# TAKU Retail

## Retail Best Practices:
## Be Found Online Locally

Optimize your retail business for local SEO.

**Part 1 of 3**

# Welcome

This guide is for retail owners who are looking to be found locally and to increase foot traffic to their physical stores.

"Being online is now essential for small businesses that want to attract more real-world customer interactions - calls, visits, or clicks."

**Google**

## 80% of people

now use a search engine to find local information.

## 7 out of 10 people

made a purchase from a business they found using a search engine.

## 88% of shoppers

who conduct a local search on their mobile phone visit a related store within a week.

# 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" 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

# 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 dominate the first page of Google search results.*
2. *They appear based on a user's location*
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.
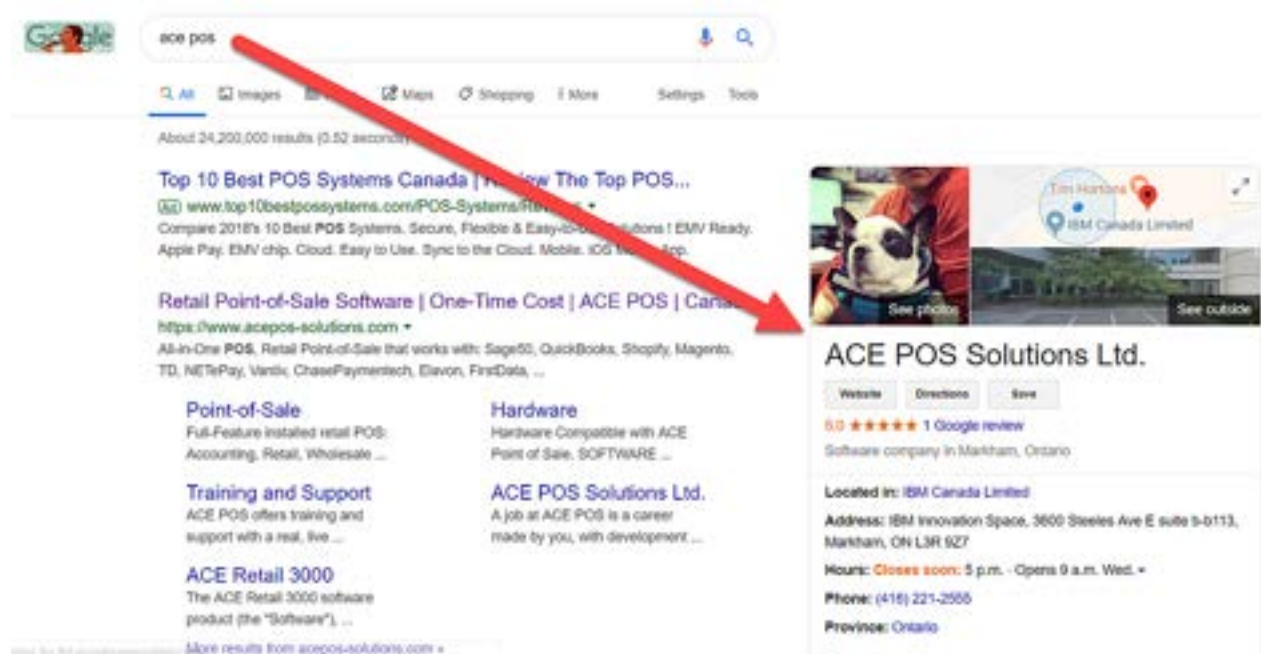
## 2 x more reputable

Complete listings are more likely to be considered reputable.

## 38% more likely to attract visits

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

## 29% more likely to purchase

Complete listings drive store traffic and ultimately lead to more purchases.

# Optimizing Google My Business

*Now that we've covered what Google My Business is , you need to know how to optimize it in order to sell more.*

The first step is to claim and verify your account. Once you do so, use this guide to optimize your listing.

When used properly,  GMB is a tool that can increase foot traffic and help grow your store's revenue.

The following is a list of steps you can take to get the most out of your business listing. We will cover each step in detail in the following pages.

*1. Stand out with accurate and complete information*
*2. Engage with shoppers and build customer loyalty*
*3. Attract new shoppers*

# A Complete and Accurate Listing

Stand out on Google by sharing useful and up to date information.

# Stand Out with Accurate and Complete Information

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## Business Information

As stated by Google, *over 90% of shoppers* are looking for specific information when using search engines. So make sure to keep your address, store hours, and other business information accurate and up to date.

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## Website

Create a free, mobile-friendly website in minutes with Google My Business or link your own. Listings with a link to a website get *25%-35% more clicks*.

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## Attributes and Category-Specific Features

Choose attributes that apply to your business so more shoppers can find you.

Take advantage of category-specific features for retail businesses such as product catalog and editor.

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## Posts and Photos

Attractive posts and photos on your business listing will grab the attention of shoppers. Google confirms that businesses with photos get *40% more requests for directions*.

Attract local shoppers by sharing posts with store updates - *50% of shoppers* are looking for promotions or discounts.

# Ensure NAP is Consistent

To get started, Google My Business will request basic store information including your store name, address, and phone number (also known as NAP).

This will act as the starting point for your store's local seo. It is *extremely important* that the NAP you provide Google My Business is *exactly the same* as the information listed on your website. Otherwise, your ranking in search results will be negatively impacted.

In fact, your store's NAP should be consistent  across the entire web - including other local directory listings and your social media.

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

> *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.*
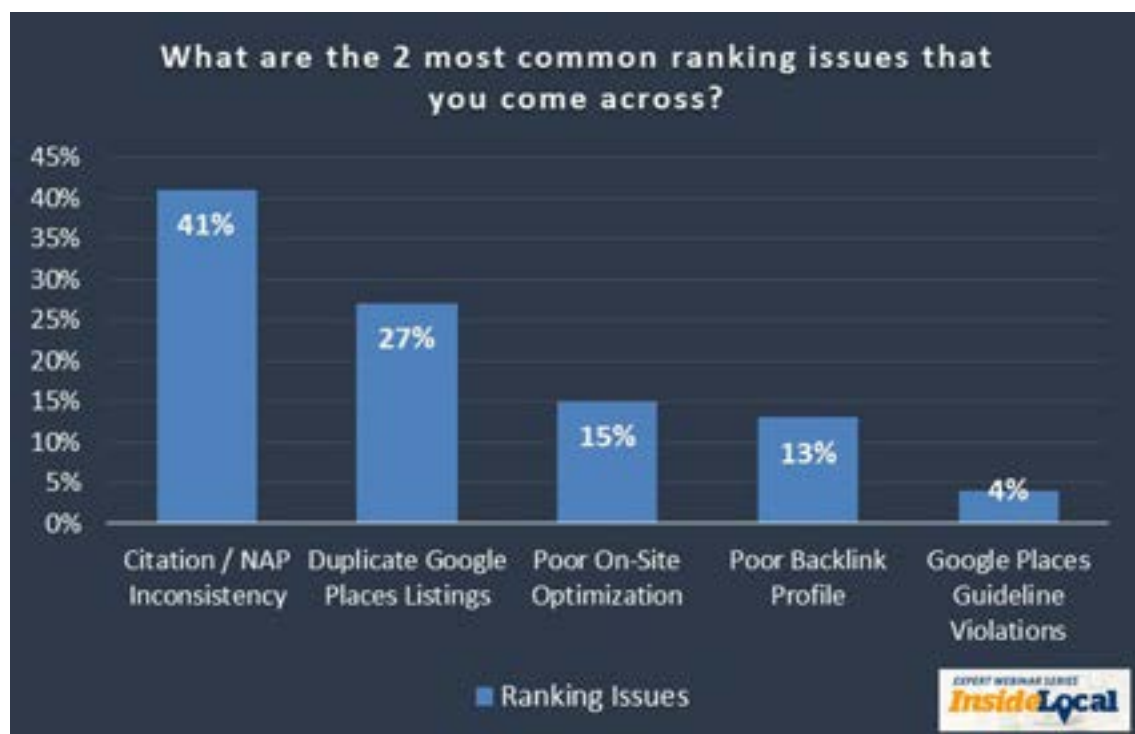
# Pick an Accurate Business Category

Your business category is used to describe the type of business you operate. It's important to **be specific** when choosing your business category - how your business is categorized on Google determines how local shoppers find you.

For example, if your primary category is "pet supply store", your business will show up when shoppers search for "pets" ,"pet food", or "pet supplies" in the area.

So if you sell gift baskets, choose "gift basket store" instead of "gift store".

You may also select additional categories that your business may fall under. Be careful - 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!
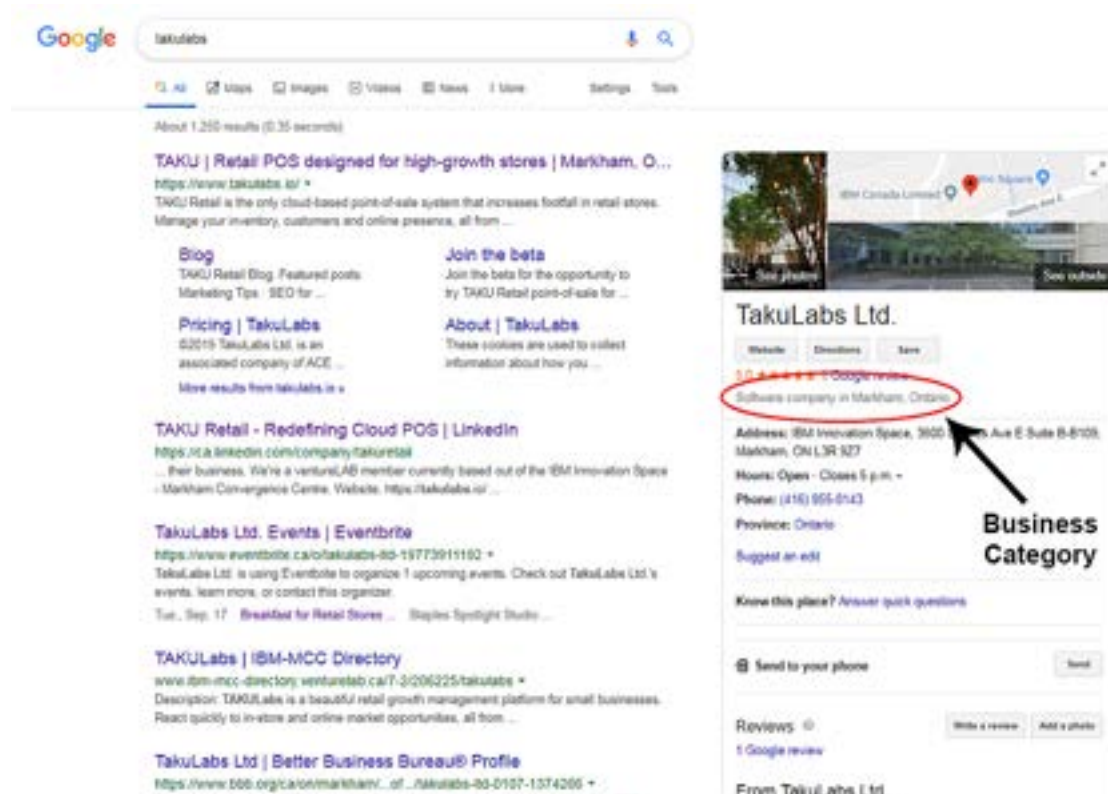
# Add Attributes

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

*Objective attributes* (women-led) can be chosen by you while *subjective attributes* (if your business is popular among local shoppers) depend on Google users who have visited your store.

The business category that you choose determines the attributes that are available for your business listing.

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.

So it's important you only select attributes that apply to your business - you can choose as many as you want as long as they apply!
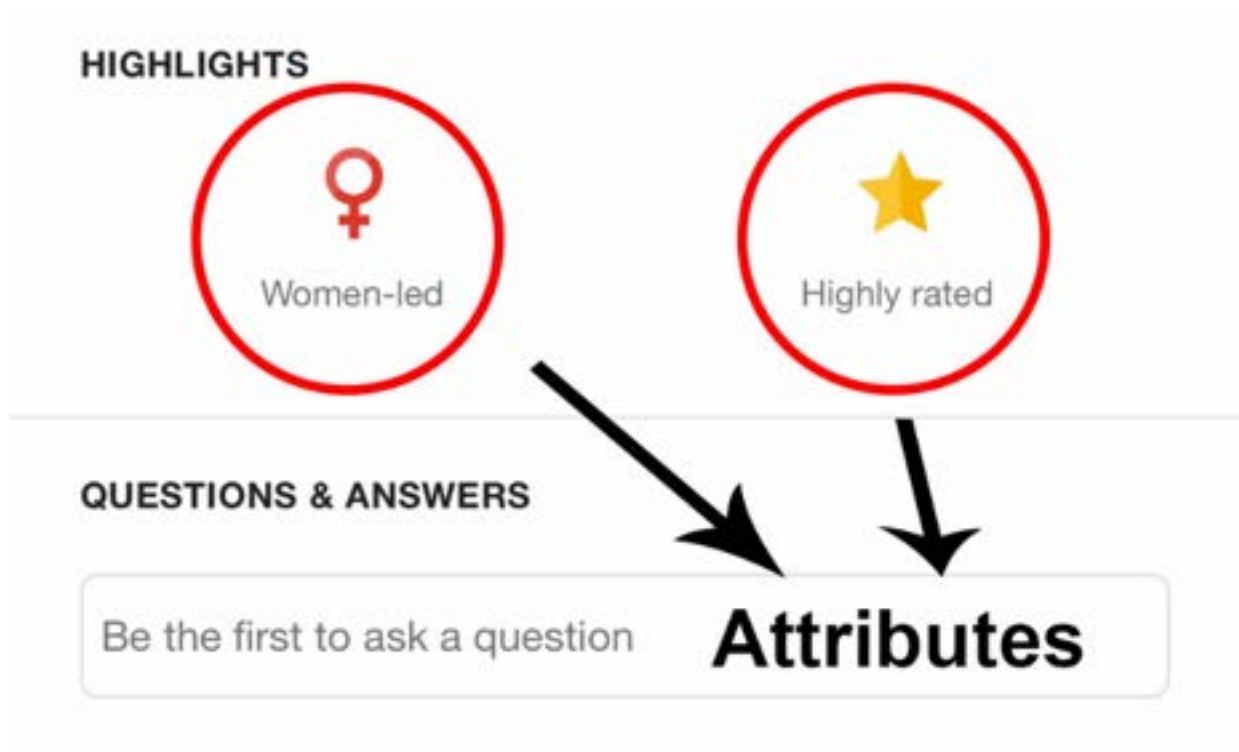
# Add High-Quality Images

Eye-catching images will grab the attention of potential shoppers and help you stand out. 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.
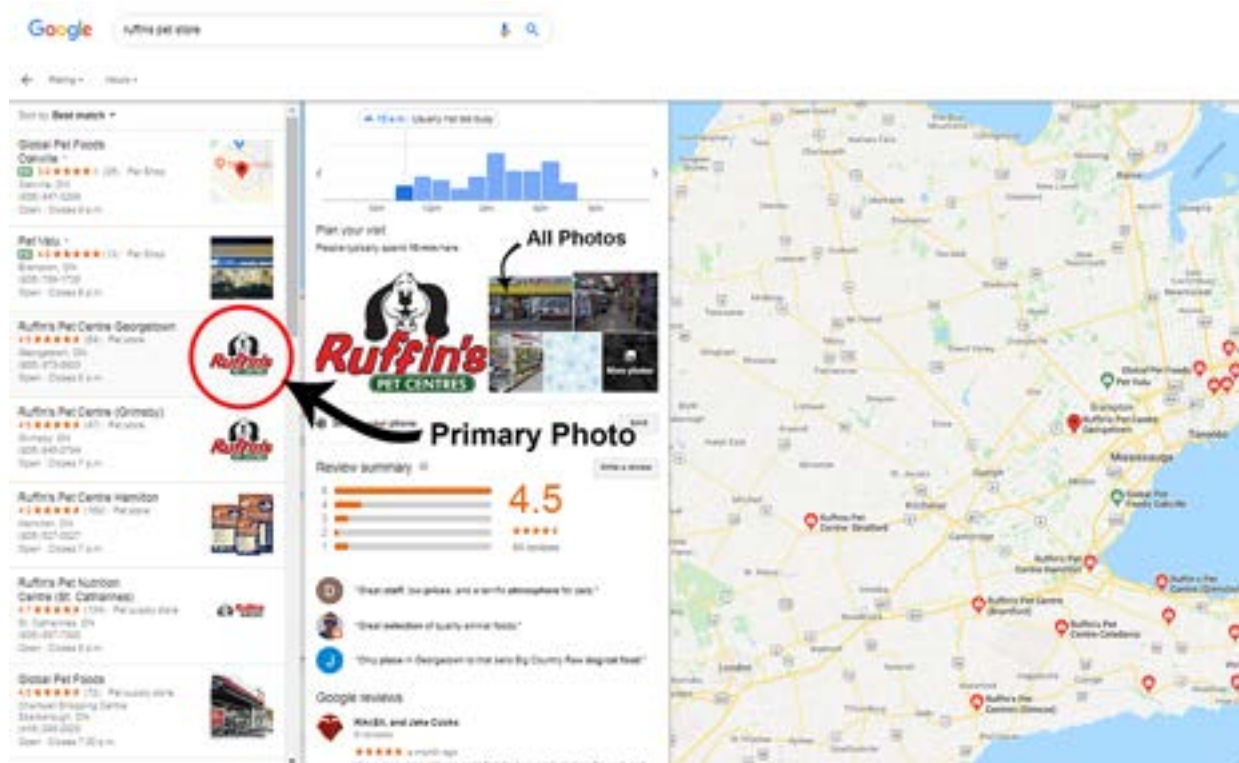


However, you can influence the algorithm in the following ways:

1) 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.

2) 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.
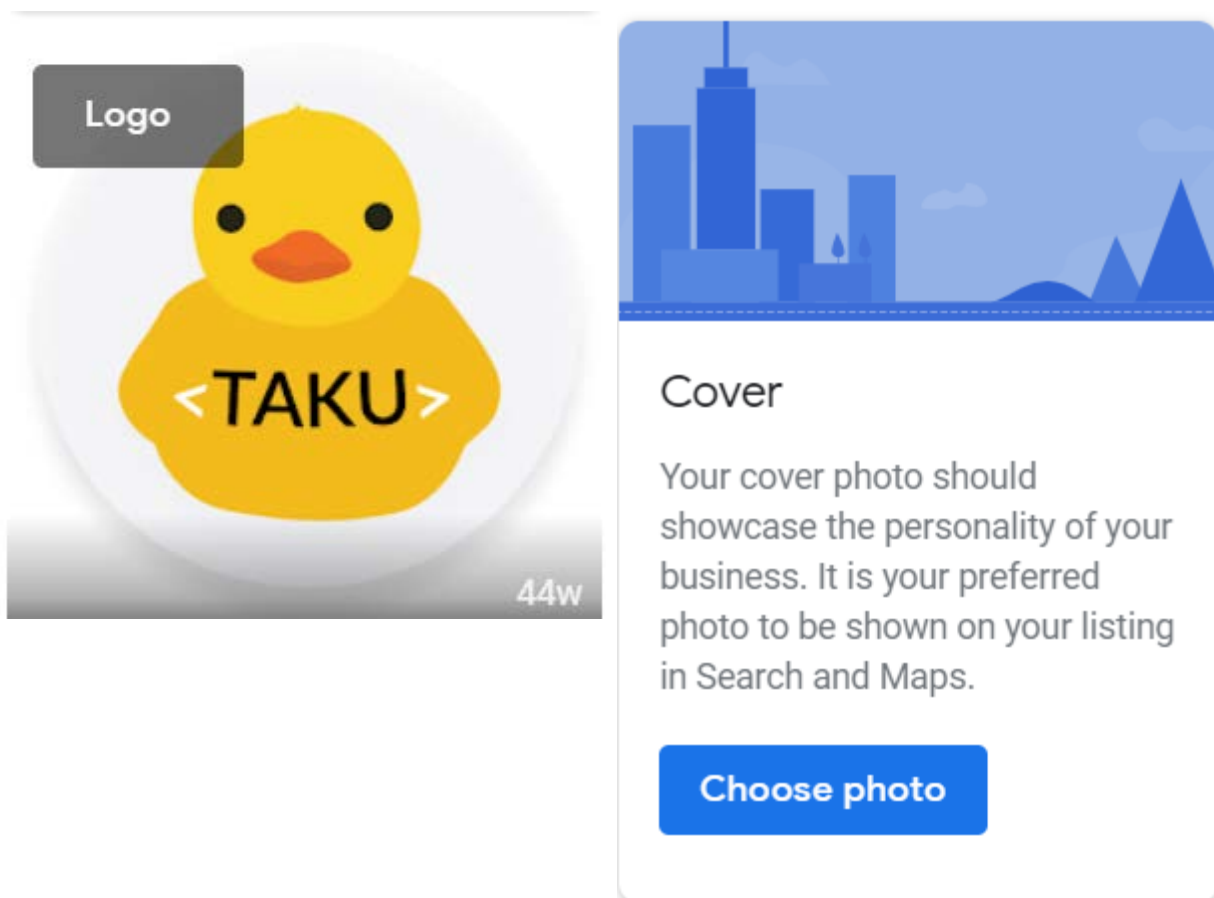
# Add High Quality Images

3) Google will ask users which photo they think best represents your business. It will take this information into consideration when ordering your images.

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

**Logo:** Your logo helps shoppers recognize your business on Google.

**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.

# Add High Quality Images

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):

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

2) *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.

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

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

5) *Team photos* : display a more personal side of your business with 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.

# Create a GMB Short Name

> *Creating a GMB short name makes it easier for shoppers to find you.*

Google recently rolled out a new feature for verified businesses on Google my Business. Business owners can now create a GMB short name or custom name.

The purpose behind this feature is to make it easier to share your business profile with customers. Before the release of this feature, GMB profiles had extremely long URLs - making it more difficult to share with shoppers or use as a landing page.

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.
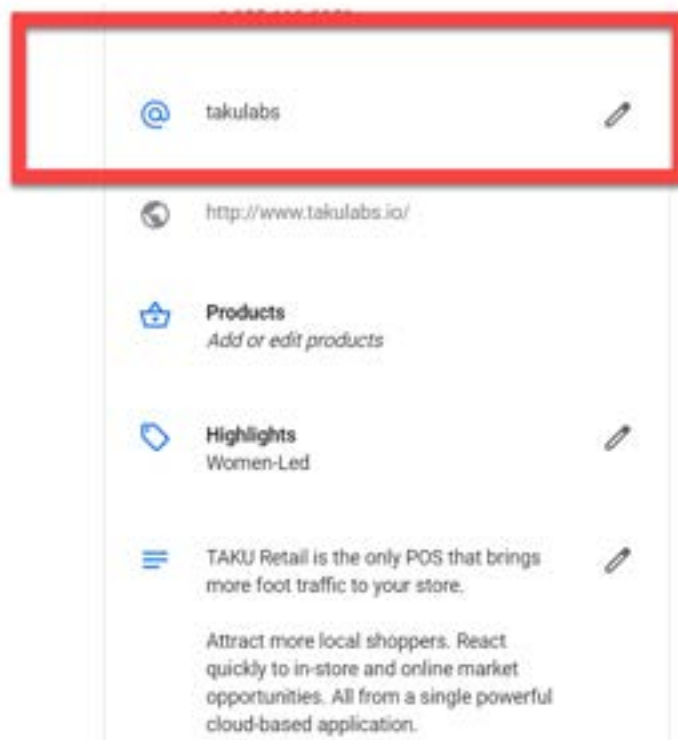
# Create GMB Posts

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. Share the latest store news, events, products, and offers. According to Google, 50% of customers are looking for promotions or discounts when searching for a business online.

You can add text, photos, gifs, and videos. You even have the option of adding different call-to-action buttons with links.

Here are some things to keep in mind about GMB posts :

- GMB posts disappear after 7 days unless you set another shorter time frame. This is why it is important to post consistent and relevant content.
- It is a good idea to include GMB in your marketing strategy. Place the same importance on GMB posts as you would on other social platforms like Instagram or Twitter.
- Google provides insights on your posts - including how many views each post got. It also tells you how many users clicked on a link in a post.

# Take Advantage of Category Specific Features

Google My Business offers category specific features depending on the business category that you select. 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.

By adding your products through the products tab in your GMB listing, users can view your products through Google Search on both mobile and desktop.
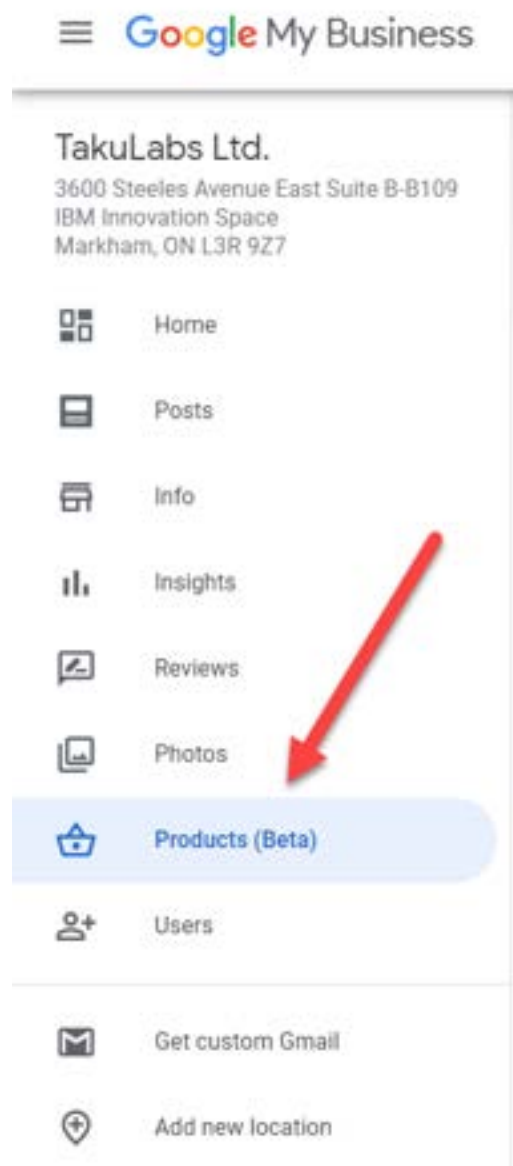
# Product Category and Product Editor

Google just recently rolled out the Products feature. Although it is still in beta, it is a great way for shoppers to learn more about your products. And the best part? It's completely free!

When shoppers see your listing on Google, they will see a new "Products" tab. From this tab there will be two carousels - *"From Product Posts"* and *Product Catalog*.

*"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.

Which brings me to the next point.

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

1) *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.

2) *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 a price
- create a product description

# Engage with Shoppers

Engage with shoppers and build customer loyalty.
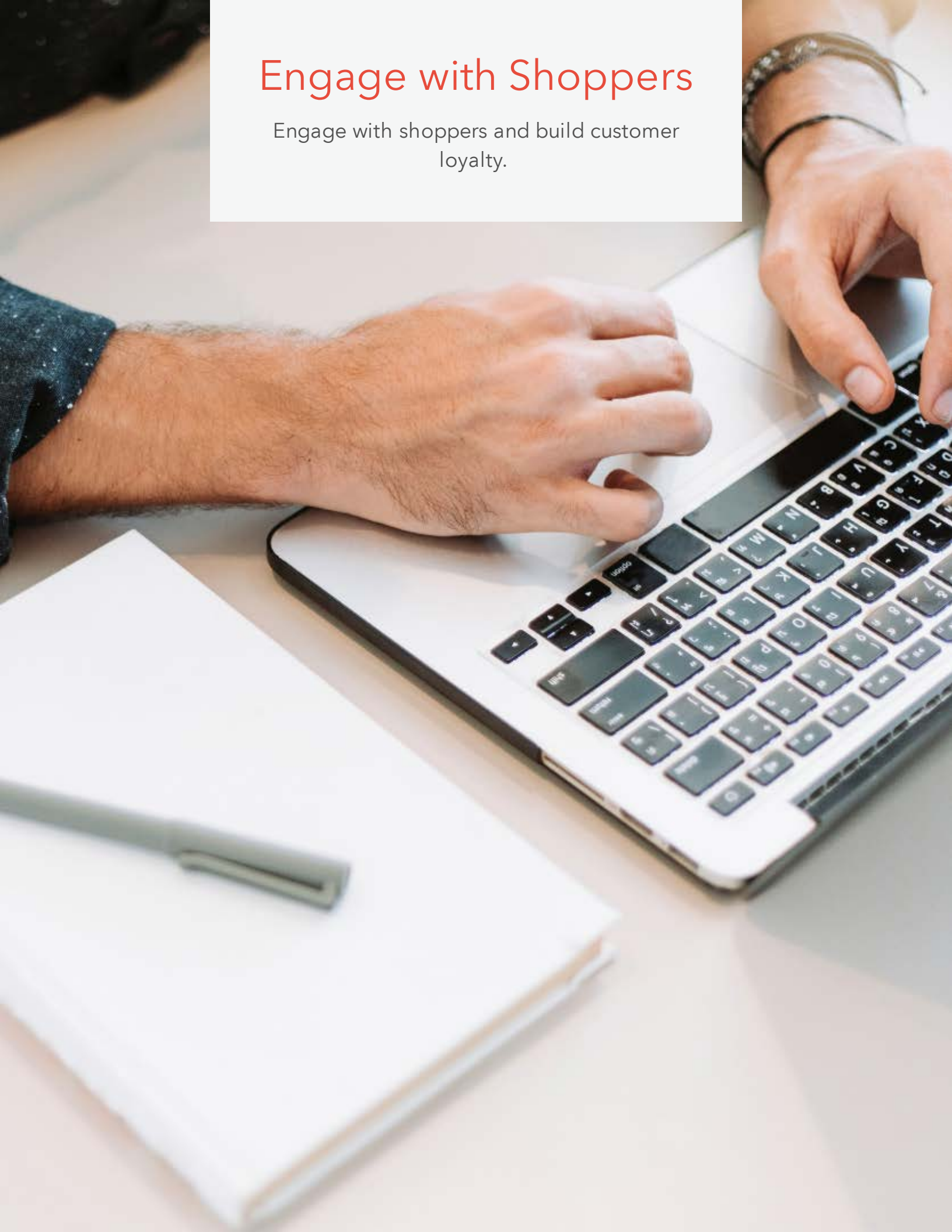
# Google My Business Reviews

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.

*More good reviews = more sales.*

*More good reviews = higher ranking in local search.*

That's why it's important to 1) gather reviews and 2) respond to them.

# How to Get More Reviews

*1. Ask for reviews at the right moment*: According to Brightlocal, 70% of shoppers that have been asked to leave a review, went on to do so. It is generally good practice to ask shoppers to leave a review after they have made a purchase from your store. How you ask for reviews is equally as important as when you ask for them - which brings us to the next point.

*2. Make it easy* : Shoppers are unlikely to leave a review if the process is difficult. 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.

# How to Get More Reviews
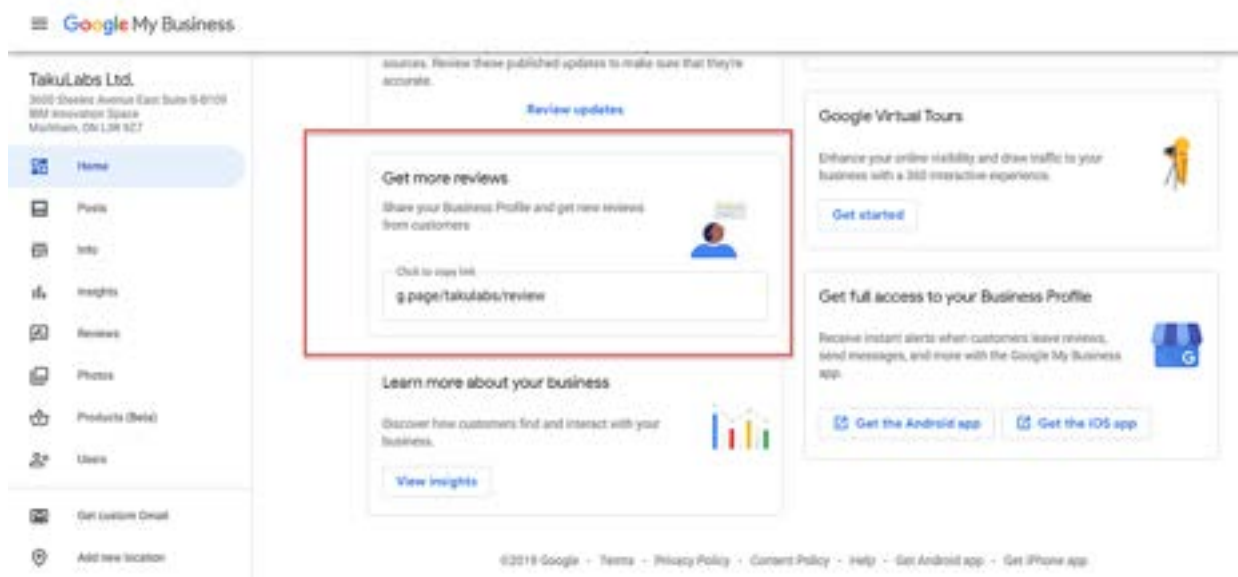


Once you claim your GMB short name, you will have a shareable short URL that directs shoppers to leave a review (shown above).

The following is an example of a good follow-up email or text.

Hi (customer name) ,

Thank you for your recent purchase of (product name) with (store name).

Shopper satisfaction is extremely important to us, so we'd love to hear about your shopping experience with us.

We would really appreciate it if you could leave a quick google review : (insert GMB short review link).

Thanks,

The (company name) team

*3. Ask quickly:* It's important that you ask customers for reviews soon after they purchase. Make sure to send the email or text 2-3 hours after they purchase.

*4. Incentivize customers with rewards* : Offering shoppers a reward for leaving a review is a great way to gather more reviews. Effective incentives include loyalty points, a $15 store credit/gift card, store merchandise etc. Make sure to include the incentive in your email or text message.

# Responding to Reviews

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

So once you've set up a process for gathering Google My Business reviews, your focus needs to be on responding to them effectively.

And that means all of them - the good and the bad. In fact, 45% of customers say they are more likely to visit a business if the business responded to negative reviews.

Tips for responding to *positive reviews* :

- Say thank you : show shoppers gratitude for their business and the time they took out of their day to leave a review.
- Keep it short : don't overwhelm shoppers with long responses - keep it useful and genuine.
- Avoid generic responses : tailor your response to specific things spoken about in each review - see the example below.
- 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.
- Respond in a timely manner
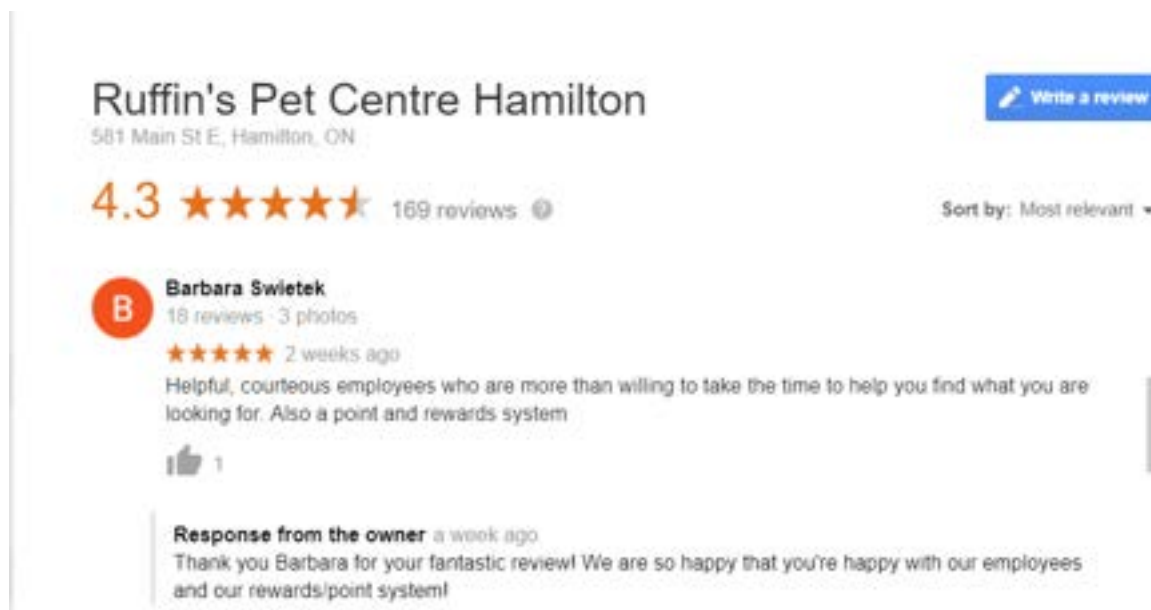
# Responding to Reviews

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 (see the response below)
- 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.
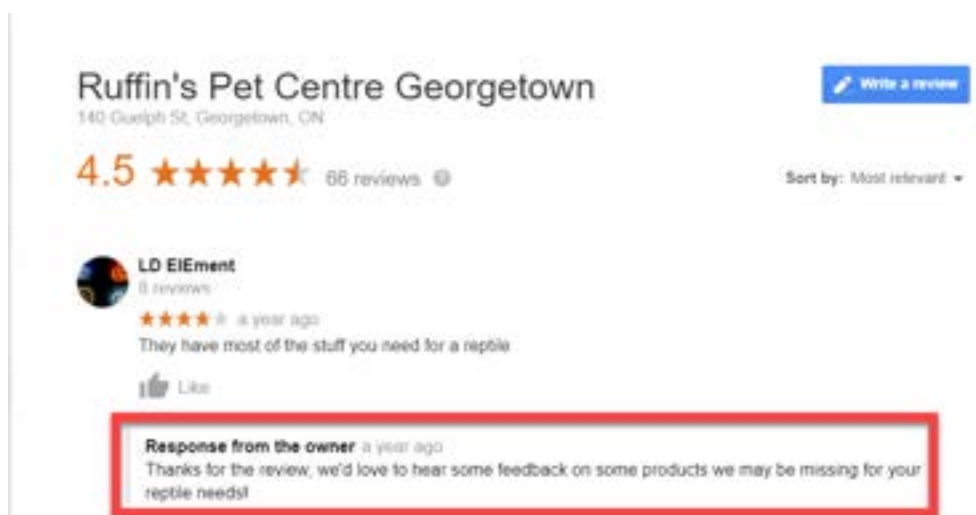
# Google My Business Messaging

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 :

- Your typical response time will show up on your listing.
- You can turn the feature on and off. 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Customers will be able to see your name and profile picture.
- Managing your messages via SMS or text is not available anymore and is currently in closed beta.
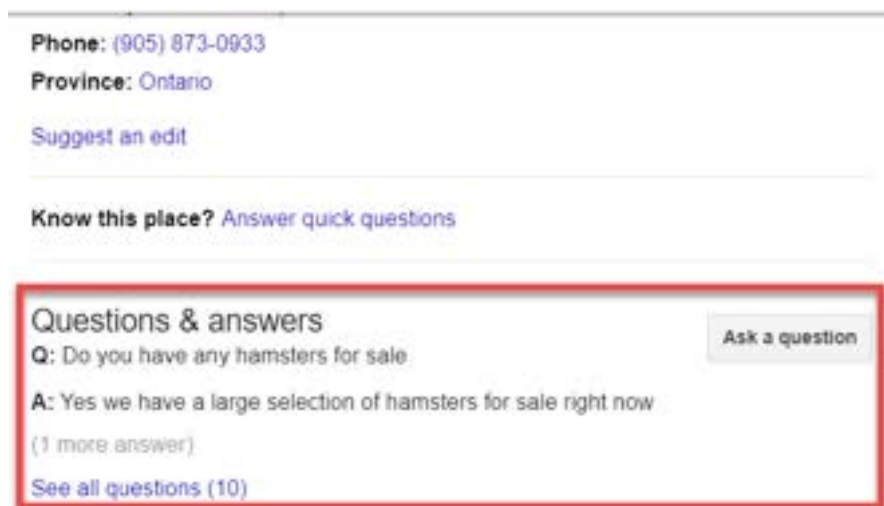
# Questions and Answers

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.

By posting relevant and helpful information, it will help shoppers consider your business. It's important to note that Q & As are crowdsourced by people - meaning real people or potential shoppers ask the questions and even have the option of answering them.

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)

# Attract New Shoppers

Discover how to attract new customers.

# Google My Business Insights

Many shoppers will find your store through Google Search or Google Maps. And as with any other marketing tactic, it is important that you analyze your Google My Business listing so you can see what is working.

Google My Business Insights lets you track important information such as *how* shoppers find your business listing and *what actions they take* once they find it. This information will help your business attract new customers.

# How Shoppers Find You

There are three ways that shoppers can find you; through a direct search, discovery search, or through a branded search.

*Direct Search*: A shopper directly searched for your business - either by searching your store name or address. This shows that shoppers know about your business and are using your name or address to find you.
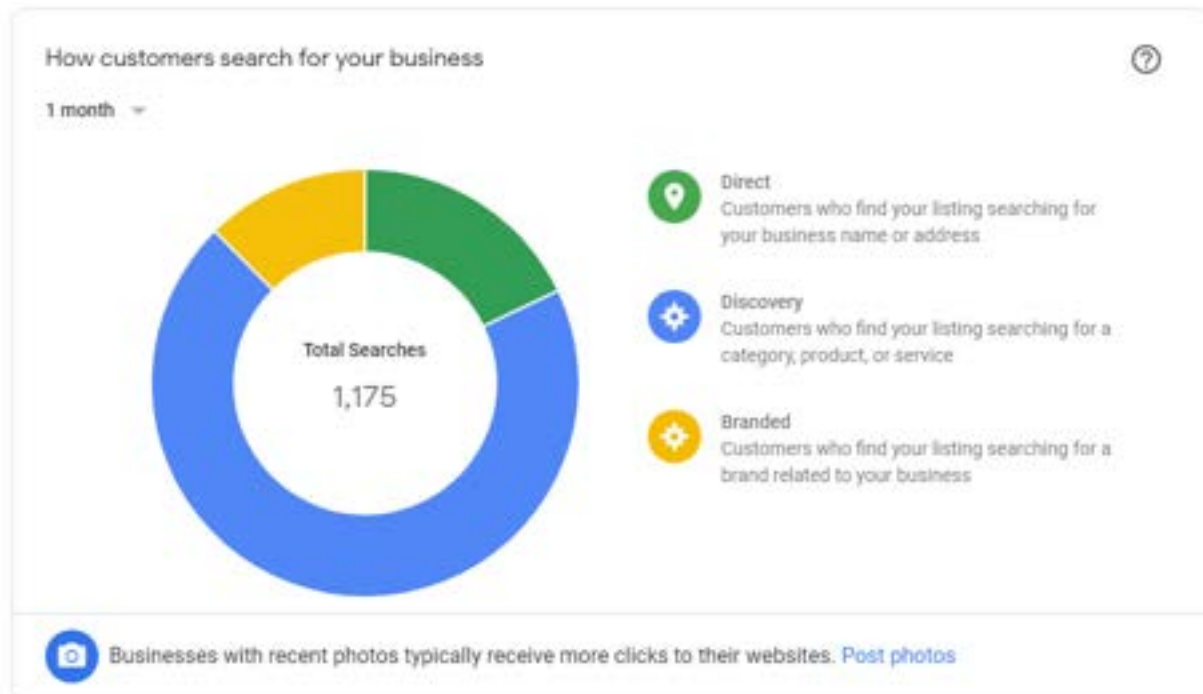
*Discovery Search*: A shopper searched for a category, product, or service that you offer. This is the most common way for shoppers to find you if they are not familiar with your business. The majority of searches made on Google are discovery searches. This is where local SEO and GMB optimization are the most important.

*Branded Search*: Shoppers found your business listing by searching for a brand related to your business. *Note*: this section will only appear if your listing has appeared at least once in a branded search.

*Total Searches* : The total number of direct, discovery, and branded searches that your business receives.

An important thing to note is that Google counts different types of searches made by an individual as multiple searches. For example, let's say that a shopper found your business through a discovery search and then made a direct search. In this case, GMB Insights would count this as 2 different searches - 1 discovery search and 1 direct search.

The image below is an example of a GMB Insights graph. It shows how many people found the company's business listing and how they found it.



How customers search for your business

1 month

Total Searches
1,175

**Direct**
Customers who find your listing searching for your business name or address

**Discovery**
Customers who find your listing searching for a category, product, or service

**Branded**
Customers who find your listing searching for a brand related to your business

Businesses with recent photos typically receive more clicks to their websites. Post photos

# Search Queries

Search queries give you a better idea of the phrases that shoppers are using to find your business listing.

This part of GMB Insights shows you the terms that people used to find your business listing on Google Search and Google Maps. In addition to common terms, you can also track search trends related to your business. This will help you create better GMB posts, Google Ads, and can even help in optimizing on-site and off-site SEO.

# Where Customers Find You On Google

This part of GMB Insights shows you which Google platform shoppers used to find you on Google - either Google Search or Google Maps. You are also able to see *how many customers* found your business on *a specific day* through each platform. This can be done by placing your cursor or mouse on the specific day on the graph.

Similar to the graph in GMB Insights that shows you how customers find your business (direct search, discovery search, or branded search), data can be displayed twice for a same user. For example, if a user finds you on Google Search and then types in your address on Google Maps, this will count as two searches.
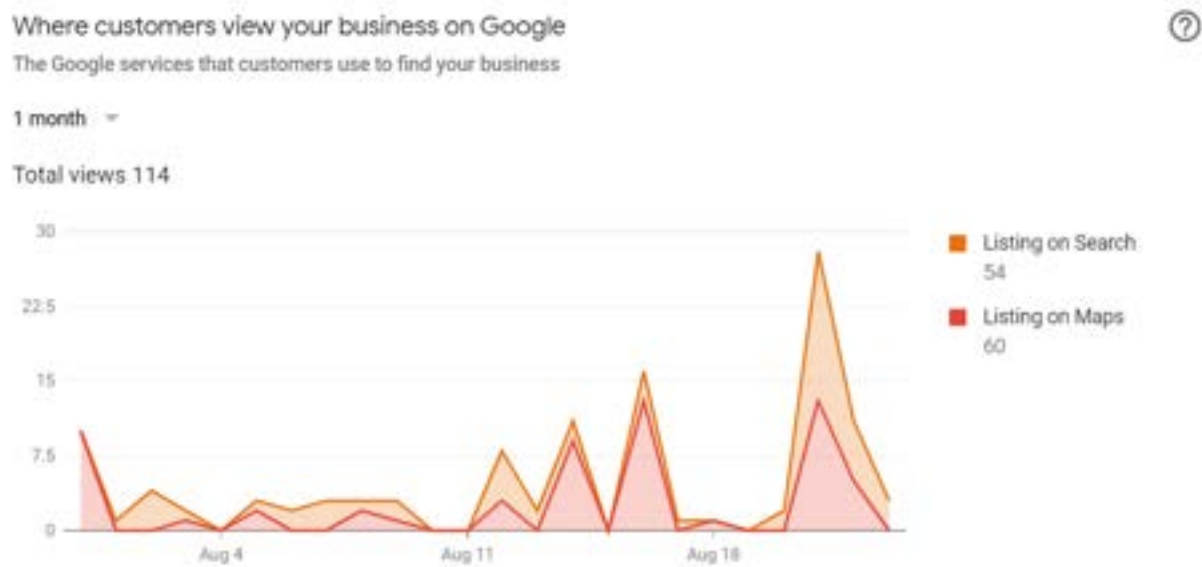


# Customer Actions

This section in Insights lets you see the actions that users are taking from your GMB profile. It shows *how many shoppers* took each of the following actions: request directions, visit your website, or call you.

An important thing to note about the customer actions graph is that it shows the total number of times that people click on one of the actions on your GMB profile. For example, if an individual user were to call your store 10 times in one day then the graph would record *all* 10 call requests.

GMB has a seperate section for two of three customer actions (request directions and phone calls) - this will be explained in detail next.

# Direction Requests

This section will show business owners the number of times that a user requested directions to their business location.

On the map, your store's location will be pinned. You will also see the popular places that your customers are requesting directions from and the total number of requests per city and neighbourhood.

This information can be used to better target ads to specific areas or popular regions.
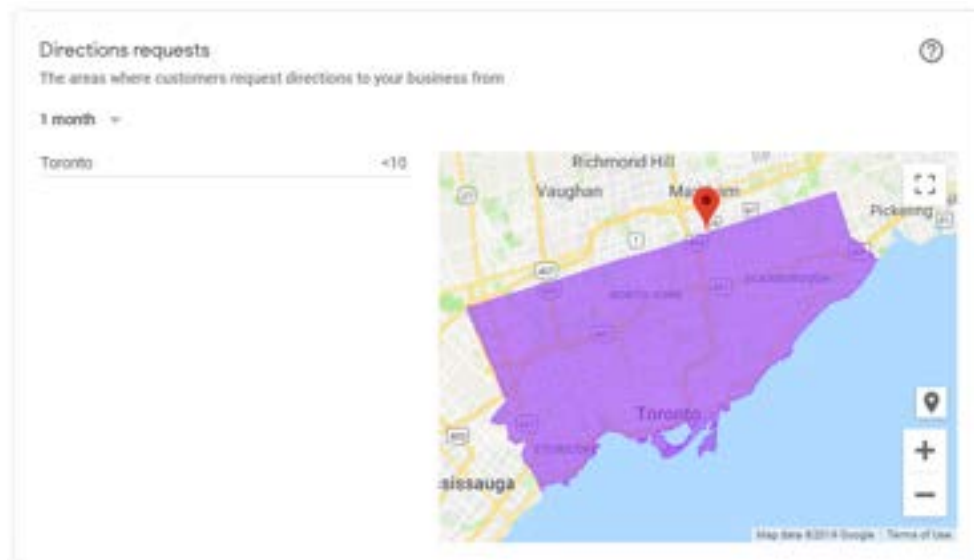


# Phone Calls

Phone Calls will show you the amount of times that people called your business from your GMB listing. This graph will show both the day and the time of day when customers call you the most.

You can use this information to find out the time of day that is best for your business and run targeted ads at those times.

# Photos

The photo insights section includes both photo views and photo quantity.

*Photo Views* : The amount of times that the photos on your GMB listing have been viewed in comparison to similar businesses or competitors.

*Photo Quantity* : The amount of photos that you have uploaded to your business listing in comparison to similar businesses or competitors. You can also see the amount of photos you have uploaded in comparison to the amount of photos that your customers have uploaded of your business.

As mentioned earlier, listings with photos have a higher click through rate and more direction requests. Posting more photos is likely to result in more views.
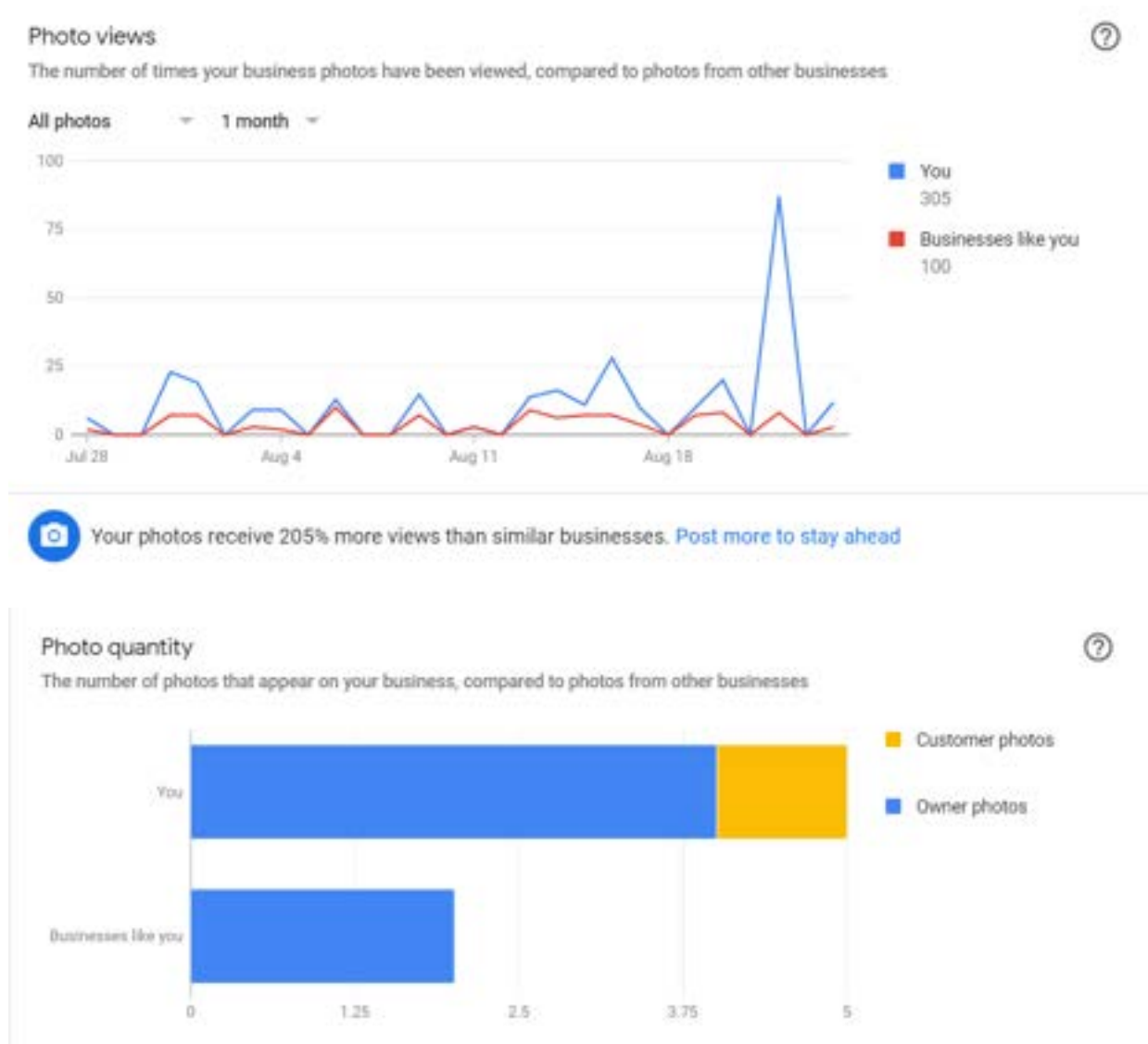
# Google Ads

When you have completed your listing and have fully optimized for local search, you have the option of reaching *even* more shoppers by advertising on Google.

You can choose the results that matter most- for example, calls, requests for directions, or store visits. Google will then optimize the ad based on your desired results.

Here are some of the benefits of Google Ads:

- You only pay when customers click on your ad or if customers take a desired action- for example phone calls or clicks to your website.
- It is an easy and quick way to reach more local shoppers.
- Minimal management of your ads is necessary.
- Analyze and track your results to determine the effectiveness of the ad.

## Available features

These are some of the key features currently available in Smart campaigns.

| Available feature | What it does |
|---|---|
| "Campaigns" overview | This is your account's home base where you'll find Google-generated performance insights. |
| Critical account alerts | Important notifications about your campaign, billing issues, etc. |
| Verified calls | Shows you the number of calls that you receive from your campaign, along with your clicks. |
| Map actions | Help you track the number of times people saw your ad and then clicked your business' pin on Google Maps or got directions to your business |
| Track actions on your website with Google Analytics | Measures how well your website meets your business expectations. |
| Ad scheduling | Choose the days of the week and the times of the day to run your ad. |

# TAKU Retail

## Sign Up for our Beta

Attract more local shoppers with your POS.

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