

# Winning Google

## For Local Business



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for your local business

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# Introduction

An online presence for local business is no longer an option. We all know that the Internet is growing at an astounding rate.

Let's face it; no one goes to the Yellow Pages to find a local business any more. They simply jump onto their computer and do a search in Google.

The question that you need to ask as a business owner is, "Am I there to meet them when they're looking for me?"

That is what this little book is all about. Helping you position yourself to meet with your customers when and where they are looking for you.

We have kept the book short and sweet because we understand that you are a busy person, but we also know that to have an understanding of how the Internet works can be very helpful to get you the kind of results that you are looking for.

# The Wild Wide Web

Sometimes even I, as an expert in Internet related subjects, and search engine optimization, find the World Wide Web more of a Wild Wide Web!



In the online world there are so many new things happening every day, and sometimes it's difficult to keep up to speed with all the latest developments. Figuring out how to best use the Internet to promote your business, and position yourself before potential customers can rapidly become a full time job!

The great thing is though, that with a little education, a bit of patience, and some expert help, the Internet can become the very best friend of local businesses just like yours.

Yes, there are new developments all the time, but there are also time-tested methods that have worked for many years, and still work today. With new and old taken together, you can befriend Google and Bing, and their whole crazy posse, and make the web really work for your business.

We are all aware of the big players in the Internet world; Google, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and many others who have become household names.

All of these have the possibility to be used to benefit your business in powerful ways. Even up until only a few years ago, many of the opportunities that are open to us today as local businessmen and women were not available.

Today, there are opportunities, and avenues to present your services to the world that are astonishing.

Honestly, you can harness the power of the Wild Wide Web and ride this new technology right into your customer's home. And once you are there, you can present them with the information, the services, the products, and the satisfaction that they are looking for.

# The New Yellow Pages

Many years ago, if I needed a business or I was looking for a service, the first place to go was the Yellow Pages. It was the one stop shop for almost every business wanting to advertise their wares. Now, the Yellow Pages are used more often as a doorstop than a place to find a local business!

The new Yellow Pages is Google search.

That is where our customers are going to find what they are looking for.

Fortunately, we are able to utilize the latest technologies, and technological commonsense, to make sure that we are there when they are looking.



# It All Begins With A Search

People are looking for you. You have the very services, the very answers that people are looking for. There was once a time where a business would go looking for its customers.



Now the customers look for the business, and we just need to position ourselves to meet them when they are looking.

One of the very encouraging statistics for local businesses is that the majority of searches that are conducted in Google are very specific, and they are often geographic. People do not just search for a plumber, they search for a plumber in their town, their city, or their district.

What this means, is that we're not competing with 10 million plumbers to appear on the 1st pages for that search, but with a handful of savvy plumbers in our area who understand how the Internet works.

Local search is becoming more and more

powerful as technology progresses. Google now delivers results based on where people are searching from. It can recognize where the computer is that someone is using to search, and send them information that is relevant to that geography. What this means is that when people search for your business, in your area, it is now much easier, and much more likely for you to appear in the search results than ever before.

What we need to learn to do as local businessmen and women is to work with Google, and the other search technologies, so our presence is really felt, not just on terra firma, but also in the virtual world of the Internet.

Optimizing our presence for local search is one of the most powerful ways to accomplish this.

And thankfully there are many ways to do this, and this is what we are going to briefly look at over the next chapters.

# Your Domain – Stake Your Claim!

Everything begins with staking your claim to your piece of virtual land. There was a time when pioneers and adventurers staked their claim to a plot of land. They put their flag in the ground, and that ground became theirs. The same thing is happening today, only this time the real estate is virtual, but nevertheless just as valuable.

As a business, we have to stake a claim to the virtual land that belongs to us. This, in techie terms, is what we call a domain.

For example, if you are Joe Bloggs the gardener from Glendale, you might want to stake your claim to [JoeBloggsgardener.com](http://JoeBloggsgardener.com).

Even better, bearing in mind that people search locally for services that you can offer, why not stake your claim to [GlendaleGardener.com](http://GlendaleGardener.com) or [GardenerInGlendale.com](http://GardenerInGlendale.com).

But we don't want to stop there, we also want [Facebook.com/glendalegardener](https://Facebook.com/glendalegardener) and [Twitter.com/glendalegardener](https://Twitter.com/glendalegardener). Get the picture?

People are searching for “gardener in glendale”,

or “gardeners in glendale”, or “Glendale gardener”, and to own the domain name that perfectly fits with that local search can be a very powerful aid to getting noticed on the Internet.

Contrary to popular understanding, just having the right domain name is often not enough. It really is just a beginning, and there are many factors that will determine whether, and where, you appear in the search engines.

But this is the best place to begin. **Stake your claim, get your name, and make sure you have the right domain!**

There are lots of places to do this, called registrars. GoDaddy.com in the USA or 123-reg.co.uk in the UK, are just two examples of companies that will allow you to easily, and cheaply, register your claim to the name.

# The Architecture of a Winning Website

Okay, so we now have a domain. What next?

We have to populate that domain. It's like a piece of bare land that we now need to build upon.

How we build can really affect how much traction we get in the search engines.

This is where many small businesses go wrong.

They have a website, and the site may look really great, but without the proper architecture and understanding of how search engines work, and how the search engine looks at and understands a web property, it can often fall far short of what is needed to appear at the top of Google listings.

First we need to figure out what people are really searching for in relation to our line of business.

You would be amazed at how much you can discover about who is searching for what in your area of business using free tools on the Internet.

You can actually find out exactly what people are searching for, how many times they are searching for it each day, or each month, and where they are ending up once they do.

(<http://adwords.google.com/ko/KeywordPlanner/Home> for example).

This can be so helpful, because if we build our website to reflect what people are actually searching for in our particular line of business, we can greatly increase the likelihood that we will appear when they do.

Keyword research is an essential prerequisite to really creating the kind of website that will shoot you through the ranks. And not just for one search term, but many of them.

It is possible to create a website that has page titles, page content, tags, categories, and a host of other factors that help the search engines know who you are, where you are, and what you have to offer. All of these factors are good to keep in mind when your website is being built. Older websites can also be updated to include these SEO friendly elements in their coding and copy writing.

One of the most valuable services that we provide for customers is an initial SEO site audit, where we take a thorough look at an existing website and provide comprehensive guidelines how to improve that site for Search Engine

optimization.

With this knowledge, when you build a website, you can do so in a way that not only informs the visitors who come to your site, but also informs the search engines, so again and again they keep coming back to you and presenting you to the people who are searching on the Internet for your kind of business.

And of course, there are also a number of behind-the-scenes factors that also come into play.

This is called meta-information.

It is hidden from the public eye, but is included in the coding of your website, and is visible to the search engines when they are looking to deliver their results. In fact, there is also what is called micro-meta info that can be including in the coding of your site that is specifically targeted for local businesses, outlining for the Search Engines key info about your business such as location, contact details, hours of operation and more. All of this is hidden in the code of your site, but visible to the Search Engines, inviting them to highlight you to a waiting and searching world.

All of these things need to be put in place so your website becomes a honeypot for the Search Engines, and as a result, for potential customers.



# Content Is King!

There is a saying in the Internet Marketing world; “Content is king”.

This is truer now than ever. Google loves constantly updated, relevant information, to deliver to its searching users.



Relevant content added regularly to your website really is the super hero.

This is great for us as local businesses. It means that we can intentionally provide the exact kind of content that Google (and our potential customers) are hungry for.

One of the very best ways to do this is by including a blog on our website (or connected to our website) that we post fresh relevant articles to as often as we are able.

You can even pay a small amount to get someone else to write those articles for you. We always recommend that clients use this strategy to build greater and greater inroads to their web sites so more and more eyeballs find them.

This kind of blog or article content can also be easily shared through Social Media sites like Facebook or Twitter.

One of the most powerful ways to do this is using a platform like WordPress. WordPress allows you to create a fabulous looking website that incorporates the ability to easily add articles simply and quickly.

# All Roads May Lead To Rome – But Do They Lead To You?

So we've staked a claim, we've built on our land (in the right way), now it's time to develop some roads onto our property.

As you can imagine, an island cut off from the rest of the world is not going to receive much traffic. The island may be beautiful, it may have all the right things in all the right places, but without roads in, it will be very difficult for people to chance upon it.

In the last chapter we skimmed over what is called **on page optimisation** factors. These are the elements you put in place *on* your website.

There is also **off page optimization**. These are things that you can put in place that are not part of your actual website, but point back to it from other places on the internet.

Again, these factors are another important element in how much visibility we have in the search engines, particularly for more competitive search terms.

This is achieved in many ways, and by intelligently using the opportunities that we now have on the Internet, we can build many roads that lead to our site.

These might be links from social media websites like Facebook or Twitter, they might be reviews in Google+ local, or links from YouTube videos that you have created to advertise your business.

The important thing is that we concentrate on making sure that these roads are in place, and we continue to build more and more opportunities for people to find their way our main web properties.

Several factors come into play when we look at this road building exercise.

Not all links are equal, and some of the sites where we can begin to build links back to our own website have more authority than others (by this I mean that Google will place more weight on some links than others).

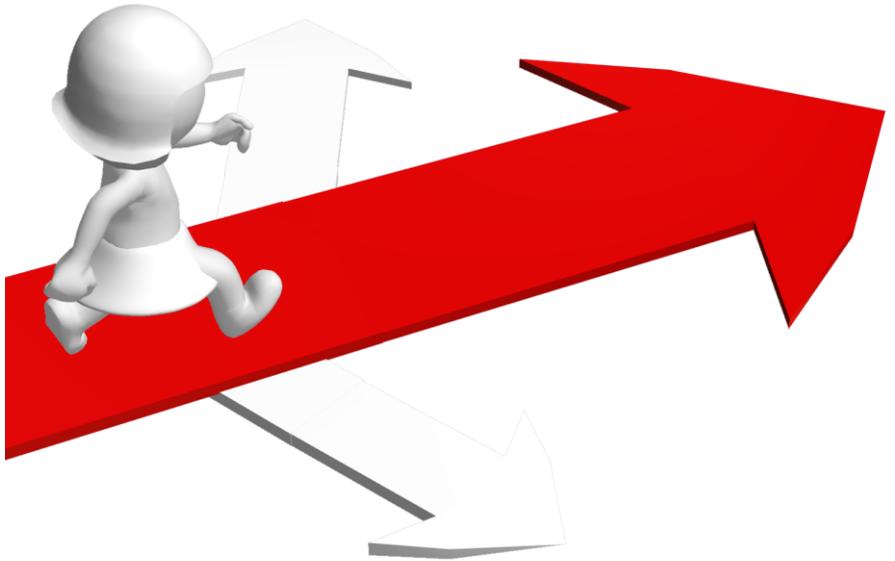
Having said this however, the important thing is that we begin to build a catalogue of links back to our site from other places on the Internet. Some of them may be important, others less so, but

every road back to our site is helpful.

As I said before, there are many ways that we can achieve this. To name just a few, we can post articles on article sites like ezinearticles.com or Squidoo.com. We can develop our Facebook fan page profile. We can make sure that our Google+ local profile is fully complete and optimised. It could be RSS feeds, a blog, links from Twitter or links from the many bookmarking and directory sites that proliferate the web. You get the picture.

A good SEO strategy will incorporate all of these and more.

And all the time, while we put these other things in place, we can continue to build our own website with fresh articles and content.



# Turning Visitors Into Leads

It is one thing to get your site set up, and to get people coming to your site, but there still remains one more question we need to ask...

## ***What happens when they arrive there?***

We are now going to ask a few more questions. If you answer them clearly it can make a big difference to your bottom line.

It is so important as a local business to think carefully about what you present to your website visitors when they arrive on your site.

What do you want them to do? And do you make it easy for them to do it? Is it obvious?

We want to turn our website visitors into customers. We want them to become fresh leads for our business.

Take a look at your site.

Is your contact information clearly visible? Do you have a working contact form that people can easily access to get in touch with you? Is your website front page confusing or is it easy to read

and navigate?

All of these questions need to be answered, so our visitors can quickly become customers.

Always remember, when people are searching the Internet they will not hang around on a website that is confusing or difficult to understand or read. We want to make it simple and clear for people when they arrive at our site.

Think of the one thing, above everything else, that you want to present to your customer, and the one action that you would like them to take when they come there, and make it abundantly clear how to do that one thing.

One of the ways that we have helped local businesses do this is by setting up an e-mail capture form on their web site. You may even offer an incentive for people to share their information with you, such as a free report, or a discount when they visit your store or business.

There are several creative and interactive ways to accomplish interaction. For our clients we have utilized quizzes, questionnaires, free eBooks or reports, access to an informative video, or a coupon or discount code. The list is endless, but

what is important is the fact that we offer something of value in exchange for contact details, that then allow us to contact that prospect again in the future.

As I have said, this will allow you to contact those visitors to your site again and again in the future, with special offers, seasonal sales, and any other information that you feel will be relevant to your market. It is a great way to bring people back to your website again, instead of them taking one look, never to return.

I always suggest that a professional e-mail company is used if this approach is taken. There are many different ones available such as Aweber, GetResponse, SendReach or Mailchimp.

Each will allow you to build a great and responsive list of leads and buyers that you can sell to again and again.

# The Mobile Revolution

Following on from our last chapter we also need to recognize that the world has gone mobile. Unless you've been living in a hole for the last decade, you will not be surprised to find out that mobile usage is growing at an unbelievable rate.

## Your customers are mobile. Are you?

Many local businesses are now realizing that not only do they need a great website for people sitting at home on their computers, they also need a very cool mobile version of the site for people who are coming to them using mobile devices.

Again, this is not impossible. In fact it is quite easy. But it may mean, particularly if you have an older website, that an update is well overdue.

It is now possible to create mobile versions of websites, that will appear when someone comes to your website using a phone or similar device.

With a mobile website in place,



and special code placed on your main website, it will automatically recognize how someone has arrived at your website and send them to the right place.

Someone on a computer will see your main website, whereas someone on a mobile phone will be taken directly to the mobile version of your site. You can even make it so when they click on the phone number while on a mobile phone viewing the mobile website it will call you directly.

I always recommend to local businesses that they invest in getting a mobile version of their website up and running.

In fact, this is becoming even more important, because the search engines actually consider this as a factor when they are determining which websites to present when someone searches using a mobile device.

If you have a mobile site set up and ready to receive visitors, and someone searches on their phone for your kind of business, you will be much more likely to appear in the top results than if you do not.

In fact, there is a technology available now

whereby you can create your website with something called 'responsive design'. This allows you to build a website that actually changes how it shows depending on the device your visitor comes from.

If you do not have a mobile friendly site already, now may be a great time to make the change and position yourself for 21<sup>st</sup> century search trends!

One site, but designed in a way that works wherever you appear!

A local business Mobile strategy may also include TEXT marketing (a very effective marketing strategy for local businesses), and even the possibility of a mobile phone app.

# Some Other Things That You Should Put In Place

So you have your website in place, and a good plan of action to build tracks back to that optimized web property that you now own.

Brilliant job!

There are still some important parts of the Search Engine puzzle that you will want to put in place.

We have mentioned Google+ local pages already. This seems to be Google's next generation of 'Google Places'.

Essentially what **Google+ Local** is, is a way to list your business, in your area, so people can find you when they search the Internet.

It is completely free, but you need to sign up with Google and claim your page. Once you have done this there are a number of things that you will fill out; information concerning your business such as opening hours, where you are, and what services you can offer.

By adding pictures, videos and other extras, you can really optimize this local listing (part of the

Google empire so they love a 100% completed local listing on Google+), and increase your chances of appearing in local searches for your business type.

This is not a book about Google+ local so we cannot go into detail, but it is certainly something that you would be well advised to find out more about.

One of the things that I do for my clients is make sure that this new Google+ local page is properly set up and ready to reach potential customers.

Another big factor with Google+ is that customer reviews of your business make a big difference in how high you appear when people search in your area.

Google recently changed the way that these reviews are left, making it more difficult for people to cheat. This of course is no problem, if you are delivering the goods and really bringing satisfaction to your customers.

There are a number of great and creative ways to encourage your customers to interact and leave positive reviews online. The more positive reviews that you can collect the better.

Another important thing to do is make sure that you have claimed your **Facebook page**. It is possible to create a business page in Facebook with your business name and information on it. Again this is just another great way to increase your market reach, and multiply the number of avenues that you have online for new business to find you and walk through your door.

We need to recognize that there is a social revolution that has taken place on the Internet.

There are new ways for us to interact with our customers that were never available a decade ago. No longer is Google the only king of the hill, there are new kids on the block who are also making waves in the online world. If we are wise, we can raise awareness of our brand and our business by riding these waves.

Another avenue that lots of local businesses fail to avail themselves of (which works in your favor if you do!) is Video.

Did you know that many businesses get lots of traffic from videos that they have placed online? It's true. **YouTube** is the second largest search engine on the Internet (and is now actually

owned by Google so receives lots of Google favor in searches).

Many people search directly in YouTube to find what they are looking for. In many ways it is easier to be found here than in the main searches.

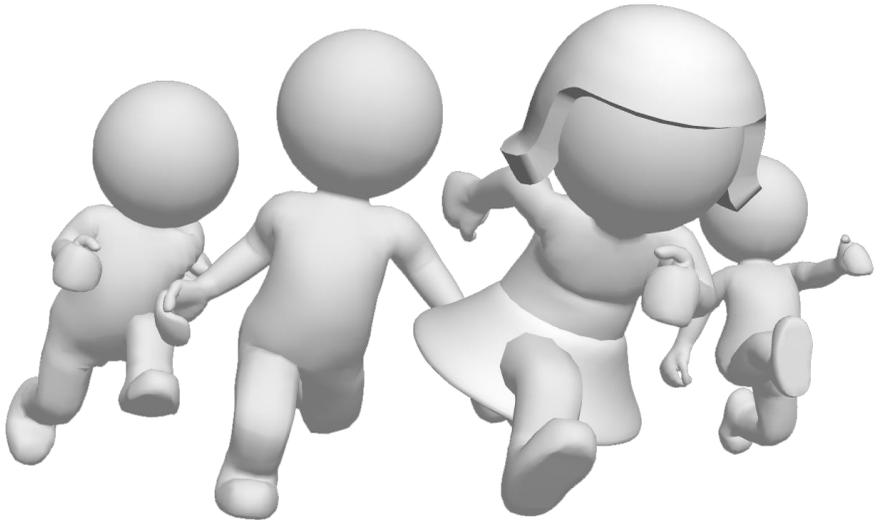
If you're able to create interesting and informative videos about your business, and about the services you offer, this can be a really great way to appear in the search engines. Google now lists a selection of videos in the 1st page searches, alongside the main search results. Used wisely this can be a great way to reach your target market.

Again, as with Google+ local and Facebook, you can stake your claim to a YouTube channel name that perfectly complements your business.

If you're a dentist in Newville for example, you could have a YouTube channel called [www.youtube.com/newvilledentist](http://www.youtube.com/newvilledentist), and post videos there with dental advice, and links through to your business.

Not only that, you could post the same videos on 6 or 7 other video sites (there are many of them),

making it even more likely for people to discover you, and building ever more roads to your front door.



***Have visitors coming from all over the place,  
not just one or two!***

# Don't Worry, Be 'Appy

This is kind of a new thing for many local businesses, but with the rise of mobile usage, and the increasing use of mobile apps, it is now possible for a local business to have an app that people can download to their phone.

This app can be used for many things, such as presenting your information, but can also be utilized to give value to your customers by putting up new offers and sending them special discounts for example.

I believe that the use of apps will become more and more popular over the coming years, and that it will be very beneficial for local businesses, not only to have a web presence, but also give their customers the opportunity to have their specific local business app on their phone.

It is possible to create a simple web based app very cheaply, that visitors can download directly to their phone. You can also of course, develop a native iPhone or Android app which offers full GPS and push notification functionality. This is still relatively expensive, but certainly a possibility if you can see the benefits of such an app for your business.

A restaurant would be a perfect example of a business that could benefit from being able to send push notifications of special offers to their app users for example, or integrate a QR code or GPS based loyalty scheme encouraging customers to come back again and again, and receive loyalty rewards.

# Summing it all up

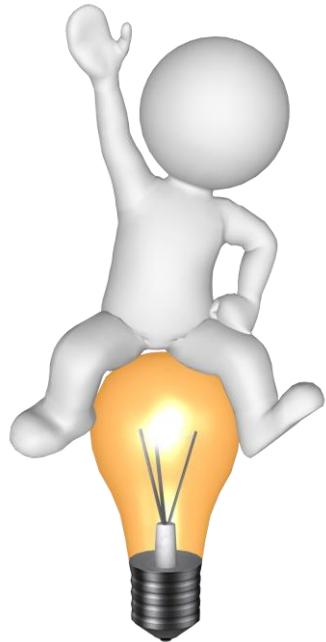
I realize that this is just a very brief introduction to some of the factors that affect us all as local businesses in today's Internet driven economy.

I also realize that we have just skimmed the surface of how we, as local businesses, can use the many opportunities at our disposal to generate leads, bring in new customers, and better serve our present customers, using this new technology.

The exciting thing is that all of these things are available to us right now. Each and every thing that I have mentioned in this short report can be accomplished without an enormous budget.

You would be amazed at how a local business can dominate the search engines if they approach things in the right way.

I hope that the information



that you have been reading has stirred your imagination to consider some of the possibilities that the Internet now presents.

For many business owners, all of this can be a bit overwhelming, and to be honest, a diversion from what they are really good doing – and that is running their local business!

Search Engine Optimization, and savvy use of the Internet, is not rocket science. But it does present some challenges, and ongoing effort is necessary to be really successful.

Bearing in mind, however, that 97% of consumers use the search engines to find a local company, this effort is well worthwhile.