10 SEO Tips For Small Businesses In 2019

10 SEO Tips for Small Businesses, Start-ups and Local Businesses

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INNOVATIVE DIGITAL SOLUTIONS

Whether you own a startup company or a small business you need to make sure that you have a proper presence in all available digital channels including search engines, social media and mobile for maximum exposure.

> *According to latest research results approximately 25% of small businesses in the UK don't have a website, and only 18 per cent of the UK's small businesses have mobile-friendly websites, a survey by PayPal has found. More worryingly some businesses are unaware of the importance of mobile sales, with 33 per cent of respondents saying they don't need a mobile website because they "do well enough as it is".*
>
> These 2 figures alone are enough for every small business owner to realize the importance and potential of the web for the success of any modern company.

Search Engine Optimisation or SEO in short, will help you gain exposure and visibility in search engines (Google, Yahoo, Bing etc.) and it is the first step for building brand awareness and establishing your digital identity.

1. Register with Google and Bing webmaster tools

Assuming that you already have a website, the first step is to register with Google and Bing webmaster tools and submit your sitemap.

Why? It's the best way to inform search engines about your website and future content updates and also it's a good way to find out what search engines know and understand about your content.

If what you have just read doesn't say much, don't worry search on YouTube for beginners gguide to webmaster tools which explain the basics to the more in-depth , you have to do in both Google and Bing for maximum benefits. In summary these are:

Enable email notifications – so that you are notified by email of any problems or changes in the status of your website (i.e. malware issues, access issues etc)

Set a prefer domain – Search engines consider www.mysite.com and https://mysite.com/ as two different websites so you need to specify your prefer domain name both in webmaster tools and in your blogging platform. Make sure you have a SSL Certificate installed. SSL Certificates are small data files that digitally bind a cryptographic key to an organisation's details. When installed on a web server, it activates the padlock and the https protocol and allows secure connections from a web server to a browser. Typically, SSL is used to secure credit card transactions, data transfer and logins, and more recently is becoming the norm when securing browsing of social media sites.

If you don't have one installed your website url will begin with http and not https and Google will display 'Not Secure' in the browser.

Check for crawl errors – The crawls errors report will give you more details in case the search engine crawlers cannot read your website either because of DNS, connectivity or access issues.

2. Register with Google Analytics

While the webmaster tools give you information from the search engines view, Google Analytics can give you more information from the user's view. It is necessary to understand how users interact with your website so as to improve the quality of your content and offer them a better user experience.

If you are new to Google analytics and reporting you may get lost in the reports. Have a search on YouTube for Google Analytics for Beginners where there are many tutorials.

- Your major traffic sources
- Keywords searches use to find your website
- The most popular landing pages
- The most popular exit pages
- The most commonly visited pages

3. Register with Google Maps/Places for business.

As a startup or small business, the main goal of your online presence is to make it easier for people to find you on the Internet and Google Places for business does exactly that. Registering your website with Google Places is free and the benefits are a lot including:

It's easy to setup – You don't need special knowledge to set up your account.

Great for local SEO – Google will show your business in the search results. For example if you own a restaurant in Finchley and have already added the restaurant in Google Maps, it will be shown like this when there is a related query about 'restaurants in Finchley'.
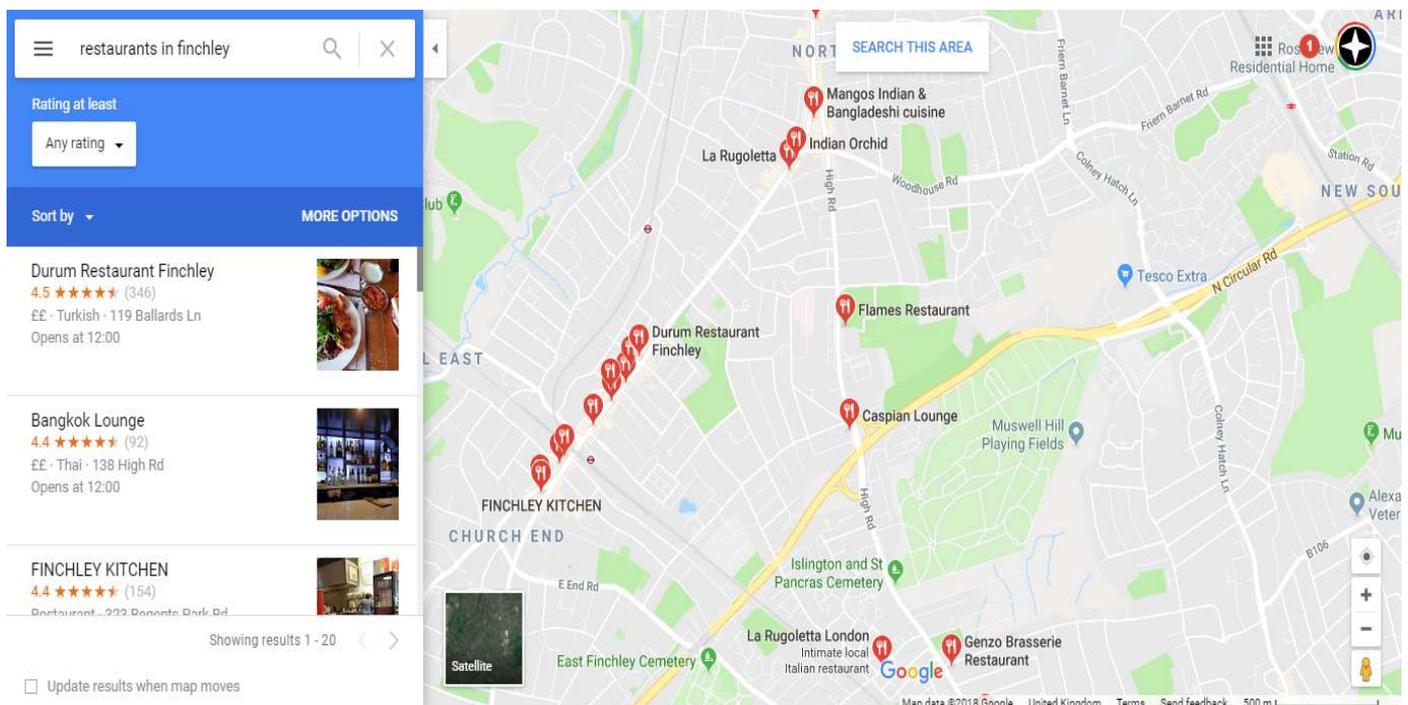
Great even when you don't have a website for your business – Users can find out where your business is located, how to contact you etc. without visiting your website.

Info is used by Google Maps as well – Google Maps is the most popular mapping software on the web and mobile (both iPhone and Android) and by adding your company in Google Places, it can also be found on Google maps as well (see above image).

Interact with your customers – Customers may add a review about your products or services and as a verified business owner you can respond back.

4. Check titles and descriptions for the home page and Internal pages

This is SEO 101 but it is very important to have proper titles (and descriptions) for your home page and internal pages. Check out the example below and notice how a good title and description can change what the user knows about a website even before visiting.

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5. Fix (or create) good internal links

As a startup or small business owner, you probably need to rank on Google for a few terms (keywords) related to your business. In other words, unlike a content driven website or ecommerce store you have a more narrow audience.

One of the ways to let the search engines understand for which keywords you want to rank is to use these keywords as the anchor text in your internal links. For example, if you have a law firm and one of your pages describes your services, then from your home page you can link to that page by saying:' You can find out more about our **legal services** and…' *Legal services* in this case is the anchor text of the link that goes to the services page and this tells search engines that the referenced page is about legal services.

6. Find your social media platform

Although social media marketing is only a subset of digital marketing it is very important especially for startups. A social media campaign can help promote your business to the local market and raise the awareness about your products or services.

If you don't plan in hiring a professional team to handle your social media campaigns, then the best way is to decide which platform (Facebook, twitter, Google+, Pinterest, LinkedIn, etc) is more appropriate to your business and concentrate on that. Try to participate in discussions related to your niche, connect with your users and give them incentives, through the sharing of quality information, to connect with your business website.

7. Create content that can be read by search engines as well

We always say 'write for users' and while this is true you should not forget about search engines. For the case of startups and small business owners this means 3 things:

- **Your website needs to have content as well** – Try to find what keywords (Hint: You can use the Google keyword Tool - you need to be logged into your Google account or search for a free one) normal people may use to find your business and create relevant and high quality content. Content can be in any form (video, audio, infographic, images, presentation, etc) but when published on the website it has to be accompanied by text as well.
- **Simple is better than fancy** – There is a tendency for small business or startups to create fancy websites with lots of images, videos, animations and flash. The problem with such websites is that if they are not developed correctly they are too slow to load and they are not easily understood by search engines. This is not good for SEO or for a good user experience.
- **Site structure does matter** – Group your content into relevant categories and make sure that navigation is user friendly. Help your users find out what they want in less than 3 clicks and make sure that you also have friendly and meaningful URLS.

8. Implement Google authorship and Google+ for business

Until very recently Google's authorship markup was one of the most popular on site optimisation factors. It showed up in the search engine results page as an eye-catching picture, it connects all your published works, it leverages trust in you as an author but not any more.

However, since Google have now removed all author photos and Google+ view counts from search results both from desktop and mobile. Although this update had rocked many SEO specialists, it doesn't mean you have to stop implementing authorship markup. It still helps with author credibility, and maybe one day with author rank.

Google+ will shut down over a 10-month period, which is slated for completion by the end of next August. More information will be available over the coming months, including ways that users can download and migrate their data.

So it's a judgement call on whether to implement this and then benefit from what you've carried out and hope the new Gogle offering is going to benefit your business.

- **It's good for SEO** – Google authorship increases website trust, a factor very important for SEO purposes
- **It increases CTR (Click Through Rate)** – Consequently, having your authorship information publicly out in Google's Search engine results page can lead to a higher click-through rate. People like to know who wrote an article and if the article is any good.

  Having a higher CTR can directly affect your SEO. Higher CTR means a more relevant title, description, URL – and now, your authorship tag affects it by displaying your Google+ profile picture and circles too!
- **It's good for customer service** – You can use your Google+ business page to interact with your customers and offer them a better customer service.

9. Define your website's purpose

Think for a moment the purpose of having a business website. Besides exposure what are your objectives? When visitors enter your website, what do you want them to do?

- Register to your newsletter?
- Fill out an order form?
- Follow your Facebook page?
- Buy a product?
- Visit your services page?

Answering the above questions will give you a good idea on how to design your website for better conversions. For example if your goal is to gain more subscribers to your newsletter then maybe it's a good idea to have the register button in all your pages and above the fold so that more users will see it.

10. Hire an SEO!

Do you believe that you cannot implement the above SEO tips because you don't have the time or knowledge? Then maybe it's time to consider outsourcing SEO to a professional firm. In today's competitive market it is necessary to have a proper web presence even if you don't do your business online so you either go in-house or outsource.

If you are still thinking whether you should invest in SEO or not, open Google and search for your competitors. If they have an online presence then you are already a step behind and if they don't, you can get a step ahead!