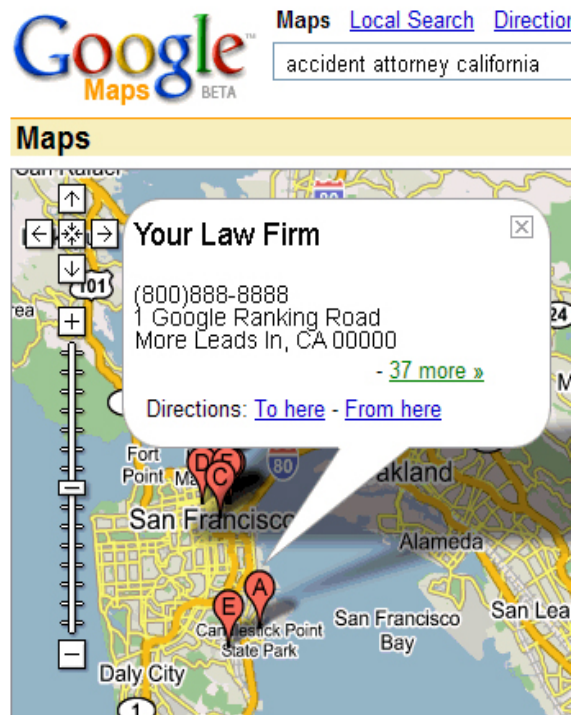


# What Every Attorney Needs to Know To Dominate **Google Places**



And How You Can Improve Your Ranking  
(and KEEP improving it!)

## Understanding Google Places – The Basics

What is Google Places and why do you care? First of all, recognize the importance that Google, the #1 search engine and fastest growing technology company ever, has placed on Google Places, formerly known as Google Local. Below is an example of a typical search for “DUI Attorney Richmond VA”

The screenshot shows a Google search for "dui attorney richmond va". The search bar is at the top, with the Google logo on the left and a search button on the right. Below the search bar, there are several sections of results:

- Sponsored Links:** Three sponsored links are listed on the left, including "VA DUI Attorney" from www.DUI.com/Virginia, "Virginia DUI / DWI Help" from www.VirginiaDUI.com, and "Aggressive Lawyer" from www.LoupassiLaw.com. On the right, there are two more sponsored links: "Local DWI Attorneys" from www.duiattorneys.com and "VA DUI - DWI Lawyer" from www.BooneBeale.com.
- Local business results for dui attorney near Richmond, VA:** A map of Richmond, VA is shown on the left, with several red pushpins labeled A through G. To the right of the map is a list of seven local businesses, each with a red pushpin icon and a letter label (A-G). The businesses are: "Richmond DUI & Reckless Speeding Lawyer-Bob Battle" (A), "John W Luxton Criminal Lawyer Richmond" (B), "Chucker and Reibach" (C), "Standish Alexander, Esq." (D), "Brenner Evans & Millman PC: Attorneys" (E), "Riley & Wells" (F), and "Richmond Criminal Law" (G). Each listing includes the business name, website URL, phone number, and a link to "More" reviews or information.
- Organic Search Results:** Below the local business results, there are two organic search results. The first is "Virginia DUI, Reckless Driving, and Traffic Attorney | Robert E ..." from www.bobbattlelaw.com, which is the same as the sponsored link for Bob Battle. The second is "Richmond VA Traffic DUI Lawyers and Attorneys | Reckless Driving ..." from www.rileywells.com.

Notice that “Local business results for dui attorney near Richmond, VA” are listed directly beneath “Sponsored Links” (Google Adwords) and before organic search results. Clicking on the red pushpin (annotated by letter in the map) will open Google Maps. Maps will provide directions and a GPS guide to the listed address.

Google Places is considered by many to be the “new” Yellow Pages. As such, it is a very powerful marketing vehicle that all attorneys who are focusing on geo-location based practice areas (like our example) must

take advantage of. Just for clarity sake, Google Places listings rely on the Google Maps GPS technology.

It seems to be a mystery, no matter what service or product you're offering, as to how to increase your rankings on Google Places searches. The *devil is in the details* and this is true for Google Places listing and placement as well.

Whether you're a local attorney, doctor, dentist, barbershop or retail store, higher rankings on the local Google search is just as important as your organic search engine rankings because of the increased online exposure that it offers as the first displayed results.

### The New Trend: Local Searches On Smartphones

*People aren't just searching from their home or business computers anymore. The trend is starting to shift from calling 411 to using a wireless device to find local businesses. Think about how many times you see people looking up information on their phones?*

*The number of searches for local businesses and service providers on mobile phones is continuing to grow year after year. Google, being the number one search engine in the world, is what a large majority of smartphone users prefer when looking for businesses in their area from their mobile devices. Therefore, it is crucial for you to stay informed on how to maintain a presence on Google Places and be viewable on these search results.*

*It's also important to note that Google Places has created a feature that allows you to better market to smartphone users. You can obtain a custom bar code, known as a QR code, which can be downloaded and placed on ads and business cards. Users of certain smartphones can then scan the code to instantly learn more about your business.*

We are going to make the assumption that you already understand the point of Google Places, as you have gotten this report. But the real missing piece is truly understanding how Google decides what businesses to rank higher than others on local searches.

## ***Is it by Location?***

### **hardware store near Virginia 20101**

Categories: [Building Materials & Supls](#), [Retail stores - Hardware](#)



## ***Is it by the Number of inbound links?***

### **[Clinton Barber Shop: More about this place](#)**

1 - 10 of about 11

#### [Clinton Beauty - WashingtonDC.com](#)

... Beauty Hair Salons/**Barber** Shops. Clinton **Barber** Shop. 8971 Wood  
[www.washingtondc.com/beauty/business-directory/.../clinton](http://www.washingtondc.com/beauty/business-directory/.../clinton)

#### [Spas and Beauty Salons In Clinton, Maryland | Travels.com](#)

... Clinton Spas and Beauty Salons. Clinton **Barber** Shop. 8971 Wood  
from the center of Clinton ...  
[www.travels.com/spa-beauty-clinton-md-us/](http://www.travels.com/spa-beauty-clinton-md-us/)

#### [Clinton Salon | Salon in Clinton, MD | Fave Video Yellow Page](#)

... Clinton Salon. 1-20 of 55 total results. Clinton **Barber** Shop. 8971 Wood  
[www.getfave.com/locations/md/clinton/salon](http://www.getfave.com/locations/md/clinton/salon)

## ***Or is it by the amount of Reviews?***

## Reviews

[Write a review](#)

### Experienced Kentucky Personal Injury Law Firm

★★★★★ By [John](#) - Jul 6, 2009

As a victim of a personal injury **accident** myself I can tell you that it is important to seek out attorneys who are experienced, trustworthy, and have a track record of success. The Schafer Law office gives you nothing less. The experienced Kentucky personal injury lawyer team is successful, honest, and gets fair compensation for their clients.

[maps.google.com](#)

Was this review helpful? [Yes](#) - [No](#) - [Flag as inappropriate](#)

### Experienced, Trustworthy, And A Great...

★★★★★ By [John](#) - Jul 6, 2009

As a victim of a personal injury **accident** myself I can tell you that it is important to seek out attorneys who are experienced, trustworthy, and have a track record of success. The Schafer Law office gives you nothing less. The experienced Kentucky personal injury lawyer team is successful, honest, and gets fair compensation for their clients.

[maps.google.com](#)

Was this review helpful? [Yes](#) - [No](#) - [Flag as inappropriate](#)

### Top Kentucky Personal Injury Lawyer

★★★★★ By [Mark](#) - Jul 1, 2009

As a certified specialist in injury and wrongful death law in Arizona, I understand the difficulty injury victims have in finding a personal injury lawyer anywhere in the United States. Due to my position in the law, I get the chance to meet great injury lawyers from all around the country. It is from my personal contacts with Mr. Schafer that I have come to respect him personally and professionally. I certainly understand that there are so many attorneys on television, in yellow pages, and on the internet that it can be difficult to choose the lawyer you can actually trust. For those that cannot decide, I strongly encourage you to start your search by meeting personally with Mike Schafer. One visit with him and you will recognize his commitment to his clients and the law are "above and beyond" your expectations. Mark P. Breyer, Esq.

[maps.google.com](#)

Was this review helpful? [Yes](#) - [No](#) - [Flag as inappropriate](#)

### Louisville Accident Attorney Mike Schafer...

★★★★☆ By [Florida FLSA](#) - May 6, 2009

Don't make a mistake in your Kentucky **auto** injury case! My friend Kentucky **auto** lawyer Mike Schafer has written a free book to help you with your **auto** injury case. Mike answers all your questions and helps you on the road to recovery. As a lawyer who has handled disability claims for over 29 years, I know it is crucial that you have a lawyer like Mike Schafer who understands the games Kentucky **auto** insurance companies will play with your **auto** crash case. I refer all my clients who have friends or family injured in Kentucky **auto**, motorcycle or truck crash cases to Mike. Attorney Nancy Cavey

Well, the answer is....

## All of the above (and a whole lot more)!!!

There are a number of factors that Google Places looks at when deciding how local businesses are ranked, and it is *significantly different* than the Google organic algorithm (organic refers to "normal," non-paid search engine rankings) that relies heavily on page optimization (page titles, content, etc.) and number of external links.

In this report, we'll not only show you everything that Google Places looks at when deciding what businesses should rank where, but we'll also show you the importance of each factor, as well as what you can do to increase your local search engine rankings and generate more leads.

Before we get into the ranking factors, let's take a moment to go over what you need to do first: claim your Local Business Listing (LBL).

### **Step ONE: Claiming your Local Business Listing**

Claiming your Local Business Listing is very important. It basically allows **YOU, THE BUSINESS OWNER** to decide what kind of information is displayed about **your business**. However, according to this report, Google Places is also ranking the business owners who have claimed and **updated** their Local Business Listings higher than those who haven't.

Claiming your Local Business Listing can be as easy as following these instructions:



*If you haven't claimed your profile yet, go to <https://www.google.com/local/add>, fill out the required fields about your business, and submit it to the Google Places Business Center.*

*They will then ask you to verify the information by either a) calling you at the phone number you entered, or b) sending you a postcard in the mail and you going back into the Google Places Business Center to enter a PIN code that is on the postcard.*

Before you start adding details about your company into your Local Business Listing, do a search to see what your competitors are doing. You want to do a little digging to determine which businesses are consistently getting top rankings in Google Places. Click on each profile and review the type of information the business has included.

When you start on your Local Business Listing, be sure to provide as much as you can when giving information about your business to Google Places. Don't leave any of the form fields blank. The more information you provide, the more likely your listing will rank high. **Videos, pictures, hours of operation, payment methods, coupons for service, etc.** can all help your Local Business Listing rank better than your competition on Google Places searches, so you can never provide too much information.



If you don't have a picture of your business, Google will provide one for you at no additional charge. All you have to do is apply for the photo shoot online. The photographs will be posted to your listing.

Google Places has added some other features to assist you with your listing. For a small monthly fee, you can tag an item in your listing, such as directions to your office, your website or some other item. Google will place a small yellow tag next to whatever you choose. Plus, this monthly fee gives you the ability to view your clicks and activity using the Google Places dashboard.

Once you feel you have optimized your Local Business Listing by providing as much information as humanly possible, you can go on to the ranking factors and we'll take a look at what Google Places reviews when determining local rankings and what you can do to improve your results.

## **Step TWO: Understand Ranking Factors**

A survey was conducted in May 2009 by a Google Places consultant, David Mihm, where he took 20 experts in the local search engine ranking community and asked them to rate the importance of each factor as it pertains to Google Places rankings.

As of this writing, the study can be seen here,  
<http://www.davidmihm.com/local-search-ranking-factors.shtml>.

We're going to be reviewing some of these results, and show you ways that you can improve on each factor and rank better for your local search results.

Here are the top 15 ranking factors according to the survey:

1. [Local Business Listing Address in City of Search](#)
2. [Citations from Major Data Providers](#)
3. [Association of Proper LBL Categories](#)
4. [General Importance of Claiming LBL](#)
5. [Accurate Business Name in LBL Title](#)
6. [General Importance of Off-Page Criteria](#)
7. [Volume of Customer Reviews](#)
8. [General Importance of Customer Reviews](#)

9. [General Importance of On-Page Criteria](#)
10. [Full Address on Contact Page](#)
11. [Proximity to Centroid](#)
12. [Quality of Inbound Links](#)
13. [HyperLocal/Web Crawl Citations](#)
14. [Product/Service Keywords in LBL Description](#)
15. [Location Keywords in Inbound Anchor Text](#)

### **Google Ranking Factor #1: *Local Business Listing Address in City of Search***

The first, and most important ranking factor according to the survey of the 20 local search experts is *making sure your physical address is actually located in the city in which you would like to rank on Google Places.*

We run into this problem with a lot of clients, for both organic search engine optimization, as well as for local search.

With organic search engine optimization, there are ways to “manipulate” the search engines and results (build links including anchor text of other cities, adding content based on other cities, etc.), so that you rank for multiple cities.

But for the Google Places searches, how can you rank for cities in which you’re not located?

Simple answer: **you can’t**... UNLESS you have an address in that city. You’ll find out later in the report, **where** in that city is also important.

This area is where you can put your creative and entrepreneurial thinking to good use. You don’t have to have an actual office, secretary, desk, and staff at that location - you just need an **ADDRESS AND PHONE.**

Look around for mail forwarding or virtual office services in your area where you can pay a monthly fee for either the rights to the address or the ability to use the office (if you plan on clients visiting you at that location) from time to time.

### **Google Ranking Factor #2: *Citations from Major Data Providers***





This is the most important Google Places ranking factor that doesn't have to do with your business' physical location.

Remember when we said earlier that "manipulating" Google Places is almost impossible? Well, it is because they verify EVERYTHING in order to reduce the number of potential spam and insincere business listings. Google also pulls from a large number of data providers (or websites) to verify your physical address, phone number, service offering, point of contact and so on, to make sure everything matches up where it should.

What data providers/websites does Google Places pull from when verifying information (so that you can go get listed on these sites)?

Well, as much as we would love to just list a few sites that you need to get listed on, it's not that easy.

There are primary and secondary sources that Google Places pulls from in order to verify your business' information.

### **Data Providers to Google Places**

The following websites provide data about your business DIRECTLY to Google Places. They, for the most part, power Google Places' search engine verification process.

#### **Primary Data Providers:**

**Localeze** - A resource trusted by Google that verifies and submits your business data to Google Places, as well as to the following websites (which are, in some cases, secondary data providers to Google Places):

- Yahoo Local
- Bing Local
- Superpages.com
- Yellowpages.com
- Best of the Web Local
- OpenList
- DexKnows
- GetFave.com
- Addresses.com
- Loladex.com
- Citysquares
- GenieKnows.com
- YellowBot
- Kudzu
- Edmunds.com
- Matchbin, Inc
- Boulevards
- Praized
- Amazon

You can list your site with Localeze by going to <https://webapp.localeze.com/bizreg/> and filling out the required information.

**InfoUSA**- Another resource trusted by Google that submits your data to Google Places. They also submit to:

- Bing Local
- Yahoo Local
- Ask
- GetFave.com
- AOL Local
- Superpages.com
- Telenav
- Tellme
- DAPlus.us
- Switchboard.com
- Centerd

You can add or update your business listing with InfoUsa by going to [http://leads.infousa.com/landing/Updatelisting.aspx?bas\\_vendor=190000&bas\\_session=](http://leads.infousa.com/landing/Updatelisting.aspx?bas_vendor=190000&bas_session=)

Google Places also pulls from a number of secondary data providers indirectly. We would recommend, in addition to Localeze and InfoUsa, getting your business/website listed on:

**Universal Business Listing:**

<http://www.universalbusinesslisting.org/>

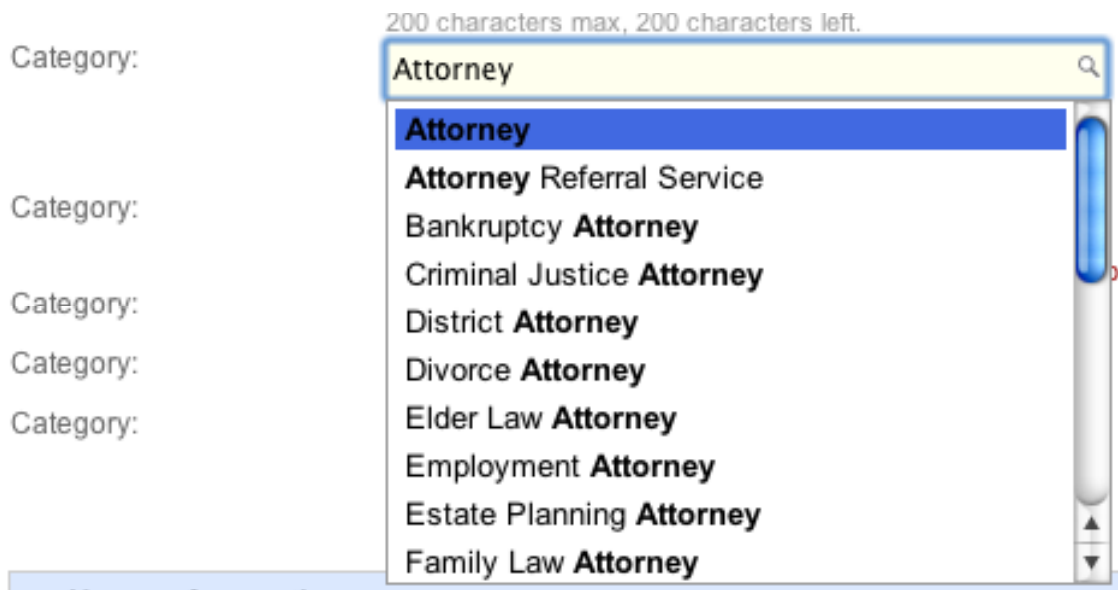
**WCities:**

<http://corporate.wcities.com/contactus.html>

**Google Ranking Factor #3:  
*Association of Proper LBL Categories***

Specifying categories that are related to your business and include the keywords that you would like to rank for is becoming increasingly important to your Google Places success.

This time last year, the categories didn't even matter. Recently however, Google Places has been putting more and more emphasis on what categories your LBL are listed in, so make sure you include categories in your Local Business Listing.



You also have the ability to add up to five categories (by clicking the “add another category” link).

Category:  200 characters max, 200 characters left.

Which categories (up to 5) best describe your business?  
Ex: Dentist, Wedding Photographer, Thai Restaurant  
[Add another category](#)

Be sure to capitalize on additional categories if you have multiple practice areas (we always recommend using as many pre-defined categories as possible, such as “attorney” and “personal injury attorney”). While you do need to make these categories specific to your business, don’t include your state or city in these custom categories. For example, stay away from a custom category that says, “Virginia family law attorney” or “insurance disputes Houston.” These geographic modifiers could hurt you, as they go against Google Places’ guidelines.

Category:  200 characters max, 200 characters left.

Category:  200 characters max, 200 characters left.

Category:  200 characters max, 200 characters left.

Note: You have chosen a custom category

Category:  200 characters max, 200 characters left.

Note: You have chosen a custom category

Category:  200 characters max, 200 characters left.

Note: You have chosen a custom category

#### **Google Ranking Factor #4: *General Importance of Claiming LBL***

We’re not quite sure why this factor isn’t number one, seeing as your business doesn’t have much chance of ranking well on Google Places if your Local Business Listing hasn’t been claimed yet. So, if you haven’t claimed your Local Business Listing yet, go back to page 5 for instructions on how to do so.

#### **Google Ranking Factor #5:**

## ***Accurate Business Name in Local Business Listing Title***

We, and many others, had previously recommended that you include relevant keywords in your Business Listing Title. Google wants their directories to be as accurate as possible and is now “dinging” people who do this. Make sure that your title matches your business name exactly as it appears in the offline world. Google Places is always watching. You will get booted if your business name isn’t accurate!

## **Google Ranking Factor #6: *General Importance of Off-Page Criteria***

The ranking factor of General Importance of Off-Page Criteria basically refers to the inbound links that you have coming into your website. As you already know, if you’ve read anything about organic search engine optimization, the quality and quantity of inbound links that you have coming into your website is critical to your website’s search engine rankings. Well, it’s no different for Google Places rankings.

More importantly is that the links coming into your website are from other websites that list your address and phone number, such as directory sites and local review sites. Any time you come across a local review site or directory, be sure to get your site listed.

How can you find some of these sites?

Localeze and InfoUSA automatically submit your site to many of the larger local sites, but there are also some legal sites that you should try to get listed on, like Avvo.com, Martindale-Hubbel.com, Findlaw.com, AttorneyPages.com, etc.

Also, don’t forget to have your address and contact information listed on your blog site or any other websites you might have. Registering with your local Chamber of Commerce usually results in a listing, as well.

One thing you can do to see what sites your competition is listed on is to spy on them and cherry pick their links.

How do you do this?

Simply do a search for what you know populates a Google Places result and that you would like to rank for.

For each of your competitors that populate in the local search results, you can click on "more" or, if they have reviews, click on the "\_reviews" link. That will take you to their Local Business Listing page.

Scroll down to the bottom of the page where it says "More About This Place."

### **More about this place**

Here is where a number of sites that Google Places is using to pull data from for your competition are listed. Go through them for each competitor and see what links/listings you are able to obtain. This is also good to see what types of other blogs or websites they are using that you may not know about. Use this information to your advantage by going to these websites and getting your business added. Not only could it help your local ranking, these websites could also give you an opportunity to attract good quality links.

### **Google Ranking Factor #7: *Volume of Customer Reviews Associated With Your Local Business Listing***

and

### **Google Ranking Factor #8: *General Importance of Customer Reviews***

The number of positive reviews that a local business obtains on Google Places is becoming more and more important to Google Places rankings, and rightfully so.

Remember Mike Schafer from Louisville who we used as an example earlier? Well, he has 5 positive reviews!



[The Kentucky Accident Attorney. Michael A. Schafer](http://www.mikeschaferlaw.com)  
[www.mikeschaferlaw.com](http://www.mikeschaferlaw.com) - (502) 584-9511 - [5 reviews](#)

It's one of the primary reasons why he (as a solo attorney) ranks number two on Google Places for the search term "Louisville auto accident attorney."

People looking to hire you as an attorney are also very likely to read the reviews that past clients and other attorneys leave on your Local Business Listing, so having a lot of positive reviews about your practice or firm can help with conversion AND rankings.

We don't think it's unreasonable to say that the fact that Mike's Local Business Listing includes five positive reviews makes his listing more likely to result in a contact or case than those without reviews.

Here's one five-star review from a satisfied client:

*"As a victim of a personal injury **accident** myself I can tell you that it is important to seek out attorneys who are experienced, trustworthy, and have a track record of success. The Schafer Law office gives you nothing less. The experienced **Kentucky** personal injury lawyer team is successful, honest, and gets fair compensation for their clients."*

and one from another attorney endorsing Mike:

*"Don't make a mistake in your **Kentucky auto** injury case! My friend **Kentucky auto** lawyer Mike Schafer has written a free book to help you with your **auto** injury case. Mike answers all your questions and helps you on the road to recovery. As a lawyer who has handled disability claims for over 29 years, I know it is crucial that you have a lawyer like Mike Schafer who understands the games **Kentucky auto** insurance companies will play with your **auto** crash case. I refer all my clients who have friends or family injured in **Kentucky auto**, motorcycle or truck crash cases to Mike."*

*Attorney Nancy Cavey"*

Also, see the words in bold? That means that Google Places is also pulling from this content, so be sure to include your keywords in the testimonials if possible.

Do not be afraid to ask for reviews/testimonials from clients you have done a good job for. They will be happy to provide it.

Always be sure to remind past clients and anyone else whom you work with that it would be greatly appreciated if they were to take the time and post a review on your Google Places page, whether it be through your e-mail list or newsletter, your Facebook or Twitter page, or any other type of communication you have with past clients.



**Google Ranking Factor #9:  
*General Importance of On-Page Criteria***

This ranking factor deals with the “optimization” of your actual business listing. Is your description optimized with keywords? Do your reviews include keywords that you would like to rank for?

We think that this particular ranking factor is a little bit unnecessary, as it pretty much ties in everything that we’ve discussed so far and everything else that we’re about to go over. So, to summarize this ranking factor: just be sure to optimize your LBL with as much information as possible.

**Google Ranking Factor #10:  
*Full Address on Contact Page***

This ranking factor, in our opinion, is often overlooked when it comes to Google Places.

Make sure your website’s “contact us” page includes the full physical address of your firm or practice. And, if you want to take it one step further, include your address on the website’s sidebar, so that it’s on every page of your website.

When Google Places sees that your physical address is actually included on your website, it gives them plenty of justification to tie your website to your Local Business Listing, along with all of those other data providers that you are now listed on after reading ranking factor number 2.

Remember, Google Places goes out and verifies EVERYTHING and when they start seeing that the address on your Local Business Listing matches up to the address on your website and all of the other data providers, they will start trusting your Local Business Listing more and more.

**Google Ranking Factor #11:  
*Proximity to Centroid***

The eleventh most important (and, in our opinion, most ridiculous) ranking factor according to the report is the **Proximity to Centroid of City Being Searched.**

In other words, the closer to the center of the city that a business is located, the better chance that they have of being ranked higher.

When you're about to pick out your office location and are working with your local commercial real estate agent, are you really taking into consideration how close the office is to the "centroid of the city?"

We would hope not - you likely have more important things to worry about.

If an attorney who is not as recognized and has only been practicing law for one year is outranking an attorney who has been nationally-renowned and has been practicing law for thirty years, just because he is in the center of the city, does that seem right?

Luckily, Google Places has revisited this issue and now puts more importance on reviews. A survey was done in 2008 and the Proximity to Centroid ranking factor was number five at the time. Believe it or not, we did see Google Places results a year or so ago that were obviously biased towards businesses that were closer to the center of that city than those that weren't, so it's nice to see this change.

### **Google Ranking Factor #12: *Quality of Inbound Links***



Here is another factor that may be directly related to organic search engine optimization and yet it still plays a key role in Google Places rankings. Many of the survey participants downplay this and other factors that relate directly to your website, because they have seen Google Places listings previously include those that have no website at all in the top results. Therefore, if listings without websites appear in the top Google Places results, why would it matter if your website has inbound links or not?

This topic is debatable, but we would still say that a) your Local Business Listing including a website (with an address and phone number, along with content based on your geographic location and practice area[s]) is important, and b) the quality of the inbound links coming to that website is just as important.

In fact, we'll throw another variable of this particular ranking factor out there: the link neighborhood of your inbound links is also very important.

Think of it this way: Google Places verifies absolutely everything before showing your LBL in the top results in order to combat spammy entries from showing up and to make sure that the business address, phone number, and additional information is correct and reliable in order to guarantee the legitimacy of these listings to their visitors and anyone else searching on Google Places.

Seeing as it is always extremely easy to get a large quantity of "junk" links from other non-related websites in order to build more authority to your website, don't you think that Google Places will measure the quality and amount of relevance of the inbound links that your website has to make sure they are indeed quality links vs. some offshore SEO company linking your site from just about anywhere in order to try to pull one over on the search engines?

We think that the quality of inbound links that your website has is important to both organic SEO rankings, as well as Google Places rankings. The motto "quality over quantity" always applies to link building. If you do decide to go out and launch an aggressive link building campaign, make sure you do so with the basics of link building in mind: only try for high authority links and only obtain links from websites that are relevant to your practice or your location.

### **Google Ranking Factor #13: *Hyperlocal/Web Crawl Citations***

This can be somewhat related to the quality of inbound links ranking factor mentioned at number twelve, but this particular one pertains to the local-based citations having more authority over the nationwide citations.

In other words, if you have a website that lists and reviews attorneys from all over the country, and another website that lists and reviews businesses specifically in your state and/or city, the niche and

location-based website listing your site will have more authority than the nationwide website.

Your local chamber of commerce website, city and state-specific directories, websites, and blogs, and any other websites that allow you to list your address, phone number, and website address are very valuable and you should always keep your eyes open for these types of opportunities.

The goal is to have Google Places crawl these particular websites, see your city or state mentioned numerous times in various content, so it will see your website listed on a bunch of different sites, and ultimately give you more authority.

Now, can it actually be verified that Google Places prefers these local-based websites vs. nationwide resources? No, and this topic is another heavily debated one. However, most of the local and niche websites that list your business are free or inexpensive, and they can also be good for traffic/phone calls even if they don't help you rise in the Google Places rankings, which is why we would recommend taking the time to get listed on them.

**Google Ranking Factor #14:  
*Product/Service Keywords in Local Business Description***

We mentioned earlier that "optimizing" your Local Business Listing is important. You should try to work your keywords into your description.

One thing you want to try to avoid is writing the description for the search engines and completely ignoring those who actually click on your LBL to find out more information. In other words, don't write your description as:

*We are a Maryland personal injury attorney, Maryland auto accident law firm, Baltimore medical malpractice lawyers, and Annapolis injury trial law firm specializing in workers' compensation, etc...*

This description doesn't read well and just lists your keywords one after another. Make sure you word the description as if a potential client is reading it and thinking about calling or hiring you, and seeing as the keywords being included in the description are not as important as having them in your title or categories, don't spend too much time overdoing your description with keywords if it sounds ridiculous. Also, don't include lists in your description. Your description should explain

what services you provide and how you help your clients.

**Google Ranking Factor #15:**  
***Location Keywords in Inbound Links to Website***

This factor is a combination of number 12 and number 13. Again, most of this may be wishful thinking, but those who have studied Google Places would like to hope that websites with quality inbound links and anchor text that includes geo-specific keywords would outrank those that don't.

So, if you have an inbound link to your website from another blog, and the link from that website says:

*My Friend Gary's Law Firm Site*

The Google Places "link juice" for this link wouldn't be as much as if it were:

*Arlington Injury Attorney Gary Smith*

The reason is that the city is included in the anchor text of that link.

Anchor text links are important for both organic SEO and Google Places rankings, so be sure to find out the anchor text of inbound links coming to your website and "optimizing" the inbound links that you have the ability to change by working keywords into the anchor text of those links.

**Other factors that we think are important:**

**City, State in Contact Page Title Tags** - Make sure your location is in the contact page titles, as these probably already include your address and phone number.

**Association of LBL Videos-** The more info that you provide in your Local Business Listing, the better chance that it will rank. Plus, videos are very good for conversion, so even if these videos don't help you rank better, they leave you with a better chance of someone contacting you or visiting your website for more information.

**Association of LBL Photos-** Again, the more info you provide, the better off you are.

There are a number of ways that you can increase your Google Places rankings, by either optimizing your Local Business Listing, getting listed on a number of other resources, or even making a few simple website changes. Remember, these ranking factors are almost certainly going to continue to change over the years. Make sure you keep an eye on Google Places ranking trends. Just because these ranking factors are important to your Google Places rankings today doesn't mean that they won't change in six months. Therefore, keep checking our website, blog, Facebook page, and other resources listed below, so that you can be sure to stay up-to-date on changes and improvements as they're being made.



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