

LOCAL SEO'S MOSTLY FOCUS ON **LINK BUILDING** & **CONTENT DEVELOPMENT** - A STUDY



The Almost Abandoned Google Messaging Gets Some Great Usability Upgrades



Google Rolls Out Four New Attributes to Google My Business

With an aim to help businesses to better serve users limited from in-person transactions due to COVID-19, Google recently introduced the following four attributes that now appear in a business's knowledge panel.

Bing Reveals Its Ranking Factors in Updated Webmaster Guidelines

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1

LOCAL SEO'S MOSTLY FOCUS ON LINK BUILDING & CONTENT DEVELOPMENT - A STUDY

Other than using organic tricks, around 80% of local marketers are buying ads on Google. This figure is almost 10% more as compared to last year, as revealed by a MOZ [survey](#) of 1,300 local marketing agencies, small businesses and multi-location enterprises.

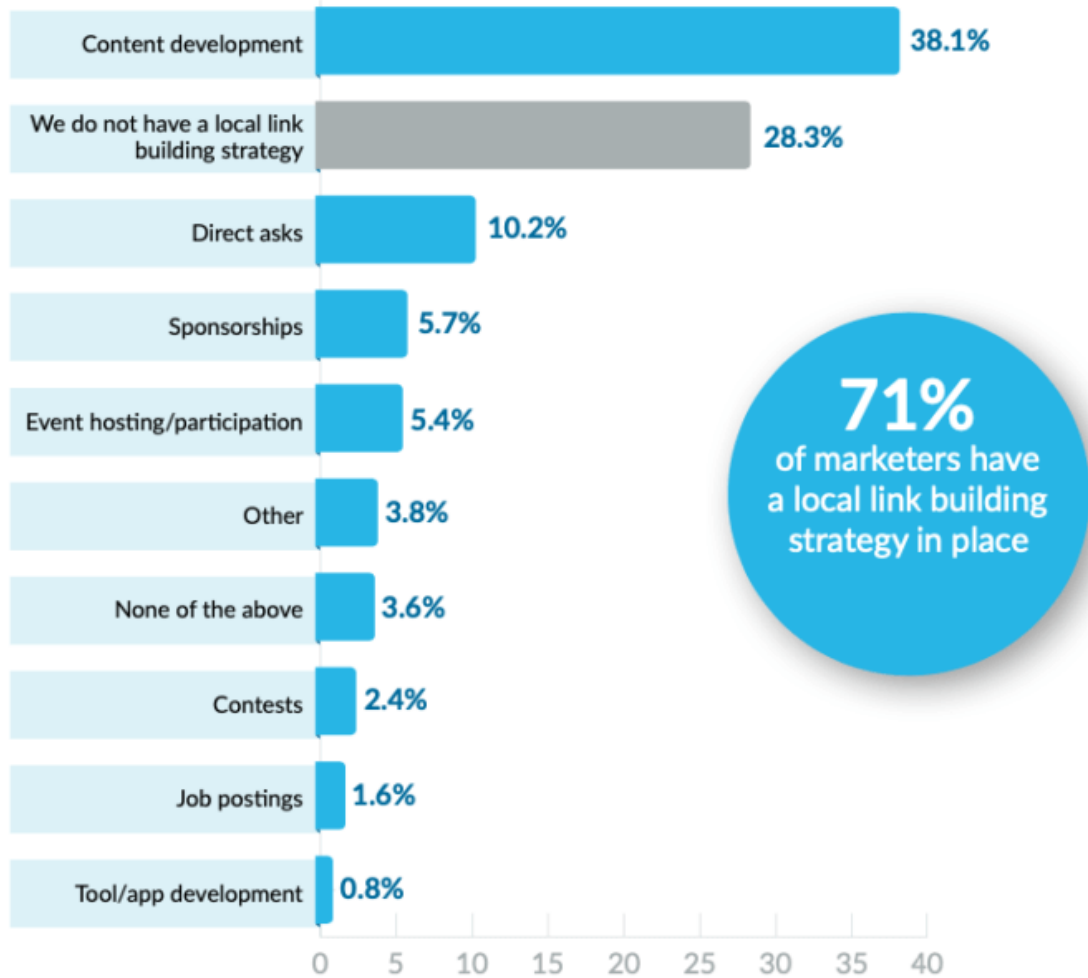
The survey also included questions regarding the impact of COVID-19 on marketing budgets. Majority of them (70%+) said that they were dealing with cuts. However, "74% believe that business-as-usual will return within a year of safety orders being lifted." While local link building was somewhere in between, paid media, social and localized web content were more often cut than SEO.

When marketers were asked about the SERP feature that they were most focused on, the results were as follows:

1. Featured Snippets
2. Local Packs
3. Google Business Profile
4. "We don't have an SERP feature strategy."

Consistent with the zero-click narrative, 77% of respondents said they agreed with the statement that Google (Business Profiles) are "the new homepage" for local businesses.

Here you can see a local link building strategy with the highest ROI.



Source: Moz State of Local SEO Industry

These are the **Top Local SEO Tricks** where marketers wanted to invest more.

1. Local link building – 18%
2. Local content development – 15%
3. On-site optimization – 13%
4. Technical analysis of ranking/traffic/conversions – 9%
5. Website design – 8%
6. Review management – 7%
7. Social media – 6%
8. Email marketing – 5%
9. Technical needs – 4%
10. Schema – 4%

As observed in the study, the highly competitive industries such as Automotive, Real Estate and Legal were “clamoring the loudest for devoted link building resources”. The top items on the local SEO tactical wish list, for enterprises, by comparison were:

1. Review management – 13.9%
2. Local content development – 13.2%
3. On-site optimization – 13.2%
4. Local link building – 11.1%
5. Technical analysis for ranking/traffic/conversions – 10.4%
6. Website design – 9%
7. Schema – 5.6%
8. Other Google Business Profile features management – 5.6%
9. Technical needs – 4.2%
10. Social media – 3.5%

When it comes to link building - content development, direct requests and sponsorships were the top 3 strategies with the highest ROI, as per the survey.

3/4th of respondents said that they believe “use of Google My Business profile features (e.g., Posts, Q&A) impacts rankings in the local pack”, which is partly true. Although some elements of GMB do impact local rankings, the local SEO consensus is that Posts and Q&A do not impact local rankings. Reviews and photos, by comparison, do not have an impact.

When asked about where local SEO resides within the organization, around 48% of the time, which is most often, it was located in the marketing department. Alternatively, it fell under the control of the business owner.

1. Account Managers – 15%
2. Webmasters – 9.1%
3. IT Department – 6.6%
4. Other groups – 3.4%

Most local marketers (68%) reported that they were using 2-5 local SEO tools, while 12% were using six or more, 20% used either none or one.

Local SEO is an essential part of digital marketing for the majority of U.S. businesses that have a physical presence or a service area. If you are looking to optimize your local presence, do get in touch with our experienced personnel for assistance.

2

THE ALMOST ABANDONED GOOGLE MESSAGING GETS SOME GREAT USABILITY UPGRADES

Google My Business's Messaging feature allows users to directly message businesses from their Google Maps listing and has been a mainstay for quite some time, but its use has been merely unsatisfactory. Businesses are required to use the GMB App to utilize the feature, but management between staff members becomes hard. There were no solid plans to make updates to the feature, up until the pandemic.

These times have been tough for people and businesses as they continue with their lives from a distance. The need for digital communication has spiked unlike ever before, making it a main priority. This desperate need for effective communication has led to Google rolling out some of the very best, user-friendly upgrades to their otherwise inert Messaging feature. Here is [Google's word on the upgrades](#):

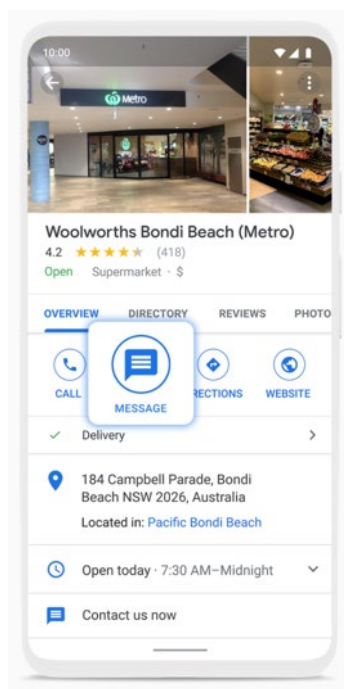


Image Source: blog.google/products/maps/nor-sending-business-messages-google-maps-and-search/

“Today we’re expanding Business Messages in Maps and Search to support all kinds of businesses, and giving them the ability to integrate Business Messages directly with their customer service platforms. Business Messages provides brands a comprehensive messaging solution across Android devices, and through Maps on iOS. To improve connections with customers, we’ve recently introduced new smart replies, visual product carousels, and unique welcome messages. There’s also a smooth transition from automated replies to a customer service agent, so that it’s not disruptive when the customer messages a business.”

Basically, this upgrade from Google works very similarly to the website chat feature that is used by several customers and businesses. Take an in-depth look at the latest additions made to the feature:

New Smart Replies - Much like your site’s chat feature, there are several options to provide automated support before anyone from your team steps in. It functions like an FAQs system, where you can send in your questions or click within the carousel, after which your team can come in and take over the conversation seamlessly.

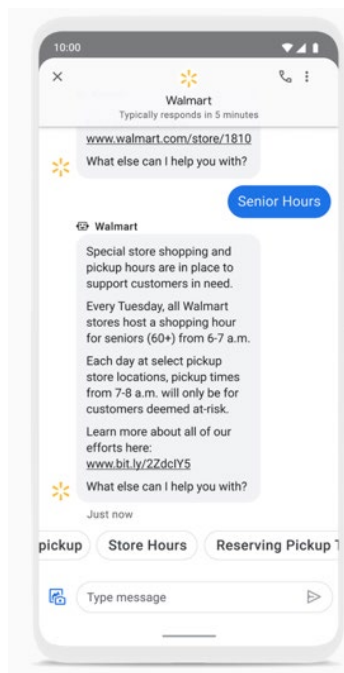


Image Source: blog.google/products/maps/now-sending-business-messages-google-maps-and-search/

Visual Product Carousels - As the name suggests, this feature enables you to showcase the various products you have in store to the customer.

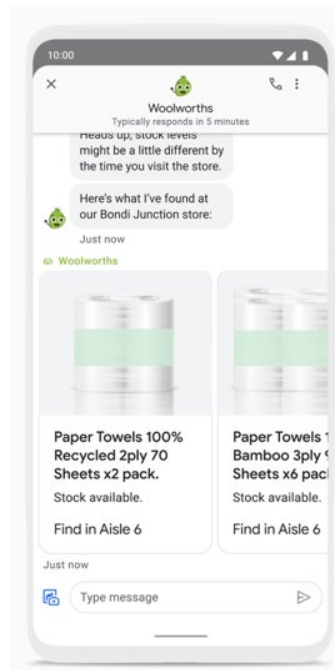


Image Source: blog.google/products/maps/now-sending-business-messages-google-maps-and-search/

Unique Welcome Messages - With this feature, you can customize welcome messages for your customers to see. This feature allows businesses to shine through and establish their brand presence online!

Enhanced Images – Images play a crucial role in our buying decision, and this new feature showcases images along with URLs.

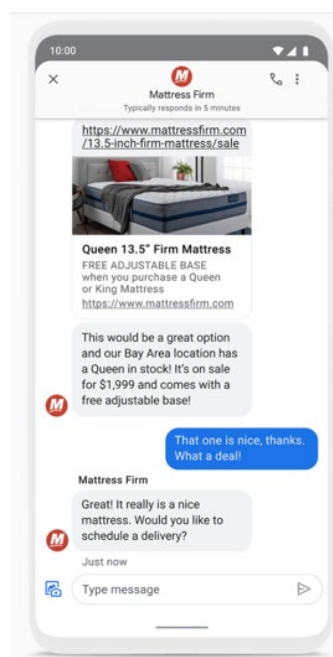


Image Source: blog.google/products/maps/now-sending-business-messages-google-maps-and-search/

Actionable Strategy - We would highly recommend using Google My Business Message feature. It is not only free to use for now, but Google will be regularly integrating more of its top features for greater user experience. Now is the time to make most of the platform!

To know more about Business Messaging, [click here](#). The message system now integrates with some of the best customer service systems, giving you the freedom to manage the complete process on your website rather than completely within Google's system. Check out the list of partners here.

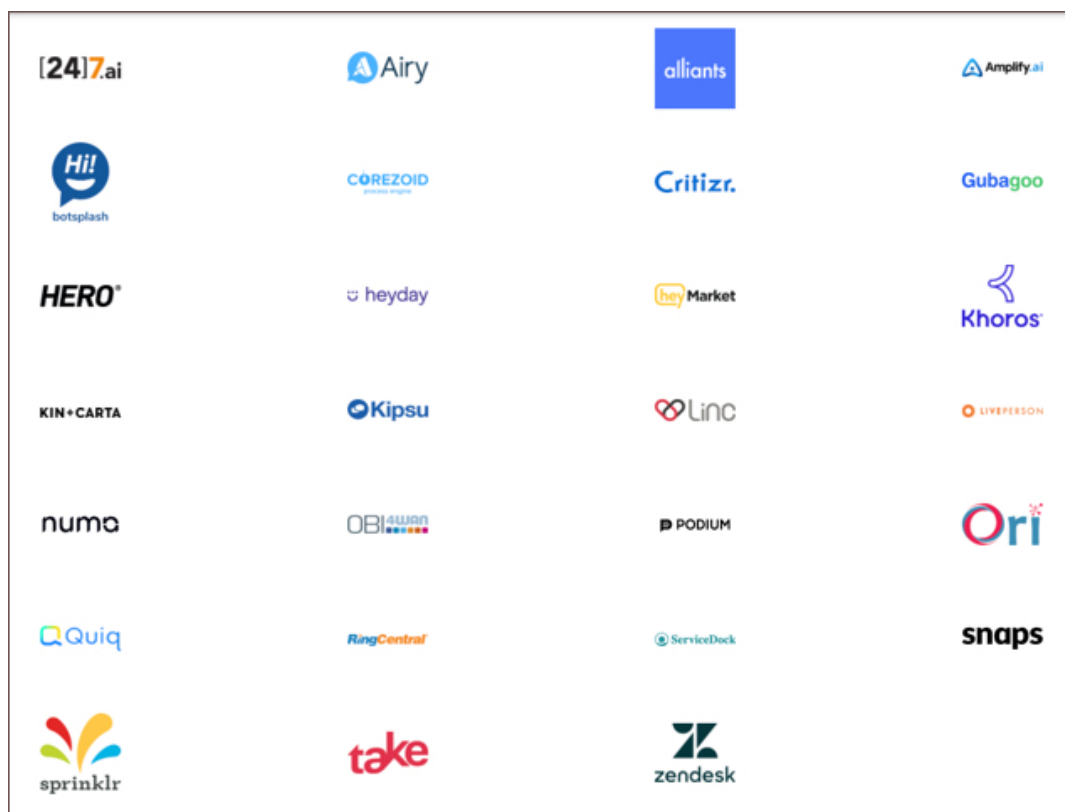


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If you wish to get started with any of the partners listed above, reach out to Google about it here. Or else, you can simply log into your GMB listing and select the messaging option on the left-hand menu. Make sure to download the app to use it!

3

GOOGLE ROLLS OUT FOUR NEW ATTRIBUTES TO GOOGLE MY BUSINESS

With an aim to help businesses to better serve users limited from in-person transactions due to COVID-19, Google recently introduced the following four attributes that now appear in a business's knowledge panel.

- Online Care
- Online Appointment
- Online Estimates
- Online Class

Here's How to Add These Attributes to Your Google My Business Listings:

Businesses can add any attribute that is relevant to their business. Follow the below steps to add new attributes to your Google My Business listing.

Login into the [Google My Business](#) listing that you would like to edit.

Then click on **Info** in the left-hand menu.

Now scroll down to **Add Attributes** and click on **Edit**.

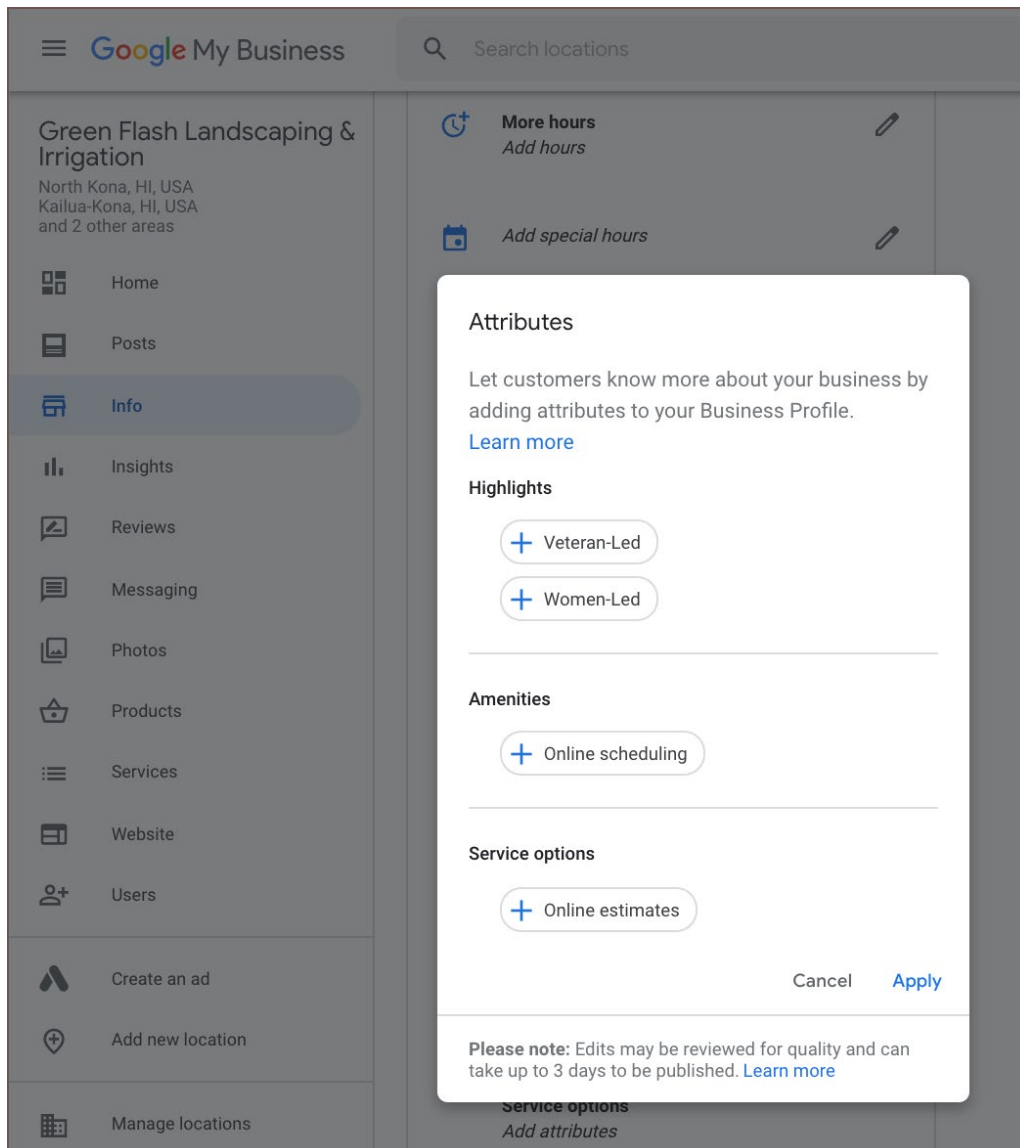


Image Source: *business.google.com*

Here's how it appears. You can find all the attributes available for your business and select all the suitable ones that apply to your business.

4

BING REVEALS ITS RANKING FACTORS IN UPDATED WEBMASTER GUIDELINES

Bing's Webmaster Guidelines, which have remained the same since 2012, were recently updated. The updated guidelines detail the changes they have made to the search engine and what the modern search results look like.

The Updated Document Shares How Bing Ranks Content

The 2020 version of the Webmaster Guidelines consists of an entire section that tells us how Bing ranks content. The main ranking factors mentioned by Bing are as follows:

1. **Relevance:** It refers to how closely the landing page content matches the intent behind a search query. Semantic equivalents such as synonyms and abbreviations are also taken into consideration.
2. **Quality and Credibility:** In order to evaluate the page itself, Bing considers factors such as the author's or site's reputation, the level of discourse, the completeness of the content and transparency of authorship.
3. **User Engagement:** To determine user engagement, Bing considers factors such as:
 - Did users click through to search results for a given query, and if so, which results?
 - Did users spend time on the search results they clicked through to or did they return to Bing quickly?
 - Did the users adjust or reformulate their query?
4. **Freshness:** Bing generally prefers "fresh" content, meaning sites that consistently provide up-to-date information.
5. **Location:** Bing also considers factors such as where a user is located, where the page is hosted, the language used, and the location of the other visitors.
6. **Page Load Time:** Bing considers slow page load time as poor user experience and hence, prefers faster page loads.

Generally, the characteristics of the goods or services do not affect how Bing ranks a site unless the content is potentially offensive or harmful to the users. Also, sites that promote methods of suicide or purport to sell opioids or other potentially harmful drugs may get demoted by Bing.

What You Should Do Next

Bing's updated search guidelines are a quick 10 minutes read and it is highly recommended that you take the time out to go through it. If you are a pro in SEO then you will note that unlike Google, Bing admits that User Engagement is an important ranking factor.

If you happen to know anyone who is serious about marketing a website or is working on a website, ask them to go through the document as all the details shared here are must-know information.