



The Best
Google Ranking
Casserole Recipe
for Local SEO

Step-By-Step Ranking Directions
Using Only 8 “Ingredients!”



IMPULSE
CREATIVE



GET READY TO COOK UP AN IRRESISTIBLE WEBSITE!

Let's pretend you're an SEO chef.

Google's hungry for some answers, and you're whipping up a recipe that's sure to rank number one on the local menu. But the picky search engine doesn't recommend just any ol' casserole.

It's looking for the crowd-pleasers, the top-rated content recipes to share with searchers.

We're here with the right ingredients to "cook up" a scrumptious website that gets served on the search engine result pages (SERPs).

Easy 8 Ingredient Google Ranking Casserole

★★★★☆ 4.5 Star Recipe

Ingredients

For high praise on the SERPs, we recommend using a quality mix of ingredients. You'll need—

2 cups of **backlinks** with a dash of **anchor text**

4 tablespoons of **keywords**

A generous handful of **citations**

3 teaspoons of **Google My Business categories**

1 teaspoon of **NAP**

A drizzle of **reviews**

Sprinkle with **social signals**

Top it with a unique **personal garnish**

Learn how to combine our eight [Google search ranking "ingredients"](#) for a tasty concoction the SERPs just can't resist.



LOCAL RANKING INGREDIENT #1: **BACKLINKS**

When a trusted source links to you, it gives your website credibility. Just like when you take a friend's recommendation, Google turns to its top dogs to sniff out the good stuff.

Because of this, backlinks are a huge part of Google's search ranking algorithm. It's been found to be one of the most important ingredients to please the local SERPs.

When nurturing connections online, be sure to:

Get Some Friends with High Domain Authority

Search engines turn to well-ranked websites for recommendations about other industry resources. Backlinks help them to judge your relevancy on the SERPs. Some sites just have more authority, mostly because their domain has seniority. They've had years to answer user's queries and build a trustworthy online reputation.

But just because a site's been running for years, it's not necessarily well-optimized. [Moz](#) developed a domain authority (DA) score to predict how well a site will rank on the SERPs, from 1-100, with 100 being the highest.

How can this score help you?

DA is more of a comparative metric than a "pass or fail" grade, so install the MozBar and aim to get recognition from sites with higher scores than your competitor's grade. If they have a 31, for example, see if you can foster a relationship from a trusted site in your industry with a 35 or higher.

Focus on Quality, but Don't Underestimate the Power of Quantity

You might be tempted to go on a “linking spree” and ask as many sites as possible to mention you. Don't. Although quantity does play an important role in ranking algorithms, search engines are smart enough to spot suspicious activity and chastise those trying to game the system.

Google wants sites to link on their own volition, by providing content that helps users— not because you begged a website to mention you. Aim to create content that's so valuable, it's hard to replicate. Remember, if you build it, they will come.

If your content is solid but traffic is still not where you'd like it to be, it might be time to develop a link building strategy. Consider ways you can distribute your information to relevant sources via email, social, etc. and make sharing easy by adding “share icons” at the end of your pages and posts.

Ask Referrals to Include Keyword-Laden Anchor Text

When a website gives you a shout-out, they will attach the link to a specific line of text. This “anchor text” matters to search engines, because it hints to both bots and users where clickers will be directed.

Use [Ahrefs](#) to see who is linking to you, then ask sites with unbeneficial “click here” anchors to change them to brand mentions or keywords. Here, you can also see your list of broken links and dig into why those sites are no longer mentioning you. Sometimes a simple follow-up email will give them the information they need to update it and get some juice back.

Make sure you enroll in [Google Alerts](#) too, in order to track any mention of your brand name or industry terms on the SERPs. You can stay savvy in your backlink game by getting email alerts as they happen or in a weekly catch-all email.



LOCAL RANKING INGREDIENT #2: **OPTIMIZED CONTENT**

You could have a ton of backlinks, but if your content isn't helpful, good luck ranking. That's because, above all, search engines care about good content.

To boost your Google search ranking, your website needs to offer helpful information that's easily digestible for both search engines and readers.

Make sure you:

Check for NAP Consistency

We've covered details about [NAP consistency](#) in another post, but really all you need to understand is that your name, address and phone number need to match across all of your online assets.

Check your website for variations, including abbreviations, missing phone numbers and general errors in spelling or accuracy. Do the same for your social outlets and all supporting citations or mentions.

We'll discuss citations and the right ones to build for killer local rankings later on in this article, so hang tight.

Drizzle Your Keywords with Care

Just as we mentioned with link building, your keywords are what drive your ranking strategy. They're what users are searching for and the terms you need to hit page one for, to prove you're the master of your niche.

But it's hard to know exactly what words to target and what phrases you have a shot at ranking for amongst high competition. Check out our advice on [discovering and decorating with your keywords](#) and for choosing the [best SEO tools](#) to get the job done.

Remember, each page of your website should have one target keyword. That doesn't mean you can't drizzle some related terms in the copy, but ensure you're driving impact around solid phrases that the data shows could be conquerable.

Kick Back & Let Your Domain Authority Grow with Time

We already mentioned the power backlinks have in increasing your domain authority, but remember that it won't skyrocket overnight.

The DA challenge is a slow battle, with your relevance and credibility growing as you optimize. If you're actively fostering link building relationships and beefing up your content to serve your viewer's needs, your SERP reputation will come in time.



LOCAL RANKING INGREDIENT #3: USER BEHAVIOR SIGNALS

User behavior is another hefty SEO ranking signal. With Google actively seeking approval from searchers, it determines how you're meeting people's search query needs based on the actions they take on your site.

These actions alert search engines to how users are experiencing your website. Are searchers finding it easy to get their answers? How easily and with what level of satisfaction?

Let's explore how user actions affect your positions, by ensuring you:

Pay Attention to Your Click-Through Rate (CTR) & Time on Page

Your click-through rate is calculated by comparing the number of clicks on your link to the total number of users who viewed the page. Time on page is just that—the seconds or minutes someone stayed and engaged.

[Google Analytics](#) and [AdWords](#) give you access to these highly relevant metrics, allowing you to understand where users are finding value, as well as places they're falling off. Your bounce rate, or the percentage of times a user has left a page without taking an action, is another great source to see where users aren't finding their answers and need to hop back to the SERPs.

Use these insights to determine what pages aren't hitting the mark, then, make a list of those that need extra optimization while continuing to develop the ones searchers love.

Focus on Calls as Your Conversions

When it comes to local SEO rankings, you must consider how users are finding you. On-the-go searchers are on their phones, and with [68% of them clicking on the "click to call" and "get directions" buttons on mobile ads](#), phones are your number one source of local SEO conversion.

Google wants to serve searchers based on their specific dimensions and advertising "add-ons." Make calls your conversion tracking "goal" in AdWords and encourage mobile-friendly actions for smaller-screen users to get their answers.

If you're not paying for ads, ensure your [Google Knowledge Graph](#) is updated. It's the first thing most mobile users see on their screen when searching your brand and the best place to boast your phone number.

Encourage Visitors to Check-in

This one's simple: Google likes knowing you're going to the local places it recommends. By checking-in to these places on Google, Facebook and other sources, you're telling the world's largest search engine that you approve of their suggestions and they're hitting their mark.

Checking in at a suggested location, or leaving reviews, shows both users and search engines that your company is involved in the industry and not just some old website that was created, ignored and rapidly outdated. Active feedback also hints that your brand is alive and kicking, happily serving people's needs.



LOCAL RANKING INGREDIENT #4: CITATIONS

Citations are listings for your business, oftentimes on directories, that give searchers a way to get in touch with you. Sometimes they're just your name, address and phone number, while others have full business profiles to display your products and services.

Think of them as dashes of zest in your local Google ranking recipe. They're not always necessary to rank, but they sure do add some good flavor.

Get started by making sure you:

Determine the Best Places for a Listing

You've probably heard of the big citation dogs like Yelp or TripAdvisor, but those are just the top of the iceberg. With dozens of places to list your business online, where do you begin?

We suggest starting small. See where your competitors are listed by pursuing the first few pages of the search results for their branded phrases. Some citation platforms are only relevant based on your industry. For example, Houzz is a must-be-on network for home design brands, but if you own a burrito shop— not your bag.

Check out our Beginner's Guide to SEO for a list of the highest recommended citation sites for your industry to get started.

Don't Go Citation-Crazy

The days of depending on one trusted Yellow Pages book are over. There are dozens of places online to list your business information, but don't feel like you have to tackle them all.

When you're building your first citations, we recommend creating two listings a week to not overwhelm yourself.

Put emphasis on making sure they're fully optimized, not simply creating an army of partially filled out profiles. Like all the Google search ranking ingredients we've mentioned, focus on quality over quantity to ensure you're giving the engines something worthwhile to serve up.

Your New Middle Name is “Consistency”

Listing accuracy in the local SEO game goes beyond simple black-and-white fact. It involves consistency in your business categorization, the URL you’re sending them to and your NAP. This makes it easy for Google, eliminating confusing inconsistencies that threaten your rankings.

We mentioned what this looks like for optimizing content on your website, but the same [NAP consistency](#) rules hold true for citation building. For example, if Google can’t figure out the best phone number to serve, they might not show any at all.

Don’t make them guess— bestow your answers on a silver platter.

[Moz Local](#) is a great tool for checking that your listings are optimized and keeping up-to-date with their maintenance.



LOCAL RANKING INGREDIENT #5: **GOOGLE MY BUSINESS**

Have you wondered how to get your business its own information box on the right side of a Google search? That's their Knowledge Graph and [creating a Google My Business listing](#) is your answer.

When this graph is served, it often takes up the whole screen on a mobile search and is, therefore, a fundamental ranking ingredient for local SEO.

When it comes to optimizing your info on their business platform, keep in mind:

Selective Categorization Wins

As a general rule, don't give your business more than three categories under Google My Business or else you start to lose sight of your niche. Be mindful of choosing categories that are closely related in one main flow, instead of choosing a handful of diverse topics and looking like too much of a generalist.

People want to know that you specialize in the exact thing they need and search engines need to know where you'll help users the most. Strive to be an industry leader in a specific area, not a jack of all trades, to increase your chances of ranking.

Don't Forget Your Keywords

Your Google My Business (GMB) platform is a great spot to splash your keywords and alert the search engine of your expertise.

Be mindful of them when choosing your categories and when uploading and naming photos. Your Google+ is connected to your GMB profile and is another easy place to mention your industry terms.

You never want to coach someone to stuff keywords into a review, just to be seen as spammy and inauthentic. It's nice to drop a keyword or two in your replies to reviews if it seems natural, but don't sacrifice organic replies that delight your reviewers for robotic responses targeting organic search.

Some Things, Like Proximity, are Out of Your Control

It's a simple fact that you're more likely to rank in the geographical area that your business operates out of. So if your company has a Fort Myers, Florida address, you're more likely to rank for your services there than an agency 20 miles away would.

This local SEO advantage can't always be helped, and competitors might have the upper hand there. But don't fret, there are many other [Google Knowledge Graph best practices](#) you can implement to overpower that frustrating ranking factor.





LOCAL RANKING INGREDIENT #6: REVIEWS

Reviews tell searchers and bots what others think about your business and should not be taken lightly. You might think they're just a "nice to have" thing for people to read, but they matter to search engines.

Although reviews aren't weighted as significantly in the algorithms as some of the other ranking ingredients, they build trust and drive user behavior that could make or break your specific SERP position.

When thinking about your feedback online, remember:

Reviews Mean You're Alive & Kicking

Freshness means a lot to Google and users alike. Much like we mentioned above when discussing user behaviors, this freshness tells them that you're actively serving customers and that you're still relevant in your industry.

Keep a unique, empathetic voice and ensure your responses look authentic with these best practices for reviews.

There's Strength in Numbers

Like all icing on top of a cake, it's hard to have too much. A hearty list of positive reviews looks great for your brand and reveals that lots of people vouch for you.

Have you ever been down to two choices on Amazon and finally pick the product with the better reviews? Oftentimes, these personally shared stories and accounts are taken into consideration when a searcher is looking to purchase your product or service, especially when comparing you to others in your industry with similar offerings.

Put some strategy behind building new reviews to keep your numbers climbing. A slow but consistent increase will keep search engines and local hunters happy.

Avoid Stereotyping or Making a Cliche of Your Brand

The worst thing you could do for your business is foster fake reviews or have ratings after ratings say the same thing. When you ask for reviews, make sure you're switching up your goals.

Give customers a small incentive to share a picture of their favorite product. The next month, ask them how you've helped them to grow. Try to leverage some diversity in your reviews to serve a variety of pain points and build wide trust.

Whatever you do, don't forget to keep them real.



LOCAL RANKING INGREDIENT #7: **SOCIALIZATION**

You don't need convincing that social media is important to your brand image. No matter what industry you're in, there's a social platform to delight your customers, both locally and beyond.

But there are certain platforms that just take the cake when it comes to local SEO. These are your Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and Google+.

Let's explore what these SERP papas have to offer and why you need them:

Google Loves its Own Platforms

Google wants you to post on its own platform, Google+, of course. Even though their social media outlet isn't super popular, it's good practice to post to it frequently, even if it's just to please the world's largest search engine.

Don't forget to post on Google My Business too and feature special offers on your Knowledge Graph. Google also owns YouTube, so get yourself a camera and start leveraging this exploding search engine as well.

Face it, Facebook is King

You also already know that Facebook is monumental to your social strategy, but ensure you're using Business Manager and optimizing your page the same way you're polishing your website.

This is an especially awesome tool for local businesses, to encourage check-in's, reviews and become a local SEO powerhouse.

Get Trendy on Twitter & Instagram

A little birdy told us you're not tweeting. We're not going to bore you with stats; get with the Twitterverse program. Check out these tips for [maximizing your impact](#) on this social media outlet.

With the world of hashtags on Instagram, it's the perfect place to network and become a social keyword star. It's not all just vintage filters and food. We promise.



LOCAL RANKING INGREDIENT #8 (THE GARNISH): **PERSONAL TOUCH**

Think of this as the cherry on top for searches! Personalization is exactly what it sounds like— it's your own creative flair.

Searchers and search engines like uniqueness that sets you apart from the rest. Stand out from the others in your industry; everyone loves an outlier.

To garnish your SEO ranking casserole, don't forget to:

Nail Down Your POV and Tone

Without a clear and cohesive brand, you make it hard for people to invest in you, or for your team to market your business.

Remember that trust is built upon consistency. You start to lose users when you lose sight of your collective image and make them question your legitimacy.

Take your brand to the next level by outlining your own secret pazzazz with our [Ultimate Brand Guide e-book download](#). It'll keep you and whoever is writing or designing for your company unified, ensuring you're always projecting the best side of your brand.

Make it Easier to Speak to a Real Person

Make it easy for website visitors to get their answers and avoid "pogo-sticking" back to the SERPs for a quicker solution. [Conversational marketing](#) is exploding right now!

It's all about inviting an open conversation with viewers through a live chat feature on your website. This one-on-one conversation is much like texting but it's really incredible for three reasons: it's tailored to the individual, it's providing instant answers and it lengthens a user's time-on-page.

All three of these things will produce a better user experience and, in turn, help your rankings. Learn more about our favorite conversational marketing tool, [Drift](#).

Always Be Thinking Like an Innovator

It's always wise to stay up-to-date with industry news and be mindful of relevant trending topics. With less competition to wrestle with for fresh topics, your chances of ranking are higher.

[Google Trends](#) is a terrific tool for scoping out the historical popularity of keywords. With helpful graphs and comparative statistics, it could be a pivotal eye-opener to adjust your toppings based on what hungry searchers are craving right now.

HUNGRY FOR MORE?

You've got all your ingredients, now it's time to whip up a delicious SEO ranking casserole!

Not sure you want to do this all yourself?

That's okay. We offer a special website audit, just for you! We'll look at where you're currently ranking and how well optimized your site is, offering personalized recommendations to improve your SEO.

Simply head over to Impulse Creative to learn more. Use the Live Chat feature on our website or click on the button below to ask about your personalized website audit.

[Request Your Audit Today!](#)

