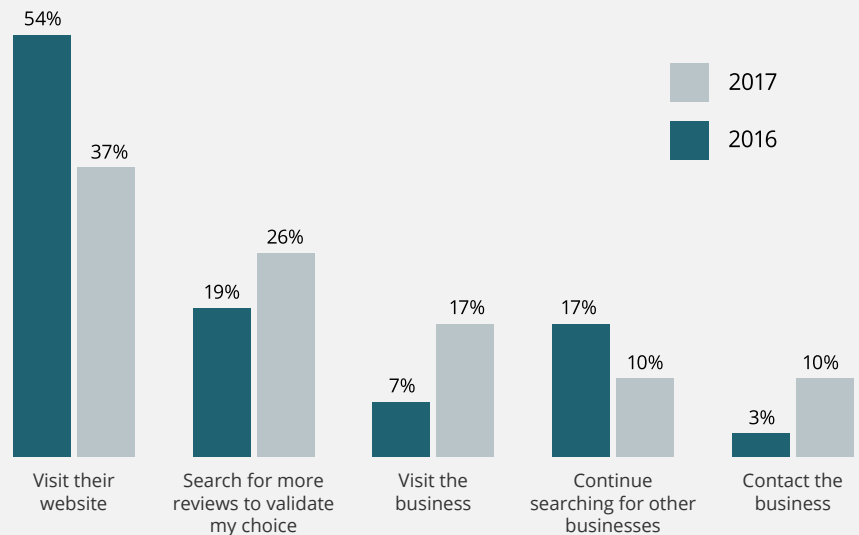
Key Review Statistics

- Consumers read an average of **10 online reviews** before trusting a local business
- **91%** of 18- to 34-year-olds trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations
- **89%** of consumers read businesses' responses to reviews
- **86%** of consumers read reviews for local businesses
- **57%** of consumers will only use a business if it has **4 or more stars**

Local Consumer Review Survey: **BrightLocal**

Positive Reviews & Typical Next Steps

Now, reading reviews is just the first step. The next step is usually clicking through to your website after reading positive reviews about your business. These click-throughs really help to boost the local SEO of your site.

*All data sourced from BrightLocal study. Read original study **here**.*

Legend: 2017 / 2016

Next Step	2016	2017
Visit their website	54%	37%
Search for more reviews to validate my choice	19%	26%
Visit the business	7%	17%
Continue searching for other businesses	17%	10%
Contact the business	3%	10%

Responding to Reviews

Responding to reviews is a powerful (and easy) tactic that can actually help improve your overall local ranking results. So, it's best practice to respond to all reviews — positive and negative.

Remember that a "negative" review and an "inappropriate" review are not one and the same. If you receive an unkind, untrue review that **violates Google's policies**, you can flag the review and often have the **review removed**.

If you receive a negative review, always thank the reviewer for the feedback (even if this is the last thing you feel like doing). Show empathy for their issue and attempt to offer a solution to the problem. Always offer the reviewer an alternative service or company that might better fit their needs.

Responding publicly also shows those reading reviews that your company cares about its clients or customers and that you always have their best intentions in mind.

TAKING ACTION

Make gathering reviews a key focus. Strategize with your team to collect customer contact information and request client reviews on a consistent basis.

SECRET 4

ATTRACT LOCAL CLIENTS WITH GMB

Attract Local Clients With GMB

Google My Business has evolved a lot during 2018 and can now be thought of as a new social media platform focused specifically on local business.

Unlike Google's failed attempt at social media with Google+, they are serious about making Google My Business an important part of the search landscape. Nowhere is this more apparent than on mobile search — where Google My Business posts are often highlighted at the top of the local results for a business.

So the question is… do GMB posts have an impact on the local results? The answer is a resounding "yes."
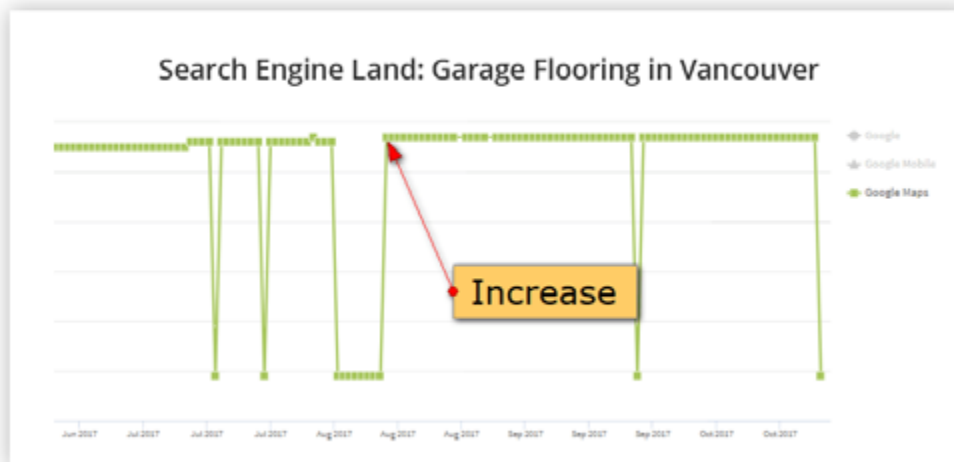

One Search Engine Land study (above) showed the impact of Google posts. The experiment revealed an increase from position four to position three (part of the Google 3-Pack) in less than a week for the term "garage flooring Vancouver" after adding GMB posts.

Google is expanding what you can do with posts, allowing the posting of photos, videos, promotional offers, and several call-to-action options. Consistent posting of relevant content about your local business can help fuel your business ranking in the search results.

Google has also added very detailed reporting — Google Insights — that will show you how well your Google My Business posts are doing.

To be successful with GMB posts make sure to post regularly and that your posts are relevant and helpful.

Post on GMB consistently (every business day). You can even repurpose your other social media posts as GMB posts to get started. Customize the CTA on each post that links readers to your content. Give them a click-to-call or book an appointment option.

TAKING ACTION
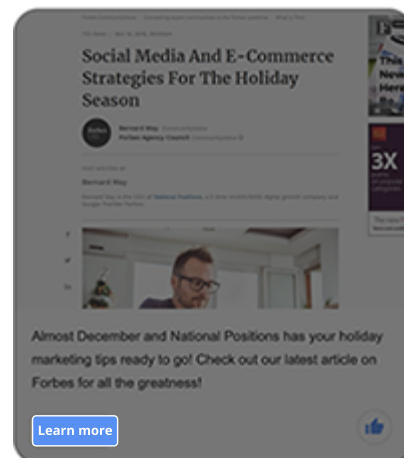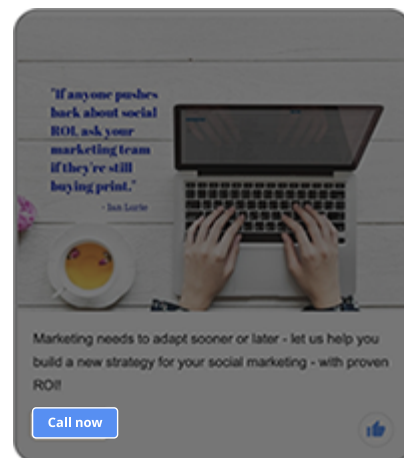
SECRET 5

LEVERAGE YOUR POWERFUL GMB "HOMEPAGE"

Leverage Your Powerful GMB "Homepage"

Your **Google My Business profile** is critical to your local search success. In fact, Google has been quietly building out their GMB profiles so that they provide more and more valuable information, making your GMB profile as important as your website.

Your website still matters, but with its detailed business information, posts, photos, Q&A, reviews, and much more, your GMB profile makes information readily available for those searching on the go.

Your GMB Profile

If you don't already have your GMB listing, head over to the Google My Business page and enter all your business information, including business name and address, and check to see if a current listing exists. The last thing you want to do is create a duplicate listing. If you don't have a listing — add one. If there is an existing listing, then **follow these steps**.

Next, let's optimize your GMB profile so that you show up in the Local Pack and Google Maps. So before you do anything, it is important that you claim and verify your Google My Business profile. If you haven't done this already, you can **claim your profile here**.
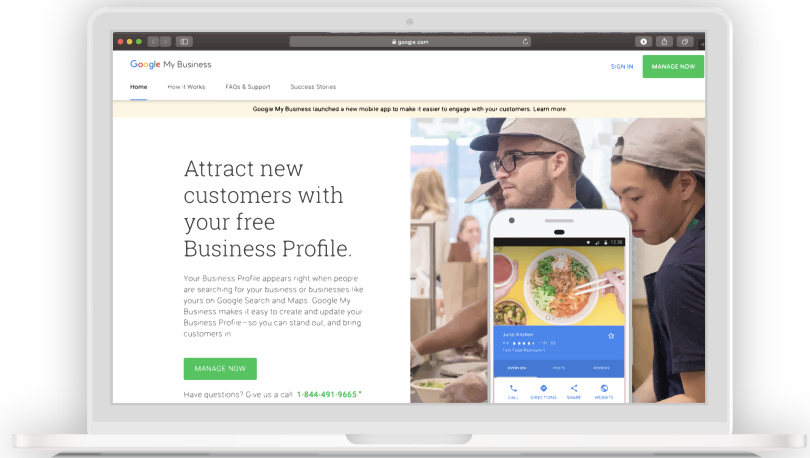
Once you've completed this step, you're ready to take advantage of some of the secrets that (if completed properly) can greatly increase your chances of showing up in the Google Local Pack.

Make sure that when you add your listing, you fill out as much information as you possibly can. What you need to remember is that the more complete your GMB listing is, the more likely you are to show up in the search results.

Because of this, I cannot emphasize enough **how important it is to make sure that your profile is as complete as possible**.

TAKING ACTION

One of the biggest mistakes that many local businesses make is they claim their profile and then... do nothing. You should take advantage of all the features that Google offers when you set up your profile. To be successful you will need to revisit and update your profile on a regular basis.
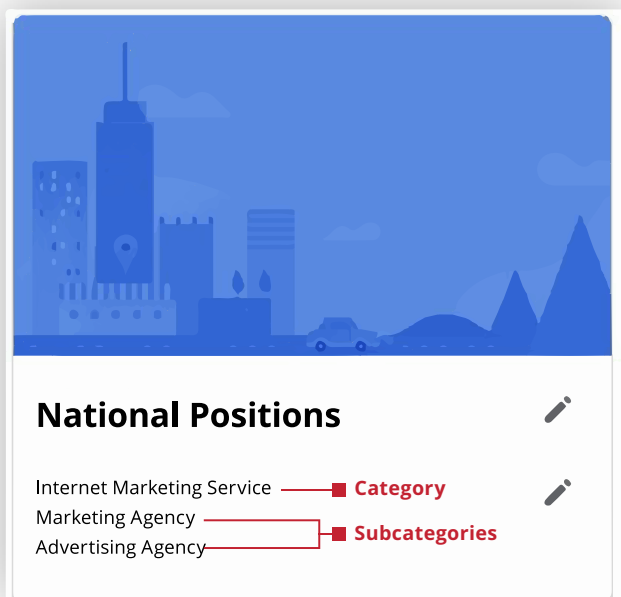
Choosing the Right GMB Category

So, now you know how important your profile is, but choosing the right primary category is paramount to your listing's success. There are currently over 4,000 GMB categories to choose from, which can be a tad overwhelming. But according to **Moz's Local Search Factors for 2018**, your category selection is the top-ranking factor besides your physical location. So choose wisely.

Use the additional categories and be sure to add all of the ones that are applicable to your business. **For example**, if you run a local automotive dealership, you may do more than sell vehicles. Automotive maintenance, retail factory automotive parts, or auto body repair may all be services that your dealership also provides. Check the category options regularly as they are often updated, and new opportunities may become available for your business.

National Positions

Internet Marketing Service —— ■ **Category**
Marketing Agency ——
Advertising Agency —— ■ **Subcategories**

Hacking Your Competitors' Categories

You can step up your game and find the GMB categories of your competitors by using this hack.

Here is an example with a search for "DUI Lawyers Orange County":

1 Go to their maps listing

2 Right-click and view source

3 Ctrl-F (find) and search for the primary category (enter the category name that is listed on their GMB listing)

[DUI Lawyers Orange County\",null, [\"Criminal Justice Attorney\", \"Business Service\",\"Justice\",\"Law Firm\",\"Personal Services\", \"Trial Attorney"]

The snippet above shows us that this lawyer is using several categories, such as "criminal justice attorney, "law firm," and "trial attorney."

Choosing Your GMB Call-In Number

It is best practice to choose a local telephone number rather than a toll-free number, but it is not necessary to include a telephone number from your website.

One trick that we suggest our clients use is this: set up a special **call tracking number** so that you can track all unique inquiries from GMB.

Remember that if you rely on the number of calls reported by GMB Insights, you are only seeing calls generated from mobile devices, as Google can only track those users who use the click-to-call functionality. This cuts out all call tracking from desktops or from users who simply dial the number without clicking on it.

Business Name

This should be the name that you use for your business everywhere else — on your signs, website, business cards — your actual business name.

You might have noticed other businesses keyword stuff. Please don't do this.

You will be found out and you will be penalized. You might be located in Los Angeles, but if your business name is not Los Angeles Dry Cleaners, then we don't recommend you use the location name. In fact, all your directory listings should be consistent and use your genuine business name.

Business Address

Use the address that customers use to find your business. As location is so important in the algorithm, you might be tempted to use a fake address in an area where you are not currently located. The simple answer is that this tactic will ultimately fail. Google uses numerous sources to verify a business address and using fake addresses could have a negative impact on your legitimate address.

So what do you do if you run multiple businesses out of the same address? The simple answer is to use the one address for each of the businesses. Google completely ignores suite numbers.

GMB Photos and Videos

Photos and videos are important, and we have seen a direct, positive impact on rankings when photos and videos are consistently uploaded to Google My Business. Make sure that your content is geotagged. In fact, most cameras and cell phones today embed the city name with the image, which makes your life much easier.

GMB Description

A lot has been written about the GMB description. Our suggestion is not to keyword stuff the description and to keep the content natural. You're allowed 750 characters in your business description, but only 250 characters show up before they get cut off in the Knowledge Panel. So you want to make sure that you carefully create your business description and put the most important information and keywords, including your city, towards the beginning of the description.

Completing Your Profile

Google is constantly adding great new features to GMB, so it is important to review and make sure that your profile is as complete as possible. Below are some additional features that we think are extremely important to your success with GMB.

- Make sure your profile is constantly updated. For instance, changing your hours of operation over a holiday is an important detail to help keep searchers in the know.
- Ask clients to ask questions on the Q&A section of your site and be sure to write solid, helpful responses.
- Remember to gather and respond to reviews, whether positive or negative.

Service Area Businesses

If you don't have a physical store but you service a particular area — such as painters, roofers, plumbers, pool cleaners, or any other profession that needs to come out to your home or business to conduct business — you need to set your business up in Google My Business as a **Service Area Business (SAB)**.

For SABs, many of the same GMB factors apply, including having a well optimized website, having reviews, and a good link profile. The difference is that your address will be connected to a target city or radius around your business. There are, however, a few factors that can really help your SAB.

Try to build links from cities or suburbs that you serve.

Populate your website with content related to the cities that you serve.

Get reviews from the areas that you serve. Try and ask reviewers to include the names of the cities in their reviews. Mark up your reviews with local business schema.

Post photos and videos from your cell phone or camera of jobs that you have completed in the various areas that you serve.

Things You Should Avoid

It is tempting to ask a friend if you can use their office address or get a PO Box or use a business suite, so you have a presence in another city. As tempting as these tactics might be, they usually don't work. Google uses government and other third-party data to confirm your current address. They also know the addresses for all PO Boxes and business suites in the country. Some of these tactics might work in the short term but never in the long term.

TAKING ACTION

Google is regularly adding Google My Business profile options, so be sure you are staying up to date and updating your profile with photos, videos, business hours, Q&As, etc.
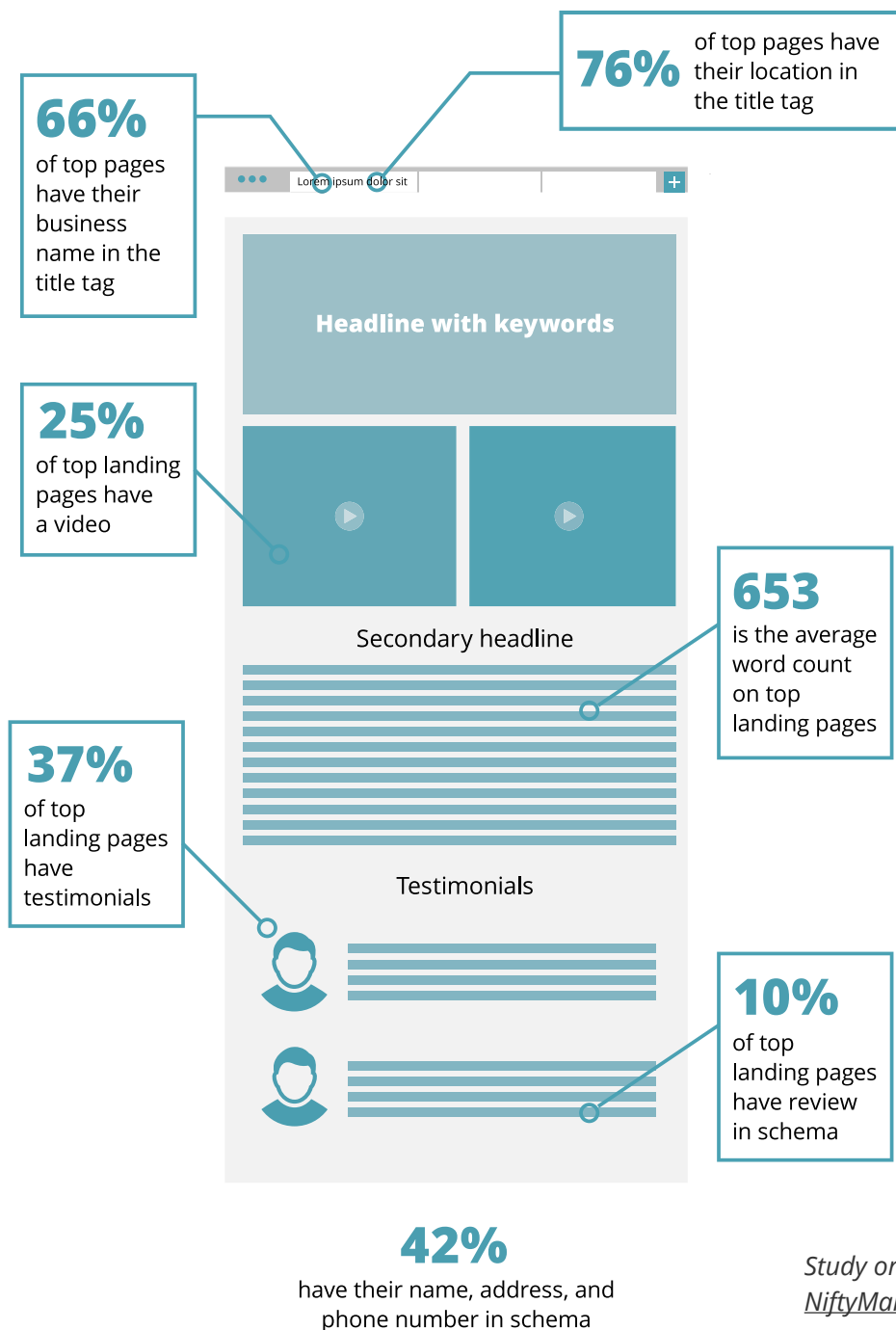
SECRET 6

IMPROVE SITE STRUCTURE FOR BETTER RANKINGS

Improve Site Structure for Better Rankings

There are a number of basic structural changes you can make to your web pages that can improve your website's relevance and results. Below is an infographic based on a study by Nifty Marketing that collected data from top ranking websites in the 50 largest metro areas in the US. The study compared desktop, tablet, and mobile, and resulted in the following insights.

76% of top pages have their location in the title tag

66% of top pages have their business name in the title tag

Lorem ipsum dolor sit

Headline with keywords

25% of top landing pages have a video

Secondary headline

653 is the average word count on top landing pages

37% of top landing pages have testimonials

Testimonials

10% of top landing pages have review in schema

42% have their name, address, and phone number in schema

Study originally done by NiftyMarketing.com

TAKING ACTION

Focus on your top landing pages. Make sure that they are correctly formatted with the right meta tags. Add video content and testimonials to improve user experience and conversion.

SECRET 7
FUEL GROWTH WITH GOOGLE KNOWLEDGE PANEL

Fuel Growth With Google Knowledge Panel

This secret is something that, according to a November 2018 Moz study, is used by less than **20% of in-house marketers**. This means you can really take advantage of this information to beat out the majority of local businesses.

The Knowledge Panel is very prevalent in local searches. It is the box that shows up to the right or above the search results. It typically includes information about your business or answers to frequently asked questions.

Typically, Google returns 10 organic results on each page of the search results. The Knowledge Graph, or Knowledge Panel, is often referred to as "Position Zero," since this result typically shows up before any other results on the search page.
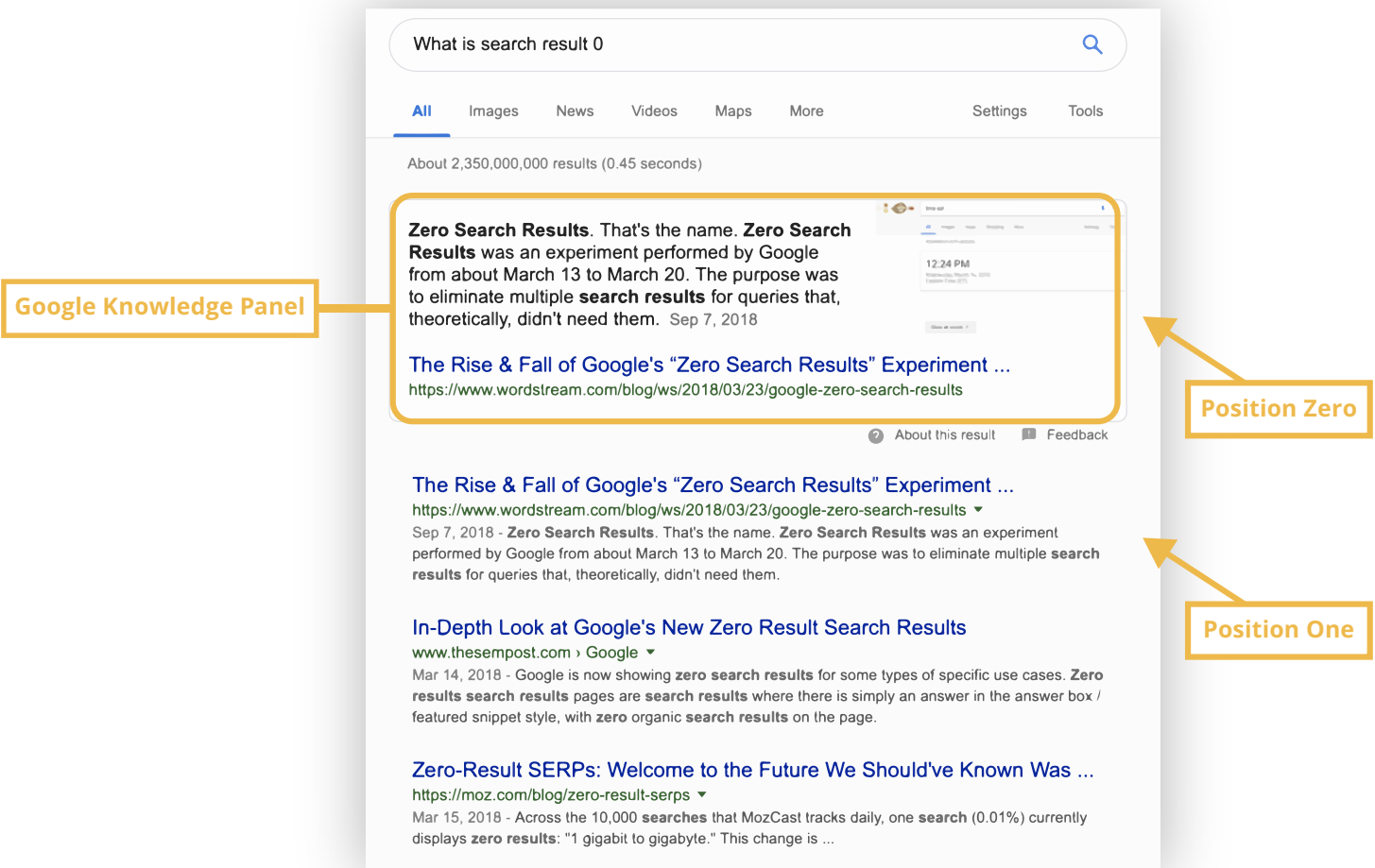
So how do you impact the Knowledge Panel and take advantage of this feature?

Use Schema Markup

This is code that you put on your website that allows the search engines to better read and understand the information on your site. One of the most important schema markups is for local schema.

```
"@context": "http://schema.org",
"@type": "Attorney",
"name": "Todd A. Landgren, Attorney at Law",
"openingHours": "Mo 0900-0859 Tu 0900-0859 We 0900-0859 Th 0900-0859 Fr 0900-0859
0859",
"additionalProperty": "",
"additionalType": "",
"areaServed": {
"@type": "GeoCircle",
"name": "Todd A. Landgren, Attorney at Law",
"geoMidpoint": {
"@type": "GeoCoordinates",
"postalCode": "92612",
"latitude": "33.655800",
"longitude": "-117.861190",
"description": "Our office location can be found in Irvine.",
"name": "Todd A. Landgren, Attorney at Law"
},
"description": "Our award-winning attorneys have represented over 3,000 individuals accused of driving
under the influence, which is why we are one of the best law firms in Southern California."
},
"email": "info@carlawdui.com",
"address": {
"@type": "PostalAddress",
"postalCode": "92612",
"addressRegion": "California",
"addressCountry": "United States",
"streetAddress": "19782 MacArthur Blvd #225",
"addressLocality": "Irvine"
```

As you see in the image above, local schema helps the search engine crawlers understand the different elements of your business's address, making it easier for them to index your website and return your website in search results.

In addition to your address, the following can also be added utilizing your own schema formats: prices, star ratings, reviews, directions to your physical location, store hours, images, and videos.

Google is also pulling data from your GMB listing — business hours, address, phone number, Google posts, etc. — to populate the Knowledge Graph about your business.

Questions & Answers

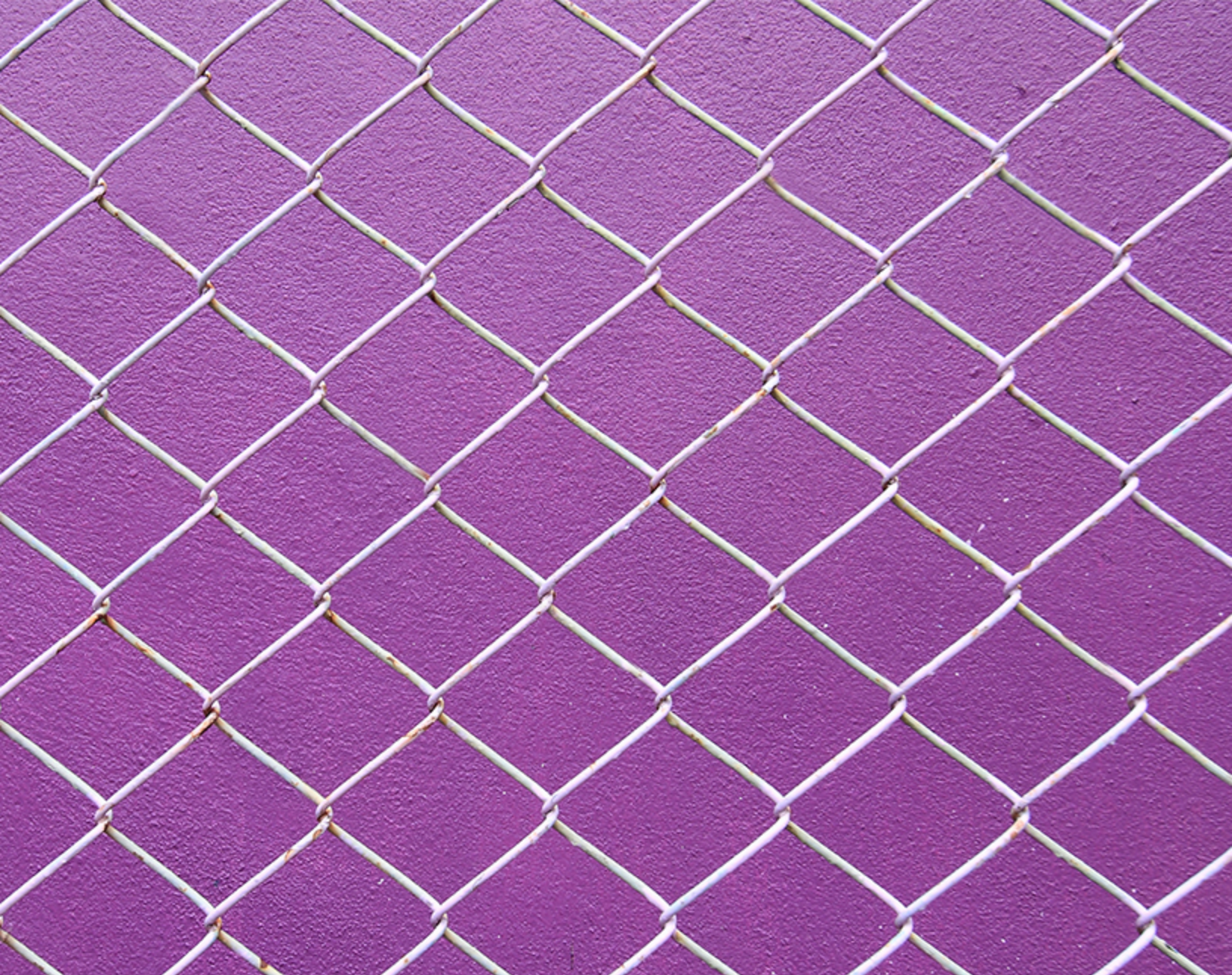To show up in the Q&A Knowledge Graph, you need to create helpful answers to questions that your clients may have. This can typically be accomplished by adding frequently asked questions formatted in Q&A schema.

TAKING ACTION

Incorporate schema throughout your site — on every page — to take full advantage of the Google Knowledge Panel.

SECRET 8
## USE INTERNAL LINKS - THE MISSING LINKS

Use Internal Links - The Missing Links

When people think of linking, the first thing that comes to mind are backlinks pointing to your site. However, internal links (links between pages on your site) can really help to boost the authority of your website.

Internal links help visitors and the Google crawler find all the pages on your website. These internal links show the search engine crawlers the hierarchy and the value (link equity) of the pages on your site.

An effective SEO strategy begins by designing a site's architecture. The best structure for a website is a pyramid, with the homepage being at the top of the pyramid. The category pages that link from the homepage have less link power (link equity), and as we get further and further from the homepage, link value diminishes.

When you build out the structure of your site, you want to make sure that you have the least number of clicks from the homepage to internal pages. This ensures that ranking power flows throughout the website. The structure illustrated below is a typical website structure with category and subcategory pages.
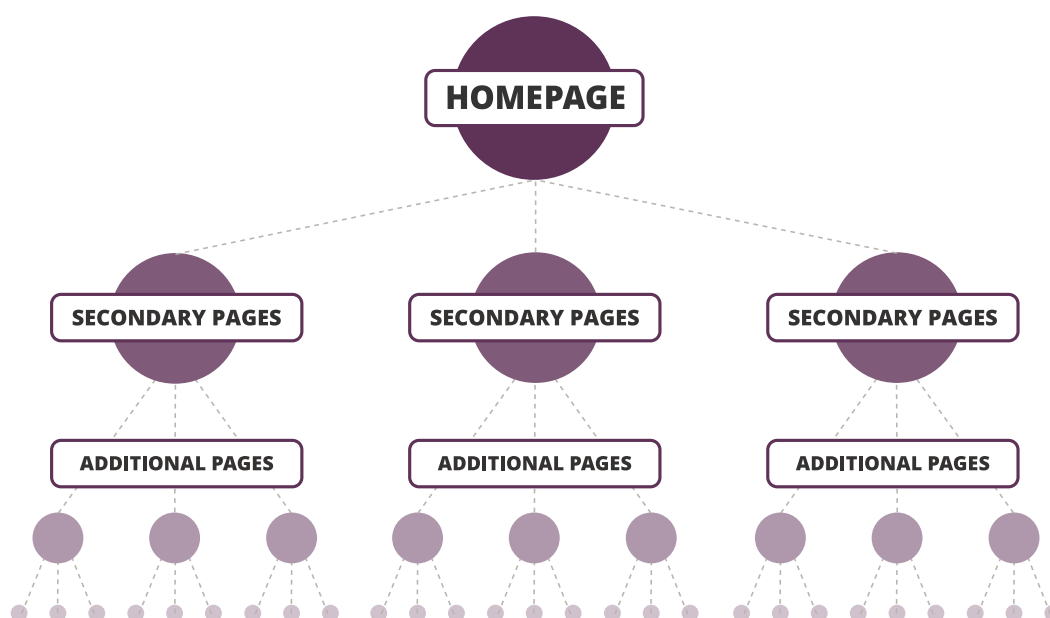
Impacting Page Relevance Through Internal Linking

The power of internal linking is not typically well understood by digital marketers. It is the secret weapon that, if unleashed correctly, can be used to increase the value or relevance of any page on your website.

There are two factors that can boost the relevance of a page:

1 How it links to the homepage or top level pages. The higher the page is linked in the hierarchy, the more important Google considers it.

2 By grouping like pages together. Here's an example for a dentist:

STEP 1: Link all cosmetic dentistry pages to the homepage.

STEP 2: Link each cosmetic dentistry page together.

RESULT: This strengthens cosmetic dentistry topic and keyword.

Ensuring Your Web Pages Are Discoverable

One of the most important goals of any SEO campaign is to make sure Google makes a copy of your pages on their servers — known as the Google Index. Only once your pages are indexed can they be returned in the search results.

Make the search engine crawlers' job easier and ensure that all pages on your site are indexed. How? By including a physical sitemap, an XML sitemap, and by submitting your sitemap to Google through Google's Search Console.

Further Internal Linking Tips:

1 Link your most important categories to the homepage.

2 Make sure that you build out subcategory pages that can support the category pages.

3 Make sure you have a reasonable number of links from your homepage and footer.

4 Make sure these pages are all logically linked to one another.

5 Overdoing any strategy can backfire.

6 Make sure that each page is relevant and helpful in your hierarchy.

7 Remove any pages that are low quality and add little or no value to the hierarchy.

8 Make sure you have a page for each of your locations if you have a multi-location business.

9 Make sure your content looks natural and none of your pages are over-optimized.

TAKING ACTION

Use programs like _Screaming Frog_ to review your current site architecture. Redesign your website where necessary to make sure that your most important pages are linked from the homepage or top category pages.

SECRET 9

FOCUS ON GEO RELEVANCE

Focus on Geo Relevance

When most people think of local search, they think of placing their business in local directories and setting up their GMB profile. But local geo relevance is much more than this. In fact, it can be one of your biggest opportunities for growth in 2019.

A way for you to make your content stand out is to write helpful local content related to your business. For instance, a plumbing business in the North East could write about how to avoid the effects of freezing pipes, while a plumber in southern California might write content about low flush toilets and how to conserve water. This kind of local-based content not only makes you more relevant but at the same time helps you boost your web results.

Local content should be added to your blog or directly onto your service pages. Some types of geo-relevant content that work well include:

Local events

Content related to your industry that can be helpful to people in your area such as "How will this holiday weekend affect traffic on the 405?"

Recent photos and videos of jobs you have completed

Helpful local resources

Local directories

Local charities and sponsorships

Local statistics

Reviews that include mention of the location

Local news stories related to your business

Besides making your site relevant for location-based keywords, you ultimately want to position yourself online as the local thought leader in your field.

Creating local content should be included in your blog, social media, reviews, and local landing pages. It is a good idea to focus more on video and image-based content as users, especially on mobile, have less patience for written content.

TAKING ACTION

Focus on building content around the local areas that you serve. Make sure that the content is helpful, unique, and includes geotagged photos and video.

SECRET 10

CREATE RELEVANCE AND HIGHER AUTHORITY

Create Relevance and Higher Authority

In August 2018, Google began rolling out what is known as the Core Algorithm Update that focuses on content and relevance.

Now, the length and quality of your content holds little weight. What matters is whether or not site visitors find the content to be helpful and relevant.

Google's artificial intelligence looks at the content on your web page and how it matches users' intent or their goal for landing on your site.

When you think of developing content for your website in 2019, don't think simply about text copy, keyword density, and copy length. Instead, think about helpfulness and relevance.

Here are some things to consider:
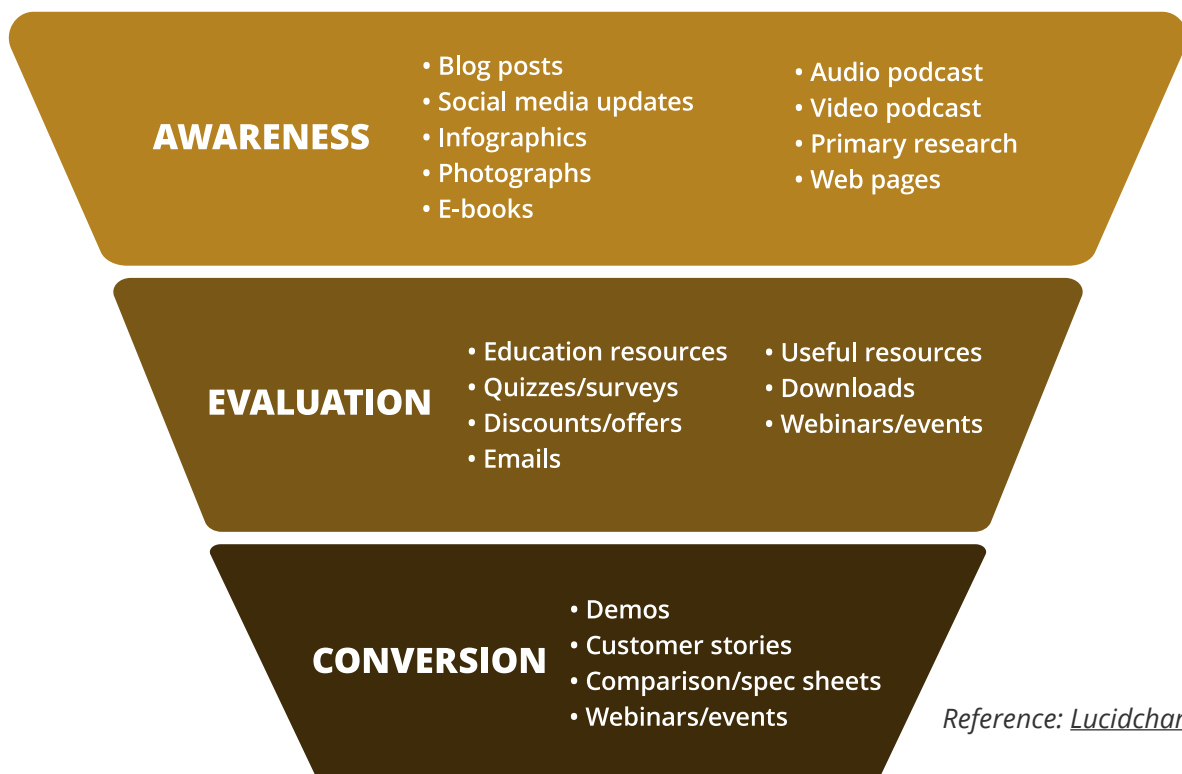
Is the content unique?	Is the content well written?	Is the content well researched?

Less Is More

If you have to decide between quantity and quality, always opt for quality. It is important to identify the pages on your site with low-quality or thin content that you can combine or eliminate altogether from your site. You can eliminate worthless content by looking at Google Analytics and Google Search Console to identify pages with little or no traffic.

Understanding Your Content Funnel

It goes without saying that not all customers are ready to buy — yet. We need to nurture with content as our customers move from awareness to evaluation and then to conversion. It is important that you build content that talks to each stage in the funnel so that you can capture interested visitors on their purchase journey.

AWARENESS
- Blog posts
- Social media updates
- Infographics
- Photographs
- E-books
- Audio podcast
- Video podcast
- Primary research
- Web pages

EVALUATION
- Education resources
- Quizzes/surveys
- Discounts/offers
- Emails
- Useful resources
- Downloads
- Webinars/events

CONVERSION
- Demos
- Customer stories
- Comparison/spec sheets
- Webinars/events

Reference: Lucidchart

Focus on Key Pages

The 80/20 content principle states that 20% of all your content generates 80% of your sales or leads. You can identify these 20% of pages by looking for the top performing pages in Google Analytics and looking for the pages on your site that generate the most traffic. Of these pages, identify what you can do to make them more relevant.

Ask yourself the following:

? Can you take dense content and turn it into bullet point lists?

? Can you add images, infographics, or videos to improve the usability?

? Do the pages have calls to action?

? Can you add more white space?

? Can you bold or highlight key concepts so it's easy for visitors to skim the content?

Make sure that you capitalize on the content by having strong calls to action. You have the ability to direct visitors to take the action you want them to — if you do this correctly.

TAKING ACTION

1. **Identify the most important pages on your website and focus on improving the content relevancy and usefulness.**
2. **Find and compare your content to that of your top competitors.**
3. **Consolidate or eliminate thin or poor-quality content from your website.**

SECRET 11

CAPITALIZE ON USER BEHAVIOR

Capitalize on User Behavior

Now we are going to take a look at your site and just how useful it is, according to your visitors.

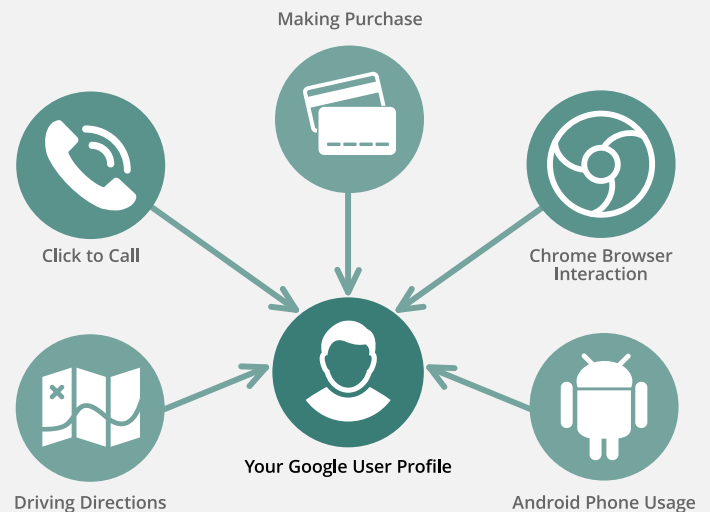The first question you should ask is:

Are they finding the stuff they are looking for or are they just looking around and then leaving?

In an ideal world your web page provides the visitor with exactly what they are looking for.

Today, Google's algorithm focuses on the user's behavior while on your site. As Google's machine learning gets more sophisticated, it's even tracking these types of behaviors:

- The time a user spent on a page
- How many pages they visited
- If visitors are finding what they are looking for
- If they are purchasing from the page
- How they interact with the page from their Chrome browser
- If they clicked to call
- If they asked for driving instructions
- How they used their Android phones when they visited a page (Google data)

Tracking Users' Behavior via Machine Learning

Making Purchase

Click to Call

Chrome Browser Interaction

Driving Directions

Your Google User Profile

Android Phone Usage

You would be amazed at how many web pages have no goal. Calls to action (CTAs) are typically links or buttons. Special focus should be placed on colors, sizes, and content — each of which can have a huge impact on goal conversions.

TAKING ACTION

○ **Use Google Analytics to identify the pages on your website with a high click-through rate. Begin by improving the user experience on these pages.**

○ **Consider the pages with a high bounce rate. These are pages where people are not finding the content helpful. These pages should be tackled next.**

○ **Use programs like Hotjar, Lucky Orange, or the Conversion Growth Pack from National Positions. They will allow you to see heatmaps and visitor screen recordings, so you know what your users find most valuable and what actions they take.**

SECRET 12

KEEP MOVING TOWARD MOBILE

Keep Moving Toward Mobile

You have your phone within arm's reach right now. If you need to find anything, you can grab your phone and find it in seconds. This same convenience is why nearly **60% of all web traffic** in the United States comes from mobile devices (and over 50% worldwide).

Thinking "mobile first" should be your priority with search. From your website experience to making Google love you even more — mobile first is non-negotiable.

Mobile First & Google

Does having a prime mobile website affect your search rankings? Yes, 100%. In early 2018, **Google officially announced** its mobile-first indexing of websites, giving search priority to businesses that have a mobile version of their website.

Why? With so much search traffic shifting to mobile, Google needs to provide the best mobile experience to its users. It makes no sense to provide websites in the search results on a mobile device that cannot be viewed from that same device, does it? So, this means building your website with the mobile experience in mind first and desktop second, instead of the other way around. Hence the term "mobile first."
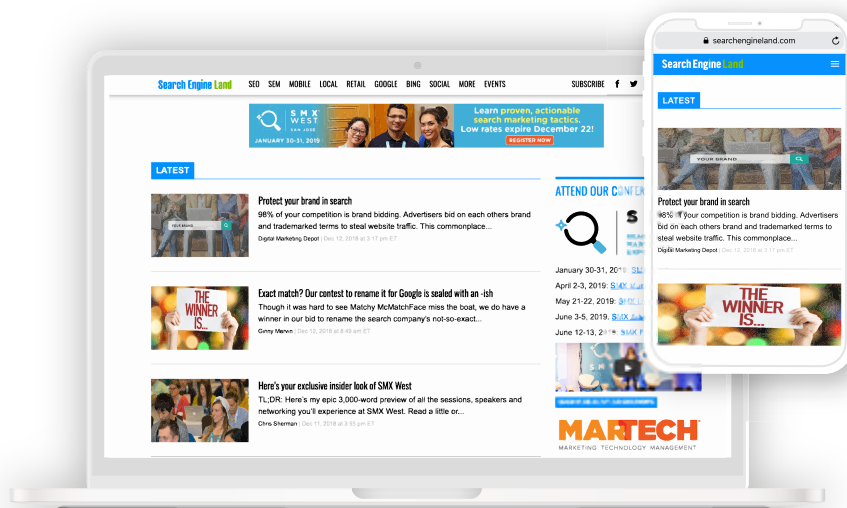
Mobile User Experience

Nearly **70% of customers** are more likely to make a purchase from a company with a mobile site that easily answers their questions or concerns. How does this apply to you? Simple — you need to provide a fantastic mobile user experience. Your customers use mobile sites differently than desktop sites, and your mobile site needs to accommodate them and adapt to how they use their device. These differences could include:
- Swiping vs. clicking
- Using voice to search vs. typing
- Reading bold "chunky" text vs. long-form text
- Shorter forms vs. longer forms
- Large bold images vs. smaller "scattered" images

You can't afford to ignore the mobile user experience any longer. Mobile websites need to be faster, simpler, and clearer to capture and retain attention. The better your mobile experience, the better your chances are to move to the top of the search rankings on mobile. Here is a checklist to get you started!

The Mobile User Experience Top 10!

1 Use large, bold homepage banners with your latest promotions.

2 Incorporate clear, clean images that are clickable.

3 Focus on large text that is simple to read when scrolling.

4 Remember contrasting colors make text easier to read.

5 Include large buttons and navigation icons for easy clicking.

6 Use "one-click" sign-in and "click-to-call" buttons.

7 Try "collage" design formats to simplify product layouts.

8 Always have clear, prominent calls to action (buy now, subscribe, contact, etc.).

9 Mobile pop-ups — don't use them!

10 Search bars are a must for ecommerce sites.

Mobile Load Speed

Speed is power! If there is one thing that matters on mobile, it is speed. Do you like waiting for a table at a restaurant? Or for the light to turn green? No? Me either.

The longer you have to wait for anything, the more frustrated you become. The same goes for visitors trying to use your mobile site. Studies by Google have shown that the longer users wait, the probability they will "bounce" skyrockets.

The name of the game is speed. Less than 3 seconds is your goal, according to Google. The faster your site loads, the more likely you are to keep the user's attention and make that next sale. It's so important that Google has officially made "speed" a mobile ranking factor.

In short, a fast loading mobile site contributes to a positive search ranking on Google.

Need to speed up your mobile site? Here are some places to start:
- Test your mobile speed with **Think With Google**.
- Use a mobile responsive design.
- Try a minimalist design (to reduce **code bloat**).
- Use fewer images and/or compress images.
- Don't use custom fonts.

As page load time goes from:

1s to 3s the probability of bounce **increases 32%**

1s to 5s the probability of bounce **increases 90%**

1s to 6s the probability of bounce **increases 106%**

1s to 10s the probability of bounce **increases 123%**

Source: Google/SOASTA Research, 2017.

Local Mobile Impact

Want to know where mobile search really makes an impact? Local businesses and local audiences.

Have you noticed that wherever you are, Google will give you search results that are closest to you?

The fact is that of the nearly 70% of users who use their mobile device for shopping **80% to 90% of them search with local intent**. All this jargon basically means that a lot of people searching on mobile are looking for local businesses...like yours!

80%-90% of online shoppers search with local intent

If your user experience is on point, your site speed is great, and your content is valuable, you have a much higher chance of capturing these local customers. This local focus is yet another reason that in addition to your mobile site's readiness, you need to have a complete and attractive Google My Business profile.

TAKING ACTION

Focus your website design on the "mobile experience" first, then the desktop experience. Use programs such as Google's Mobile Tester to identify issues with your mobile environment.

SECRET 13

HEY GOOGLE, WHAT ABOUT VOICE SEARCH?

Hey Google, What About Voice Search?

One thing that all marketers agree on is that voice search is the fastest growing trend in SEO.

The good news is that we're still in a transitional period, as more users move to voice searches over traditional searches. In fact, **Gartner predicts** that voice activated searches will account for **30% of all web-browsing sessions in 2020**. This trend will only grow as more people embrace mobile and home devices such as Amazon Alexa, Apple HomePod, Google Assistant, Microsoft Cortana, and Samsung Bixby.

It is estimated that at the end of 2018, **48% of American households** will own at least one of these devices. So get ready, Alexa's listening!

Use Natural Speech

The fact is this: the way we speak is quite different from the way we write, or in this case, search. While our fingers and thumbs have grown accustomed to using keywords and locations, our speech is more free-flowing and far less robotic (usually).

We might **type** a search like this: "basketball shoes Los Angeles." While **speaking** the same search, we might say, "Where can I buy some basketball shoes?" This natural way of speaking is something that voice search technology has learned to adapt to.

According to a **2017 Google study**, 70% of all searches utilizing the Google Assistant are using a more natural speech pattern.

What does this mean? It means that digital assistants (for the most part) understand what we are trying to say. This also means that, to take advantage of voice search, you want to start incorporating a more natural, conversational flow into your content. Adding more questions and answers on your site is a great way to get started.

Try Long-Tail Keywords

Did you notice something else about the example about basketball shoes I shared with you?

If you didn't catch it, the voice search contained more words than the written search. In SEO, we refer to these as "long-tail keywords" or "key phrases." When we speak, we add details and context that make our searches more specific. Contextual words like "today," "in the color red," or "artisanal," can make simple keyword searches into long-tail keyword searches (which tend to run from three to five words in length).

Short vs. Long Tail Searches
- "Pizza" vs. "Where can I get New York style pizza?"
- "Designer shoes" vs. "Where can I get a pair of Yeezys?"
- "Living room furniture" vs. "Reclaimed distressed wood coffee table"
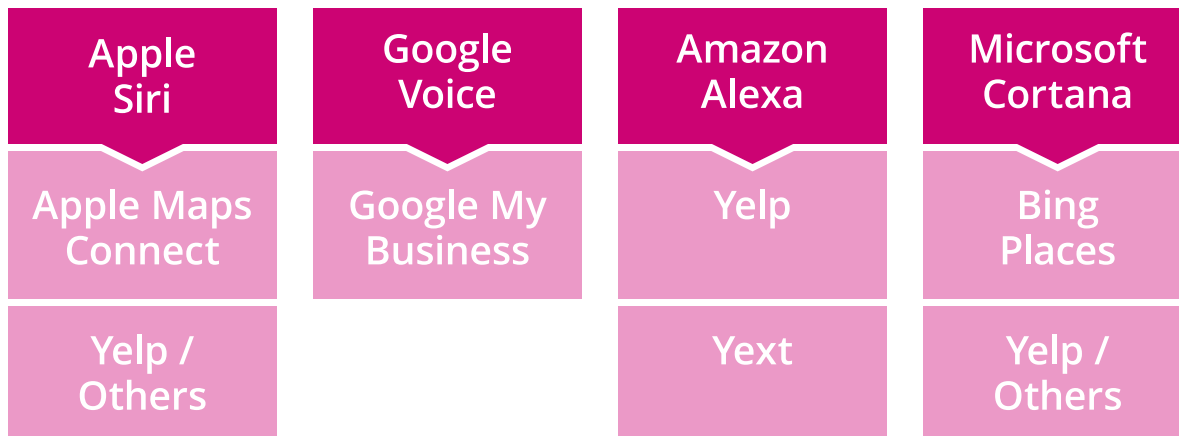
Voice search is here to stay, and the more people who use it, the more we will need to adapt.

The good news is that using natural speech patterns and incorporating longer-tail keywords often go hand in hand. Before going live with your content, read it out loud to make sure it follows a natural cadence like a regular conversation.

Optimize Your Local Listings

Each of the voice search engines use different local directories to make local business recommendations. It is important that you optimize your local listings for each of the voice-based search engines (see image below).

Apple Siri	Google Voice	Amazon Alexa	Microsoft Cortana
Apple Maps Connect	Google My Business	Yelp	Bing Places
Yelp / Others		Yext	Yelp / Others

In Secret 7, I discussed schema markup and how you can format your data so that it is easily read, indexed, and formatted by the search engine servers. One of the ways to get your answers chosen by the search engines is to set up a frequently asked questions page that answers questions around your business. According to Backlinko, the typical voice search result is 29 words in length, so make sure to make your answers within that range.

TAKING ACTION

○ **Start to build voice SEO into your strategy. Make sure you are listed in all of the directories that are most important to voice search (GMB, Yelp, etc.).**

○ **Make sure to focus on voice-related keyword selection, schema markup, and FAQs to capture voice search traffic.**

SECRET 14

DRIVE HIGHER CLICK-THROUGH RATES

Drive Higher Click-Through Rates

Click-through rate (CTR), in organic search, is the percentage of people who click on your listings directly from the search results. The higher your CTR, the more valuable Google may deem your content, and in turn, provide it more often in related searches.
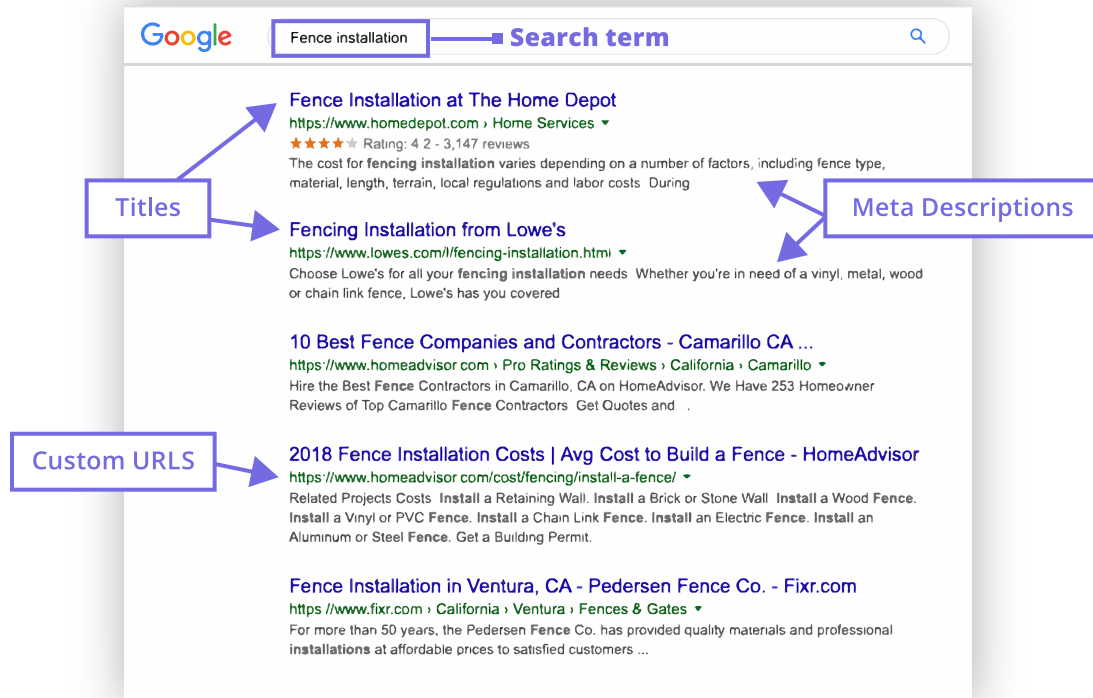
As your content populates the search results, your title and meta descriptions will become contributing factors as to whether or not **your** content is selected by the search engine.

Including keywords in your title descriptions and meta descriptions, as well as your custom URLs, can all contribute to your content being shown in the search results. Each piece of the puzzle is greater than the sum of its parts, so make sure that each piece is thorough and complete.

According to a **study conducted by WordStream**, search results with high click-through rates tend to rank higher in the SERPs.

These sites with high click-through rates also tend to have higher than average conversions.

Keywords/Pages with above expected CTR tend to rank higher in search results
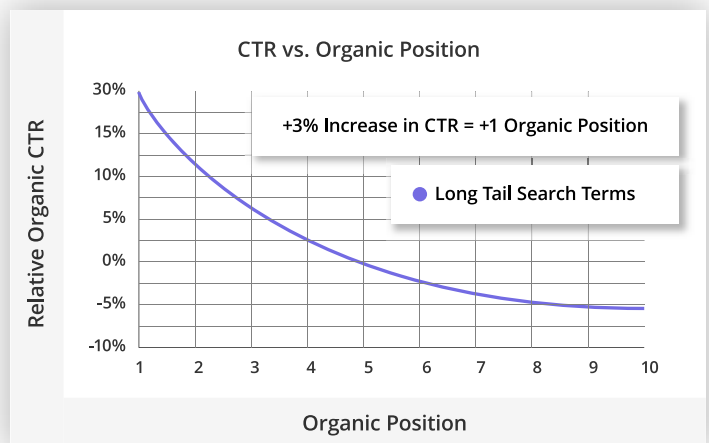
Source: WordStream

Keywords/Pages with above expected CTR tend to higher conversions

Higher CTR = Higher Conversion Rates

Search Conversion Rate (y-axis): 0.0%, 0.5%, 1.0%, 1.5%, 2.0%, 2.5%

Search Click-Through Rate (x-axis): 0%, 5%, 10%, 15%, 20%, 25%

TAKING ACTION
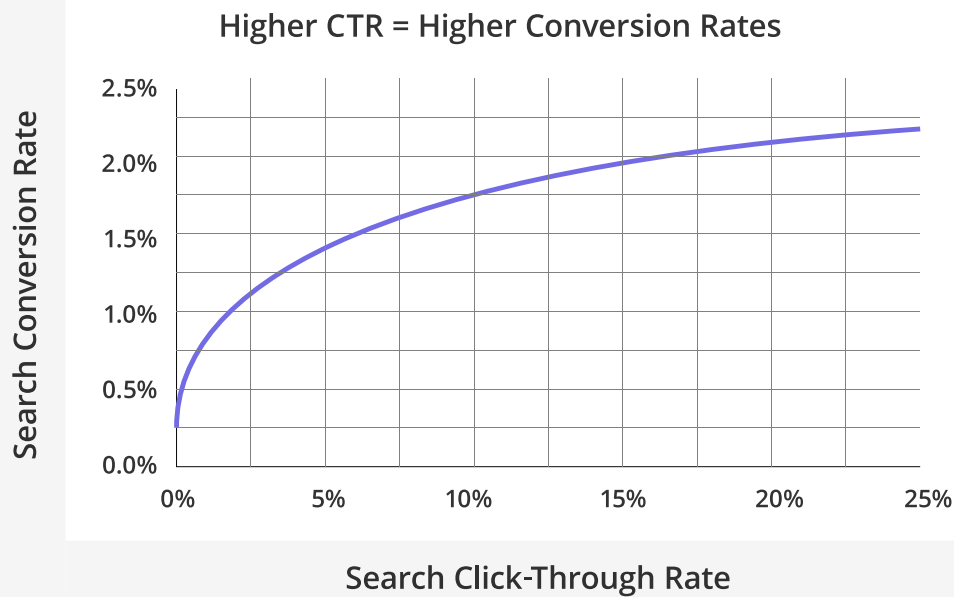
○ Incorporate star ratings into your listing when possible. Star ratings catch the eye of the searcher and help increase CTR.

○ Make your titles interesting and punchy (not keyword heavy), keeping the following in mind: use emotion, be relatable, use a numbered list, and be descriptive.

○ Make sure your title and meta tags are helpful from a marketing perspective and not just optimized for SEO.

○ Include your telephone number in the title tag to increase conversion.

○ Use descriptive URLs to increase CTR.

○ Test your headlines on Google Pay Per Click and Facebook posts, and then apply these to your organic rankings.

○ Use the table below, WordStream summarizes how to best format your title tag.

THE FORMAT	EMOTIONAL HOOK	CONTENT TYPE	YOUR SUBJECT
• List	• Amazing	• Images	• Love
• Quiz	• Insane	• Quotes	• Cats
• Infographic	• Powerful	• Pictures	• Fitness
• Facts	• Unreal	• Facts	• Health
• Strategies	• Shocking	• Strategies	• Marketing

SECRET 15

CONSOLIDATE CONTENT FOR GREATER IMPACT

Consolidate Content for Greater Impact

You need to cut to the bone and get to the point faster than ever before. There is too much content (being produced very rapidly) online to waste any amount of your readers' time.

What do you do? Why do you do it? How do you provide more value? What problem do you solve? Who is your brand or service best suited for?

If you spend any amount of time dancing around the main point, it is time to change your shoes and get to the point faster.

Getting to the Point

SEO used to be more basic — high volumes of content, lots of places for keywords and phrases (along with best practices), and you were well on your way. However, the context and the ***value*** provided by your content has taken center stage. Content that doesn't provide value does not keep buyers on your site, does not drive action, and can do more harm than good.

Start auditing your website content now.

What are you trying to say? Can you say it in three words instead of 10? Can you use a video or infographic instead of a page of written text?

Keep your eyes out for words like "however," "therefore," and "additionally" — if you are using these words (a lot) chances are you are explaining far more than you need to. Purge your content for any unnecessary fluff and filler. Get to the point and get there faster.

Make Content Useful - Adding Value

If you want to make your content better faster, ask yourself this question. How is this adding value? If you can't answer this question, it's time for a change. There is always an exchange, whether it is hard dollars, time, emotion — whatever it is — it all comes down to value.

Don't think of your content as "content" – think of it as "value." You are creating, providing, and distributing value. If you don't provide value, then you have taken the reader's time and offered them nothing in return — not a great exchange of value.

Content = Value

| Videos | How-to Guides | Infographics | Podcasts |

Your brand and business are only as valuable as they are perceived by your customers — no matter how great you may know you are. Providing value through your content is a powerful strategic approach that will raise your brand value and reduce buyer friction.

Well Organized and "Fun-Sized"

Keep the flow, size, and organization of your content in mind. The last thing you want to do is confuse those visiting your website with too much information. Along with "purging" your content, break your information down into smaller pieces that are easier to consume.

This is especially true for mobile content — nobody wants to read paragraphs of content on a small screen. Sectioning out your brand, service, or product content into separate areas will keep your content focused and easier to absorb.

Speaking to YOUR Audiences

Your audience is all that matters. Creating content that speaks to them in a way that they understand, in short, makes it more valuable. Strip out the jargon that you think makes you sound credible and use language your audience understands. Why? It's more valuable.

You could say that your new mobile processor is "**quad-core running at 8-gigs,**" or it is "**lightning fast for a crisp and flawless performance.**" Use real language that they can connect with and visitors are more likely to stay on your site, take action, and convert to paying customers.

Quad-core running
at 8-gigs

VS.

Lightning fast for a crisp
and flawless performance

TAKING ACTION

Focus on improving the quality and relevancy of your content. Clean up any spammy, thin, or poorly written content on your site. Focus on making content that is the most valuable for your target audience.

SECRET 16

ALL CITATIONS ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL

All Citations Are Not Created Equal

One of the secrets around citation building is figuring out which directories really matter (for your brand).

Just like you'll be doing with your GMB profile, spend time building out your listings in these directories. The more quality citations you have (keyword: quality!), the better. Your citations can work collectively to help boost your search rankings.

Identify Important Directories for Your Business

It's easy! Simply perform a search for your most important business keywords and review the first page of results.

For the example search "Dentist Westlake Village CA," Yelp shows up three times in the first three organic results. This means if you are a dentist in Westlake Village, California, you should claim your profile on Yelp and make sure that it is complete. Then work on building reviews and content for this profile.
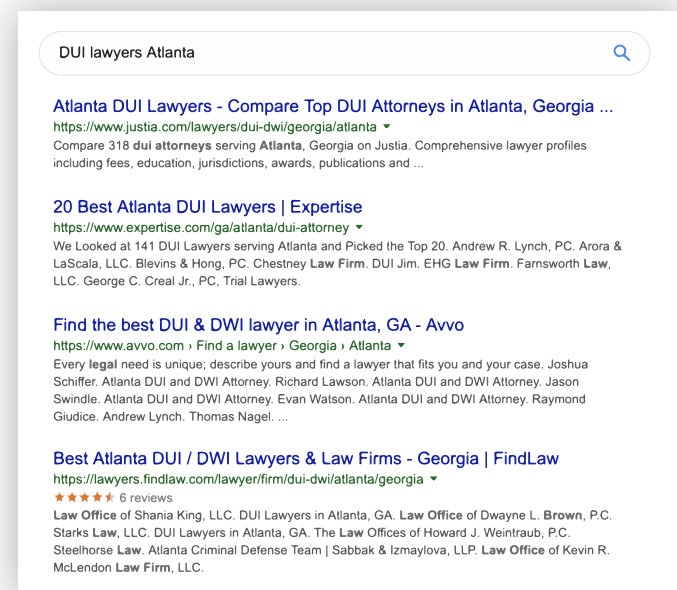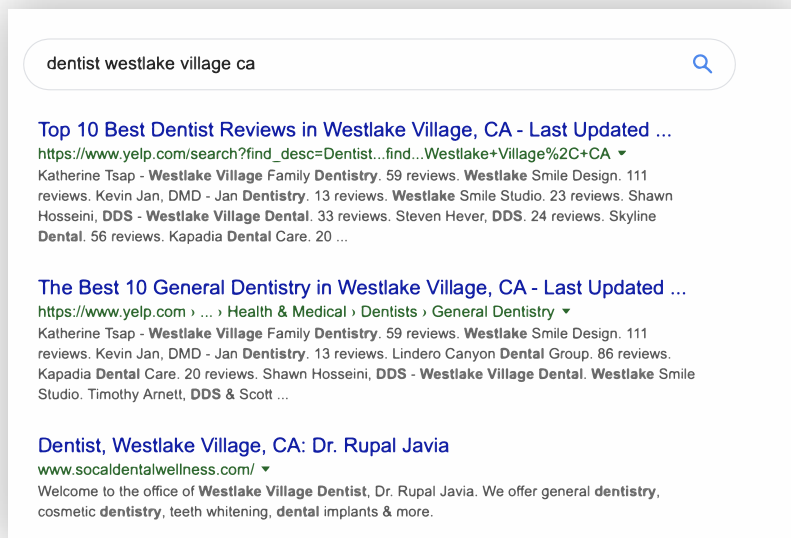
In another example, "DUI Lawyers Atlanta," four important directories show up, i.e., Justia, Avvo, Expertise, and FindLaw. As with the dentist example above, you should claim your profile on all of these directories. Make sure that you focus on collecting reviews (and creating content) for these directories — in addition to Google My Business.

Identify and focus your resources on the directories that are most relevant to your business. Use Google searches to uncover niche directories or local directories for your industry that can be used as well.

TAKING ACTION

SECRET 17

DIG INTO THE DATA: GOOGLE ANALYTICS

Dig Into the Data: Google Analytics

It's time to focus. You might find Google Analytics (GA) overwhelming — we get it. There is a ton of data and knowing where to focus is a challenge — unless you know what you are looking for.

Analytics is telling you a story, painting a picture. Google Analytics is your opportunity to listen to your site visitors, so you know how to better help them and give them what they need.

Finding the Cracks – Underperforming Web Pages

Let's start simple. At the highest level, GA lets you see what pages customers are visiting on your website and how they are using them. You want to begin by finding which pages are performing the worst. In marketing we like to call this "underperforming." What do underperforming pages look like and how can you fix them?

Impressions vs. Clicks

Don't be blinded by your pages that are simply flooded with traffic. If that traffic is not converting in some way, the page is underperforming. There are several telltale signs, such as:

> High traffic with no click actions **=** customers are not clicking anything
>
> High traffic but low "time on page" **=** customers are not staying on your page
>
> High traffic and high bounce rates **=** customers are leaving right away
>
> High traffic and high drop off rates **=** customers are not going past the first page
>
> High traffic for the wrong keywords **=** customers you don't need are finding you

Pinpointing the pages that have high traffic going to them but few actions being taken shows you your greatest opportunity is to make a bigger impact, provide greater value, and convert more leads.

Understanding the Users (User Flow)

Want to know what your customers are thinking about your site? Want to know where they are getting confused and leaving your site? One of the most overlooked Google Analytics features is **user flow**. Basically, this visual look at your website shows you where customers are dropping off your site.

If you know where buyers are clicking and where they are leaving your site, you have uncovered a big crack that must be fixed. The more you dig down, the more you can see how people are "flowing" through your site, and you can begin making high-impact adjustments.

Using the Data to Drive Action

Now is the time for action. Remember the data (analytics) is simply here to help you improve. Listen to the data and let it guide your actions. Are users dropping off your services page? It may be time for you to rework that page content. Users dropping off your "contact us" page without sending their information? Try redesigning your contact form. Use analytics to look for the cracks to fix — and tackle one thing at a time.

TAKING ACTION

> **Pinpoint underperforming pages that, when optimized, will provide you the biggest impact. Set goals, test, and adjust your pages based on the results.**

SECRET 18

# KEEP SOCIAL MEDIA – ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Keep Social Media – On Social Media

Social media can have a huge impact within the social media ecosystem, thanks to content distribution, sharing, engaging, advertising, etc. But data shows that social engagement does not have a major impact on your search rankings. In fact, "social signals" only account for about **3.5% of local search impact**. But — you can beef up your social media game to make a greater impact on your social platforms.

Stay Focused - Picking Your Platforms

Not every platform is going to work well for your brand, but 1 to 2 platforms is a great place to start. Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Twitter — they all have their place in the marketing ecosystem, so pick a couple that will work best for you.

SOCIAL ECOSYSTEM

LINKEDIN

GOOGLE MY BUSINESS

PINTEREST

TWITTER

INSTAGRAM
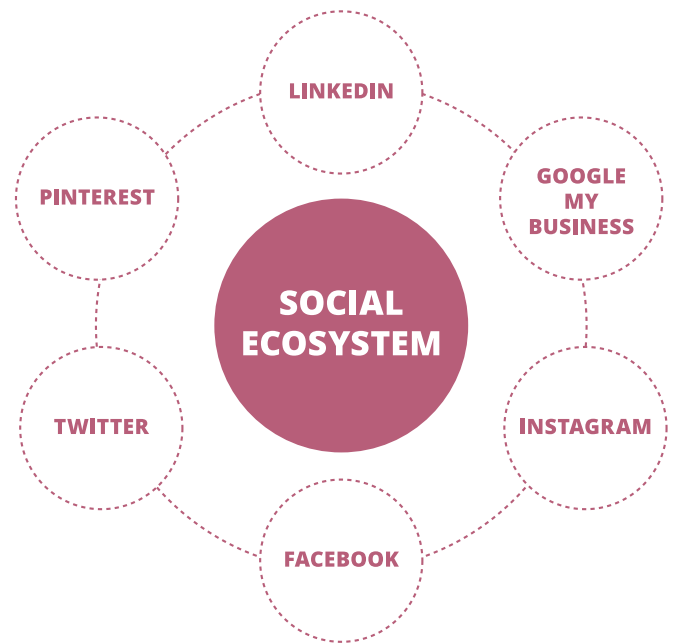
FACEBOOK

If you are a cosmetics, fashion, or fitness brand, Instagram will be your go-to. Lawyers, corporate trainers, and recruiters will find LinkedIn a better place for results. Small businesses that need to tap into local markets will love Facebook. Once you know who your audience is, it's time to pick your platform and get to work.

Targeting and Advertising

To effectively reach your audience you need to capture their attention, you need to go to them — and nothing holds more attention power than social media. The true value for businesses in social media marketing is the ability to programmatically target audiences and advertise directly to them.

Use the **Facebook Audience Insights** tool to build the best target audience for your brand with options like:

Geography (pinpointing local or national areas)

Behaviors (purchasing, device types, financial, etc.)

Demographics (sex, age, religion, marital status, etc.)

Lifestyles (millennials, lavish, baby boomers, etc.)

Page Likes & Interests (sports, travel, fashion, automotive, etc.)

These examples are just scratching the surface. You can dig much deeper, so spend some time in Audience Insights to build your audiences for better return on your marketing investment.

Once you have your audience, you can set up your ad campaign and budget, and start testing ad variations. It will take a little time to get rolling, but once you do, it will be hard to beat the audience-targeting possibilities of Facebook. But keep in mind, Facebook is just one example.

Each platform has its own pros and cons when it comes to accessing your audience. Pinterest, Twitter, and LinkedIn each have their respective tool sets for pinpointing target markets.

Content and Engagement

For most brands, just posting every day won't work. It's a hard but true fact. You might be posting every day, but your organic reach will continue to drop. **It's not your fault!**

Facebook's updates have made pay-to-play a reality for your brand, which is why post-boosting and advertising are so important.

Engagement is something **you can control**, and it is arguably more powerful and important than just posting content. So, what does engagement look like?

- Liking & commenting (other content)
- Sharing other industry content
- Tagging followers or pages
- Responding to reviews
- Replying to comments

This type of engagement takes time, but it sets you apart as a thought leader and builds your authority. Above all, it shows your audience that you are listening to them and are part of the community.

It is powerful and a necessity to extending your reach on social. The more you engage, the more others engage with you. The more attention you capture, the further your content can reach. Keep posting your content, but don't forget to engage as well!

TAKING ACTION

○ **Choose one or two social networks on which to focus.**

○ **Use tools like Facebook Audience Insights to pinpoint your target market.**

○ **Produce high-quality content on these platforms.**

○ **Consistently engage with your audiences.**

○ **Use free design tools like Canva, Skitch, QuotesCover, PicMonkey, and Pixlr to speed up your media development.**

SECRET 19

OPTIMIZE THE EXPERIENCE

Optimize the Experience

Providing a better website experience for users is a fundamental way to improve your website's ranking and overall impact. The better the experience, the longer customers stay on your site, the more actions they take, the more valuable Google deems your site to be.

From layout and content to navigation and the mobile experience, improving your website's user experience can only help you.

Guiding the Way

What do you want your site visitors to do on your site? What actions do you want them to take? How can you streamline this journey and **make taking action simple**? You need to keep all of this in mind when optimizing your website – making sure that users can simply navigate to the most logical next step in the buyer funnel.

Organized website headers, clear calls to action, and logically linked content – you need to make all of it simple. Your customers should be able to focus on the value you provide first and foremost – without any confusion.

Showing - Not Telling

Your content goes far beyond words on a page. Videos, infographics, images – pretty much everything visual on your site – can be optimized for improved rankings. Beyond this, your visual content should improve the user experience and provide your users more value for their time – all to help improve the user experience.

Any piece of written text that can be replaced (or supplemented) with visual media can add value to your website.

NATIONAL POSITIONS

6: Google Best Picture

Google ran a campaign during the 89th Annual Academy Awards ceremony called Best Picture. The film went through different categories in the Academy Awards, but instead of showing pieces of box office hits, they highlighted photos and videos that had been shot on Google Android phones.

On YouTube alone the campaign got over 14 million views. It got millions more on TV broadcasts. This approach – using real home videos – hooked people in through humor, while bringing awareness to Google Photo's service.

The Takeaway: In order for a campaign to go viral, people need to talk about it. They must want to talk about it and share it. Humor is one great way to interest people. Spoofing a serious event like the Academy Awards and bringing it down to the level of personal photos and videos was a great hook, and it's also the type of parody that almost any business can do to promote themselves.

What would you prefer, a written case study or a video testimonial from a customer? A whole page of you trying to explain why you are the best or a five-star review from a satisfied client prominently displayed? Showing – not telling – lets you provide more value in less time.

User Experience Fuels Rankings

The math is simple – the better the user experience, the more time and actions customers take on your site, the more valuable Google thinks your site is. Google is in the business of providing the most valuable content it can to its users. You can show Google more value by optimizing your website, and more valuable sites move higher up in the rankings – period.

TAKING ACTION

Use tools such as **Hotjar**, **Lucky Orange**, or National Insights™ **Conversion Growth Pack** to review video session recordings and heatmaps to better understand user experience – and ways to improve it.

SECRET 20

THE ABCs OF SPLIT TESTING

The ABCs of Split Testing

You should always be testing (or split testing) your content, website elements, and advertising. Testing variations will let you see what performs the best and gives you a better ROI. Site layouts, ad copy, images, forms – all of this can be tested and optimized with the goal of driving higher conversion, which leads to higher ROI and more profits for your brand.

Conversion Optimization

What is your goal? When split testing, the goal is usually to drive more conversions, attract more leads, and drive action. The key word is *action*. If nobody is clicking your ad, you need to test your copy and visuals.

There are far more variables that you can split test than you may realize:

- ✅ **Content Copy** (Does it make people take action?)

- ✅ **Landing Page Designs** (Are they well-laid-out and clean?)

- ✅ **Media Design** (Does it add value? Is it enticing?)

- ✅ **Video Content** (Will a video add value?)

- ✅ **Opt-In Forms** (Are they simple or overly complicated?)

- ✅ **Device Types** (Is your audience on their phone or a desktop?)

- ✅ **Calls to Action** (Nobody wants to click a submit button, right?)

- ✅ **Audiences** (Do you have more than one audience?)

- ✅ **Your Ad Offer** (Is it worth their money?)

- ✅ **Geographies** (Are you staying local or going national?)

- ✅ **Promotion Types** (Is it worth their time?)

If your ad is getting clicks but you have no leads, you need to test your landing page. No form fills on your landing page? Time to test different forms or promotional offers. Keep the conversion goal in mind from start to finish. Without conversions, there are no leads, profits, or ROI.

Conversion Process

One of the most valuable things to remember is that for every conversion, there are trackable steps along the way that can be optimized. Conversion is a process. If your content or ads are not converting, it doesn't mean the whole system is broken. It could be just one part.

Here is a simple way to look at it:

1 Attention Conversion: Is your content or advertisement being seen? Is your website or ad design capturing and holding their attention enough to inspire an action? If your analytics are showing that your site doesn't have traffic or your ad has very few impressions – you need to optimize the content to first capture attention.

2 Soft Conversion: They have seen your ad or they made it to your website – awesome! Now are they navigating your site? Are they clicking links, watching your video, maybe signing up for a newsletter? Test site elements that provide the greatest value to drive more onsite actions.

3 Lead Conversion: Customers have found you and they are taking action, but are they converting into a genuine lead? Are they reaching your contact page at all or calling directly? This is where all of your efforts converge and sales can be made. If you have attention and you have action, start testing different CTAs, forms, offers, etc., to lock down your lead conversion.

Being Realistic About Conversion

This process may be oversimplified, but the main point is when you are focusing on conversion optimization, you need to know where to focus – and you need to be realistic. Only a certain percentage of customers will click over to your site, and only a fraction of those will take action – and even fewer will turn into leads. But the better you can optimize, the more leads you can attract.

TAKING ACTION

Generate split tests and gather data faster using tools such as Unbounce, Instapage, Lead Pages and Google Content Experiments.

SECRET 21

TRACK METRICS - WHERE ARE YOU HEADED?

Track Metrics - Where Are You Headed?

Tracking the metrics means tracking progress. If you just open Analytics and look at today's data, you don't have anything to compare it to – which does not help much. From SEO campaigns to PPC campaigns and beyond, you want to have measurable data.

Data is Power

It's not just about better performance. It's about something more – the entire *who, what, when, where, why, and how* behind that performance. To know what is working and what's not, you need to be able to track your progress with complete transparency.

Seeing Clearly

Our team uses our in-house system called **National Positions Insights Dashboard**. With this, our clients always have access to all their campaign data.

To keep things simple, you want to have the highest-level data available – the data that matters to you the most. Let's face it, most business owners simply don't have time to be downloading analytics data from multiple sources and building spreadsheets to pinpoint correlations. That being said, what should you be tracking to see your progress?

Organic vs. Paid Traffic

Are your site visitors finding you organically or through paid media sources? Either way, this breakdown should be considered to make sure that the majority of your traffic is coming to you organically.

But that doesn't mean you shouldn't invest in paid advertising. Just make sure to track which paid channel is making the biggest impact (social media advertising, Google advertising, YouTube, etc.). In addition to immediate paid traffic, these efforts can result in returning organic traffic over time.

Overall you are looking for steady growth in both of these areas – the more organic traffic you are getting, the higher the value of these leads.

If you're seeing massive fluctuations in very short periods of time, something else may be affecting your traffic such as an algorithm change. And the only way you'll know this is if you're tracking.

So if you have 200 visitors a day on Monday and 2,000 visitors a day on Wednesday, there could be something else influencing the traffic flowing to your site.

New vs. Returning Traffic

Traffic is traffic, right? Well...sort of. New traffic is great because it means that new potential customers are finding you – but rarely does your traffic convert on the first visit. Returning visitors can actually be more valuable. If they are coming back, they are keeping you in mind, considering you for their business.

You will consistently get more new traffic than returning traffic. This is normal and nothing to be scared of. But if your returning numbers are rising, you've hit the jackpot. This means more people are coming back to your site more often to see what you have to say and what's new and exciting with your business.

Understanding Campaign Impact

Tracking the data gives you fuel to make future decisions. Being able to track your progress (even at a high level) shows you what is working and what is not. If you are working with an agency, you should have access to this data, so you are informed and know the impact of your marketing investment. Tracking your metrics means understanding your campaign impact.

Attribution a.k.a. What Drives Conversion?

Marketing Attribution is a fairly new concept centered around answering one question: what action(s) drive conversion? With so many strategies and tactics available to us, knowing what moves the needle and where you can "attribute" campaign success are paramount.

Picture this: you are running Facebook and Google ads, creating video content for YouTube and your website, automating your onsite leads, and executing with email marketing drips with valuable eBooks. How do you attribute success to each of these areas? Is your video content driving more action than your email drips? Are the landing pages from your Google ads providing more conversions than your eBooks?

Tracking each touchpoint, assigning it a value (i.e., 10% or 20% of overall campaign success), and looking at the data helps you determine your campaign's success at a granular level. This breakdown helps your team prioritize and focus their efforts.

Google's Data-Driven Attribution

Google is putting a significant amount of weight on data-driven attribution, especially in their ad platform. As **Google states**, *"Typically, all credit for the conversion is given to the last ad customers clicked. But was it really that ad that made them decide to choose your business?"*

Google has the technology to not only determine which ad produced a final conversion, but also to break down the entire path a user takes before making that final decision. The longer that ad campaigns are tested, the more effective Google's optimization can be.

A Google attribution example might look like this:

You have a boutique salon in Los Angeles. Through conversion tracking you know when customers purchase hair products from your website. You have a particular conversion action to track purchases of a new hair volumizer you are testing. Buyers usually click several of your ads before deciding to buy your hair volumizer.

Google's data-driven attribution finds that clients who clicked the "Hair Volumizer" ad first and also later clicked "Hair Volumizer West Hollywood" were more likely to make a purchase than those who ONLY clicked on the "Hair Volumizer West Hollywood" ad. The model gives credit to the "Hair Volumizer" ad and its keywords, ad groups, and campaigns.

Now, when you look at your reports, you have more complete information about which ads are most valuable to your business.

TAKING ACTION

○ Maintain only one Google Analytics account if you have multiple domains and subdomains. This allows you to track purchases even if they happened on a different site.

○ Focus on a data-driven attribution model.

TAKING LOCAL ACTION
IN A GLOBAL ECOSYSTEM

While adhering to your local market might seem limiting, remember other brands and businesses are playing the same game.

Your local market truly is your greatest – often overlooked – asset for increased exposure and supercharged profitability.

You have an opportunity that outside competitors wish they had – greater access to your local market. Remember, it's as hard for them to break into your local market as it is for you to break into theirs. Take advantage of this!

There is effort involved but rewards to be had. In many ways your ability to optimize and capture more of your local market levels the playing field.

All you need to do is begin.

I hope you have found value in these secrets, and I encourage you to share them with your team. If you need any help with executing these strategies, please contact National Positions anytime. So, take advantage of these local ranking secrets, apply the most sensible, and have a fantastic 2019!

Kind regards,

Bernard May

NATIONAL POSITIONS'
LOCAL RANKING
SECRETS

21 STRATEGIES FOR CRUSHING YOUR COMPETITION IN 2019

For 15 years National Positions has been at the forefront of the digital marketing industry. We focus on combining the worlds of technology, data analysis, and creative design into our digital marketing strategies. Our data and know-how alone give us the edge required to effectively help our clients beat the competition. We focus our strategies on driving more traffic to your business, nurturing your lead pipeline, and helping convert your leads more rapidly. We look forward to helping your brand and business reach new heights in 2019 and beyond.

Contact Us for More Information:

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