

The Top 10 Things You Should Be Doing in Local SEO Now



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Dominate Your Local SEO Strategy Today With SOCI

Introduction

Consumers today use search engines to conduct local searches and find more information about nearby businesses. Previous [SOCi research](#) found that **74 percent** of consumers conduct local searches at least once a week. Many of these searches result in a transaction, with **54 percent** of consumers saying they are likely to visit a business immediately or on the same day after searching.

However, if you don't have a local SEO (search engine optimization) strategy, you're likely not appearing at the top of the search engine results pages (SERPs). This poor SERP performance means you're missing out on valuable online visibility and traffic. Even worse, you might lose local search traffic and consumers to your competitors.

What is Local SEO?

Local SEO is a set of strategies and tactics used to compete well in local search and to improve your rankings and visibility in local search results.

As a multi-location business, you need local SEO to ensure that your locations shows up in relevant search results for each market and for each of your important keywords.

Before going further, let's look at how Google determines local search rankings. While local search optimization can impact more than just Google, the company does have a more than **93 percent** share of the search market, so we'll be focusing on Google throughout this piece.

In this guide, we'll:

- Define local SEO
- Explain the different types of local search results
- Highlight the impact of high local search rankings
- Detail 10 local SEO tactics to improve rankings and convert more consumers

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How Google Determines Local Search Rankings

Google keeps its local search algorithm and ranking factors confidential to ensure fairness. However, the company has offered some general insight into how it ranks Google Business Profiles (GBPs) in local search results. **According to Google, relevance, distance, and prominence** are the three primary factors it considers when ranking GBPs.

- **Relevance** is how well a local GBP matches what someone is searching for.
- **Distance** considers how close businesses are to a user's current location or location term used in a search.
- **Prominence** refers to how well-known a business is and the information Google can find about a business across the web, such as links, articles, directories, and review volume and ratings.

Distance isn't something a business can control after establishing a location. You can make some impact on relevance, such as by choosing the correct GBP category. Prominence, though, is the most complex factor. It is also the factor the majority of local SEO experts focus on and the one you can try to influence most.

It's also worth noting that there are two basic types of local search results that Google and other search engines typically present to users. We'll dive into this next!



Local Pack/Finder vs. Local Organic

Search engines often display two types of results: the local pack/finder and local organic.

When you conduct a local search on a browser-based interface like Google Chrome, you'll get a list of three GBPs. This trio of businesses is called the local pack or Google 3-pack. Then, if you want more results, you can click "More places," which will bring you to the local finder or the remaining seventeen or so GBPs.

Local organic results often appear below the local pack/finder, depending on the search query. They're often filled with articles, local directories, and other webpages.

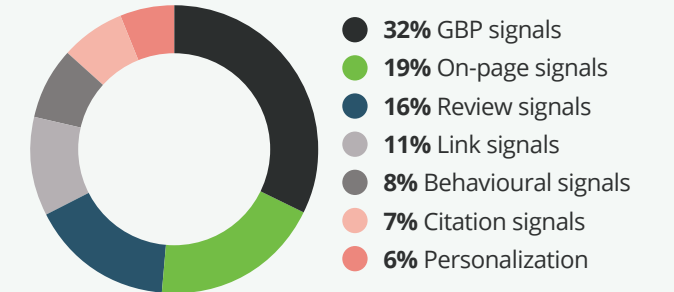
You want your multi-location business to appear in the local pack/finder and local organic search results. However, some ranking factors affect one local search result more than the other.

After decades of analysis, experience, and research, local SEO experts have a few well-founded and specific hypotheses on how Google evaluates and ranks businesses. The chart to the right shows the **2023 local search ranking factor groups** according to local SEO experts.

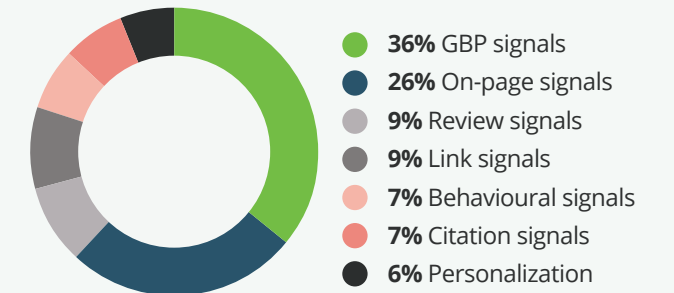
We'll dive further into these local search rankings factors and others later on in this guide.

2023 LOCAL SEARCH RANKING FACTOR GROUPS

LOCAL PACK/FINDER RANKING FACTORS



LOCAL ORGANIC RANKING FACTORS



Source: Whitespark 2023 Local Search Ranking Factors Survey Results

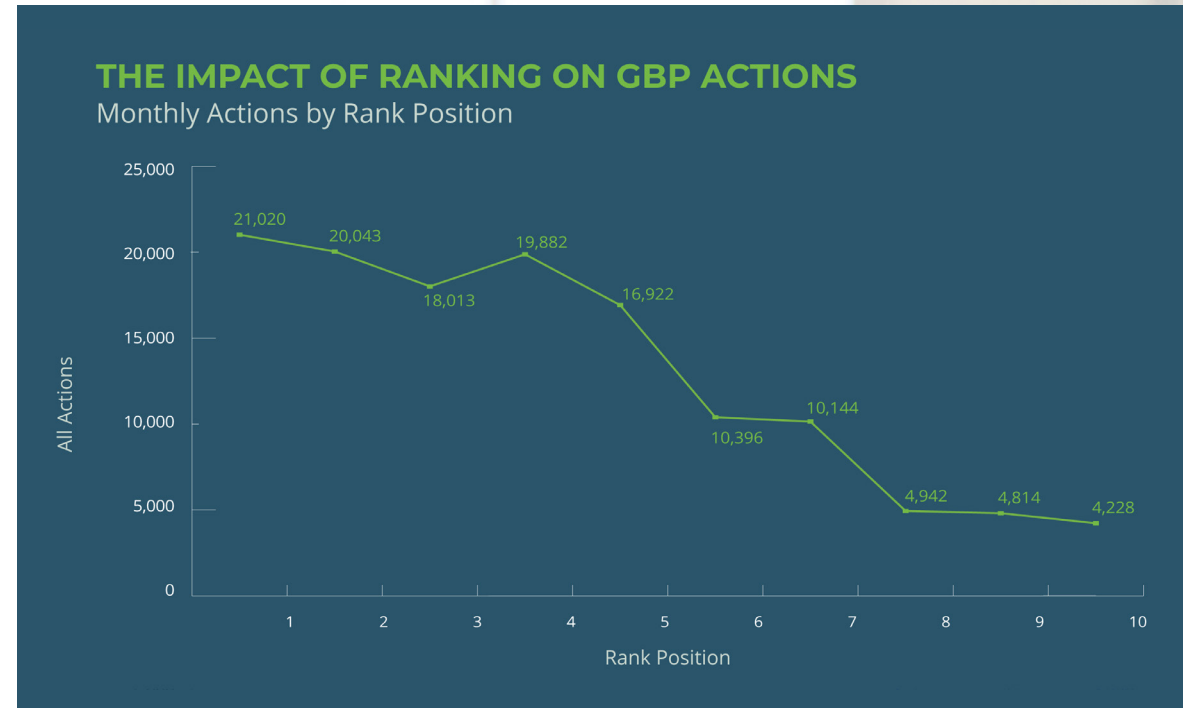
Impact of Higher Local Search Rankings

A local SEO strategy will improve your GBPs and your website's local search rankings if implemented correctly. Higher local search rankings often result in more **online visibility** and higher **conversion rates**, especially if your GBP makes it into the coveted local pack.

Our **Top Ranking and Conversion Factors for Local Search** research report found that multi-location businesses ranking in the local pack receive **126 percent more traffic** and **93 percent more actions** (calls, website clicks, requests for driving directions) than those ranked 4-10. The line graph shows the volume of conversion-oriented actions by rank position.

Now that you know what local SEO is and the benefits of local search rankings, let's dive into the top 10 things your business can do to improve both.

Multi-location businesses ranking in the local pack receive **126 percent more traffic** and **93 percent more conversion-oriented actions** than those ranked 4-10.



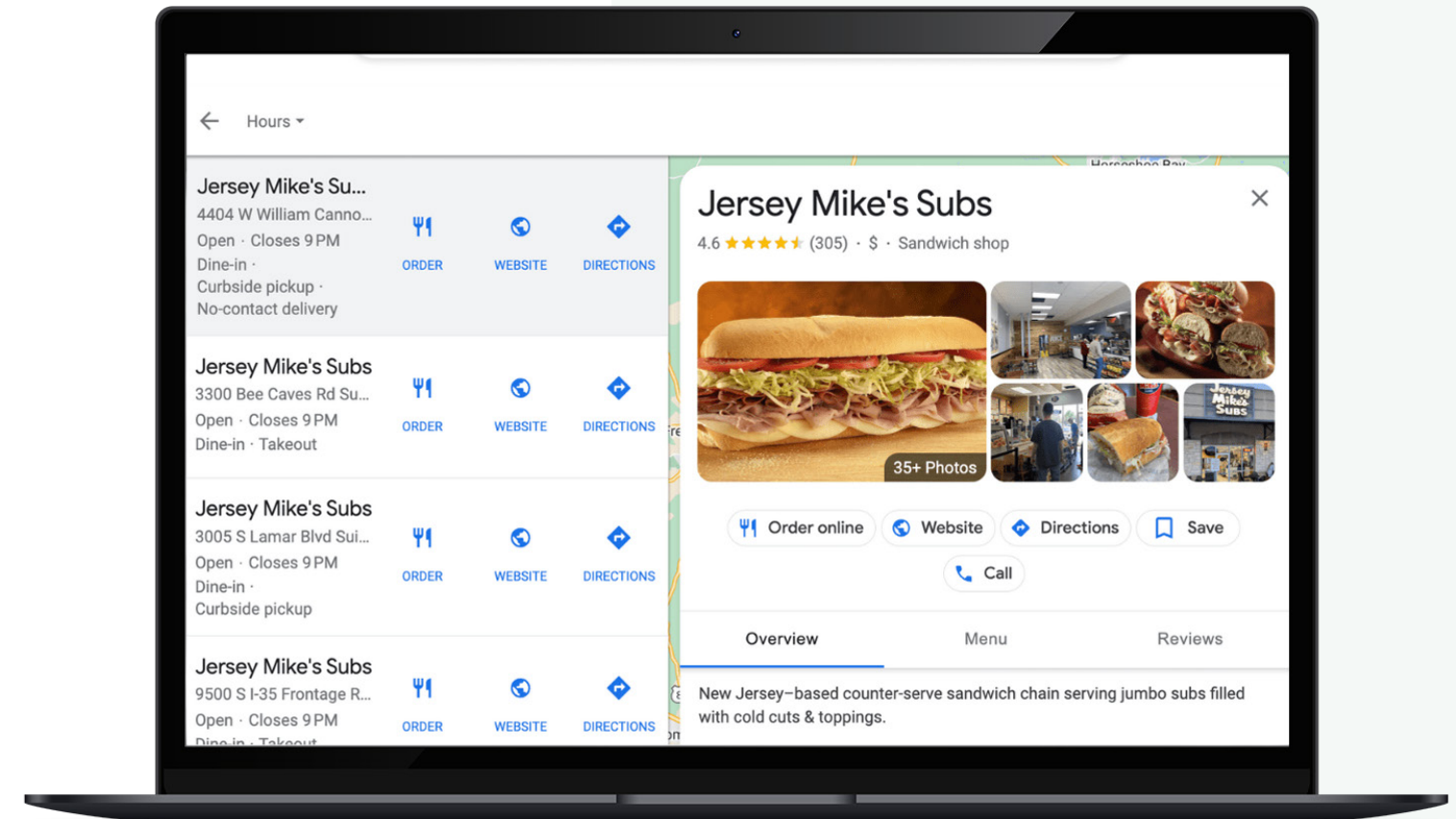
01 Claim All Local Listings

If you're unfamiliar, local listings are online profiles of your local businesses containing critical business information. They are published on search engines or local directories like Google, Apple Maps, Bing, Yelp, or Facebook.

For the purpose of consistency, we'll be focusing on Google listings in this guide. Similar tactics can be applied to listings on other search engines as well.

As a multi-location business, you must claim your local listings on all major search platforms. It's also advantageous to remove duplicate listings that search platforms accidentally create.

Once you've claimed and deduped all of your listings across all major directories it's time to ensure that there's accurate information across them.



02 Update Your Local Listings

Accurate and up-to-date information on your listings improves visibility, especially on Google. As we know, Google considers relevancy a significant search ranking factor. **Google says**, “Businesses with complete and accurate information are easier to match with the right searches.”

When consumers come across your GBP and other listings, they should easily understand what you do, your exact location, and when they can visit.

Therefore, at minimum, include the following information on your local listings:

- **Name, address, phone number (NAP)**
- **Business categories**
Example: Pizza restaurant
- **Operating hours, especially during holidays or other major events**
- **Products and services your business offers**
- **Website and social media profile links**
- **High-quality photos and videos**
- **Attributes**
Examples: Pickup, delivery, virtual appointments, wheelchair accessible seating, LGBTQ+ friendly

When the information is consistent across all local listings, search engines are more likely to share your listings in their local search results.



03 Select Primary and Additional GBP Categories

In your GBPs, you must select a relevant primary category for your business. According to the [Local Search Ranking Factors survey](#), having a primary GBP category is the number one local pack/finder ranking factor. Moreover, “additional GBP categories” is the seventh highest local pack/finder ranking factor.

After selecting your primary category, you can select up to nine additional categories. You won't need to fill all of these categories, but choose a few that are relevant if you can.

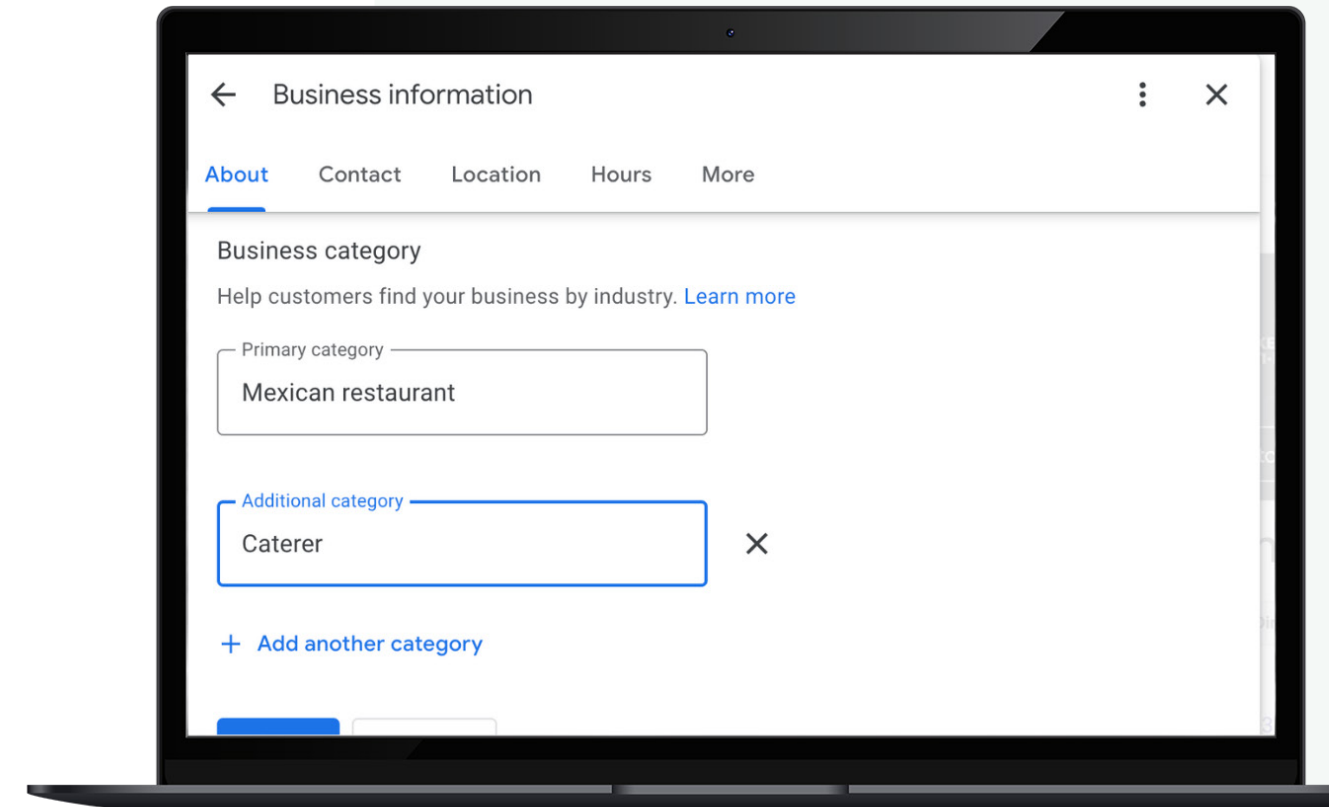
Google's rules state that you should select the most specific category that adequately represents your main line of business as your primary category. You shouldn't list more general categories as secondary. Secondary categories should be equally distinct lines of business.

For instance, if you're a restaurant specializing in Mexican cuisine, you might select “Mexican restaurant” as your primary category. If your restaurant also has a catering service, then you

should select “Caterer” as an additional category. These additional categories can help you rank for related search queries.

Google has over 4,000 category options, and new categories are added on a regular basis. When choosing categories, we recommend considering the following:

- **Choosing a primary category that best fits your services and offerings**
- **Examine what categories other top-ranking local competitors have chosen**
- **Choose secondary categories that clearly describe secondary lines of business, or separate product lines for a retailer**
- **Consider keywords consumers might be using when searching for your business**



04

Gain a High Volume of Ratings and Reviews

Ratings and reviews are a must have on local listings. Let's quickly explain the difference between ratings and reviews. Ratings are a numerical score on a set range; on Google and Yelp, they're 1-5 stars. A review is often a star rating with a text comment.

According to [local SEO experts](#), "high numerical Google ratings (e.g., 4-5 stars)" is the **sixth** most important local pack/finder ranking factor, and "quantity of native Google reviews (w/ text)" is the **eighth** highest factor.

When evaluating ratings and reviews' impact on local SEO, we must examine three areas: **review volume, star rating, and review response.**

Review Volume

Our [2022 Localized Marketing Benchmark Report \(LMBR\)](#) found that multi-location businesses average 223.9 reviews on Google, compared to 24.3 recommendations on Facebook and 19.8 reviews on Yelp.

[According to our Top Ranking and Conversion Factors for Local Search](#) research report, the top-ranking GBP averages **404 reviews**, and those ranked second average **375 reviews**.

Both have more reviews than those ranked three through five, who average 281 reviews

This data indicates that a high review volume can help a listing achieve a top local search ranking, especially at positions one and two.

Star Rating

In general, Google star ratings skew positively. Our previously mentioned LMBR data also found that the average star rating of a business on Google is a full 1.0 star higher than on Yelp — despite both using a five-star scale.

According to our [State of Google Reviews](#) report, in July of 2022, the average business on Google had a star rating of **4.11 stars**. As you can see in the chart to the left, star rating doesn't vary much across the 20 positions shown in the local finder. Thus, to appear in the local finder, or top 20 results, you need a relatively high star rating. Note that results will differ across markets and industries.

Review Response

Now, onto the impact responding to reviews has on your GBPs. While the [Local Search Ranking Factors](#) survey argues that responding to reviews doesn't impact local search rankings, responding to reviews is still important.

Responding to reviews does impact conversions. Consumers prefer businesses that respond to reviews. We [found](#) that for every **25 percent** of reviews responded to, the conversion of GBPs improves by **4.1 percent**.



Download our [Multi-Location Marketer's Guide to Online Reputation Management](#) and start dominating your online reputation today!

[DOWNLOAD NOW](#)

05

Include Attributes on Your Local Listings

On your GBPs and other local listings, you can include attributes. Attributes allow your multi-location business to provide critical information consumers might want.

There are two attribute types: factual/objective and subjective attributes.

Factual attributes are added and maintained by the business on the GBP platform.

Subjective attributes are added by Google users who've visited a business. You can't edit subjective attributes since Google users who've visited your business contribute them.

Let's focus on factual attributes, which you can update. Google has a provided list of categories, from which you can choose different attributes by clicking "yes" or "no."

There are other business attributes available to specific industries and businesses. For instance, restaurants can select dine-in, takeout, delivery, and other attributes. In comparison, retail companies can select in-store shopping, curbside pickup, delivery, and others.

These factual attributes can help local users find unique business details. Furthermore, they can help you rank for category-related keywords and phrases.

For example, by choosing the "identifies as veteran-owned" attribute, a veteran-owned salon in Tampa Bay may rank higher for search queries such as "veteran-run salon." They won't necessarily rank higher for "Tampa Bay salon."

Examples of Factual Attributes

From the business

- *Identifies as Asian-owned*
- *Identifies as Black-owned*
- *Identifies as Latino-owned*
- *Identifies as LGBTQ+ owned*
- *Identifies as veteran-owned*
- *Identifies as women-owned*

Accessibility

- *Has wheelchair-accessible restroom*
- *Has wheelchair-accessible seating*

Amenities

- *Has gender-neutral restroom*

Crowd

- *LGBTQ+ friendly*
- *Transgender safe space*

Planning

- *Appointment required*

Service options

- *Offers online appointment*
- *Onsite services available*

Business information

About Contact Location Hours **More**

More

From the business

Add

Accessibility

Let customers know more about your business by showing attributes on your Business Profile. These may appear publicly on Search, Maps, and other Google services.

Has wheelchair accessible restroom Yes No

Has wheelchair accessible seating Yes No

Save Cancel

06

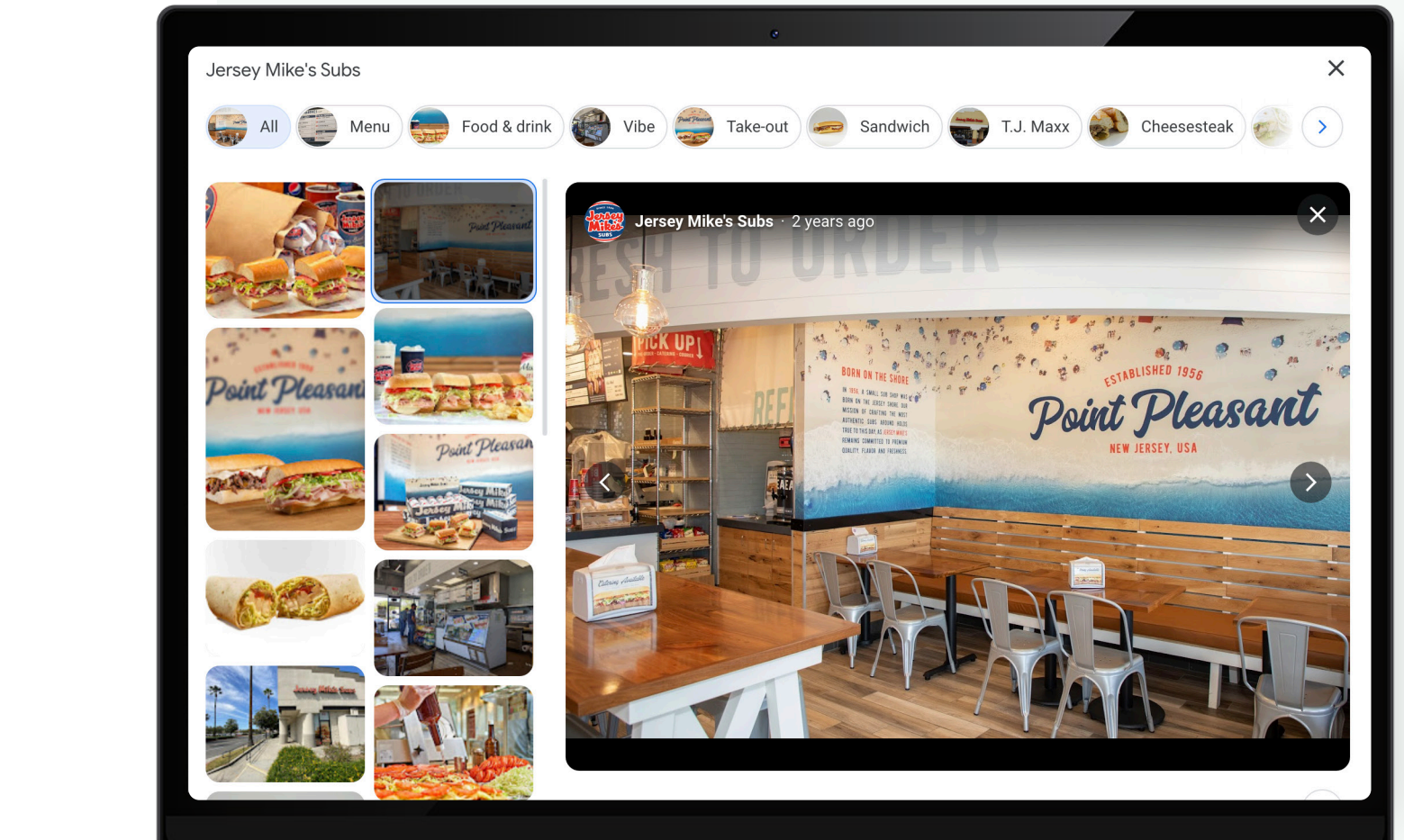
Add High-Quality Photos

The completeness of your GBP is undoubtedly a local search ranking factor. Adding high-quality photos is one way to make your GBP more complete. Furthermore, Google indexes photo content and may give businesses with relevant photo content a higher ranking.

When choosing photos for your local GBPs, consider the following:

- High-quality photos are a must
- Include interior and exterior photos
Tip: Add a few business signage photos
- Have photos connected to your category or business offerings
Example: Rooms for hotels, products for retail, and food for restaurants
- Update your photos every quarter to show Google you're active and your GBP is up to date

When uploading photos or videos, ensure they adhere to [Google's photos and videos content policy](#). Also, note that you **do not** need to geo-tag photos.



07

Ensure Local Pages Are Optimized

Local pages, sometimes called local landing pages, are individual web pages connected to a specific business location or franchise. Local pages are similar to local listings; they give detailed business information about a local store. However, since local pages live on your website, you have complete control over them.

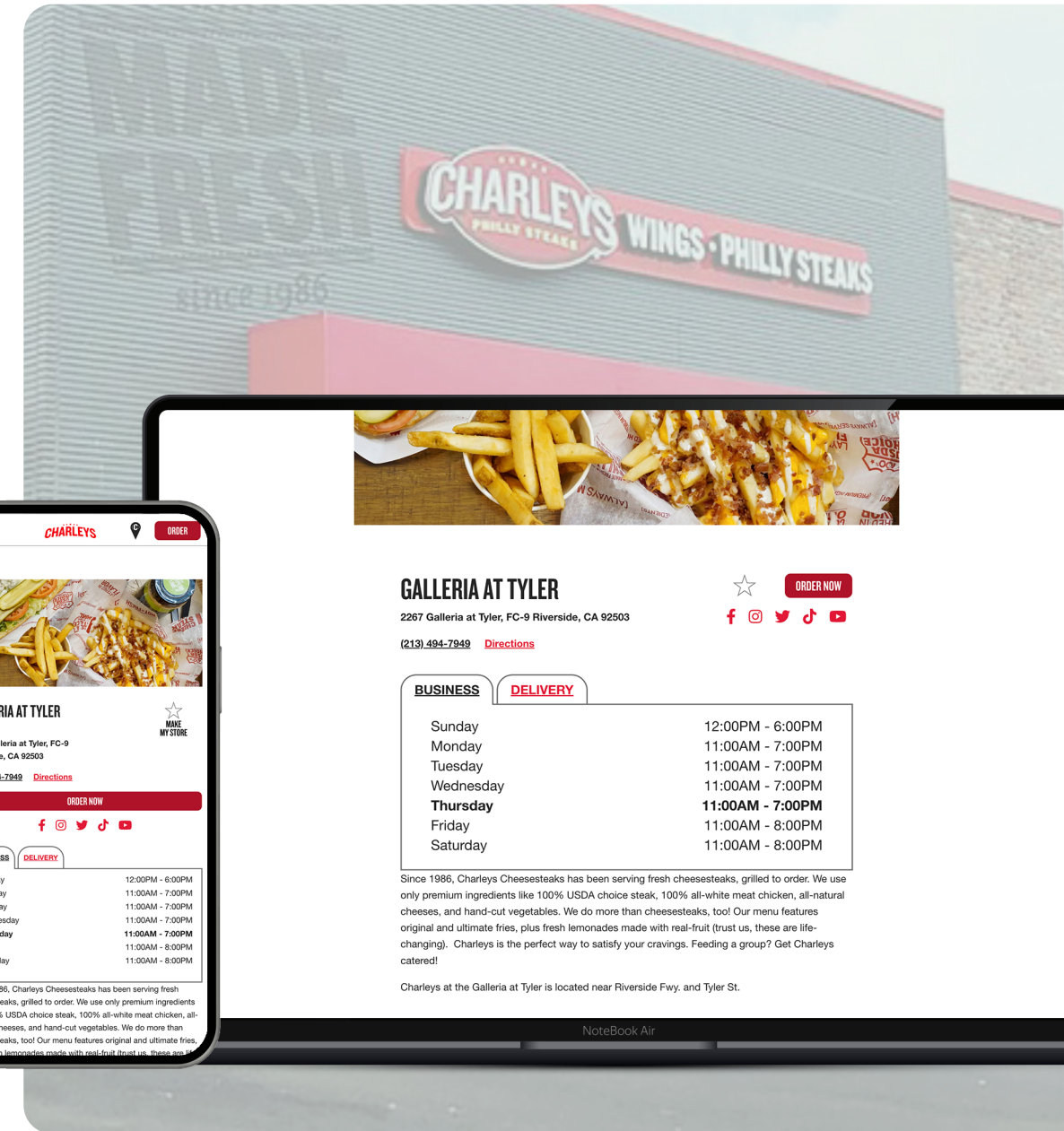
Similar to local listings, local pages should have the following business information:

- Name, address, phone number (NAP)
Example: Store and curbside pickup have different hours
- Store and service-specific operating hours
Example: An office supply store has printing, tech, shredding, and other services
- Products and services your local business offers
- Dedicated pages for each service
Example: An office supply store has printing, tech, shredding, and other services
- Driving directions and/or an embedded map
- Calls-to-action (CTAs) such as “order now” or current promotions and sales
- Website and social media profile links
- Ratings and reviews
- High-quality photos and videos

Local pages will generally impact your local organic rankings more than your local pack/finder rankings.

Quality local pages give Google and other search engines a plethora of business information and details about your products and services. This information makes it easier for search engines to match your business with relevant local searches.

Beyond increasing online visibility, local pages also provide consumers with the detailed information and convenience they’re looking for. This convenience often leads to happier consumers, a boost in returning customers, and increased revenue.



08

Acquire Backlinks From Locally Relevant Sources

It's long been known that backlinks or external links from authoritative domains improve your SEO. This correlation holds true for local SEO as well. Backlinks affect both your local pack/finder and local organic rankings, but more so your local organic rankings.

To obtain backlinks, you need a local link-building strategy. Below are a few local link-building tactics.

Get Listed on Local Directories

We've already mentioned the importance of claiming and updating all your local listings on popular business directories. They're also a place to add easy backlinks to your website — although some directories don't allow backlinks.

When adding links from your local listings to your website, they should link to your local pages versus your home page or elsewhere. You want to make finding locally relevant information as easy as possible for local users.

Create Locally Relevant Content

Having locally relevant blog posts and other content can help bring in organic traffic and natural backlinks. For instance, your multi-location business can create local content that lives on your website's blog or resources page that others find interesting and are willing to link to.

Here are a few local content ideas and examples:

- **Resource guides**
Most Common Pests in [Region] and How to Prevent Them From Entering Your Home
- **Data studies**
Monthly Real Estate Trends in [City]
- **Local surveys**
Top 10 Restaurants in [City] According to Local Experts
- **Listicles**
Top 50 Things for Families With Young Kids To Do In [City]

Create Local Partnerships

Partnerships with other local businesses and groups are a great way to improve local awareness and trust. We recommend creating partnerships with local:

- **Businesses**
- **Nonprofits and charities**
- **Schools**
- **Community groups**
- **Youth leagues and sports clubs**

With these partnerships, you can also gain backlinks by co-hosting or sponsoring events and fundraisers. These events can gain local traction and generate backlinks to your site.

We also recommend creating partnerships with local journalists, bloggers, and newspapers. You can collaborate on content or have them write a featured story or review of your business.



09

Have a Strong Internal Linking Strategy

Speaking of links, it's also essential to have an internal linking strategy. Internal links are links that connect one page of your website to another page on your website.

According to the [local organic ranking factors](#), internal linking across your entire website is the second most important search ranking factor. Here are a few internal linking strategies to boost your local SEO:

Your Other Website Pages Should Link to Your Local Pages

For multi-location businesses, it's important to build the page authority of your local pages. One way to help achieve this page authority is through internal linking. Try to add links from your content pages — like blogs and articles — to your local pages. For instance, if you're writing an employee-highlight story, link to the local page where the employee works when mentioning the location.

Link From Your Local Pages to Other Pages on Your Website

Vice versa, from the example above, your local pages should link to other pages on your website.

You can add links to your:

- Service pages
- Online order page
- Popular items or services
- FAQ page
- Nearby locations or store locator

Use Relevant Anchor Text

If you don't know, anchor text is the visible or clickable text of a link. It's an SEO best practice to have the anchor text be relevant to the page you're linking to. This anchor text practice holds especially true for keywords.

For instance, if you're linking to a blog post with an associated keyword, try using that keyword or a similar phrase in the anchor text. Similarly, when linking to local pages, use location-specific anchor text that includes the name of the neighborhood or city where your business is located.

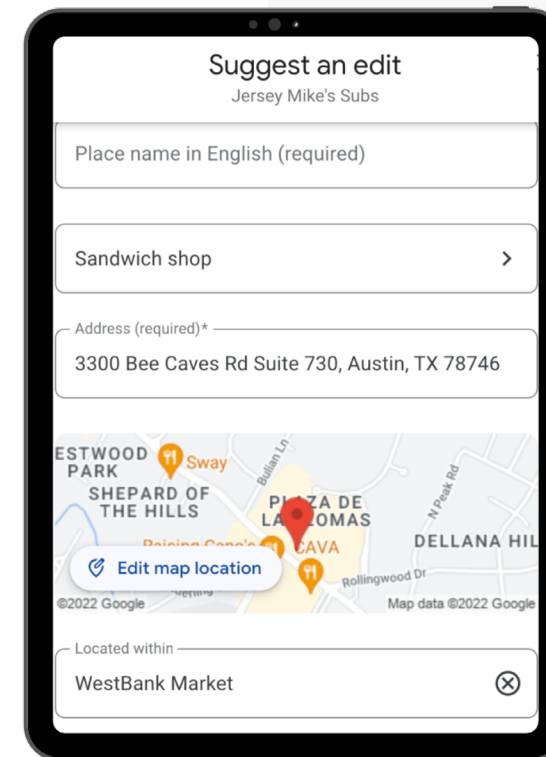
10

Properly Place Your Map Pins

Another local finder ranking factor and SEO tactic you can quickly implement is correctly placing your business's map pins on Google, as well as Apple Maps and other local directories or navigation platforms.

Before adjusting your GBP's map pin, ensure you correctly list the address, including the street number, name, town/city, zip code, and suite number (if applicable). Also, if you're in a shopping center, you can write the name of it in the "located within" box.

When adjusting the pin location, try to place the pin closest to the front entrance. Read our article on [fixing your Google Maps address](#) for more details.





**THE MARKETING PLATFORM
FOR MULTI-LOCATION BRANDS**

Dominate Your Local SEO Strategy Today With SOCi

Changes in digital marketing and the consumer journey are here to stay. Google and other search engines are constantly updating and evolving. It's important to stay informed about those changes and adjust your local SEO strategy accordingly. Following the steps mentioned above will significantly improve your business's local SEO and increase visibility on Google.

As a multi-location business, it's challenging managing 100s or 1,000s of local listings across multiple directories along with keeping up with all the local SEO news and updates. **SOCi** is here to make things easier.

SOCi is *the* marketing platform for multi-location brands. With our software and services, you can manage your **local listings, local pages, online reviews**, and other aspects of localized marketing — all with a single login.

To learn more about our offerings, visit us at meetsoci.com.

