13 Google My Business (GMB) Optimizations to Rank Higher in Local Search

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MEET 🧇

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Any business today needs targeted visibility on Google. Most businesses know that this requires optimizing their website and Google Ads, but what most don't know is that there is a third entity that also needs optimizing: their Google business listing. Officially known as your Business Profile, this powerful listing is a dynamic snapshot of your business that highlights your best features and enables potential customers to quickly find, learn about, and engage with you—all from the SERP. The best part? It's completely free.

And yet, despite the 167 billion searches performed on Google each month, a BrightLocal study showed that the typical Business Profile only averages 1,260 views during that same period (that's 0.00000075%!). Even worse, only 59 actions are taken from those 1,260 views. That's less than 5%.

The problem is not the Google Business platform; it's that not nearly enough businesses take full advantage of its impressive features.



And that's why I've written this guide.

Here are 13 ways to optimize your Google Business Profile:



- 1. Claim your Business Profile
- 2. Complete every section of your Google My Business account
- 3. Be meticulous with contact information
- 4. Select primary and secondary categories
- 5. Mark off applicable attributes
- 6. Write a complete "from the business" description
- 7. Publish Google posts weekly
- 8. Upload new photos weekly
- 9. Answer questions
- 10. Collect and respond to reviews
- 11. Add your products and/or services
- 12. Set up messaging
- 13. Maintain your Business Profile

With these optimizations, you can turn your Business Profile into the best free customer acquisition tool you didn't know you had. Let's get into it.

Note: The more familiar term "Google business listing" is officially known by Google as your Business Profile, so I'll be using "Business Profile" throughout this post.

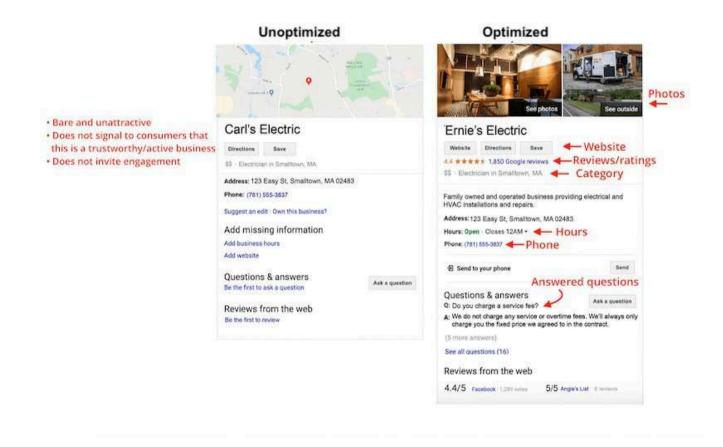


Are your listings optimized for local search?



What does an optimized Google Business Profile look like?

Before I get into the strategies, let's make sure we're on the same page about what an optimized Business Profile looks like and why you need one. To help you visualize what you're striving for and why, let's take a look at a mockup of an incomplete Google Business Profile versus a complete and optimized one.





Here, Carl's Google Business Profile is a short box, but Ernie's Business Profile would show even more when you scroll. This diagram doesn't encompass all of the features of an optimized Google Business Profile, but it does give you an idea of how much more attractive and engaging an optimized profile is.

Why you need to optimize your Google Business Profile

The comparison above makes it clear that an optimized Business Profile on Google helps consumers to choose your business over competitors, but there are other benefits to optimizing your Business Profile for effective local marketing.

Improve engagement

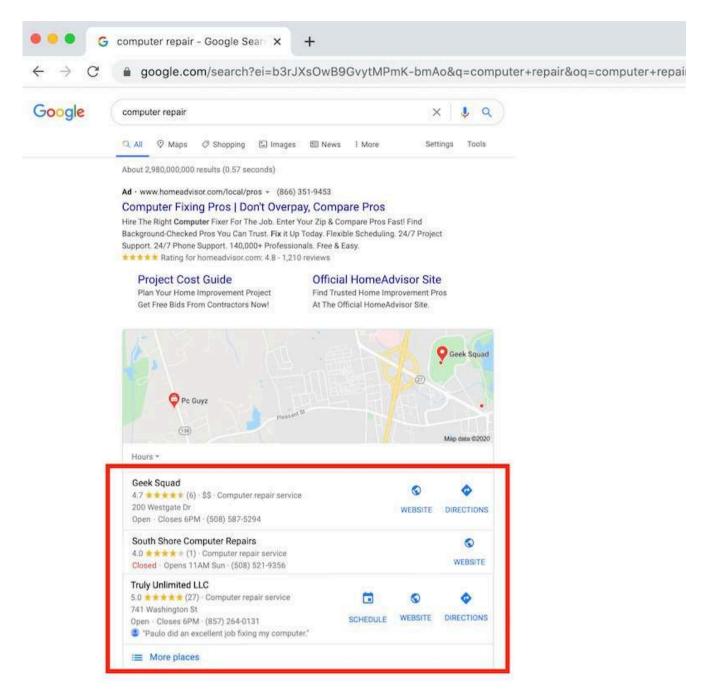
More and more, consumers are entering and exiting Google without going to any other website. Why? Because the information in search results pages themselves is fully answering their questions, resulting in "zero-click searches." With potentially more consumers interacting with your businesses through your Google Business Profile than your website, you'll want that profile to be optimized for quality engagement and conversions.

Boost your local ranking

Google's algorithm for ranking Business Profiles does not just consider proximity and relevance but also activity and quality of information. Optimizing your Google Business Profile sends these



signals to Google to rank you higher in local results. And higher rank, as you know, means more visibility and engagement with your business.



Optimizing your Business Profile can help your business to rank higher on Google Maps and on the first page of Google Search results like these.



Convert more customers

A regular Google Business Profile alone doesn't offer much in the way of acquiring customers. They can find out where you are located and read your reviews—if they know to search your business name in the first place. But with an optimized Business Profile through your Google My Business account, consumers can discover you in keyword searches, call you, visit your website, research your products and services, view/contribute FAQs, request a quote, book an appointment, make a reservation, and more. Plus, you can track clicks to your website, appointment, or menu link using UTMs and Google Analytics.

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Unlock the complete in-depth **Audit Report** & understand why your competitor rank higher whereas you have more reviews?



How to optimize your Google Business Profile

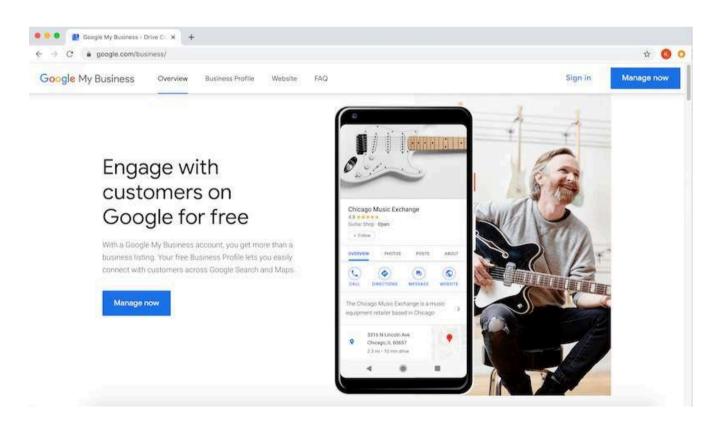
Now that you see that optimizing your Google Business Profile is the key to getting found in local search, standing out above competitors, and winning customers online, it's time to get to work on doing just



that. Here are 13 ways you can turn your Google Business Profile into a 24/7 marketing and lead generation tool for your local business.

1. Create a Google My Business account

First and foremost, it's important to note here that a Google Business Profile is a separate entity from a Google My Business account. The latter is used to gain access to and optimize the former. Which means that in order to make the optimizations laid out in this guide, you need to have a Google My Business account and then tell Google to connect it with your Google Business Profile. To create an account, head to Google.com/business and sign in with the regular Google/Gmail account you use for your business (as opposed to your personal Gmail, if you have one).



Related: Find more listings management tools that can help boost your presence.



2. Complete every section

The completeness of your Google Business Profile not only helps Google to rank you higher in local search results, but it also increases the number of actions customers take when they find your profile. There's a lot of information to provide, so here are some guidelines for prioritizing.

These aspects of your profile should be completed right away:

- Name
- Address
- Phone
- Website
- Hours

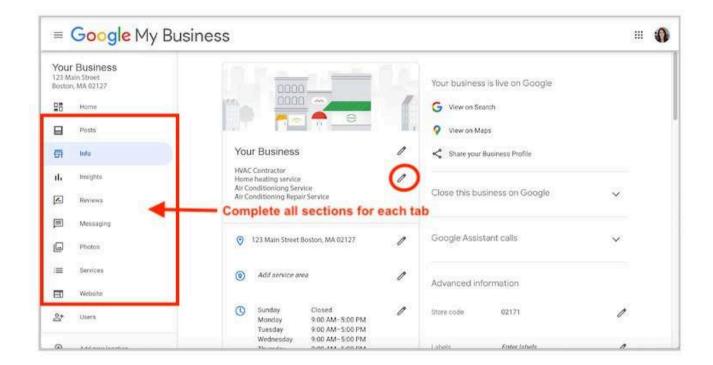
These sections take a bit more time and thought:

- Category and Attributes
- Products and services
- From the business
- Questions and answers (Owner-generated queries)

These sections are ongoing:

- Posts
- Reviews
- Questions and answers (Consumer-generated)





3. Be meticulous with contact information

Here are the steps for optimizing the contact information in your Google Business Profile:

- 1. Make sure your business name is identical to the one you use on your store signage. In other words, exactly as it appears in the real world. Adding location name (unless it's in your brand name) or keywords is considered spam by Google and you could be penalized.
- 2. Make sure that both your business name and address exactly match your other listings across the web. This means using "st" vs "street" or "co" vs "company" consistently. Google's algorithm takes these inconsistencies into account when assessing your credibility.
- 3. **Indicate both your regular and holiday hours.** This encourages customers to visit you, and also avoids the potential of a negative



review left by someone who took the trip out to your store only to find it was closed.

4. Write your "from the business" description

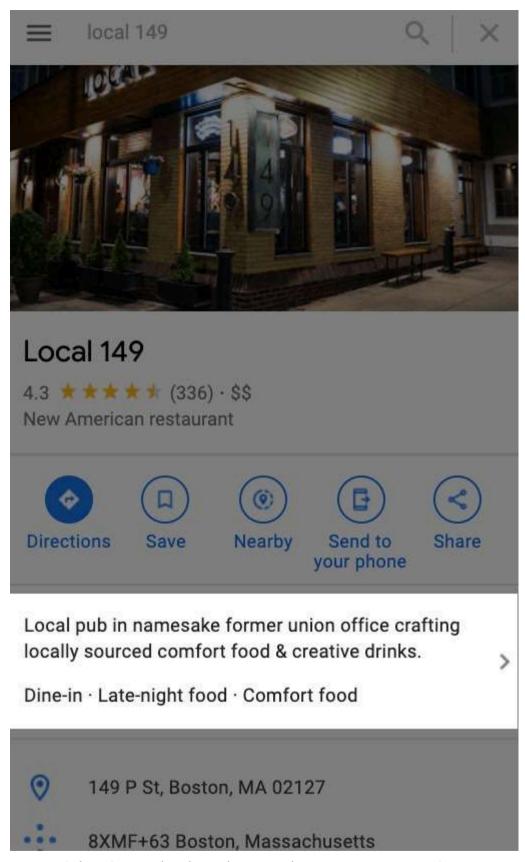
The first thing to note is that the brief description that appears just below your business name in your Business Profile is not actually in your control. This is the editorial summary that Google writes to ensure consistency across the platform.

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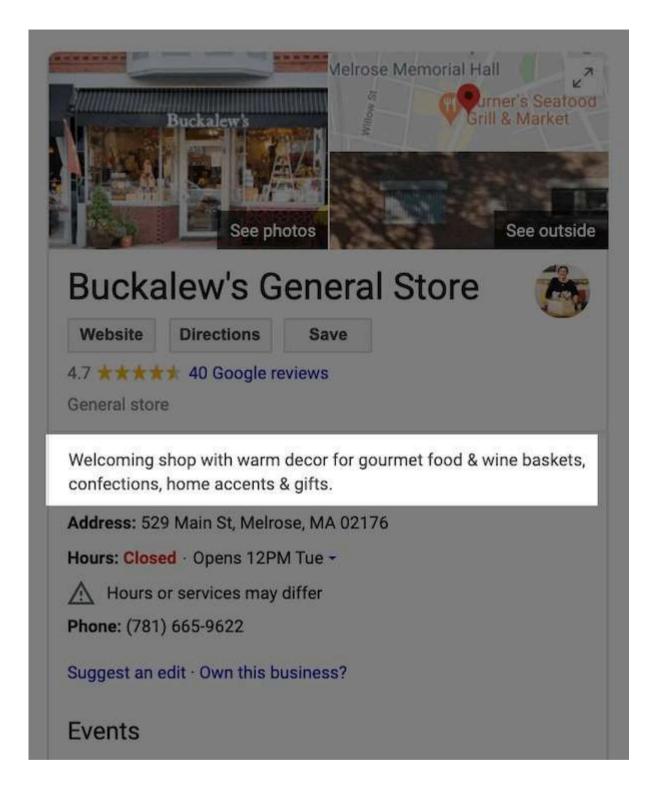




This description is not in your control.

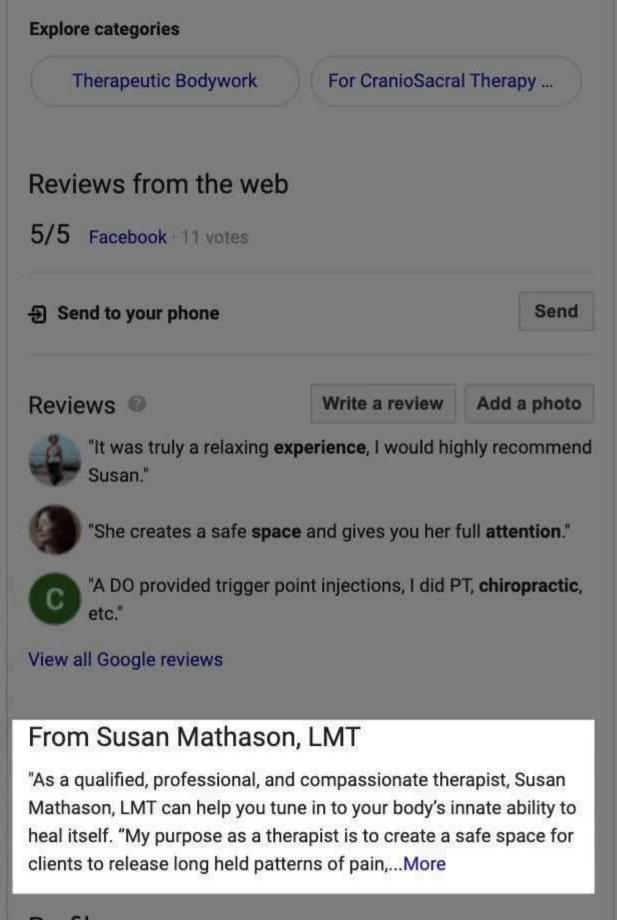
Bummer, I know. But the good news is that Google does a pretty good job at coming up with descriptions.





The description you do have control over is the "from the business" section in your Google My Business account dashboard. This section appears lower in your profile, often under the reviews section.





Profiles





To optimize the "from the business" section of your Google Business Profile:

- Use all 750 characters, with key information in the first 250 characters.
- Repurpose content from your "About Us" page or mission statement.
- Use keywords your audience uses to nd businesses like yours.
- Don't repeat any information already visible in the other sections of your profile. Use this space to talk about what sets you apart from competitors and what customers like most about your business.
- Don't include links or HTML.

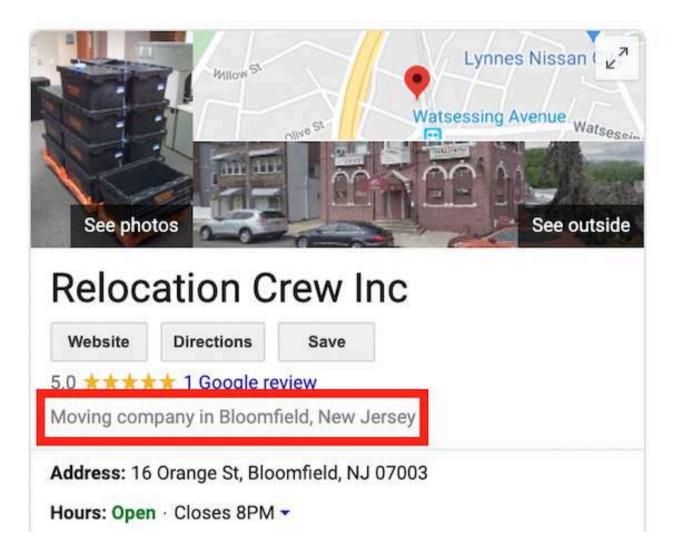
5. Choose a category

Choosing a category is a must for optimizing your Google Business Profile. Here's why:

• **Get found in discovery searches**. A whopping 84% of Business Profile views on Google originate from discovery searches (meaning the consumer searched for a product, service, or categorical term and that business's profile appeared), versus only 16% coming from direct searches (the consumer typed in the business name or address). This is especially true for businesses whose name doesn't indicate their service (e.g., Fresh Express or Amelia's Catering).



Highlight category-specific features. Once you choose a category, Google makes available to your category-specific features that make your profile more attractive and effective. For example, restaurants can include a menu or reservation button; hotel profiles will pull in star ratings; hair salons can con rm that they have experience with thin or curly hair. These details can help consumers choose you over competitors.



Your category appears in the top portion of your Google Business Profile.

Google offers a set number of categories, so it's important to choose the correct ones. Here's how to optimize your Google Business Profile using categories:

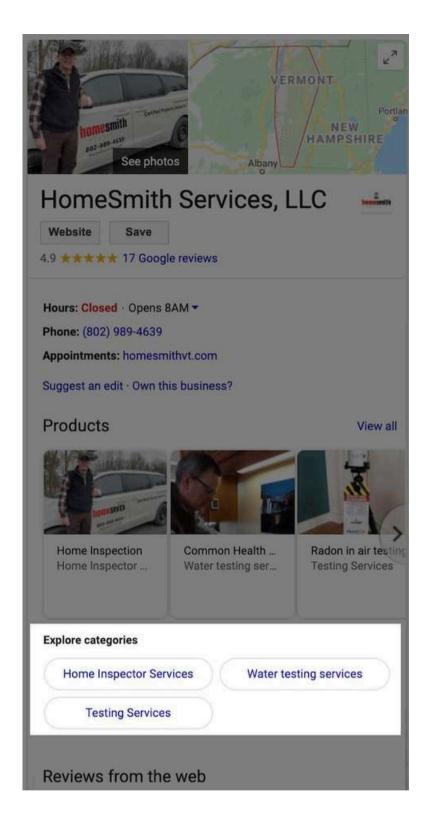


- **Be specific.** If you're a nail salon, choose "Nail Salon" and not just "Salon." If you're a restaurant, choose "Egyptian Restaurant," "American Restaurant," etc., rather than simply "Restaurant." A dropdown list of categories will appear once you start typing, but you can also see a full list of GMB categories here to ensure you not the most speci c one for your business (there are over 3,000 categories so it's worth the look).
- Choose secondary categories. Many businesses fall into multiple categories. Set your primary category to your chief offering (for example, "Grocery Store") and then choose additional categories that apply, such as "Grocery Delivery Service" or "Gourmet Grocery Store."
- Don't overdo it. You want Google to connect you with consumers who need your service, so choose only categories that match your offering. For example, if you're an appliance repair business, select "Appliance Repair" only, not "Appliance Parts Supplier." Technically you do supply service parts, but this is not a standalone offering of your business. (Pro tip: Don't confuse categories with products or attributes, which are separate sections.)

Also, keep in mind that Google might ask you to verify your business if you edit your category list or add multiple. This is just to ensure accuracy across their platform.



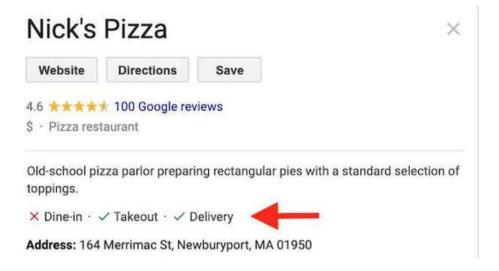




6. Select applicable attributes

As we just mentioned, once you choose a category, Google will give you a list of attributes you can check off to further describe your business. Attributes are special features that potential customers seek out, like "gift shop on-site" or "free wi-fi."





Attributes are not specific to the Google My Business platform (review sites like Yelp have them, too). But Google's attributes get really granular, like "good for working on laptop" or "popular for travelers". Check out this attribute list to see what I mean.

7. Add photos

Uploading photos to your Business Profile through your Google My Business account dashboard is important for three reasons:

- ✓ **Ensure quality.** Anyone can add photos to your Business Profile, which means you'll get a range of quality. By adding your own great photos, you can ensure your profile looks its best.
- ✓ Be active. Adding photos regularly signals to Google that you
 are active with your profile and it is up-to-date, which positively
 impacts your ranking.
- ✓ Get images in results. Google is advancing in image recognition and starting to include photos in local results.
- ✓ Increase engagement. According to Google, customers are 42% more likely to request driving directions to a business if its Business Profile has photos, and 35% more likely to click through to its website. Furthermore, a BrightLocal study showed that businesses with more than 100 photos get 520% more calls, 2,717% more direction requests, and 1,065% more website clicks than the average business. Whoah.



This doesn't mean you should go crazy and add a hundred images to your profile at once. Follow these tips to use photos to optimize your Google Business Profile:

- ✓ Add at least one new photo every seven days.
- ✓ For your thumbnail photo, upload your logo.

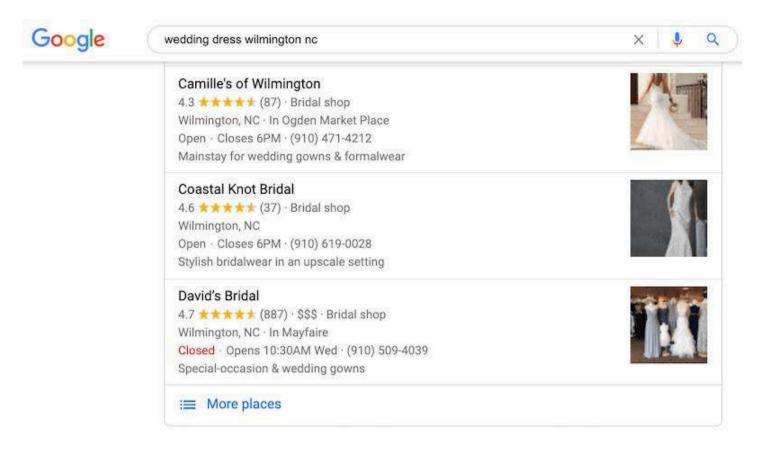
For your cover photo, use something that best represents your brand — but don't fuss over this because Google will display different feature photos depending on the search query.

For other general photos, refer to Google's photo guidelines for specifications, but be sure to include happy customers, interior and exterior views, and team photos.

No stock photos, and no photos with special effects or branding. Google is trying to represent your business as it appears in the real world.

Focus on quality images that have clear depictions (to align with image-enriched results).



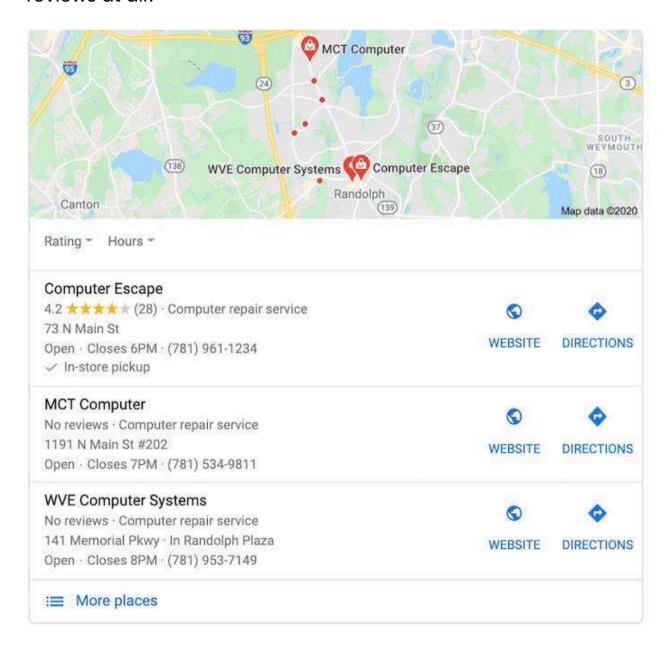


Google will pull a specific photo from a Business Profile and display it directly in local results if it matches the keyword searched.

- ✓ Geo-tag your photos to further indicate to Google your prominence in your area.
- ✓ Add videos, too!
- ✓ Use Google's Street View app to add a 360° photo to your profile.

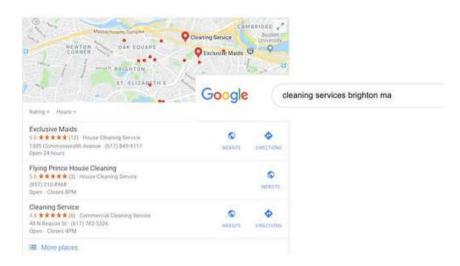
8. Get Google reviews

If you were to get a list of businesses in search results like the one below, which one would you be most likely to choose? The one with four attractive yellow stars or one of the two below with no reviews at all?

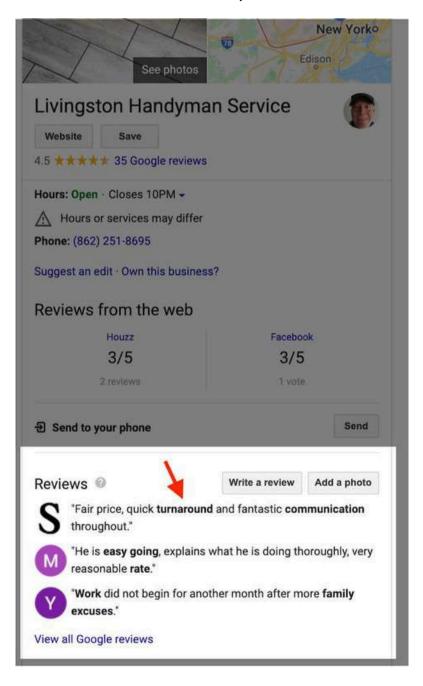


Google knows that reviews are the #1 influence on consumer buying, so this is a key ranking factor in their algorithm. You can also see for yourself the impact of reviews on ranking. For most searches performed on Google, the first three local results that appear (in what is known as the "Local 3-Pack") are the ones with multiple reviews and solid star ratings:





In addition, Google may also display a Business Profile in search results if it has reviews that contain those keywords.



Google will embolden keywords in your reviews to further validate relevancy.



To optimize your Google Business Profile with reviews, follow these tips to stand out from competitors:

- Start with your long-time, loyal customers to get the momentum going.
- Make it as easy as possible for customers by creating a review shortcut link or using Whitespark's shortcut link generator (both are free).
- ✓ Ask! 62% of customers will write a review if asked. Do so via email, text, social media, and in-person conversations.
- Remind customers that reviews aren't just for your benefit; they help people who have the same pain points as them to find a solution and make informed decisions.
- ✓ Have a "Reviews" page on your website with a CTA to leave one.
- Respond to reviews. This feedback incentivizes additional customers to leave theirs, reveals a lot about your business to prospects, and improves your local SEO.

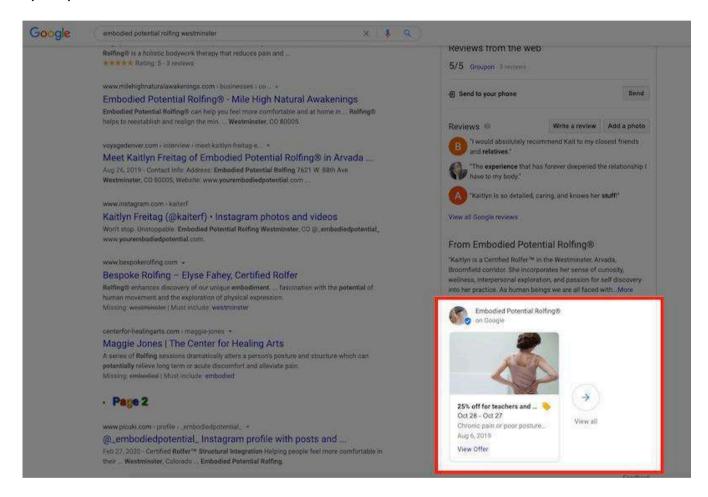
For a deeper dive into this optimization strategy, check out this post on how to get more Google reviews.

Be careful not to incentivize reviews with discounts, gifts, or cash, though—that's not allowed.



9. Post to your Google Business Profile

Just like with social media platforms, you can post to your Google Business Profile about announcements, offers, events, and products. Posts are created in your Google My Business dashboard and show up on the "Updates" section toward the bottom of your Business Profile. However, they might become more prominent based on the search query.

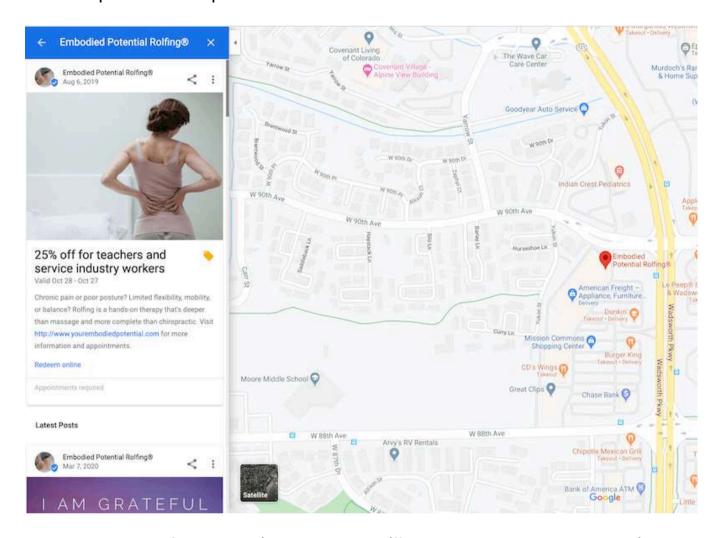


Here's how posts help you to optimize your Google Business Profile:

- Posts increase the number of actions taken by consumers who find your profile.
- Posting regularly sends positive ranking signals to Google in the same way that adding photos does.
- Consumers have higher intent on search engines versus other posting platforms (i.e., Facebook and Instagram, where they are leisurely scrolling), so they are more likely to engage with your Google posts.



Consumers can follow your Business Profile and get notified of new posts and updates.



Your Google My Business posts will even appear on Maps—it's free advertising for your local business!

Here are your tips for optimizing your Google Business Pro le with posts:

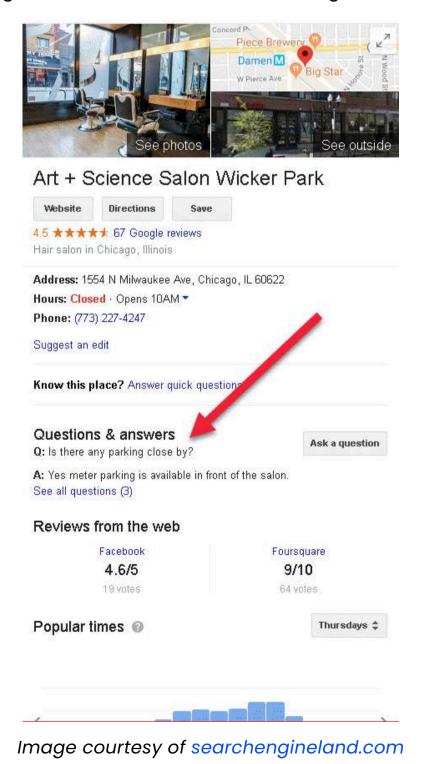
- ✓ Post regularly. Not just to send signals to Google, but also because certain post types expire every seven days.
- ✓ Use event and offer posts for marketing campaigns that have a timeline. You can choose a date range and the posts will stay live for the duration of that timeline.
- ✓ Include links and CTAs in every post.



✓ As of writing this post, there is currently a COVID-19 post type, which I'd encourage you to use to effectively communicate with your audience during the pandemic.

10. Ask and answer questions

Have you noticed on Amazon that in addition to the product description and customer reviews, there is a section for questions and answers? Google offers the same feature in Google Business Profiles.





Answers to these questions may be the impetus for a customer deciding to choose your business. However, this section is particularly important to optimize because not only can anyone ask a question on a business's Google profile but also **anyone can answer**. This can lead to inaccurate information on your profile, or even worse, something like the Q&A on this pizza restaurant's profile:

Ready to Rank on Top?

Unlock the complete in-depth **Rank Report** & understand why your competitor rank higher whereas you have more reviews?

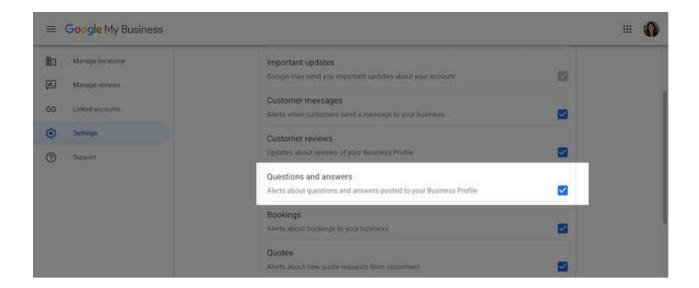


Questions & answers Q: Are they cash only so they can easily evade the IRS? A: I'm not sure. I find it best not to involve myself in the financial aspects of pizza. I wrote it to let those who do dine there know that they need to bring... (5 more answers) See all questions (16)

You can't turn off the Q&A feature of your Business Profile, but there are ways to optimize it:

Set up alerts so you can stay on top of questions and answers posted to your profile.





- ✓ Seed your own Q&A section. Make a list of the most frequently asked questions your business gets. Then ask, answer, and upvote your answer on your own profile. This does not go against Google's terms and conditions. In fact, Google encourages it.
- ✓ Keep keywords in mind. Questions and answers that contain keywords can help improve your Business Profile's ranking for that keyword. So keep your keyword strategy in mind when seeding your Q&A section, but use them loosely and organically, and do not keyword stuff.

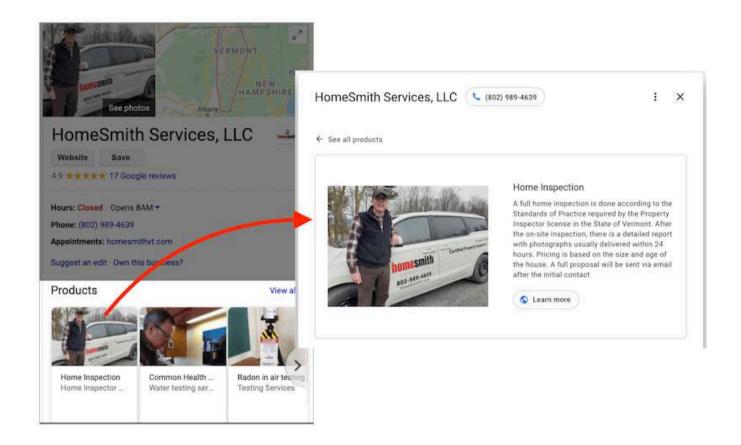
By monitoring and seeding your Q&A section, you can ensure accurate information, highlight your best features, and reduce common barriers to entry.



11. Add products and services

Adding products and services is especially helpful if your offerings are not made clear in your business name. Populating this section also adds content to your profile that can help it to rank for even more relevant searches.

When adding products and services, include the name, description, and price (if applicable). The full description will show up once a searcher clicks on the product. Also, Google may link to your products from your category section.

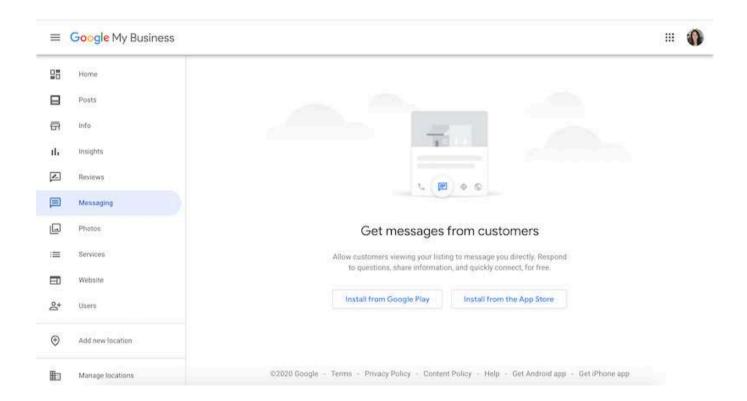




12. Set up messaging

This feature gives searchers the option to send a text message to your phone directly from your Google Business Profile. With 82% of smartphone shoppers (92% for millennials) using their device for local search, this is a great opportunity for customers to get in touch with you.

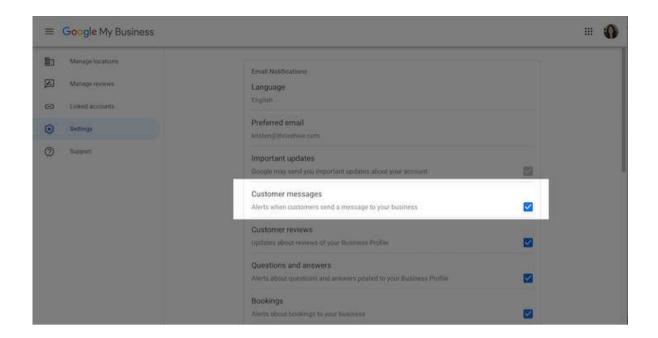
To enable messaging, select the "Messaging" tab in your Google My Business dashboard, and you have the option to install this via Google Play or the Apple App Store.



Two notes on Google My Business messaging:

- ✓ You don't need to worry about displaying your personal phone number, as you'll use a different number via Google's Allo app.
- Be sure to set up alerts for messages in your Google My Business dashboard. Head to settings and check off "Customer messages."





13. Maintain your Business Profile with a solid Google My Business strategy

As you can see, a Google Business Profile is not a one-and-done marketing task. It's a local marketing tool that requires ongoing action in order to increase your online presence and maximize your bene fits. This includes:

- ✓ Updating information, even as minor as a change in suite number.
- Publishing posts and uploading photos each week.
- Keeping a steady stream of reviews coming in.
- Monitoring and responding to reviews.
- Staying on top of new features so you can ensure you're using your profile to its fullest potential.
- ✓ Just like any Google SEO strategy, your Google Business strategy should center around providing as much quality information about your business as possible, not just in your Business Profile but in the sources that Google uses to populate it—your website, review site profiles, and even your social media accounts. We can't ever know every specific ranking factor, but we do know their ultimate goal: to connect searchers to the best business for their needs through detailed, trusted information.



Get your Report

Here's an example how the report looks like

GMB RANK REPORT



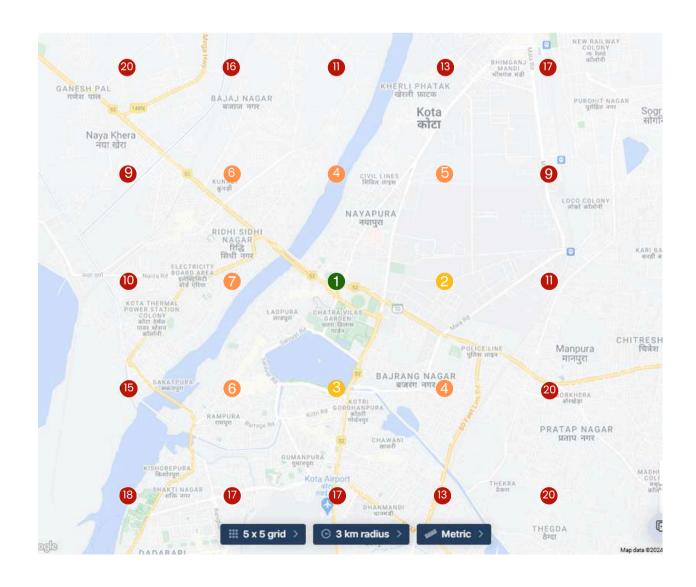
Searching "hotel in nayapura" on OGoogle Maps for:

Hotel Saraswati Railway, Station Main Rd, Opp. Manappuram Finance Limited, Nayapura, Kota, Rajasthan 324001, India 3.4 *** (131) • 3-star hotel

ARP 8.33 ATRP 8.33 SoLV 11.11

Searched using a **5 x 5 grid** with a **3.0 km radius** covering **28.27 square kilometers (km²)**

The center point for this grid is **25.1930532, 75.8519592**Search performed on *June 3, 2024, 12:18 AM*



Business Results Comparison

ARP: Average Rank Position across data points where the business is found in the top 20 results. **ATRP: Average Total Rank Position** across all data points data points searched.

SoLV: Share of Local Voice is the percentage of data points where the business ranks in the top three positions. Over time, SoLV may be an excellent tool for understanding brand lift.

Business	s Information	Found In	ARP	ATRP	SOLV ₩
1	Hotel Chandan near Chambal River Front, behind Bus Stand, Nayapura, Kota, Rajasthan 324001 4.2 ★★★★ (203)	9 data points 100% of results	2.22	2.22	[100]
2	Hotel Navrang, Kota Civil Lines, Nayapura, Kota, Rajasthan 324001 3.7 ★★★★ (614) ③ 3-STAR HOTEL +2 MORE	9 data points 100% of results	1.78	1.78	88.89
3	Sukhdham Kothi , A heritage hotel. Station Main Rd, near collectorate circle, Civil Lines, Nayapura, Kota, Rajasthan 324001 4.3 *** (1739) \$\infty\$ 3-STAR HOTEL \(\frac{+1 MORE}{2} \)	9 data points 100% of results	4.00	4.00	77.78
4	Hotel Mamnani bus stand, Khai Rd, near Nayapura, in front of badrinarayan mandir, Kalpuriya, Nayapura, Kota, Rajasthan 324001 4.5 ★★★★ (261)	9 data points 100% of results	3.89	3.89	11.11
5	Hotel Maheshwari Bikaner Wale 5VV2+838, Near Bus Stand, Nayapura, Kota, Rajasthan 324001 3.8 ★★★★ (69) ③ 3-STAR HOTEL +1 MORE	9 data points 100% of results	6.89	6.89	11.11
6	Hotel Saraswati Railway, Station Main Rd, Opp. Manappuram Finance Limited, Nayapura, Kota, Rajasthan 324001, India 3.4 *** (131) 3.4 *** *** (131)	9 data points 100% of results	8.33	8.33	11.11
7	Hotel Rajendra Bus Stand, Ajmer - Kota Rd, near Nayapura, Nayapura, Kota, Rajasthan 324001 2.9 ★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★	9 data points 100% of results	14.67	14.67	0.00
8	Hotal jamindar Bus Station, Nayapura, Kota, Rajasthan 324001 3.4 ★★★★★★ (5) ◇ HOTEL	3 data points 33.33% of results	18.33	20.00	0.00
	Nayapura nohra 6V24+FJQ, Civil Lines, Nayapura, Kota, Rajasthan 324001 0.0 (0)	4 data points 44.44% of results	18.25	19.78	0.00

20111000	Information	Found In	ARP	ATRP	SOLV
	♥ HOTEL				
10	Super OYO Flagship Hotel R.m Havel Plot no. 423, Maheshwari restaurant ke saamne ki gali, Chatra Vilas Garden, Nayapura, Kota, Rajasthan 324001 3.7 *** (9) *** HOTEL	4 data points 44.44% of results	20.00	20.00	0.00
11	Hotel New Raj Palace Bus Stand, Nayapura Main Rd, Nayapura, Kota, Rajasthan 324001 3.7 ★★★★★ (28) \$\infty 2-STAR HOTEL \(\frac{+1 MORE}{2} \)	9 data points 100% of results	17.78	17.78	0.00
12	Brijraj Bhawan Palace Hotel Brijraj Bhawan Palace Hotel, Civil Lines, Nayapura, Kota, Rajasthan 324001 4.2 ★★★★ (401) → HOTEL	6 data points 66.67% of results	17.83	18.89	0.00
13	Jain Mahaveer Hotel And Vishram Grah 5RVX+6R8, Bus Stand Road, Nayapura, Kota, Rajasthan 324001 3.7 ************************************	9 data points 100% of results	16.00	16.00	0.00
14	Hotel Karan Villas Brijraj Bhawan Road, Civil Lines, Kota, Rajasthan 324003 4.0 ★★★★ (308) → HOTEL	9 data points 100% of results	12.89	12.89	0.00
15	Rajdoot hotel Bus Stand, Nayapura, Kota, Rajasthan 324001 5.0 ★★★★ (1) ♥> HOTEL	9 data points 100% of results	12.78	12.78	0.00
16	Hotel Chambal 5VQ2+94M, Nayapura, Kota, Rajasthan 324001 3.8 ★★★★ (203) ③ 3-STAR HOTEL +1 MORE	9 data points 100% of results	15.67	15.67	0.00
17	Hotel suvaan 5VR2+MR2, Nayapura Rd, Chatra Vilas Garden, Nayapura, Kota, Rajasthan 324001 5.0 ★★★★ (32) ♥ HOTEL	9 data points 100% of results	14.33	14.33	0.00
18	OYO 7880 Hotel Navrang near Distict Collector Office, Civil Lines, Nayapura, Kota, Rajasthan 324001 4.0 *** *** (78) *** 2-STAR HOTEL +1 MORE	9 data points 100% of results	11.11	[11.11]	0.00
19	Gokul INN 5RRX+QV6, Rampura Rd, Chatra Vilas Garden, Nayapura, Kota, Rajasthan 324001 4.0 ★★★★ (40) ♥> HOTEL	9 data points 100% of results	8.33	8.33	0.00
20	Hotel Pankaj 5VR2+V4J, Circle, Chatra Vilas Garden, Nayapura, Kota, Rajasthan 324005 3.6 ★★★★★ (1389)	9 data points 100% of results	10.11	10.11	0.00



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