



# Local SEO for small business

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A beginner's guide

[fundingcircle.com](https://fundingcircle.com)

[support@fundingcircle.com](mailto:support@fundingcircle.com)

[855.385.5356](tel:855.385.5356)



## **A beginner's guide to local SEO for small business**

As a local business owner, one of the biggest advantages you have over big-brand competitors is surprisingly simple: your locality. You know customers by name, you know the local issues they care about, and you have firsthand knowledge of the directories and people who are most likely to influence the purchasing decisions of your community.

This local intel can be particularly powerful when applied to your small business' local SEO ("search engine optimization") strategy. Local SEO is a form of local online marketing, and while it has a lot of similarities with organic SEO, it's actually quite different. Put simply, local SEO helps nearby customers find your business online by boosting your ranking in local directories, review sites, and maps.

If you target customers in specific regions, it's important to invest in a localized SEO strategy to ensure your business ranks higher and more frequently in Google's local listings and other local directories. The higher your ranking, the more you can drive nearby customers looking for the products or services you offer to your business. This guide to local SEO is designed to get your site's local search optimization off the ground by improving your listings for localized search queries.



# What are the goals of local SEO?

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## Visibility

Put simply, local SEO helps nearby customers find your business online. While SEO is the art of boosting your site's visibility across general search results, local SEO is the more specific art of boosting your site's visibility in searches related to the region in which you operate. Through local search results, for example, potential customers can more easily pinpoint you on Google Maps and discover useful information about your business, such as hours of operation and contact information – straight from Google's results pages.

## Traffic

Through localization, you can better target specific and highly relevant customers, while driving valuable traffic to your website that's more likely to convert into a sale.

## User experience

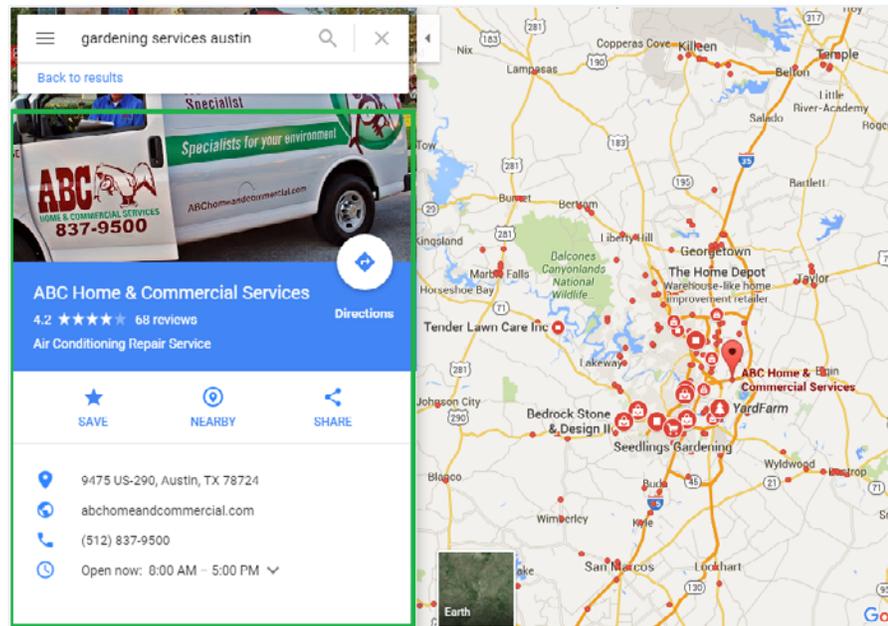
By correctly identifying your business' basic details (such as address, hours, contact information, etc.) search engines will be able to display this information in search results – allowing for increased engagement with your business via offline channels (be that phone, email, or even in person).



# 5 super simple things you can do today to improve your business' local SEO

## 1. Show people you are open for business: set up a Google My Business page.

The first key step in your small business' local SEO strategy is getting listed on Google My Business. It's important to provide as much information as possible about your business when setting up your listing. In addition to providing standard information about your address, phone number and opening hours, don't forget to upload quality photos of your office, products, or services. A comprehensive listing on Google My Business will not only help your potential customers (and Google!) find the information they are looking for – it will help your business stand out in search results. For step-by-step instructions on how to set up your business on Google, [get started here](#).





## 2. Ensure you're listed in your local directories.

In order for customers to find you, you have to put your information in places they'll look for it! Submit your company information to local business directories like Yelp, Foursquare, and Google+. Include need-to-know basics like your business name, address, and phone number, as well as a photo of your location to help them find you. Also, look for more local directories in your community. For example, does your state have an official landscape designers webpage, or does your city have a site for after-school tutors? Do your research and see where else you might find customers, and make sure your information is included there.

## 3. Encourage reviews.

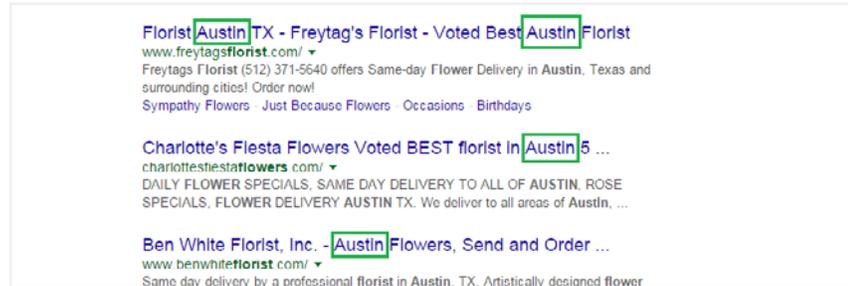
Some local listing sites allow users to leave a review with impressions of your business. Since this information will influence the decisions of other potential customers looking at your profile, you'll want to ensure your business has a collection of really positive reviews! Unless someone had a negative experience, though, the average customer usually won't proactively look for ways to leave a review, so don't be afraid to ask them for one and ensure you make it as easy as possible. Think about creative ways you can integrate the ask into your own sales process, and remember that customers are more likely to give you feedback right away. For example, some businesses even offer a special deal or discount to incentivize reviews.

## 4. Make your basic information clear.

You don't just want customers to be able to understand the information about your business — you also want it to be understood by search engines. Carefully select the words you use to describe your business.

Title tags, or meta titles, are HTML title elements that are very important to both SEO and user experience, as well as useful in describing the topic and theme of a webpage. [Check out our SEO guide](#) for more information about title tags.

Here's a good example of a local business that has optimized its landing pages to effectively target potential customers in the area:



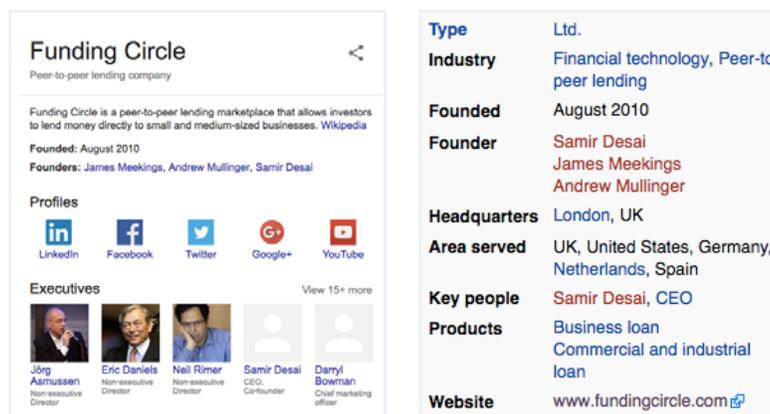
As you can see, the top three listings have optimized their metadata effectively toward the target location of Austin, whereas the fourth business on the list has not. If a customer is specifically scanning search results for businesses conveniently located in their neighborhood, they may overlook the fourth search result – and that business may miss out on potential sales.

### 5. Set up your Knowledge Graph.

A Knowledge Graph entry is the Wikipedia excerpt you can see highlighted in the search engine results page (SERP). For brand searches, Google will display these Wikipedia excerpts directly in the search results.

All you need to do is edit your business’s Wikipedia page (or create one, if you haven’t already), and ensure that it references the same website that’s listed in your Google+ profile. Similar to the other accounts you’ve set up, make sure your Wikipedia page includes key business information and an image (such as your logo).

Armed with this information, Google will be much more likely to list your brand with Knowledge Graph listings.



This is good for your SEO because it enhances the amount of real estate you have in the initial results pages, which can entice users to click through to your site.



## Key SEO takeaways

You're well on your way to developing a beginner's local SEO plan! If you ever start feeling overwhelmed, remember these key takeaways:

- Set up your company's Google My Business page, and fill in as many fields as possible.
- Set up your Yelp, Foursquare, or Google+ pages and encourage customers to leave reviews.
- Optimize your site's content and title tags toward the specific region in which your business operates.
- Build up your company's information on Wikipedia.

Now that you've begun to build SEO into your local online marketing, it's time to examine your approach to social media. Read our next guide, [A Beginner's Guide to Social Media for Small Business](#), to learn about popular social platforms and best practices for each!



## We hope this guide has been useful!

If you have any questions, please get in touch.

[support@fundingcircle.com](mailto:support@fundingcircle.com)

855.385.5356

8am - 8pm PT, M-F except federal holidays

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