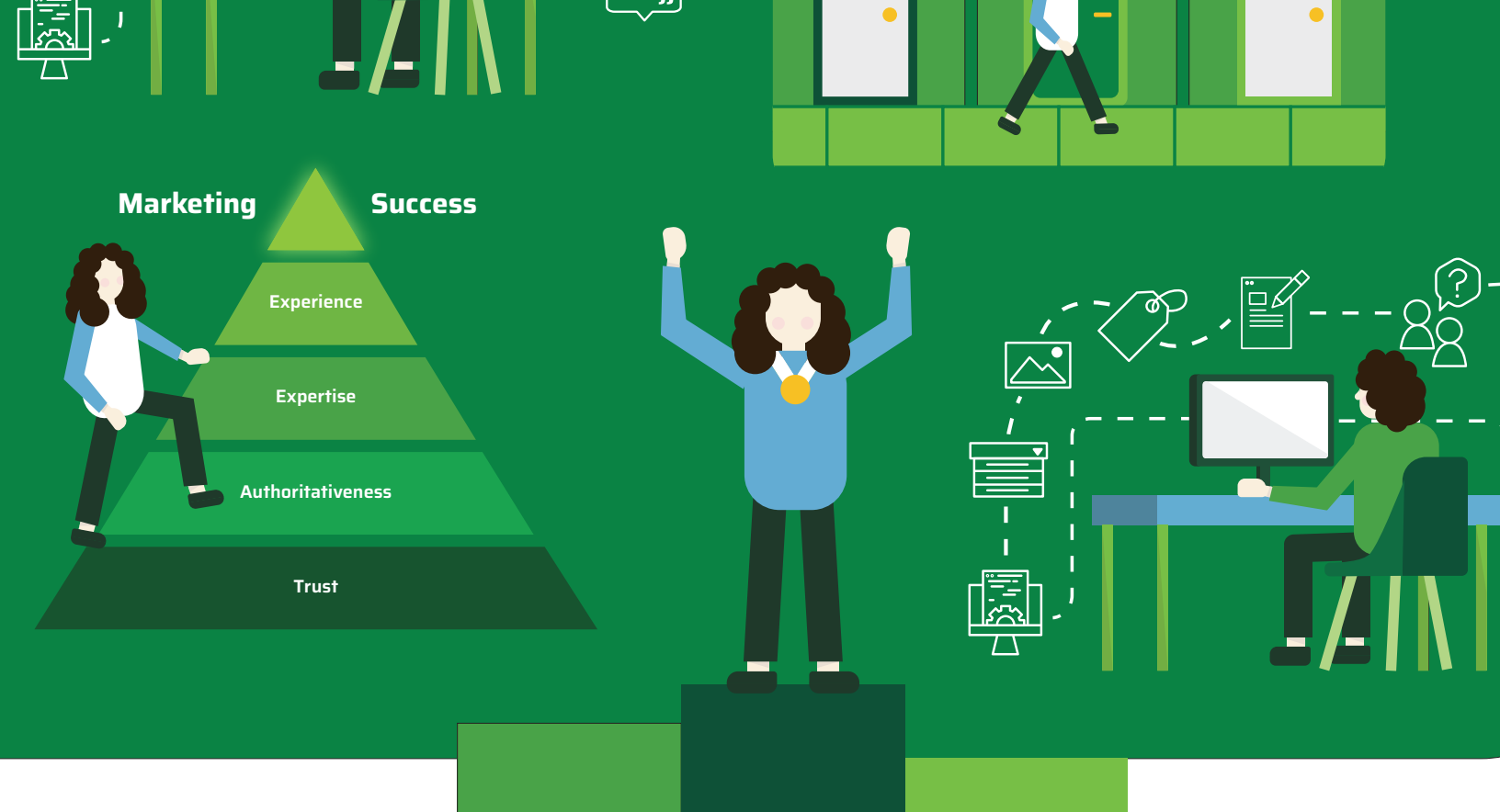




Reputation Management Demystified

Strategies and Trends for
2025 and Beyond



GREEN HOUSE
SALES & MARKETING

Table of Contents

02 CMO Summary

04 Reputation Management: Past, Present, Future

05 Part I: Understanding Reputation Management

06 The power of reputation today

06 What's in a name?

08 Relevance

10 Distance

10 Prominence

14 Part II: Current Strategies

15 Playing Google's game

16 Breaking it down

18 Part III: Reputation Managment at Green House

19 Reputation management at Green House

22 Part IV: Future Trends

23 Staying ahead of the curve

25 Looking to the future

27 Appendices

CMO Summary

Reputation management

Online reputation management (ORM) is the practice of monitoring, influencing, and leveraging public perception to improve brand image and lead generation. Primarily, ORM is achieved through local search engine optimization (local SEO)—optimizing a business's online presence to maximize visibility in search results. For businesses with a larger footprint, ORM also includes leveraging positive brand search results while minimizing the impact of negative ones.

For purposes of this document, we will focus on the foundations of reputation management.

Impact

Reputation management drives both immediate and long-term benefits for businesses, especially B2C companies with a geographically set customer base. For B2B businesses, the benefits are most evident in top-of-funnel metrics like brand awareness, customer support, and recruitment.

Key Factors

Enhancing local search rankings and your brand reputation requires focus on the following factors:

- 1. Relevance:** How well your business aligns with the search terms used by internet users. Ensuring relevance helps position your business to attract the right consumers within your industry or niche.
- 2. Distance:** The proximity of your business to a search user's location, which directly influences search result rankings. The closer your business is, the more likely it is to rank higher.
- 3. Prominence:** Your business's trust and visibility quantified. It reflects how well-known your business is, the reputation it holds, and how many quality backlinks (online recommendations) it receives from authoritative sources.

Executive Metrics

Metric	Inputs	Impact
GBP Position/Ranking	GBP Content, Reviews, Geopositioning	Website Traffic, Direct Leads (Phone Calls, Texts) to Business
Website Traffic	Visitors/Time	Awareness, Conversion
Backlinks	Trusted Directory Links	Domain Authority, Traffic, Targeted Lead Gen
Sentiment Scoring	Google Reviews, 3rd Party Reviews, Industry Review Sites	Domain Authority, Traffic, Targeted Lead Gen
SERP Ranking	Reputation Score, SEO, Keyword Optimization	Traffic, Keyword Ranking

Questions for Partner Validation

- What examples can you provide where you have clearly seen an improvement in reputation? What outcomes can you attribute to that accomplishment?
- How will you measure success during the activity stage of building/strengthening reputation? What visual and non-visual benchmarks will we be using to measure?
- What information should we measure/benchmark today before we get started to be accurate and successful when we are finished?
- What tools from industry will you be using, or who have you partnered with, to help make your work more impactful and scalable?

Why Green House Sales & Marketing?

Every business professional is searching for a breakthrough. How can you achieve more with less? Green House is the solution that turns you into the hero of your own story.

Our unique business model—rooted in transformational experiences for marketing students—delivers the value proposition you’ve been looking for. We offer services on par with any agency, but at an unmatched price.

Think of us as an extension of your marketing team, your brand, or even you—always collaborative, never ego-driven. Because every hero needs a trusted sidekick. Let us be yours.

www.greenhouseuvu.com

Reputation Management: Past, Present, Future



Reputation management is no longer an option: it is an intangible asset with real, costly implications."

Since the beginning of record, history has demonstrated the powerful influence of reputation. Arabian tales speak of the beloved Sultan, Haroon-Al-Rashid, who traveled incognito at night, secretly soliciting insights about his administration.¹ In ancient Greece, philosophers Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle used debates in public places to shape public opinion² while Alexander the Great used letters of aggrandizement to embellish his military and political accomplishments.³ In colonial America, public demonstrations like the Boston Tea Party and Boston Massacre inspired colonists to revolt against Great Britain.

As the world approached the industrial era, reputation found its way onto the corporate scene. Societal reform and the cultivation of democracy shaped public sentiment and redistributed wealth. Freedom of the press and advances in communication technology magnified the voice of the middle class, scrutinizing businesses who failed to align private interest with public good, and hailing those who did. In this environment, reputation management—the practice of monitoring, shaping, and leveraging reputation for business—was conceived.

As industrialization spread around the world, reputation management followed. Now, in an age obsessed with online connectedness and proximity between customers and businesses, reputation management is no longer an option: it is an intangible asset with real, costly implications. With the increasing prevalence of digital marketing and emergence of AI technology, there is no doubt reputation management will continue to play an influential role in business operations now and into the future.

However, reputation management is a complex concept in a notoriously dynamic industry. It requires a knowledge of trends, strategies, softwares, and industry experience to be effective. What areas should be focused on? What are key strategies to implement? How is the industry changing, and how will it look in the future?

At Green House Sales & Marketing, we understand the intricacies of online reputation against the backdrop of its dynamic landscape. We have created this comprehensive guide to be a conceptual overview for business owners who want to better understand reputation management and apply their knowledge. Inspired by case studies with real clients, guided by years of professional experience, and organized by Google's local search factors, this guide explains the most influential components of reputation management, predicts how they will change in the future, and provides specific suggestions to anticipate, adapt, and capitalize on opportunities.

With Green House Sales & Marketing as your guide, rest assured your online reputation is secure now and into the future.

¹ Donald Grunewald, Giri Dua, and Robert Petrausch, "Public Relations: A Primer for Business Executives" (Indiana: iUniverse, 2008), 2.

² Martina Topic, "History (and professionalization) of public relations" (Corporate Communications: An International Journal, 2024).

³ Donald Grunewald, Giri Dua, and Robert Petrausch, "Public Relations: A Primer for Business Executives" (Indiana: iUniverse, 2008), 2.



01

Understanding Reputation Management

The power of reputation today

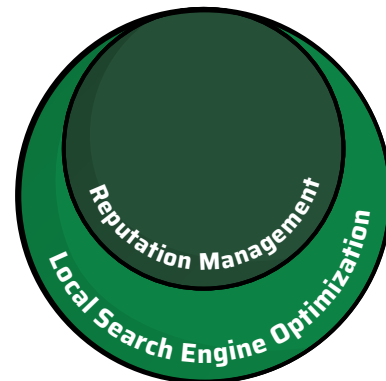
The landscape of digital marketing has dramatically changed over the past two decades. Consumers have moved online, and businesses have followed suit, saturating the internet with services and products. The addition of social media has added another dimension to marketing, broadening its scope and increasing its reach. With more competitors in the market than ever before and rapidly changing consumer preferences, the importance of a strong brand has never been more critical to attract and retain loyal customers.

Case studies from Green House Sales & Marketing clients have proven the impact of optimized reputation management in marketing operations. For example, one client saw a click-through rate (CTR) increase of 44%¹ (3.1% to 47.9%) while another saw an increase in online interactions of 53%.² Some clients have moved up in local search rankings³ while others have experienced major influxes (+359/monthly) of customer visitations.⁴ Although the financial impacts of these changes are difficult to quantify, it is important to consider that the average marketer allocates 20% of their total budget to advertising. Coupled with perpetual concerns regarding customer trust, the benefits of these improvements go far beyond numbers. They are irreplaceably valuable and undeniably important in building sustainable, long-term marketing success.⁵

Reputation management affects every aspect of digital marketing, and trends show this impact will continue to increase. The time to understand reputation management and leverage it for corporate success is now.

What's in a name?

At Green House Sales & Marketing, we consider reputation management to be synonymous with local SEO. While all elements of reputation management fall under local SEO, not all local SEO elements are classified as reputation management. However, we believe the differences between the two to be subtle and largely inconsequential, making this perspective appropriate and necessary. We will therefore refer to both interchangeably hereafter.



Google factors for local search

Google has outlined three factors for improved local SEO. At its core, these factors form the basis of reputation management. By optimizing these factors, companies can rank higher in local searches, attract more consumer traffic, and improve company reputation. According to Google,⁶ these factors are:



1. Relevance. "Relevance refers to how well a local Business Profile matches what someone is searching for."



2. Distance. "Distance considers how far each potential search result is from the location term used in a search."



3. Prominence. "Prominence refers to how well known a business is."

¹ "Case Study: Amano Artisan Chocolate" (Green House Sales & Marketing, 2024).

² "Case Study: BYB Global Leadership" (Green House Sales & Marketing, 2024).

³ "Case Study: Dry Canyon FR" (Green House Sales & Marketing, 2024).

⁴ "Case Study: SR Construction" (Green House Sales & Marketing, 2024).

⁵ "State of Marketing Report, 9th ed" (Salesforce, 2024)

⁶ "How to improve your local ranking on Google" (Google, 2024).

Components of reputation management

Acting in alignment with Google's search factors, Green House Sales & Marketing has developed a proprietary approach to reputation management with emphasis on three components:



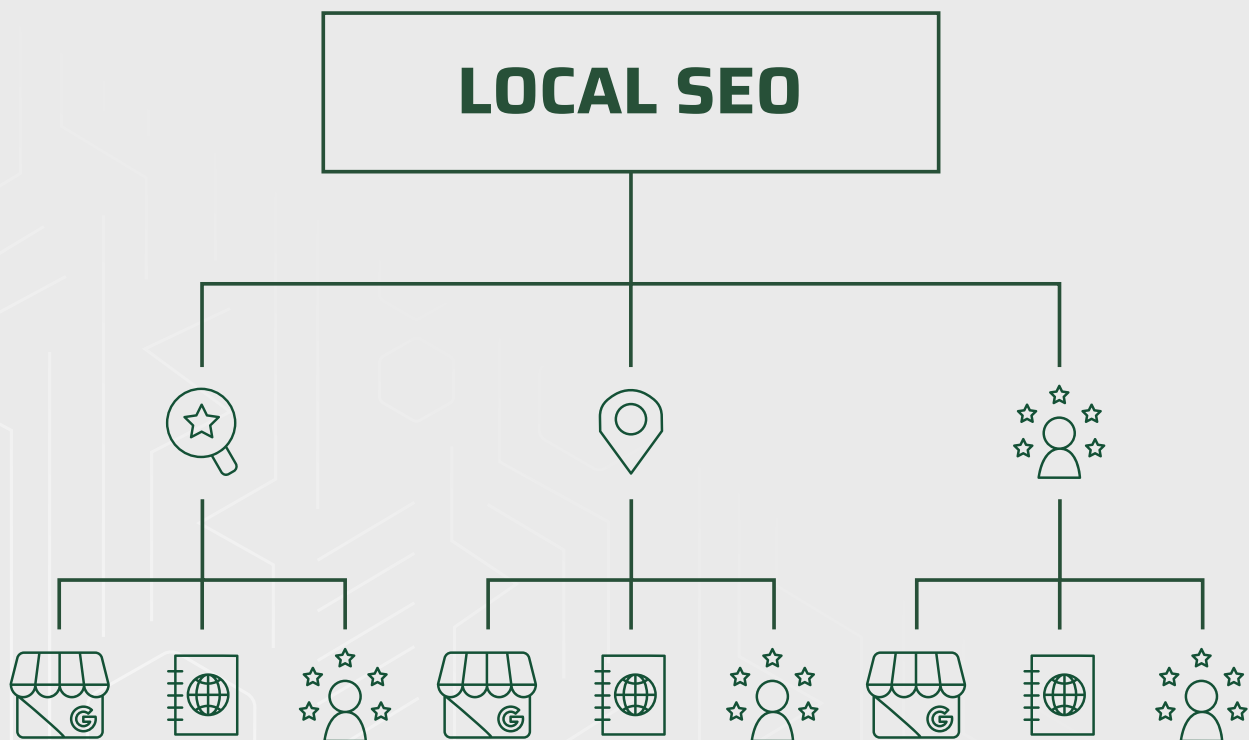
1. Google Business Profile (GBP). Formerly known as Google my Business, GBP is a public online directory for businesses. GBP enables business owners to control their presence on Google Maps or Google Search, and helps customers research, locate, and interact with local companies.



2. Online directories. Online directories are public databases of business listings. Online directories help increase company visibility across the internet and facilitate meaningful customer interactions.



3. Review management. Review management includes soliciting, monitoring, and responding to customer reviews on online directories. Review management significantly influences how consumers perceive companies, affecting their purchasing decisions.



When applying elements of these three components to each Google factor, companies can identify opportunities and weaknesses within the local SEO sphere, and map actionable paths to better optimization. The following sections will act as a guide through this process, breaking down each factor into actionable steps through Green House's reputation management components.

1. Relevance



Customers search for businesses and products through keywords, the terms most people search regarding an industry or product."

As the first Google factor of reputation management, relevance is about ensuring a business aligns itself with consumer expectations. When expectations are understood and met, visibility is increased.

Customer expectations are manifest through keywords, the terms most people search regarding an industry or product. To maximize relevance, companies must identify the correct keywords and ensure they are being leveraged effectively.

There are two different classes of keywords: primary keywords and secondary keywords. Primary keywords are more general in nature, providing a comprehensive summary of a business or industry. Secondary keywords are more specific, usually centered around product or service offerings. Both primary and secondary keywords must be leveraged effectively for maximized relevance.

For example, to determine primary keywords, businesses may complete the following statement:

"Best_____near me" (whatever industry the business is in).

This word (or phrase) will be the primary keyword that should be used whenever referring to the business entity online. For analysis of secondary keywords, the same process may be repeated, but with slight variation for emphasis on products or services.

There are specialized tools designed to assist with keyword research and analysis. Green House Sales & Marketing has access to these tools and helps ensure the successful integration of keywords throughout Google Business Profiles. The following steps demonstrate how Green House may complete this process.

Google Business Profile

Google Business Profile (GBP) provides seamless opportunities for businesses to leverage primary and secondary keywords online. With an estimated 80% of online consumers using search engines to find information about local businesses¹ and Google owning 82% of the internet market share in 2024,² utilizing a GBP is necessary to maintain relevance in the online space.

GBP bio

GBP has a bio section where companies can self-author short form content describing their business to consumers. Google indexes the keywords in bios to group businesses together during local searches. Including primary and secondary keywords within GBP bios can help improve search accuracy and overall relevance. Competitor analysis can assist with this process.

¹ "Understanding Consumers' Local Search Behavior" (Google, 2014).

² "Market share of leading desktop search engines" (Statista, 2024).

Category and subcategories

Google requires businesses to tag themselves under one main business category (MAIN) and various subcategories (SUBS). These tags help Google group similar businesses together and allow customers to quickly review related offerings. Including primary and secondary keywords as MAIN and SUBS, respectively, will help ensure businesses are found by the correct consumers during local Google searches.

Photos

Relevance extends beyond words. Consumers often use photos to assess the culture and values of a business, the quality of products and services, and locate the premises on which businesses are located. If one or more of these aspects does not align with customer expectations, conversion will drop. Ensuring photos are professional and aligned with company culture will help meet consumer expectations and increase relevance.

Hair Cut Co.



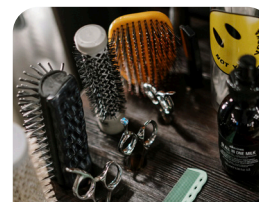
Product tiles

Product tiles provide businesses the opportunity to briefly showcase product or service offerings. This allows businesses to capture search traffic from secondary keywords, and provides images that appeal to customers. By naming product tiles as secondary keywords and creating keyword-optimized product descriptions, businesses can utilize product tiles as valuable keyword opportunities, creating relevance for a larger audience.

Weekly posts

Weekly, businesses should complete a Google Post (also called an Update). Google Posts are short, visually engaging messages that businesses use to share information, promotions, or updates directly through their GBPs.

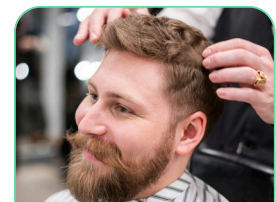
By including keywords in weekly posts, businesses can generate content that increases the scope of keyword coverage.



We use only the best products for your hair! We want you to leave feeling like a new person.

November 15th

[Learn More](#)



Our stylists are here to make you feel your best!

November 1st

[Learn More](#)

Q&A

Q&A (question and answer) responses provide extra opportunities for businesses to publish keywords, attracting more consumer traffic. By using a combination of keywords in response to customer questions, businesses can increase relevance and appeal to more consumers.

Online directories

Since, in form and purpose, Google Business Profile is considered an advanced online directory, other online directories may be utilized in similar ways. However, since every online directory is different, understanding the strengths and limitations of each can help businesses maximize their online relevance.

Review management

Successful review management allows businesses to meaningfully address customer comments while improving online relevance through keyword implementation. Businesses should ensure that whenever possible, any online publications or responses are supplemented with keywords.

2. Distance



Distance ensures that local searches are matched with local results. "

Distance, the second Google factor of reputation management, ensures that local searches are matched with local results. Local searches are automatically triggered by a search within Google Maps, or by a Google Search including locational language such as "near me" or "nearby." If no location is specified, Google will use IP addresses to approximate users' locations.

Google wants to maximize the user experience. During local searches, Google places more weight on distance than the other two Google factors (relevance or prominence). Usually, this means businesses with a closer proximity (< 40 miles) to the consumer will appear higher in their local search results. However, in some cases, such as searches within cities with a dense population, proximity to a focal point like a town center may also determine ranking.

While the distance criteria provides a seamless experience for users, it is impossible for companies to directly leverage unless they physically relocate. However, this does not mean distance should be ignored. Understanding proximity to consumers can help businesses adjust their marketing strategies and focus on other local search criteria that can be adjusted.

For companies without a central location, like food trucks or mobile service, Google Service Areas can be a helpful alternative to permanent addresses. While Google will always prioritize listed addresses, Service Areas provide a way for mobile companies to rank in local searches.

3. Prominence



Prominence is mainly determined by online referrals called citations. "

The third and final Google factor is prominence, creating a reputable image among search engines and customers. Since Google associates prominent businesses with consumer value, developing a trustworthy reputation is key to increased visibility.

For businesses with a Google Business Profile (GBP), prominence is mainly determined by online referrals called citations. A combination of factors such as citation volume, referrer diversity, and referrer credibility play into the weighting of citations on listing prominence.

There are two types of citations:

1. Structured citations: Citations that come from official online directories such as Yelp and Facebook.¹

2. Unstructured citations: Citations that comes from blogs or websites.

 <http://www.yelp.com>

Top 10 Hair Salons in Orem, UT - Yelp

Top 10 Hair Salons Near You · Good Clips · Salon G · Hair Cut Co. ·
Cuttin Corral · Henrietta's

 <http://www.jennihair.com/blog>

Curly Cut Recommendations - JenniHAIR

My Recommendations For Curly Hair Cuts and My Favorite Salons in
Orem UT - Hair Cut Co.

While both citation types improve prominence, industry professionals hypothesize referrers with higher Domain Authority, predictions of “how likely a website is to rank in search engine result pages,”² create a larger impact on listing prominence.

Green House Sales & Marketing uses industry standard tools like Synup to post and monitor business listings in 30 reputable online directories. This ensures an efficient and effective citation system designed to maximize prominence and listing visibility.

Google Business Profile

Google Business Profile acts as the bridge between citations and companies. Its prevalence in the digital marketing space creates a recipient for structured and unstructured citations, maximizing the chance citations from external sources will link to their intended recipients.

Online Directories

Online directories act as structured citation referrers, listing NAP (Name, address, phone number) information required for Google to link listings together. Ensuring identical NAP across online directories is vital to boosting prominence and optimizing reputation.

Review management

According to Google, “Google review count and review score factor into local search ranking. More reviews and positive ratings can improve your business’ local ranking.”³ By employing review management strategies across online directories, businesses can boost local SEO by consistently soliciting reviews and effectively addressing customer concerns wherever possible.

Through specialized tools, Green House Sales & Marketing can effectively monitor and address customer reviews to best optimize Google Business Profile citations and reputation.

Reviews

★★★★★

“They gave me an excellent scalp massage during the hair wash!”

★★★★★

“Got my hair done here for the first time and it was AMAZING!! The salon is clean and inviting! I wish I could give 50 stars!”

★★★★★

“I couldn’t imagine going anywhere else to get my hair done. Everyone is so kind here.”

¹ “Where to get local business citations” (Moz, 2022).

² “What is Domain Authority, and why is it important?” (Moz, 2024).

³ “How to improve your local ranking on Google” (Google, 2024).

Next Steps

With the foundational factors of reputation management understood, it is time to explore current reputation management strategies and where they are headed in the future. Proceed to the next sections to continue reading.

Additionally, to learn the specific steps Green House Sales & Marketing uses to improve reputation management, visit our [9-step guide to Google Business Profile](#), our [7-step guide to online directories](#), or our [3-step guide to review management](#).

To learn more about Green House, please visit our [website](#). To learn about our comprehensive digital marketing startup package, visit our [Fertilizer Package page](#).

If you have questions or would like to book a consultation, please utilize the QR code on the back cover.

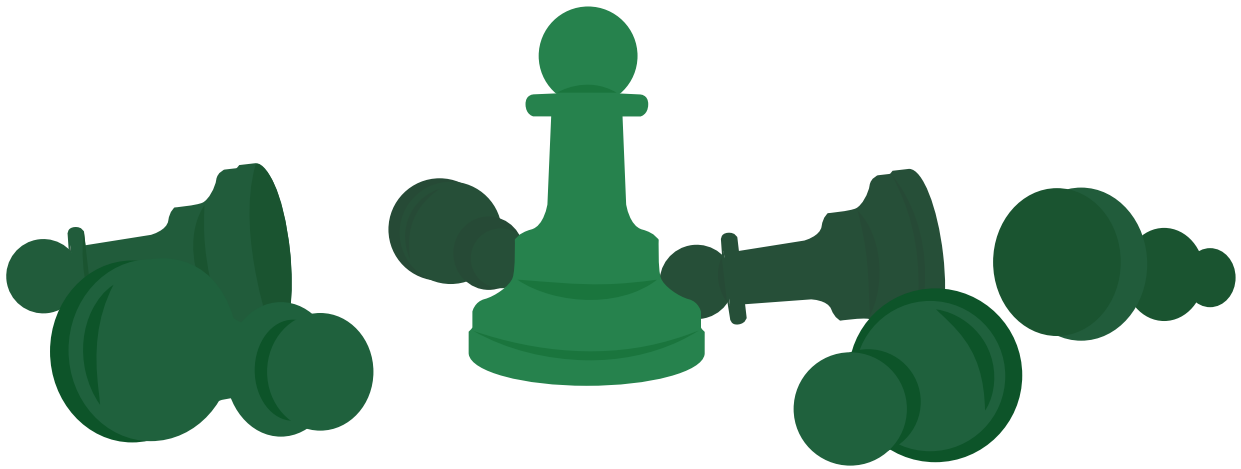


02

Current Strategies

Playing Google's game

Google is notoriously secretive about its ranking algorithms, which change frequently. While this confidentiality preserves the integrity and effectiveness of Google's search engine for users, marketing professionals need to understand these algorithms to perform effectively. This creates a challenging contradiction.



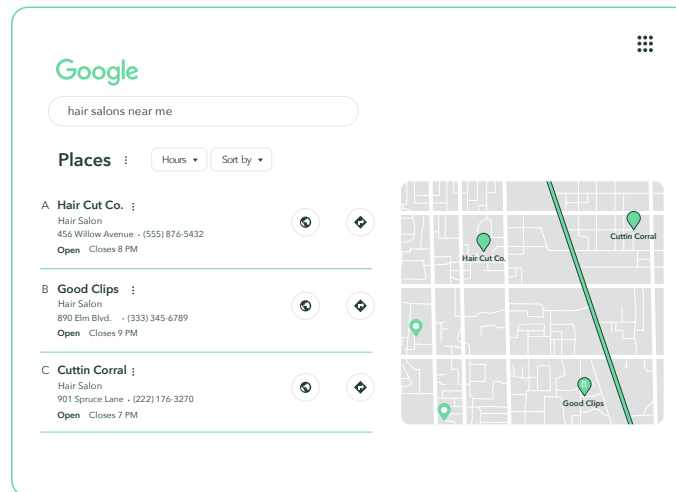
Essentially, Google writes the games marketers must play, yet the rules are subject to change at any time. When they do, companies must again learn how to play, or risk throwing money and resources into strategies that are ineffective at best, or penalizing at worst.

While algorithmic specifics are confidential, marketing professionals use peer surveying to determine what factors are most important to Google. Analysis of these factors over time lend insights into Google's current ranking methodologies, and suggest where trends are headed in the future. Anticipating and capitalizing on these trends is key to staying ahead of the curve and optimizing digital marketing strategies.

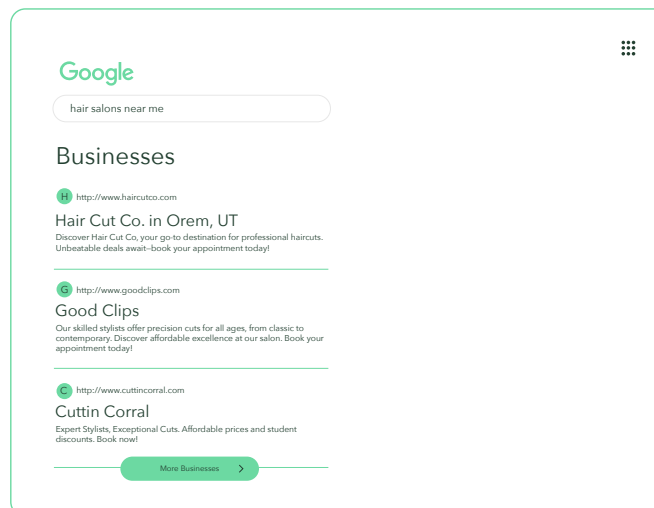
Breaking it down

Industry professionals agree Google breaks down local search results into two categories, both of which have different ranking requirements.¹

Local pack results (3-Pack): The top three local search results that provide information about a business's name, address, star rating, review count, price range, and location on the map. Local pack results are the most visible (and desirable) local Google search results.



Local organic results: All other results not in the local pack during a local search are considered local organic results. Local organic results provide less information and require more user scrolling, so they are less visible than local pack results. If ranking in the local pack is not feasible for organizations, they should seek to rank as highly as possible in local organic results.



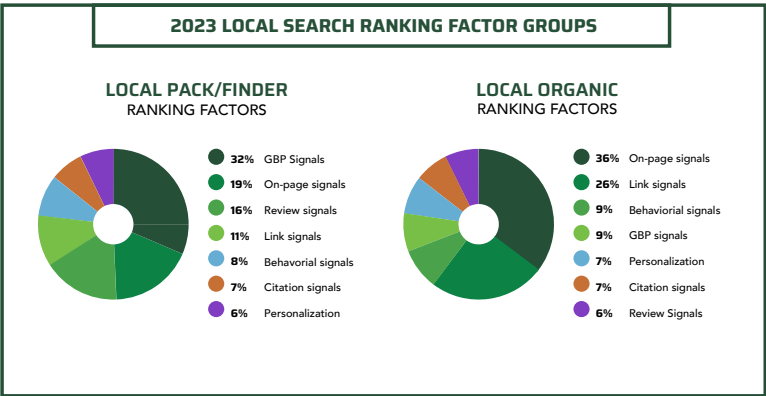
¹ "Local SEO Ranking Factors 2023" (brightlocal, 2024).

7 Contributing groups

According to the 2023 Local Search Ranking Factors Report,¹ seven contributing groups affected the ranking of both local pack and local organic results. They were as follows:



The averaged survey score of industry professionals identified the relative impact of each contributing group on local search rankings. The results were as follows:²



This information suggests the same contributing groups affect both local pack and local organic rankings, but in different weights. By breaking down these groups into specific elements, tailored marketing strategies can be identified for each type of ranking. For both local search categories, the top ten elements were as follows:³

¹ "2023 Local Search Ranking Factors Report" (Whitespark, 2024).

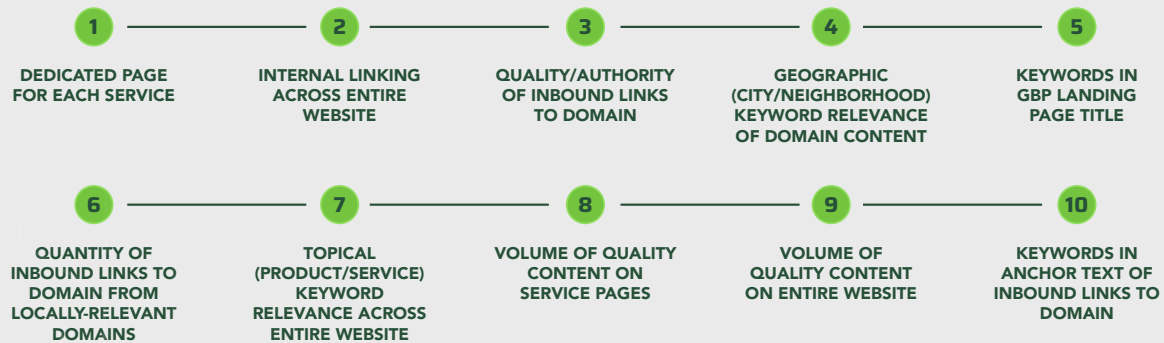
² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Top 10 local pack ranking elements



Top 10 local organic ranking elements



While local pack rankings were dependent on Google Business Profile (GPB) factors primarily affecting relevance (categories and profile verification), local organic rankings were based on factors affecting prominence (internal links, inbound links, and keywords). Additionally, distance had a greater impact on local pack rankings than local organic rankings.



03

Reputation Management at Green House

Reputation management at Green House

Green House Sales & Marketing incorporates many of the top ranking elements of local pack and local organic results by breaking down reputation management into actionable steps. These steps provide a structured framework for local SEO improvement and a strong foundation for success.

1. Set reputation management checkpoints

Since only Google understands the intricacies of the local search algorithm, focusing on outcome measurements is essential to determining the impact of reputation management. To measure outcome effectively, Green House uses checkpoints, key performance indicators (KPIs) which quantify how changes affect business activities over time. Green House benchmark metrics are:

- Calls sourced from GBP
- GBP interactions
- GBP direction requests
- Website clicks from GBP

2. Update business description and category

Updating Google Business Profile (GBP) descriptions and categories is key to optimized local pack and organic rankings. Green House ensures an organization's primary keyword is in the first sentence of their business description to leverage keyword prominence and boost local organic visibility, while selecting the correct categories to boost local pack ranking.

3. Upload photos

Although photos uploaded to GBP directly affect local search results by increasing customer-profile-engagement (a local pack ranking factor), the largest benefit of professional photos is increased customer conversion. Polished, diverse, and professional photos foster customer trust and encourage future sales. To accomplish this goal, Green House recommends organizations upload five main pictures:

1. Company logo
2. A photo of the outside of the office or building
3. A photo of the inside of the building
4. A work sample
5. A picture of team members

4. Add Q&A's

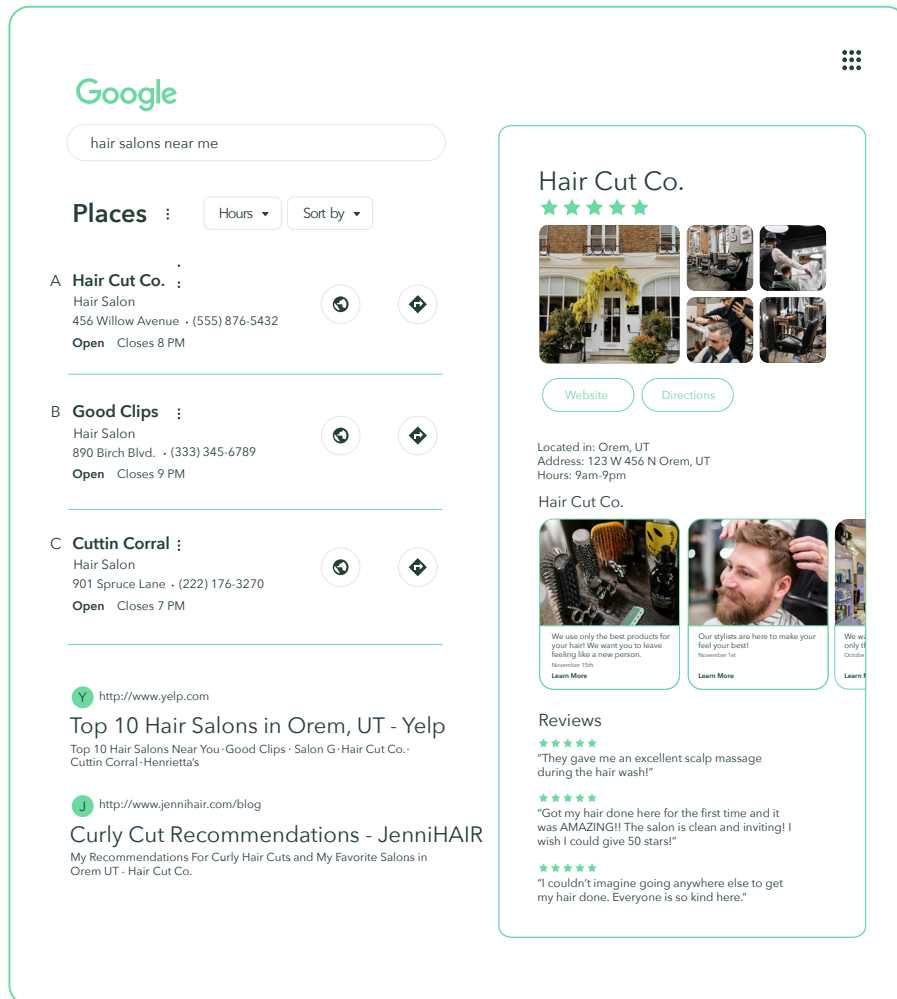
Similar to photos, Q&A (question and answer) sections directly affect local search results by increasing customer-profile engagement. Q&A sections also help boost local pack and local organic rankings when keywords are included in questions or responses, and when more Q&As are listed in a GBP. Green House provides assistance to help companies request and appropriately respond to customer questions to boost local search results.

5. Add product tiles

While many organizations do not take advantage of product tiles, Green House recommends clients highlight 3-6 products on their GBP. Aside from clarifying product and service offerings, product tile name, categories, and descriptions provide opportunities for primary and secondary keywords, boosting prominence through local organic rankings.

6. Add Synup

Green House uses Synup, a directory listing software, to list organizations across 30 reputable online directories, boosting prominence and local organic rankings. By leveraging industry-standard software to create diverse citations, Green House ensures listed NAP are consistent with GBP information and that all inbound-links are properly cited.



7. Add GBP to website

Through embedded links or by insertion of a Google icon, Green House directly incorporates GBP links into client websites. By showing Google that business pages and websites are connected, companies can experience a more optimized GBP, boosting local pack and local organic visibility.

8. Create GBP Posts

Regular GBP Posts help organizations generate additional prominence around targeted keywords, boosting local organic search rankings. GBP Posts also help market products and services to new customers using a combination of strategies such as giveaways, announcements, and in-person or digital events.

9. Review audits

High numerical review rankings is one of the most important elements of high local pack visibility. As such, Green House conducts review audits to ensure organizations are soliciting, monitoring, and responding to reviews correctly. Doing so can present opportunities for problem resolution and improve customer relations.



04

Future Trends

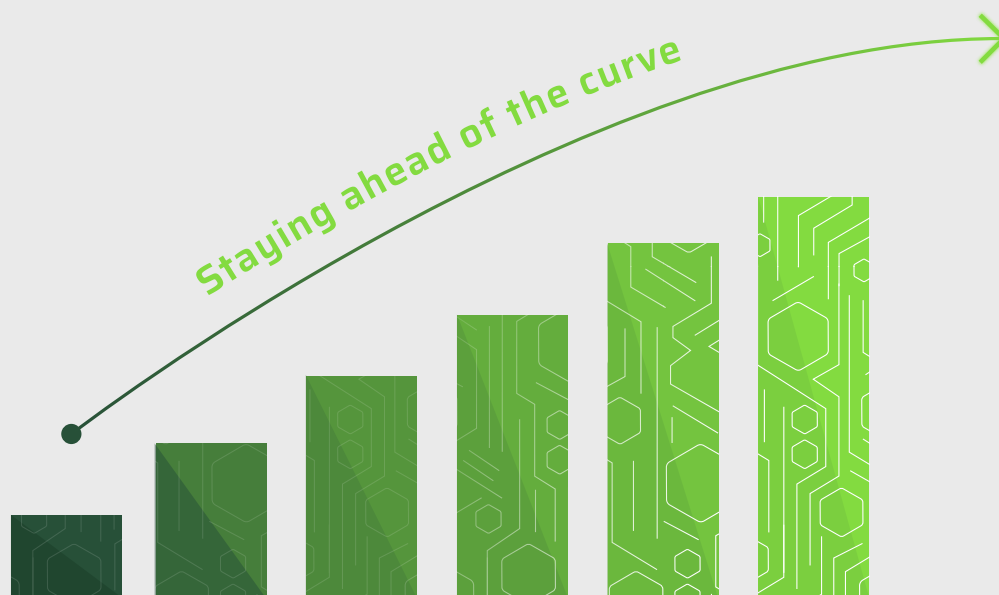
Staying ahead of the curve

Predictable or uncertain, the needs of online customers are always changing. In this dynamic environment, Google algorithms must address these needs before customers recognize they have them. Doing so is critical to Google's goal of organizing the world's information and making it universally accessible and useful.¹

Keeping careful watch of these changing trends is important for marketing professionals and the organizations they serve. A combination of professional experience, trend recognition, and calculated speculation can make the difference between a good marketing strategy and a great one.

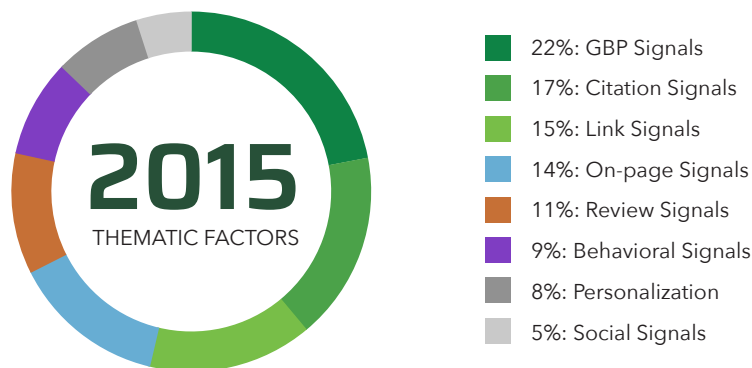
Companies who quickly align themselves with algorithmic revisions will gain improved visibility and competitive advantage over inept competitors, leading to greater sales and the opportunity to capture more market share. Understanding and keeping track of Google trends can position companies for success in a competitive and ever-changing digital marketing environment.

In this final segment, we will conduct an analysis of Google's past algorithmic changes compared to recent research to forecast where local search has been, and where it is headed in the future.

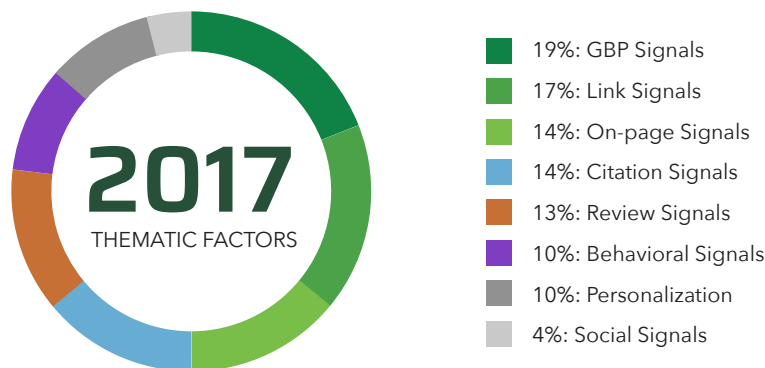


¹ "Our approach to Search" (Google, 2024).

In 2015, professionals ranked the impact of Google's thematic groups on local search as follows:



In 2017, professionals from the same source updated the ranking of the thematic groups as follows:



As a result, from 2015 to 2017, the four most significant changes were:

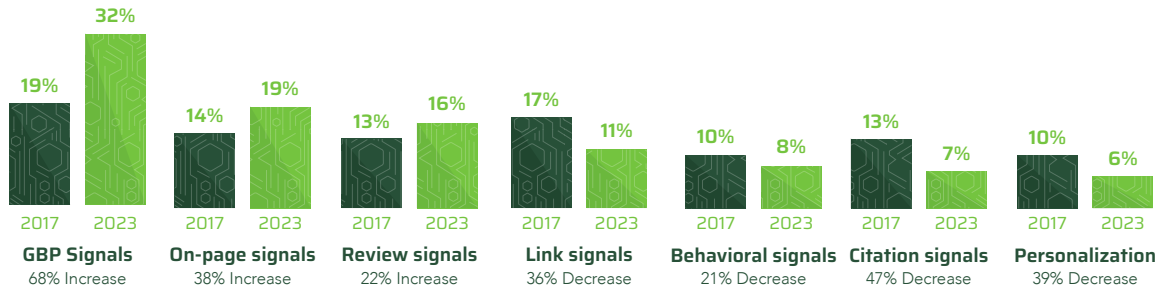
1. 22% Increase in review signals importance
2. 19% Increase in personalization importance
3. 23% Decrease in social signals importance
4. 22% decrease in citation signals importance

These results demonstrate that in 2017, Google began to prioritize a user-optimized experience over simple SEO practices. Google also began to minimize the impact of social signals, which have since been assimilated into other thematic factors. These changes suggest a shift in Google's ranking methodology, from checkbox-style metrics, to subjective, user-friendly signals.

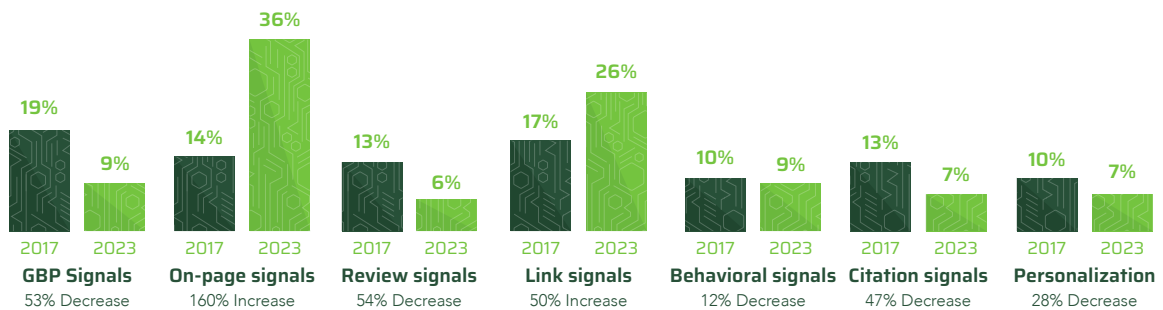
2023 thematic factors

In 2023, professionals revised the ranking of thematic groups, differentiating between local pack and local organic traffic. The updated results, and the differences in their respective weighting since 2017, are as follows:¹

Local pack ranking factors:



Local organic ranking factors:



While professional opinion in 2017 hypothesized Google's departure from checklist SEO metrics in favor of a user-friendly experience, recent studies suggest revision to this theory. Now, professionals believe Google is accentuating the differences between local pack and local organic rankings in pursuit of improved personalization for internet users.

Looking to the future

When making predictions about the future of reputation management, the limitations professionals admit when conducting local SEO research must be acknowledged:²

- There is no single answer to which local SEO factors carry most weight.
- Factors can vary based on the type of search engine being investigated.
- Research regarding local search is theoretical, not definitive.

As a result, no prediction can be guaranteed. However, since its inception, Google has been value-driven, constantly seeking to align its products with its goal of organizing the world's information and making it universally accessible and useful.³ As such, the increased segmentation of consumer markets—and algorithmic differentiation designed for those markets—will likely continue into the future.

¹ "Local Search Ranking Factors" (Whitespark, 2023).

² "The Ultimate Guide to Local Search Rankings Factor" (Moz, 2023).

³ "Our approach to Search" (Google, 2024).

1. AI Integration

With the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI), and a general shift towards personalization, Google plans to solve one need with another. By integrating AI into Google Search and Google Maps, Google can cater search results to user-specified parameters, going beyond the limitations of current algorithms, and providing the most valuable results possible for internet users.

For marketing professionals, the impact of AI is uncertain. It is also a top matter of priority and concern, according to nearly 5,000 polled marketers.¹ How will generative AI affect local SEO, both local pack and organic? How will organizations appeal to AI algorithms? Which factors will weigh heavily in AI rankings? These questions, and others will come to light in the near future.

2. On-page signals

Since 2015, the importance of on-page signals has grown in both local pack and local organic searches. On-page signals, referring to the credibility, usability, and design of a website, signal to Google that websites have the solutions users are looking for, improving local SEO. As a result of this consistency, it is reasonable to expect on-page signals to remain relevant, and possibly, become more important, in the future.

With the majority of local searches being performed on smartphones (57%),² maximizing loading speeds and creating a reputable, user-friendly website should be a priority for organizations competing in local SEO.

3. GBP signals

Although GBP signals saw a 53% decrease in importance to local organic rankings, it increased in importance by 68% for local pack rankings. A direct result of Google's attempt to personalize local searches, GBP signals such as keyword usage, categories, and proximity are likely to affect local organic search results with greater weight in the future.

With the addition of AI to search engines, and an increased emphasis on more advanced search, organizations will need to meticulously manage and monitor their GBPs to ensure they are optimized during upcoming changes.

4. Link signals

Link signals saw a 36% decrease in local pack importance, and a 50% increase in local organic search importance. Likely caused from the increased differentiation between local pack and local organic searches, link signals, such as inbound anchor text, linking domain authority, and linking domain quantity affect the visibility of local organic search results more than ever before.

Consistent with other forecasted changes, it can be reasonably expected that link signals will continue to weigh heavily in the local organic ranking methodology. This solidifies the importance of link signals for local SEO, and should encourage companies to continue soliciting backlinks from reputable domains into the future.

¹"State of Marketing Report, 9th ed" (Salesforce, 2024).

²"50+ Compelling Local SEO Stats" (Synup, 2024).

Appendix A:

Glossary of Terms, Abbreviations, and Acroynms

Behavioral signals:	Ranking signals related to average customer behavior; local search group
Category:	A specific type of business classification, used in online directories
Citation signals:	Ranking signals related to NAP consistency; local search group
Citations:	Mentions of businesses from online directories or business listings
CTR:	Click-Through-Rate, how often people click on website links in searches
Distance:	Geographic proximity of searchers to businesses; Google local search factor
GBP:	Google Business Profile, a tool for managing business presence on Google
GBP Signals:	Ranking signals related to GBP, local search contributing group
Google Post:	Short, text-based updates businesses can publish directly from GBP
Google Service Areas:	A geographic area where businesses provide services (opposed to location)
Keywords:	The words or phrases searched when looking for a specific product or service
Link signals:	Ranking signals related to backlinks, local search group
Local organic results:	Search results that appear during local searches, outside of the local pack
Local pack results (3-pack):	The top three results that appear during local searches
Local search:	Location-relevant Google search queries
Local SEO:	Content and technical optimization to maximize local search visibility
MAIN:	The category that best describes the entirety, or core of a business
NAP:	Name, Address, Phone, critical information Google uses to verify businesses
On-page signals:	Ranking signals related to technical site optimization, local search group
Online directories:	Websites or platforms that host and organize business listings
Online interaction:	The level of interaction audiences have with posted content
Personalization:	Ranking signals related to individual customer behavior, local search group
Primary keywords:	The main terms or phrases surrounding specific products or services
Prominence:	How well known a business is online; Google local search factor
Relevance:	How well a business offering matches user intent; Google local search factor
Reputation management:	Monitoring, influencing, and leveraging perception for higher search visibility
Review audit:	The process of analyzing online reviews to improve reputation management
Review management:	Monitoring, responding to, and improving online review practices
Review signals:	Ranking signals related to customer reviews; local search group
Secondary keywords:	More specific, less competitive terms or phrases related to primary keywords
Structured citations:	Mentions of businesses on websites that follow specific, organized formats
SUBS:	Categories that best describe individual products or services
Synup:	A local SEO platform that helps businesses manage citations

Appendix B:

Executive Metrics for Reputation Management

To evaluate the success of your reputation management efforts, focus on the following metrics:

1. GBP Position/Competitive Position

- **What it measures:** Where your organization ranks in local search results, compared to local competitors. It reflects how the public perceives your business versus others in the same space.
- **Why it matters:** A core benchmark for assessing the effectiveness of your reputation management strategy.

2. Direct Website Traffic

- **What it measures:** How many website visitors come to your site directly (by typing in your URL or using a bookmark). It demonstrates brand awareness, trust, and customer loyalty.
- **Why it matters:** Higher Direct Website Traffic suggests customers positively recall your brand and seek repeat experiences.

3. Backlinks & Traffic from Trusted Directories

- **What it measures:** The quantity and quality of backlinks pointing to your website, and the traffic generated from those links. It measures online trust and authority from other reputable sources.
- **Why it matters:** Backlinks from trusted sources indicate that others recognize the value of your business, boosting reputation.

Positive/Negative Sentiment Scoring (Sentiment Analysis)

- **What it measures:** An analysis of online mentions, reviews, and social media posts to determine whether the tone is positive, negative, or neutral.
- **Why it matters:** Provides valuable insights into public perception of your brand and serves as a baseline for reputation improvement efforts.

Google SERP Page Ranks

- **What it measures:** Similar to GBP Position, but focused on non-local search results (i.e., organic SEO). A higher SERP ranking typically correlates with better visibility and overall marketing success.
- **Why it matters:** Strong SERP rankings signal a reputable online presence outside of local search boundaries.

Appendix C:

Indirect Metrics for Reputation Management

In addition to the executive metrics, consider tracking these indirect metrics to provide a more holistic view of your brand's reputation:

1. NPS (Net Promoter Score)

- **What it measures:** Customer loyalty based on their likelihood of recommending your business to others.
- **Why it matters:** A high NPS indicates strong customer satisfaction, which is directly tied to positive reputation.

2. Referral Count

- **What it measures:** How many leads are generated through referrals, either by word of mouth, social media, or referral programs.
- **Why it matters:** A high referral count indicates a satisfied customer base and a trusted brand.

3. Conversion Growth

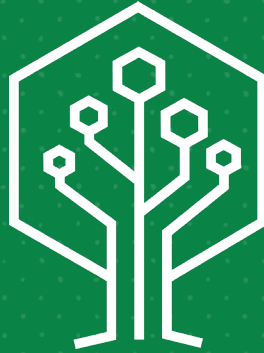
- **What it measures:** The increase in percentage of website visitors who take a desired action (e.g., making a purchase, signing up for a newsletter).
- **Why it matters:** Strong Conversion Growth demonstrates that your brand is effectively driving calls to action.

4. Employee Advocacy & Satisfaction

- **What it measures:** Employee sentiment and how likely they are to advocate for the company.
- **Why it matters:** Positive internal culture can correlate with improved brand recognition, including NPS and Referral Count.

5. Brand Awareness & Recall

- **What it measures:** How easily customers recall or remember your brand when making purchase decisions.
- **Why it matters:** Demonstrates business reputation and customer loyalty while impacting conversion rates.



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