



## 7 Ways to Enhance Your Local Search Marketing Efforts

With the release of Penguin 2.0 in May, Google made it apparent that, among other things, a business's location would play a little more heavily in search results. You may have noticed over the last few months that businesses near you are getting preferential placement in results for non-geo-specific terms like "sushi" or "veterinarian." Your firm can take advantage of this development by adding a targeted local strategy to your online marketing efforts.

Google wants to see more diverse link profiles and higher quality content in its quest to provide relevant and useful results. Old-fashioned link exchanges and over-optimized, location-based keyword stuffed pages will do your firm more harm than good. Google may be giving physical proximity more weight, but it will still recognize and penalize geo-specific keyword spam.

Instead, local search marketing efforts must be organic. Here are some things you can do to make sure your local marketing is on track:

1. Update directory listings. The web is full of directory services, and you could drive yourself crazy (while wasting valuable time) trying to fill out a profile on all of them. At the very least, make sure that your address is consistent and correct on larger sites like yellowpages.com, Yelp and City Search. Also, fully fill out a profile for your firm on attorney specific sites like Nolo and Avvo. Google your firm (and yourself) to see if there are directories that have created a listing for you, and either delete or claim the listings in order to ensure that all address information is accurate. Google compiles location data about your firm, and inconsistencies make you seem less trustworthy.
2. Get press releases in local papers. Offline networking with local reporters is a valuable marketing investment. Newspaper, radio and TV reporters have column space and air time to fill, and they are always looking for stories of interest to the community. Some things that provide good material for press releases are special events, involvement in community activities, the launch of a new program or a significant achievement by an attorney or staff member. Having a relationship with reporters also makes it more likely they will come to you when looking for quotes or commentary on larger, nationwide stories.
3. Sponsor or participate in events. If you sponsor a local team or charity walk, your logo, firm name and a link to your site will likely appear on the event's website. It may also appear in local media in conjunction with coverage of the event. Sponsoring or participating in events is also good outreach and a way to keep your firm's name in the front of people's minds.
4. Identify and network with local authorities. Brainstorm on what organizations have the most influence within your community and become involved with those organizations. Authorities could include: charities, schools or universities, industry groups and other businesses. What can you do to build relationships with these authorities?





5. Create content relevant to local audiences. When you are blogging, try to incorporate commentary about news that is material to people in your city. If it is a slow news week (or month), try writing hypotheticals and connecting them to things that could take place in your community. Simply placing “Baltimore” or “Houston” in front of your practice area does not count. Dig a little and find some items that may not be getting coverage elsewhere. Google loves uniqueness and exclusivity.

6. Complete your Google+ Local profile and take advantage of Authorship. The information you provide to Google+ can help give you an advantage over other firms for national and local terms. Google+ Local listings provide your firm with a chance to gain higher placement and visibility, while Google Authorship helps you build online authority. When you include author information in your posts, your work is linked to your Google+ profile, letting Google know you are the creator of quality content.

7. Get reviews. Take advantage of social proof – the theory that people are more likely to do things they see others doing. Getting good reviews (especially on Google+ Local) helps your firm build trust with search engines and people when they see that others have benefited from your services.

Many of these steps, like updating profiles and applying for Google Authorship require a minimal time investment but can have a large payoff. Others, like adding stories relevant to your city to your blogging routine, can be incorporated into your current marketing efforts. Since Google is considering location in their algorithm, it is to your firm’s advantage to make it as easy to find you as possible.

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