SERP Master

Local SEO in 2021

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Introduction

46% of Google searches have local intent, according to recent HubSpot research. Not only that – 88% of the time when a consumer performs a local business-related search query, (i.e., searches for a specific brand name) they call or visit the business within 24 hours.

No wonder more and more search engine optimization (SEO) agencies now offer local SEO as a separate service. Local SEO is especially for small brick-and-mortar businesses and specialists – cafes, bars, plumbers, electricians – it provides an opportunity to compete with industry giants and rank high in search engines like Google.

But what is local SEO, and how does it work? More importantly, how does it help businesses to succeed?

> ⓘ In this guide, we'll go through the basics of local SEO and explain why hyper-localized Google data is essential for businesses. We'll also provide instructions on how to acquire hyper-localized search results.
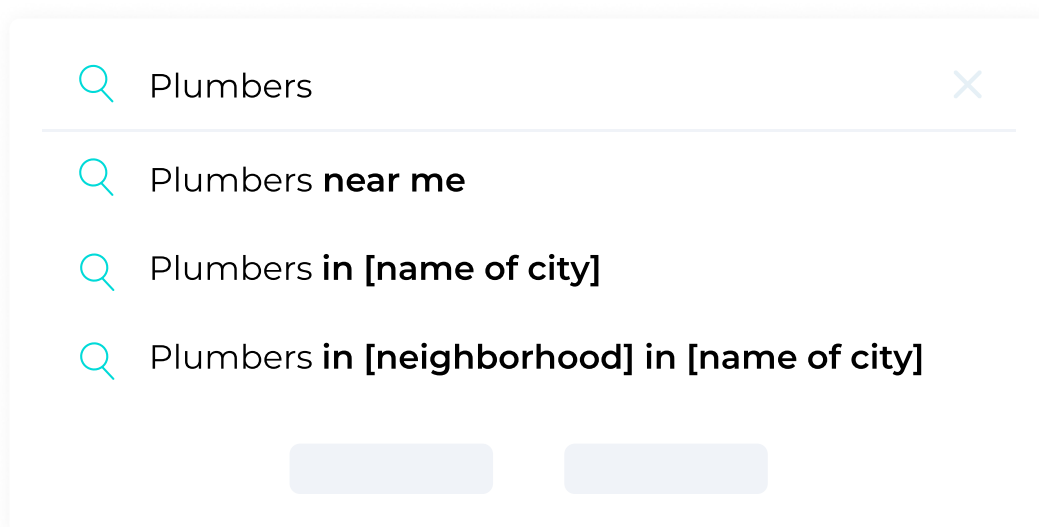
What is local SEO?

Local search engine optimization is a subsection of SEO aimed specifically at optimizing your website for localized search results. To be more specific, it refers to any type of search where the user intent is aimed at a specific geographical area. Typically, the user is looking for a particular service or commodity in a certain area, i.e., a 24-hour pharmacy service nearby.

Here's another example: say Mother's Day is coming up and our user Jack wants to buy his mum a nice bouquet of flowers. Jack lives on 44th Street in New York, so he opens Google and types in "florist on 44th Street NYC".

Google, in response, will serve Jack listings of local florists that are based close to – or, ideally, are directly on – 44th Street.
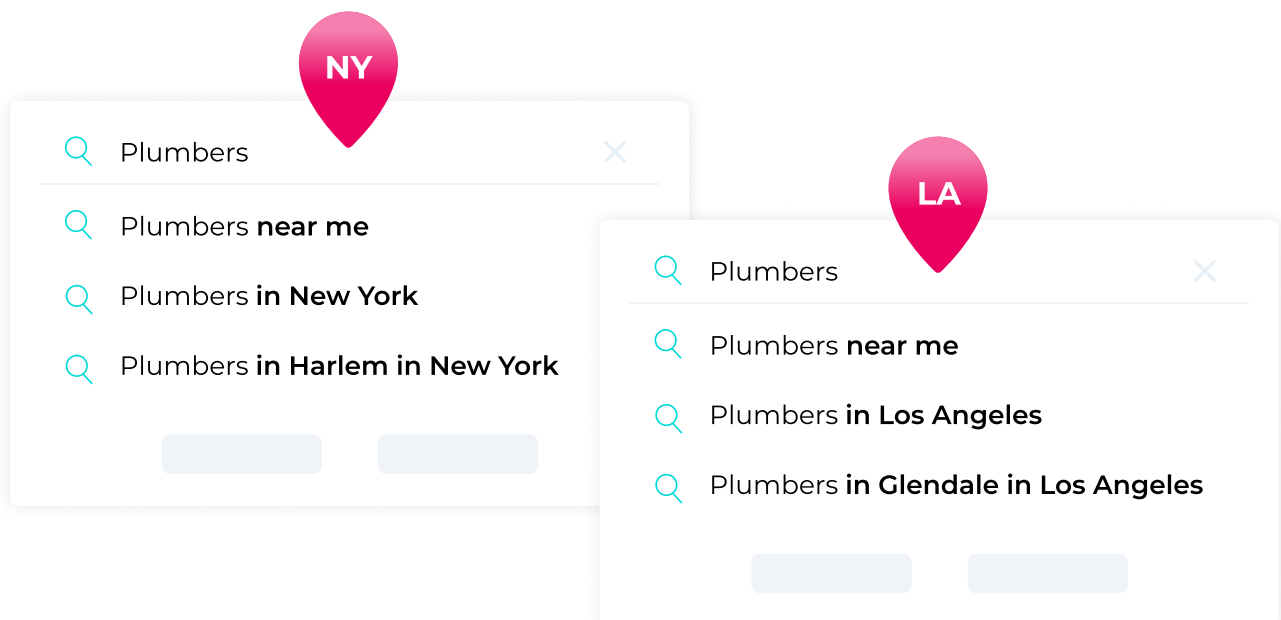
These types of local searches happen for all sorts of services and businesses, from grocery stores to laundromats to barbers. Common formats of local searches are:

🔍 Plumbers   ✕

🔍 Plumbers **near me**

🔍 Plumbers **in [name of city]**

🔍 Plumbers **in [neighborhood] in [name of city]**

The search queries reflect the localized intent of the user. But even if you just search for a term (i.e., "plumbers") on Google, search engine results pages (SERPs) will show different results based on your location.

ⓘ For example, if you're in New York, while your friend is in LA and you both search for "plumbers", the result page Google will return to you two will be different.

🔍 Plumbers ✕

🔍 Plumbers **near me**

🔍 Plumbers **in New York**

🔍 Plumbers **in Harlem in New York**

🔍 Plumbers ✕

🔍 Plumbers **near me**

🔍 Plumbers **in Los Angeles**

🔍 Plumbers **in Glendale in Los Angeles**

That's because search engines like Google know the device's location (unless you use a VPN and connect to a server in a different country) and will serve results that best fit the geographical location. That's also why a search term with the words "near me" will automatically trigger a result based on the geographical location.

Why are local SEO and hyper-localized Google data essential for businesses?

Now that we explained what hyper-localized SEO is, let's look at why it is crucial for any business.

From brick-and-mortar businesses looking for customers in the area to SEO agencies that want to start offering local SEO as a service – any type of business can benefit from local search.

Take these two statistics from BrightLocal's Local Consumer Review Survey of 2020:

93%
consumers performed an online search for a local business.

34%
of consumers did this every day.

With internet users searching for localized content this frequently, just imagine the organic traffic a website can receive if it's properly SEO-optimized. Similarly, with so much localized traffic on search engines every day, the valuable data businesses can acquire from this is near infinite.

Let's go through some examples of the opportunities and benefits local SEO has to offer.

Local SEO benefits and opportunities

There are a lot of potential benefits and opportunities when it comes to local SEO. Here are some common examples:

1   A chance for small businesses to succeed

One of the greatest local SEO benefits is that any company can benefit from it, no matter the size. In most cases, small businesses have a chance to compete with – and even outperform – industry giants.
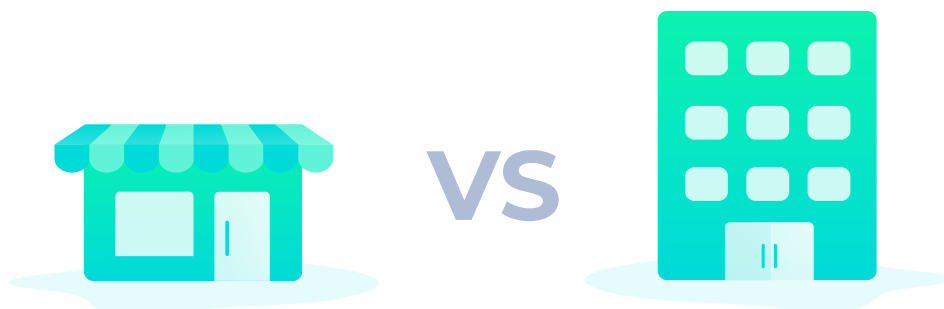
With non-localized search queries, a small little gift shop can never compete with an eCommerce website like Amazon. The small business surely underperforms in all the traditional SEO ranking factors, like the number of backlinks, site speed, or domain authority. It's an unfair battle, to say the least.

But with localized search, small businesses have a chance to rank in the top 10 positions, regardless of all those traditional ranking factors.

In fact, only local companies can claim many of the top positions for highly localized search terms as they can get included in Google's local pack, a rich feature in the search results showing a Google Maps map with highlighted local business listings.

(2) Conversion rates are higher

According to WebFX research, 80% of local searches convert, which means conversion rates tend to be much higher for local searches than for non-localized searches. That's because the user's intent is much more specific, and your business is more likely to meet the user's needs.

After all, if someone needs to buy a pound of tomatoes and your business is just around the corner, the way from search to conversion is rather short. But that's not all.

Whereas traditional SEO (mostly) just drives online traffic, local SEO also drives a lot of physical traffic (i.e., footfall to your brick-and-mortar store or business). After all, they're looking for something close to their geographical location, probably because they want to visit the actual store.

Besides, local customers tend to be more loyal. Once they've been to a store and had a positive experience, there's a good chance they'll come back more often, increasing customer lifetime value.

3 Increasing numbers of leads and direct orders

Whether phone calls, bookings, or filled out forms, local SEO can help attract customers to generate more leads, direct orders, and, ultimately, drive more revenue.

A large part of local SEO revolves around easily accessible contact information, like phone numbers or email addresses.

Google wants the user to find what they need as quickly as possible. So when a user searches for something like "pizza delivery Queens," there's a good chance the result shows Google My Business listings on Google Maps with the phone number. So, the user can straightaway call to get a pizza delivered.

So with local SEO, customers can go from a search to a successful order in a matter of minutes. It benefits both the company and the customer: a customer can place the order hassle-free while the company gains more revenue.

Now that we went over the opportunities and benefits of local SEO, let's find out the ways businesses can acquire hyper-localized search results.

How to improve your local SEO game: tips and tricks

Just as with standard SEO, there are a lot of factors to consider when trying to rank for localized search terms. In fact, Google has separate ranking factors when it comes to local searches.

So let's go through **7 local SEO best practices for businesses** to kickstart local SEO efforts in 2021.

1 Follow Google's guidelines

As with traditional SEO, the best way to rank high on Google is to listen to Google and do as they say. It may sound simple, but they've created their guidelines for a reason. If a company sticks to what Google deems valuable, trustworthy, relevant content, their chances of ranking higher will increase.

So a great place to start is by carefully reading Google's guidelines for representing your business on Google.

2 Google My Business is key

Once a company learns all there is to know about representing your business on Google, they can dive in and get listed. As the above-linked guidelines tell, all of it is done via the Google My Business (GMB) platform.

In the field of local SEO, companies can't survive without a Google My Business listing. Even if they have a local business and offer what the customer needs, their service won't be displayed in Google's local pack. As a result, the company loses a number of potential customers.

There are many ways to optimize GMB listing, but here are few common ones companies can use:

- Create a Google My Business account.

- Get customers to review their business on Google (more on this below.)

- Respond to any reviews received, ideally by adding the business name and location in the response.

- Make use of Google Posts.

- Ensure contact details are up-to-date, allowing customers to instantly reach out as they perform a localized search.

③ Align Google My Business with social media

Syncing up a company's business page with their social media profiles is not only considered a positive ranking signal in the eyes of Google, but it's a great way to utilize multiple marketing channels at once.

By adding social profiles to their GMB account, companies can also further encourage customers to review their business.

Nowadays, a company's social activity can even show up directly inside Google's local pack, meaning that local SEO can even help grow a social following.

(4) Optimize for aggregators

Map data aggregators are a large part of local SEO. In fact, Google retrieves the local business information it uses in local search results directly from such data aggregators.
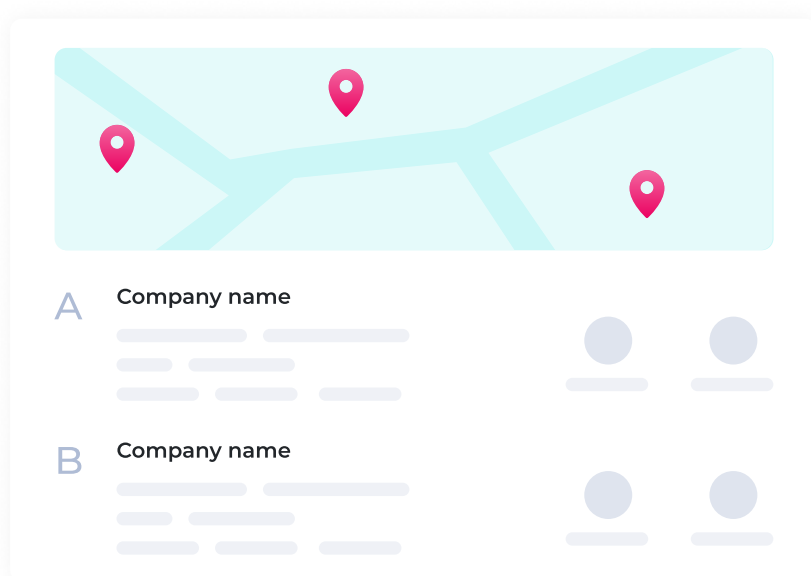

The most important thing is to ensure the citations are identical and consistent across all such aggregators and directories.

If your business data shows up differently, Google might fail to recognize that in all cases, it is actually the same business; or, it might not understand which name is correct. As a result, Google may leave your business details out of the search results altogether.

When optimizing a business for local search, it's crucial to ensure citations are the same across all popular aggregators, such as Foursquare, Factual, Neustar Localeze, and Express Update.

5 Build a location page

Companies can also add a page about their business location on their website and include their contact details. It's important that the information shown here matches the details on Google My Business, online directories, and map data aggregators.
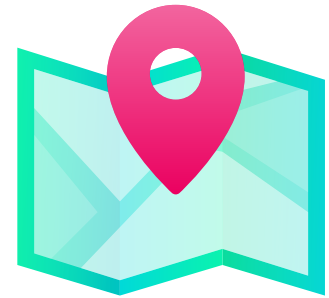
> **+ Extra tip**
> Add a Google Map and pinpoint the store's location on the About Us page. It further helps Google to quickly link the company's website to their Google My Business profile and to determine its relevance.

If a company has multiple stores or locations, it should ensure that each one has its own separate location page. This page should contain all the relevant contact details and other unique information, like a store description, the store's facilities, or customer reviews.

6   Create localized content

When it comes to SEO, content is still king – the same goes for local SEO. To further boost local search optimization efforts, companies can produce localized content to attract local customers. What's even better is that this may be aimed at multiple locations.

For example, if a company provides plumbing services based in Manhattan and in Brooklyn, they can create localized content around plumbing in Manhattan and plumbing in Brooklyn. This way, they will show Google that they deliver that service within those specific areas.

7   Use a SERP scraper or utilize SEO tools

To ensure all of the above-mentioned tactics are working, businesses or SEO agencies use SERP scraping tools (i.e., SERPMaster.) By gathering data from search engine result pages, they can check if all bases are covered: a map showing their location is displayed, the contact number is available, and so on. Also, companies can check how their competitors are presented on Google SERPs and see if their website is missing anything.

That is why it's essential that your scraper can access and deliver data from all SERP features. For instance, SERPMaster can extract data from all SERP features (maps, knowledge graphs, featured snippets, People Also Ask boxes, etc.), giving a company the full picture of how they appear on Google SERPs.

In addition, a SERP scraper helps companies track their competitors' actions, most importantly, competitors nearby. Say, a restaurant chain is successfully running their place without any competitors nearby. Recently, the number of customers began dropping without any apparent reason. By utilizing a SERP scraper, the restaurant can keep track of new competitors and their online presence.


To monitor competitors and track how their own local SEO initiatives are performing, companies can also use any of the well-known SEO tools, including Keyword Explorers by Ahrefs or Moz. However, these SEO giants typically provide large, pricy packages with extra features a small company (i.e., a coffee shop or a pizza place) may not necessarily require.

Therefore, if a company already has, let's say, Ahrefs, they can utilize it for local SEO via the Keyword Explorer tool. They can also use Rank Tracker, which allows them to track keywords on a hyper-localized level.

However, for smaller companies that don't already use obfuscated SEO tools and are just beginning to improve their local SEO tactics, a SERP scraper may be a better option. Usually, a SERP scraper is cheaper and delivers hyper-localized keyword data like an SEO tool would do.

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SERP scraper may be a better option: it's usually cheaper, delivers hyper-local keyword data and doesn't include advanced features they may end up not using.

Below is a comparison of the approximate **number of keywords companies can scrape for 99 USD per month**.

	Keywords
Ahrefs	500
SERPMaster	9333
DataForSeo	2750
Semrush	150
Moz	300
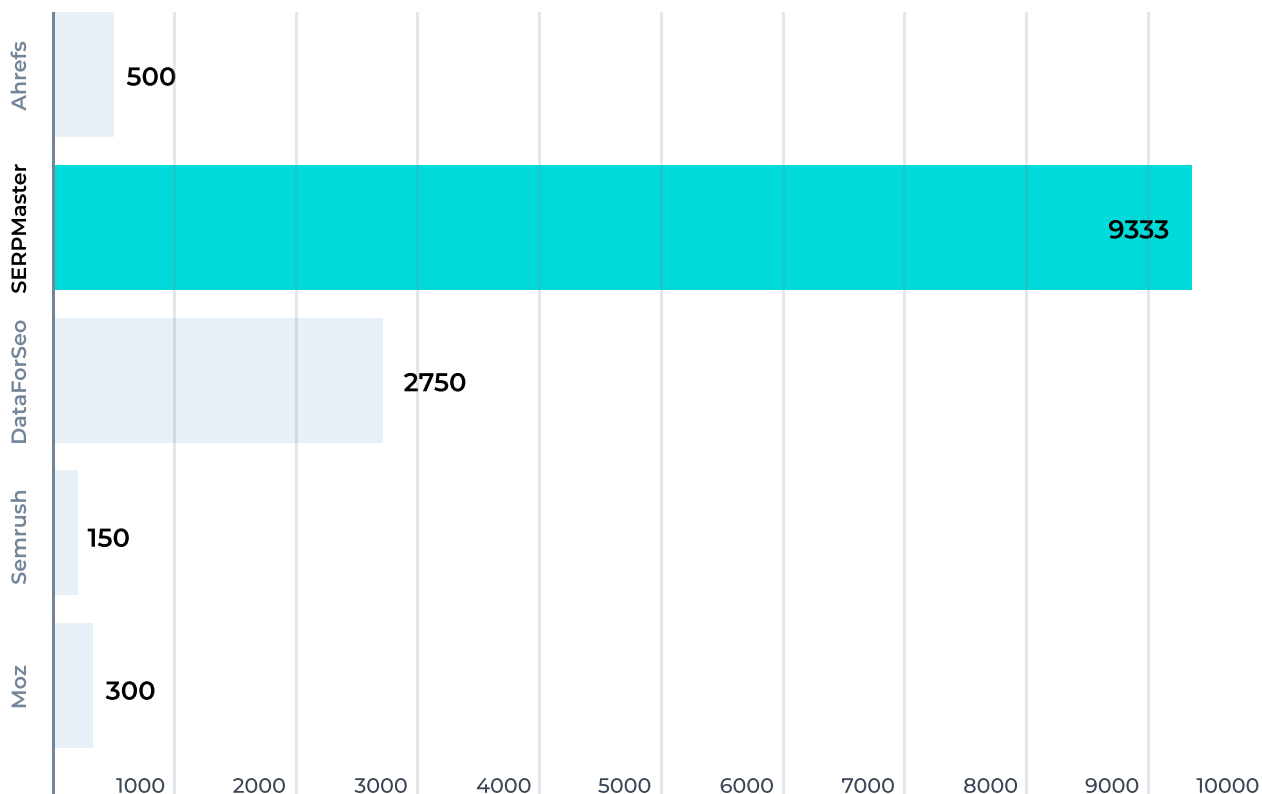
Source: ahrefs.com, dataforseo.com, moz.com, semrush.com, serpmaster.com

+ A final tip before wrapping up
Businesses should follow all the standard SEO best practices but localize them wherever possible. From local digital PR to local link-building efforts – the better they can show Google that their business operates in certain geographical locations, the better the chances their content will show up in the SERPs.

Local SEO in 2021

Although local SEO seems to have grown into a discipline of its own, with more and more SEO agencies offering local SEO as a separate service, often many of the standard SEO best practices still stand. After all, it is "following the guidelines" rule Google sets out to rank in their search engine.

That said, local SEO does come with its own set of rules and tactics. At the heart of all of this is your Google My Business listing and ensuring businesses' data is accurate, relevant, and as detailed as possible.

In this local SEO in 2021 guide, we've listed seven of the best steps to take to boost local rankings. **Good luck grabbing that local search traffic and growing your local business!**

Start your free trial today – we offer 250 requests free of charge, no-strings-attached.

Get free trial

SERP Master