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MARKETING

# The Ultimate SEO Guide for Local Business

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## Bring in More Customers with a Local SEO Campaign

It is important now more than ever to have a solid digital marketing strategy to bring in more revenue for your business. In a [consumer study conducted by Google in May 2014](#), researchers unveiled that 4 out of 5 consumers use search engines to find information on local businesses. Not only that, but 88% of these people search with their smartphones. Also, 18% of local mobile searches led to a purchase in-store within a day.

A local SEO campaign can benefit your business in several ways including:

- Beat the Competition
- Brand Awareness
- Reputation & Trust
- High Conversion Rate Traffic
- High Return on Investment

This guide is created to help you understand how you can position your local business above the competition and to bring in more customers.



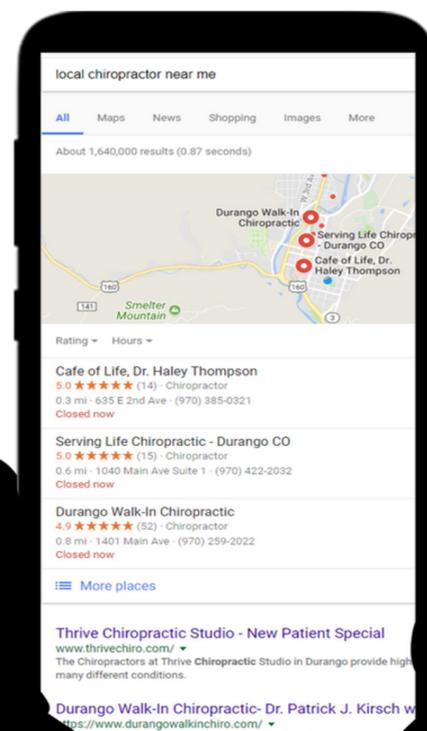
## What Exactly is SEO?

SEO stands for “Search Engine Optimization” and is the practice of increasing high quality and quantity of traffic to your website through organic search results. This can include optimizing your website for certain keywords or phrases, updating business listings, and increasing trustworthy and relevant links to your site. This may sound like a daunting process but if you read through this guide, you will have the knowledge you need to bring more customers to your business!

We will start with some of the simpler processes in SEO and continue to work our way through more complex practices. This will have you ready to hit the ground running with improving your digital presence!

## 9 Steps to a Successful Local SEO Campaign

1. Search Engine Business Listings
2. Keyword Research
3. On-page SEO
4. Business Directory Listings
5. Online Reviews
6. Schema Tags
7. Backlink Strategies
8. Google Analytics
9. Social Media



## Step 1: Search Engine Business Listings

One of the first steps in any successful local SEO campaign is to make sure that your business is correctly listed on all major search engines. This will ensure that your business is even listed under search engines and with the correct information that consumers look for.

### Google Business Listing

If you haven't already done so, begin by creating a Google My Business listing, or gain access to one if it exists. This is a free service and will allow your business to display information on Google including Search and Maps.

- 1: Navigate to [Google My Business](#)
- 2: Log into your Gmail account
- 3: Input your business information and click "Continue"
- 4: If you see a dialog box claiming that someone else has verified your business, [follow these steps from Google](#)
- 5: Verify the correct business information and click "Continue"
- 6: Choose a verification method by Phone, Text, or Mail

Congratulations! You have just successfully verified your business listing through Google and are ready to be seen by consumers searching for you on the web.

### Bing Business Listing

- 1: Navigate to [Bing Places for Business](#) and click "Get Started"
- 2: Search for your business by phone number, business name or location and click "Search"
- 3: If your business is already listed click "Claim and Edit Details" and follow the instructions to claim your business

4: If your business is not found, click “Create New Business”

5: Create your user profile and click “Submit”

6: Add your business information, category, and contact details and click “Submit”

Awesome! You have just taken the crucial first steps to obtaining an online presence for your customers. Now that your business is being found on both Google and Bing, it is time to move forward to Keyword Research.

## Step 2: Keyword Research

Billions of consumers are utilizing search engines each day and it is important for you to understand what your customers are searching for when looking for your business online. This is a process that takes careful consideration and planning.

When coming up with a keyword list, we recommend coming up with a proper strategy with an internal team, and take into consideration external influences. What do YOU think people are using to search for your business? What about one of your employees? Maybe try asking one of your customers to get an idea what they would search for when finding your business?

## Keyword Research Tools

There are also many tools available on the internet to provide a helping hand in your keyword research. If you are looking for a free and convenient tool to aid in your research, make sure to check out the [Google Keyword Planner Tool](#). The Keyword Planner will allow you to enter keywords and phrases and will give you further suggestions based on your query.

For example: say you own a sushi restaurant in Durango, Colorado. You might try the search query “sushi restaurant” and enter the targeting location as Durango, Colorado.

Once you click “Get Ideas” you will be taken to a new page that lists multiple similar keywords by relevance and the average monthly searches.

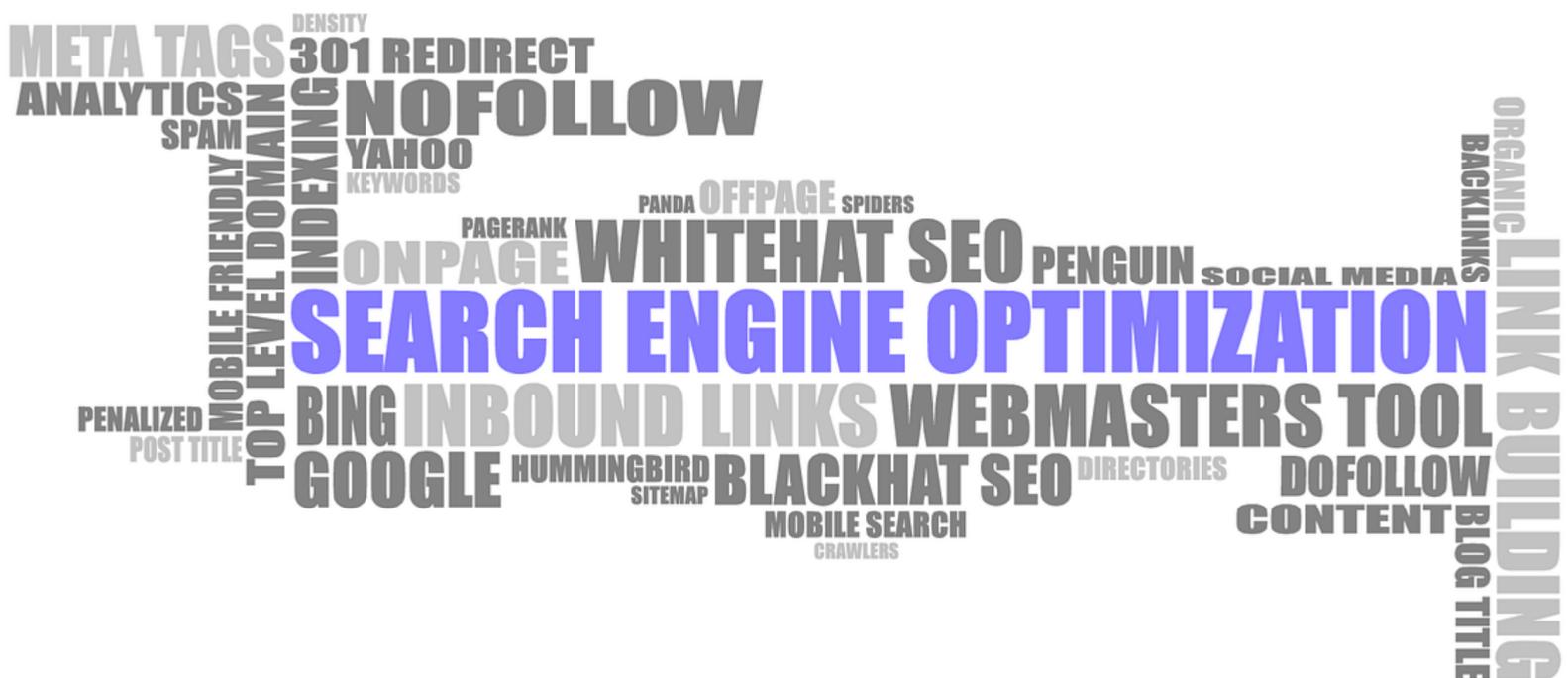
The terms that came up included:

- Sushi near me
- Japanese food
- Japanese restaurant
- Sushi bar
- Best sushi near me
- Sushi near me open now

There are many more terms listed and this tool can give you an excellent idea of how many people search for a term, and what to add to your keyword research report. Keep in mind to use helper terms such as “Near Me” and “Town Name” for a local business to add to keywords.

## Long-tail Keyword Searches

Keep in mind that most searches made on Google are located on the long-tail keyword spectrum. This means that rather than a consumer searching for “sushi restaurant”, a customer could be search for “best Japanese sushi near me”, or “Durango Colorado best sushi in town.” This is important to keep in mind when creating a keyword research report to understand how you can best optimize for each unique search.



## Google Trends

A powerful and many times overlooked tool is [Google Trends](#). This application shows you how a specific term trends over time based on location and type of search.

For example, let's say you own a garden shop in Breckenridge, Colorado. You can search the term "garden supplies" over the past 12 months and see what time of year that term is most populated. From the data provided, we see that the term is widely used at the end of January, the beginning of May, and mid-June.

At this point, you should have a lengthy list of keywords and phrases that pertain to your business. This will be a valuable resource that you will need to use throughout the SEO process, and it is important to keep on hand.

Now that we have this step completed, let's dig into optimizing a website for search engines.

## Step 3: On-page Search Engine Optimization

First, it is important to have an easy-to-use and visually attractive website for your users.

The website is the focal point of your SEO strategy and it is imperative that it is reliable and relevant to your customers. The website should include your full range of products or services and be designed to generate conversions.

It should include a call to action for visitors to make a purchase, download information, or to simply contact your business. Also, an informative website should have testimonials to help show off business expertise. This reassures the consumer of the company's positive reputation with past clients.

## HTTPS:// (SSL Certificate)

As of October 2017, Google has released some significant changes regarding security certificates on websites. Have you ever noticed that some sites have “https://” or “https://”? This is the inclusion of an SSL certificate that provides secure connections from web servers to browsers.

While in the past this may have been overlooked, it is now a ranking signal for search engines. It is recommended to contact your web developer or hosting provider to make this simple change to your site.

Aside from having a professional website, it is crucial that the site is mobile-friendly. When 88% of consumers use their smart phone to conduct a local search, if your website is not mobile-friendly, the consumer will potentially move on to a competitor’s site.

With your professional website, it is time to optimize certain sections for the relevant phrases that you chose from your keyword research.

## Title Tags

One of the most basic processes in on-page SEO is to update and optimize the titles to each page. While there are many different platforms to create websites, the process of optimization is the same. If you are looking for specific instructions on making updates to your platform, here are links to the most popular website builders:

- WordPress
- Joomla
- Square Space
- Wix
- Drupal

So, what are the best ways to optimize the title to each page?

## 1. Place Your Important Keywords in the Title

Place the most relevant keywords to your business in the beginning of the title for the best optimization, and consider using the next best keyword phrases to follow.

Keep in mind that you want to optimize different pages for different keywords so that they are never fighting over certain search engine placements.

Keep your keywords in the titles relevant to the content on that page. This will lead the consumer to the correct page, and search engines will see that as trustworthy and suitable page.

## 2. Keep the Title Short

Google search engine will not show more than the first 60 characters of a title. If you keep your title below this limit, then you can make sure that your whole title gets displayed correctly. When creating the title, you may use characters such as “:” or “|” to separate keyword phrases. Many other special characters are not supported in the title tag.

## 3. Don't Overdo it

If you stuff your title with the same keywords, Google can recognize this and dock you in the search engine results. Keep it relevant and pleasing to a user experience.

## 4. Don't Duplicate Titles

You want to make sure that each of your individual web pages have a unique title to them. This will help with the click-through rates for each page and will spread your results on the long-tail end of keyword searches. Refrain from using titles such as “Home” or “About” since Google will see this as possibly having duplicate content on your website.

## 5. Make Sure It Looks Nice!

Make sure that your title looks professional to any potential visitors to your site. No matter how you optimize your title tags, if it is not relevant to a user, then they will not click your link.

Always keep in mind that search engines, such as Google, strive to bring the best web pages for each search. If Google feels that your web page is too keyword heavy and does not have good enough content for a great user experience, then it will dock your site from the top of the search rankings.

Underneath each title that shows up in a search engine is a brief description of the webpage. This is called the meta description.

## Meta Description

While the meta description has no ranking power with search engines anymore (too much spam), it offers a clean and concise way to explain the page that consumers are about to enter.

Even though it has no effect on SEO, it is good practice to optimize this description for consumers since it will could be the different between a person finding a page relevant or not.

## Headings

<h1> to <h6> includes the headings on any given page. HTML? Yes. But don't worry, updating these tags (and other HTML elements) doesn't have to take any coding knowledge. Many times, your website will allow you to update these headings without the HTML tags.

These headings should be optimized with relevant keywords and should pave a straightforward direction to the information below them.

Things you should know:

- <h1> is the most important tag and is usually the title of the post.
- Use synonyms and related phrases and keywords to avoid keyword stuffing.
- Switch it up! Use <h2>, <h3> or even <h4> tags to structure your content with headings.

## Image Alt Attribute

With every image on your website, there is a description and "alt" attribute attached to it. The description is exactly how it sounds. The "alt" attribute (and name of the image) is what holds the SEO power.

### So, What Exactly is the "alt" Property?

Historically, it has been used as a source of alternate information for an image if a user was unable to view it. This could be due to a slow connection speed, disability, or other technological issues. It is the section where we can use keywords that are relevant to the image to help in ranking the webpage on search engines.

## URL Structure

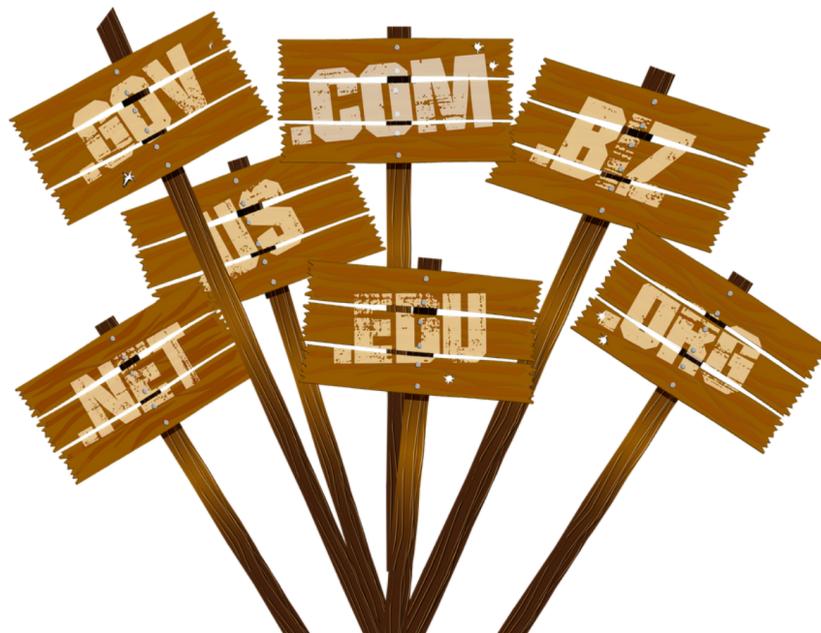
The URL structure can be a large ranking factor when having webpages featured on search engines. All SEO set aside, which webpage URL looks cleaner to you?

- <https://www.DurangoGymMembership.com/improve-squats>
- [https://www.DurangoGymMembership.com/2017/08/16/#id=blogpost\\$16](https://www.DurangoGymMembership.com/2017/08/16/#id=blogpost$16)

Simply put, keep your URLs relevant with keywords and keep the structure clean and simple.

Let's compare the ideal website to a local music store. The music store sells records, CDs, and stereo equipment. It would be ridiculous if the gear was all mixed together throughout the store. Therefore, there are different sections in the shop. The front of the store has the vinyl records, which then has sub-sections with new arrivals, new, and used LPs. In the middle of the store there is the CD area, which is sectioned off by genre (Rock, Bluegrass, Disco, etc.). At the back of the store is the stereo equipment, which is sectioned off by brand and accessories.

Much like the music store, a website should have a clearly defined and organized structure. This will not only ensure that a consumer has a convenient experience on your website, but it will help Google understand the importance of items and the hierarchy of the site.



## Content

The main goal of a search engine is to provide the most relevant search results to a consumer's search query. Therefore, search engines like Google have clever algorithms in place to better understand the validity of content.

It is true. Content is king.

While this phrase has been widely overused in the digital marketing community, it holds true when working with on-page SEO.

While writing exceptional content can be a whole book in its own, let's go over two considerations when writing website content. These aspects are quality and quantity.

## Quality

The content on any web page should be free of any typos or embarrassing grammar mistakes. Each paragraph should have relevant content that matches up with the title and headings of a page. While this may seem like a simple concept, it can be a challenge to find the balance between adding relevant keywords and quality content. Always keep in mind that you're writing for real people, so keep them interested in your unique business!

## Quantity

If a search engine "spider" comes across two sites for a keyword search with one of them updated a year ago and the last updated twice in the past week, what site do you think the "spider" will think is more relevant?

Obviously, the page that was updated recently is the correct answer. If a site is continuously adding additional content, then search engines (and consumers) will see this as a very active site. Not only that, if your business is continuously adding original blog posts, there is a larger opportunity to grab more consumers from long-tail keyword searches.

So, how about the length of content on a webpage? While there is no clearly defined answer, in a [2017 post by Hubspot](#), they found their blog post sweet spot was at 2,500 words. This may seem lengthy, but search engines will favor content that is longer since it could entail that a business has more to say and has more expertise on a subject. This is not to say that every webpage should hold that many words. Just keep in mind that search engines like to see a page that can cover a wide variety of topics for their audience.

While there are many strategies and resources that go more in-depth with on-page optimization, this section covered some of the most basic and approachable methods.

Next, we will dive into updating Business Listings, and how it will be a major step in your local SEO strategy.



## Step 4: Business Directory Listings

Business Directory listings can be based on national, local, or industry levels. Let's say you own a pet supply store in Durango, CO. You could list your business on local sites such as [360Durango.com](http://360Durango.com), national directories such as [YellowPages.com](http://YellowPages.com), or industry-specific directories like [PetClue.com](http://PetClue.com).

While you may have to search the web for local and industry specific directories, there can be a more direct way to audit your site for national directory listings.

At [Animas Marketing](#), we like to use Moz Local Business Listing Search to observe some of the major business directories to choose from. While you have the option to pay a yearly fee to have Moz add your business and to update each listing, many of the directories you can update yourself.

While many of the directory listings will want you to pay extra to add your site, most of the listings can have a business added at no charge. Whether you decide to pay for the business listings or manually add your business, it is recommended to have a strong presence on these directories regardless.

If you do decide to update the business listings yourself, make sure to keep a consistent NAP (Name, Address, Phone Number). This is a ranking signal for search engines when listing your business in the search results. If your business has inconsistent addresses and phone numbers across various parts of the web, a search engine could see that as untrustworthy and dock your webpage.

Search engines are extremely detail-oriented and will see your business as relevant if it is consistent on the internet.

## Step 5: Online Reviews

This section is extremely important for local businesses (especially in a tourist town), and should have a solid strategy to back it up. Too many times businesses do not have a system in place to consistently gather reviews. These reviews are crucial in the transactions consumers carry out. If a consumer wants to buy a new computer, they look at the reviews made online by other customers to gain confirmation that the product is the right one. The same goes for most local businesses in any town.

If a consumer goes to San Diego, CA looking for pizza, they might type in “best pizza in San Diego” on their mobile device, resulting in multiple results on Google My Business. From looking at the first few listings, the businesses with the most reviews tend to rank higher. In fact, without even making any adjustments to search options, Google decides to only show me results of businesses that have a 4.0+ rating. As a local business it is important to come up with a strategy to bring in consistent reviews from pleased customers.

On the other hand, it is against the policies of review sites such a Google, Yelp, or Facebook to “bribe” people to give your business a review. If one of these companies finds out that your business is giving consumers incentives in return for favorable reviews, they could ban your account and remove your business from their site.

It is up to you to decide on a unique strategy to gain positive reviews on a consistent basis. Also, pick a platform that will best benefit your business from reviews. Are you trying to rank higher in organic search results from Google? Or maybe you are a restaurant pulling in many customers searching for the best food through Yelp. Regardless of the platform, this is a section of your business’ digital strategy that you do not want to slack in and should keep all your team members involved.

## Step 6: Schema Tags

Ah yes, the dreaded schema tags. First off, what is Schema Markup?

Schema Markup is code that you add to your website to aid search engines in returning informative results for users. While your content may have much to say, that doesn't necessarily mean that a search engine knows what it all will mean.

For example, let's look at the 2009 movie by James Cameron, "Avatar." The word avatar could also mean a representation of a person on screen or possibly the TV series labeled, "Avatar: The Last Airbender." For a search engine to better understand that the website is talking about the movie, we add schema markup to each page.

With schema tags, we can tell search engines that:

- Avatar is a movie
- It was released in 2009
- It includes actors Sam Worthington, Zoe Saldana, and Sigourney Weaver
- It was Directed by James Cameron
- The country of origin in the USA

There can also be much more information that you can tell Google about the movie by adding Schema markup. Not only can this help search engines understand your content, but they can display your page in what is called "rich snippets". These snippets are an improved way of displaying a webpage beneath the title in the search engine results. It could be anything from displaying a list of upcoming events, to reviews, to additional information on a historic person.

Common data markup includes:

- Movies
- Events
- Articles
- Person/People
- Restaurant
- Reviews
- Product
- Offers

Adding this information to your webpages can help in your keyword rankings and is encouraged for a better overall user experience. This allows a consumer to find out more relevant information about your site even before they visit it. You can either manually add the code to webpages, add the schema markup to an addon with popular website applications, or use [Google Tag Manager](#) to add the tags to your site. To learn the process of adding this code to your site, visit the [Schema website](#).

```

43 <body <?php body_class() ?>
44 <div id="fb-root"></div>
45 <script>(function(d, s, id) {
46     var js, fjs = d.getElementsByTagName(s)[0];
47     if (d.getElementById(id)) return;
48     js = d.createElement(s); js.id = id;
49     js.src = "//connect.facebook.net/en_US/sdk.js#xfbml=1&version=v2.6&appId=286644443678117";
50     fjs.parentNode.insertBefore(js, fjs);
51 })(document, 'script', 'facebook-jssdk');</script>
52 <div id="page" class="site">
53     <a class="skip-link screen-reader-text" href="#content"><?php esc_html_e( 'Skip to content', 'vrdutube' ); ?></a>
54     <header id="masthead" class="site-header" role="banner">
55         <div class="site-branding">
56             <div class="navBtn pull-left">
57                 <?php if(is_home() && $xpanel['homepage-style'] == 1) { ?>
58                 <a href="#" id="openMenu"><i class="fa fa-bars fa-3x"></i></a>
59                 <?php } else { ?>
60                 <a href="#" id="openMenu2"><i class="fa fa-bars fa-3x"></i></a>
61                 <?php } ?>
62             </div>
63             <div class="logo pull-left">
64                 <a href="<?php echo esc_url( home_url() ) ?>">
65                 
66             </a>
67             </div>
68             <div class="search-box hidden-xs hidden-sm pull-left ml-10">
69                 <?php get_search_form(); ?>
70             </div>
71             <div class="submit-btn hidden-xs hidden-sm pull-left ml-10">
72                 <a href="<?php echo get_page_link($xpanel['submit-link']) ?>" class="header-submit-btn"><i class="fa fa-search fa-3x"></i></a>
73             </div>
74             <div class="user-info pull-right mr-10">
75                 <?php
76                 if ( is_user_logged_in() ) {

```

## Step 7: Backlink Strategies

One of the largest ranking factors in SEO is what is known as “backlinks.” This is really where a business can set itself apart from the competition and build a powerful brand online.

### What are Backlinks?

Simply put, backlinks are incoming links to a webpage. While historically the more links a website had, the better search engine ranking position they would be in. While this still can hold true, it is important to focus on quality over quantity. Search engines can understand the relationship between sites and if you have numerous links from low-authority websites, it could be seen as spam and can hurt your business in search engine results.

### What Qualifies as a “Good” Link?

A good backlink is one that can:

1. Drive referral traffic
2. Build visibility with your target audience
3. Build your reputation

For example: if you own a music venue, you would want to create links from other websites in the music industry or local sites that can feature your business. It would not make much sense to have a backlink from a medical forum. You want to make sure that backlinks are relevant to the company, and furthermore promote the site overall.



## Link Building Ideas

The following is a suggestion to define a link-building strategy for your business. While there is no method set in stone for building the best links, the list below will offer some great opportunities for you and your business.

### 1. Get Mentioned in the Local Newspaper

That's right. Never miss an excuse to get mentioned in your local news. Obviously, you won't want to have a bad controversy surrounding your business, but then again, there is no such thing as bad publicity. There are multiple ways to get featured in the news and it never hurts to reach out to your local newspaper to start a conversation.

### 2. Industry Forums

Join the conversation! There are various blogs and forums online with the same industry as your business that it would be beneficial to join the communities. SEO aside, joining these industry-specific communities could provide some valuable leads, and information that could potentially be helpful to your day-to-day operations. Many forums, after you post a certain number of times, allow you to add a link back to your website. This helps generate backlink ranking power.

### 3. Local Contests/Nominations

It is important to consider any opportunity surrounding a local nomination for your business. In Durango, Colorado there is a contest nomination for "Best of Durango and La Plata" offered from one of the local newspapers, "The Durango Herald." Another local nomination is the "Best of Business" offered by the Durango Chamber of Commerce.

Implementing a strategy or planning to get nominated not only helps your business gain valuable exposure, but your business website can be linked to that webpage.

## 4. Guest Blogging

One way to gain valuable backlinks is to guest blog for another business, either local or in the same industry. Feel free to reach out to a domain with high-authority and ask to write a guest blog post for them. Many online businesses that create content each day would be happy to feature a piece that someone else wrote on their website. The trade-off is, you write a valuable piece of content for them and they can link back to your website from that content.

## 5. Community Events

Hosting an event can bring you links from numerous sources, some including your city's website and community news sources. The event can be as big or as small as you would like, depending on what you are trying to accomplish.

Some ideas include:

- Swap Shop
- Trash Pick-up Day
- Bar Crawl
- Dance
- Raising Money for a Non-Profit

This is just a small list of ideas to get your started and will help you begin the process of getting your community more involved.

## 6. Offering Discounts

Some link building strategies include (but are not limited to) offering discounts to students at a local university, or offering discounts to organization members. This could in return bring your business backlinks from a university (.edu websites can offer very authoritative linking power), a local organization such as the Chamber, or a non-profit that serves veterans.

## 7. Partnerships with Other Local Businesses

When owning a local business, it's important to understand who the other local businesses in town are. Reach out to them and see if they can offer a link back to your website and possibly see what you could offer them in return.

While this includes just a few ideas to get you started in your backlink strategy for your local business, there are hundreds of ways to gain valuable links to your website. If you would like to check out a more comprehensive guide to backlink ideas, check out [PointBlackSEO's blog](#) offering over 500+ ideas for building links.

## Step 8: Google Analytics

While connecting your website to Google Analytics holds no proof of adding ranking power to your business, it is a valuable tool to measure the success of your local SEO strategy.

Google Analytics compile important data involving the users on your website, and it is free! This can include daily users, new and returning users, bounce rate, acquisition, and demographics of your users.

Google Analytics  
Anywhere. Anytime.



On the “Audience” tab, you can see your daily visitors specified by a date range. This data can include new and returning visitors, the amount of time they spent on your website, the bounce rate, the primary language used, the browser consumers use, and the city they visited your website from. This tab can also include details for your visitors including gender and other interests they share due to their searching habits.

On the “Acquisition” tab, you can gain an idea of how your visitors are funneling into your website. This shows if people are directly searching for your brand (Direct), found your site through organic results (SEO), were sent there through another website (Referral), or through social media (Social). You can click on each option to find out more on how a visitor arrived at your website. For example, clicking on the “Referral” option will allow you to see exactly which backlink and website a user clicked on to arrive at your webpage.

Google Support offers a [comprehensive guide](#) to setting up your website to Google Analytics. Much like working with the Schema Markup, it includes adding code to your website. Fortunately, there are many plug-ins available to different website builders that make the process easier for any business owner.

## Step 9: Social Media

Social Media is known to be a great practice for any business... but did you know that it can also affect your rankings on search engines?



## 1. The Amount of Followers/Engagement

The total number of followers on any social media profile you have has a considerable influence on search engine rankings. If your business has 50 Facebook followers while your competitor has 4,000 Facebook likes, Google may see your competitor as being a more relevant business for users.

However, as mentioned earlier, Google can understand the value of links. The search engine can also detect the value of social media followers and if you have followers that are irrelevant to your business, it can be considered spam. Buying Facebook followers is never recommended and can hurt a business. It is recommended to build your follower list organically through people who will engage with your business.

## 2. Encouraging Engagement

Having your followers engaged in conversation with your brand is equally important when holding a social media profile. This can encourage people to share your content with their friends, use hashtags to boost your brand visibility, or simply bring in more visitors to your website. Having additional links and more visitors to your website will increase your ranking power in search engines.

## 3. Social Media Profiles Rank in Search Engines

Finally, each profile you have in social media will rank in the search engines. This can be helpful when you are branding your business. Let's say you own the business, "Colorado Styles Jewelry." When someone makes a search for your business in Google, it is helpful to not only have your website listed in the results, but to have your social media profiles ranked there as well. This can ensure that competitors websites are ranking high in the search engine when people are directly searching for your brand.

## In Conclusion:

Search Engine Optimization is a time-consuming and elaborate process that can go way beyond this guide. In fact, searching the internet can bring you hundreds of more comprehensive guides on the subject. The point of this specific guide is to help you get started with a local SEO strategy with some of the easiest and more helpful methods available.

We hope that you found this guide informative to building your first SEO strategy! We want to see your local business succeed. If you have any further inquiries or questions on one of the methods explained, feel free to reach out to us here at [Animas Marketing](#). Farewell and good luck on your local SEO journey!

