

# **Google 3-Pack Secrets for the Local Business**

By Isaiah M Bizabani

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# About the Author

Isaiah M Bizabani is a Digital Marketing Consultant and founder of Netonline Media. He has a combined 15-year experience in film production, corporate video production, online marketing and web design.

# Introduction

People turn to Google for everything these days. It's been the number one search engine since at least 2004, which is impressive considering its inception was only a few years before in 1998. Today, over 20 years later, it remains the top place people go to when they're looking for a product, service, company, or just general information.

Marketers and business owners know this. It's why they make sure their websites are optimized according to Google's algorithms. Not Yahoo's, not Bing's, but Google's. They optimize their website by using search engine optimization, making sure their website is mobile and secure, and using both external and internal links to other webpages.

And it's why so many have already caught on to the Google 3-Pack. The Google 3-Pack is at its most basic, a top listing of places Google recommends. This recommendation is, gold for business owners. They know that when a customer sees them in this little blocked off space reserved just for them, they're going to get way more calls than the business that's sitting in the number eight spot.

Sounds good, right? So, how do you get your business into one of those top three spots? How do you take your business from the front page to the top three spots on that front page?

That's what this report focuses on. Using a few tools like Google My Business and your own website, it's easier to get into the Google 3-Pack than you might think. All you really need are the tips and tricks outlined here, and a little bit of time to devote to your online presence. So read on and get ready to skyrocket over your competitors.

# From the 7-Pack to the 3-Pack

It was in August of 2015 that Google made a major change to the way it displayed businesses. Prior to this date, Google had what was known as the “Google 7-Pack.” This was a box of the top businesses that were customized to the queries entered by users. The businesses in the 7-Pack were local and displayed basic information.

In 2015 though, Google had undergone major changes since creating their 7-Pack. They had placed a much greater emphasis on mobility, considering that the majority of users were searching through handheld mobile devices. It was a great move that had business owners scrambling to ensure their website displayed properly on a mobile device. But, there was a problem.

The 7-Pack results didn’t display properly on mobile devices - a problem Google had started penalizing business owners and webmasters for. So, the change was made and Google’s 3-Pack was born.

In addition to reducing the number of businesses listed from seven to three, Google implemented other big changes, too.

One of those is the fact that within the 3-Pack, business addresses and phone numbers are not displayed. Customers can still get a basic idea of the location because the street the business is located on still appears. However, they cannot get a street number until digging a little further.

When the change was first implemented, some marketers and business owners complained that Google’s new pack no longer offered visitors a one-click option to get to their website. That’s true, it doesn’t. With the 7-Pack, you could click on a listing and be taken right to that business’ website. It’s no longer like that. Instead, after clicking on a listing, the user is taken to another page within Google. Here, the old 7-Pack card for the business appears on the left. On the right, the business that was clicked on sits in the top spot. Below it, are 20 other businesses.

This was good news and bad news for marketers. Yes, it’s clearly easier to make it into a top 20 listing of businesses, but it also makes it easier for users to scroll down to that number eight spot, even after they’ve selected a business.

So, now that you know what the Google 3-Pack *used* to be, what is it really?  
And why is it so important for businesses to get into it?

# What is the Google 3-Pack?

Google is all about giving people relevant search results that answers their query. It's the only way to keep people coming back to use their search engine, and this focus on relevance is why Google has been the number one search engine for so long. The 3-Pack is one way they do this and it's specifically tailored to users that have local intent.

Local intent means that the user is looking for something local. Google is international, and there's a lot of information on it. Without the 3-Pack, it would be difficult for customers to find something in the neighborhood they're currently in. So, Google has encouraged business owners and marketers to go local in everything they do, and one of the main focuses is on the 3-Pack.

How does Google do this? By recognizing local terms. Clearly, beginning with a street name or the name of a city is a good place to start. Users looking for somewhere to eat lunch for example, may enter a query of, "Manhattan Italian restaurants." They would get a listing of search results only for Italian restaurants in Manhattan. The most optimized for Google would appear in the 3-Pack.

Google also considers terms like "find" or "near me" to express local intent. Lastly, any business category or term normally associated with small business is also considered local intent. These are terms such as "plumber, realtor, or dentist."

The 3-Pack is designed for these local users, and for these local businesses.

Once Google understands that a user has local intent, they place a group of businesses into the 3-Pack. The 3-Pack is displayed at the very top of the first page of search result pages. The only results above the 3-Pack are paid advertisements. Below the 3-Pack sit all the results that ranked organically, that is through optimization alone and not paid ads.

In addition to listing the name of the business and the street it's on, the 3-Pack also displays business reviews, images, business hours, and if a business is currently opened or closed.

Since Google dropped the number of listings in this pack from seven to three, many business owners and marketers thought it was a change that would only make life more difficult for local business owners. That's not necessarily true, though.

It's important to remember that those top three spots are in rotation based on the user's physical location. When two users are even just a few miles away from each other, those results will change depending on the location of the user. That means that the 3-Pack could potentially allow even more businesses to enjoy increased exposure.

# How Can the 3-Pack Impact Your Business?

So, now you know that getting your business listed in the 3-Pack will give your business more exposure. Often in marketing, it's hard to quantify just how much exposure your business will get. That's not the case with the 3-Pack, though. Consider these stats:

- The first, second, and third results in the 3-Pack receive 24.28%, 13.81% and 9.5% of all clicks, respectively.
- The 3-Pack appears in the top spot 93 percent of the time a local search is conducted.
- 50 percent of customers that performed a local search on a mobile device visited that store with a day and 18 percent of those visits resulted in a purchase.

See how beneficial the 3-Pack is for your business? With so many customers out right now in your community searching for your business, the best way to help them find it is by ranking Google's 3-Pack. This will increase foot traffic, something all local businesses rely on, bring in new customers, and boost your bottom line.

So, now that you understand that benefits the 3-Pack has to offer business owners, how do you get your business into it?

# Using Google My Business to Rank in the Google 3-Pack

Ranking in the Google 3-Pack all starts a Google My Business listing. If you don't yet have one, now is the time to get started creating one. Getting listed on Google My Business is free and, unlike what many business owners think, it does not replace having your own website. In fact, not having a website could greatly hurt your chances of ranking in the 3-Pack.

Google My Business (GMB) complements your business' website by providing basic information to users through GMB, the largest online local directory. The information contained within a GMB listing is then shown in Google Search, namely the 3-Pack, and on Google Maps, which is displayed along with the listing.

If you've already used Google to promote your business, either through Google Place for Business or Google+ Pages Dashboard, your business is likely already on GMB. When Google did away with these services, they automatically converted businesses over. Still, the information displayed is likely pretty bare if you haven't created and optimized your own GMB listing.

To start creating your own listing, or see if your business already appears in GMB, you can visit:<https://www.google.com/business>.

Once you have a basic GMB listing, you can then begin to optimize it. Google chooses the best three businesses to display in the 3-Pack based largely on these listings. Business owners that have ensured their listing is optimized are more likely to rank in the 3-Pack.

# Optimizing Your GMB Listing

There are several steps to take when optimizing your GMB listing so your business can rank higher in the search results. While not difficult work, it can be time-consuming. Many business owners opt to hire a marketing consultant to ensure the business is fully optimized, and to save themselves a bit of time. For business owners that want to go it alone though, it certainly can be done. You just have to follow these few tips.

## **Make sure your listing is complete**

This seems obvious, but so many business owners, rush through creating a GMB listing that they skim over the questionnaire. They automatically assume that certain information doesn't pertain to them, or they think it's simply not important. This is not true, though.

The local search results in the 3-Pack are Google search results. Just like any other results, Google wants to ensure they're delivering results to users that are relevant and helpful. When listings are incomplete with scant information, Google doesn't think it will be helpful to users and so, it won't rank in the 3-Pack.

## **Use keywords**

If you've spent any time optimizing your website or blog, you know just how important keywords are. These are the words or phrases users enter into Google when looking for information. By matching the words in your text to the terms they're searching for, Google is more likely to make a match. That matching word or phrase is a signal to Google that your website will be helpful to the user, so it will turn up in the search results.

This same concept is important for your GMB listing. Use them throughout your listing, and use several of them. The more keywords you include, the more matches you'll make with search queries. Do be careful not to overstuff, though. Google's pretty smart at picking up on that and will see it as a dishonest tactic. Keep the language natural and when it makes sense to use a keyword, do so.

## **Keep accurate business hours**

One of the best aspects of the Google 3-Pack for customers is that it displays a business' hours of operation. Imagine that a user is across town and knows your business and where it's located. They just want to know if you'll still be open if they make the trip out to see you. They enter your business into Google and see that you're open for another two hours. When they get there though, you're closed, and now they're frustrated.

This is why it's so important to keep your business hours accurate. If customers are unhappy, they could leave an unfavorable review right on your listing. That's not only bad for business, it will also hurt your optimization efforts. When creating the listing, enter all operating hours and make sure they are correct. If needed, use the tool Google provides to customize your hours for holidays and other special events.

## **Add Photos**

If there's any area in a GMB listing that business owners are likely to think is irrelevant, it's the photos section. They understand that GMB isn't a social network, and they don't think they're there for entertainment purposes.

Photos on GMB though, are not for entertainment, either. They're to authenticate your business and entice even more customers to come visit you. It works, too. Businesses that have at least one photo on their listing get 42 percent more requests for driving directions on Google Maps. They also have a click-through rate to their website 35 percent higher than businesses that don't have photos within their listing.

## **Understand the importance of reviews**

One of the best features of a GMB listing is that customers are able to leave reviews right within it. Many business owners today fear reviews, but they shouldn't. Generally, customers want to leave good reviews and make their own recommendations to which businesses served them best.

Positive reviews of course, are going to have the most positive effect on a GMB listing. These will also have the greatest effect on new customers that are searching for your business and read the good things people have to say about you. When Google sees that a business has many positive reviews, they're going to rank them higher in the 3-Pack.

Still don't understand just how important reviews are? Consider these stats.

- Listings in the 3-Pack have approximately 472 percent more reviews than listings not in the 3-Pack.
- 63 percent of the time, the 3-Pack contains the listings with the most reviews.
- Listings in the 3-Pack have, on average, 7.62 reviews while those not in the pack have an average of 1.61 reviews.

Businesses should always encourage customers to leave reviews and not be scared that the customer will say something negative. Even the great businesses have one or two negative reviews sometimes, it's just one of those matters of not being able to please everyone. When the amount of negative reviews is very small compared to the amount of positive reviews though, they hardly matter.

What is important is that you respond to as many reviews as possible, and certainly all negative reviews. Always tell a customer you're sorry they didn't have a good experience and, if possible, offer something that can help fix their problem. This can help save the relationship, and impress others that see the review that you care enough to reach out to customers. Be sure though, to also regularly respond to positive reviews. People want to know you care about them when they were kind, too!

Don't know how to get reviews? Here are a few ways:

- Send an email to your list asking them to create a review on Google for a product or service you've offered them.
- Call your customers and write down what they say about your business. Then, put it on your listings as a review. Just make sure you tell them what you would like to do and get permission first.
- Ask for a review after someone has made a purchase, but don't take too long. You should ask within the first few days.

If you're just starting out with your listing and haven't collected any reviews just yet, don't worry. You can use services such as [CustomerLobby](#) or [Yopto](#) to get automated reviews. Remember, these are just to get you started. While they are helpful tools, nothing beats an honest and authentic review.

### **Use Insights to monitor your listing**

Google wants your GMB listing to work for you, too. Without businesses signing up, they have no service to offer users. To help you use and monitor your listing, Google offers Insights. This allows business owners to see how users are interacting with their listing. There are six ways Google tracks:

- How customers found your listing
- Where customers find you on Google
- Customer actions
- Direction requests
- Phone calls
- Photos

Insights will tell you how customers found your listing by telling you if it was through a Direct search or a Discovery search. A direct search means they searched specifically for your business. Discovery is a search that searches by product, service, or another broader category. Insights will break the data down into these two types of searches and then give you a total number.

Insights will also let you know where customers found you on Google by letting you know how many found you through Listing on Search and how many through a Listing on Maps.

Of course, the customer actions section will tell you what action your customers took once they found your GMB listing. There are many possible actions including:

- Visited your website
- Requested directions

- Called you
- Viewed photos

If people requested directions, Insights will show you a map where they were located when they made the request. The phone calls section will tell you how many people called your business through the listing, and how often.

In the photos section, Insights won't just tell you how many people looked at the photos, but will also tell you how your photos are comparing with those of your competitors. Now that's a great insight!

By monitoring your listing through Insights, you can give customers more of what they want and really start to drive traffic to your listing. Therefore, driving more customers to your business, too.

### **Make your website mobile-friendly**

For nearly a decade, Google has focused on going mobile. Google has realized that the majority of searches are done on mobile devices. In fact, a [2014 study](#) done by Google showed that four out of five people searched the web for local information, and 88 percent of people were searching on a mobile device.

Google loves mobile, and having a mobile-friendly website linked to your listing is a major ranking factor for the Google 3-Pack.

### **Get backlinks**

Backlinks have been part of SEO ever since SEO became a thing, and they're just as important today as ever. Backlinks are links on other websites that link back to your website. Google considers each backlink a vote for your website. The more votes a website has, the more relevant Google considers it and the higher it's placed in the search results.

It's important to remember though, that you should only seek out high-quality backlinks. If you have websites that rank poorly linking to your site, it could actually hurt its ranking.

So, how do you get quality backlinks? Here are just a few ways:

- Get listed in the top 30 online local directories such as: [GMB](#), [Bing Places](#), and the [Yellow Pages](#).
- Create amazing content that people want to share and promote it through your website and social networking profiles.
- Draft a great local resource list, such as the Top 3 Restaurants in your area.
- Automate your backlinks efforts with tools like [Ahrefs](#) and [Majestic SEO](#).
- Guest post on other blogs and ask that a link to your website be included in the piece. Just remember to link back to a high-quality, useful page on your own website, such as a resource page.

### **Optimize your website for your location**

Websites are optimized for so much these days. URLs are optimized, keywords are used, and title tags are created. It's a digital world, and this is all a part of it. However, it's still just as important to optimize your website for your location. Insert your city name into title tags, keywords, and title tags. Your website, and therefore your listing, will be much better for it.

### **Make sure citations are accurate**

Citations are mentions of your business online, and you have to make sure they're correct. Any time you get a tweet, a review, or anyone else talks about you online, this is a citation. Online directories are also citations. Citations are good, but you must make sure they are correct. Check every time you get a notification of a mention or citation, and make sure it's correct so you can fix the problem if it's not. Online services such as [MOZ Local](#) and [Bright Local](#) will build citations for you.

### **Choose Local Over Toll-Free**

Toll-free numbers in a local directory don't really make much sense, do they? After all, anyone from anywhere in the country or even the world could call a toll-free number, and why would someone local need to? This is exactly what Google thinks. Google places a preference on businesses that have local

numbers in their GMB listing because it's a local service. When toll-free numbers are used, they aren't likely to rank as well.

Some business owners that want local traffic, but also want to reach a little further out of their community, think it's bad news that they shouldn't include a toll-free number, but not to worry. Google also gives the option of placing a second phone number next to the main one.

Getting results in the 3-Pack largely rests on a Google My Business listing simply because this is where Google pulls their listings from. However, you don't need to rest your chances of ranking in the 3-Pack on GMB alone. There's one other way to do it, and that's by using organic SEO. More on that in the next section!

# How to Use Organic SEO to Rank in the Google 3-Pack

In this day and age, many business owners are aware of the many SEO tactics they should use on their blog, website, and anywhere else online. These strategies typically involve creating backlinks, using keywords, and ensuring websites are mobile-friendly. However, when talking about trying to rank in the Google 3-Pack, there's really only one SEO strategy that matters: going local. What does this mean though, and how can you do it?

## **Why Going Local Matters**

Location is a critical part of today's SEO strategies for one reason. Businesses are no longer competing against other companies in the same industry or category. They are competing against companies that have the best digital presence. And today, including location pages is a huge part of that.

Did you know that when a business has multiple locations, and webpages for each of those locations, 85 percent of all brand-customers engagement occurs on the location pages, not corporate? In addition to this, four out of five customers want ads tailored to their location. Clearly customers today have a lot of expectations when it comes to what they're seeing online. Incorporating local SEO strategies into your website can help you meet those expectations.

Another reason, and possibly the biggest reason for ranking organically on local pages is because it means there's less chance that you'll get filtered out of the 3-Pack. That's right. The 3-Pack has filters and if you don't know the rules of the game, your business could be filtered right out of the local pack.

To keep the 3-Pack clean and organized, and give customers the most relevant results, Google began filtering listings from the 3-Pack. It was part of their Possum update. Since 2016, businesses that have the same phone number or website, or that have addresses near each other are filtered out. For most businesses, it's the latter of these that's really a problem.

In today's world, not every business has its own building or office. Sometimes several orthodontists are in one building, or one building could house several different real estate agents. This usually works for everyone involved, except

when it comes to the 3-Pack. When Google sees the identical addresses, it will filter some of the results out of the 3-Pack. If that happens, it doesn't matter how great your GMB listing is. You still may not show up in the Pack. This is often very frustrating for business owners to hear. Luckily, there is something they can do about it.

When deciding which business to filter, Google will look at the business' organic ranking. The business with the highest ranking gets to stay in the 3-Pack, while all others must go. So, to ensure you're not left out of the results, you need to increase your organic local ranking. Below are some tips on how to do it.

### **Create local landing pages**

When a company has several stores at different locations, or they service different areas, it's important they create a landing page for each on their website. A plumber that operates out of Florida may have a "Florida Plumber" page on their website as well as a "Tampa plumber" and a "Saint Petersburg Plumber" landing page on their website.

Creating these different pages allows you to quickly and easily publish highly relevant pages for each location. It also helps your locations rank higher in Google Search, and encourages interactions that convert searchers into customers. When creating these pages it's important to:

- Optimize the title, meta description, and H1 tags for each landing page
- Ensure each page has customized hyperlocal content
- Use both internal links and external links in the content
- Make sure each location page is mobile-friendly
- Make sure each location page downloads quickly and easily for users by employing Google Page Speed Insights

When creating local landing pages, it's also important to include nearby landmarks, events, services, products, and any coupons applicable to those in the area. Showcasing local attractions and nearby information for travelers on local pages all also highlight the additional services your company offers. Lastly, in-store inventory and products can also help drive conversions.

Depending on your business and your location, you may also want to add localized specialty pages. For example, a New York lawyer may have a “New York Personal Injury Lawyer” but then also have local specialty pages. These may include “New York Car Accident Lawyer” and “New York Pedestrian Accident Lawyer” pages. They may even create location pages that are more specific, such as “Manhattan Personal Injury Lawyer” and then further specialty locations pertaining to Manhattan.

Each of these pages, both location pages and specialty pages, also needs to have:

- Page-ranking authority to push to local pages
- An interface that’s easy to use
- Logical hierarchy and structure
- Internal text links
- XML sitemaps
- Schema markup
- Meta tag and content optimization

### **Using Local SEO Without Locations**

Sometimes business owners want to do all of the above, but they have a problem. Their business doesn’t have a location. This often happens with consultants, salespeople, and others that are often out in the community, they’re just not in an office building or other location that is solely for the purpose of their business.

It sounds like an impossible challenge, and one that will keep you out of the Google 3-Pack forever, but that’s not the case. As long as you have face-to-face interaction with your customers, meaning your business is not 100 percent online, your business can make it to those coveted three spots.

Strategies that can help you rank in the 3-Pack include:

- Develop “where to buy it” locators on all local landing pages indicating where the product or service can be purchased

- Focus primarily on “where to buy it” keywords
- Include local reviews from customers

The only real difference between businesses that have an actual location and those that don't, at least when it comes to the Google 3-Pack, is that those without locations won't have a map feature. If you don't have a location but you still optimize your website for relevant consumers searches, it will still catch the eye of Google, and those of your customers.

# Conclusion

Google is always changing the way it does things. When they announced in 2015 that the 7-Pack was being reduced to a 3-Pack, it sent marketers and business owners into a tailspin. However, there's no need to think that all of your efforts thus far have been for naught. There are plenty of ways to get into the 3-Pack, and still get all those clicks and conversions you've become accustomed to.

The key things to remember are to:

- Fully optimize your Google My Business listing so Google can find you and want to list you at the top of the 3-Pack,
- Optimize your website using SEO strategies such as keywords, meta tags, and backlinks, and,
- Create location pages that employ all of the same SEO strategies.

By following these simple steps, it's easy to get your business listed in Google's 3-Pack. Of course, completing all of these steps does take a little bit of time. If you would rather use that time to focus on running your business, a marketing consultant can take over the task for you. This can help keep your business running smoothly, and allow you to focus on what's really important - your customers!

# Next Steps

Include details here on how to contact you for a free consultation.