

Ranking locally can be a huge boon for small businesses that service a specific region.



Having a local SEO strategy for your business can be a game changer.

Imagine your business showing up when someone searches for your offerings on Google; someone who is clearly in the midst of a buying decision. Being front-and-center when a shopper has high purchase intent can help your local business reach new customers and build loyalty with existing ones.

However, ranking locally involves [search engine optimization](#) and that isn't exactly a piece of cake. There's a lot that goes into it. You have to optimize your actual [website](#). And then you have to provide all sorts of off-site signals to help Google decide that your business deserves to rank above the competition.

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The importance of backlinks

One of the biggest off-site ranking factors is backlinks; or, links that point to your site from other websites.

In the past, it was all about quantity. Webmasters would stuff their websites with low-quality backlinks from all sorts of questionable sources, just to build up their number of backlinks. This backlink strategy would help them rank.

However, Google quickly caught on to this strategy and modified their algorithm (Penguin), so that it can now differentiate a reliable link from a questionable one. The algorithm runs in real-time, so be sure your backlinks should all come from high-quality sources. Moreover, those high-quality sources should be relevant to your website.

Why local link building is important



For a local business, your link building efforts will be around obtaining links from both *authoritative websites* and *local sources*.

In this local link building guide, I will cover 25 different methods that you can use to obtain quality backlinks to help your local business website outrank the competition — and drive more business from the internet through your doors.

Added bonus: In the process of building backlinks through many of these methods, the actions you take are generally good business practices. It's a win-win. And this makes

sense, as Google wants to display the businesses that are most worthy of being displayed in the search results.

So let's dive in...

25 Local Link Building Methods for Small Businesses

Local directories

Business directories are extremely important for ranking factor for local businesses because they provide valuable backlinks and location information reinforcement. However, in order to reap the benefits of local directories, all your business information *must be accurate on all of them.*

To start, you should set up a Google My Business account. In addition to being a directory itself, Google My Business is also a great way to communicate directly with Google and is also the source that feeds into Google's map listings. To learn more about setting up an account, download a copy of our free [Google My Business ebook](#).

After you set up your Google My Business account, you should inventory your business listing across all online directories. Instead of auditing each site one-by-one, you can use our [free diagnostic tool](#) that will show you how your business is listed on major directories. You'll need to make sure to fix any errors and inconsistencies so that your listing on major directories matches your Google My Business information.

Once your business listing in online directories matches Google My Business, Google can now be certain that the information they are providing the searcher is accurate — and will reward you with a ranking boost.

In addition, business directories are also a good source of backlinks for your website. You can typically put your business URL in your directory profile, providing you a backlink from a powerful, authoritative source.

Start a blog

A blog can be the lifeblood of an effective [content marketing](#) strategy. It can help you establish yourself as the authority in your space. And it can also help you establish an immensely valuable resource for link building efforts.



In addition to establishing your business as an authority figure in your industry, it will also give you a resource for link building.

Publish content on authority sites

Publishing content on your own site is great for a variety of reasons (and you should definitely do it). But publishing content on other websites is the most direct way of getting a powerful, contextual, relevant backlink.

You can do this by reaching out to other site owners and asking if they accept guest authors. Find a way to mention your own business in the content you submit. This is another reason that having your own blog is beneficial: linking to other valuable content is a lot more acceptable (and welcome) than linking to your business homepage.

Another way to get some powerful backlinks by leveraging content is a newspaper column. Reach out to your local newspapers and see if they are willing to take you on as a contributor. Perhaps you can get your own column as an expert in your space. This can get you a backlink that's powerful and highly-localized.

If you use the Vivial Marketing Platform, you receive exclusive access to the NearSay publishing network — a great way to get backlinks from an authoritative website.

Be a source for reporters

While not everyone is cut out to have their own newspaper column, almost anyone can be a source for reporters in their area of expertise. When a reporter quotes you in a story, they will link to your website.

To start being a source for reporters, sign up for HARO (Help a Reporter Out). It is a daily email newsletter that lists topics for which reporters are seeking expert sources. You can contribute as an expert, and if you're used as a source you'll get a backlink.

First of all, creating valuable content provides something that other websites will actually want to link to. It provides you with the ability to reach out to other site owners and let them know that you have something valuable their audience might actually want to see. In other words, you can provide value rather than simply saying “my business has a website, link to it.”

Additionally, it gives you the ability to include more internal links – links pointing from pages on your website to other pages on your website. This is another factor in improving your website's rankings. Plus, you can obtain some unplanned backlinks from less than scrupulous people who may scrape your website content

It's important to note, however, that these requests will probably be coming from writers for pieces to be published on national-level websites. If you want to go the extra step, and really focus on local link building, you can actually network with local reporters.

Browse through local newspapers and blogs and introduce yourself to writers who have published stories on topics related to your business. When you reach out to them, let them know that you are available if they need a quote or a source for another story.

Social media and web 2.0s

Regularly publishing content gives you plenty of information to share on social networks. Once published, share your content across your social media accounts.

You can also submit the content to sharing networks such as StumbleUpon and Scoop.it. Check to see if there are any industry-specific sharing sites that you can leverage as well.

Being active and engaged on social media networks is a good general business practice, not just something you should do for backlinks. In fact, research shows that customers actually expect small businesses to have a presence on social media networks (like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+).

When you are filling out your profile on social media pages, always include your website and business location — more backlinks that send local signals to search engines.

Media and document submission

The web is full of websites that allow you to share non-text based content. This includes networks like SlideShare for presentations, Scribd for documents, and a variety of different infographic sharing sites.

If you already have an inventory of content, is there a way to repurpose it into a different format? Google can detect links within content that isn't HTML-based (like PDFs), so you can leverage this. Or, at the very least, you can include a link to yourself as the source of the content in the description when you share the media.

For example, if you created a PowerPoint presentation for a recent conference you attended, upload that to SlideShare and link the presentation back to your website.

Sponsor a local event



Many events have different tiers of sponsorship opportunities, so contact the event organizer and ask.

Events usually need sponsors. And they typically give those sponsors a shout-out at the event and on all materials — including the website. This can get you both a quality, local backlink, as well as generate brand awareness among event attendees.

Of course, depending on the event, sponsorship can get a bit pricey and you may not have that type of marketing budget. However, don't write off event sponsorships simply because of tag.

Many event organizers are also open to “bartering.” For example, if you have a decent social media following, some events will be happy to leverage that in exchange for mentioning you as a sponsor on their website. Or, perhaps you can negotiate a smaller sponsorship amount in exchange for the mention. The price tag.

After all, you don't need the large banner at the event for SEO purposes, you just need a quick mention and link on their website (which costs them nothing and is extremely quick to do).

Donate to local charities or scholarship funds

Similar to an event sponsorship, many local charities have a sponsors web page to recognize people and businesses who have given to the cause. Find a charity you believe in and recognizes donors for a win-win.

You can also contribute to a scholarship that helps students preparing for the future. Your donation doesn't have to break the bank and any amount is always appreciated.

Donating to scholarships can get your business listed on some student resource and scholarship list websites. If the local school or library offers an online list, even better. Not only will you get a valuable backlink, but you'll also be doing good for your local community.

Local associations

Is your business a part of any local trade associations? Or can it be? Joining local associations is a surefire way to gain a powerful local backlink — especially if they have a front-facing page with the roster of members.

If you aren't part of an association, becoming active with your local chamber of commerce is another option to consider. Just like associations, chambers have websites and actively promote their members (providing them a backlink while doing so).

Speak at local events

Speaking of your local chambers of commerce, very often I'm sure they have events that feature different speakers. If you can share something with other local businesses in the area — and be a speaker at one of these events — you may get your bio on the website.

Alternatively, you can also try to get speaking engagements at other events (there are likely some industry-specific events you can tap into).

Offering to speak at events is a great word-of-mouth marketing strategy for your business and will also help you build authority online via backlinks.



If you make the list, you'll be included on the publication's website (backlink) and also benefit from all the word-of-mouth marketing that surrounds these "best of" lists.

Participate in local events

I have already discussed speaking at and sponsoring events. But these aren't the only ways to leverage local events to get your name on the board (and the website). Simply participating in local events can lead to a valuable backlink.

Perhaps there is a charity walk that you fundraise for every year to support a friend/family member. Or, there might be a holiday food drive that you can help promote by leveraging your business's assets (such as posting flyers in your store, being a designated drop-off location, offering to use your truck to transport donations, etc.) — you'll have to be creative, but you'll most likely get a backlink from your efforts.

Nominate your business

Many business publications (especially ones specific to a trade, industry or city) and media outlets have annual awards that they give to businesses.

For example, *Crain's New York Business* has an annual [Best Places to Work in NYC](#) feature, which are published in print, online and celebrated at an in-person event. In addition to bragging rights, winners receive a profile on an authoritative website that has a valuable backlink.

Pay attention to when they are calling for entries and nominate your business!

Not only will nominating your business put you in the running to be on the list, but it will introduce you to the publication staff members that vet the entrants (the same ones that you're probably responding to on Help a Reporter Out).

Look around at local events and see if there's a way for you to get a backlink for your business while also participating.

Leverage local daily deal sites

Daily deal sites, like Groupon and Living Social, have revolutionized how people shop for products and services. While these daily deal sites don't work for every type of business, they do provide decent backlinks (and usually generate brand awareness and sales).

Before you dive into daily deal sites, be sure to read their fine print; you want to make sure you can deliver on your deal, while also turning a profit. Daily sites work well for large businesses that want to reach a large volume of potential new customers and spread awareness. Very often these large businesses are willing to write off the money lost on the low price of a product/service on the daily deal site simply to get a new customer in the door. However, for smaller businesses that can't support the volume generated from daily deal sites, a low price point can be devastating.

If daily deal sites aren't something you want to explore, you can always post your deal on a local site. Many local newspapers and bloggers share daily deals from local businesses with readers. One of those can be you.

Find local link partners

There's a good chance that you already interact with other businesses in your local area. It's very common for businesses in similar, but not competing industries, to refer clients to each other. For example, an accountant may refer a client to a lawyer or a financial advisor.

These referrals are obviously great in the real world. But you can leverage these relationships for some SEO power by obtaining local links from other businesses. Ask your network if they would be willing to link to you on their website.

Broken link building

Broken link building is all about identifying sites that have links pointing to locations that don't exist anymore, and offering them a better alternative. That alternative is, of course, a location on *your* site. Again, this is where having a blog and an extensive library of content comes in handy, as this gives you something for people to link to.

There are many ways to go about this. One great way for local businesses to identify potential targets for broken link building is to find sites linking to businesses that are no longer open.

You can find closed businesses on Yelp by doing a Google search with the following string:

site:www.yelp.com intitle:closed intitle:city industry

This will look for closed businesses on Yelp in the city and industry of your choosing (replace “city” and “industry” above).

Then, run the website of the closed business through a link checking tool like Majestic or Ahrefs. Contact the sites linking to said business and offer them your website as an alternative.

Press releases

Press releases are a great way to get your business name out there. In addition to spreading awareness, press releases also provide decent links pointing back to your website — especially if the news gets picked up by authoritative news outlets.

However, don’t publish press releases simply for the backlink. In addition to being pricey to send across the wire, your clients and customers should actually find value in the press release.

Links to your competition

One of the best ways to find a site that is willing to link out to your business is to find sites that link to your competitors.

Run your competitors’ websites through a tool like Majestic SEO or Ahrefs to see what sites link out to them, and then reach out and ask for yours to be included, too.

During your research, you will probably find a lot of other pages that you can obtain a link for as well (local resources pages, for example).

Profile links

Is there a prominent online community in your industry that you can participate in? Make sure to claim your profile and include a link to your website.

It’s also important that you stay active (both from a general business and backlinking perspective). If the community is a forum, include a signature with a link to your website that is included below every message you post. If it’s a discussion board such as inbound.org (an online community for inbound marketers), all you have to do is create a profile and link to your business’s website.

Provide testimonials

While your top priority should be generating (positive) online reviews for your own business, providing feedback to others will also help when it comes to backlinks. Submitting reviews and testimonials for products and services you use for your business

Submitting reviews and testimonials for products and services you use for your business is especially helpful if the provider is local. Local product and service providers will give you a link that is localized, a characteristic that will help you rank locally. Offer a testimonial to the business, they should be happy to have a glowing review. And ask for a link back to your site along with the quote.

Reach out to other businesses and ask if they would like a testimonial. Most will jump at the opportunity for a glowing review that they can feature on their website. And ask for a link back to your site along with the quote.

Hold a contest

People love prizes and playing games, hence why contests are such a popular marketing tactic. A contest can spur a lot of business for you and also attract local backlinks.



For example, in Cleveland, Chef Zack Bruell holds an annual tour contest. People who dine at all of his restaurants during a certain time period are eligible to win a home cooked meal prepared by the chef himself. Not only is this a great way to cross-promote all of his different restaurants, but it is also a great way to generate buzz with local news outlets and bloggers.

While not every business can run a contest like Chef Zack Bruell (with the ability to cross-promote several different locations and brands), almost any business can run some sort of contest.

Including social media components in your contest will help spread awareness via word-of-mouth and increase the likelihood that your promotion will go viral. Campaigns that go viral on social media usually revolve around requiring an entrant to share the fact that they entered into a contest with their friends on a particular network.

Get creative. Brainstorm and research different kinds of contests you can run, and you'll generate both business and backlinks.

Alumni profiles and directories

Does your high school or university have an alumni spotlight page? You might be surprised to learn that they actually run their own blog or news section on the website that highlights alumni. After all, it's in their best interest to show potential students how successful their alumni have become.

Reach out to the alumni relations office and ask to be listed/featured. If your school is nearby, this is all the better for local backlinks (plus you can get a highly sought-after .edu link).

Fix 404 errors

Over time, pages on your website may move or change URLs. Perhaps someone has linked to your from their website, but put in the address wrong — and it's too difficult to get them to change it. No matter how it happens, there's a good chance that you're going to encounter links pointing to pages on your site that don't exist, and you're faced with 404 errors.

You can reclaim some of that link power by redirecting those pages that no longer (or never did) exist to either the homepage of your website or to other appropriate pages.

Sign up for a Google Webmasters account and track these crawl errors. Redirect the pages these external links point to, to pages that actually exist.

Link reclamation

During your regular course of business, you may be mentioned in a local news article simply because you are awesome. While everyone likes it when they receive an unsolicited endorsement of their greatness, these mentions don't necessarily link to your website (but they should!).

Since you aren't a mind-reader and don't know when a blogger or news outlet is going to mention your business, you should set up a Google Alert for your name and your business name. When you are mentioned, Google Alert will ping you and you can reach out to whoever authored the piece and ask if they can insert a link pointing to your website.

Offer internships

Need some extra help? Offer internships and help some youngsters get some work experience in the process.

Post the internship opportunity on local job boards and directories. You can also send the internship description to local universities and see if they will share with their students. If the school has a public-facing job/internship board, you can get a valuable .edu link out of it in the process.

Local resource directories

Beyond local business directories, there are specialized local resource directories that you might be able to tap into.

For example, if you are a coffee shop owner and offer patrons free Wi-Fi, you can get yourself listed on a free Wi-Fi directories like this one: <http://www.wififreespot.com/>.

If your business does something that can be considered a public service (a nice clean public bathroom is in high demand here in NYC!), see if there's a directory for it. You'll be surprised at what people compile.

Links = Rankings = Sales

Better search rankings get you right in front of the hottest prospects in the midst of their decision-making process.

Once you've optimized your website for search, it's time to start building up your external signals. The first step is to ensure all of your local listings are up to date and accurate. Use our [free tool](#) to run your diagnostic. Then, move onto a link building campaign.

There is plenty here to get you started on an effective local link building campaign. But be creative. How else can you get online recognition for your business (and attract some local backlinks in the process)?