

# The Tartan Guide to Local SEO

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## Introduction

Many people get online to search for information about LOCAL products and services every single day. This presents a major opportunity for ANY local business owner to put themselves right in front of those who are looking for what they have to offer.

As fellow small business owners, we understand that your business is your livelihood. So you must be constantly searching for new ways to improve and take your business to the next level.

If you are a “local” business, this can pose a challenge as reaching out to new local customers can be intimidating... but not impossible!

We all know that the Internet is a powerful marketing tool for major corporations and online personal businesses.

However, it is important to note that internet marketing for a small local-based business is just as lucrative as any other form of marketing; in fact it can increase your business more than you would think.

Businesses that rely on traditional advertising methods such as newspapers, the Yellow pages, and TV ads are seeing some major challenges today. These forms of advertising are just not as effective as they used to be.

This is due to one fact: *People go to the internet first when looking for products and services – that includes LOCAL products and services.*

Taking your business online may seem like a daunting challenge, but it's a challenge that you cannot afford to ignore. Understanding how to market your local business online is extremely important, and can help you keep your losses to a minimum while maximizing your revenue potential.

Perhaps one of the most powerful and effective ways to boost your business is by having a website that is capable of generating new viewers and converting them into paying customers.

The best and most inexpensive way to do this is through the utilization of quality Search Engine Optimization (SEO).

## **What Is SEO and How Does it Work?**

Getting started online is one of the hardest things most local business owners ever have to go through. SEO, website design, HTML, page rank, SERPs and social media... all of this can seem like a foreign language!

But in today's high-tech world, businesses *must* keep up and conform to the demands of their customers and potential customers. People go straight to the internet to find what they need these days, so if your business does not have a strong presence there, you are missing out on some serious profits.

You're probably thinking, "*Well, I already have a website.*"

Having a beautiful website is not enough... If your website is lost in the jungle where no one can see it, it's simply a waste of time, money, and effort.

Your website needs traffic. And the most cost effective ways to get this traffic is through SEO.

Whether you decide to perform SEO yourself or hire someone to help you out, you will play a huge role in the outcome. While you can hire someone to create and design a website for you, only you can tailor the content to your business and the demands of your prospects and customers.

### **What is SEO?**

First, it is important to understand precisely what SEO really is. SEO stands for search engine optimization. Most business owners who are not internet-savvy might ask, "*What does my business have to do with a search engine?*"

Surprisingly enough, your business has plenty to do with search engines and the results that they produce.

Think of a term you are looking to find out more about. You will head on over to your favourite search engine, be it Google, Bing or Yahoo, and you will type in that word or phrase into the search box.

Hundreds, thousands or even millions of pages come up with your keyword in them and are most related to your search. From there you can search through each of these sites to find the information that you are looking for.

The idea of SEO is for your business website to land on the first page of results. The more often your site shows up as a result on the first page, the more likely you will gain business from internet users.

SEO refers to the manner in which you can optimize your website so that it gains higher search engine rankings when keywords related to your business are entered into the search box.

There are many different ways to get your website on the first page of search engines. However SEO is one of the easiest and most affordable means to do so.

But SEO does take time and you have to be patient.

Although some businesses will see quick SEO results when they start, there are some businesses that take a little bit longer to see results. This is because SEO depends on a LOT of factors such as location and the industry you're in.

If your business has a lot of competition, chances are that it can take a little time to out-rank them. But once you do, you will see the amazing impact it can have on your business.

## How Does SEO Work?

Understanding how SEO works is important to every business professional who is seeking to use their website to draw customers.

When implementing SEO, all of the content and information on your site is closely related to your business, your products, and your services - at least it should be.

When a search engine user types a term into a search engine, a list of websites containing those terms come up. If you use those specific words effectively throughout your website, it will show up in the results as well.

The problem is that you may be way down on page 25 of the results. As you know, most web searchers don't go past page one when looking for a product or service. Do you?

*So page one is where you want to be.* That can be accomplished with proper SEO. But why stop at page one? Most businesses today strive for the FIRST POSITION on page one... This is where you REALLY want to be!

You're probably wondering, "*How can I get there?*"

SEO is based on a mixture of "on-page" and "off-page" techniques that should be followed in order to increase your webpage results rankings.

SEO is based on the following 4 main principles:

- 1. Identify the Right Keywords:** Identifying the right keywords is the most important step of Search Engine Optimization. You have to figure out the right set of keywords so that you get the desired traffic to your page. Your keyword list can be created by you or they can be obtained from online service companies.
- 2. Optimize Your Website:** Make sure your website has keyword-rich page titles and metatags. Also keep in mind that the search engine bots cannot view the images and videos that you have on your site; they can only read the text. So choose the right text content for your website – and use a lot of it! You want to be certain that your content is appropriate and strongly relates to your business. Your content should be structured in a way that captures some of the local keyword terms that your local prospects may type into the search engines.

**3. Backlinks:** Backlinks are the inbound links that are directed to your website. You want to get links from sites with high-authority as well as sites that are relevant to your niche. It is a form of determining how many websites think that your site is important. The more 'important' your site is, the better rankings you will have. The better rankings you have, the more visitors you will have.

**4. Site Structure:** From an SEO perspective, the site structure is also a factor to determine the rankings of the website. The structure of your site is based on how easy it is to navigate and the way that you utilize the content you are sharing with your viewers.

As simple as it sounds it is extremely important to remember SEO when you are creating content for your website. Think of the terms that your prospects will be searching for online.

For instance, if you have a plumbing company, don't fill your website up with information about electricity. That's unless you want to attract consumers who are looking for electricians.

The content of your website should always be centered around your specific product or service; especially if you are planning on using free SEO as a form of marketing your business online.

### **How Can SEO Work for Your Local Business?**

Many businesses use the power of SEO to promote themselves in the virtual world, but there are many local businesses that are still struggling to figure it out.

It is crucial that you use SEO for marketing your local business. It will help improve the visibility of your website in major search engines, as well as local search engines.

SEO is an art; you'll need to understand the way search engines work and use that knowledge to rank your site higher.

As a small business owner, you probably thrive on your regular customers who have known and worked with for years. You see them as your main source of income.

But is it really smart to stop there? Don't you need new customers to keep your business flowing and growing?

A lot of businesses only get new customers by referral, drive-bys, or sheer luck. They are not actively doing something that will steadily generate a new stream of customers.

This will not cut it today where customers are shopping smarter and wiser; and it usually starts online. So it is time to market your business using newer, more innovative means - such as using your website - to draw customer attention.

When you paid money to have your website created, you wanted a new, powerful marketing tool that would help take your business to new levels.

*You may be disappointed in the fact that you haven't seen those results yet.*

But with a little SEO, you can finally start to generate the type of traffic you need.

Local businesses that have a vibrant online presence can have all the prospects that they need from the internet because potential local customers are browsing through search engines for products and services every day.

## **SEO for Service Professionals**

If your local business offers services to consumers, such as a roofing company, a party planning firm, or even a catering company, you have to think about how you can attract visitors to your site and make them want to call you before anyone else.

You especially want to speak to the specific services you offer and anything that you have received “specialised training” in on your site. This is optimization. This way, you have a better chance of capturing new visitors who are looking EXACTLY for what you have to offer.

Your website must be comprehensive; one that explains your services, your rates, customer testimonials, any other information that your target market would find useful.

Many businesses in the service industry also find it beneficial to include a little information about what their mission and the quality of the services that they provide.

No matter what type of information you include on your site, be sure to include **keyword terms** that are likely to be typed in by your target market.

If you have a house cleaning service, and you operate only within a certain city, you will want to tailor your information to “house cleaning” and in your city.

You can include a little bit of information about the products you use or the process you use when you do certain cleaning jobs – just to give your visitors extra information that will sell them on your services.

However, the basis of your information should always be directly related to house cleaning and the city that you work in. When done properly, your website will show in the results when potential clients type in a variety of related terms such as ‘house cleaning in Edinburgh’ or ‘East Lothian housekeeping.’

Specifics as to the type of services that you offer are also useful in SEO. For example, if you own a window replacement service company you would want to include specifics on the types of windows you replace.

So if you offer “windscreen” replacement, use this keyword terms throughout your site instead of focusing only on “window” replacement. This will allow those who are searching for windscreen replacement in particular to find your website as well – which is extremely targeted.

## **SEO for Product Sales Professionals**

The product sales industry differs from the service industry in that you are not going to be able to list all the products that you sell on your website, unless you are a smaller speciality store. Therefore, it is important that you speak to your particular niche and include information on that in your website.

If you own a bookstore, there is no way that you can include every book that you sell on your website. So, your next best option is to include information on your site about the genres of books, or perhaps the quality of these books.

As always it is important to include the city that your bookstore is located in, so that you gain the customers in your area who are searching for the products that you offer. You want to include information that is revealing to your prospects and identifies your store as a place that they would like to purchase their next novel from.

Now, let's say you are visiting a new town and are really looking for a great coffee shop nearby. You would go to your favourite search engine and type in the town you are in and the term "coffee shop."

The results yielded will be specific to that town and specific to the type of business you are looking for, which in this case is a coffee shop.

On your results page, you will have a list of coffee shop websites in that town. If you are a coffee shop owner, you would want to make sure that your website is properly optimized to capture terms that people will type in using your city name.

Optimizing your service or sales website with SEO content is a reliable way to ensure that your website will obtain maximum exposure on even some of the most popular search engine sites. Creating content that is relevant to your consumers is crucial to success in this type of marketing endeavor.

### **Creating an SEO-Friendly Website**

If you are just starting out in online marketing, the first place you want to start is with the creation of an SEO-friendly website. The more your website appears on search engine results pages the more traffic to your site, which means more local traffic to your business.

Therefore, your website not only has to be functional and appealing, but the content has to be unique and extremely relevant to your business, product or service.

#### **Website Structures**

The first portion of your website to take a look at for SEO quality is the actual structure itself. For instance, you probably use tabs or categories to list your services or products. You can use optimized keywords to label your tabs and categories.

When you create buttons or links you can also use keywords that will be picked up by the search engines.

Take the example of the coffee shop again...

If you want to make your website flow better and more user-friendly, you could add a tab for the different types of coffee or espressos you offer. You could also add another tab for the dessert pastries you make.

The point is that these "tabs" could be terms and keywords that you know coffee shop seekers would enter into a search engine.

The idea is to use your entire website, not just the articles or blogs posted, as a means to

appear on a search engine results page.

If you use high-quality, relevant keywords and content on your website, your business will likely see an increase in popularity amongst online consumers.

However, it is important to note that “keyword optimization” does not mean “keyword stuff” – there’s a difference. You can “over-do” the process of using keywords in your website as well.

The search engines can identify this type of behavior and they don’t like it – meaning it hurts your rankings instead of help.

There’s a fine balance that you have to use when incorporating keywords into your website, so do so with caution if you want to see results.

## Using SEO Quality Keywords

Keep in mind that when you are creating content for your website, it is important to include SEO quality keywords. A keyword, as mentioned earlier, is the term that is used to refer to words that are most likely to be entered into a search engine.

These are the words that are going to determine whether or not your website pops up on search engine results pages.

While there is no magical list of keywords for your business, but they are fairly simple to determine based on your business itself and the searches that others frequently make. However, we will discuss keywords further in depth in a later chapter. Follow the Rules!

There are also some simple rules which you should consider while you are designing and adding content to your website if you really want to get the best results:

**Rule #1:** When you create your website, make sure that you comply with W3C Standards. Use CSS and XHTML for page mark up, as it will make the pages light and easier to download, keep in mind that no one wants to wait for your site when they can download the competition much faster. If at all possible, try to make your website accessible via smartphone, as many people now surf through their phones. The ability to access your site via mobile phone is important for those who search for local products and services while out on the go; these are the new customers that you want to generate.

**Rule#2:** If possible, try to put the keywords in your domain name URL; for instance: <http://www.glasgowcarsales.com>. Don’t make it too bulky or complicated and make sure that your URL is related to your business. Keyword rich domain names are great for search engine optimization and tend to rank more quickly. If you already have a URL for your business, you can always create additional sites and put them up on keyword rich domains.

**Rule #3:** Your website should have proper content to be indexed by web bots or spiders. Try to add a sufficient amount of text to your website as the crawlers can only read text. The more content, the better.

The text on your website will be scanned over for indexing in search engines, as a method of relevance and validation. If you use images and videos on your website, be sure to name them as “keywords” so the search engines are able to read them as well.

**Rule #4:** Make the titles and headings of your website appealing while using keywords. The keyword should be used in the first header, which should also provide a description about the page. Your headers should be related entirely to the content of your page and to your business; otherwise you will attract the wrong visitors to your site.

**Rule #5:** Do not keyword-stuff your website. Make sure that the keywords look natural in the text and do not just stuff them in where they make no sense to visitors. Your keywords should be directly related to your business and should read naturally with the rest of your text.

**Rule #6:** If you want the search engine spiders to index your webpage, be sure to include a sitemapfile.xml on our server.

**Rule #7:** Get quality backlinks to your website. A “backlink” is a link back to your website from other websites. Basically, this means putting a link to your website on other relevant websites. You should try to get high-quality, relevant backlinks from high-authority websites back to your website for the most powerful impact.

As you can see, there are several steps to ensure that your website lands on the first page of a search engine results. However, if these rules are not followed, you probably won't get the website traffic you expect.

## **Developing Quality Keywords to Maximize Your Business**

Now, the importance of relevant and useful keywords cannot be stressed enough when you are aiming to gain traffic and customers from search engines.

This does not mean that you obtain keywords and merely place them in every third word of every piece of website content that you have, instead you have to develop and use your keywords in a more natural and free-flowing manner.

## **Finding the Right Keywords - For a Price**

If you are just starting out and want a little help generating keywords, there are plenty of online services that monitor the top keywords in your niche; and they are willing to share them with you for a price.

Sites like Wordtracker and services like Market Samurai monitor keywords as they are entered into search engines, they then break them down into their respective niches and show you how often these words are used. This will allow you in turn to determine which ones are best suited to your business.

Their service also includes information about words that are misspelled that relate to your niche and keywords that are used less often by those in your niche. With this information you may decide to go with a keyword that is not used as often, but will yield you additional visitors.

The keywords that you obtain with a service such as this are unique and will provide you

with quality traffic that will turn into sales. While this may seem easy, you have to keep in mind that this is not a free method of obtaining keywords. Also, if you are trying to stay within a budget there are plenty of other ways to obtain the best keywords for your local business.

### **Finding the Right Keywords - For Free**

If “*spending as little money as I have to*” is your motto, then it is important to seek out other methods of finding the right keywords for free. One of the most useful places to do so is search engines themselves.

You can begin to enter a potential keyword and the search engines will make suggestions for related keywords as well.

Another way of developing and generating keywords is merely through a ‘play on words’. To do this, just choose a term that is related to your business and then alter that term into other terms that people might type into the search engines to find your product or service.

For instance, if you own a dog grooming business you could use a simple term like “dog grooming” and then take that term and alter it to become another keyword that you think people will search for.

In this case it might be “puppy grooming” or “grooming animals.” While these words essentially mean the same thing, you are merely expanding your possibility of obtaining more hits to your site. This might require a little bit of thinking on your part, but as an expert in your business niche it is more than possible.

Also, you can do a little homework and find out about your competition or larger name brand stores that come up on keyword searches. You want to take note of terms that pick up on your local competition and terms that don’t. That way, you can monopolize in both search engine terms.

You can also use the **Google Keyword Tool**, which is free, to find out what type of keywords people are typing in to search for your type of product or service.

Additionally, remember that you do not have to stick to certain keywords for an extended amount of time. If you feel like changing the content of your site to maximize on the amount of traffic that you receive feel free to do so, whatever you need to do to maximize your website and your business.

### **What *Not* to Do with Your Keywords**

Once you have generated your keywords, it is important to assess how they should be used within your website. While you might be tempted to pack your site full of all the keywords that you possibly can, there are some issues with this.

Not only will your visitors not be able to comprehend what your website is trying to communicate, but they won’t be able to understand what your business is all about. Keywords used on your website should be used within informational and quality content that relates to your business and the services that you offer.

When your viewer attempts to scroll through your site and they find that it is difficult to

understand they will quickly abandon it and go with the competition whose site was clear and concise about their business.

Another mistake that new internet marketers often make when utilizing keywords is that they scatter them throughout their website without any sense of organization. This too can confuse your viewers and will not generate the attention you want from a search engine.

The best option for a business professional who is attempting to generate new clients from search engines is to use their keywords in a natural and flowing manner within their website content, be it articles, headers or merely just an overview of your business.

Finally, you want to be certain that your keywords directly relate to your business and the products and services that you offer. If you sell jewellery you don't want to use keywords that can link your site to other items, like furniture or food.

Your keywords should be clear and common terminology that the average internet user will be able to understand. Remember these are individuals who are seeking your services and may not understand the details of your business per say.

Keep in mind when you are creating your website and posting content to maximize search engine optimization that you are taking a professional, knowledgeable, and authoritative stance on your business and your niche.

All your content should be related to your business and should be properly communicated, even if you are seeking to obtain SEO. Your website can say a lot about you and the type of business that you run, so you should ensure that content is always genuine and speaks to your business.

## **Perfecting Your Business Listing Profiles**

Part of maximizing traffic to your website from search engines involves another technique; one which is often forgotten by smaller local businesses:

### **Local Business Listing Profiles**

Have you ever searched for a particular type of restaurant in your community? Most of the time, if you are going to do this online you will type in a term like 'Chinese restaurants in Dallas'.

Most search engines have taken the next step for you and created a listing of Chinese restaurant names within the city, and a map denoting their location.

These listings will typically contain the business name, their phone number, address, and in some cases even a rating from consumers who have previously purchased from or used the services of that business.

For a local business your data profile is critical to ensure that search engines give the right information to your potential clients who are at that moment searching for a local business in your niche to contact and perhaps do business with.

Information that is incomplete, wrong, or worse, not available, on your business will mean a lost opportunity. This will be another reason for a consumer to pass you by.

When you claim, update, and verify your profile on listings and directory sites, or directly with Google or Yahoo maps, your business will come up even higher in the results for these listings. These are called citations and the search engines love them.

It is a good idea to always double check periodically when you move or change your business information that you are updating your information for online searchers too.

Business data profiles are even more important for your mobile prospects and customers. More and more individuals are using the internet and apps on their mobile phones to find local businesses while they are already out and about.

Each phone carrier offers various apps for their users, but regardless of what they are using your business should appear when a search is conducted... and all your information should be correct.

For instance the Yellow Pages app allows users to select a type of business they are looking for as well as their post code. Your store or business should definitely be amongst the results of apps such as these.

From your accurate business data profile, your viewers will be able to check out your website, call your store or shop, or find your address to come visit you in person. Some apps even come with maps so that they can find your business with ease.

This is perhaps one of the best, free ways that you can turn a quick internet search from a consumer into a potential new client and revenues for your business.

## **SEO and You**

Although you may still feel a little green in the land of SEO, it is important that you work step by step to perfect your business 'relationship' with search engines.

You want to be certain that you are staying on top of the keywords that are working for your business and the traffic that is visiting your site. There are plenty of online software programs which can help you monitor the number of visitors to your site. However, some of these programs are not free.

You can do your own forms of traffic monitoring by asking your new customers how they heard of your business. If you hear more and more individuals speaking about your website then you are doing something right.

However, when it comes to SEO, patience is key.

SEO doesn't happen overnight, but once it does happen, you will notice the impact. The satisfaction of increased customers, increased sales, and increased profits will be rewarding.

Make sure your website itself is equipped and ready to take on all of this newfound traffic. Now that you will have more visitors, be sure you have a strong call to action and the proper conversion tools on your website.

Depending on your type of business, it may be a good idea to put a face to your business and offer a personal profile of yourself and what makes you a qualified business

professional (Hint: include SEO keywords in your biography).

Nothing is more endearing to a local community member than feeling like they can create a relationship with you and your business. This will make them more likely to do business with you, and as well as recommend your business to their friends and family.

While you may be thinking that your business is doing well enough without the use of search engine optimization, why settle? Think about all the ways that you can ensure the financial state of your business, for those rough times when business may be a little slower.

Gaining new customers is not a seasonal trend. Any chance you get to do so should be taken advantage of. Internet marketing is an inexpensive method of mass marketing that can take your business from good to great – turning you into a local sensation.

## **Conclusion**

*Now that you have formed a basic understanding of what SEO is and what exactly it can do for your local business, it is time to implement what you have learned into your online marketing endeavours.*

*Keep in mind that it may take a few times to get things right, but the internet is powerful tool, capable of yielding great benefits for business professionals.*

*Giving up should never be an option, and there is no limit to the number of tries it takes to get it right!*

*Take a look at the sites that you frequent online or that come up in a search engine results page when you type in your favourite niche. Analyse how they are using SEO to their advantage and take a page out of their book so that you can further understand how to market your website.*

*While you don't want to ever copy someone's content online, you can gain an understanding from others about all the ways that you can apply SEO to your own business.*

*It's time for your business to take advantage of a new audience... one that is SEARCHING for your type of product or service every single day online.*

We hope you enjoyed this free report. If you would like professional help implementing any of the methods you read about in this report, please contact us at [hello@tartanwebdesign.co.uk](mailto:hello@tartanwebdesign.co.uk) or visit our site at [TartanWebDesign.co.uk](http://TartanWebDesign.co.uk) to set up a free consultation.

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