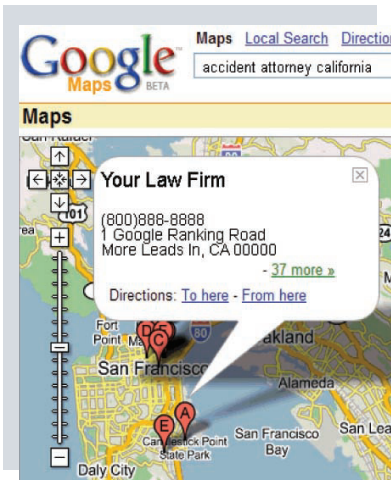




**FOSTER**  
WEB MARKETING



# WHAT EVERY ATTORNEY NEEDS TO KNOW TO DOMINATE GOOGLE PLACES

**AND HOW YOU CAN IMPROVE YOUR RANKING  
— AND KEEP IMPROVING IT!**

# UNDERSTANDING GOOGLE PLACES: THE BASICS

What is Google Places and why do you care? First of all, recognize the importance that Google, the #1 search engine and fastest growing technology company ever, has placed on Google Places, formerly known as Google Local. In fact, Google has stated that one out of five searches on Google is related to location. As of 2011, that roughly translates to 2.6 BILLION local searches performed each month, with many experts believing that this number will increase by 50% every year.

Below is an example of a typical search for “DUI Attorney Richmond VA.”

The screenshot shows a Google search for "dui attorney richmond va". The search bar is at the top with the text "dui attorney richmond va" and a "Search" button. Below the search bar, the results are categorized into "Sponsored Links", "Local business results for dui attorney near Richmond, VA", and "Organic search results".

**Sponsored Links:**

- VA DUI Attorney** - www.DUI.com/Virginia - Want your Virginia DUI Dismissed? Free visit. Save your license.
- Virginia DUI / DWI Help** - www.VirginiaDUI.com - We teach DUI law to other lawyers. We employ 5 former Va. prosecutors.
- Aggressive Lawyer** - www.LoupassiLaw.com - Richmond Criminal-DUI-DWI Attorney Experienced Former State Prosecutor

**Local business results for dui attorney near Richmond, VA:**

A map of Richmond, VA, is shown with several red pushpins. A blue arrow points from the "Sponsored Links" section to the map area. The map shows the following businesses:

- A Richmond DUI & Reckless Speeding Lawyer-Bob Battle** - www.bobbattlelaw.com - (804) 673-5600 - 0 reviews
- B John W Lutton Criminal Lawyer Richmond** - www.luttonlaw.com - (804) 643-0147 - More
- C Chuckler and Reibach** - www.vatraficattorneys.com - (804) 335-0836 - More
- D Standish Alexander, Esq.** - www.standishalexanderlaw.com - (804) 355-0016 - More
- E Brenner Evans & Milman PC Attorneys** - www.beylaw.com - (804) 644-1300 - More
- F Riley & Wells** - www.rileywells.com - (804) 673-7111 - 1 review
- G Richmond Criminal Law** - www.richmondcriminallaw.com - (804) 643-7311 - More

**Organic search results:**

- Virginia DUI, Reckless Driving, and Traffic Attorney | Robert E ...** - Richmond, Virginia DUI Lawyer Bob Battle is the author of the extremely ... or DUI, people charged in Virginia can rely on **Richmond, Virginia attorney Bob ...** Criminal Defense - Traffic - Personal Injury - Drunk Driving/DUI - www.bobbattlelaw.com/ - Cached - Similar - ...
- Richmond VA Traffic DUI Lawyers and Attorneys | Reckless Driving ...** - Riley & Wells, Attorneys-At-Law. Experienced Criminal, DUI & Traffic Defense Lawyers. Richmond, Virginia. Free Consultations. - www.rileywells.com/ - Cached - Similar - ...

**Sponsored Links (continued):**

- VA DUI - DWI Lawyer** - Fight Your Drunk Driving Charges Call For A Consultation Today - www.Soonerleale.com - Virginia
- DWI.com** - Arrested for DWI? Call now. Goto DWI.com. Free DWI visit. - www.DWI.com
- SF DUI Defense Attorneys** - Experienced, Aggressive, Trusted. Free Consult: 888-373-8000 - www.bortel-law.com
- Richmond Criminal Defense** - Aggressive Criminal Defense Lawyer Free Consultation, Available 24/7 CriminalDefenseLawyerRichmond.co Virginia
- DUI Defense Lawyer** - Choose Aggressive & Experienced Representation. Free Consultation! EstherWindmueller.com Richmond-Petersburg, VA
- Attorneys in Richmond** - Expert Attorneys at Lawyers.com Search By Location & Practice - www.lawyers.com

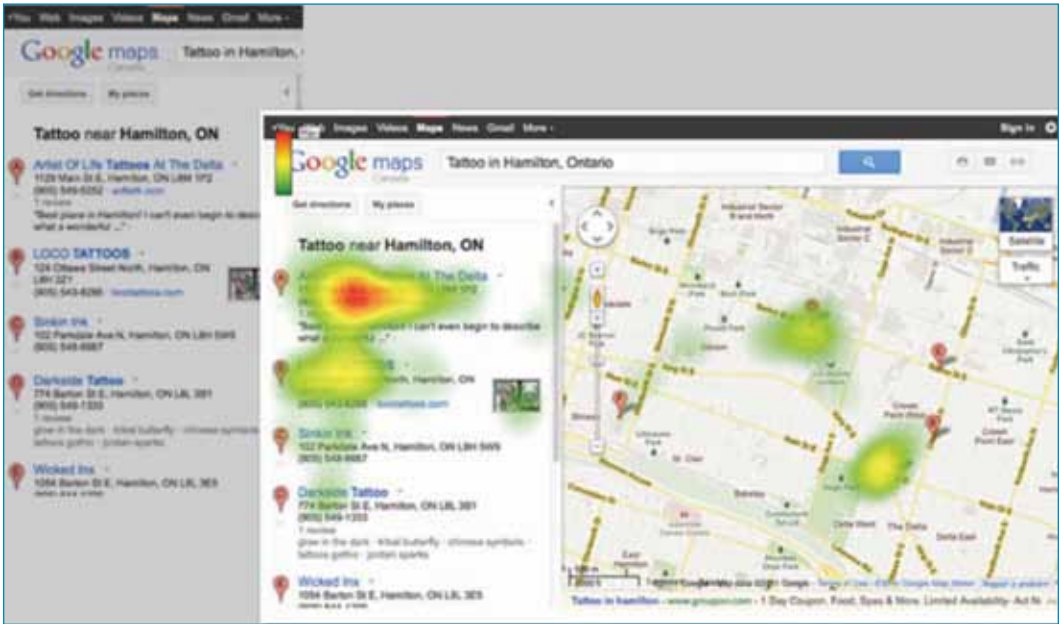
Notice that “Local business results for dui attorney near Richmond, VA” are listed directly beneath “Sponsored Links” (Google Adwords) and before organic search results. Clicking on the red pushpin (annotated by letter in the map) will open Google Maps. Maps will provide directions and a GPS guide to the listed address.

Google Places is considered by many to be the “new” Yellow Pages. As such, it is a very powerful marketing vehicle that all attorneys who are focusing on geo-location based practice areas (like our example) must take advantage of. Just for clarity sake, Google Places listings rely on the Google Maps GPS technology.

It seems to be a mystery—no matter what service or product you’re offering—as to how to increase your rankings on Google Places searches. “*The devil is in the details...*” This is true for Google Places listings and placements as well.

Whether you’re a local attorney, doctor, dentist, barbershop or retail store, higher rankings on the local Google search are just as important as your organic search engine rankings because of the increased online exposure that they offer as the first displayed results.

Just happy to rank in Local at all? We’ve all heard the expression, “Cs get degrees.” While that may be true, it certainly does not apply in Local Search. Take a look these Eye-Tracking Studies performed by a top Canadian marketing research firm.



Notice where the eyeballs go? Right to the top two results.

We are going to make the assumption that you already understand the point of Google Places, as you have gotten this report. But the real missing piece is truly understanding how Google decides what businesses to rank higher than others on local searches.

## THE NEW TREND: LOCAL SEARCHES ON SMARTPHONES

People aren't just searching from their home or business computers anymore.

The trend is starting to shift from calling 411 to using a wireless device to find local businesses. Think about how many times you see people looking up information on their phones.

The number of searches for local businesses and service providers on mobile phones is continuing to grow year after year. Google, being the number one search engine in the world, is what a large majority of smartphone users prefer when looking for businesses in their area from their mobile devices. Therefore, it is crucial for you to stay informed on how to maintain a presence on Google Places and be viewable on these search results.

It's also important to note that Google Places has created a feature that allows you to better market to smartphone users. You can obtain a custom bar code, known as a QR code, which can be downloaded and placed on ads and business cards. Users of certain smartphones can then scan the code to instantly learn more about your business.



Scan here to get even more info about optimizing your Google Places page!

### Is it by Location?



#### hardware store near Virginia 20101

Categories: [Building Materials & Supls.](#), [Retail stores - Hardware](#)

### Is it by the Number of Inbound Links?

#### Clinton Barber Shop: More about this place

1 - 10 of about 11

##### [Clinton Beauty - WashingtonDC.com](#)

... Beauty Hair Salons/**Barber Shops**. Clinton **Barber Shop**. 8971 Wood  
[www.washingtondc.com/beauty/business-directory/.../clinton](http://www.washingtondc.com/beauty/business-directory/.../clinton)

##### [Spas and Beauty Salons In Clinton, Maryland | Travels.com](#)

... Clinton Spas and Beauty Salons. Clinton **Barber Shop**. 8971 Wood  
from the center of Clinton ...  
[www.travels.com/spa-beauty-clinton-md-us/](http://www.travels.com/spa-beauty-clinton-md-us/)

##### [Clinton Salon | Salon in Clinton, MD | Fave Video Yellow Page](#)

... Clinton Salon. 1-20 of 55 total results. Clinton **Barber Shop**. 8971 Wood  
[www.getfave.com/locations/md/clinton/salon](http://www.getfave.com/locations/md/clinton/salon)

## Or Is it by the Amount of Reviews?

Reviews [Write a review](#)

**Experienced Kentucky Personal Injury Law Firm**  
★★★★★ By [John](#) - Jul 6, 2009  
As a victim of a personal injury **accident** myself I can tell you that it is important to seek out attorneys who are experienced, trustworthy, and have a track record of success. The Schafer Law office gives you nothing less. The experienced Kentucky personal injury lawyer team is successful, honest, and gets fair compensation for their clients.  
[maps.google.com](#)  
Was this review helpful? [Yes](#) - [No](#) - [Flag as inappropriate](#)

**Experienced, Trustworthy, And A Great...**  
★★★★★ By [John](#) - Jul 6, 2009  
As a victim of a personal injury **accident** myself I can tell you that it is important to seek out attorneys who are experienced, trustworthy, and have a track record of success. The Schafer Law office gives you nothing less. The experienced Kentucky personal injury lawyer team is successful, honest, and gets fair compensation for their clients.  
[maps.google.com](#)  
Was this review helpful? [Yes](#) - [No](#) - [Flag as inappropriate](#)

**Top Kentucky Personal Injury Lawyer**  
★★★★★ By [Mark](#) - Jul 1, 2009  
As a certified specialist in injury and wrongful death law in Arizona, I understand the difficulty injury victims have in finding a personal injury lawyer anywhere in the United States. Due to my position in the law, I get the chance to meet great injury lawyers from all around the country. It is from my personal contacts with Mr. Schafer that I have come to respect him personally and professionally. I certainly understand that there are so many attorneys on television, in yellow pages, and on the internet that it can be difficult to choose the lawyer you can actually trust. For those that cannot decide, I strongly encourage you to start your search by meeting personally with Mike Schafer. One visit with him and you will recognize his commitment to his clients and the law are "above and beyond" your expectations. Mark P. Breyer, Esq.  
[maps.google.com](#)  
Was this review helpful? [Yes](#) - [No](#) - [Flag as inappropriate](#)

**Louisville Accident Attorney Mike Schafer...**  
★★★★★ By [Florida FLSA](#) - May 6, 2009  
Don't make a mistake in your Kentucky **auto** injury case! My friend Kentucky **auto** lawyer Mike Schafer has written a free book to help you with your **auto** injury case. Mike answers all your questions and helps you on the road to recovery. As a lawyer who has handled disability claims for over 29 years, I know it is crucial that you have a lawyer like Mike Schafer who understands the games Kentucky **auto** insurance companies will play with your **auto** crash case. I refer all my clients who have friends or family injured in Kentucky **auto**, motorcycle or truck crash cases to Mike. Attorney Nancy Cavey

Well, the answer is...

**ALL OF THE ABOVE (AND A WHOLE LOT MORE)!!!**

There are a number of factors that Google Places looks at when deciding how local businesses are ranked. It is *significantly different* than the Google organic algorithm (organic refers to "normal," non-paid search engine rankings) that relies heavily on page optimization (page titles, content, etc.) and number of external links.

In this report, we'll not only show you everything that Google Places looks at when deciding what businesses should rank where, but we'll also show you the importance of each factor, as well as what you can do to increase your local search engine rankings and generate more leads.

Before we get into the ranking factors, let's take a moment to go over what you need to do first: Claim your Local Business Listing (LBL).

### Claiming Your Local Business Listing

Claiming your Local Business Listing is very important. It basically allows **YOU, THE BUSINESS OWNER** to decide what kind of information is displayed about **your business**. However, according to this report, Google Places is also ranking the busi-

ness owners who have claimed and **updated** their Local Business Listings higher than those who haven't. In fact, this is the single most important step you can take.

Claiming your Local Business Listing can be as easy as following these simple steps:



If you haven't claimed your profile yet, follow these steps:

- 1) Visit **<http://www.google.com/places/>**
- 2) Click "Get Started" under the "Get your business found on Google" heading.
- 3) Make sure you are logged into the Google Account you want associated with your business.
  - a. If you do not already have a Google Account (think gmail), you should sign up for one now.
  - b. If you prefer to use a non-gmail address, do the following:
    - i. Click "Sign up for a new Google Account" in the upper-right-hand corner.
    - ii. Enter the email address you want to use & follow the rest of the on-screen instructions.
- 4) Enter in your business' LOCAL number, not its toll-free number (we will go over this in Ranking Factors).
- 5) Fill out the required fields about your business, and submit it to the Google Places Business Center.

*They will then ask you to verify the information by either a) calling you at the phone number you entered, or b) sending you a postcard in the mail. If you choose to receive a postcard in the mail, you will be required to log back into the Google Places Business Center to enter a PIN code from the postcard.*

Before you start adding details about your company into your Local Business Listing, do a search to see what your competitors are doing. You want to do a little digging to determine which businesses are consistently getting top rankings in Google Places. Click on each profile and review the type of information the business has included. Google can be wildly inconsistent, so tactics that boost rankings in some industries can hurt or even bury rankings in others.

When you start on your Local Business Listing, be sure to provide as much detail as you can when giving information about your business to Google Places. Don't leave any of the form fields blank. The more information you provide, the more likely your listing will rank high. **Videos, pictures, hours of operation, payment methods, coupons for service, etc.** can all help your Local Business Listing rank better than your competition on Google Places searches when done correctly.

If you don't have a picture of your business, Google will provide one for you at no additional charge. All you have to do is apply for the photo shoot online. The photographs will be posted to your listing.

Google Places has added some other features to assist you with your listing. For a small monthly fee, you can tag an item in your listing, such as directions to your office, your website or some other item. Google will place a small yellow tag next to whatever you choose. Plus, paying this monthly fee gives you the ability to view your clicks and activity using the Google Places dashboard.

Once you feel you have optimized your Local Business Listing by providing as much information as humanly possible, you can go on to the ranking factors. We'll take a look at what Google Places reviews when determining local rankings and what you can do to improve your results.

## Understand Ranking Factors

A survey was conducted in June 2011 by a Google Places consultant, David Mihm. He took 33 experts in the local search engine ranking community and asked them to rate the importance of each factor as it pertains to Google Places rankings.

As of this writing, the study can be seen here,  
<http://www.davidmihm.com/local-search-ranking-factors.shtml>

We're going to be reviewing some of these results, and show you ways that you can improve on each factor to rank better for your local search results. This year, the survey differentiates between work done on your places page (PLACE PAGE), work done on your website (WEBSITE), work done on internet yellow pages (IYPs), and work done external websites (OFF-PLACE/OFF-SITE).

Here are the top 10 ranking factors to focus on, according to this year's survey:

1. Physical Address in City of Search (PLACE PAGE)
2. Manually Owner-verified Place Page (PLACE PAGE)
3. Proper Category Associations (PLACE PAGE)
4. Volume of Traditional Structured Citations (IYPs, Data Aggregators) (OFF-PLACE/OFF-SITE)
5. Crawlable Address Matching Place Page Address (WEBSITE)
6. PageRank/Authority of Website Homepage/Highest Ranked Page (WEBSITE)
7. Quality of Inbound Links to Website (OFF-PLACE/OFF-SITE)
8. Crawlable Phone Number Matching Place Page Phone Number (WEBSITE)
9. Local Area Code on Place Page (PLACE PAGE)
10. Place Page and the City/State in Your Landing Page Title (WEBSITE)

## Google Ranking Factor #1: Physical Address in City of Search (PLACE PAGE)

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The first and most important ranking factor, according to the survey of 33 local search experts, is *making sure your physical address is actually located in the city in which you would like to rank on Google Places*.

We run into this problem with a lot of clients, for both organic search engine optimization, as well as for local search.

With organic search engine optimization, there are ways to “manipulate” the search engines and results (build links including anchor text of other cities, add content based on other cities, etc.), so that you rank for **multiple cities**.

But for the Google Places searches, how can you rank for cities in which you’re not located?

Simple answer: **You can’t**...UNLESS you have an address in that city. Keep in mind that if your office is located just outside the city you want to rank for, there is chance you will rank for it—but you will most certainly be behind like-offices which are actually located in the city proper.

This area is where you can put your creative and entrepreneurial thinking to good use. You don’t have to have an actual office, secretary, desk, and staff at that location; you just need an **ADDRESS (NO PO BOXES) AND A LOCAL PHONE NUMBER**.

Look around for mail forwarding or virtual office services in your area. You can pay a monthly fee for either the rights to the address or the ability to use the office (if you plan on having clients visit you at that location) from time to time. Be aware that this listing will be live on Google Maps, so potential clients may inadvertently visit this location if left to their own devices.

## Google Ranking Factor #2: Manually Owner-verified Place Page (PLACE PAGE)

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We’re not quite sure why this factor isn’t number one, seeing as your business doesn’t have much of a chance of ranking well on Google Places if your Local Business Listing hasn’t been claimed yet. So, if you haven’t claimed your Local Business Listing yet, go back to page 5 for instructions on how to do so.

PRINT – LINK – Edit this place - **Business owner?**

## Google Ranking Factor #3: Proper Category Associations (PLACE PAGE)

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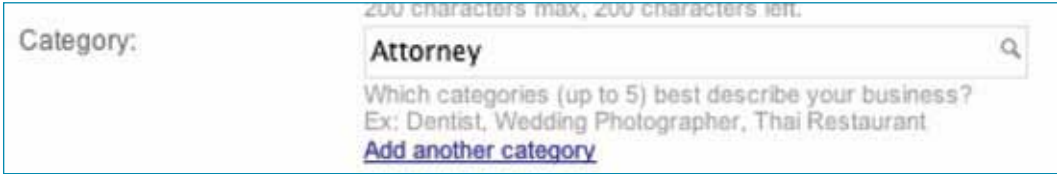
Specifying categories that are related to your business and include the keywords that you would like to rank for is becoming increasingly important to your Google Places success. Simply put, if your business is not associated with the proper category, it will be tough to rank for it.



What this means to business owners is that they should first associate their Google Places page with Google suggested categories that are the best match.



You also have the ability to add up to five categories (by clicking the “add another category” link).

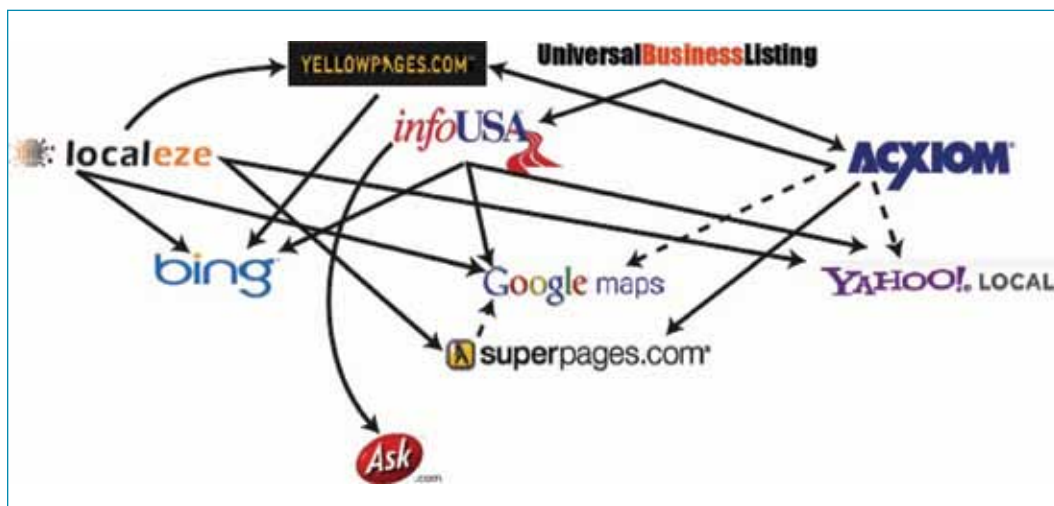


Be sure to capitalize on additional categories if you have multiple practice areas. We always recommend using as many pre-defined categories as possible, such as “attorney” and “personal injury attorney.” While you do need to make these categories specific to your business, don’t include your state or city in these custom categories.



For example, stay away from a custom category that says, “Virginia family law attorney” or “insurance disputes Houston.” These geographic modifiers could hurt you, as they go against Google Places’ guidelines. You may see some of your competitors doing this, but believe us when we tell you that it is more likely to hurt your rankings than help them.

#### Google Ranking Factor #4: Volume of Traditional Structured Citations (IYPs, Data Aggregators) (OFF-PLACE/OFF-SITE)



This is the most important Google Places ranking factor that doesn’t have to do with your business’ physical location.

Remember when we said earlier that “manipulating” Google Places is almost impossible? This is because they verify EVERYTHING in order to reduce the number of potential spam and insincere business listings. Google also pulls from a large number of data providers (or websites) to verify your physical address, phone number, service offering, point of contact, and so on, to make sure everything matches up where it should.

What data providers/websites does Google Places pull from when verifying information (so that you can go get listed on these sites)?

Well, as much as we would love to just list a few sites that you need to get listed on, it’s not that easy.

There are primary and secondary sources that Google Places pulls from in order to verify your business’ information.

#### Data Providers to Google Places

The following websites provide data about your business DIRECTLY to Google Places. They, for the most part, power Google Places’ search engine verification process.

### Primary Data Providers:

**Localeze** – A resource trusted by Google that verifies and submits your business data to Google Places, as well as to the following websites (which are, in some cases, secondary data providers to Google Places):

- Yahoo
- Bing
- Twitter
- Facebook
- Yellowpages.com
- DexKnows.com
- TomTom
- 411.com
- Whitepages.com
- Yellowbot
- Comcast.net
- Cox (Kudzu)
- Edmunds.com

You can list your site with Localeze by going to <https://webapp.localeze.com/bizreg/>, signing up, and filling out the required information.

**InfoUsa** – Another resource trusted by Google that submits your data to Google Places. They also submit to:

- Bing Local
- Yahoo Local
- Ask
- GetFave.com
- AOL Local
- Superpages.com
- Telenav
- Tellme
- DAPlus.us

You can add or update your business listing with InfoUsa by going to [http://leads.infousa.com/landing/Updatelisting.aspx?bas\\_vendor=190000&bas\\_session=](http://leads.infousa.com/landing/Updatelisting.aspx?bas_vendor=190000&bas_session=)

Google Places also pulls from a number of secondary data providers indirectly. We would recommend, in addition to Localeze and InfoUsa, getting your business/website listed on:

**Universal Business Listing:** <http://www.universalbusinesslisting.org/>

**Prefer to Manually Manage Your IYPs, 3rd-party Sites, Data-aggregator, and Review Sites? WE DO!**

We recommend using whitespark's invaluable Local Citation Finder. You can find the local citations that influence the ranking for a particular keyword and even find out what local citations your competitor has (**shhhh, all you need is their phone number**).

You can access the tool by visiting <http://www.whitespark.ca/local-citation-finder/search/>. But remember, all citations you create for a particular business location must have identically matching business names, URLs, address, and phone numbers.

### Google Ranking Factor #5: Crawable Address Matching Place Page Address (WEBSITE)

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This may seem simple enough, but it's surprising how often this trips people up. If your website lists your business as being on **123 Fake Street**, then you better not have your Google Places Page saying your address is **123 Fake St**.

Now, isn't Google smart enough to know that St. means Street? Of course they are, but when it comes to Google Places, they are looking for consistency & accuracy across all listings.

When Google Places sees that the physical address on your website exactly matches the one on your Google Places Page, it gives them justification to tie your website to your Google Places Page.

So, if you list your suite number on your website, list your suite number on your Google Places Page. If you write suite as STE on your website, write suite as STE on your Google Places Page.

Remember, Google Places goes out and verifies EVERYTHING. When they start seeing that the address on your Local Business Listing matches up to the address on your website and all of the other data providers, they will start trusting your Local Business Listing more and more.

When we say crawlable, we mean that a Google spider can find it on your site. That means that an image or banner containing your address will not cut it. The best way to check if your address is crawlable is to act as Google and search for it. If the page on your site where you believe your address to be listed comes up, then it's crawlable. If it doesn't show up, and the page where you believe it to be listed is indexed by Google, then your address isn't crawlable.



**Google Ranking Factor #6:  
PageRank/Authority of Website  
Homepage/Highest Ranked Page (WEBSITE)**

We could fill up a book, or entire series of books (we've written them!), on how to improve your website's PageRank & Authority, so we're not going to get too in-depth here. Here's what I will say. This is a ranking factor that is becoming increasingly important. What it means in a nutshell is this: **If your site isn't going to rank organically, then it's most likely not going to rank locally.** The reason for this is that Google is working on blending Local search & Organic search.

The authority of your homepage is best viewed as a combination of factors. Chief among them are PageRank, volume of incoming links, anchor text relevancy of links, and age of the domain.

PageRank is a hotly contested issue among SEOers, but one thing is clear—the PageRank of your homepage is an important ranking factor. So if you've been focusing your SEO efforts on deeper pages, you might want to refocus your efforts around your site's homepage.

Local search is trending more and more towards traditional SEO efforts, so these changes are not going away. If you've been ignoring traditional SEO efforts in favor of Local SEO, it is time to reevaluate your organic SEO efforts.



### Google Ranking Factor #7: Quality of Inbound Links to Website (OFF-PLACE/OFF-SITE)

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Here is another factor that may be directly related to organic search engine optimization, and yet it still plays a key role in Google Places rankings. In past years, we have seen Google Places listings include those that have no website at all in the top results. This is no longer the case in all but the least competitive categories.

Not only does your Google Places account need to be linked to your website to rank, your website needs quality inbound links pointing to it. What do we mean by quality? In Organic SEO, quality means the relevancy & authority of the pages linking to your website.

In Local SEO, it means the same thing, plus an added wrinkle. The link neighborhood of your inbound links is also very important. Google Places verifies absolutely everything before showing your LBL in the top results in order to combat spammy entries from showing up and to make sure that the business address, phone number, and additional information is correct and reliable. They do this in order to guarantee the legitimacy of these listings to their visitors and anyone else searching on Google Places. So inbound links to your website that reinforce that you are located where you say you are and your business does what it says it does go a long way to strengthen Google's trust in your Google Places page.

It is always extremely easy to get a large quantity of "junk" links from other non-related websites in order to build more authority to your website. Therefore, don't you think that Google Places will measure the quality and amount of relevance your website's inbound links have in order to make sure they are indeed quality links and not some offshore SEO company linking your site from just about anywhere in order to try to pull one over on the search engines?

We think that the quality of inbound links that your website has is important to both organic SEO rankings, as well as Google Places rankings. The motto "quality over quantity" always applies to link building. If you do decide to go out and launch an aggressive link building campaign, make sure you do so with the basics of link building in mind: Only try for high authority links and only obtain links from websites that are relevant to your practice, your location, or—in a perfect world—both.



### Google Ranking Factor #8: Crawable Phone Number Matching Place Page Phone Number (WEBSITE)

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This is the same as Google Ranking Factor #5, except with your phone number. And when we say phone number, we mean your **LOCAL PHONE NUMBER**. It is fine to include your toll-free number on both your website and your Google Places Page. In fact, if you have a toll-free number, it would be unwise not to.

But for Local Ranking purposes, Google is only concerned with your local phone number. So make sure your local phone number is listed on your website and that it is visible to the search engines. We previously mentioned Googling your address to

see if it is crawlable on your site. This will work for your phone number as well. But if your site is new, another way to determine if something is crawlable is to look at your website's source code in your browser (each browser is different, but usually it is under the View Menu). Depending on your familiarity with web coding, it may just look like a jumble of numbers and letters. Simply use the find command to look for your phone number in the source code; if it shows up, it is visible to the search engines.

### **Google Ranking Factor #9: Local Area Code on Place Page (PLACE PAGE)**

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As if we haven't hammered on this point enough, using your local phone number



is important! In case you missed it in our "Claiming your Local Business Listing" section, you ideally claimed your Google Places Page with your business' local phone number and not its toll-free number. If you used the toll-free number, make sure you add your local number to your business' Google Places Page. Also be sure that it matches the number listed on your business' website.

If your local phone number changes for any reason, remember that you must change it on both your website and your Google Places page, or you risk not showing up in Local Search.

### **Google Ranking Factor #10: Place Page and the City/State in Your Landing Page Title**

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This means that your homepage needs to be optimized for the city and state you are wanting to rank for locally. So be sure to put the city and state in your homepage's Page Title.

What happens if your business has locations in more than one area? Well, there are few ways to handle that.

The best way would be to have different landing pages for each of your Google Places Pages. So let's say you have locations in Houston, Texas and Galveston, Texas. For the Google Places Page of Houston, make your homepage a landing page, which is optimized for Houston. What does that mean exactly? It means that your landing page should include keywords targeted to Houston, such as "Houston personal injury lawyer".

For your Galveston Google Places Page, make the landing page a Galveston-

**Houston Personal Injury Lawyer | Houston Accident Attorney**

specific page on your website, which you will use as the homepage for your listing. Again, the landing page would contain keywords focused on Galveston, such as "Galveston personal injury attorney".

If you choose this route, remember Google Ranking Factors #6 and #7, and choose a secondary page that has a high page rank and quality inbound links.

If the above strategy seems like too much work, or let's say most of your business comes from one location over the other, you can still be okay. Many of the polled experts believe that this Ranking Factor primarily influences the results of search queries that include the location (in our above example, it would be a search for relevant keywords that include Alexandria or Fairfax). So, you should still rank for a town your landing page is not optimized for in non-location based queries simply by following the other ranking factors.

## Other Factors That We Think Are Important:

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### Reviews



You might have noticed that reviews did not crack the top 10 this year, which is a bit surprising. The reason for this is that at the time of this survey, Google was changing how and where they used reviews. Previously, Google would display reviews from 3rd party websites directly on your Google Places Page. However, those 3rd party sites complained, and now this is no longer the case. The only reviews that will appear on your Google Places Page are the ones created on that particular Google Places Page.

Another important change happened as well. Google removed a HUGE number of reviews that they viewed as SPAM. This was very controversial, as many businesses claimed that legitimate reviews were removed.

## So Does This Mean That Reviews Are Not Important in Google Local Rankings?

### Far From It.

Reviews are still very important, but how they influence rankings now is not as transparent as it was previously.

Since Google Places reviews are the only ones displayed on your Places Page, they have taken on increased significance. But it is important to monitor both the velocity and frequency at which you acquire reviews. Google is looking for natural human patterns and is penalizing sites that acquire reviews in ways that deviate from this. So while a hundred reviews on your Google Places Page is great, a hundred reviews from the same day is not—unless you're a business that typically gets that volume of reviews. If that is the case, congratulations!

Somewhat surprisingly—and this is subject to change—Google currently values volume of reviews over the positivity of reviews. This makes sense when you view it from Google's perspective. A bunch of okay reviews gives more credibility that a business is where they say they are does what they say they do more than one glowing review. As Google's Local algorithm becomes increasingly sophisticated, this will probably change, since Google tends to favor quality over quantity.

If you want to get more reviews on your Google Places Page, you can do so by making it easier for your clients. All you have to do is purchase a "reviewmeweb-site.com" domain and point it to your Google Places Page. The simpler you make it for your clients, the better your odds of getting reviews.

### **What About Reviews From 3rd Party Sites?**

Just because Google doesn't display them on Google Places Pages, don't for a second think they don't value them. 3rd Party site reviews are just as important as ever—and with search advances like Siri, which is discussed later, they will continue to grow in importance.

So do not be afraid to ask for reviews/testimonials from clients you have done a good job for. They will be happy to provide it. Just make sure they don't all post their reviews on the same day. Also have them mix it up between Google Places and high quality 3rd party review sites like Yelp.

Always be sure to remind past clients and anyone else that you work with that it would be greatly appreciated if they would take the time and post a review on your Google Places page—whether it be through your e-mail list or newsletter, your Facebook or Twitter page, or any other type of communication you have with past clients.

There are a number of ways that you can increase your Google Places rankings: by either optimizing your Local Business Listing, getting listed on a number of other resources, or even making a few simple website changes. Remember, these ranking factors are almost certainly going to continue to change over the years. Make sure you keep an eye on Google Places ranking trends. Just because these ranking factors are important to your Google Places rankings today doesn't mean that they won't change in six months. Therefore, keep checking our website, blog, Facebook page, and other resources listed below, so that you can be sure to stay up-to-date on changes and improvements as they're being made.





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## THE NEW TREND: APPLE IPHONE4S & SIRI

*By now, most of you have heard about Apple's new voice-activated "personal assistant," Siri. Siri can help you set up appointments, check your calendar, and even help you locate nearby businesses. So how do you get your business 'talked up' by Siri?*

*Since Siri just went live, the data is limited, but here are 2 easy steps to improve your chances:*

- 1. Follow the steps outlined in our "Claiming Your Local Listing" section. An accurate, complete, and keyword-rich Google Places Page provides the foundations for getting found by Siri.*
- 2. Have a strong Yelp presence. As of now, Siri relies on Yelp for most of its local business searches. So your best bet is to cultivate a highly descriptive Yelp profile for your business with many positive reviews.*

*Siri will most likely incorporate other popular review sites down the line, so stay tuned to Foster Web Marketing for the latest updates.*



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