

NEXT LEVEL
"NEAR ME"
SEARCH
STRATEGIES





Next Level "Near Me" Search Strategies

Gone are the days of the "spray and pray" approach to digital marketing. We are drowning in data that lets us know where, when, and how people are using search engines to make purchasing decisions.

Search engine users expect search technology to quickly guess their intent and find the places they can get the stuff they need right now.



46%

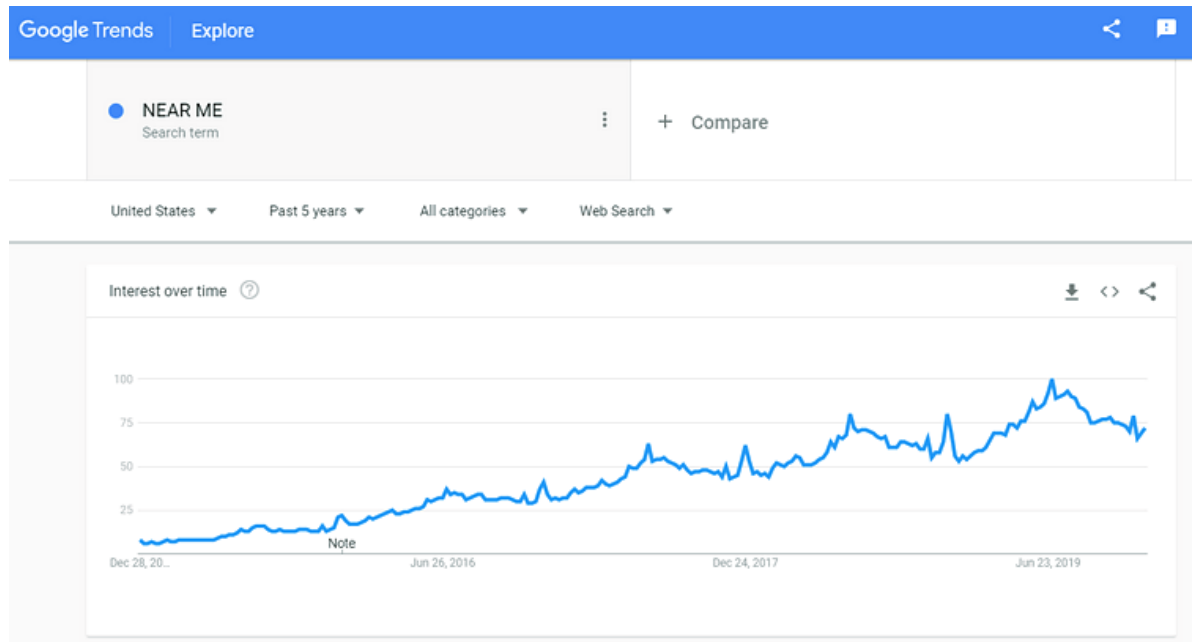
*Local information
is the main goal of
46% of all Google
Searches.*

(SEO Roundtable)

Ranking high in local search results is critical to the success of your business, especially if your operating in a crowded market where competition is pushing your business listing lower and out of sight.

RISING POPULARITY OF NEAR ME SEARCHES

“Near me” is a popular phrase that shows up in search engine queries across all categories because people often want to know the closest options for activities, services, and stores. Where local identifiers like city name or zip code are declining in smartphone searches, “near me” has steadily increased in the last four years.



**75% OF
SMARTPHONE
USERS EXPECT TO
GET IMMEDIATE
INFORMATION
WHILE USING THEIR
SMARTPHONE.**

- GOOGLE/IPSOS

"NEAR ME" IS A SIGNAL THEY INTEND TO BUY NOW

When consumers use "near me" in their search, they are showing a clear signal of intent to make a purchase, make it soon, and in a specific area. **Google data showed a 500% increase in searches containing the variants "can I buy" or "to buy" with "near me" from 2015 to 2017.**



83% of U.S. shoppers who visited a store in the last week say they **used online search** before going into a store.

Think with Google

Google/Ipsos, Global Retail Study, Base: Past Week In-store Shoppers (n=597) U.S. online 18+ who searched before visiting a store in the last week, Feb. 2019.

Recent research from Google shows that satisfying immediacy is often more important than loyalty. Businesses that are able to increase visibility, save people time and get them what they want as quickly as possible will outperform local competitors as more consumers rely on **automatic "near me" searches to make purchases locally.**

Using the following NEXT LEVEL "near me" search strategies, you can create a digital marketing plan that increases core performance metrics such as store visits and sales.

RAMP UP MOBILE-FIRST LOCAL SEO

Drive new customers by making valuable information available when they are on their device and searching for somewhere to make a purchase. Your Google My Business profile is a virtual storefront where search users should see your hours, directions, special offers, and clues to what makes your store unique.

>200%

"Where to buy" + "near me" mobile queries have grown by over 200% in the past two years (where to buy flowers near me, where to buy stamps near me, where to buy pumpkins near me).

Think with Google

Google Data, U.S., April 2016–March 2017 vs. April 2018–March 2019.

Right now, your customers are using mobile devices as their primary mode of navigation and communication, and "near me" searches are how they find the things they want to buy right now. It's crucial that your website is mobile-friendly and all of your online business listings are optimized for local search.

Claim and fill in business listings completely, paying special attention to local identifiers such as an address, service areas, and business categories so your business has more chances of ranking as the best results for "near me" searches.

ROUGHLY A THIRD OF ALL MOBILE GOOGLE SEARCHES ARE RELATED TO LOCATION.

- BLUE CORONA

Start by optimizing your Google My Business account and grow from there. Gather positive reviews for social proof and show how your business is better than the alternative.

Prioritize the rest of your optimization efforts to mirror the places where your customers hang out. If your customers use Yelp, ensure your exact location is very clear to Yelp. If your customers go on Facebook to find services, optimize your pages to show for the areas you are serving.



Mobile searches for “on sale” + “near me” (such as, “tires on sale near me” and “houses on sale near me”) have grown by **over 250% YOY** in the last two years.

Think with Google

Google Data, U.S., April 2016–March 2017 vs. April 2018–March 2019.

Continue to gather positive reviews, respond to customer questions, add photos, and update seasonal and holiday hours so search users can get all the information they are looking for when they are driving or arriving after a "near me" search.

BONUS LOCAL SEO CHECKLIST

Showing in the top of "near me" search results will continue to revolve around your ability to optimize your online properties and mentions for location and relevance.

DON'T FORGET THE BASICS OF LOCAL SEO:

- Optimize Google My Business
- Gather (and Respond to) Reviews
- NAP on Website & Business Listings
- Location Identifiers on Image and Meta Tags
- Mobile-Friendly, Fast-Loading Website
- Local Backlinks (from Chambers, Associations, Directories)
- Written Text Driving Directions (with major cross streets)
- Text List of Services, Products, & Service Areas (not PDF, PNG, JPG)
- Use Landmarks and Neighborhoods (as additional written out directions and location identifiers on your website)

GOOGLE ADS LOCAL CAMPAIGNS

Google Ads Local Campaigns are designed to bring business to your storefront by making it easy to promote your stores across Google's most popular properties:

- Google Search Network
- Google Maps
- YouTube
- Google Display Network

THE AVERAGE CTR FOR GOOGLE SEARCH AD ON MOBILE IS 4.1% - NEARLY A FULL PERCENT HIGHER THAN DESKTOP AD.



- WORDSTREAM

Google knows you're not a digital marketing expert, so they try to keep it simple to set Local Campaigns. You can start Google Ads with as little as \$10 a day and you just need to add a few lines of text, a bid, images, and define the store locations you want to promote.

Then Google's machine learning technology gets to work to optimize bids, ad placement, and asset combinations to help search users find your business by promoting your locations across various Google properties.

Local Campaigns match your ad to search terms that are relevant to your business and location, which help you show up at the top of "near me" search queries.

They also work with Google Maps when customers search for locations like yours or explore a local area using Maps. Google matches these actions with your location so anyone located in, or who plans to be located near, your location may see your ad.

CLOSING THE DEAL WITH IN-STORE SEARCHES

You probably assume that customers on their phone using search engines while in your store are looking for nearby or online competitors selling the same things at a cheaper price. But that is not usually what is happening.



4X

While comparison shopping does happen, most in-store shoppers are actually searching online for more information about your store, brand, or the products you offer. In-store shoppers are 4X more likely to search on Google for the retail brand of the store they're currently in compared to the next highest competitor.

(Google)

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Anticipating and delivering on in-store search needs helps you seal the deal and get the sale. Whether you're a bakery or a repair shop, future customers could be standing in your store or sitting in your parking lot following a "near me" search and looking for the information that confirms your business is the best choice.

Win these shopping moments by setting up your online presence to provide fast and meaningful assistance to people using search while at your location. Look at the online customer journey for your industry so you can build an in-store search strategy that provides the content that customers are looking for.

If you have no idea what your customers are looking for before they arrive and once they reach your location - ASK THEM. Whether it's product reviews, coupons, or things to do while waiting on services, part of your "near me" strategy should include what happens when they are still on search after arriving.



Mobile searches for "store open near me" (such as, "grocery store open near me" and "auto parts store open near me") have grown by **over 250%** in the last two years.

Think with Google

Google Data, U.S., April 2016–March 2017 vs. April 2018–March 2019.

"NEAR ME" SEARCH WITH DIGITAL ASSISTANTS AND VOICE SEARCH

Digital assistants have changed the way we live and the way consumers find and engage with new brands and local businesses. The use of voice assistants like Amazon Alexa, Apple's Siri, Google Assistant, Samsung's Bixby and Microsoft Cortana is increasing faster than anyone anticipated.



In 2019, we estimate that 111.8 million people in the US will use a voice assistant at least monthly, up 9.5% from last year. This is equivalent to 39.4% of internet users and 33.8% of the total population.

(eMarketer)

With both digital assistants and voice search, if you're not ranking first, then you're not being "spoken" as the best answer. That means the battle for the number one spot is fierce and your local SEO must ensure you're ranking for "near me" searches.

NEXT LEVEL "NEAR ME" SEARCH STRATEGIES

Look at your current online content - your ads, website, business listings such as Google My Business and Yelp - and make sure they are optimized for near me searches and contain helpful information relevant to the questions people are turning to their digital assistants and voice search tools to find answers to.

You know those questions your customers are always asking? Get those answers online through webpages, blog posts, or videos on your local search engine optimized properties, so they show up as answers for those digital assistant and voice searches.

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The expectation of finding precisely what you want, exactly when you want it, using a search engine is growing. Consumers are increasingly impatient as they move through the entire buying process and that creates new opportunities for you to leverage "near me" search to separate your business from competitors.



Make sure you're showing up in moments of intent throughout the purchase journey and giving customers the answers they are looking for. Businesses that help consumers make their "near me" searches fast and easy not only increase in-store traffic - they also earn the sale.

**We can help you generate more leads
and grow your business!**



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