

The age of “The Pigeon” began in 2014 with the Google Pigeon update. Everyone declared [Local SEO](#) was dead or soon to be dead; people thought the end was coming or at least near.

In the pigeon update, [Google](#) Slashed the Google map pack to 3 visible results (Yes Three!!!), well there are more below but you only see 3 until you click for more..and you know, how we hate to click below.

Directory listing was no longer a viable strategy, prior to this update you could just list yourselves in the top online directories, check your NAP (Name, Address, and Phone number) consistency, put a [backlink](#), add keywords and voila..you were in the map results.

Geographic ranges were all changed and shrank down.

Yes, Google cracked down on Local.

### **That was just the first step.**

The message is clear, Google wants to feature only the most prominent brands and places that people are most familiar with to show up on top.



Sounds like an uphill climb to get a small local business on the map? the bad news is, you cannot create directory listings, put a small blog, launch a social media campaign and target [keyword]+[city name] and build a bunch of links to reach your way to the top of the maps. It's just not that easy.

The good news is, it's not that hard, why? – Good question !! – Google doesn't care if you are a small business or a large store brand, they care about prominence.

In many instances, small businesses offer the most personalized service and value to customers.

Americans spend nearly 70% of their shopping budgets in stores. Most customers find what they need using online research on Google or on social media platforms.

If you are a small business or a business with multiple locations, selling locally and achieving prominence should be of utmost importance.

Like the saying “Drops of water make up the mighty ocean” – Local SEO is one of the most important factors in digital marketing especially when it comes to small and local businesses.

In order to understand the magic behind the term, it is important to know what it means and how it differs from the general term SEO and its sub-types such as regional, national or international SEO.

SEO is still a pretty young factor on the marketing horizon. It first appeared in the mid-1990s.

With the introduction of Google in 1997, SEO is directly related to the results of this search engine. As its algorithms evolved, so did SEO in order to try and help businesses get in front of their customers.

While previously SEO was mainly used by bigger, international companies, now smaller local business avail of it.

### **So, What does local SEO really mean?**

Prior to listing the important benefits of local SEO, it is necessary to define what stands behind the term. Basically, local SEO aims to rank your business among the most visible location-based searches. In the top 3 map results.

Local SEO thus aims to help your business be found by people who are looking for products and/or services near a certain locality.

Examples of local search phrases are “Colorado dentist”, “New York car rentals”, “Dublin restaurants” and the like.

Local search can be further narrowed down with geo qualified local terms which include postal code or street number for even more precise results of the nearest business.

It is especially popular among people using their mobile devices to locate a business. Thus, Google picks up the location of the person via their mobile device and shows results from the area – these are the so-called “near me” searches.

Local SEO is useful for all interested parties – both for the business and for the users, who trust Google to find products/services near them.

Note that it is of extreme importance that your business has a Google My Business verified location so that it appears in the local search.

What is the importance of local SEO?

According to a study by Forbes 95% of smartphone users have used their devices to look up local information and as a result, 61% called that business, while 51% visited it.

The numbers are significant enough to make us immediately think of calling an [SEO specialist](#) and request the service.

[SearchEngineWatch](#) also found out that 70% of mobile searchers call a business directly from

search results on Google.

In addition to that, via local SEO, your business can appear in Google's local 3-pack providing the most visibility to your customers.

The local 3-pack is one of the most desired places when it comes to search engines results. It's FREE!!

When you search for a business near you, Google shows you the three most popular businesses related to your search along with their addresses, phone number and direction links in the form of a snippet. It used to be called the local 7-pack prior to 2014 (Penguin update).

According to a [MOZ study](#), 44% of the users who searched for local results clicked on the 3-pack listing, while only 8% decided to load more results. Having a spot in the Snack Pack means more traffic to your site and hence a greater potential revenue.

Local SEO is the marketing tool that can get you in the Snack Pack by using the right keywords, proper relevance, prominence & helpful user-centric content.

So, how does local SEO differ from national and international SEO?

Local SEO is mainly used by businesses that are based in a given locality and want to promote their services/products to the local users.

In many cases, we are talking about mortar-and-brick stores or services such as dentists, restaurants, plumbers and the like. Local SEO uses the local listings of Google Plus, Bing or

other local business directories.

The focus is on keywords containing the locality so that it gets the necessary ratings. Local SEO specialists focus on [building high-quality backlinks](#) on local blogs, sharing links with local profiles and engaging local users through social sites.

National SEO is mainly used by online businesses that operate in a given country and want their results to appear for those users.

A business with many locations throughout the country can also use national SEO. The aim is to build valuable backlinks on national blogs and relevant niche sites.

It is important that your domain ends with the relevant country extension like .co .uk or .co .de so that the users get the right results.

International SEO is used by businesses who want to sell their products or services worldwide. Their domain name should not be limited by a country extension but end in .com.

The goal here is to optimize your site for organic traffic and choosing the right keywords and phrases is vital. Note that as an international company you will face a lot of competition from the national businesses who are targeting the same customers in the respective country.

As a whole, we can conclude that the common factors between local, national, and international SEO are that, the experts use keywords and a combination of various onsite and offsite strategies to rank for them.

The main difference is that in local SEO, location plays the leading role in ranking your business. The focus is on getting the “near me” results and having your business name,

address and contact details rank among the first results on the search engine.

What does multi-location local SEO mean?

Local SEO plays a vital role in businesses with multiple locations as well. If you have a local business with several locations, local SEO is vital as it will help you rank better.



Each of your business locations needs to have their own Google My Business verified location.

In addition, in order for Local SEO to work for a multi-location business, it is necessary to have a separate page on your website for each particular location.

This will make it easier for Google to crawl it and index it properly. Each page dedicated to a certain business location shall contain the following information as a minimum:

Name, address, and phone number (NAP) of the location

An embedded Google Map

Location-specific content – testimonials, reviews, staff members, etc.

Location-specific Title Tags and Meta Descriptions

Description of how to get to that location (include landmarks if any so that Google can connect them as entities)

Photos of your shop/office/product

Note that the pages should not be identical but separate optimized pages so that you can

reap the benefits of multi-location SEO.

If your business has multiple locations in different countries, it is important to translate your website.

If you want to make the website translation successful and also use it for SEO purposes it is important to embark on the multi-site strategy rather than the multi-language one.

The latter simply means that your site is translated in the respective languages where your business has a presence.

A multi-site is actually a set of separate sites developed specifically for the location and bearing the specific country extension – .co .de or .co.uk. Thus, you can optimize each site using the tools of local SEO and targeting the specific audience there.

Remember that for each location to rank, it needs a separate webpage, separate Google My Business listing and respectively separate keywords with the location in mind.

How does multi-location local SEO differ from regional SEO?

Most SEO specialists argue that there is no such thing as regional SEO per se.

Still, we can use certain regional keywords to help a business that wants to optimize its website for keyword phrases containing a large city name or a region. In this case, the focus is not in the direct location but the larger area.

Keyword phrases shall be coined after the model “Los Angeles rent a car” or “London dentist”.



Multi-location local SEO, on the other hand, focuses on each of the multiple locations in the region and on “near me” and “nearby” searches.

It uses the city name for hyperlocal searches. A multi-location local package aims to bring each of the local business locations to the first results and preferably get them in Google’s local 3-pack in order to generate more traffic and eventually profit.

What is NAP? Why it is important to keep NAP consistent?

NAP is one of the most important abbreviations when it comes to SEO, and there are a lot of them. The abbreviation stands for Name, Address, and Phone Number and is essential for each business that aims at ranking well in local organic search results.

Search engines like Google or Bing use the NAP data when determining which business to show in a geo-targeted search.

Hence, it is mandatory that you keep your NAP consistent throughout the web. Make sure first of all that your business name, address, and phone number/s are correctly written on your website and that you have submitted the exact same information on other sites throughout the web.

This information can be used by Google to validate your business as a legitimate one.

The consistency of your NAP information on local directories, Yelp or the Internet Yellow Pages is kind of a confirmation that your business actually exists.

A fake website of a business created merely for SEO purposes most probably won’t contain

NAP details, let alone have them distributed on other sites.

NAP consistency is one of the criteria used by search engines to differentiate between fake and real businesses, so make sure that you always submit the correct information.

Be careful when you register more than one location for your business not to mix the details and loose positions as a result of a simple typing mistake.

NAP data can also be used by the business to get better SERP rankings. It is a good idea to get as many “local citations” as possible.

In order to that, you need to register your business in any reputable directory. Start from local directories and such dedicated to the specific industry you are in. You can also use the local chambers of commerce, Yelp, the BBB, merchantcircle.com, 411.com, and other similar sites.

What are GMB Insights?

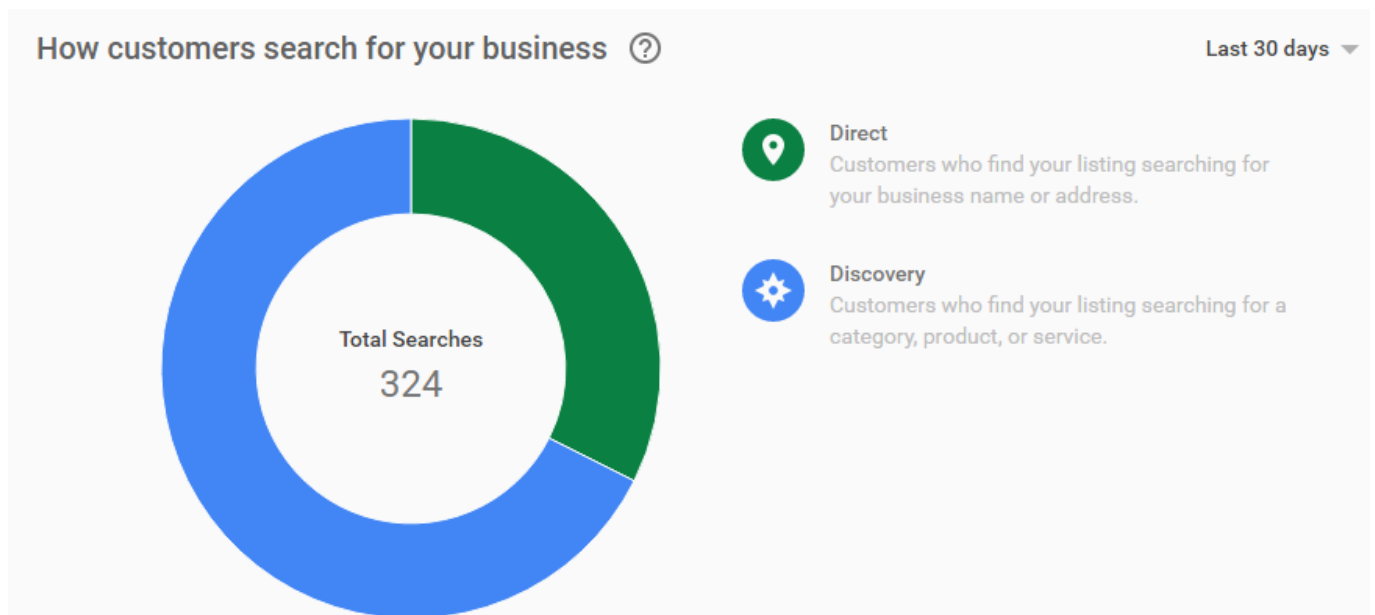
GMB insights provide information on how customers find your business listing using either Search or Map and how they proceed further. The data covers the past 28 days and includes information about:

How users search for your business

Where customers view your business – either on Search or on Map

What is the follow-up customer action – visit the website, give a phone call, ask for directions

With the latest update, GMB insights allow you to review data for the past three months. This is quite useful for analyzing the information and taking the respective steps in order to improve your traffic.



You can access GMB insights from your desktop or mobile and the easiest way is to follow the instructions given on View insights for your business listing provided by Google My Business.

Basically, you need to open your business page in your GMB dashboard. You will see a “Your business is on Google” card that gives direct links to your live listings on Search and Maps. You can also access insights in bulk in the event you have multiple locations.

For your convenience, you can download the insights for multiple listings to a spreadsheet and see and compare the performance for each of them.

In recent months, Google has significantly improved the service it provides to businesses that have registered and verified their GMB listing. Viewing the insights for your business listings is quite simple and straightforward and with the new data, it is even easier to track details for a multi-location business.

## What is the Role of Content in Local SEO?

Content plays a key role in SEO and localized content can help your company rank better in local searches.

While for SEO it is important to find the right keywords for your business, local SEO also utilizes keywords phrases that contain the specific location in them. This helps your site being recognized topically and geographically.

Inserting geographic keywords in your content and tags helps Google or other search engines index you for the specific geographic location.

For example, if you write a blog post on “Best rent-a-car services in Denver”, Google will index your content for Denver. One of the tricks to use is to put the geographic keyword at the beginning of the tag so that it serves its purpose better.

Localizing the content on your website will help you get better results in local searches. That can mean, including customer testimonials and reviews for the specific service at the location.

You can also include case studies of previous work you have done in the region and also describe what is unique for the area that you work in.

In case you serve multiple locations, make sure to create pages for each of them and localize them. The more local the content, the greater are the chances of higher rankings by Google or Bing.

You can use [Google Trends](#) to research for keywords and focus on the phrases most popular

in your specific geographic area.

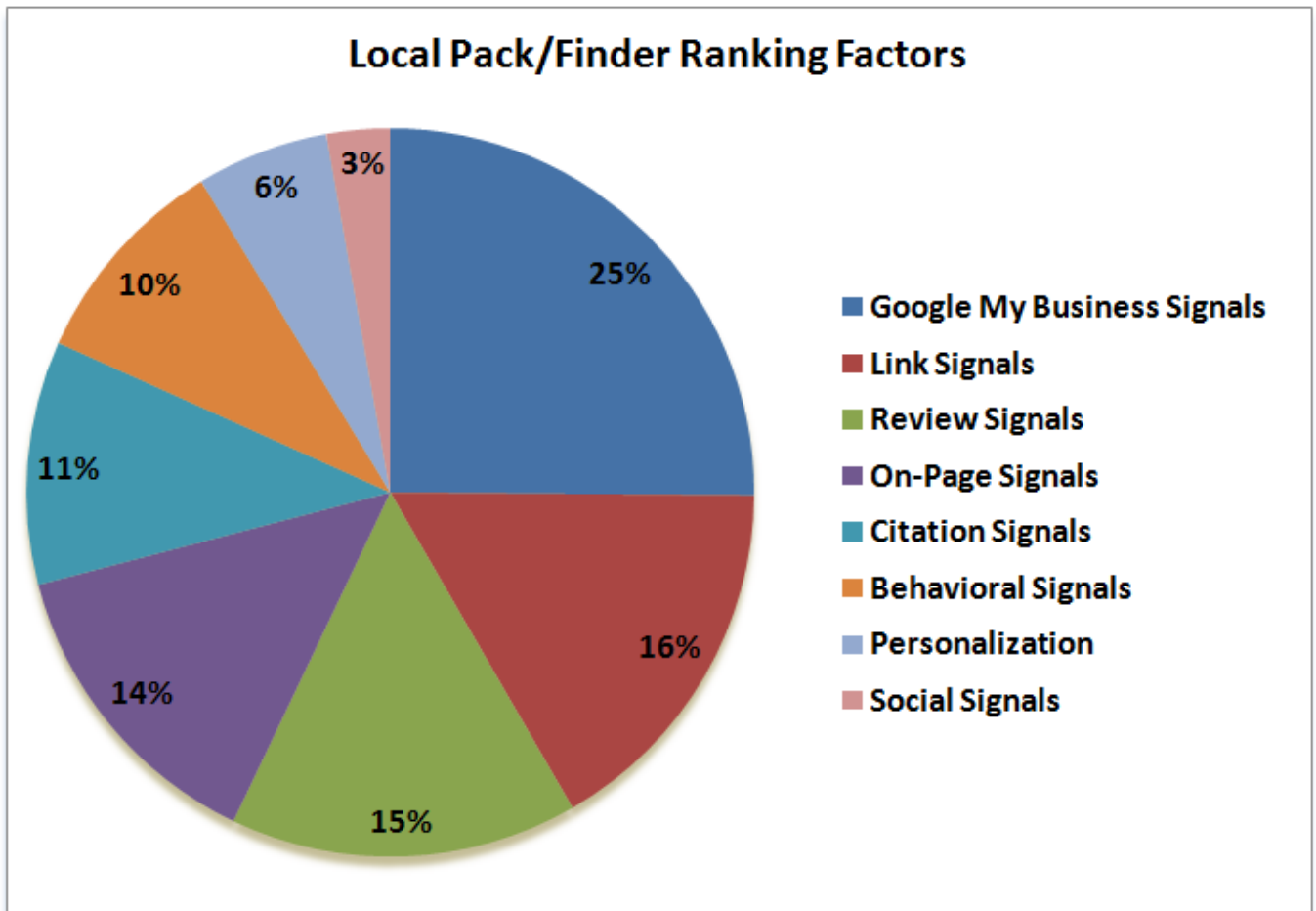
Another idea for great content from an SEO standpoint is providing answers to questions that you often hear from your customers. If they ask them offline, the chances are that they will be looking for the same answers online as well.

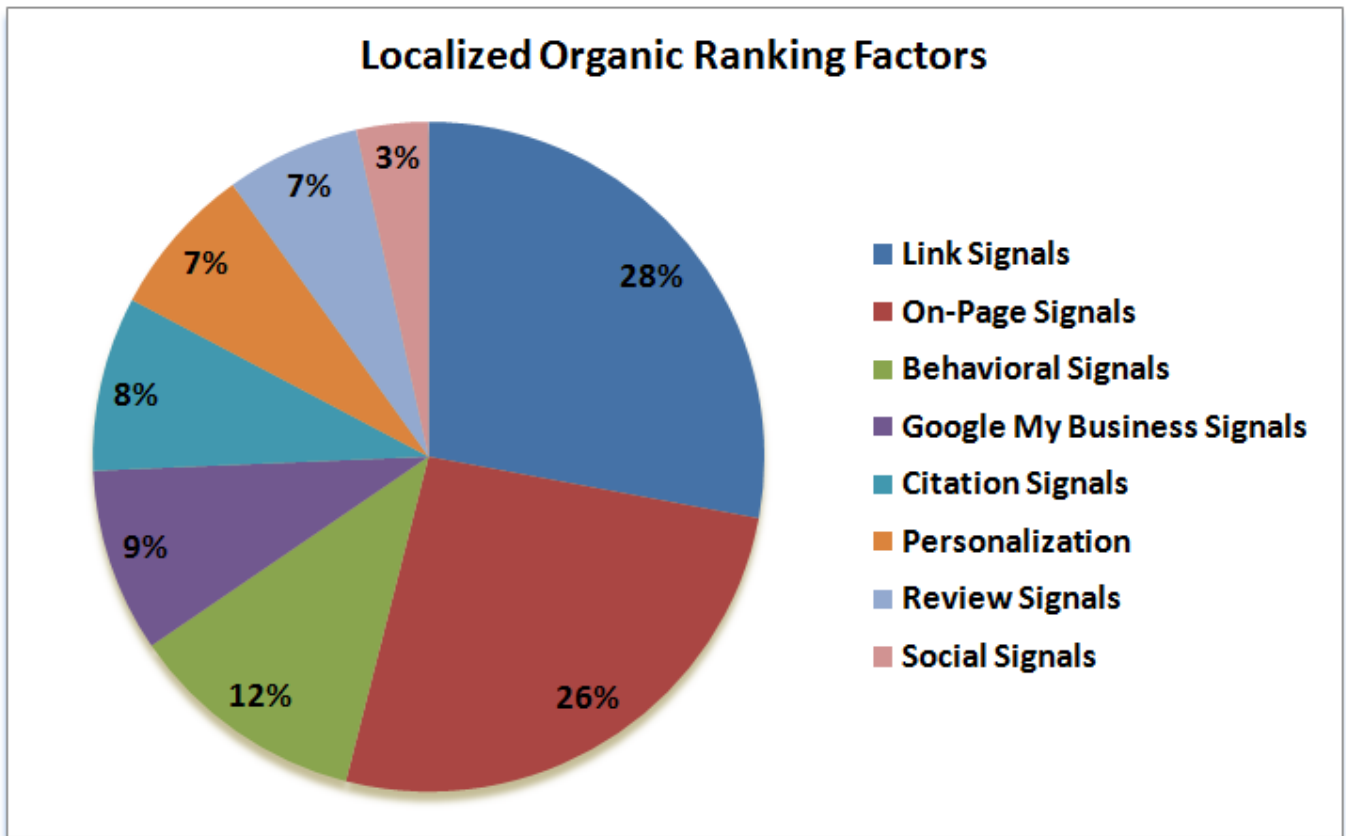
Last but not least, remember that you create content for your customers and not only for the search engines. Try to be informative, descriptive, useful in the blog posts, reviews or testimonials you provide and avoid simply flooding the content with keywords.

What are local SEO ranking factors?

MOZ has performed a [Local Search Ranking Factors survey](#) that lists 8 factors as the most important ones.

Their shares slightly different when it comes to Local Pack/Finder Ranking Factors and Localized Organic Ranking Factors.





Here is the list that you need to keep in mind when organizing your local SEO:

Link Signals (Inbound anchor text, linking domain authority, linking domain quantity, etc.)

On-Page Signals (Presence of NAP, keywords in titles, domain authority, etc.)

Behavioral Signals (Click-through rate, mobile clicks to call, check-ins, etc.)

Google My Business Signals (Proximity, categories, keyword in business title, etc.)

Citation Signals (IYP/aggregator NAP consistency, citation volume, etc.)

Personalization

Review Signals (Review quantity, review velocity, review diversity, etc.)

Social Signals (Google engagement, Facebook engagement, Twitter engagement, etc.)

In conclusion, it is essential to point out that in 2019, local SEO continues to play a significant

role in helping multi-location businesses, medium businesses, small and local businesses to reach their customers and serve them better via search engine results.

It is still worth investing time into proper local SEO since it's FREE traffic and is proven to have positive results that will affect not only your business rankings and site traffic but also your profit and potential growth.