

## Is SEO Right for Small Businesses?

by jvogel | June 19, 2021

Small businesses have traditionally faced numerous challenges when it comes to marketing their products. While many of these obstacles persist, the increasing popularity of digital marketing should make it easier for small businesses to sell their products and services. However, a knowledge gap hinders many small business owners from using digital tools effectively, or at all. The good news is this gap can be closed with a bit of digital literacy training. With this goal in mind, let's go over some fundamentals for small business owners who want to get noticed on Google.

First and foremost, over 90% of internet users use Google to search for information on the web. As a small business owner, landing on Google's main results page will not only demonstrate your credibility to potential and existing clients, but it will also drive traffic to your website. To that end, SEO is one of the most effective marketing forms out there, boasting a higher ROI than many other types of advertising. Regardless of whether you decide to dive head-first into SEO or just dip your toe in the water, you must do a few things first to ensure that Google can even find your company.

1. Create a Google My Business account. Google My Business is a free service that allows any business with a physical location to create a profile on Google. The profile includes basic information about the business such as their name, address, and website. This information is useful because when customers search for a type of business "near me," Google displays businesses near the searcher's location—which they only know if they have your address. It also allows customers to leave reviews, both positive and negative. For businesses that compete heavily in local markets (such as restaurants, attorneys, dentists, and so on), paying careful attention to their Google My Business profile and reviews is especially important.

2. Create a business website. A website is important because it allows potential customers to learn more about your business. It also allows customers to contact you or make a purchase online. A simple website is a great way to get started, and numerous inexpensive services have templates that make it easy to get a website up and running quickly. You can always add more advanced options such as e-commerce and blogging capabilities later. From the beginning, though, the content should contain relevant information about your business for your intended target audience. Fair warning: Your site must load quickly and efficiently, or your visitors will get frustrated and "bounce" away.
3. Optimize your website for SEO. Once you create a website, you need to optimize it for both speed and SEO. If your business already has a website, the digital marketing concept of search engine optimization (SEO) has very likely come across your desk at one point or another. If it has, you may have felt overwhelmed or confused by what it entails, and if so, you're not alone. Fortunately, as SEO's importance continues to grow, so does its accessibility. More resources are available now than ever before, and marketing your business to the digital consumer base has never been easier. However, implementing SEO into a digital marketing strategy can still be a challenge for many small businesses, and tensions exist that can prevent some people from taking the plunge.

We close with some SEO best practices if you're considering implementing an SEO strategy for your small business:

- Jump in; the water is warm! SEO is complex, but it's not overly technical. Many small business owners believe that search engine optimization is beyond their reach due to their lack of technical knowledge. However, the truth is that SEO is far more intuitive than it may seem at first glance. In fact, if your business has a website, you likely have already inadvertently implemented SEO practices in your design! Well-written and relevant content is key to a successful SEO campaign, so begin by analyzing your website and identifying its most important content. Is it accurate? Are any words misspelled? Is it relevant? If you spot any issues, begin by making the

necessary changes.

- Keywords are the “key.” SEO’s foundation lies in the strategic use of relevant keywords placed within quality content that Google can use to let people know what your website is all about. Done correctly, this approach raises a website's search engine results page (SERP) ranking and drives visitors to your site. If your website has a description or a blog post that contains business-relevant terms and concepts, search engine algorithms are probably already taking notice of it. Of course, keywords are only the tip of the iceberg; many other factors contribute to a successful SEO campaign.
- Get on board with backlinks. Backlinks are simply clickable links that refer you from one website to another. In the context of SEO, quality backlinks help Google measure your website’s popularity. However, not all backlinks are created equal. The best kinds of backlinks are those from reputable (high-authority) websites that get lots of internet traffic. For example, if you own a car dealership that sells electric cars, it may be helpful for you to publish a blog on a popular informational website that answers common questions about electric car ownership and promotes their use. Posting a blog somewhere like that can not only supply helpful content to those potential customers, but it can also deliver visitors to your website via a link (or backlink) to your site when they’re ready to make a purchase. Sometimes posting is free (if the content is good enough), but sometimes you’ll need to pay a fee for the opportunity to post content on these websites.
- Avoid “sharks” in the water. It’s worth mentioning that many sharks are in the water who employ “black hat” (dishonest) SEO practices. One deceptive practice you’ll want to avoid is “keyword stuffing,” which is placing keywords in your content that are irrelevant to your business just to increase the number of visitors. Google frowns on this practice and may penalize your website in the future if you engage in it. Also, beware of third-party service providers that offer to build hundreds of backlinks for you at a very low cost. These backlinks typically don’t help at all, and some of them (called toxic backlinks) can actually harm your website.
- Weigh your options carefully. Many small businesses may find pay-per-click advertising (PPC) enticing. This strategy relies on the typical digital banner ads you

would expect to see anywhere on the internet. As the name suggests, you pay each time a user clicks on your ad. PPC can be a good option for specific promotions or products, and it may temporarily increase traffic to your company's website.

However, PPC is complicated, is purely a short-term strategy, and is typically more expensive than SEO in the long run. Once the ads are gone, you no longer show up at the top of Google searches; whereas SEO will yield results for your business for years to come. The benefits of showing up in Google's "organic" (non-ad) search results section cannot be overstated. The vast majority of users never stray from the first page of results, and many refuse to look at ads altogether—some even block them entirely.

- Enlist the help of a good SEO provider to help navigate the waters. Even with all the above tips, integrating SEO into your digital marketing strategy may still seem like a daunting task because of the time and effort required. While an untrained individual can likely create a serviceable SEO campaign after a lot of research and experimentation, an expert's aid will allow you to focus on other aspects of your business and not be distracted by SEO's technical aspects. SEO professionals help you identify the most effective keywords for your business, advise you on the best ways to implement them, and provide the ongoing execution, support, and maintenance necessary to keep your campaign running smoothly.

Digital marketing is more important now than it has ever been, and this trend is bound to continue. Learning SEO's basics and how to implement it effectively is a pivotal first step to growing your business and establishing a strong online presence. If you're a small business owner interested in reaping the benefits of SEO, look no further than newData. Our Nashville-based analytics and SEO consultancy features a team of [SEO experts](#) that offer our clients a comprehensive pathway to growth and success through data optimization.

