

Quit Making These Seven Local Search Marketing Mistakes!

We hear it time and time again. Why is that practice outranking mine online? You may see a website that seems to do better than yours on Google but doesn't have as great content, or that hasn't been updated in years. What's going on?

There is more to ranking well on Google as a local business than just content and a nice design. How do we know? In 2013 we started offering free website analyses, and we've learned quite a bit from them about what SEO (search engine optimization) best practices are missing from most websites.

One of the most competitive areas for practices like yours is the local search market. This is where Google, Bing and other search engines return results tailored for a searcher in your local market. Many factors you may not even be aware of influence your ranking in local search.

If you're making one or more of the following mistakes in local search, you can make some changes now to see immediate results:

1. **Inconsistent NAP information across local citations.** NAP stands for **Name Address and Phone** number. When any one of these is listed incorrectly, on any site, Internet-wide, it can compromise your success. If you have ever changed your practice's name, moved office locations, or changed phone numbers—you may have incorrect NAP issues out there. **Tip:** Use a free tool, such as the one on Yext, to scan the internet for mistakes in your listings, or schedule your free site audit at FWManalysis.com.
2. **Categorization problems.** Don't forget to choose a category for your business listing—and choose wisely. If you fail to do so, you won't get the local traffic you desire. Many business listing websites allow you to really target the categories that you want to show up for in local search. **Tip:** Be sure to pick a *specific* category for your business. You're not just a doctor; you're a podiatrist.
3. **Using a toll-free phone number.** Never use a toll-free number in your local listings. Ever! You want to have a local phone number from the area where you're trying to rank well. **Tip:** Only use your office's primary phone number, and triple check to make sure that it's the same Internet-wide.
4. **Sloppy online profiles.** Mistake-ridden, half-done, keyword-stuffed online profiles are a local SEO power killer. If you don't include your business hours, leave parts of your profile blank, or cram your description with

keywords, your ranking will suffer. You also don't want to have incorrect information—like the wrong office hours—that will frustrate potential patients! **Tip:** Fill out all profile information with your ideal patient in mind. Make descriptions evocative, and make sure your office hours are precise. And—keep this information up-to-date!

5. **Skimming on images.** Too many times, we find that people aren't using images in their local profiles or that they've included wrong or outdated images. **Tip:** Use your logo for all business-related profiles, and make sure it is consistent. Include images of your team and your office if additional images are allowed, to personalize your listing. All pictures should be high quality—no grainy cell phone pictures.
6. **Not checking your location marker.** If your location marker, or pin, is in the wrong place on the map for Google or Bing, you're in big trouble. When the pin is off, your patients are going to be incredibly frustrated when they show up at the wrong place—not a good start to your working relationship. **Tip:** Search for your business' name and see where it is on the map. Do this in Google and Bing. It may be in the wrong place, or there may be no location marker at all. Fix it!
7. **Listings for shared/virtual offices.** Many professionals have satellite offices and/or phone numbers that are shared by other businesses—sometimes as many as 20 businesses will share this information! Google doesn't like multiple listings for the same phone number or address, as they can't tell if the business location is “real” or just a trick you're using to rank well online. **Tip:** The only locations you should have business listings for are your “real” brick-and-mortar offices where patients can visit you. Virtual offices don't count. If you share an office, get a unique address and phone number (suite numbers are helpful here!)

Not sure if you're making these mistakes, or if you are not sure how to correct them? The Foster Web Marketing team can perform a detailed website analysis for you to dig up issues like the ones above. Just go to www.FWMAnalysis.com to sign up; we'll even provide you with recommendations for improvement!

Need help cleaning up your local listings? The Top Practices Virtual Marketing Directors (VMDs) are here to help! Let them do the hard work needed to get your practice ranking well locally.