

LOCAL  
BUSINESS  
MARKETING  
SOLUTIONS

## LOCAL SEARCH MARKETING: LET THE POWER OF THE SEARCH ENGINES DRIVE YOUR BUSINESS' GROWTH



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## Local Business Online Marketing Landscape

Online marketing is one of the **hottest topics in the local business** space right now and it's only going to get hotter as more and more local business owners start to take notice of what's going on in the [local business online marketing](#) space – as well as of the results that so many local business owners are getting from their online marketing efforts.

And it's not just hype. There are solid numbers behind all of the buzz, such as those reported in a recent [study by the Kelsey Group](#) which found that **97% of Americans<sup>1</sup> use the Internet to find information about products and services that they can buy locally** – of whom:

- 90% use search engines
- 48% use the Internet Yellow Pages
- 42% use comparison shopping sites
- 24% use vertical sites

And it isn't only business-to-consumer sales that have been getting a lift as a result of the increasing number of people who turn to the Internet to find – and buy from – local businesses. According to [Nielsen/WebVisible's The Great Divide](#), **41% of business-to-business (B2B) decision-makers rely on search engines** such as Google, Yahoo!, and Bing to find local businesses to do business with.

The message is clear: **consumers and B2B decision-makers want to buy from local businesses**. And they're using the Internet to find local businesses to buy from.

## Where Consumers Are – and Aren't – Spending Their Time

The Nielsen/WebVisible study also confirmed what many people had been saying for years: that **consumer usage of Internet marketing channels was up** – and it wasn't up just a little bit, it was up significantly as the following figures show:

- Search engines – up 72%
- Internet Yellow Pages – up 46%
- Email offers – up 52%
- Email newsletters – up 28%

### What Makes a Local Business a “Local Business?”

A basic working definition of a local business is simply any business where customers have to come to it or where its staff has to go to its customers.

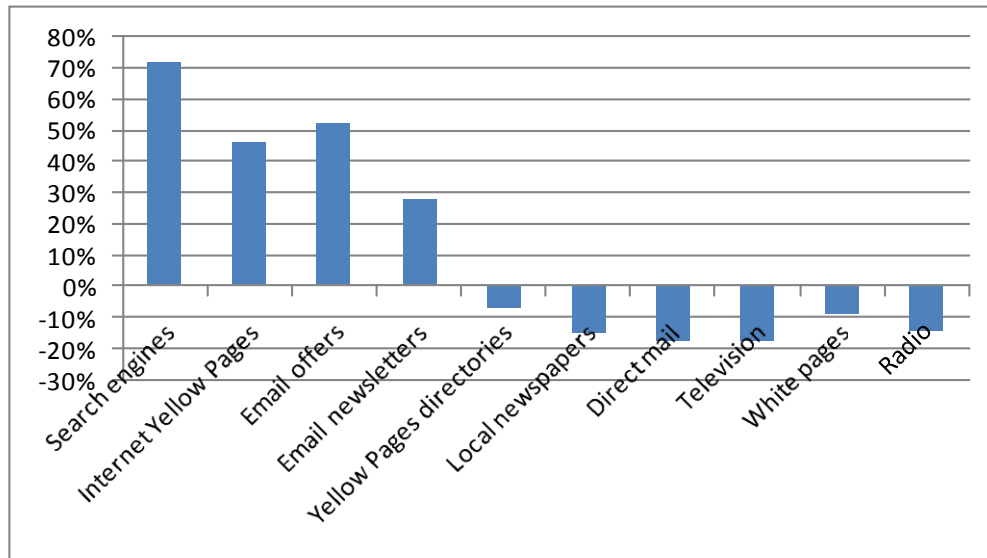
It can be a global corporation with locations all over the world that sells business-to-business (B2B) or a small business with a single location that sells business-to-consumer (B2C).

Either way, face-to-face contact between the business' representative/s and the customer is necessary to sell, fulfill, and/or service its products and services.

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<sup>1</sup> Although data for other regions were unavailable as of the writing of this report, it would be reasonable to assume that the numbers would be similar for other countries

Figure 1 - Consumer Usage of Online Marketing Channels vs. Traditional Marketing Channels



Not surprisingly, in the face of the continued growth of the Internet as a source of local business information, the **popularity of traditional media channels has plummeted**. According to the same Nielsen/WebVisible study, consumer usage of traditional media channels was down across the board:

- Yellow Pages Directories – down 7%
- Local newspapers – down 15%
- Direct mail – down 18%
- Television – down 18%
- White pages – down 9%
- Radio – down 14%

"Why are the Yellow Pages like nursing homes? They're shockingly expensive, few people under 70 use them, and many who do are just a little out of it." Killian & Company.

And yet, in spite of the fact that consumers and B2B decision-makers **have been abandoning traditional media** channels in favour of online media channels, owners of local businesses have been slow to respond – or simply haven't responded at all – as the following facts attest:

- 90% of business owners have not claimed their free [Google Places Local Business Listings](#)
- 61% of business owners spend [less than 3 hours per week marketing](#) their website
- 51% of business owners feel that the [quality and ability of their website to acquire new customers](#) is only "fair" to "poor"
- 49% of business owners [spend less than 10% of their marketing budgets](#) on online marketing and advertising
- 46% of small businesses [do not even have a website](#)

All of which means that most local small and medium businesses are virtually invisible on the Web and, as a result, are **missing out on countless leads and sales** (as you'll see, there are tens of thousands of people in cities all over the world searching online for businesses just like yours every single month) and **incurring higher-than-necessary costs** (online marketing offers the best of both worlds: is not only more effective than offline marketing, it is also considerably less expensive).

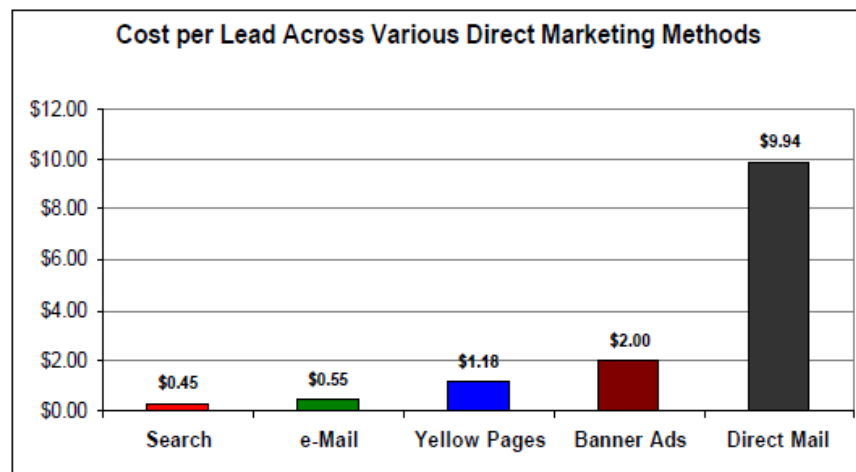
Of course, this also means that any local business that gets its search marketing effort into gear can **gain a huge advantage over most of its competitors** and start to get a lot of targeted search referral traffic to its website – and emails, phone calls, and visitors to its business – virtually right way.

## The Power of Search Engine Marketing

Search engines like Google, Yahoo!, and Bing are among the most powerful marketing tools on the Internet for a number of reasons:

- Search engine usage is the [second most popular Internet activity](#) (second only to email) among the **239 million Internet users in the United States** (that's a little over 77% of the U.S. population; Canada rings in with 26 million users, also a little more over 77% of the Canadian population)
- Global and regional **monthly search volume continues to reach record levels** – search engine users carried out [131 billion searches globally in December 2009](#), an increase of 46% over the previous year – as more people turn to search engines to help them find all kinds of different information
- Search engine marketing offers the [lowest cost of lead acquisition](#) – as little as **\$0.45 per lead, compared with nearly \$10 per lead for direct mail** – of all online and offline marketing activities

Figure 2 - Average Cost per Lead by Marketing Method



Another reason has to do with the fact that the basic reason that search engines exist is to **connect people in need of information with websites that contain the information people need – at the precise moment when they need it the most.**

People search the Web because they have an itch to scratch. That's what drives them to sit in front of their computers, navigate their browsers to Google (about [65% of all people navigate their browsers to Google](#) when they want to search the Web<sup>2</sup>), type keywords into the query bar – e.g., “best „itch-scratchers” for sale in Vancouver – and click on the search button with the expectation that their search will lead them to information about how to best scratch that itch – and where they can find the best – and closest – places to buy “itch-scratchers” from.

<sup>2</sup> Now that Yahoo! and Bing have joined forces – [Bing's search engine now powers Yahoo!](#) – their combined share of nearly one-third of the search market makes them a force to be reckoned with

## Search Engine Marketing is Not Just for Online or Ecommerce Businesses

Contrary to the belief held by some that search engines are useful as marketing tools only for online/ecommerce businesses, **the facts show that search engines are just as important** for businesses that focus on local markets in the offline world, whether they sell business-to-consumer or business-to-business:

- 90% of US consumers [use search engines to find information](#) about local businesses
- 41% of US business-to-business buyers [use search engines to find local businesses](#) to buy from
- 20% of all [Google searches have a local intent](#) behind them

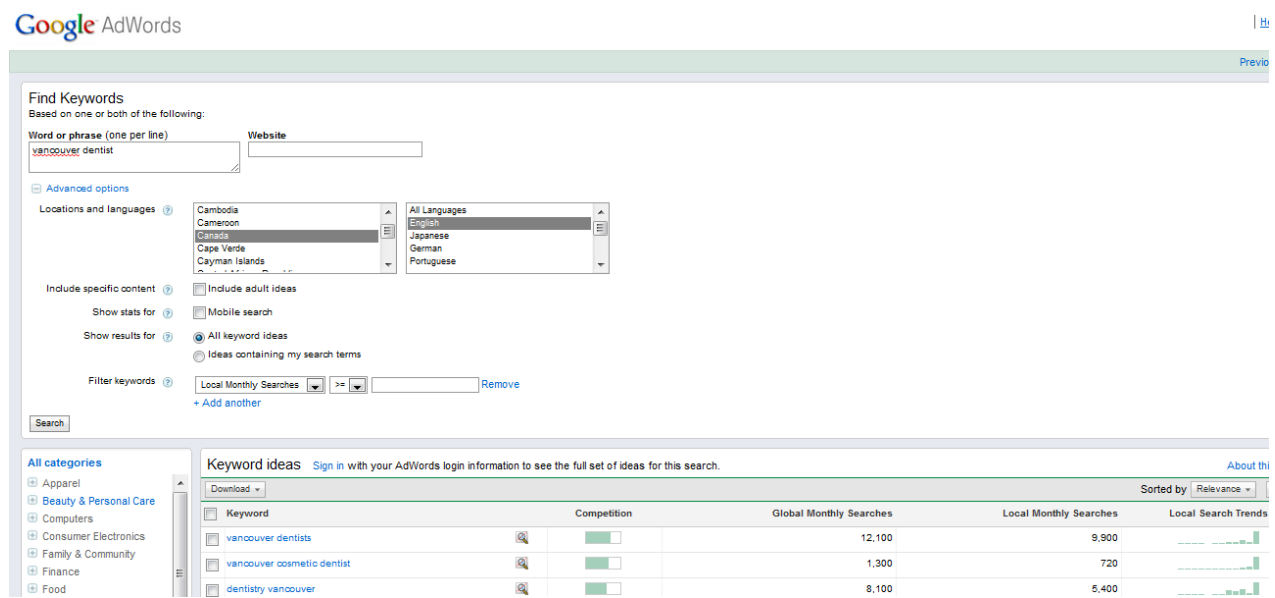
Clearly, the online **demand for local business information** proves that Internet marketing in general, and search engine marketing in particular, is not just for online or Ecommerce businesses, but that it is also **very much for local businesses** that compete in the offline world.

## Demand for Businesses, Products, and Services at the Local Level

If you want an idea of the **level of local interest in businesses like yours** and in the products and services you offer, simply visit Google's free [Keyword Selection Tool](#) and run a search for a keyword phrase that includes the words people use (or that you think people would or should use) to find businesses like yours and the types of products and services you sell, along with a geographic modifier that is relevant to your local market (such as the name of the city your business operates within) – e.g., “dentist” (keyword) “Vancouver” (geographic modifier).

The image below is a screenshot of Google's Keyword Selection Tool.

Figure 3 - Google's Free Keyword Selection Tool Helps You Research Search Volumes and Suggestions for Keywords



The following table summarizes the results of a search on Google's Keyword Selection Tool for **just 25 randomly selected, generic keywords** – out of thousands – that represent a broad cross-section of types of businesses that exist in virtually every market and include a city name – in this case, “Vancouver” – as the geographic modifier.

Figure 4 - Random List of Generic Keywords for Businesses in the City of Vancouver

Monthly Search Volume	Keyword Phrase
14,800	"furniture Vancouver"
12,100	"Vancouver jobs"
6,600	"lawyer Vancouver"
6,600	"hotels in Vancouver"
6,600	"spa Vancouver"
6,600	"sushi Vancouver"
5,400	"massage Vancouver"
5,400	"pizza Vancouver"
4,400	"insurance Vancouver"
4,400	"hair salon Vancouver"
4,400	"dentist Vancouver"
2,900	"storage Vancouver"
2,400	"Vancouver wedding photographer"
2,400	"Vancouver apartments for rent"
1,900	"Vancouver limo"
1,900	"property management Vancouver"
1,900	"medical clinic Vancouver"
1,600	"gym Vancouver"
1,600	"Vancouver movers"
1,600	"realtor Vancouver"
1,000	"Vancouver car rental"
1,300	"jewelry Vancouver"
1,300	"carpet cleaning Vancouver"
1,000	"bed and breakfast Vancouver"
1,000	"florist Vancouver"

You can dig deeper into any one of the above-listed keywords to **find additional related and/or similar keywords that people search for every month** to find information about specific local businesses.

For example, following are the monthly search volumes for an additional five keywords – out of dozens – that are simply basic variations on the term “dentist Vancouver:”

1. 2,400 searches for “Vancouver dentist”
2. 1,900 searches for “Vancouver dental”
3. 1,900 searches for “dentists in Vancouver”

#### Key Questions to Consider

- How much traffic are search engines currently sending to your website?
- How do the numbers for total traffic to your website – from all sources – compare with the total search volume for any one of the keywords listed



4. 1,600 searches for “dental Vancouver”
5. 1,300 searches for “dentists Vancouver”

That takes the total search volume for just six keyword phrases that relate to “dentist Vancouver” to **13,500 searches every single month**. And it doesn’t end there, as a proper (read: thorough) keyword research effort will take you deeper as **there are dozens of additional, more specific keyword phrases** that relate to “dentist Vancouver” and that people use in their searches every month – e.g.

- Vancouver teeth cleaning
- Vancouver Zoom whitening
- Vancouver root canals
- Vancouver sedation dentist
- Vancouver dental check-up
- Etc etc etc

You’ll find **similar results for other geo-targeted keywords and keyword phrases no matter what type of business you’re in** – hospitality, law, insurance, financial services, recruiting, security, real estate, and so forth – and no matter what types of products and services you offer.

## People Who Use Search Engines Have a High Propensity for Taking Action

Another extremely important thing to know about people who use search engines to find local business information is that they **do not search simply for the sake of searching**. They search for the sake of finding. And **when they find, they take action**, as the [Nielsen/WebVisible study on the post-search behaviour](#) of people looking for local business information found:

- 70% will **call the phone number on a website**
- 60% have **referred a business they found on the Internet** to a friend
- 52% always or often research online first, then **follow up with an offline purchase from a local business**
- 14% will **send a business they found online an email**
- 11% will **fill out an online form**

Consider those numbers carefully for a moment. **Seven out of ten people** who search for local business information on the Web **call the phone number** listed on the websites they find. **Six out of ten people refer a business** they

### Key Questions to Consider

What percentage of new visitors to your website currently:

- Call your business
  - *Is your phone number even on your website and is it very visible?*
- Refer your business to a friend?
  - *Do you make it easy for people to share your website’s address?*
- Visit – and make a purchase from - your business?
  - What do you do to identify where your customers come from?

If there are big gaps between your numbers and those from the study, what actions will you take to close them?

found on the Internet to a friend. And **five out of ten people follow up with an offline purchase** from a local business.

Can you think of any other marketing channels that drive such high conversions?

Of course, in order for your website to **get phone calls, referrals, emails, and motivate people to visit your actual place of business**, your website first must be found in the search engine results. And in order for your website to be found in the search engine results, it must be highly visible. And high visibility means one thing: **ranking at or near the top** of the search engine results.

## The Importance of Ranking at the Top of the Search Results

Search engine companies are notoriously secretive about certain types of information – for obvious and not-so-obvious reasons. Information about click through rates for search results rankings is an example of information about which they are very protective.

### Studies on Click Through Rates and Search Engine Ranking

And while you could probably safely trust your own personal “clicks-by-ranking” experience to be representative of the search engine user population as a whole, there have been numerous studies and surveys over the years – for both commercial and educational purposes – that have sought to clarify the **relationship between click through rates and ranking** on the search engine results pages (SERPs).

A few of the more notable study/survey findings include:

- iProspect/Jupiter Research's [Blended Search Results Survey](#) found that, among other things, nearly 70% of survey participants clicked only on the first page of search results (27% of whom clicked only on the first few results)
- Cornell University's [eye-tracking analysis](#) studied both click distribution and attention distribution and found that [the top three search results on Google attracted nearly 70% of all clicks](#) and approximately 68% of users’ attention (measured by length of time of “eye fixation”)<sup>3</sup>

Figure 5 - Heat Map Showing Click and Attention Distribution on Google SERP (image from [SEO Searcher](#))



The image to the upper right is a “heat map” that graphically – and colorfully – depicts where people looked and clicked in Cornell’s study.

### AOL Data Show That the Top Five Search Results Get 75% of All Clicks

The most compelling data comes from a controversial data release in 2006 by the research arm of AOL (whose search engine was then – and is still now – powered by Google). The data were based on **search behaviour of more than 650,000 AOL subscribers** and covered a **three-month period and consisted of nearly 20 million search queries**.

<sup>3</sup> [The Power of Defaults](#) provides some very interesting insights into search engine user behaviour

According to the data, the **first page of search results attracted nearly 90%** of all clicks for all search queries, with the second page getting about 5% of the clicks and all of the rest of the search results pages (which commonly number in the tens of thousands) sharing the remaining 5%.

As the table to the right shows, the **top five results on the first page shared nearly 75%** of all of the clicks:

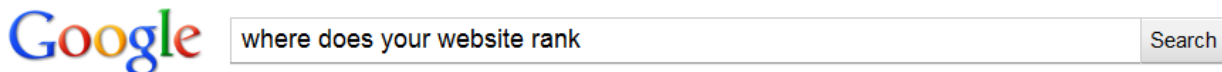
- 42.30% for the first result
- 11.92% for the second result
- 8.44% for the third result
- 6.03% for the fourth result
- 4.86% for the fifth result

The rest of the five results on the first page shared a little over 16% of the clicks.

### Page One: The Ultimate Competitive Advantage and Source of New Business

Ultimately, although the data on click through rates vary from one source to the next, the pattern is clear no matter what source you consider (including your own experience as a search engine user): a **page one ranking in the search results** – ideally, at or near the top of the page – can help you **outperform your competitors' websites dramatically** and should, therefore, be the focus of your website promotion efforts.

When you **factor in the local search volume for the keywords that are relevant to your business** – e.g., Vancouver dentist, dentist Vancouver, dentist in Vancouver, and so forth – you can begin to appreciate just how much traffic search engines can send to your website.



And you when consider the conversions reported by the Nielsen/WebVisible study shown earlier in this report ( 70% of the people who visit websites in search of local business information call the phone number on the website, 60% refer the business to a friend, and slightly over 50% visit the business and make an offline purchase) you can really see the **potential impact that a top search engine ranking could have on traffic to your website and sales and savings for your business.**

The table below **models the effects of ranking in the 5<sup>th</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> positions** (to be conservative) on the SERPs for five keywords relating to “Dentist Vancouver” (obviously, in “real

Figure 6 – AOL Data on the Distribution of Clicks by SERP Ranking

Rank	Click Throughs	Distribution
All	19,434,540	100%
1	8,220,278	42.30%
2	2,316,738	11.92%
3	1,640,751	8.44%
4	1,171,642	6.03%
5	943,667	4.86%
6	774,718	3.99%
7	655,914	3.37%
8	579,196	2.98%
9	549,196	2.83%
10	577,325	2.97%
11	127,688	0.66%
12	108,555	0.66%
13	101,802	0.52%
14	94,221	0.48%
15	91,020	0.47%
16	75,006	0.39%
17	70,054	0.36%
18	65,832	0.34%
19	62,141	0.32%
20	58,382	0.30%
21	55,471	0.29%
31	23,041	0.12%
41	14,024	0.07%

life” rankings would not be so perfectly ordered). It also factors in a conversion rate of website visitors-to-customers of 10% (rather than the 50% conversion rate that was established in the Nielsen/WebVisible study) and assumes an average dollar value per transaction of \$100.

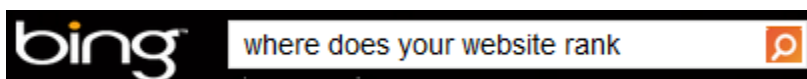
Figure 7 - Table Modeling the Potential Economic Impact of SERP Positions for Keywords Related to “Dentist Vancouver”

Keyword or Phrase	"dentist Vancouver"	"dental Vancouver"	"Vancouver dentist"	"Vancouver dental"	"dentists Vancouver"	Total
a) Monthly search volume	12,100	6,600	4,400	3,600	2,900	29,600
b) Target ranking	10	9	8	7	6	N/A
c) % of clicks (based on ranking)	2.97%	2.83%	2.98%	3.37%	3.99%	N/A
d) # of website visitors (a * c)	359	187	131	121	116	914
e) Projected # of sales/new customers (d * 10% conversion)	36	19	13	12	12	91
f) Average \$ value per new customer per transaction	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100
g) Total increased monthly sales	\$3,594	\$1,868	\$1,311	\$1,213	\$1,157	\$9,143

Based on these numbers and assumptions, total **sales would increase by nearly \$10,000 per month**. And that's just for ranking five keywords in the 5<sup>th</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> positions, which attract a considerably lower share of the clicks (about 16%) than the 1<sup>st</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> positions (about 75%). Also note that lower rankings – meaning lower click through rates – have been applied to the higher search volumes in order to keep the numbers conservative.



If you applied the same search volumes in the table above – in the same order (lower click through rates paired with the higher search volumes) – total **monthly sales would increase by nearly \$30,000** for the same five keywords (and if you wanted to get really “crazy,” you could pair the click through rates of the higher rankings with the higher search volumes).



Ultimately, a simple strategy for any local business would be to identify **dozens of different keywords for which you’d aim to achieve a high ranking** because every individual keyword represents the opportunity for visibility in the search engines and is, therefore, **a source of potential search referral traffic to your website** (and phone calls and visits to your business):

- One keyword = **one source of potential search referral traffic** to your website
- Ten keywords = **ten sources of potential search referral traffic** to your website
- Twenty-five keywords = **twenty-five sources of potential search referral traffic** to your website

Even if each keyword is responsible for only 100 visitors to your website every month, 25 keywords would translate into 2,500 visitors to your website. And **if only 1% of those visitors became customers, you’d still gain an additional 25 new customers** each and every month.

## Multiple Pathways to the Top of the Search Results

Although there are differences in how search engines rank and display search results there are two basic types of search results that are common to every major general search engine's results pages – each of which represents an opportunity for visibility and, therefore, traffic:

- Paid search results
- Organic search results

**Paid search results** are drawn from a database that consists of paid advertisements that are triggered to appear in the search results when people use the keywords the advertisements are targeting in their search queries.

Paid search results are ranked primarily on the basis of relevance to the keywords in the search query and click through rates (the higher the percentage of clicks an ad attracts, the higher it is likely to rank).

**Organic search results** are drawn from a search engine's index of web pages (Google's search index [passed the one trillion mark back in July of 2008](#)) and are ranked in descending order of relevance to the keywords people type into the search bar.

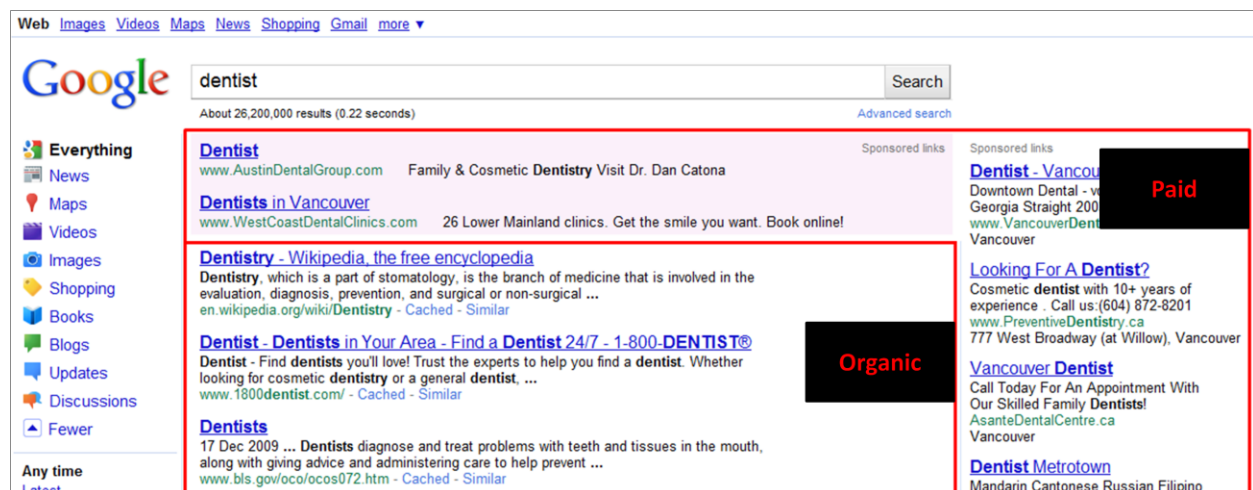
Relevance is determined by many factors – some of the more important of which include: keyword density, keyword proximity, keyword prominence, and link popularity.

Although there are thousands of different search engines in the world that you could conceivably incorporate into the search engine marketing strategy for your local business, there are really only **three that matter because, between them, they hold a 96% share** – give or take – of the total search engine market:

- Google
- Yahoo!
- Bing

And since Google owns about three-quarters of that 96% share its own – more **than the rest of the top 100 search engines (including Yahoo! and Bing) combined** – it should be the primary focus of your search marketing efforts.

Figure 8 - Anatomy of Google's SERP





We'll take a closer look at both paid search results and organic search results in the sections that follow.

## Paid Search Results

Paid search results – which are commonly referred to as *sponsored links* – are an excellent search engine marketing investment for local business owners to consider for *at least* four reasons:

- Advertisers can gain virtually instant access to the first page of the search results of the search engines on which they're advertising – which can cause **a sharp spike in traffic to their website** since the first page of search results, as we saw earlier, gets about 90% of the clicks for all searches
- Advertisers **pay only if people actually click on their advertisements** (hence the name Pay Per Click or PPC) – so advertisers pay only if people take some form of action in response to their ads (unlike most offline advertising which requires advertisers to pay whether or not people exposed to their ads respond to them in any way)
- Advertisers can **exercise tight control over their ads** – in terms of daily budgets, times when their ads appear, regions in which their ads appear, campaign activations and deactivations, and more
- Advertisers have access to comprehensive – and free – data that they can use to **make immediate improvements to campaign performance**

### Google's Enhanced Local Listings

For just \$25 per month, business owners in select cities can make the appearance of their Google Places listing in the local business search results stand out with a "Tag."

While the fee does nothing to enhance the ranking of a local business listing (as with non-local organic search results, you can't pay to appear or rank better in local business search results) it does make a business' listing stand out amongst the other listings which should impact positively on click through rates.

Another thing that's great about PPC advertising is the fact that, as we saw earlier, people who use search engines take action.

The same Nielsen/WebVisible survey cited earlier in this report that provided the general data on the post-search actions of people using search engines to find local business information also provided **specific data on how people respond to the sponsored links** that appear in the paid search results section of the SERPs:

- An average **50% of individuals were likely to click at least one sponsored link**
- An average **83% of those that clicked a sponsored link, also called the vendor**
- An average **75% of those that clicked and called the vendor, also made a purchase**

Clearly, if it's done right, PPC advertising can be one of the best investments a local business owner can make because it can **yield huge returns in the form of website traffic for pennies per click** (depending on the level of competition for the keywords). And, since advertisers can monitor campaign performance virtually real-time – and shut campaigns down at the click of a

button – PPC advertising offers a very low risk way to test campaigns, product launches, new website designs and content, and so forth.

## Organic Search Results

While paid search results make it possible to **capture a top ranking on the first page of search results within a matter of hours**, they don't attract as high a percentage of clicks as organic search results do – owing largely to the fact that **most people trust non-paid organic search results more** than paid search results because organic search results are earned and not purchased.

This means that search engine marketing that focuses purely on PPC leaves a lot of traffic, potential customers, and sales behind.

On top of the fact that organic search results attract a higher share of the click distribution than paid search results, they also **offer a number of different ways to capture top rankings** on the first page of search results thanks to Google's introduction of universal (or blended) search results several years ago.

## The Introduction of Universal Search

In its never-ending quest to **improve the satisfaction of its users** (assuming, rightly, that satisfaction is, largely, a function of the relevance of search results), [Google rolled out a new version of its search engine results page](#) in May of 2007 that went beyond “traditional” Web search results – i.e., pages from standard websites – to include a wider variety of content from the World Wide Web:

- Images
- Videos
- News
- Local business
- And more

Google's (then) new and improved search engine algorithm began to **review and rank all of the content in its search index** and served up results that it “decided” were most relevant to the keywords people typed into the search query bar – irrespective of whether the content came in the form of images, videos, news, local businesses, and so forth.

Other search engines followed suit soon after.

## Key Implications of Universal Search

The implications of universal search were pretty significant from the outset as it opened up **numerous new pathways to the top of the organic search results**. Websites that had been shut out of the top of the organic search results because competitors were so well entrenched with their “traditional” content suddenly had **an opportunity to gain excellent visibility in the organic search results** on the strength of “alternative” content if a search engine's ranking



algorithm decided that an image or a video or a news release scored higher on the relevance scale.

Moreover, if people included a geographic modifier as part of their search term (e.g., “dentist Vancouver”), **search engines served up listings for local businesses on the first page** as part of the organic search results. In 2009 Google eliminated the need to include a geographic modifier as part of a search query as its search engine started to serve up local search results when it detected “local intent” (although many people continue to use geographic modifiers).

As you can see in the image below, a search for the keyword *dentist* yields not only standard Web results but also news, local business listings, images, and videos.

Figure 9 - Screenshot of Google's Universal Search Results for the Keyword Dentist

The screenshot displays Google's search results for the keyword "dentist". The interface includes a search bar at the top with the text "dentist" and a search button. Below the search bar, the results are organized into several sections:

- Paid/PPC Search Results:** Located at the top right, these results are sponsored and include advertisements for dental services, such as "Richmond Dentist" and "BC's Trusted Dents".
- Web Results:** These are the standard organic search results, including links to dental websites, Wikipedia entries, and local business listings. Red arrows point from the "Web Results" label to these sections.
- News Results:** These results show recent news articles related to dentistry, such as "Dentists show to go open to keep your teeth white". Red arrows point from the "News Results" label to these sections.
- Local Business Results:** These results show a map of Vancouver with red pins indicating the locations of various dental offices. Red arrows point from the "Local Business Results" label to these sections.
- Video Results:** These results show video thumbnails and titles related to dentistry, such as "Dentist" and "Dentist". Red arrows point from the "Video Results" label to these sections.
- Images Results:** These results show image thumbnails related to dentistry, such as "Dentist" and "Dentist". Red arrows point from the "Images Results" label to these sections.

It's worth noting that the results shown in the image above for a search for the keyword *dentist* are not typical – yet. This means that there's a **great opportunity for forward-thinking business owners** to rank for images and videos and news releases right now, especially for searches that do not currently yield such content.

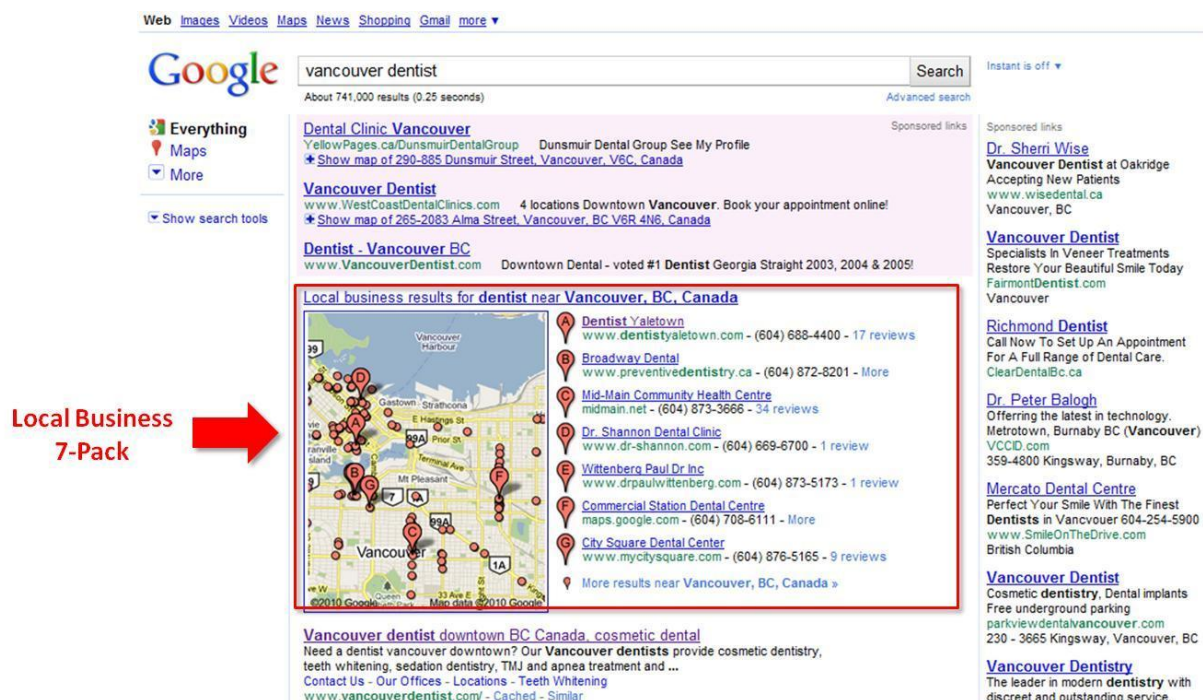
Another important point is that the SERP in the image above includes **listings for 26 websites in the organic search results**. Typically, “traditional” Web search results – with no universal content – feature only 10 listings.

Universal search offers a great opportunity to gain much-needed visibility in the search engines.

### The Importance of Visibility in the Local Business Search Results

Local business search results appear as three, seven or ten business listings (commonly known in the search marketing industry as the “local 3-pack,” “local 7-pack,” and “local 10-pack”) alongside a map that displays the location of the businesses. **Local business search results only ever appear on page one of search results** (and, of course, throughout Google Maps) and are commonly displayed at the very top of the page – just below the paid search results and, importantly, **above the non-local organic search results** (occasionally they also appear somewhere around the middle of page one).

Figure 10 - Google's Local Business 7-Pack Appearing at the Top of the Organic Search Results



Local business search results deserve special attention for several reasons (the first four of which were referenced at various points earlier in this report but are worth repeating):

- Approximately 20% of all Google searches have a local intent behind them – this means that one in every five of the **100 billion+ global searches that are carried out every month** are targeting local content
- Search volumes for keywords that target local business information is extremely healthy – and since every individual keyword should be a source of traffic to a website, there's an **opportunity to gain an exponential increase in website traffic**
- People who use search engines to find local business information have a high propensity for taking action – the reason that most of them are using a search engine is that they have an itch to scratch and if they find something that can help them scratch their itch, **they call, email, visit, and buy**
- Universal search makes it possible to capture a highly prized page one ranking at the top of Google and other search engines for local business search results – websites that once might have been shut out of the organic search results for highly competitive keywords **have an opportunity to gain excellent visibility**
- An **overwhelming number of businesses have done little or nothing with local business search** and many of those that rank at or near the top of the local business search results have not even claimed the local business listings (like their Google Places Page) that are made available for free by the search engines and that are the only way to rank in the local business search results

The last point is especially important because it means that business owners that get their local search marketing efforts in gear are likely to find themselves **climbing the rankings of the local business search results** and, in so doing, seeing a sharp spike in traffic to their websites – and to their businesses – and putting distance between their businesses and those of their competition.

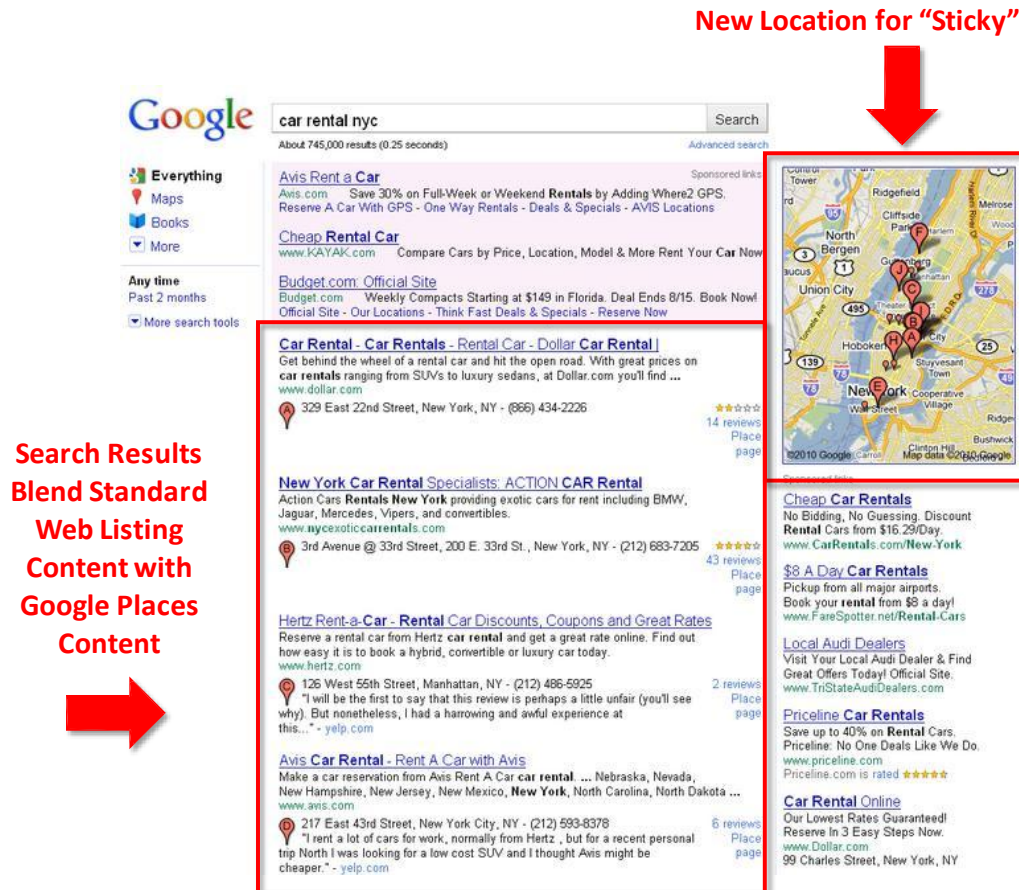
They are also going to have the benefit of getting time on their side, as the more time they have to improve and solidify their rankings, the more entrenched their listings in the local business search results will become.

### A Sneak Peak at Google's Experimental Search Engine Results Page

One additional reason that local business search deserves special attention has to do with the fact that Google, in its never-ending pursuit of improved user satisfaction through a better quality search experience, has begun **testing of a new search engine results page** – available on a controlled basis and only to limited users – which seems to have eliminated the Local Business 3-7-10 Packs in favour of integrated search result listings.

As you can see in the image below that depicts a Google search for the term *car rental nyc* – from [Converseon.com](http://Converseon.com) – listings in the organic search results section **combine the information traditionally displayed in the Web search results listings** (page title, page description, and website address) **with information previously displayed only in Google Places Page listings** (pushpin corresponding to location on the map, ratings, reviews, and Place Page link).

Figure 11 - Google's Experimental Search Engine Results Page Serves up Integrated Web/Local Search Results Listings



Additionally, you can see that the map has been moved to the right of the organic search results section and sits above the paid search results section. It's worth noting that it has been made "sticky" in the experimental SERP so that it is always in view even as you scroll down the screen.

And while it's impossible to say whether or not the SERP shown above (or other versions that have appeared on other websites recently) will ever become its new "official" SERP, the fact that the king of all search engines is testing search results that better integrate local business results into the organic search section certainly speaks to the fact that **Google sees local business content as essential to the quality of the search experience** and to the satisfaction of its end users.

And if the king of all search engines thinks so, perhaps owners of local businesses should, too.



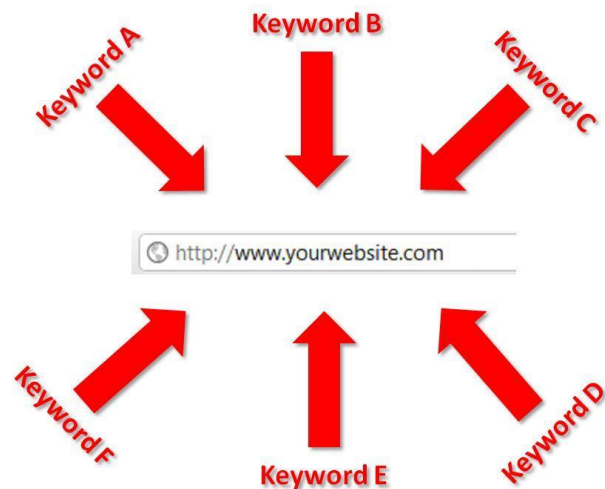
## The Bottom Line

Local search marketing can dramatically increase the visibility of your business in the search engines which means it will gain significantly better exposure to the **thousands or tens thousands of people** who search –each and every month – for keywords that relate to your business and the products and services you offer.

Figure 12 - Every Keyword That Ranks Should be a Source of Traffic to Your Website

And if you target the “right” keywords – those with a worthwhile search volume but comparatively low levels of competition – then you can **capture the top rankings in the search engine results for a variety of content:**

- Web results
- Images
- Videos
- Local business results



In so doing, you can **dominate the first page of the search results** which means that every individual keyword you target can provide multiple sources of traffic to your website. And, more importantly, a source of emails, phone calls, and customers for your business – because the **more presence your brand has on the first page** of search results, the stronger its impression on people becomes.

## A to Z Calculation of the Return on Investment for Local Search Marketing

Ultimately, if you're going to invest money in anything, you should want to know that answers to three questions:

- How much will I get back (return on investment or ROI)?
- How soon will I get it back (payback period or breakeven point)?
- How sure am I about how much I will get back (risk)?

The following table on the page that follows shows the basic steps involved in projecting the ROI of a search engine marketing effort. Payback and risk calculations are not included in the spreadsheet below. Payback is often easy to see in simple ROI cases – in the example that follows the investment would reach break-even at some point within 30 days (\$45,000 first year return is \$3,750 per month which is \$750 greater than the investment in the example). Risk requires a more complex calculation mostly because of competition.

Nevertheless, in spite of the absence of payback and risk, the ROI calculation is well worth completing.

**What is the Average Annual Value of a Customer?**

a) Annual sales	\$250,000
b) Total number of transactions per year	2,000
c) Calculated dollar value per transaction (a / b)	\$125
d) Average/estimated # of transactions per customer per year	2
e) Calculated annual value of a customer (c * d)	\$250

**How is Your Website Performing Today (As-is Scenario)?**

f) Average number of visitors per month	1,000
g) Average number of visitors who become customers every month	10
h) Calculated conversion rate of visitors to customers (g / f)	1.00%

**How is Your Website Expected to Perform (What-if Scenario)?**

i) Estimated # of new monthly visitors from Keyword A	250
j) Estimated # of new monthly visitors from Keyword B	500
k) Estimated # of new monthly visitors from Keyword C	750
l) Calculated total of estimated # of new monthly visitors	1500

**What are the Economic Benefits I Could Expect from the "What-if"**

m) Total estimated # of new monthly visitors (row l)	1500
n) Conversion rate of visitors to customers (row h)	1.00%
o) Total estimated # of new monthly customers (m * n)	15
p) Calculated total estimated # of new customers per year (o * 12)	180
q) Annual value of a customer (row e)	\$250
r) Calculated total projected increase in annual sales (p * q)	\$45,000

**How Much is the Investment?**

s) Website design and development	\$1,000
t) Website promotion	\$1,000
u) Google Places Page verification	\$0
v) Google Place Page optimization	\$1,000
w) Calculated total upfront investment	\$3,000

**What is the Projected First Year ROI?**

x) Total projected benefits (row r)	\$45,000
y) Total estimated costs (row w)	\$3,000
z) Calculated projection of ROI (r - w / w)	1400%

You can download a working copy of the ROI calculation spreadsheet at Local Business Marketing Solutions by clicking on the link.

Ultimately, local search marketing becomes a **“gift that keeps on giving”** because efforts that are made today will pay off not only tomorrow, but also well into the future. And since the future of local business marketing is online, establishing and solidifying your online presence now is the best way to grow your business today and ensure it continues to grow in the future.

## About Brian McDonald

- University of Texas graduate 1989.
- Investment Banker and equities analyst - NYC - FC Asset Management and FC Advisers.
- Chief Financial Officer of public company DSI Industries Inc. In 1994 was youngest CFO of public company in US.
- Elected Board of Directors DSI Industries, Inc.
- Founder of Spur Ventures. President of Spur Ventures. Raised capital from investors to fund downtown Austin Real Estate development project.
- Created McDonald Financial Services a consumer financial services company in 1998.

## Professional Highlights

- In 2001 created innovated web based health care company operating in all 50 states enrolling 50,000 members.
- Innovative health care product and service was one of first health care companies to operate nationally exclusively through the internet. Company developed exclusively through direct-to-consumer marketing and DR marketing in PPC, SEO, magazines, affiliate marketing, direct mail.
- Developed original products and created copy for sites, auto responders, agents, postcards magazines and all videos.
- Develops sales and service organization. Hires and trains all sales and writes scripts and responses to objections.
- Company enrolls over 50,000 members that pay between \$69 and \$99 per month.
- Creates member site and with video driven and real time chat service support.
- Develops customized CRM platform for customer acquisition and customer service. Includes split testing and multi-variate testing.
- Acquires over 1,000,000 exclusive leads.
- Creates integrated replicated sites for agents and affiliate network.
- Internet revenues of over \$20,000,000 in 5 years with staff of 40 full time employees, 50 affiliates and close to 300 contracted agents.
- Creates geo coded Google map of all OB docs in US with cost data in 2007.
- Large institutional benefits company agrees to acquire data and IP to repurpose to an even larger health insurance company.



## How I Can Help Your Business

I bring a wealth of knowledge and experience in the online and offline business worlds and have considerable expertise and a great track record in online and offline marketing – especially at the local business level, which is where all it all happens, even for companies with national or global footprints.

My focus is on helping clients **increase their sales and marketing productivity** by helping them attain higher levels of sales at lower costs.

Every engagement begins with **a thorough, no-cost assessment** of a client's business – the net output of which is two-fold:

- A projection of the results you can expect
- A “go” or “no go” decision from you

Assessments are **fluff- and pressure-free and even if you opt for the “no go,” you’ll still have a report** that will give you some valuable insights into your business and its marketing strengths and weaknesses.

If you're interested in learning more or getting a complimentary marketing “health check” of your business, click on the link to [contact me](#).