

SEO and content strategies for multi-location businesses



**VERTICAL
LEAP**



Companies that operate with multiple business locations have to work hard to build a local SEO presence in each area they operate. Local SEO is a time-consuming strategy and the workload for brands optimising multiple locations is particularly intense.

In this guide, we show you how our team maximises the local search presence of every business location for our customers operating across the country - or internationally.

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Local search marketing insights

The 2021 Local Search Consumer Behaviour Study, which analyses users' local search habits and the impact of Covid-19, found that 90% of people searching for businesses in their local area were looking to make a purchase - either immediately or within seven days.

According to a study published by Backlinko, the local results in the Google Map Pack have a combined CTR of 42%, which is way above average considering almost 65% of all queries supposedly generate no clicks at all.

Local searchers typically have a high purchase intent. They're looking to buy now, and they interact with local listings through clicks, including website visits, phone calls and even in-store visits. **This shows the importance of being discoverable in every location.**

When searching online for a business in your area, when would you typically be looking to make a purchase?

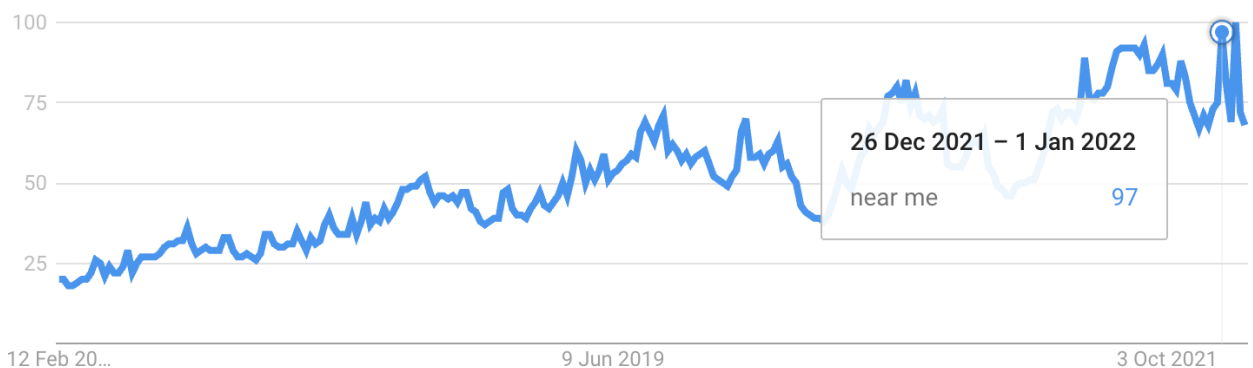


of local consumers are looking to make a purchase *within one week.*

'Near me' searches

If we look at Google Trends data over the past five years for 'near me' searches (below), we can see that despite a couple of Covid-19 dips, they continue to demonstrate impressive year-on-year growth as more people actively seek out local search results.

There has also been an increase in non-brand queries; people searching for business types and services in their 'near me' queries rather than simply typing to find the nearest branch of major brand names. This shows people are actively looking to discover new brands through local search.



1. Multi-location insights

The biggest asset you've got as a multi-location company is access to performance data across every area. Instead of simply working with global data, you can gain insights from several, dozens or hundreds of different locations to spot trends, benchmark performance and differentiate each business location.

Even with the most basic data system in place, you can build a comparative picture of business performance across locations, including:

- ▶ Revenue
- ▶ Average sale value
- ▶ Sales volumes
- ▶ Top-selling products/services
- ▶ Search visibility
- ▶ Keyword search volumes
- ▶ Keyword CTRs
- ▶ Conversion rates
- ▶ Search visibility radius
- ▶ Local customer radius

This isn't a particularly sophisticated dataset, but you can already identify which locations are performing best (both financially and in search) and which ones are underperforming. You can then determine why certain locations are falling behind and optimise to improve results.

For our customers, we build a far more comprehensive dataset to develop a complete picture of business performance, which we can segment for each location or group of locations. We can then identify trends across locations to understand why performance varies. These insights allow us to learn from top-performing locations and understand why certain strategies won't work for specific locations.

We can enhance these insights with competitor analysis to measure performance against local rivals. We may see competitors also perform below-average in the same location and then determine whether this is simply a low-priority location or whether there's anything we can do to dominate this particular area.

Third-party data can provide more context to first-party data and competitor analysis. E.g., by comparing average sales values across locations with average salary data from ONS you can identify locations where you could promote more expensive offerings



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2. Drive business with localised content

Localised content is crucial for maximising search visibility in specific locations, yet few marketers prioritise this due to the time and budget required to produce localised content for multiple locations.

Localised content is generating around 400% ROI for some of our multi-location customers through direct bookings. Yes, it takes time and money to produce content for each business location, but the returns are more than worth it.

Some companies challenge the idea of producing localised pages because of concerns around content duplication. However, senior Google figures repeatedly tell us duplicate content is OK providing it delivers value.

When it comes to location pages, general information about your business is going to be the same – and this is fine. We've tested this across hundreds of business locations and similar content is not an issue in this situation. The bigger issue with location pages is optimising for local keywords so you can target searches like “best places to eat [location]” and “things to do in [location]”.

How to implement a localised content strategy

1. Create a localised landing page (or set of pages) for each business location.
2. Insert landing page content from a boilerplate template.
3. Insert location names and local keywords
4. Add business location details: address, phone numbers, opening times, Google Maps embed, etc.
5. Add unique content about the specific location to the page.
6. Publish regular localised content for each location.

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3. Build sub-location pages

Each of your business locations attracts customers within a certain radius and you can use local SEO to target, build and enhance these catchment areas for driving more business to each location.

For example, one of our customers is a growing self-storage company with locations across the south coast and, of course, they want to attract customers beyond the immediate vicinity of their business locations.

Let's say a company has a business location in Portsmouth that's targeting customers within a 10-mile radius. This would cover several sub-locations, including Fareham, Havant and Emsworth. A Portsmouth-based business wouldn't necessarily show for people typing "self-storage Fareham" or people in Fareham searching "self-storage near me" - especially after the November 2021 local search update, which made proximity even more important.

To improve search visibility in these areas, you need to create sub-location pages for each area you want to target in your catchment area. Optimise these pages to include keywords like "self-storage near Fareham", emphasise key selling points (such as only five minutes from Fareham) and provide relevant information, such as directions from the target location.

Again, you can use the same content from your other location pages and add or change roughly 30% to optimise for keywords and include unique content for the target location.

By adding sub-location pages around your business locations, you build a much stronger ranking for keywords like "self-storage Fareham" and establish your catchment area. Obviously, these are low-volume opportunities, in terms of total search queries, compared to searches like "self-storage Portsmouth". But they're also less competitive, high-intent queries that are more likely to convert, especially if you deliver localised pages showing how well your company caters to their area.

Low search volume, high-intent queries are some of the biggest opportunities in local SEO and building a catchment area of sub-location pages is a great way to boost ROI.



Create sub-location pages for each area you want to target. These low search volume, high-intent queries are some of the biggest opportunities in local SEO.



4. Drive growth through each location

A lot of multi-location companies make the mistake of trying to manage local search with a globalised strategy, which is like taking all the hard work of multi-location SEO without any of the benefits.

Earlier, we talked about using comparative data to identify your top-performing locations and calculate how much room is left for improvement with competitor analysis and third-party data. By now, you should have all the data you need to understand what makes each business location unique from its local rivals.

We did this analysis for one of storage customers and found some interesting and unique characteristics about one of its business locations:

- ▶ **It was the only one in the area offering 24-hour access for customers**
- ▶ **It had more on-site parking than local alternatives**
- ▶ **It had a covered loading bay to protect items on rainy days**



Research unique characteristics about each location and promote them on your landing pages.

With these three USPs, we can ensure these factors are specified on the landing pages. This way, when someone searches for “self-storage 24-hour access”, Google ranks the page higher and even shows the user that “24-hour access” is specifically mentioned on the landing page.

By building the local presence of each business location, you’re enhancing your search strategy in two key ways: You’re building local search signals for each specific location that search engines detect, and you’re building brand awareness through meaningful relationships with the local community.

How to maximise the local presence of each business location

1. Create localised blog posts for each location.
2. Support local businesses (this was particularly important and effective during lockdown).
3. Partner with local charities.
4. Get involved in local events.
5. Be newsworthy - get published in the local press.

5. Long-term website authority and growth

The long-term goal of any SEO strategy is to build self-sustaining growth from pages that continue to generate higher volumes of traffic. To achieve this, you have to build domain authority, and this requires quality backlinks.

In SEO terms, a quality link points from an external website with a stronger domain authority than yours. To get the strongest signal boost, you want links with optimised anchor text and no rel="nofollow" tag in the link HTML. Nofollow links from quality websites are still valuable but you should aim to earn multiple high-quality "do-follow" links each year.

Quality is more important than quantity and earning 2-3 follow links from high-authority websites every year is better than half a dozen from websites with a similar domain authority to yours. Recency is also a factor, which is why it's important to keep earning quality backlinks every year.

Link quality is more important than quantity

So how do you consistently earn this level of backlinks for local pages? You must create the best content for each topic to earn the best backlinks and continue earning them for years to come. This doesn't happen easily, but a content-driven local SEO strategy increases brand awareness and builds the kind of search authority that drives long-term growth.

This visibility growth translates into business growth outside of search, too. Increased brand awareness means more people know about your business and are more likely to do business with you as locations open in their nearby area.

How to build long-term website authority

- ▶ Produce high-quality, in-depth content for each business location.
- ▶ Build content clusters: Publish shorter pieces of localised content exploring related topics to your in-depth pieces.
- ▶ User questions: Publish shorter, localised pieces addressing the questions your target audience asks in search, on your Google Business Profile, etc.
- ▶ Build internal links to your location pages from relevant pages and posts on your website.
- ▶ Update existing content, expand with more detail and add more value over time.
- ▶ Audit: Combine pages competing for the same keyword and remove pages gaining no traction.

6. Win customers without a fixed location

Whether you take the service to your customers (plumber, roofer, etc.) or you deliver them at other venues (events, catering, etc.), you face the challenge of optimising for locations where you have no business premise.

You can't replicate the same type of local search presence as a company with physical locations, but you can take lessons from strategy #3 where we talked about building catchment areas with sub-location pages.

For example, one of our customers is a locksmith that covers quite a wide area across the UK. We've created more than 2,000 location pages for its website!

That might sound like an unmanageable workload, but we can automate much of this process. And remember, duplicate content isn't an issue for location pages, as long as the content on each page is relevant and accurate.

Below is a review of the process we used to produce these 2,000 location pages for our locksmith customer:

How we produced 2,000 location pages for a customer

1. **Keyword analysis:** Analysed every target keyword for "locksmith [location]" and compared against competitors.
2. **Opportunities:** Keyword analysis revealed 300 location keyword opportunities our customer was missing out on.
3. **Prioritisation:** Analysed search volumes of all 300 keyword opportunities to determine which ones were worth optimising for.
4. **Page creation:** Generated every page from a boilerplate template.
5. **Local keywords:** Inserted location names and localised keywords where relevant.
6. **Business details:** Added relevant business details to each page, including the address, phone numbers, opening times, Google Maps embed, etc.
7. **Localised content:** Added unique content about the specific business location and the local area.
8. **Postcode targeting:** Created location pages for key postcodes in London for searches like "locksmith SW1".
9. **Inbound links:** Earned inbound links for location pages with the same content strategy from strategy #5.
10. **Scale up:** With a search presence established in key locations, we expanded the catchment area with sub-location pages, as in strategy #3.

Need help?

Multi-location SEO and content marketing is an extremely challenging, never-ending job. The minute you take your foot off the pedal, a competitor will take your place in the search engine results.

We are very experienced at helping multi-location businesses achieve maximum visibility in their local areas. So, if you need help or advice, contact our experts today:

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About Vertical Leap

We are a UK-leading search marketing agency with 65 employees specialising in SEO, PPC, content marketing, web design and CRO.

We are part of the Sideshow Group; an independent group of 10 agencies with 500+ staff across Europe, the US and Canada.

We are a Premier Google Partner (rated in the top 3% of agencies) and accredited advertising partners with Facebook, Microsoft and Amazon.



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