
How to show up in local searches.

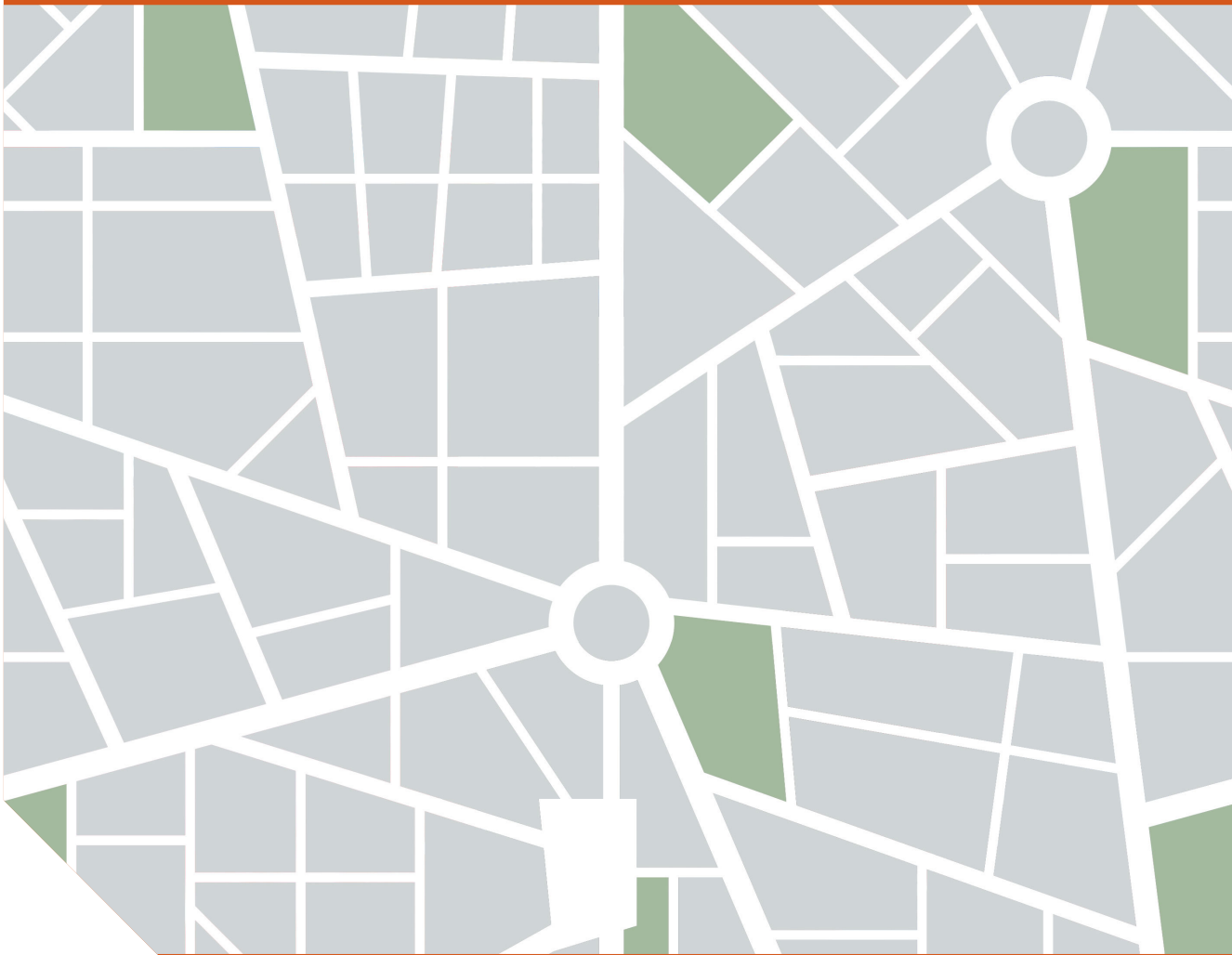
a Local SEO guide
by **AutoRevo**.

Can people really find your website?

Does your dealership show up on the first page of search results?

There are only 10 spots on the first page of Google, and depending on where you're located, there could be hundreds of dealers fighting for those spots.

Google automatically shows local results when users search for vehicles, so Local SEO is what you need. This guide will share the important EXTRA aspects of Local SEO that most providers ignore, so you'll have the ammunition you need to increase your dealership's visibility in local searches.



How do you show up in local search results?

As an auto dealer, it's important to understand what Local SEO is and why it's different from traditional organic SEO. At the most basic, the purpose of traditional SEO is to get a website to rank well for specific terms regardless of the searcher's location. Local SEO is meant to increase rankings for a website in a limited geographic area.

Local SEO is exactly what you need – even if you're hearing the term for the first time, it's actually what matters most to your dealership.

Think of it this way: If you're located in Austin, Texas, you don't really care if someone in Hoboken, New Jersey sees your dealership as a result when they search "used cars."

Google has determined that certain businesses fall into the "Local" category. When users search for specific terms related to those businesses, Google knows that they're looking for results from nearby businesses. If you search for "Italian restaurant," Google will give you a list of local restaurants, because it knows you're looking for a place to eat that's nearby.

Car dealerships are included in Google's list of local businesses. When users are looking for car dealers, they're looking for local results. If they want something from outside of their immediate area, they're going to use AutoTrader, cars.com, or eBay Motors – but the vast majority of searches will be for local dealerships.

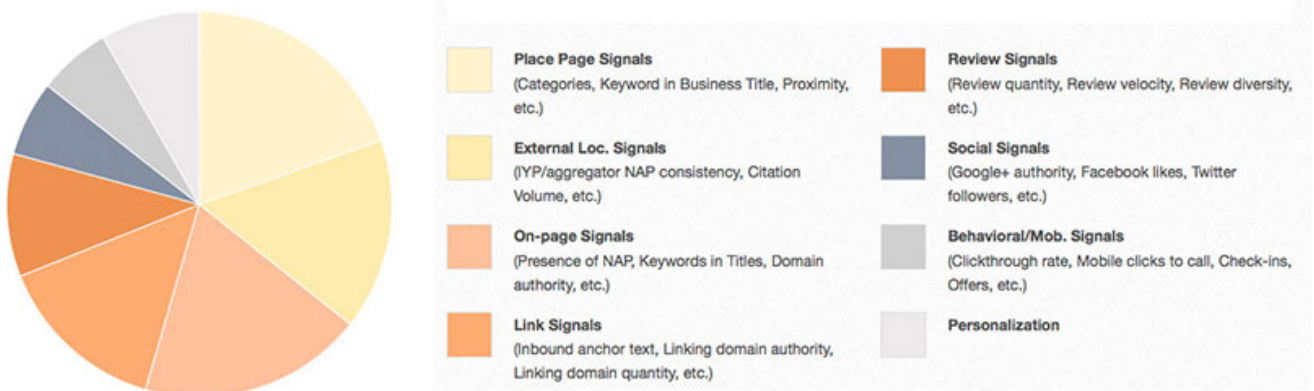
Because of this, auto dealers need to be sure that their SEO strategy includes the extra elements that are necessary for Local SEO.

This is where most automotive SEO providers fall short – they don't include the most vital Local SEO elements, and choose to concentrate on traditional SEO elements that won't be as effective. If you're spending money to have someone optimize your site, don't you want them to do what's best for your site?

Important Elements of Local SEO

There's actually a separate algorithm that determines the local search results. Obviously, Google doesn't tell anyone what factors are included in the algorithm, but some Local SEO experts have banded together to help solve the mystery.

Moz, an SEO tool provider, conducts a yearly survey of about 35 Local SEO experts, asking them which elements they think have the most weight in the Local SEO algorithm. These experts specialize exclusively in Local SEO, so they know from experience what works and what doesn't. Moz collects the data and crunches the numbers, and the aggregated results paint a pretty clear picture of the important factors.



If you'd like to read the full report for 2013, you can [read it here](#).

Place Page Signals – 19.6%

Your Google Places page is extremely important to local SEO. It's amazing how many dealers still haven't claimed their location – and even more dealers have incorrect info listed. You've got to claim your page. Do it now if you haven't done it yet.

Select the right categories. Don't make up categories and try to stuff important keywords, use what's already in the system. We talk to dealers all the time who wonder why they don't show up for “used car dealer” – and in their Places page, they're listed as an “auto broker.”

Don't stuff keywords into your business name. It'll cause a ranking penalty. Google is going to compare your Places page info to the info that's listed on your site, and on other sites. It has to be exactly the same everywhere.

Proximity matters – but it's not a deal-breaker. Realize though – if you're in a suburb of a major metro area, the dealers who are located within the city limits of the city you're targeting will have an advantage.

On-site signals – 18.8%

Traditional organic website optimization obviously still matters, so make sure you're covering all the basics. **PLEASE** make sure that your site's content is unique. Log in and change your generic text to something that's actually about your dealership.

Besides the traditional points of optimization, there are additional elements that matter for Local SEO. It's absolutely vital to have what's called your **NAP** on your site – that's Name, Address, and Phone number. You're trying to send the signals to Google to prove that your dealership is a locally relevant result. If your address and phone number are only located in a jpg in your banner, Google can't see them.

You also need location keywords in your title tags and H1 heading tags. This is especially important on the landing page that you're pointing to from your Google Places page. Most of the time, that will be your website's home page, but if you have multiple locations, you should be pointing to unique location pages on your site, not your home page.

Off-site signals – 16%

Off-site signals are all about citations. Citations are mentions of your **NAP** (name, address, phone number) on other websites, and are arguably the most important element of Local SEO.

This is where most automotive SEO providers fall completely short... They simply don't do anything with citations.

The most important factor of citations is that your information matches EXACTLY everywhere it's listed online. That means your dealership name, address, and phone number need to be 100% the same – everywhere.

Yes - that means no tracking phone numbers!

We get this question all the time, and in most cases, dealerships never even look at their call tracking reports. Even if they do look at the reports, it all boils down to one question: Would you rather have tons of data on the calls you get, or would you rather get more calls?

If your dealership has changed locations or names, it's incredibly important to get out there and update your citations. If you have citations with different information, it sends confusing signals to Google, which results in lower rankings.

Citations have to match what's on your Google Places page and your website as well. We've seen far too many dealers who change location or phone number and only update their website. We've even seen dealers with difficult to spell names who don't even have their name spelled consistently on their own site. Make sure your name, address, and phone number are consistent everywhere!

Link Signals - 14.4 %

Surprised that links are this low on the totem pole? Most automotive SEO providers concentrate more on links than on any other element. Thanks to Google's Penguin updates, links are trickier than ever. While it used to be purely a numbers game, it's now vitally important that links come from relevant sources.

If your provider is piling on links every month, check out the sources. Are they international sites? Why would some random blog in the UK link to your website? Do the sites sound spammy? Trust us - a link from newjerseyusedcardealerlinks.com isn't going to help you.

Also – if this is the main play used by your provider, look at what we’ve talked about so far... Citations are much more important for Local SEO. Since citations have to match what’s on your Places page and your website, we could count those three sections of the Local Search Ranking Factors together... and the result is a staggering 54.4%.

Links need to be from relevant sites that have a real reason to link to you. If it’s a link from a local site, that’s even better. In fact, sometimes a link from a small local website can really help, even though that website might not have a ton of authority.

Yes, the anchor text (the clickable text of the link) still matters – but you don’t want every link to be the same phrase, because that doesn’t look natural.

Review Signals – 10.3%

If your dealership doesn’t have a reputation management strategy in place, you need to get on the ball immediately. Reviews are another important signal in the Local SEO algorithm. The number of reviews you have matters, so you need to be sure that you’re actively collecting reviews.

Review velocity matters – so you can’t just get a bunch of reviews and then stop. You need a consistent stream of reviews to send the strongest signal.

Reviews on your Google Places page are the most important, but you also need to get reviews from third party sites like Yelp, Yahoo, or CitySearch.

The authority of the person leaving a review is also important. A review from a “power reviewer” (a person who leaves a lot of reviews) will carry more weight than a review from someone who rarely leaves reviews.

Social Signals – 6.3%

It’s amazing how many dealers still don’t use social media. Your customers are there, so you should be too – plus, it’s another important element of Local SEO. Google+ is one of the major players here (not surprisingly, since it’s Google), so make sure you’re actively working your dealership’s Google+ page. Work on increasing your followers and make sure you’re sharing engaging content.

Facebook likes, Twitter followers, and social engagement and interaction are also important social signals. If you’re one of those dealers who just posts links to vehicles, stop now. If someone buys a car from you and you ask them to follow you, the last thing they want to see is 5 links a day to cars in your inventory. Share something useful, something entertaining – your posts should be something that people will click “like” or “share” on.

Things NOT to do

Besides knowing what helps, it’s important to know what factors can harm your visibility online. Obviously, you’ll want to avoid these factors if you’re doing your own Local SEO - but if you’re using a provider, this list might help you avoid a provider who’s using the wrong tactics.

The following factors are the ten most harmful elements to Local SEO. If you've got any of these problems, you need to correct them immediately.

1. Google Places listing at the wrong address

If you've moved, mark your old location as closed!

2. Keyword stuffing in your business name

Seriously, don't do it! Just use your real dealership name.

3. Mismatched NAP or tracking phone numbers across the web

Make sure your NAP is consistent everywhere!

4. Incorrect business category on your Places Page

Use real categories, and choose the right ones.

5. Multiple Places pages with the same business name/address

Get rid of duplicates immediately.

6. Mismatched NAP or tracking phone number on landing page

Your landing page NAP has to match the NAP on your Places page.

7. Mismatched address on your landing page

Seeing a pattern? Make sure your info matches your Places Page.

8. Reports of violations on your Place page

Get rid of spammy content, follow [Google's Quality Guidelines](#).

9. Presence of malware on your site

*If your site has been hacked, you've probably got bigger problems...
but obviously you should get rid of any malware.*

10. Absence of crawlable NAP on your site

Get your address out of your banner jpg and into the actual text on your site so that Google can see it.

If you have any other questions about Local SEO, feel free to reach out to Greg, AutoRevo's Director of SEO. He speaks all over the country about Local SEO, so he's very dialed in to the current best practices. He'll do his best to help answer any questions you might have.

We hope you enjoyed this guide...

Unlike other providers who forget about you until you complain about a technical problem, AutoRevo is dedicated to helping each and every dealer succeed.

This Local SEO guide is one of many free guides that we provide for our dealers. We've worked with thousands of dealers through the years, and we want to share our knowledge and experience to help dealers be the best they can be.

Real data, real solutions, and real success. From vehicle acquisition to point of sale, we're with you every step of the way.

