TAKU Retail

Part One: Be Found Online Locally

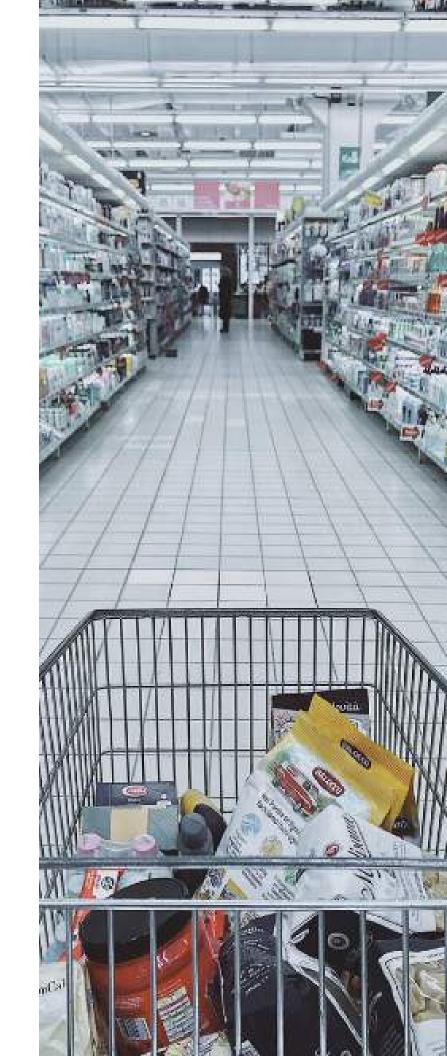*Learn how Google My Business can make your retail store more visible online.*

Table of Contents

This easy to follow guide will help you get the most out of your Google My Business listing so that you can attract more local shoppers and sell more.

Glossary of Terms

Below is a list of common terms found throughout this playbook.

Search Engine	An online tool that locates information on the internet (for example Google, Yahoo, Bing etc.).
Ranking	Refers to a website's position in Google (or other search engines) search results. Many factors influence whether a website appears higher on Google including the site's relevance to the search term, mobile responsiveness, quality of backlinks etc.
Backlinks	When one website links to another (usually through a link on a blog post).
Mobile responsiveness	When a website is **mobile responsive** the layout and content adapts based on the screen size or device the website is being viewed on. A mobile responsive website automatically changes to fit the screen.
Online presence	The collective existence of a company or individual online. The easier it is for search users to find you online, the stronger your online presence.
Reputable	Having a good reputation or being well thought of by customer.
Optimize	Making the best or most effective use of a resource.
SEO	SEO stands for **search engine optimization**. It is the act of ranking high on a search engine in the unpaid (or organic) section of search results.
Online directory listing, listing	An online profile that contains important business information such as your business name, address, phone number, hours of operation etc. Online listings include Google My Business, Yelp, Yahoo!, Bing, Foursquare etc.
Proximity	Nearness in space or location.

What is Local SEO?

Local Search Engine Optimization (local SEO) helps you promote your retail business to local shoppers.

It is the process of "optimizing" or improving your online presence so you can appear as high as possible in search results.

A focus on local SEO will attract more business from relevant local searches. There are three main components to local SEO:

- Google My Business
- On-site SEO
- Off-site SEO

This playbook will cover the first component - Google My Business. Keep an eye out in your inbox for part 2 and 3 of our local SEO guide!

Google My Business

Google My Business is a free online listing service. It lets you manage how your retail business appears both on Google Search and Google Maps.

Attract New Shoppers for Free

Google My Business (GMB) is one of the easiest ways to increase your store's presence in local search results.

Yet, only 44% of local businesses have claimed a Google My Business listing.

So what is it and how can it help you sell more?

GMB is a listing that showcases your business information, customer reviews, posts and much more. For example, if you searched for ACE POS, the company's business listing appears on the right side of the page.

There are a couple of things that make GMB so powerful:

1. *The listings are displayed on the first page of Google search results.*
2. *They appear based on a user's location or how close a user is to the store in the listing.*
3. *They appear in local searches for business types.*

So when a user searches for a business type (say for instance "pet store" or "grocery store") stores in the area will appear.

The three listings that appear first (also known as the "Local 3 Pack") are the most likely to attract local foot traffic.

Why do you need to optimize your GMB profile?

Now more than ever, retail businesses need visibility on Google. While optimizing your website and buying digital ads are an important aspect in achieving this, many retailers overlook the importance of their Google My Business listing.

An optimized Business Profile on Google helps your retail store stand out so shoppers choose your business over competitors. Let's take a look at some of the benefits of an optimized Business Profile:

1. **Improves local ranking in search results & Maps**: there are many factors that Google takes into consideration when it comes to local search ranking including proximity, a secure website, relevance, mobile responsiveness etc. Among these factors, quality of information and activity act as strong local SEO signals. According to Google, complete business listings get on average 7x more clicks than empty listings (listings that are not complete or have missing information).
2. **Attracts more local shoppers**: complete listings are 38% more likely to attract store visits.
3. **Increases engagement**: your Business Profile gives potential shoppers easy access to important business information and insights (store hours, website, reviews, directions etc.) at no cost. This is why more shoppers are making decisions on Google about where to shop without going to any other website.

2 x more reputable

Complete listings are more likely to be considered reputable.

38% more likely to attract store visits

According to Google, complete business listings get on average 7x more clicks than empty listings. More clicks lead to more store visits.

29% more likely to purchase

Complete GMB listings encourage more local shoppers to visit stores which ultimately leads to more in-store sales.

NAP Consistency

NAP stands for your business **N**ame, **A**ddress, and **P**hone number.

Tip: Keep your business name, address, and phone number consistent. For example, if you use Allison and Bret's Pet Store, 123 Main street, and 555-555-5555 on your website, don't use AB's Pet Store, 123 Main St., or (555)-555-5555 on GMB

Note: NAP inconsistencies are the #1 issue affecting local search ranking.

☐ **Decide how to format your name, address, and phone number.**

☐ **Post your NAP on your website.** You'll want to ensure that it is visible on specific parts of your website including: a prominent location on your homepage, your contact page, and the header/footer on the rest of your webpages. You may also want to include an embedded Google Map of your business address on your contact page (this acts as a strong local SEO signal).

☐ **Post your NAP on your Google My Business listing.**

☐ **Improve local SEO by listing your business on local directories.** The following are some online directories that will help your store appear in local search results:

- Yelp
- Yahoo Local
- Bing Place for Business
- MerchantCircle
- Yellow Pages
- Foursquare
- Manta
- Angie's List
- Citysearch

☐ **Add your NAP to your social media accounts (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest etc.).**

☐ **Once your NAP is listed across the web, make sure to periodically check that it is accurate and consistent.**

Pick an Accurate Business Category

Note: You can only select 1 primary category for your GMB listing.This is the category that people see on your business listing. It is also the most important – Google prioritizes your primary category in it's search algorithm

The business category you choose determines how local shoppers find you!
☐ **Be as specific as possible when choosing a primary category.** For example, if you sell gift baskets, choose "gift basket store" instead of "gift store"
☐ **Your primary category and additional categories should describe your retail business as a whole.** For example, if you run a furniture business that also includes a pastry shop, avoid adding the category "pastry shop". Instead, the pastry shop owner should claim their own listing and choose "pastry shop" as their primary category. Google suggests that you select categories that complete this statement: "This business IS a" rather than "this business HAS a".
☐ **Try minimizing the amount of additional categories that you add.** Although you may be tempted to select as many categories as possible, it's important not to. Doing so will negatively impact your store's local ranking. Only choose categories that directly apply to your business!

Add Attributes

Note: While business categories are meant to be specific, attributes allow you to expand on what your business has to offer. For instance, they indicate things like payment options, parking availability, free wifi, wheelchair accessible etc.

Attributes are an easy and effective way to showcase aspects of your business that may be important to potential shoppers.

☐ **Objective/factual/business-defined attributes** can be chosen by you. They include things like women-led, if your business has Wi-Fi,restrooms etc. Go to your Google My Business listing, click on "Info", and click attributes. Then, select all the attributes that apply to your business.

☐ **Subjective attributes** (like if your business is popular among local shoppers) depend on Google users who have visited your store and are crowd-sourced.

☐ **Note that choosing false attributes could result to the removal of the attributes from Google or negative reviews from shoppers.** Google is known to confirm if attributes are true by asking users to submit subjective attributes.

Add High Quality Images

Note: According to Google, businesses with photos get 40% more requests for directions while 90% of customers are more likely to visit a business that has photos on a Search/Maps results page.

One of the first things that shoppers will notice about your business listing is your primary photo. It's important to note that *you cannot control which photo appears as your primary photo*; Google's algorithm will determine which photo will appear first on your business listing. It will also determine the order of the other pictures that have been uploaded.

However, you can influence the algorithm in the following ways:

☐ **Upload the photo that you would like to appear as your primary photo as your cover photo.** This does not guarantee that this image will be displayed first but it tells Google that it is the image you prefer.

☐ Google will look at user behaviour to determine which photos best represent your business. **By uploading an attractive cover photo, people will engage with it more** (or view it more) - telling Google that it is an important photo.

☐ Google will ask users which photo they think best represents your business. It will take this information into consideration when ordering your images. **Upload high quality photos that represent your retail business and appeal to your target shopper.**

Add High Quality Images

Note: According to Google, businesses with photos get 40% more requests for directions while 90% of customers are more likely to visit a business that has photos on a Search/Maps results page.

To get started, Google My Business will suggest that you upload three types of photos : a logo, cover photo, and additional photos.

☐ **Logo:** Upload your store's logo. Your logo helps shoppers recognize your business on Google. Make sure your image is square with a white background (see below).

☐ **Cover Photo:** Showcase your store's personality. Again, your cover photo tells Google that you want this image to be displayed first (or be your primary photo) on your business listing - however it does not guarantee that it will be the first photo displayed.

☐ **Additional Photos:** Add additional category specific photos to display different business features and products. The next page will take you through the additional photos you should be adding as a retailer.

Add Additional Photos

Google suggests that you **upload a minimum of three of each** of the following category specific or additional photos.

Note: The following category specific photos apply to retailers (other categories listed by Google did not apply to retail stores and they have been excluded from the list).

- ☐ **Exterior photos:** photos of your business from the outside - these photos help shoppers recognize your store as they approach from different directions.

- ☐ **Interior photos**: photos of the inside of your store - these photos showcase the decor and layout of your store so shoppers can get a feel for your business.

- ☐ **Product photos:** high quality images of your products give shoppers a better understanding of the types of products that you offer.

- ☐ **Photos at work:** pictures of your team serving customers help represent the quality of customer service you provide.

- ☐ **Team photos:** display a more personal side of your business with candid pictures of your management team and employees.

Add a Business Description

Your business description is an area of text on your business listing that tells shoppers more about your store. This is your chance to indicate what makes your business unique to potential customers and set yourself apart from your competitors.

Without a business description, shoppers are left to draw their own conclusions about your business.

What to include in your business description:

- ☐ Make it clear what you do - pretend shoppers know nothing about your business.

- ☐ Highlight what makes your store different or unique.

- ☐ Information about the products and services you offer.

- ☐ The mission and history of your business.

What not to include in your business description:

- ☐ Do not keyword stuff - your business description is not a factor in the ranking algorithm. Keyword stuffing can get you flagged for spam.

- ☐ Do not use any URLs.

- ☐ Do not use ALL CAPS, emojis, or other odd characters.

- ☐ Do not write about business promotions/sales/prices/deals - use GMB posts for this instead.

How to add/edit your business description:

- ☐ Go to your Google My Business listing.

- ☐ Click "Info"

- ☐ Click "Description". You can write up to 750 characters but only 244 will show up on your listing until the user clicks "More".

Create a GMB Short Name

By creating a short name, shoppers can now enter your short name URL "g.page/(yourshortname)" and they will be directed to your GMB profile.

> With GMB short names, it is now easier to share your GMB profile to gain more reviews, share directions, and get leads.

- [ ] **Sign in to your Google My Business Account**

- [ ] **Click "Info" from the menu bar on the left.**

- [ ] **Click on "Add profile short name".**

- [ ] **Enter your short name** – it can be up to 32 characters. If your name is unavailable, you will receive an error message. You can try a shortened form of your name or you can try adding your location. Otherwise, try another short word that describes your retail store.

- [ ] **Click "Apply".** Once you do so, your short name will show as pending. When it is ready and approved, it will show up on your business listing.

Some important things to note:

- [ ] It's important that your short name is associated with your store's name.

- [ ] Make sure that it is simple so that you can easily promote your business and shoppers can remember it.

- [ ] If you have multiple locations, you must claim a short name for each GMB listing. Again, it's a good idea to include your location (city, neighbourhood, street etc.) to make your name unique and easy to remember.

- [ ] It is also a good idea to use your short name URL on marketing materials. This way, you can gain more reviews and local exposure

Create GMB Posts

GMB posts is a feature that allows you to share content about your business - it is similar to any other social media platform like Twitter or Facebook. It posts directly to your Google My Business listing - so users can see your content directly in search results.

Get shoppers interested in your GMB posts by posting attractive and relevant content. For each post, business owners can include text, call-to-action buttons, and/or photos or videos to promote their store.

There are 5 different post types including:

☐ **Events:** Promote any upcoming events that you are holding. Each event requires a start time, end time, and a title. It is also good practice to include a photo/video,an event description, and a call to action button leading to a landing page for your event.

☐ **What's New:** Share general information about your retail business. For example, you can give shoppers an inside look at your Halloween displays and merchandise.

☐ **Products:** Store owners also have the option of promoting any products or new merchandise. For example, a pet store could promote their new range of dog food. Keep in mind that product posts require a title and photo/video.

☐ **Offers:** According to Google, 50% of shoppers are looking for promotions and discounts when searching for a business online. So provide shoppers with information on the latest sales and promotional offers. Offers will appear at the top of your business listing on both Google Search and Maps. These posts require a title, and start/end dates. It's also good practice to include photos/videos, descriptions, coupon codes, and terms and conditions of the offer. The call-to-action button "View" will automatically appear on all Offer posts.

☐ **COVID-19 update:** you can use this post type to provide updates about your business during the COVID-19 pandemic. Let your customers know how your business has been impacted (temporary closures, reduced hours etc), how you are giving back to the community, new health & safety precautions etc.

Category Specific Features

The majority of businesses have access to Product Category and Product Editor. These features are specifically for small to medium sized retailers who want to showcase their products on Google. Google Local Inventory ads (LIAs) are meant for larger retailers who want to display product information.

"From Product Posts" highlights products that you have posted about through GMB Posts. **The Product Catalog** will display all the products collections that you have added in the product editor or products tab.

There are two ways that retailers can upload products on to Google My Business:

- ☐ **Google My Business Posts:** there is an option to create posts about your products under "posts". You can highlight featured products and they will be displayed in the "From Product Posts" carousel. You can add up to 10 product posts at a time. But remember - Google My Business posts expire in 7 days. Although they will no longer appear on your business listing, they will remain in the "From Product Posts" carousel. They will also still be available under the "Posts" tab.

- ☐ **The Product Editor:** you can also upload product collections in the "Products (Beta)" tab. You must give the collection a name and you can also add a description (optional). It is required to add at least one product to your collection. For each product, you should do the following: add a photo, name the product, set the price, and create a product description.

How to Get More Google Reviews

Reviews are an integral part of local search. **Shoppers trust reviews;** according to Google, 2 out of 3 customers say that having positive reviews was an important factor in selecting a business or store to purchase from.

According to Brightlocal, 70% of shoppers who have been asked to leave a review went on to do so.

☐ **Ask for reviews at the right moment:** It is generally good practice to ask shoppers to leave a review after they have made a purchase from your store. Also think of asking loyal and long-term shoppers who have not made a purchase in a while.

☐ **Make it easy:** The easier you make the review process for your shoppers, the more reviews you are likely to gather. Go mobile by sending a follow-up email or text message to your shoppers. Here a few tips for what to include in your email or text message:

- Personalize the email/text : personalize your message by including the customer's first name. Personalized messages make shoppers feel important and they've been proven to have a higher open rate too.
- Keep it short : keep your message short, simple, and straight to the point.
- Include a review link : shoppers are not going to take the time out of their day to find your Google My Business account. Once you claim your GMB short name, you will have a shareable short URL that directs shoppers to leave a review.

☐ **Create Review Cards**: Create physical "drop us a review" cards with your store's short URL. Place them near checkout and remind your employees to hand them out to shoppers after they make a purchase. Create incentives for your employees; reward the staff member who hands out the most review cards or generates the most reviews.

☐ **Add a Review Link on your Store's Website**: Include a review link or button on relevant pages of your store's website. This might be your contact page, thank-you page, or even a section on your homepage.

How to Get More Google Reviews

More good reviews = higher ranking in local search
Higher ranking in local search = more foot traffic = more sales

☐ **Incentivize shoppers:** Offering shoppers a reward or incentive for leaving a review is a great way to gather more reviews. Effective incentives include a $15 gift card or store credit, loyalty points, store merchandise etc.

☐ **Include a review link in your email signature:** Adding a short and simple call to action in your email signature is another effective way to gather reviews. For example, "Your opinion is important to us! Drop us a review at [GMB short URL]." This strategy is especially important for retailers who regularly email their customers.

Responding to Google Reviews

Once you've set up a process for gathering Google My Business reviews, your focus needs to shift to responding to them effectivelyly.

Responding to reviews builds customer loyalty and allows you to develop a relationship with customers.

Tips for responding to **positive reviews**:

- ☐ **Thank the customer and be specific.** For example: "Thank you for your kind words - glad to hear you appreciate our large selection of items!

- ☐ **Don't be a salesperson** - anyone who left a review is already a customer so there's no need to advertise. Share store updates or other information that may be relevant to the shopper. For example: "We're glad you love our healthy food options...we've got more products that we will be releasing in September! More information will be revealed on our social media very soon ;)"

- ☐ **Keep it short:** don't overwhelm shoppers with long responses - keep it useful and genuine.

- ☐ **Respond in a timely manner.**

- ☐ **Invite the Customer to Take an Action:** You can provide additional value to customers by suggesting other products or complementary services offered by your store. For example : "Next time you visit, you should really try (product name)!"

Responding to Google Reviews

45% of customers say they are more likely to visit a business if the business responded to negative reviews.

Tips for responding to **negative reviews:**

- ☐ **Be polite and professional:** It can be difficult to stay positive when dealing with a frustrated customer. But as a business owner, you want to avoid acting in a defensive manner or burning any bridges. So keep your responses useful and polite.

- ☐ **Find out more about the reasons behind the bad review:** You'll want to investigate why the reviewer has a negative impression of your store. Check your records and ask your employees to find out more about the customer's experience. You can also directly ask for feedback.

- ☐ **Apologize when appropriate:** It's best to respond with empathy with an aim to fix the issue.

- ☐ **Be honest:** It's important to be honest about any mistakes that were made but do **not** take responsibility for something that was not your fault. Instead, explain what you can and cannot do in the situation. For example, it is store policy that customers have 2 weeks to exchange an item but employees will remind shoppers at checkout.

- ☐ **Show you are a real person:** Sign off each review with your name or initials - this way, you come off more authentic and real.

- ☐ **Take the conversation offline:** Suggest taking the conversation offline by contacting the customer personally - whether it is through Google My Business Messaging, e-mail, or phone. Remember, a positive interaction after the review often leads to the customer updating the review to be more positive. It also shows potential shoppers that you value good customer service.

- ☐ **Respond in a timely manner.**

Google My Business Messaging

Sometimes shoppers are unable to call you but they may have a question about your retail business. This is why Google introduced a feature called messaging.
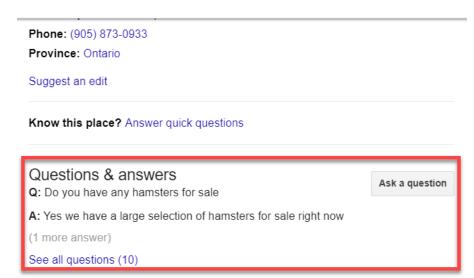
When you enable Google My Business messaging, shoppers can message you directly from your Google My Business listing. By activating this feature, you can communicate one-on-one with shoppers in real-time, answer any questions they may have, and increase customer loyalty.

Here are some things to keep in mind:

☐ You can **create a customized welcome message** of 120 characters that customers will see when they message your business. Each person who has access to or manages your listing can respond to and message customers.

☐ You can **turn the feature on and off.** Your typical response time will show up on your listing. It is best to turn on the feature during your store's business or operating hours and turn it off when you are closed or no one is available to respond to the messages.

☐ It's important to **reply within 24 hours**. You cannot respond to messages on your desktop - you must download the Google My Business app. This is where you will receive notifications for incoming messages.

☐ **Avoid long or irrelevant responses.** Spamming users with promotional content is forbidden by Google.

☐ **Do not request sensitive information** such as credit card info.

Questions and Answers

GMB's Question and Answer feature allows merchants to answer questions from potential shoppers, add frequently asked questions to their GMB listings, and highlight top responses.

The purpose of GMB's Q & A feature is to give local shoppers additional information about your business to gain local exposure. As a business owner, you are allowed to ask and answer questions about your own business.

Here are some tips for optimizing the question and answer section on your GMB profile:

☐ **Make a list of frequently asked questions** - what are some questions that clients frequently have or call in to ask? Think about the different products and brands you carry, the payment options you accept, and special order options.

☐ **Make it brief and accurate** - most people are busy and prefer to scan rather than read.

☐ **Answer promptly** - shoppers are expecting fast replies with this feature.

☐ **Don't go overboard** with too many questions or use this feature as an opportunity to keyword stuff.

Phone: (905) 873-0933
Province: Ontario

Suggest an edit

Know this place? Answer quick questions

Questions & answers   Ask a question
Q: Do you have any hamsters for sale
A: Yes we have a large selection of hamsters for sale right now
(1 more answer)
See all questions (10)

COVID-19 Tips

If your retail business is operating differently due to COVID-19, update your Google My Business profile to provide the most accurate information to your shoppers.

These updates will show up on your Business Profile in search results as well as Google Maps.

Here are some tips for optimizing your business listing during COVID-19 so shoppers have the latest information about your retail store:

- ☐ **Update your business hours** - if your store operating hours have been impacted or reduced by COVID-19, update the times your store will be open or closed. Alternatively, mark your business as **"temporarily closed"** if you have temporarily stopped providing services. **Note:** an integrated system such as the TAKU Retail POS system allows you to keep all of your store details including store hours up-to-date on your published GMB business listing.

- ☐ **Manage your delivery options** - let shoppers know if your store offers pickup, delivery, curbside pickup, in-store shopping or if your store is not open for in-store shopping. You can do so by adding or editing the "Pickup," "Delivery," "Curbside pickup," or "In-store shopping" attributes on Google My Business. **Note**: when customers search for your store, your business listing will prominently showcase your delivery options.

- ☐ **Use Google My Business posts** - use posts to provide updates about your business such as extra health & safety precautions your business is taking, expected delays, reduced hours/temporary closures, how you are giving back to the community etc. **Note**: Google has added a COVID-19 post type so it appears in a more relevant way in search results.

- ☐ **Use messaging** to connect with your customers. Download the Google My Business app and turn on messaging. This provides customers with an easy way to contact you with questions/concerns when you are not available by phone, email or after business hours.

- ☐ **Set up a gift card or donation campaign** - use the support links feature on your Business profile to set up a gift card/donation campaign so that shoppers can buy a gift card or donate to your retail business.

TAKU Retail

Attract more shoppers with our built-in Google Integration.

Learn more