

LOCAL SEO BASICS



By Eric LeRiche

www.WebSalesSpecialist.com

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Let me cut to the chase and tell it to you straight: More and more searches on Google are from people looking for information on local businesses so “standard” SEO doesn't cut it anymore. Fact is this subject is really hot these days and it could include hundreds of hours of content thus in this short report I will focus on things that can be done rather easily but have a big impact... I'll first start with on page optimization tips and end with the next most important thing you need to do to optimize your site locally.

Page Titles

- – Most important On-Page SEO element.
- – Must be unique for each page.
- – It is the highlighted headline link in the search engine results.
- – It tells the search engines and people what the page is about.
- – It's very rare for a page to rank for a competitive keyword phrase without having the phrase or a close variation in the page title.
- - Best format for Page Title = Keyword – City – Business Name
- - No more than 65 characters

Description Meta Tag

- – Has little to no impact on rankings but is very helpful at attracting searchers in Google. Most of the major search engines use the Meta Description Tag as the snippet under the main Title link in their search results pages. So a well written Meta Description Tag can entice searchers to click through to your site over a competitor's site.
- – Generally a Description Tag should be about 2 to 3 sentences with some page specific keywords in it. It should also include some Call To Action, maybe an offer or some hook to get the attention and click through from searchers.
- – The description should be relevant to the content on that page.
- – Must be unique for each page.
- – Meta Description characters displayed in Google are 156 so anything more than this is not going to do anything for you since it's not visible.
- – DO NOT stuff the description with keywords it's a waste of valuable search engine results real estate and won't help with rankings OR attracting site visitors...it's just spammy.

Keyword Meta Tag

- – Has NO impact on search engine rankings.
- – I like to use it for misspellings
- – Must be unique for each page.
- – It's most helpful to look at this tag on your competitor's sites to get some potential insight into what keywords your competitors might be using...unless they are just keyword stuffing.

Header

- - Include in TEXT the business local phone number and address (although the address is less important)

Site Navigation, Site Structure & Page URLs

Keyword research should be more than just finding keywords to target. It helps you build and organize new sites or existing sites. Keyword research can be used to plan the structure and content of your website. This is one reason SEOs always groan and roll their eyes when they hear that SEO has not been considered until after a site's content has been planned.

- - Important for users & search engines
- - Make it clear and logical
- - Text links with the keyword in the anchor text are BEST (No image links, non-crawlable JavaScript or Flash links). If links can't be crawled by the search spiders they most likely won't find the pages and the pages won't be indexed. When looking at the source code, be sure to check the navigation for crawlable link code

Crawlable:

`href=http://www.mysite.com/category/page.html`

Not Crawlable:

``

- - If you are forced to use Image links at least place Keywords in the Image ALT tag (Have other Text links somewhere on the site...usually in the Footer)
- - Page file names should use primary keywords that best describe that page. Try to keep the page file name to no more than 4 words. You don't want it to look to spammy.
- - Use a dash (-) www.mysite.com/exterior-painting to separate page URLs

instead of underscores (`_`) www.mysite.com/exterior_painting

or no spaces www.mysite.com/exteriorpainting

- - Preferred site structure is a site that is sectioned into logical categories.

www.localcontractor.com/painting/interior-painting.html

www.localcontractor.com/painting/exterior-painting.html

- - Content should be kept as close to the ROOT domain as possible. It's best to keep all pages no more than 3 clicks from the any page. The fewer clicks the better for usability and search engines.

Important: If you have an existing site with most of the pages indexed, whether they're ranking highly or not, it's best to not change your URLs simply to stick a few keywords in them. Changing the URLs of an existing web site should only be done when the existing URL structure is broken and preventing the site from being crawled.

Body Content

- - Try to have at least 250 words of content on a page
- - Must be unique for each page.
- - Try to use your primary keyword phrase at the beginning of the first paragraph.
- - It's most important to make the content important and relative for the visitor more than the search engines.

H1, H2, H3 Tags

- - Heading tags should be used to identify page topics
- - Heading Tags should be used in descending order

Image Optimization

- - add image ALT Tags with keyword rich descriptions
- - name image file with keywords and separate keywords with hyphens (-)
- - Make the alt attribute 2-5 words long including words related to the pages core keywords. (So not a long list of keywords separated by commas.)
- - Use a descriptive image title to describe the image.
- - Keep all image files in the same image folder www.mysite.com/images/

Footer

- - Include in text the business name, address, local phone number

Location Pages

- - Each location should have its own details page that includes
 - Unique address
 - Unique local phone number
 - Unique Google Map
 - Unique text directions
 - [Unique hCard Rich Snippets](#)
 - Unique hours of operation

HTML Site Maps – All Keyword rich Text links

- - This is a public site map that visitors can access as well as search engines, NOT an XML site map that you submit to search engines.
- - Not necessarily needed if you have a small website (up to 10 or 20 pages) that is simple with clean, logical navigation.
- - It's best not to have more than 100 links on a site map page.
- - It's best to organize and present your site map material in a logical format with categories that follow your site's structure.
- - Use appropriate keywords in your text links to each page.
- - You can add a brief description under each page link. This can be another opportunity to include keywords and a more descriptive text for visitors and search engines.

External Linking

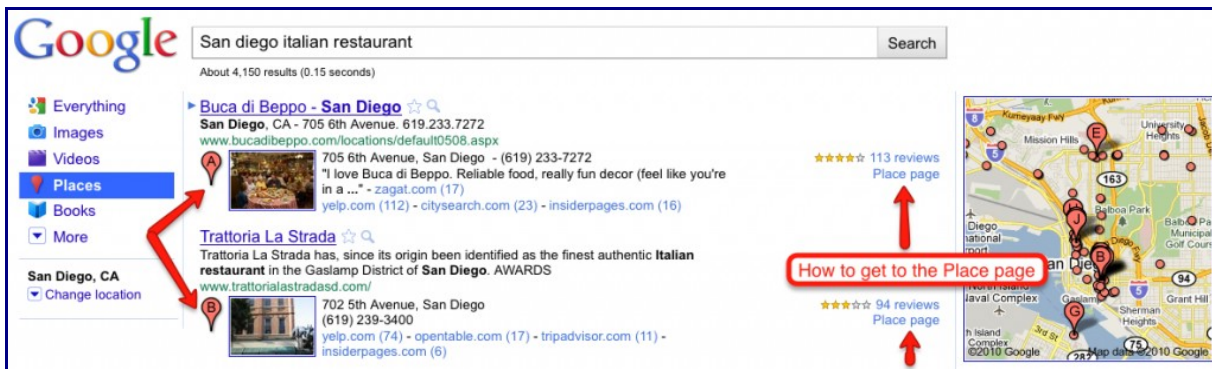
- - Do your best to limit the amount of external links as each external link not only passes some page rank but also may take visitors away from your site.
- - If you have to have external links try to place them on a unique page with NO FOLLOW, make the links image links and NO FOLLOW links.

Google Places

If your business is one that relies on local clientele, then this is not to be overlooked.

For a long time now, Google has given business owners the option of listing their business' information so that when someone searched for a business, a list of local results would show up and yours would have the possibility of being included. These showed up next to a map that marked each of their locations.

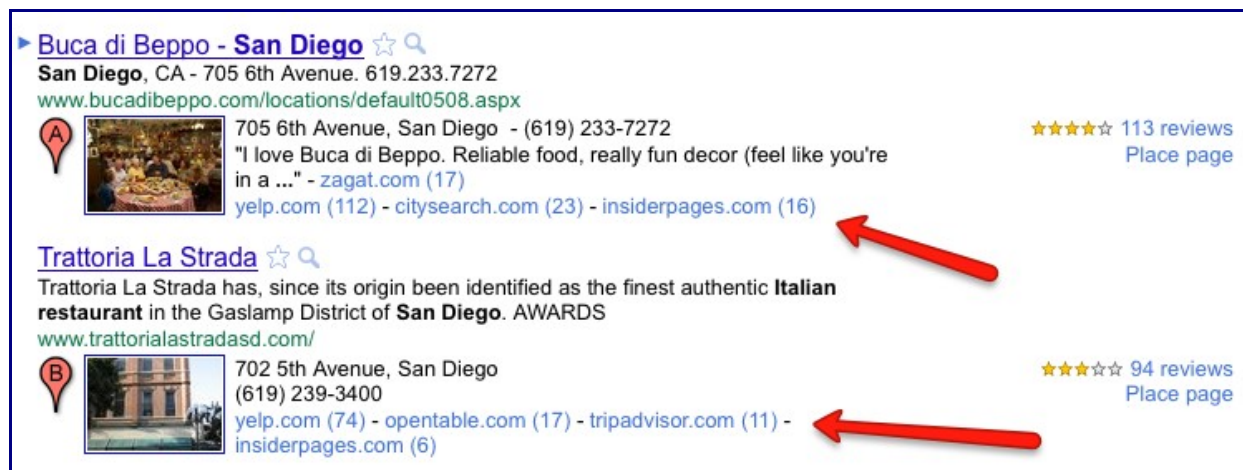
If you haven't already explored a Google Place page, go ahead and do a search for a local business, let's say "San Diego Italian restaurant." The listings with the red pushpin next to them are Google's local results. To the right of these listings, you'll see a star rating system followed by a link called "Place page." Pick one and click on it.



You'll see that the business owner has the opportunity to provide information about their business in a website-like format including the following:

- Address
- Website
- Description
- Categories your business falls under
- Store hours
- Payment information
- Photos
- Videos
- And any other additional details such as parking, dog-friendly, etc.

Notice too that when you get your search results page, some listings also have a cluster of external links leading to review sites.



This means that as a business owner, you have some work ahead of you. Reviews are automatically pulled into your page from other sites including Yelp!, CitySearch and Insiderpages.com for example. Unfortunately, you don't have control over which reviews show. So as if I haven't given you enough homework already, be sure to treat review sites as part of your Google Place page management. It's your job as a business owner to encourage good reviews from satisfied customers and to manage negative review as well.

If you are feeling overwhelmed by the additional work Google just gave you, keep in mind that they are making these changes to better the experience for the user. The new Place pages makes it so that people searching for the most basic information about a company, can find it all in a one-stop click. It's pulling together the best results for what that person is looking for and letting them see all the most relevant information, without ever having to leave the search results page *and* without ever going to

your business' website. And herein lies the problem for business owners, because between Place pages and the many aggregator and review sites, **your website is getting lost.**

Therefore, my biggest takeaway is that you must treat your Google Place page as another website. It needs your attention to be monitored and optimized.

If your place doesn't have a Google Place page, you've already fallen behind. There's only a slim chance your website will show up above these pages and, quite frankly, making your own Place page is the easiest SEO you can do for yourself.

Here's how you get started

Claim your business:

Go to- <http://www.google.com/local/add/businessCenter>

Once there, simply enter your phone number and carry on from there. Keep in mind as you fill in the information that your goal is to succinctly describe your business using researched keywords where they fit naturally. If it looks spammy to you, Google won't like it and nor will searchers. You also must earn the trust of the searcher – sell them with your great images, useful videos or honest description. Don't try too hard, just be thorough.

Lastly, remember that your Place page is something that must be managed, not simply completed. Just as I say with all SEO, you're never done. It is important to monitor your Place page analytics (Google provides these to you, similar to how they do with your website analytics) and make changes accordingly so that the Place page can best benefit your business.

In conclusion let me reiterate that this subject is vast and a lot more needs to be addressed to be perfectly optimized locally but if you do everything I mentioned in this report you will be ahead of 99% of local businesses! Seriously, do not underestimate these tips. If you do it all it will work, period.

Hope you liked it (if you need more help go to my site and contact me there.)

Sincerely



Eric LeRiche

Internet Marketing Consultant

www.WebSalesSpecialist.com