

Five steps to pandemic-proof your business using Local Search



2020 has been tough for everyone - it has affected our social lives, our habits and plans. It has also impacted our jobs - while some enjoy the home office opportunity, others are simply forced out of business because of this situation. Tourism, retail and leisure are some of the most affected industries. Businesses which couldn't shift their operations in line with the restrictions have at best suffered an immense loss of turnover. Which is why, more than ever, it is recommended to pandemic-proof your business and enhance its different options for growth, for multiple future scenarios.

If there's one thing we learned throughout this year, it's that there are opportunities for the most agile amongst us, even during a pandemic. To elaborate on what we think any business should be doing, we have created a simple five-step guide on how to make sure you stand equal chances to global businesses. And all of this without overstressing your budget!

➤ Step 1: Use COVID19-related Google My Business attributes

At the beginning of the pandemic, many businesses were unsure how to comply with the new restrictions. Some of them were focused on shifting to an online model, while others had to close their doors. Whatever your business situation is, if you have a physical address, making sure to provide customers with up-to-date information on how to engage with your business, and perhaps how you guarantee safety for staff and visitors, should be your top priority.



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Having out-of-date information on your business listings will not only cost you loyal customers, it will also prevent you from attracting new ones. Google demands constant verification of how your business is adapting to the current situation so it knows the information it is going to present to customers is up to date and accurate. Businesses who fail to update important data points are doomed to appear less relevant (in Google's eyes), meaning that these businesses will likely be shown less prominently or regularly.

To support those who choose to provide complete and up-to-date information, Google has rolled out very specific attributes that businesses should add to their listings. "Curbside pickup", "no contact delivery", "online appointments" were the first ones to appear for restaurants, retailers and service providers. At the start of the second wave of COVID-19 cases new attributes related to health and safety measures were released. Attributes such as "staff wears masks", "temperature checks required", and "appointment required", to mention a few.

➤ Step 2: Optimise for specific keywords through review responses

Everybody likes a good review – being praised and acknowledged for the quality of your products or services is the best referral you can get. Eighty eight percent of consumers [consider online reviews as trustworthy as a personal recommendation](#), and another eighty two percent of users read reviews when they consider a local business. It is hard to control what is being said about you, but you can start by investing fifteen minutes a week to scan all (negative) reviews. Be aware of what your online reputation is that potential customers see when they consider your business. Another small piece of advice – if you decide to start replying to them it is recommended to add keywords you want to score for in local search to your review responses.

Say that you are an Asian cuisine restaurant that hired the best sushi chef in town. Yes, you would have customers complimenting your spring rolls, poké bowls and teriyaki chicken, but you would like to promote the great sushi, right? So try to include in your responses things like "Have you tried our new sushi variations?", "Thank you for complimenting our sushi chef", "If you liked our Nigiri set, you should definitely try out the classic Norimaki based on an authentic 300-year old rolling technique". This is a simple, yet highly effective approach when you want to boost your discoverability and conversion without spending a lot more time.



➤ Step 3: Use GMB to maximise exposure on Local Search

Now that your business listings are under your direct control, we will unveil yet another secret – potential customers are comparing businesses based on the information provided. And Google will list businesses that offer a rich consumer experience more often. When you see a business which has a great rating and many reviews, clear description of the services offered, up-to-date photos, you'd be much more willing to engage, either online or offline.

Google My Business is a powerful tool that will help you provide the right information to the right customer at the right time. Sharing your offering via a local product inventory or services feed will make your business more visible to a lot of people in your catchment area(s). We recently wrote down a case study on [how we implemented GMB solutions to increase a local retailer's impressions with 80%](#).



Are you unsure how to start managing your listings on Google My Business? Or do you have tons of business locations and struggle to update and optimise those manually? [Give us a call today](#) and let's discuss the opportunities for your business over a free consultation.

➤ Step 4: Take ownership of your Google Maps presence

The majority of your potential customers are using Google not only to find answers to their questions but to also discover locations in their surroundings that would meet their needs. Whenever potential customers are looking for your products or services in your catchment area(s), you want them to consider your business. Therefore, if you are shying away from being found on Google Maps, you will be simply hiding from your potential clients.



If your business has multiple locations, claiming each of them on Google Maps is the first step to initiate business growth. The chances of your business looking great compared to competitors on Google.com or Google Maps, without you taking ownership of your business' appearance on Local Search, are little to none. And with COVID-19 around, not many people will be willing to wander around, looking for random new stores to "experience".



➤ Step 5: Expand your online presence to multiple platforms

While the majority of people would search for you on either Google or Google Maps, there is still a large percentage of potential customers who are residing on other platforms. Have you heard of Apple Maps, TomTom or do you use any other navigational service powered by Here? Tripadvisor? Do you want your location in Uber? Well, as you can guess, they offer a similar platform as Google Maps but serve another audience.

On top of that, listing your locations on multiple platforms will add a lot of SEO value. Think of the many backlinks and referrals you will get if just providing your business information on multiple networks. We can support you in getting your business out there on different types of platforms such as navigational tools, social media players, directories, publishers, aggregators and more.

An extra opportunity is created if you regularly update the content of your listings and respond to reviews on all these platforms. Testing across different industries has shown us that if a business is publishing content on a weekly basis, an additional seventeen percent of impressions is gained in that particular week. We understand it can get pretty difficult to do so consistently for multiple channels and dozens of locations. Therefore, we offer tooling that helps you update business information and content from a single interface. It will also help you to keep an eye on what is being said about you. And last but not least, we provide easy A/B testing of optimisations so you can improve your local presence fast.

➤ Get your free quote now

Up Analytics has helped small and large businesses to structure and manage their presence on Google My Business, Apple Maps, TomTom, Here, TripAdvisor, and many other platforms that could be also relevant for your business.

[Curious about what we can do?](#) We are happy to demo our tooling and offer a free two-week test to anyone with more than ten locations.



You can contact us via our [online form](#) or by [email](#).
We will get back to you within three working days.