[To get in touch with a local business to help with your advertising needs, please click here.](#)

How does local SEO (Search Engine Optimization) work?

Local SEO helps customers find your business in real life. When a customer searches for information that doesn't need local results, like "Why is the sky blue?" it shows webpage results from everywhere. However, if a customer searches for "Car repair", they're likely looking for mechanics in their city. This will give place-related results to local businesses and using local SEO can ensure that customers see your business first.

Establishing a web presence:

- **Start small.** Start with free, quick-to-make platforms like Facebook pages, LinkedIn profiles and Instagram accounts. Not all types of business need every type of platform, but most should have at least one where online consumers can find more information.

- **Consider a website.** While there are up-front costs associated with building and maintaining a website, the increase of customer traffic from people finding your business online can often cause the website to pay for itself.

- **Link your platforms.** Include links to social media on your website and include links to your website on social media, because this allows users to find more information and helps your business to rank higher in Google Search results.

Once you have a web presence:

- **Focus on the on-page aspects.** This includes site structure, accessibility through different browsers and devices, the use of keywords in text, and the inclusion of your contact information.

- **Foster external links.** Having other websites include links to your website improves your search results and lets customers see your business first. The Medicine Hat & District Chamber website includes links to local businesses to improve local SEO, please reach out to us if you would like to have this set up for your business.

- **Recognize the impact of customer reviews.** Including on-site citations from customers who have left positive comments helps to show the quality of your business and encouraging customers to leave reviews on platforms like Google or Yelp will drive more customers to choose your business by improving your local SEO.

- **Optimize your Google My Business.** Your Google My Business listing should include the type of business you are and what service you provide, your business location, your contact information and your hours of operation.

Optimizing your site content:

- **Make your message clear.** The purpose of a particular webpage should be clear from the very first sentence. Don't use excessive or stuffy language, because you want customers to immediately know what purpose your page/site serves.

- **Don't build a maze.** Drop-down menus with clear, concise headings are one of many ways to make sure your site is easy to navigate. Don't make pages that serve no purpose and let the customer reach the information they need in as few clicks as possible.

- **Readers don't read, they scan.** Make sure your content is up front and visible. A giant block of text with no sizing, bolding or highlighting means that consumers will likely glance at the information without getting anything out of it.

- **Structure your website.** More clicks should mean the consumer is getting more specific information. The capstone of your structure is the homepage, followed by your most important content, followed by information similar to the most important content, and the least important information should come last or not be included on the website.

Use of Keywords in your content:

- **What keywords are:** A keyword is a word that accurately describes the content of a page or website. The more a keyword is use proportionally on a page, the better the google search

results will be for that particular keyword. It's best to choose a number of keywords/phrases, as long as they are all relevant to your content.

- **Avoid keyword stuffing.** While using your keywords enough to show what the page is about to Google and customers is good for optimizing your site, you can't accomplish this by simply fitting in as many keywords as possible. This is called keyword stuffing, and when Google detects this practice it will lower your SEO ranking. For example, "Our site sells many types of tea, including green, black and white teas." contains numerous keywords for customers that are looking to buy tea, and these specific types. On the other hand, keyword stuffing looks like "Our tea site sells tea, and our tea is the best tea in the tea market." While the word "tea" appears more, it shows less relevant keywords, and the excessive number of keyword usages will damage your local SEO.

- **The focus is on the customer, not Google.** Keep your website easy-to-read and don't overwhelm the user with information just to use keywords. Google's algorithms are made to focus on promoting sites that the customer will like, so building your site around that is ideal. Keywords should be included on your pages but should only be 1-2% of the words on the page and should be spread out in your content.

- **Know what keywords to use.** Some keywords like "Tea" will have very high local SEO competition because so many businesses sell tea. These generic keywords tend to cast a wide net for customers, which means higher competition with other businesses, and so it's unlikely to be your safest bet when choosing keywords. Mid and long-tail keywords like "Organic green tea" or "Caffeine free tea" are more specific and niche and give your site a better chance of being ranked highly as you're not competing with Wikipedia and other major websites in the search results.

- **Know your business.** When you understand what makes your business stand out, finding good keywords is easier. Your keywords should reflect your unique strengths and product/service offerings and should reflect the mission of your business. When customers ask for something, what do they call it? In a mechanic shop, they might call a particular repair a "Transmission controller swap", but customers call it a "Transmission repair." As a result, their keywords should be transmission repair, because that's what people will search for.

Final/Additional Tips

- **Do research in Incognito mode.** When testing to see where your site ranks for a particular search query, use incognito mode on your browser. Google tailors your search results based on your history, so this will give you a better idea of what the customer sees.

- **Consider sponsored search results**. Google AdWords can be used to buy the top spot in search results, driving more traffic to your website. A properly set-up campaign can massively boost views from relevant customers and drive customers to choose your business. 33% of Google users pick the first result, and 25% pick the second.

- **Make sure all your links lead somewhere**. If your site has a dead link or leads to a 404-Page Not Found, it is less likely to be displayed in Google searches.

- **Take advantage of SEO programs and services.** Some examples include Yoast which allows you to set your meta tags, google search captions and more.