A comprehensive digital marketing guide for local SMBs

Step-by-step action plans, tools, and when to hire a pro.

VENDASTA

Quite often, owners of local small businesses in North America underestimate the importance of digital marketing. There are many reasons why. These reasons range from the difficulty in measuring the return on investment (ROI) to a lack of in-house expertise to follow through with marketing efforts.

Simultaneously, there's a motherlode of compelling statistics that should sway any SMB owner in favor of adopting at least a basic marketing strategy. Here are just a few mind-boggling statistics.

According to [DeepReach research](#), 85% of all transactions occur in local stores, but consumers are discovering these stores by searching online. Out of the people who search for a local business on a smartphone, 75% visit a related business within 24 hours.

These statistics underscore the link between online searches and in-store visits, highlighting the importance of having a strong digital presence for local businesses.

As a local small business owner, you no doubt need to wear many hats and juggle a lot of responsibilities. That's why we came up with a practical guide that walks you through how to implement a basic marketing strategy for your small business. This guide also provides you tips on when it's best to enlist the help of a marketing agency or consultant.

Table of Contents

1

Do they know you?

Digital advertising

Digital advertising is one of the fastest ways to get your business in front of potential customers.

What is digital advertising?

This form of advertising promotes your products, services, or brand through online channels such as search engines, social media platforms, websites, and mobile apps.

Unlike traditional advertising (like TV or print ads), digital advertising leverages the internet to target local audiences, track campaign performance in real-time, and adjust strategies based on data.

Display ads
(e.g., banner ads on websites)

Social media advertising
(e.g., Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn)

Video ads
(e.g., YouTube ads)

Types of Digital Advertising

Search engine advertising
(e.g., Google Ads)

Mobile ads
(e.g., in-app advertising)

Why digital advertising works best for increasing brand awareness

Digital advertising is particularly effective at increasing small businesses' brand awareness for several reasons:

- **Precise audience targeting:** Digital platforms like Google and Facebook allow businesses to define exactly who will see their ads. This can be based on demographics (age, gender, location), interests (hobbies, habits), and behaviors (online shopping habits, previous website visits). For example, a local coffee shop could target young professionals living within a 5-mile radius who frequently search for cafes or coworking spaces.

- **Cost efficiency:** Digital advertising is scalable, making it accessible for businesses of all sizes. Unlike traditional methods, where you might spend thousands for a TV spot or billboard, digital ads allow you to set a budget that fits your needs. With pay-per-click (PPC) models, you only pay when someone interacts with your ad. For local small businesses with limited resources, this makes digital advertising an affordable way to raise awareness.

- **Engaging ad formats:** digital advertising offers various formats—text, image, video, carousel, and interactive ads—that can grab attention and communicate your brand's message effectively. Video ads, in particular, are highly engaging and can tell a story, create emotional connections, or showcase products in a way that resonates with viewers.

- **Real-time analytics:** one of the biggest advantages of digital advertising is the ability to track and measure results in real-time. Metrics like impressions (how many people saw your ad), clicks, and engagement rates can help you gauge how well your campaign is raising brand awareness.

- **Retargeting and consistency:** Brand awareness requires repeated exposure. Digital advertising allows for retargeting—showing ads to people who have previously interacted with your brand but didn't convert. Seeing your ads multiple times builds familiarity and trust with your brand. For example, someone who visits your website but doesn't make a purchase can be retargeted with ads that remind them of your products or offer a promotion to entice them back.

Skillsets needed

Google Ads or Bing Ads

Google and Bing's dominant position makes them the go-to platforms for search engine advertising.

Google and Bing are primary platforms for search engine advertising, which is when businesses bid to have their ads shown at the top of search engine results pages (SERPs).

Let's take a look at the key concepts that you should be familiar with to leverage search engine advertising for your small business:

- **Keyword research:** You'll need to identify the search terms that potential customers use when looking for products or services like yours. Tools like Google's Keyword Planner can help you find relevant keywords and estimate their search volume and cost-per-click (CPC).

- **Ad structure:** Google and Bing Ads are structured into campaigns, ad groups, and ads.
  - Campaigns set the overall goals and budget.
  - Ad groups group together related ads and keywords.
  - Ads are the actual text or display ads users will see when they search for your keywords.

- **Ad copy:** Writing compelling ad copy that includes a clear headline, a concise description, and a strong call to action (CTA) is key.

- **Bidding and budgeting**: In Google and Bing Ads, businesses bid for ad placements. You set a maximum bid—the highest amount you're willing to pay for a click. You also need to learn how to set a daily or monthly budget to control spending.

- **Quality score:** Google and Bing reward relevant, high-quality ads. The Quality Score is a metric that evaluates how well your ad matches the user's search query, your landing page relevance, and your click-through rate. A high-quality score reduces costs and improves ad placement.

- **Targeting options:** These include geographic location, device targeting (desktop vs. mobile), and keyword match types (broad, phrase, exact). For example, a local SMB would want to use geographic targeting to focus on users within a specific radius of their business.

- **Monitoring and analytics:** It's important to know how to read reports and understand basic metrics like impressions (how many people saw your ad), clicks, CTR (click-through rate), and conversions (actions like purchases or sign-ups). Monitoring these metrics helps optimize performance over time.

92%
of the global search engine market share in 2024 belongs to Google and Bing.

Source

Facebook Ads

Facebook Ads is a social media advertising platform that allows small businesses to reach users based on their interests, behaviors, demographics, and more. Ads appear in users' newsfeeds, stories, and other placements across Facebook, Instagram, and Messenger.

Here's an overview of the key concepts that you should master to take your social media advertising off the ground:

- **Ad objectives:** Facebook Ads are designed around specific goals or objectives, such as brand awareness. Understanding how to select the right objective for your campaign is essential, as it determines how Facebook optimizes your ads for delivery.

- **Audience targeting:** Facebook's strength lies in its highly specific targeting options. You can target audiences based on demographics (age, gender, location), interests (hobbies, pages they've liked), and behaviors (purchase behavior, device usage). There's also the option for lookalike audiences, which are users similar to your existing customer base, and custom audiences, which target people who have already interacted with your business.

- **Ad formats:** Facebook Ads offers several ad formats, including:
  - **Image ads:** Simple photo ads.
  - **Video ads:** Engaging video content.
  - **Carousel ads:** Multiple images or videos in a single ad.
  - **Collection ads:** A full-screen mobile experience with multiple products.

- **Ad placement:** Facebook Ads can be shown across Facebook, Instagram, Messenger, and the Audience Network (partner websites and apps). You can either select placements manually or let Facebook optimize placements for you.

- **Bidding and budgeting:** Similar to Google Ads, you need to set your daily or lifetime budget and decide on a bidding strategy—whether you want to pay for clicks, impressions, or conversions. Facebook's system allows for automatic or manual bidding depending on your confidence in managing ad spend.

- **Facebook pixel:** Installing the Facebook Pixel on your website allows you to track user behavior and conversions from your ads. It also enables retargeting, meaning you can show ads to people who visited your website but didn't convert.

- **Ad performance:** As with Google Ads, you'll need to regularly review performance metrics such as impressions, reach, clicks, and engagement (likes, shares, comments). Facebook provides detailed insights through Ads Manager, where you can track how well your ads are performing and make adjustments as needed.

Facebook had
3 BILLION
active users in the second quarter of 2023

Source

69%
of adults in the US use Facebook in 2024

Source
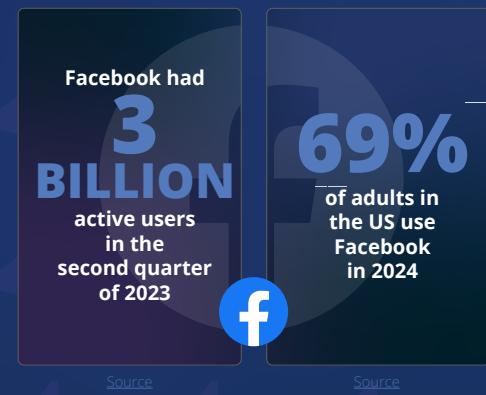
Step-by-step action plan for running Google, Bing, or Facebook Ads

Step 1: Define your advertising goals

Before you launch any ads, you need to be clear about what you want to achieve. Your goal will shape the entire campaign. Common objectives include:

- **Brand awareness:** increase the visibility of your business.
- **Lead generation:** collect contact information from potential customers.
- **Sales:** drive purchases or inquiries about your products or services.
- **Website traffic:** bring visitors to your website for more information.

Make sure your objectives are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound).

Step 2: Set a budget

Determine how much you're willing to spend on your digital advertising campaign. Even a modest budget can yield results if managed properly. Here are typical budgets:

- **Google/Bing Ads:** You can start with as little as $5-$10 per day, but $300 to $500 per month is a common minimum for small businesses.
- **Facebook Ads:** Similarly, a budget of $5-$15 per day is effective for testing your ads, with a $500 monthly budget recommended for scalable results.

Keep in mind that ad spend on both platforms is based on bidding (cost-per-click or cost-per-impression), so your budget will directly influence how often your ads are shown.

Also, when setting budgets, remember that Google Ads calculates budgets daily.

How to determine a monthly budget for Google Ads

Daily Budget X **30.4** (the average number of days in a month)

Step 3: Identify your audience

Clearly define your target audience based on demographics, location, interests, and behaviors. You need to know who your customers are to effectively target them.

Step 4: Choose your ad platform and format

Choose the platform that best suits your objectives.

- **Google/Bing Ads** are best for capturing demand when people are actively searching for products or services like yours.
- **Facebook Ads** are ideal for generating awareness and interest, with highly visual formats like image ads, video ads, and carousel ads.

Step 5: Create your ads

Write compelling ad copy or create engaging visuals.

Your ads should:

- ❑ Highlight the main benefit of your product or service.
- ❑ Include a strong call to action (CTA), such as "Shop Now," "Sign Up," or "Contact Us."
- ❑ Use relevant keywords in your ad text (for Google/Bing Ads) to match the searches of potential customers.
- ❑ Focus on your unique selling proposition (USP)—what makes your product or service better than competitors.

For Facebook, your ads should:

- ❑ Use high-quality images or videos that grab attention.
- ❑ Include your product/service and branding elements.
- ❑ 125 characters or less for primary text.
- ❑ Use Facebook's CTA button options (e.g. "Learn More", "Shop Now").
- ❑ Reinforce the CTA in your ad copy.

Step 6: Set up your campaign

Now it's time to set up the campaign on the advertising platform.

Google/Bing Ads:

- ❑ Create a new search campaign.
- ❑ Choose your goal (e.g., website traffic, sales).
- ❑ Set your local geographic targeting.
- ❑ Enter your list of keywords and set your bid strategy (manual or automated).
- ❑ Upload your ad copy, links, and extensions (e.g., phone number, address).

Facebook Ads:

- ❑ Open Ads Manager and create a new campaign.
- ❑ Select your campaign objective (e.g., brand awareness, conversions).
- ❑ Define your target audience using demographic and interest-based targeting.
- ❑ Choose your ad placements (automatic or manual).
- ❑ Upload your images, videos, or carousel and write your ad copy.
- ❑ Set your budget and duration (daily or lifetime).

Step 7: Launch your campaign

After you've set up your campaign, review everything to ensure accuracy:

❑ Double-check your targeting, ad copy, and budget settings.

❑ Preview your ads to see how they'll appear to users.

❑ Once satisfied, launch your campaign. Ads will typically start running immediately or within a few hours.

Step 8: Monitor and optimize

After your ads have been running for a few days, start reviewing performance metrics:

- **Impressions:** How many times your ad was shown.
- **Clicks:** How many people clicked on your ad.
- **Click-Through Rate (CTR):** The percentage of people who clicked on your ad after seeing it.
- **Conversions:** The number of users who completed your desired action (e.g., purchase, sign-up).

Use these metrics to optimize your campaign. If certain keywords or audience segments are performing well, allocate more budget toward them. If ads are underperforming, consider A/B testing ad copy or images or tweaking targeting.

On Google/Bing Ads, check your Quality Score (a rating based on the relevance of your ad and landing page). On Facebook, track engagement metrics like likes, shares, and comments to see how well users are responding to your ads.

Why hire a pro

Running a local small business is already a full-time job. Adding the complexities of managing digital ads—constantly monitoring performance, adjusting bids, tweaking targeting—can quickly become overwhelming.

Here are several compelling reasons why you may want to consider hiring an agency or consultant.

Improved ROI and budget efficiency

A common concern for local SMB owners is making the most of their advertising budget. Without professional guidance, it's easy to spend a significant portion of your budget on ineffective ads.

Marketing professionals know how to set optimized bids so that you pay less per click or impression while maintaining effective exposure. They can also track performance metrics closely and adjust ads in real time to eliminate wasted spend.

In many cases, you can offset the investment in an agency or consultant with the savings and higher returns generated from a well-optimized campaign.

Access to cutting-edge technology

Digital marketing professionals often have access to advanced tools that small business owners may not be familiar with or able to afford independently. These tools help with:

- In-depth analytics to track campaign performance beyond the basic metrics.
- Competitor analysis, keyword research, and audience behavior insights that provide a strategic advantage.
- Automatic adjustments to campaigns in real-time based on performance data.

These tools offer a major competitive edge, allowing your business to stay ahead of local competitors who may not be using such sophisticated tools.
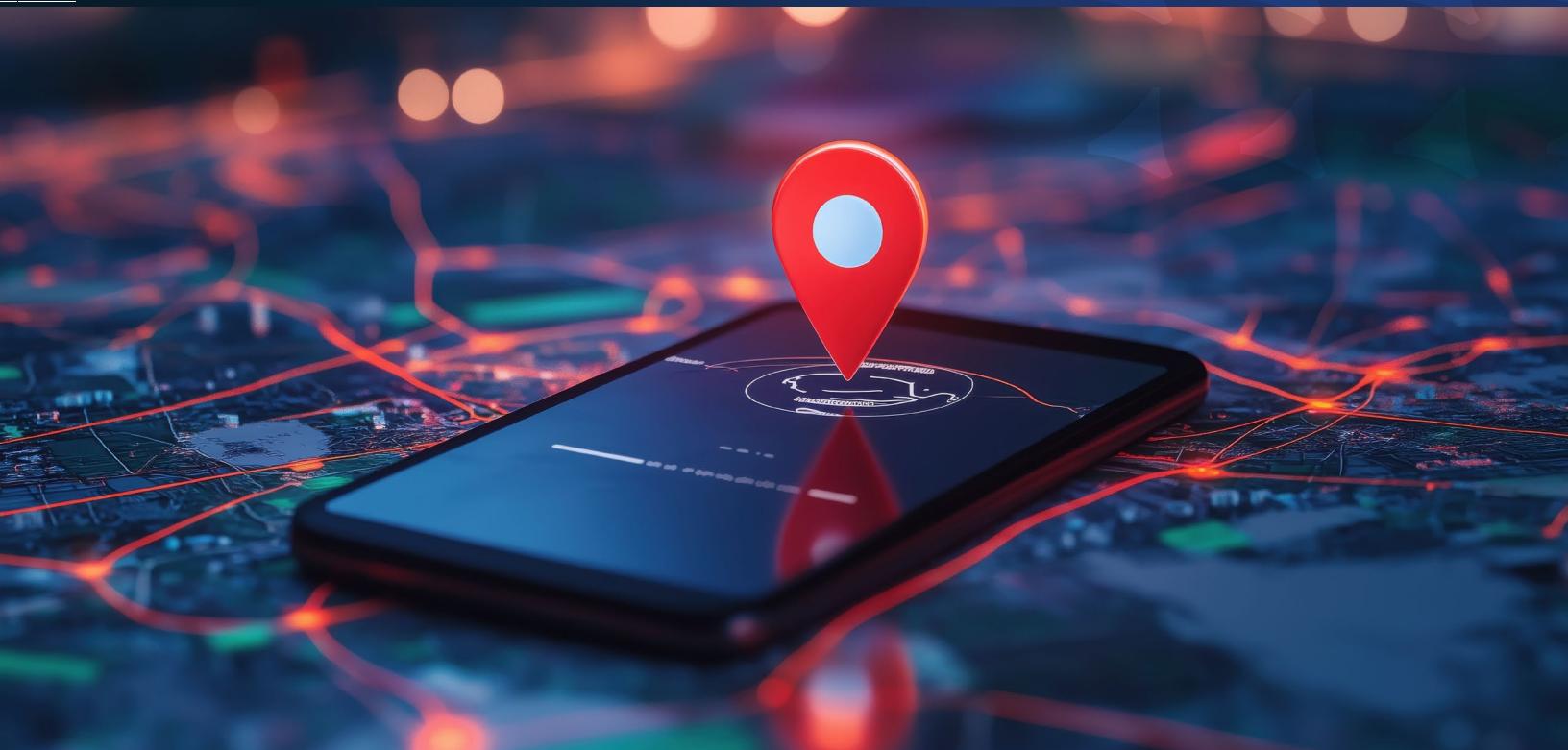
2

Can they find you?

Listings

Nothing irritates customers more than confusing, ambivalent, or altogether missing information about a local business's address, location, and work hours. Make sure your online presence is a beacon, not a black hole.

What are listings?

Listings are online profiles or entries for a business on various platforms, directories, and search engines. These listings provide key information about a business, such as its name, address, phone number, website, hours of operation, and services offered. The goal of listings is to ensure that potential customers can easily find and engage with the business online, particularly in local searches.

Here are the primary platforms where local SMBs need to have listings:

- Google My Business is one of the most important platforms for local businesses. It integrates with Google Search and Maps to display business information directly in search results.
- Yelp is popular for customer reviews and ratings, especially for restaurants and service-based businesses.
- Bing Places for Business is similar to Google My Business. This platform helps a business appear in Bing search results.
- Depending on your business, industry-specific directories like TripAdvisor, Zocdoc, or Angie's List may be important.

How do listings help potential clients find you?

Listings help improve a local small business's visibility in local search results. When people search for specific products or services near them, search engines like Google often pull data from business listings to display results.

For example, if someone searches for "best bakery near me," Google will show results based on listings from Google My Business and other platforms. These listings include not only the business's name and location but also customer reviews, photos, and ratings.

How do listings work?

While business owners can manage listings manually, data aggregators continue to play a significant role in distributing NAP information. Major aggregators such as Infogroup, Acxiom, and Localeze collect and disseminate business data to multiple platforms.

Infogroup is considered the easiest of the aggregators to navigate. All business owners need to do is follow this straightforward process:

1. Visit the aggregator's website.
2. Search for their business listing.
3. If found, claim and verify ownership.
4. If not found, add the business.
5. Once verified, business owners can manage and update their NAP information at any time. Maintaining consistent NAP data across all online platforms is important because it's one of the top local SEO ranking signals.

The top local SEO ranking signals

01 Consistent NAP

02 Listings on Online Directories

03 ★★★ Positive Reviews

04 Locally-Relevant Content

05 Titles and Meta Descriptions

Skillsets needed

To ace listings, local SMB owners need to have a basic knowledge of local SEO and online directories and a clear understanding of how to optimize business listings.

Key components of local SEO

Google My Business (GMB) optimization
Google My Business allows local SMBs to manage their presence on Google Search and Google Maps. Optimizing your GMB profile with up-to-date information (name, address, phone number, business hours, website, etc.) increases the likelihood that your business will show up in local searches.

Local listings and citations
Ensuring your business is listed in online directories (such as Yelp, Bing Places, Apple Maps, and others) with consistent and accurate information is important. Citations are mentions of your business's NAP (Name, Address, Phone number) on the web. Consistent citations across the web help build credibility with search engines.

On-page optimization
This involves optimizing the content on your website for local keywords. For example, if you are a bakery in New York, you should incorporate keywords like "New York bakery" or "bakery in New York" into your content, meta descriptions, title tags, and headers to signal to search engines that you serve that area.

Localized content creation
Producing content that focuses on local events, news, or community-related topics can also boost your local SEO. Blog posts or pages that target local customers (such as "Top 5 places to eat in [city]") help you rank for locally relevant keywords.

Backlinks from local sources

Backlinks from local websites, directories, or blogs enhance your local SEO by increasing your domain authority. A backlink from a local chamber of commerce or a well-known community blog signals to search engines that your business is relevant to the local community.
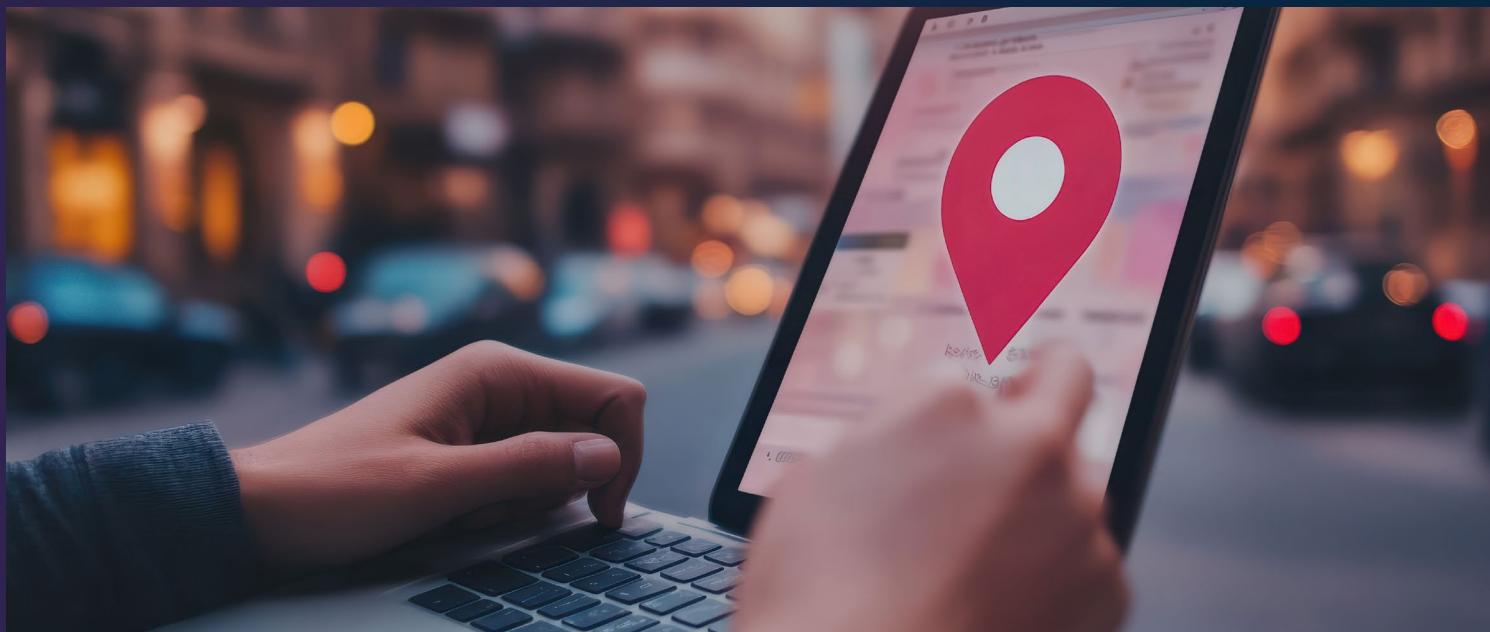
Step-by-Step Action Plan to Optimize Business Listings

Step 1: Claim your listings

The first step is to ensure you have claimed your business listings on all relevant platforms. Use a tool like Moz Local or BrightLocal to find out which directories your business is already listed in and which ones you need to claim.

Step 2: Ensure NAP consistency

Your business's NAP (Name, Address, Phone number) must be consistent across all platforms and directories. Any discrepancy (e.g., using "St." on one listing and "Street" on another) can confuse search engines, lower your ranking, and cause customer confusion.

Step 3: Complete your profile

Make sure you provide all necessary information:

- **Business name:** Use your official business name (avoid adding keywords or extra text that can confuse search engines).
- **Business category:** Select the most relevant business category. For example, if you run a bakery, "Bakery" should be your primary category, and you may add "Café" as a secondary one.
- **Address and service areas:** If you operate in a specific geographic area, indicate the cities or regions you serve.
- **Phone number:** Make sure your phone number is up-to-date and easy to contact.
- **Business hours:** Keep your business hours current, especially if they vary by season or during holidays.
- **Website URL:** Add your website's link, ensuring it points to the correct homepage or landing page.
- **Payment methods**: Include which payment methods you accept (e.g., cash, credit card, mobile payments).
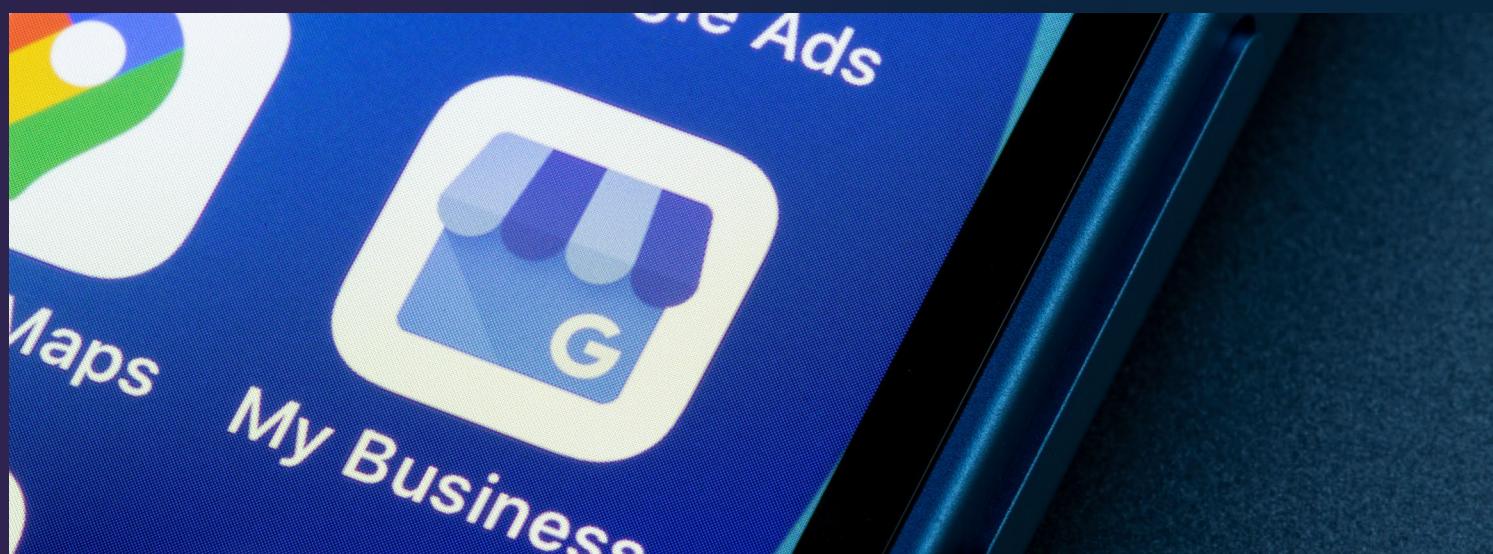
Step 4: Add High-Quality Photos and Videos

Visual content can greatly enhance your listings and attract more customers. High-quality photos of your storefront, products, staff, or services can increase engagement with your listing and showcase your business to potential customers.

Use professional photos when possible, as they can help you stand out in crowded search results. Google My Business also allows you to add videos, so consider uploading a brief video tour of your business or an introduction to your services.

Step 5: Encourage and respond to customer reviews

Customer reviews play a significant role in local SEO and influence purchasing decisions. Positive reviews can boost your search engine ranking, and platforms like Google prioritize businesses with higher ratings in local searches.

Here are some tips on how to increase your reviews:

- Ask satisfied customers to leave reviews on your Google My Business, Yelp, or other relevant platforms.
- Respond to reviews promptly—whether they're positive or negative. Thank customers for positive feedback, and address any concerns in negative reviews with professionalism. This shows potential customers that you care about their experiences.
- Send follow-up emails to recent customers with a polite request for reviews. Make the process easy by including direct links to your review pages.

Step 6: Update listings regularly

Your business information may change over time—new locations, adjusted hours, or additional services. Make sure to update your business listings as these changes occur.

If your business is running promotions, hosting events, or changing hours for holidays, reflect those updates in your listings. Keeping your profile current helps search engines and customers trust your information, reducing the risk of potential leads being lost due to outdated details.

Step 7: Use keywords in your listings

Incorporating relevant keywords into your business listings can improve your local SEO ranking. When filling out descriptions in listings like Google My Business, try to include keywords that relate to your services or products, such as:

- "Best bakery in [City]" if you own a bakery.
- "Affordable auto repair in [City]" for a local mechanic.

Make sure your keywords are naturally integrated and relevant to your business offerings.

Step 8: Leverage special features

Many business listing platforms offer additional features that can enhance your profile. For example, Google My Business offers the ability to post updates, promote events, or showcase special offers, and Yelp allows you to display menus, promote deals, or indicate health and safety measures, which is important in the post-pandemic world.

Why enlist the help of a professional?

While you can optimize business listings in-house, enlisting the help of a digital marketing expert or local SEO professional can save time and provide better results.

1. Spotting and handling duplicate listings

A marketing agency can save you time and effort by identifying and addressing duplicate listings on platforms like Google My Business, Yelp, and Bing Places. Many SMB owners may not realize that duplicate listings affect their visibility, but an agency has the tools and expertise to find and resolve these issues quickly.

For example, suppose a local café has moved to a new location, but its old address is still listed on Google My Business, while the new address appears on Yelp. This inconsistency not only creates confusion for customers but also leads to lost foot traffic.

A marketing agency would spot this duplicate listing on Google and take the necessary steps to merge or delete the outdated profile. The agency would also ensure that the NAP (Name, Address, Phone number) information is accurate and consistent across all listings.

2. Optimizing listings

A marketing agency can also help you optimize your business listings.

Let's say a local restaurant owner sets up their business profile on Google My Business and Yelp but doesn't have time to request reviews from customers or respond to the ones they receive. Reviews are critical to local SEO—businesses with more reviews (especially positive ones) tend to rank higher in search results.

A marketing agency would manage the review process on the owner's behalf, sending follow-up emails to customers encouraging reviews and responding to both positive and negative feedback in a timely and professional manner. This level of engagement not only improves local SEO but also demonstrates that the business values customer feedback, leading to better customer retention.

3. Leveraging industry-specific directories

Marketing agencies often have deeper knowledge of industry-specific directories that many SMB owners are unaware of. These directories can significantly improve local SEO and attract more targeted traffic based on the industry.

For example, a local healthcare clinic would benefit from being listed on directories like Zocdoc, while a hotel would gain more visibility on TripAdvisor.

A marketing agency would ensure the business is listed on all relevant directories, enhancing its reach beyond just Google and Yelp.

Additionally, industry-specific directories often come with specialized features, such as appointment booking or customer feedback tools, that can provide a competitive advantage.

Without a marketing agency's expertise, you might only focus on the major platforms like Google My Business, Facebook, and Yelp, missing out on other valuable directories that could drive more leads and revenue.

3

Are you the first choice?

Search engine optimization (SEO)

Websites that are well-optimized according to search engines' best practices beat the competition by popping up at the top of search results.

What is search engine optimization (SEO)?

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the process of improving your website's visibility in search engine results (like Google or Bing) so that more potential customers can find your business online. When people search for products or services that your business offers, SEO helps ensure that your website appears at or near the top of the search results.

How SEO works

Keywords are the specific words and phrases people type into search engines. For example, if you run a bakery, common keywords might be "best bakery in [your city]" or "custom cakes near me." By using these keywords in your website's content, you signal to search engines that your site is relevant to those searches.

We have already discussed **local SEO** in the previous section. In a nutshell, this component of SEO focuses on optimizing your online presence to attract business from local searches. This includes creating or updating your business listings on platforms like Google My Business, ensuring your business name, address, and phone number (NAP) are consistent across the web, and gathering positive reviews from customers.

Search engines value fresh, useful **content**. By regularly updating your website with blog posts, product updates, or special offers, you're more likely to rank higher. It's about providing valuable information that answers what your potential customers are searching for.

On-page SEO is optimizing the elements on your website, such as title tags, meta descriptions, headers, and images, to make it easier for search engines to understand and rank your pages.

Backlinks are links from other websites to your website. The more reputable sites that link to yours, the more search engines see your site as trustworthy and relevant.

Since most people use smartphones for searching, your website needs to be **mobile-friendly**. A site that looks good and functions well on mobile devices is more likely to rank higher in search results.

70%
of local clicks come from Google Map Pack
(three featured business profiles atop search results)

Source
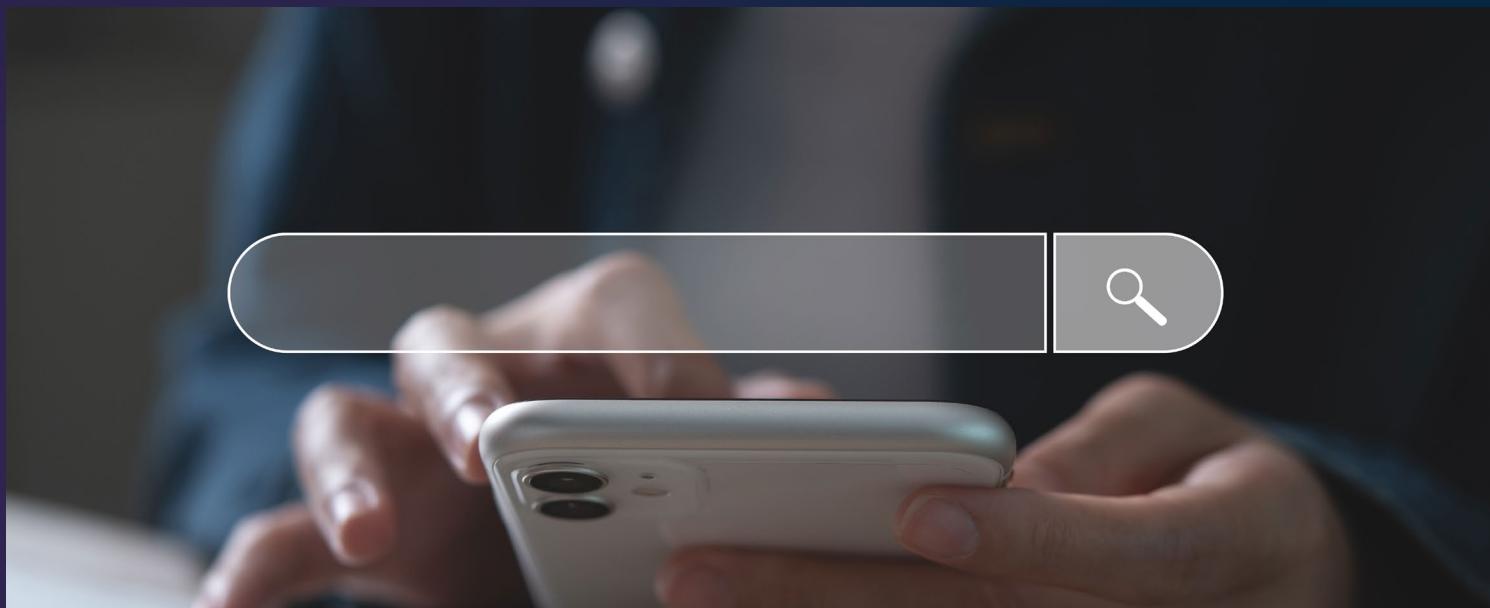
Step-by-step action plan for basic SEO implementation

1. Set up essential accounts

❑ Create a Google Business Profile (formerly Google My Business) or Bing Places for Business.

❑ Set up Google Analytics for tracking website traffic, user behavior, and campaign effectiveness.

❑ Create a Google Search Console or a Bing Webmaster Tools accounts to monitor search performance.

2. Conduct keyword research

❑ Use Google Keyword Planner or Ubersuggest to identify relevant local keywords.

❑ Focus on long-tail keywords specific to your business and location.

❑ Make a list of 10-20 target keywords.

3. Optimize your Google Business Profile

❑ Ensure all information is accurate and complete.

❑ Add high-quality photos of your business.

❑ Encourage customers to leave reviews.

4. Perform a basic SEO audit

❑ Use Screaming Frog SEO Spider (free version) to crawl your website.

❑ Identify and fix any broken links or missing meta descriptions.

❑ Ensure your site is mobile-friendly using Google's Mobile-Friendly Test.

5. Optimize on-page elements

❑ Use Yoast SEO (if on WordPress) to optimize titles, meta descriptions, and content.
❑ Incorporate target keywords naturally into your page content.
❑ Optimize header tags (H1, H2, etc.) with relevant keywords.

6. Improve website speed

❑ Use PageSpeed Insights to analyze your site's loading speed.
❑ Implement recommended improvements (e.g., image optimization, browser caching).

7. Create local content

❑ Develop blog posts or pages focused on local events, news, or topics.
❑ Use your target keywords in this content naturally.

8. Build local citations

❑ Use Moz Local to ensure your business information is consistent across directories.
❑ Submit your business to relevant local directories.

9. Implement schema markup

❑ Data markup, a.k.a. structured data, is a code that classifies content on web pages to help search engines better understand it and effectively display your website in SERPs.
❑ Use Google's Structured Data Markup Helper Tool to add the markup code to the <head> section of your page's HTML.

10. Encourage and manage reviews

❑ Set up a system to ask satisfied customers for reviews.
❑ Respond to all reviews, both positive and negative.

11. Optimize for mobile

❑ Ensure your website is fully responsive.
❑ Use Google's Mobile-Friendly Test to identify any issues.

12. Build local backlinks

❑ Reach out to local businesses, organizations, or events for potential partnerships or mentions.
❑ Create valuable, shareable content that local sites might want to link to.

How an SEO expert can help

1. SEO is complex and always changing

Google is notorious for frequently updating its SEO best practices. Here are some interesting facts:

- Google makes small algorithm tweaks and adjustments daily, leading to over 500-1000 minor changes per year.
- There's no set number, but major core algorithm updates typically occur several times per year.

As a local SMB owner, you probably don't have time to conduct all the necessary assessments to determine if Google's updates have negatively impacted your SEO.

SEO experts keep tabs on resources such as Google's Search Central Blog, Search Engine Journal, and Search Engine Land. They dedicate time to understanding updates and adjusting strategies accordingly, ensuring that your website remains optimized and compliant.
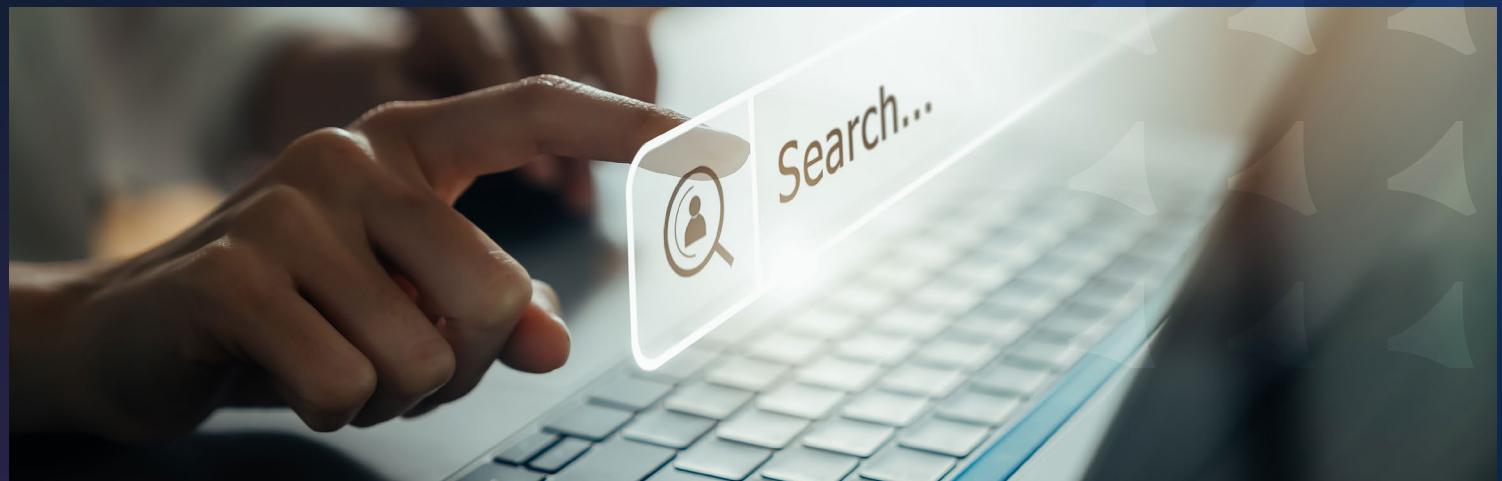
2. Better, faster results

SEO is a long-term strategy, but with an expert's help, you're likely to see results faster than if you attempt to handle it yourself. SEO professionals have experience and access to advanced tools that allow them to conduct in-depth audits of your website, uncover opportunities for growth, and implement strategies that maximize your site's performance.

They know what works and can avoid trial-and-error methods that a non-expert might rely on. Whether it's improving your website's load time, optimizing content for local searches, or building a backlink strategy, SEO experts can bring faster, more effective results.

3. Avoid costly mistakes

SEO mistakes can damage your website's reputation and lower your rankings in search results. Common mistakes include keyword stuffing, low-quality backlinks, duplicate content, or poor mobile optimization. These errors can lead to penalties from search engines, causing your site to lose visibility and traffic.

An SEO expert knows how to avoid these pitfalls and ensures that your SEO strategy is following best practices. Additionally, SEO experts will prioritize white-hat SEO techniques, which are ethical and align with search engine guidelines, ensuring long-term success.

4 Should they trust you?

Reputation management

Good reviews improve local SEO, so it is important to know how to encourage satisfied customers to leave positive feedback and constructively engage with negative reviews.

Skillset required for reputation management

Basic reputation management includes several key competencies:

- **Monitoring and awareness:** Reputation management starts with keeping track of what people are saying about your business across various platforms—Google, Yelp, social media, etc. You'll need to consistently monitor these channels to stay updated on new reviews or mentions of your business.

- **Crisis management:** if a negative review or a public complaint arises, you should de-escalate the situation as soon as possible.

- **Technical skills**: Familiarity with reputation management tools like Google Alerts, Yelp for Business, and Facebook Business Manager helps you track and respond to online mentions and reviews efficiently.

Step-by-step action plan

Here's a simple, step-by-step action plan for getting started with basic reputation management for your local business. It's designed to help you protect and improve your online reputation, even if you're managing it on your own.

Step 1: Claim your online listings

❑ Make sure your business is listed on platforms like Google My Business, Yelp, and set up relevant social media business profiles on platforms like Facebook and Instagram.

❑ Claim ownership of these profiles if you haven't already. This allows you to control the information, respond to reviews, and update your details regularly.

Step 2: Set up alerts to monitor your reputation

❑ Use free tools like Google Alerts to get notified whenever your business is mentioned online.

❑ Regularly check review sites, social media, and search engine results for any mentions of your business.

Step 3: Respond to all reviews

- ❑ Always thank customers for their kind words. This shows you value their feedback and builds loyalty.
- ❑ Avoid emotional reactions and see every negative feedback as an opportunity to demonstrate great customer service.

Step 4: Encourage reviews

- ❑ Politely ask satisfied customers to leave a review on platforms like Google or Yelp. You can do this by including a link in follow-up emails or on your social media.
- ❑ Make it easy for customers to find where they can leave feedback.

Step 5: Keep your social media active

- ❑ Post regularly on your business's social media accounts to engage with your audience. Share updates, promotions, and behind-the-scenes content to build a strong connection with your followers.
- ❑ Respond to comments and messages promptly.

Step 6: Track feedback over time

- ❑ Use free or inexpensive tools like Google My Business Insights or Yelp Business Dashboard to analyze customer sentiment.
- ❑ Keep track of common themes in your reviews and feedback to improve your services based on customer input.

Step 7: Address common issues proactively

- ❑ If you notice recurring complaints, take immediate action to resolve them. This could involve improving customer service, fixing product issues, or changing your processes.
- ❑ Let your customers know when you've made improvements based on their feedback.

Step 8: Create a plan for crisis management

- ❑ Have a plan in place for how to handle negative publicity or a wave of bad reviews.
- ❑ Designate someone to handle public relations or draft templates for responses to common issues.

⭐ Reputation

Average Star Rating
Your average rating across all reviews to date

4.9 ▲ 1.6   Industry Avg.   4.2

★ ★ ★ ★ ⯪

Last 30 days

Why hire a pro

Access to advanced tools

Marketing professionals have access to specialized reputation management software and social media management tools that can streamline the process.

Tools like Hootsuite, Sprout Social, and Reputation.com allow them to monitor multiple review platforms and social media channels and even respond to customer feedback in real-time—all from one dashboard.

These tools provide valuable insights, like tracking sentiment over time and identifying trends in customer feedback, which can help improve your business. Without these resources, it can be hard to efficiently monitor everything, and you might miss important feedback that could either help your business grow or prevent a potential PR issue.
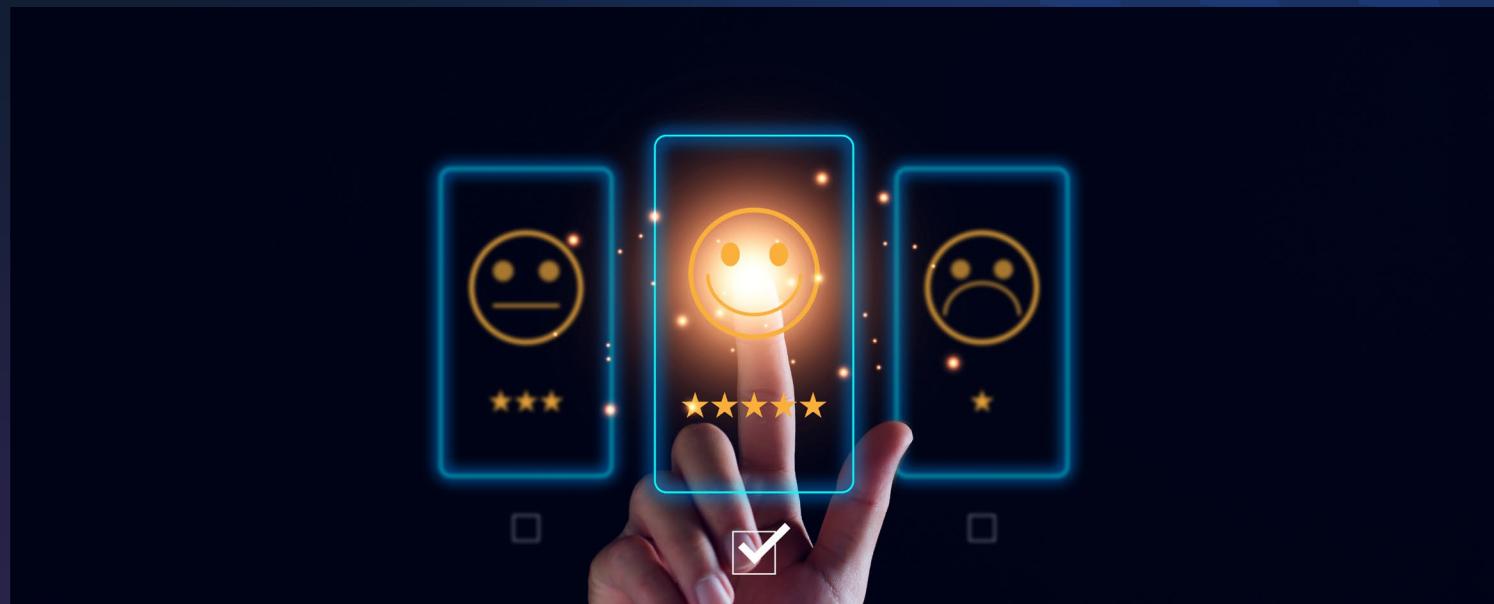
Objectivity and stress reduction

As the local SMB owner, you're deeply invested in your business. Negative reviews can feel personal, and responding to them in the heat of the moment can be challenging.

A marketing professional brings an objective, level-headed perspective when dealing with complaints. They are trained to respond in a calm, professional manner that prioritizes problem-solving and maintaining your business's positive image.

While negative feedback can be stressful, delegating this task to someone who is emotionally detached from the situation can prevent the stress from affecting you and your decisions. Letting a professional handle delicate situations offers peace of mind, allowing you to focus on running and growing your business without getting bogged down in online conflicts.

Keeping track of all the channels

Most SMB owners are focused on day-to-day operations and may not realize just how many review platforms exist—or which ones are most relevant to their business. A marketing professional ensures no potential reviews slip through the cracks.

By covering all available channels, marketing professionals can maximize your opportunities to collect positive feedback from satisfied customers. This comprehensive approach not only boosts your business's credibility but also helps improve your rankings on search engines and enhances your local SEO efforts.

Avoiding optimism bias

SMB owners may experience optimism bias—the belief that negative events are less likely to happen to them. While it's great to have confidence in your business, this bias can make it harder for you to anticipate or prepare for crises.

Many small business owners may not be willing to develop a comprehensive PR strategy because they assume they won't face serious issues like bad reviews, negative press, or public backlash.

Marketing professionals, on the other hand, are trained to think ahead and prepare for the worst. They understand that even the most well-run businesses can face unexpected challenges, whether it's a dissatisfied customer leaving a viral negative review or a product issue that sparks public criticism.

By creating a comprehensive crisis management plan, marketing professionals ensure that every possible disaster is accounted for and that the right response strategy is in place.

This proactive approach helps maintain your positive brand image even in challenging situations. Instead of scrambling to react to a crisis, you'll already have a plan ready to protect your reputation and turn potential PR challenges into opportunities for growth.
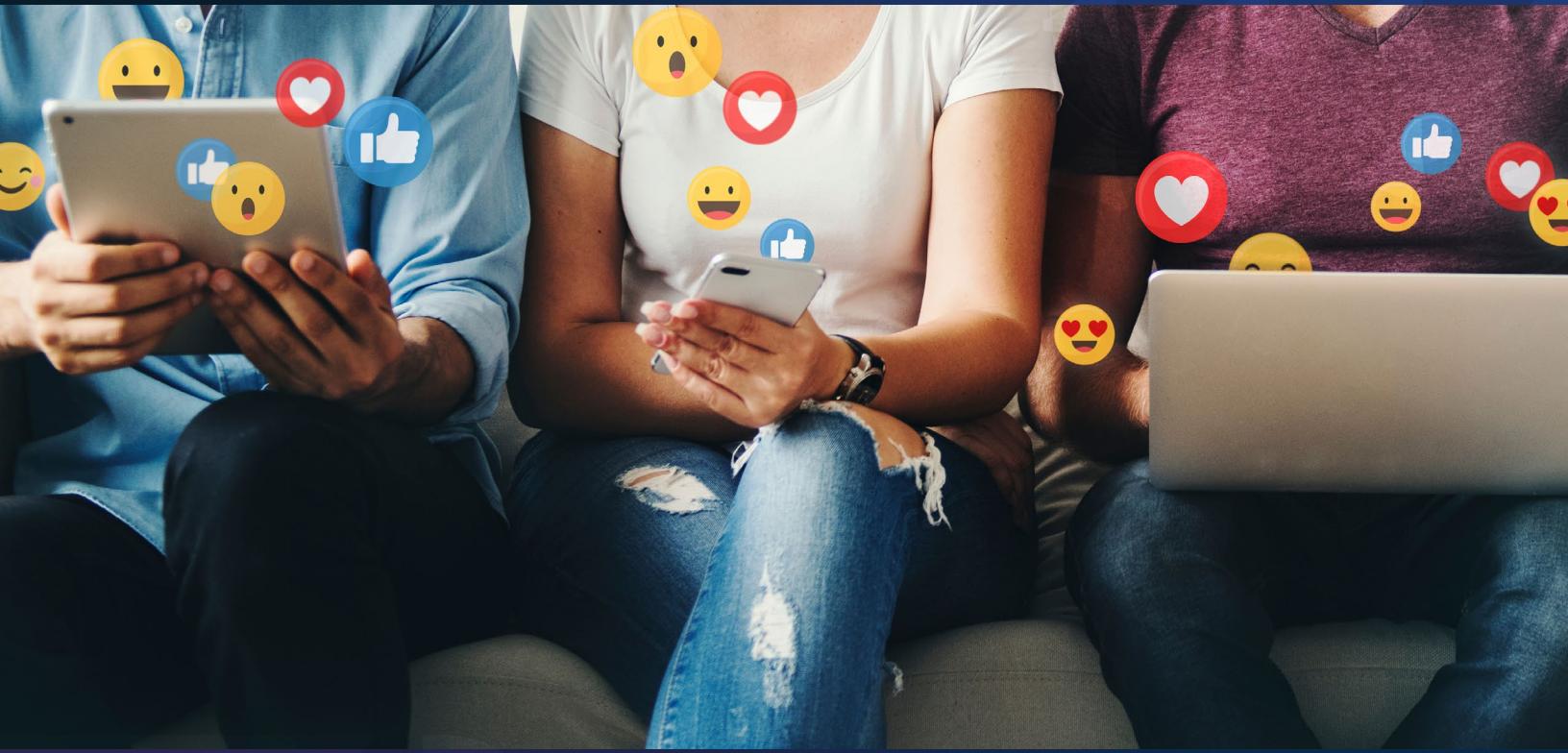
5

Do they like you?

Social media management

Social media platforms have become an integral part of our daily lives. If you can vibe with your customers on social media, they are more likely to stay loyal to your business.

Local SMBs with strong social media profiles have a higher liking in their communities compared to those without a social media presence. Here are just a few stats that support this statement. Research tells us that 21% of consumers are more inclined to purchase from brands that they can connect with on social media.

As reported by 90% of marketers, their social media marketing initiatives have boosted their business visibility, while 75% indicate that these efforts have driven more traffic.

What is a basic social media management strategy?

A basic social media management strategy consists of planning, creating, posting, and monitoring content across various platforms to engage with customers, build brand awareness, and generate leads. For local SMBs, social media management can also help cultivate a strong community presence and offer real-time customer service.

The key components of a basic social media management strategy

Goal Setting	Platform Selection	Content Creation	Engagement and Community Building	Monitoring and Analytics

Tools and resources needed

Here is a list of easy-to-use tools that can help you get started with your social media strategy.

- Canva or Adobe Express are great tools for creating visually appealing posts and graphics for your content.

- If you aren't familiar with hashtags, tools like Hashtagify or RiteTag help you find trending hashtags relevant to your business and industry.

- Tools like Buffer, Hootsuite, or Later help you schedule posts in advance across multiple platforms. HubSpot and CoSchedule offer free content calendar templates to help you organize your posts.

Step-by-step action plan

Step 1: Define your goals

Decide what you want to achieve with social media. For example, are you focused on increasing brand awareness, generating leads, or promoting specific services?

Step 2: Choose your platforms

Select 2-3 social media platforms that align with your audience. If you're a local restaurant, for example, visual platforms like Instagram and Facebook are likely your best bet. Set up business profiles on these platforms if you haven't already.

Step 3: Create a content calendar

Plan out your content for at least a month in advance. Your calendar should include the type of post (image, video, link), the topic, and the specific platform you'll post on. Aim for a balance of content that informs, entertains, and engages your audience.

Step 4: Develop engaging content

Create content that resonates with your local audience. Showcase your products, services, and behind-the-scenes content.

Step 5: Schedule posts consistently

Use scheduling tools like Buffer or Hootsuite to automate your posts. This allows you to be consistent with your content without having to post manually every day.

Step 6: Engage with your audience

Social media is a two-way conversation, and active engagement builds trust. Don't forget to participate in local community conversations by commenting on other local businesses' posts.

Step 7: Monitor performance

Use analytics tools to track how your content is performing. Monitor metrics like engagement rates, follower growth, and conversions from social media to your website. Adjust your strategy based on what's working and what isn't.

Why hire a marketing professional for social media management?

While you can certainly start managing social media on your own, here's why hiring a marketing professional can be a game-changer for your local SMB.

Social media management can become time-consuming. A professional can manage everything from content creation to community engagement, giving you more time to focus on growing your business.

Consistent posting is key to staying relevant on social media. A marketing professional ensures that your content calendar is always filled and that posts are scheduled and published at optimal times.

Professionals are skilled in handling public relations issues or negative feedback online. They can quickly mitigate any damage to your reputation with the right response, ensuring that minor complaints don't escalate into bigger problems.

Professionals are often more creative when it comes to developing engaging campaigns and coming up with fresh ideas that resonate with your audience. They can craft strategies tailored to your business and target demographic.

A professional knows the best practices in social media for your specific industry. For example, they may know which types of content perform best for restaurants versus service businesses. They're also aware of trends and can help you capitalize on them.

Finally, professionals help you maximize your social media ROI. Instead of posting content that doesn't generate engagement or leads, they can help create campaigns that directly support your business goals.
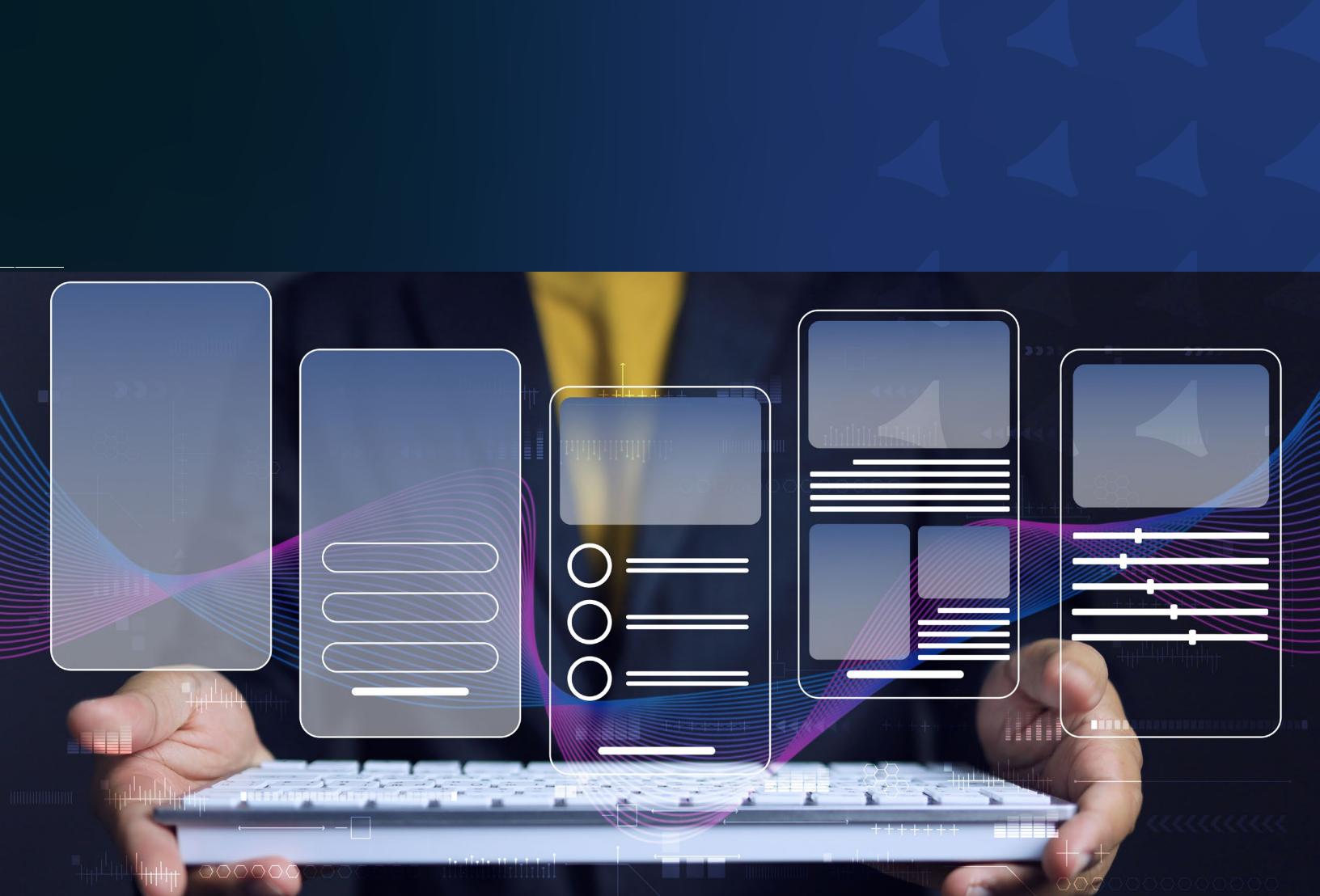
6

Do they know what you offer?

Website development

Today, people are more likely to find you by seeing your business's website online rather than hearing about you by word of mouth. If you haven't already, create and optimize your website ASAP.

While it may seem that having several social media profiles is enough for running a successful local SMB, building a website is the best way to inform current and potential clients about your business's products and services.

Given that a brand-new website is built every three seconds, as a local SMB facing fierce competition, you don't want to miss out on this trend.

Skillsets and tools needed to build a basic website

Building a basic website doesn't require you to be a tech expert, but you will need certain skills, knowledge, and tools.

You should learn how to use platforms like WordPress, Wix, Shopify, or Squarespace and grasp the basics of design principles, including layouts, fonts, and color schemes to make the website visually appealing. Basic photo editing and content creation skills will come in handy here.

Accessibility

It is also necessary to make sure your website design adheres to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) international standard.

Did you know that a website can be sued for non-compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?

One prominent real-life example is the case of Gil v. Winn-Dixie Stores, Inc. In 2017, Juan Carlos Gil, a visually impaired man, filed a lawsuit against the grocery store chain Winn-Dixie in Florida.

Gil, who is legally blind, relied on screen reader software to access websites. He found that Winn-Dixie's website was incompatible with his screen reader, preventing him from accessing digital coupons, refilling prescriptions online, and finding store locations. Gil argued that this inaccessibility violated Title III of the ADA, which requires places of public accommodation to be accessible to people with disabilities.

The case went to trial, becoming the first ADA website accessibility case to do so. The judge ruled in favor of Gil, stating that Winn-Dixie's website was heavily integrated with its physical stores and therefore subject to the ADA's accessibility requirements. The court ordered Winn-Dixie to make its website accessible to individuals with visual impairments and to pay Gil's attorneys' fees.

For small businesses with limited operating budgets, a costly lawsuit can be disastrous. Here are some boxes to check to make sure your website caters to all online visitors:

- ❏ Ensure keyboard accessibility and screen reader compatibility.
- ❏ Provide text alternatives for non-text content.
- ❏ Use sufficient color contrast.
- ❏ Make content adaptable and distinguishable.
- ❏ Ensure content is operable, understandable, and robust.

71%
of businesses have a website as of 2023

Source
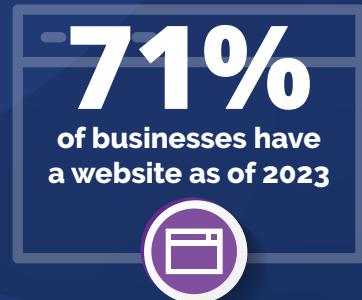
Security

Another highly important aspect of website building is making sure it is secure. Here are the basics of website security you need to know:

❑ **Install an SSL certificate:** SSL ensures that data sent between your website and users is encrypted, making it difficult for hackers to intercept.

❑ **Use strong passwords**: Using strong, unique passwords for your website's backend (like your CMS login) helps protect your website from hackers who often try to gain access to websites by guessing weak passwords.

❑ **Keep software and plugins updated:** Outdated software or plugins can have vulnerabilities that hackers can exploit.

❑ **Back up your website regularly:** If your website is compromised, a backup allows you to restore it to a previous, uncorrupted state without losing important data.

❑ **Limit user access:** Limiting access reduces the chances of an accidental security breach or malicious activity from inside your team.

When building a website, you also need to dedicate time to writing product descriptions, service overviews, and an About Us page.

Tools

Let's now take a look at the essential tools that you will need to make your website a reality. Along with a website builder, you will need to purchase a domain name through services like GoDaddy or Namecheap, use a web hosting provider like Bluehost, SiteGround, or HostGator to keep your website online, and leverage plugins such as Yoast SEO for optimizing search, Contact Form 7 for forms, or WooCommerce for e-commerce functionality.

Step-by-step action plan for a DIY website

Step 1: Choose a website platform

Decide on a platform such as WordPress, Wix, or Squarespace. WordPress is great for flexibility and customization.

Wix and Squarespace are beginner-friendly with drag-and-drop interfaces.

Step 2: Purchase a domain name

Register your business name as a domain through a domain provider like GoDaddy or Google Domains. Make sure the domain reflects your business and is easy to remember.

Step 3: Select a hosting plan

Choose a hosting provider such as Bluehost or HostGator. They typically offer plans tailored to small business websites.

Step 4: Design your website

Start designing your website using a pre-built template or creating a custom layout. Most platforms offer templates that you can modify to match your brand's look and feel. Include essential pages like:

- **Home Page:** Introduces your business and services.
- **About Us:** Explains who you are and what sets you apart.
- **Products/Services:** List your offerings with details and pricing.
- **Contact Us:** Includes your contact information and a contact form.

43%
of websites are hosted on WordPress.

Source
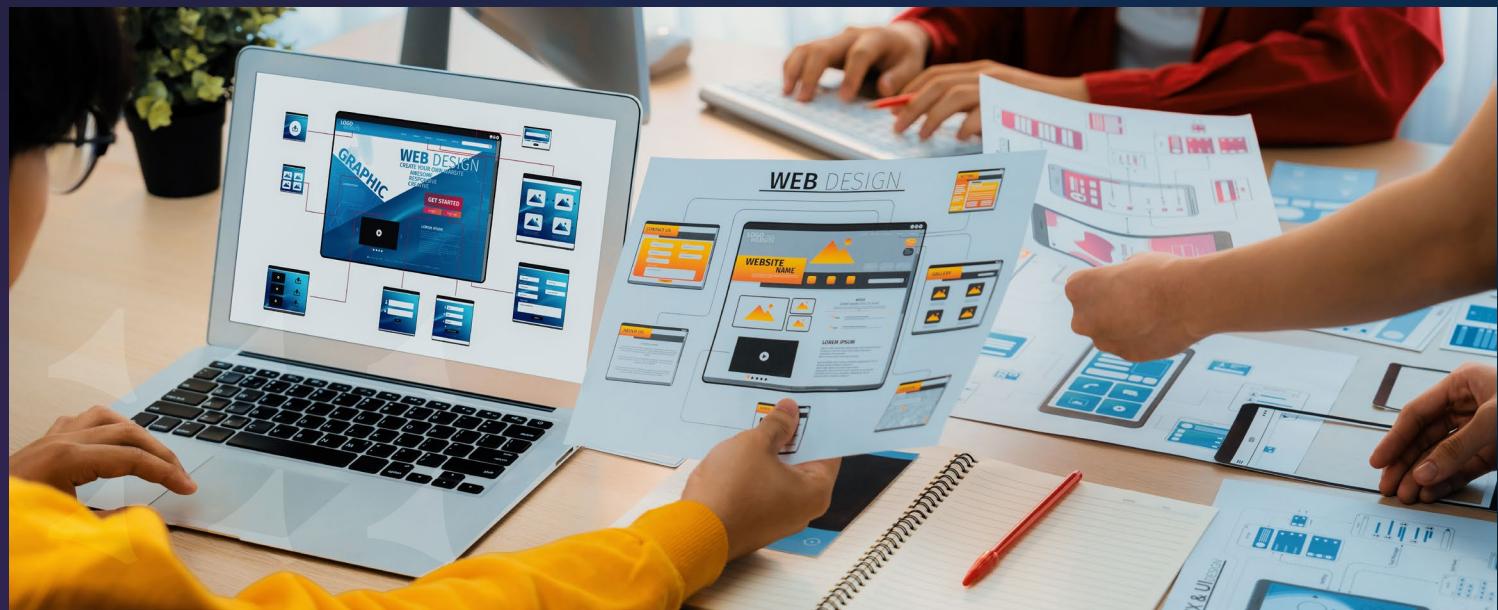
Step 5: Create content

Write compelling copy that explains your business, products, and services. Use clear, concise language and make sure to include calls to action (e.g., "Call us today," "Book now").

Step 6: Optimize for SEO

Use basic SEO techniques such as adding keywords to your titles, headings, and content. Tools like Yoast SEO for WordPress can guide you through this process.

### Step 7: Add functionality with plugins

Install plugins to add extra functionality like contact forms, photo galleries, or e-commerce capabilities. For example, WooCommerce can help you set up an online store if you're selling products.

Step 8: Make sure your website is GDPR compliant

Identify what personal data you collect, how it's used, where it's stored, and who has access to it. Document your data processing activities.

Also, write your privacy policy. Clearly explain what data you collect and why, describe how you use and protect the data, and outline data subject rights under GDPR.

Additionally, use clear opt-in consent forms for data collection, allow users to easily withdraw consent, and avoid pre-ticked boxes or assumed consent. Remember to add a cookie consent banner that allows users to accept or reject non-essential cookies.
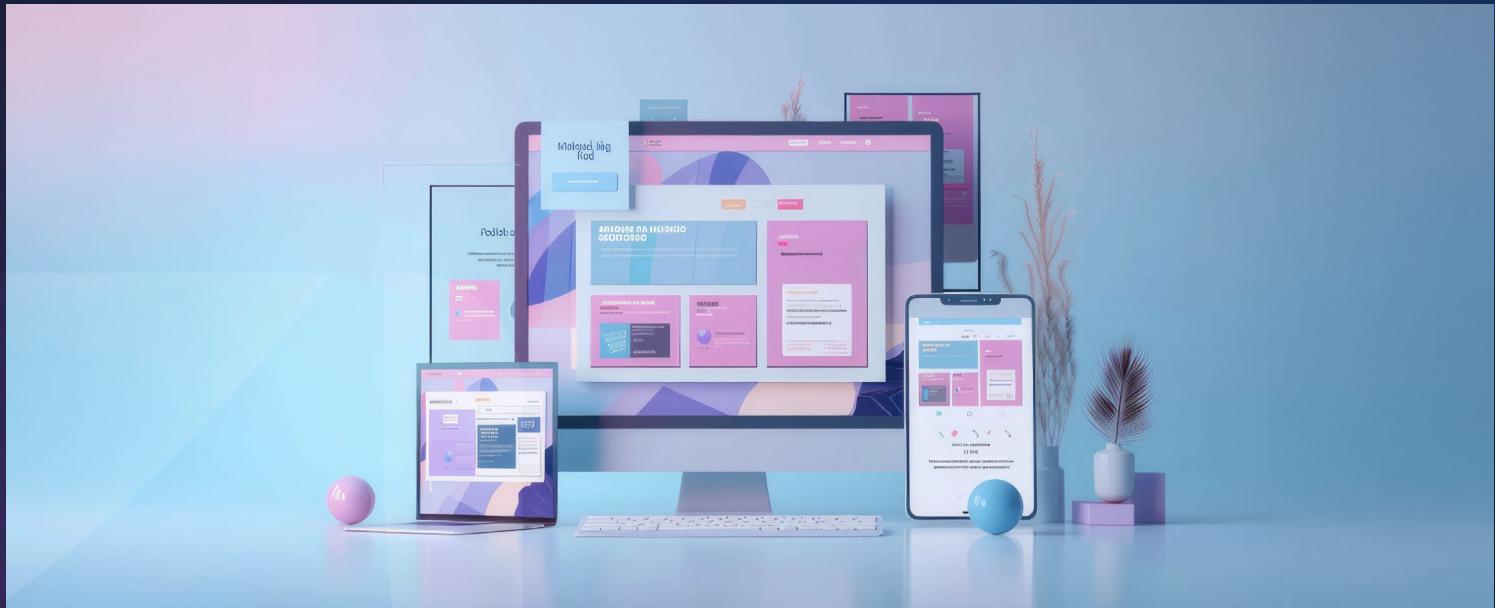
Step 9: Test your website

Check the website's performance on different devices (desktops, tablets, and smartphones) to ensure it's responsive. Test all links, buttons, and forms to ensure everything works.

Step 9: Launch and promote your website

Once you're happy with the site, publish it and start promoting it through social media, email marketing, and local directories.

Why hire an expert web developer or a marketing agency that offers web services?

Did you know that 7 out of 10 small business websites don't include a call to action? Additionally, 73% of users report that during their travels across the web, they've experienced a mobile website that took too long to load.

While a DIY approach is feasible, hiring a professional web developer can help you avoid the aforementioned beginner mistakes. It will also save you time. According to research, getting a website with basic features designed by professionals on average takes three months. Imagine how much longer it will take if web design isn't your area of expertise.

Let's dive into the indisputable benefits of relying on expert marketing agencies or professional web developers.

Professional developers can build custom features for your website, ensuring it's perfectly tailored to your business needs. If your business grows, a developer can easily scale your website with additional functionality.

SEO is crucial for getting found online, and while basic knowledge is useful, an expert can implement advanced techniques to help your website rank higher in search results. This includes technical SEO such as improving site speed, mobile optimization, and setting up proper redirects.

A professional developer will create a website that not only looks great but also offers a seamless experience for visitors. Better UX can lead to higher conversion rates, meaning more customers for your business.

With a professional developer, you'll have access to ongoing technical support. This means you won't be left to troubleshoot problems on your own. They'll also handle security updates and help you stay compliant with privacy regulations like GDPR.

7

Will they convert?

Webpage optimization

Webpage optimization is the process of improving your website's technical performance and user experience to ensure that it attracts and retains visitors. For a local SMB owner, optimizing your website is one of the most important steps in converting leads.

Technical performance

According to research, 47% of consumers expect a web page to load in 2 seconds or less, and 40% of people abandon a website that takes more than 3 seconds to load.

Let's take a closer look at the key factors that negatively affect your website's loading speed:

- **Large images**: Images that are not properly optimized for the web are one of the most common reasons for slow page loading times. High-resolution images may look great, but they take longer to load, especially if there are many on the same page.

- **Too many plugins:** If you're using a content management system (CMS) like WordPress, having too many plugins can cause your site to load slowly. Plugins can add extra scripts and stylesheets to your pages, increasing the load time.

- **Unoptimized hosting:** If your hosting provider has limited resources or slow server speeds, it can significantly impact your website's performance. Shared hosting, in particular, can slow down your site if you're sharing resources with many other websites.

- **Too many ads**: Displaying too many third-party ads or using poorly optimized ad scripts can slow down your site significantly.

Quality of user experience

What about the website's user experience (UX)?

Let's explore some of the key constituents of poor UX in website design:

- **Lack of clear website navigation:** If users can't easily locate products, services, or contact information, they are likely to leave the site.

- **Absence of prominent Calls-to-Action (CTAs):** CTAs guide visitors toward taking the next step, whether it's signing up for a newsletter, scheduling a consultation, or making a purchase. Having too few or unclear CTAs can leave visitors unsure of how to proceed.

- **Convoluted checkout process:** For e-commerce websites, a complicated or lengthy checkout process can lead to abandoned carts.

- **Long forms**: If your website requires visitors to fill out forms to book appointments or sign up for services, forms that ask for too much information and demand too much time to complete may become a significant deterrent.

17%
of Americans abandon a cart at an e-commerce site if the checkout process is too complicated.

Source
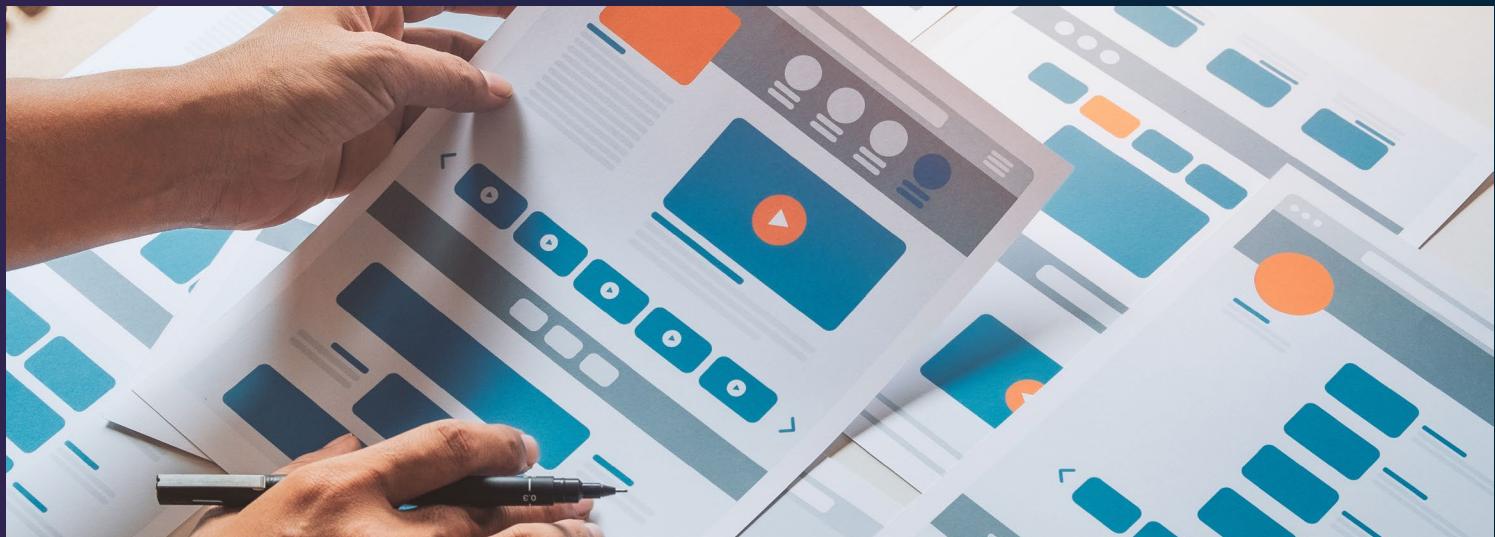
Step-by-step action plan for basic Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO)

Step 1: Analyze current performance

How to assess technical performance

To begin with, to gauge your website's technical performance, it's important to get familiar with Core Web Vitals—metrics that help assess any website's technical performance.

Here's a breakdown:

- **Largest Contentful Paint (LCP):** This measures how quickly the main content of your webpage loads. Essentially, it's about the speed at which your customers can see and interact with your site. Google considers an LCP of 2.5 seconds or less to be good.

- **Interaction to Next Paint (INP):** This metric evaluates how responsive your website is to user interactions, like clicking a button or selecting a menu item. A good INP score is 200 milliseconds or less, ensuring that your site feels snappy and responsive to visitors.

- **Cumulative Layout Shift (CLS):** This measures the visual stability of your website as it loads. It checks if elements on your page move around unexpectedly, which can be frustrating for users. A good CLS score is 0.1 or less.

Good scores for core web vitals

LCP	INP	CLS
Largest Contentful Paint	Interaction to Next Paint	Cumulative Layout Shift
2.5 seconds or less	**200** milliseconds or less	**0.1** or less

There are several free and beginner-friendly tools available to assess your website's technical performance.

Google PageSpeed Insights is one of the most accessible and user-friendly tools for measuring Core Web Vitals. Simply enter your website's URL. Google PageSpeed Insights provides scores for both mobile and desktop versions of your site, along with specific recommendations for improvement.

If you've set up Google Search Console for your website (which is highly recommended and free), you can access the Core Web Vitals report directly. This report gives you an overview of how your pages are performing, grouping them into "Poor," "Needs Improvement," and "Good" categories. It's particularly useful for identifying trends across your entire site.

How to assess UX

Even non-experts can carry out basic usability testing. Let's explore how.

In a nutshell, usability testing helps you understand how real people use your website and where they might get confused or frustrated.

Here's a step-by-step process to do basic usability testing:

- ❑ **Set goals**: Decide what you want to learn. For example, you might want to see if people can easily find your contact information or make a purchase.
- ❑ **Create tasks:** Write down 3-5 specific tasks for testers to try on your website. Keep them simple, like "Find our business hours" or "Add a product to the shopping cart."
- ❑ **Find testers:** Ask 5-10 friends, family members, or customers to help. Try to pick people similar to your target audience.
- ❑ **Observe and take notes:** Watch each person use your website while trying to complete the tasks. Pay attention to where they struggle or get confused. Take notes on what you see.
- ❑ **Ask questions:** After they finish, ask testers what they found easy or difficult and if they have any suggestions.
- ❑ **Review and improve**: Look at your notes and the feedback you received. Make a list of the biggest problems and brainstorm ways to fix them.

Here are some free, easy-to-use tools to help with usability testing:

- · In Zoom, you can use the screen-sharing feature to watch testers use your site remotely.
- · Hotjar offers a free plan with heatmaps and session recordings to see how visitors interact with your site.
- · UsabilityHub provides free, quick tests for assessing first impressions and navigation.
- · You can use Google Forms to create simple surveys to gather feedback after testing.

Step 2: Identify areas for improvement

Once you assess your website's technical performance and UX, make a list of all the problems that need fixing.

For each issue, assign ratings for:

- Cost to fix (Low, Medium, High)
- Complexity of implementation (Easy, Moderate, Difficult)
- Potential impact on conversions (Low, Medium, High)

It may be most fruitful to focus on issues that have a high impact on conversions, require a low cost to implement, and are of easy to moderate complexity.

Step 3: Implement changes

Start with "low-hanging fruit"—issues that are easy to fix but can have a significant impact. For example, you could improve page load times by optimizing images, fixing broken links, making call-to-action buttons more prominent, opting for a better hosting provider, ensuring your website only uses plugins that are absolutely necessary, and reducing the number of ads displayed to website visitors.

Next, tackle problems that severely impact user experience or conversions, even if they're more complex or costly. These might include improving site navigation, simplifying the checkout process, and making sure all the forms on your website are straightforward and don't take too long to fill out.

How a CRO specialist can boost your website's conversion rate

While basic CRO improvements can be made by any business owner, hiring a CRO specialist can significantly accelerate your website's growth. Here's why:

- **Deep technical knowledge:** A CRO specialist knows how to implement complex A/B tests, use sophisticated CRO tools, and make your website fully mobile-responsive, all of which can drastically improve conversions.

- **Efficient use of tools:** Learning to use CRO tools takes time and effort, which could be better spent running your business. A CRO specialist already knows the ins and outs of these tools and can start implementing data-driven changes quickly.

- **Ongoing testing and optimization:** Conversion rate optimization is not a one-time task—it requires ongoing testing and refinements. A CRO specialist can continuously analyze your website's performance, run new tests, and make adjustments as needed to keep improving your conversion rates.

- **Data-driven decisions:** CRO specialists are trained to make decisions based on hard data rather than guesswork. They know how to interpret the results of tests and heat maps to ensure that every change is backed by evidence, leading to better long-term outcomes.

Let's take a closer look at a couple of examples of what edge a CRO specialist has to offer.

To begin with, a CRO specialist is well-versed in leveraging paid tools and software, such as Unbounce and Crazy Egg, to perform more sophisticated A/B testing. For example, CRO specialists can A/B test dynamic content that changes based on a user's location, browsing behavior, or past interactions, such as showing different offers to first-time visitors compared to returning customers.

CRO specialists have the technical know-how to ensure that your site is fully mobile-responsive, providing a seamless user experience across all devices. They can ensure fast load times on mobile devices by compressing images and streamlining code and can run tests to see how different mobile layouts, fonts, or product displays impact conversions.

8 Are they loyal?
Customer relationship management (CRM)

A good CRM strategy can improve customer satisfaction, increase retention, and boost revenue by providing a personalized experience that keeps customers coming back. For local businesses, where repeat business is crucial, building strong customer relationships is key to success.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is the practice of managing interactions with current and potential customers. It involves using data and tools to organize, track, and improve your relationships with customers.

According to a study by Nucleus Research, CRM implementations deliver an average return on investment of $8.71 for every dollar spent. Additionally, Business.com informs us that 51% of small businesses that adopt a CRM report an increase in the rates of their lead conversions.

# How to Perform Basic CRM

If you're new to CRM, here's how you can start implementing it.

1. Learn the basics of CRM software

CRM software is the backbone of any effective CRM strategy. At a minimum, CRM software lets you store customer contact details, track sales leads (individuals who have interacted with your website in a way that indicates their interest in your products or services), set reminders for follow-ups, and analyze customer data.

For local SMBs, simple and affordable CRM tools like HubSpot, Zoho CRM, or Freshworks CRM are great places to start.

2. Grasp the basics of customer segmentation and personalized marketing

As the next step, you should leverage CRM software to deliver personalized experiences to your potential and existing customers.

Customer segmentation is the process of dividing your customers into different groups based on specific characteristics like purchase history, location, interests, or age. By segmenting your audience, you can send more targeted messages, which resonate better than generic marketing.

Start by looking at your customer data and identifying patterns. You might notice that certain customers always buy during sales, while others prefer your high-end products. Divide your customers into segments based on these behaviors.

Once you have your segments, tailor your marketing efforts to each group. For example, you could send exclusive offers to your loyal customers or promote new products to those who have recently made a purchase. Personalized marketing helps build stronger connections with your customers by offering them something relevant and valuable.

3. Use automated email campaigns to nurture leads and re-engage customers

Email automation allows you to send the right message to the right customer at the right time. With the help of CRM software, you can take the level of your customer communication to the next level of personalization:

- Set up automated emails that are triggered when a customer takes a specific action, like signing up for your newsletter or adding items to their cart but not purchasing. These emails can help move customers down the sales funnel by providing them with relevant information, promotions, or reminders.

- Use automated emails to stay in touch with customers who haven't purchased in a while. For instance, you can send them special discounts or personalized product recommendations to bring them back.

- Based on the customer data stored in your CRM, you can create automated campaigns that offer personalized deals. For example, send birthday discounts or special offers based on a customer's previous purchases.

Why hire a CRM consultant

While any local SMB owner can perform basic customer relationship management, there are a few compelling reasons why a CRM specialist can make a substantial difference:

- **Automation of sophisticated workflows:** A CRM consultant can set up complex workflows, saving you time while ensuring that every customer interaction is optimized for building loyalty.

- **Access to advanced features and strategic insights:** CRM platforms are packed with features, but understanding how to use them effectively requires experience. A CRM consultant will ensure you're making the most of these tools, such as predictive analytics.

- **Personalized approach for long-term success:** Every business has unique needs, and a one-size-fits-all CRM setup won't deliver the results you need. A CRM consultant will tailor your CRM system to your specific goals and customers, ensuring long-term success and growth.

Salesforce is one of the most comprehensive CRM platforms available. It offers advanced automation, analytics, and customizable workflows, but its complexity can be overwhelming. A CRM consultant can help set up Salesforce to meet your specific business needs, ensuring you're making the most of the platform's capabilities to improve customer loyalty.

Conclusion

Implementing a comprehensive digital marketing strategy involves multiple components, each requiring specific skill sets and tools. While you can manage some tasks in-house with the right resources, enlisting the help of a marketing agency or consultants who specialize in certain marketing areas often leads to better results, saving you time and ensuring that every aspect of your strategy is executed at a professional level.

By following the step-by-step action plans outlined in this ebook and leveraging a helping hand when necessary, your local SMB can build a strong online presence, attract new customers, and foster long-term customer loyalty.

VENDASTA

Get a demo