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The Voice Search Revolution



As a business owner there are things you must do to achieve and maintain higher rankings in voice search results, or at least understand the dynamics of voice search optimization so you are better equipped to choose the best expert to help your business achieve higher ranking which are different than organic results. We offer this guide as your educational tool.

The Voice Search Revolution

People are showing a preference for voice search. The last five years reveals a rapid increase in sophisticated searches being conducted using voice search, along with a higher volume of spoken search queries in general. Google states that 41% of adults (and 55% of teens) use voice search daily and that 20% of all Google mobile queries are voice searches. More people are talking to their smart speakers and desktop computers. Furthermore, research indicates that people have no intention of reverting back to using the keyboard and trend watchers seems to think smart speakers may become as indispensable as the refrigerator.

Voice technology changes how people search for information and how they get search results. If you have a business, you cannot ignore the increasing reliance on and the convenience of voice recognition and how it impacts how you plan your website to achieve a higher ranking for voice search results. To be competitive, you want your product or service to be more than visible online.

Answers are more Precise

With voice search, people are getting answers that are more specific. When they voice a query via a smart speaker, within seconds their search engine reads the featured snippet answer back to them. On a mobile, the individual may access more via a traditional set of links, but may not need to search beyond the snippet if their query is satisfied.

People Embrace Voice Search

Why are people eager to embrace voice search? There are several reasons.

- The average person can type around 40 words per minute, but can speak around 150 words per minute.
- Advances in the voice recognition make it increasingly easy for people to be specific about their searches.
- They get faster answers with much less effort.
- In so many instances, one does not have to visit the site to get an answer to their query.
- Not to mention they do not miss the difficulties of typing on some of their devices.
- People do not have to locate the nearest WIFI to get a result they simply do a voice search wherever they happen to be.



In fact, you might say that because search engines, like Google, Amazon and YouTube are using answer-focused technology to provide voice search results, they are transitioning into “answer” engines.

What about “These Answers” is Significant?

In studying 10,000 search results from Google Home here are some findings you should find significant when planning your website:

- Page speed matters: The average voice search result page loads in 4.6 seconds – 52% faster than the average page.
- HTTPS websites dominate Google’s voice search results three out of every four searches.
- Google prefers short, concise answers – the typical voice search result is only 29 words in length. However, Google also tends to source these answers from pages with a long form content of more than 2,300 words.
- Highly shared content appears often in voice search, and authoritative domains tend to produce voice search results significantly more than non-authoritative domains.
- The average Google voice search result is written at a 9th grade level.

We will explore these findings and offer suggestions to place your business higher in the rankings for voice search results.

The Shift in Personalized Marketing

The convenience of voice recognition is driving its integration with emerging products and technologies along with changing the specifics of people-based marketing. Search engines are changing their algorithms to concentrate on providing increasingly relevant search results to users based on a constantly growing volume of data specific to them as individuals. Advertisers targeting users based on a profile system that included a person’s behavior (browsing history and shopping preferences) has evolved into a marketing methodology that allows advertisers to target users based on who they are.

If you have a business you want your product or service to be more than visible online. To appear in the search results, the structure, content and SEO of your online environment has to meet the challenges of a voice search and align with people-specific marketing. If you want to be competitive, the conversion to voice search presents an incredible opportunity for you to get ahead of your competitors. Develop content, ad campaigns, and strategies with voice search in mind, as a means of driving local traffic to your doorstep.

When people conduct a “near me” search to find stores selling goods they want to buy, hours of operation, and check for discounts, you want your small business to rank in the top three in the voice search results. The reason for this is simple. With smart speakers like Google Home and Alexa, the search results only give one answer, so you need to rank first. Individuals using smartphones and laptops will get more results, so ranking in the top three makes your business stand out.

Increase your Search Engine Ranking in Voice Search Results?

To achieve and maintain higher rankings in search results requires diligence and a certain set of skills in SEO or anything else within your online environment. It is exhausting to monitor the competition and to keep up with everything Google and other search engines are implementing as they are constantly changing their algorithms, features and criteria. Since what they do affects your success, you have to work keep up, which right now means boosting your voice search rankings to increasing local organic traffic to your website or doorstep.



If you are planning a new website your strategy must include voice search optimization. If you already have a website that ranks high in search results, you may only have to tweak it to achieve a higher ranking in voice search results. If you are unskilled in SEO, at the very least you need to understand voice search optimization so you are better equipped to choose the best expert to help your business achieve the higher ranked voice search results.

When people use voice search, it is highly likely that they are looking for a very specific answer. As we explain eleven key elements of a high search ranking, bear that fact in mind and aim accordingly:

1. Invest in HTTPS for your website
2. Ensure your website is mobile friendly and usable
3. Go local – claim local listing
4. Verify your business on google maps
5. Be specific by becoming more adept at natural language queries
6. Be specific by preemptively answering questions
7. Focus on specifics rather than generalities
8. Write at a grade 9 reading level
9. Enhance your domain authority
10. Lay claim to the knowledge panel
11. Optimize for featured snippets or answer boxes

Invest in HTTPS for your Website

The first is the easiest and most obvious – pay a nominal cost to your hosting company to install the SSL certificate on your web server. Regardless of your content or type of business, users expect a secure and private online experience when using your website. HTTPS protects the integrity and confidentiality of data between the user and your site using three layers of security:

- Encryption – which means no one can listen, track activities, or steal the users information.
- Data integrity – which means data cannot be modified or corrupted during transfer without being detected.
- Authentication – which proves that that the user is communicating with the intended website.



Ensure your Website is Mobile Friendly and Usable

Ensure you website is optimized to be mobile friendly and usable. Google predominantly uses the mobile version of the content for indexing and ranking.

Go Local – Claim Local Listings

Claim your free business listings on business directories, local citation sites and other location-based mobile apps to improve your local SEO and make it easier for customers to find you. So, when a potential customer says, “near me” you want your business to appear in the results. Because voice technology is so convenient when combined with location technology, Google reports that adding the term “near me” to a query has grown by 150% since 2018, and that figure will increase as more and more people decide to use voice search.

Of course, you should be visible on online properties like Google My Business, Yahoo, Yelp, Bing, YouTube, LinkedIn, Facebook, MapQuest, Hubspot, or AppleMaps, because they are the major players. Make sure your business details appear on as many online business directories as possible. Being listed in niche directories, location-specific and industry-specific business listings or free classified advertising sites is also remarkably important because when someone is doing a voice search that includes “near me” having multiple listings helps you rank even higher.

There are hundreds of listing opportunities out there. Many of the best ones are free. The fact that a business directory is free to use does not mean that the directory is accessed less often than a directory that charges businesses for listing. Take Kijiji as an example: Did you know that Kijiji with a majority of free ads is the 10th most visited website in Canada? Here are just a few directories that are free:

- 411.ca
- Bing Places
- CanadaOne
- Canadian Business Directory
- CTI Directory
- Cyclex Canada
- Foursquare Canada
- Google My Business
- HotFrog Canada
- Ic.Gc.ca
- Kijiji
- MyStore411
- Profile Canada
- WebLocal
- Websites.ca
- Yellow Pages Canada
- Yelp Canada

You have an advantage over the competition if you claim more online properties and keep the information up to date and consistent.

- Is your website linked?
- Are your hours of operation, map to your location, and contact info up to date?
- Is there a description of your business?
- Don't forget to upload good photos, too.
- After you create or edit a listing, go back to make sure the listing is visible and accurate.

Caution about Consistency - Search engines rank businesses they can trust, and one measure of your trustworthiness is the consistency of information about your business across your entire online environment. Be meticulous in making sure each listing is exactly the same as the other. Even a slight variation such as “St” vs Street” can affect your ranking in search results.

Make a list of your online listings and check them often. Do a query and see where you rank in the results. Make changes or updates to rank higher.

Make sure you are choosing directories that serve you well. If you want to increase the amount of traffic that comes to your business or to your web pages you have to make sure your advertising efforts are working for you. It does not make sense to be on a directory specific to an area or sector of the population that you cannot serve. For example: cakes with customized decorating made in Alberta may arrive in tact to a market in Newfoundland.

Verify your Business on Google Maps

In keeping with the “near me” factor, did you know that 46% of the searches on Google have local intent? Did you know that 67% of consumers rely on Google apps for navigation and 86% of consumers use Google maps to look up a business? Those stats, taken from a study done in 2020, indicate that visibility on Google maps is a crucial marketing tool that helps you generate more business, especially if you are targeting local consumers. A higher ranking on Google Maps helps your business stand out from your competitors and new customers to find you faster and more easily.

Google does not automatically rank your business just because your business exists in an area. You have to verify the business and boost your ranking on Google maps.

- Provide supplemental information that boosts your rank and increases your appeal.
- Enhance your website to further improve the rank of your Google Maps listing.

It is worth the effort because ranking higher on Google Maps typically means ranking higher on Google Search as well. If you rank #1, yours will be the only business in the results provided to smart speakers and if you rank in the top three, your business will automatically appear in regular applicable voice search results.

Step One – Add your Business to Google Maps if you have not already done so:

- 1) Go to [Google.com/maps](https://www.google.com/maps) or to the Google Maps app on your smartphone and search for your business name.
- 2) If it appears in the drop-down menu with a location next to it, then you have a listing! Skip to the next section.
- 3) If your business name does not appear, choose “add a missing place” from the drop-down menu. You will be prompted to provide your business name, category, and location.



Step Two – Claim your Listing:

Your business listing may already exist because anyone can add a business to Google Maps. However, that does not mean the person that created the listing has control over it. The person who claims the listing and proves ownership controls the listing. When you claim your listing you can provide many more details to boost your rankings.

To claim your listing, first you require a FREE “Google My Business Account”. Once you have created the account or if you have an existing account simply access your account, select “Google Maps business listing”. Then choose the “own this business” or “claim this business” option and follow the prompts.

Step Three – Add Information to your Google Maps Business Listing:

Your Google Map business listing is linked to your Google My Business platform which has impressive features that many businesses fail to utilize. You gain an automatic advantage over your competition if you complete all the sections of your account.

Log into your “Google My Business account” and access the dashboard. Select the “Info” tab, which includes your name, category, address, service area, hours, special hours, phone number, website, products, services, attributes, and description. Remember be meticulous about the details so they are exactly the same as they appear on your website and other online directories.

- **Use a local phone number** – Google isn’t keen on toll-free (800 and 877) numbers because these types of numbers are frequently used for spam. A local number verifies to searchers that your business is located close to them.
- **Keep your hours updated** because a Google Maps business listing tell users if that business is open, closed, or opening or closing soon. Keeping these hours updated not only helps customers, it sends a defined signal to Google that you are active and, therefore, trustworthy, and this will help with your rank.
- **Choose categories carefully.** You cannot add custom categories, but if you begin typing into the box, a drop-down menu of possible categories will appear. Choose the one that best represents the core of your business. If any other categories apply, choose them as secondary categories.



- **Add photos to your Google Maps business listing.** Google loves photos for three reasons. One because it is a sign of an active business worthy of ranking. Two, because Google is aiming to gain momentum in the marketplace as photo-recognition advances. Three, because people have shown they love images and if consumers love it so does Google and so should SEO experts and entrepreneurs. Business listings with photos rank higher on Google Map listings. If you do not upload a photo, your listing will come up with a generic map, which is less appealing. High-quality, relevant, and compelling photos capture consumer interest. You can upload several photos, and videos, too.

Here’s a trick to improve your ranking even higher: Ideally, you should strive to add at least one new photo a day or per week to amplify your activity.

- **Write a concise business description** in a manner that supports your brand and compels searchers to learn more or visit your business. Include key words that searchers might use in a query.
- **Get Google reviews.** When you have an online presence, this automatically opens your business up to receive reviews. Google maps will obviously rank in favour of positive reviews. Good reviews have to be earned. You will need to be proactive by asking each customer for a review.



When it comes to online reviews, you need to be alert to control what you can. That means monitoring reviews so you can respond. When you get a good review, respond to it. This shows you are attentive to your customers and it will encourage more reviews. If you are running a good business and working hard to provide customer service, negative comments may be nonexistent. However, if you get a negative review respond to it right away to

mitigate damage and show potential customers that you are open to resolving issues. Your responses to both positive and negative reviews indicates your activity, which is what Google's algorithm recognizes for ranking.

You can earn a negative review if you fail to update your business hours and a customer arrives to find the doors locked because you decided to change your hours. So we cannot stress enough that accurate, up to date information is paramount.

- **Post regularly to your Google Maps business listing.** You can publish posts to your business listing. Again, regularly posting signals Google that you proactively manage your listings. Since consumers have intent when they are on a search engine, regular posting is a great way to get your offers in front of a ready-to-engage audience.
- **Consolidate your Google Maps listings and weed out duplicate listings.** Google discredits a listing and lowers the ranking when multiple phone numbers or locations are listed for one business. Check for listings under similar names that may point to your business. If you do not resolve duplicate listings, Google may not always show the listing that provides the most accurate information for your business. That means customers may be misdirected or confused, which could result in loss of business. Good reviews could be scattered as well. To avoid repeating the verification process, make sure all important business information is contained in a verified listing BEFORE you remove the duplicate listing.

You might be able to delete a duplicate listing via your account summary. Otherwise, when you find a duplicate listing you can **"Suggest an edit"** and mark the listing as **"Permanently closed"** and select a reason such as **"never existed"** or **"private"**. In some instances, you may have to contact Google to resolve the issue.

Step Four – Use your Website to Rank Higher on Google Maps:

Once your business listing is set up on Google Maps, you can optimize your website to support a higher Google Maps ranking. Google maps links to your website. Since nearly 60% of Google searches are on mobile devices you need to ensure your website supports a higher ranking.

- **Make sure your website functions consistently across any device or screen size.** Slow loading, broken links, and the need to pinch and zoom will deter customers from delving into more information from your site, and your ranking will suffer accordingly.
- Embed a Google map on your website. Again make sure the address and contact info on your website are an exact match to Google Maps.
- Add local keywords to your website. Google Maps is defining exacting where you are in a specific locale. Make sure the keywords of your website point to that locale, as well.

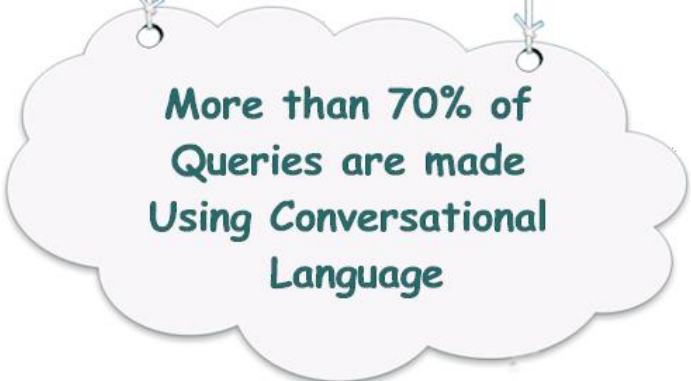
Focus on Specifics Rather than Generalities

Small businesses do not have to look at everyone in the world as a potential customer. You can end up way down in the search rankings if you water down your content to reach the masses. In fact, you may be watering down your content if you are trying to target a city.

Are you one of the fortunate ones that understand that a niche market can be very profitable? Are you offering customized services and tailoring your marketing to a very specific group? Instead of focusing on just a city you may rank higher in search results if you focus on a specific location within a city or close to a particular recreation venue or business centre. Because voice searches are significantly longer than keyboard searches it opens the door to you using tailored long-tail keywords to help customers find you. Say you specialize in teaching children to play the Spanish guitar and your business is in St. Albert. Say just that in your content and in your long-tail key words, rather than make a general statement that you provide music lessons to the population of Greater Edmonton. Using a longer keyword will be more targeted and easier to rank in specified queries. Thankfully, search engines keep coming up with new ways for *all* businesses to stand out in local search.

Be Specific by Becoming more Adept at Natural Language Queries

Voice technology changes how people search. When they typed in their queries people used robotic keyword phrasing. If the trend for voice search continues to grow as it has in the last ten years, you can expect fewer people to use robotic keyword search. In fact, today broad high volume keywords are detrimental to your ranking. Competition is fierce. The results page on a robotic key work query is filled with well-established brand names which is does not bode well for small businesses.



**More than 70% of
Queries are made
Using Conversational
Language**

With voice technology, searchers are more apt to use conversation language, that is they speak more naturally. People speak faster than they type so now they love the freedom to create searches that are longer and more precise or personal. They are using of words like 'me' and 'I' in voice search. As an example: one might say, "How do I make apple pie?" rather than use key words: apple, pie, recipe, and ingredients. Think how easy it is to ask a question: Is there a life coach near me? Is there a dry cleaner near me? What kind of dog is right for me?

Driven by voice search, natural language questions are on the rise and *question keywords* tie into that. Use question keywords in your SEO. You can implement very specific terms or phrases called 'long tail keywords' into your SEO strategy. These are keywords that are three words or more in length and are more conversational or descriptive to match more specific voice search queries. So specific in fact that employing long tail key words enables you to drive more traffic to your pages, and also more quality traffic.

- In the past, SEO experts avoided long keywords. Today, the conversational aspect of SEO has resulted in a keyword length of five words or more.
- Anytime a natural language long-tail keyword is found interspersed in content, it will show up in a voice search result.
- Long-tail keywords usually have more click through or higher conversion value, because they are so specific.

Did you know that using filler words in your key words will give you more matches in a voice search – words like "me", "for" and "a" are not only more acceptable they are hip to use in keywords. Embed lots of long-tail keywords in your content but refrain from optimizing an entire page around the longer keyword phrases.

Be Specific by Preemptively Answering Questions

It seems more people are asking questions when using voice search. In fact, the question format of a voice search rises by 60% each year. For the consumer or searcher, it conversationally gets right to the point. Google does too, and it is a fact worth noting. They have all the answers, plus related searches.

On average, Google answers a voice search query with a 29-word result. Therefore, content creators need to be concerned with providing both the question and a short concise answer that can be extracted from the supporting, authoritative content on the page. If your blog post or your editorial presentation is not conducive to that format, you should consider creating an FAQ page specific for voice search.

The good news is that an FAQ pages can rank for hundreds of different voice search queries. It satisfies the criteria of questions, conversational language, the concise 30 word answers favored by Google, and allows you to link separate pages with expanded content if necessary. A page with lots of content is more likely to “match” a voice search query. The point is that if you provide an authoritative answer, Google will find it.



When you identify commonly searched questions that are related to your business, try to work them into your site’s headlines, subheadings, and editorial content. This better aligns your content with what potential customers are looking for. Makes sure you use these questions as long tail keywords in your SEO.

- Ask new customers how they found you to determine which search strategies are working well for you and which may need refinement. You need to be aware of how search trends evolve.
- Make notes on the questions customers ask you in person, on the phone, and via email.
- See what questions people ask about your type of business in forums and on social media.
- Get a deeper level of understanding of how people search around topics; get content creation inspiration or the top internet keywords from search tools like AnswerThePublic, Soolve, BuzzSumo, Google Search Console, or Jaaxy, to name a few.
- Google helps. Essentially, when you start typing in a word, Google will automatically give you some long tail suggestions based on your search. This is your long-tail key word jackpot – a surplus of long tail keyword suggestions right at your fingertips.

You do not have to overwhelm your readers with questions, and please do not dump rows of questions on each page just because you think it will get you results. It won’t. Just keep a question or two relevant to what is on the page.

Write for a 9th Grade Reading Level (Or Below)

To reach a mainstream consumer audience, you should strive for readability in the 7th-9th grade range.

Did you know that the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development found that 50 percent of U.S. adults cannot read a book written at an eighth-grade level? Did you know that popular mass-market novels are written at a 7th grade level because studies show adults prefer reading two grades below their ability? According to the U.S. Department of Education's National Assessment of Adult Literacy, 52% of Americans have basic or below-basic reading skills. In Canada, the statistics are slightly better, averaging 42% for all age groups.



Research found that the online behavior of low-literacy users is radically different than that of higher literacy users. People with high literacy can scan editorial and pick out the pieces that interest them. People with lower literacy often have difficulties:

- They are not always able to spelling the query terms. Voice search is a better option for them.
- They have difficulty processing search results and are apt to pick the first hit on the list if it is less appropriate to their needs.
- They are able to read, but have difficulty because in trying to understand editorial, they must focus on reading word for word and thus spend considerable time trying to understand editorial.
- When they have to scroll for information it breaks their visual concentration. They narrow their field of view, miss other important objects on the page, and tend to settle on something that “is good enough”.

The only other option for lower literacy consumers is to completely skip over large amounts of information, which they often do when things become too complicated.

Besides organizing your content so it makes sense, presenting clear, easy to read, concise content on your website will make it much more likely to be read and understood and actionable by a broad consumer audience. Clear writing – no jargon or fancy words or complicated sentence structure in your content. Some experts advise writing at a grade seven level on your homepage, important category pages, and landing pages. You can use a 9th grade reading level on other linked pages. Writing at or near the seventh to ninth grade reading level helps your voice search rankings.

Having said all of this, your writing strategy may differ if you sell to other businesses and target highly educated readers. An audience of scientists, sophisticated investors, or professionals may expect you to write at a higher level and only trust a website that caters to a higher or sophisticated level of literacy.

Either way how you organize the information on your website is important?

Prioritize information - place the main point at the very top of the page where it will be seen first.

Static text is easier to read – avoid text that is animated, moves or changes.

Streamline page design – place important content in a single main column. This narrows the field of view so readers see what is important and this is especially good on devices like smartphones.

Optimize search – make your search key words tolerant of misspellings.

Research shows that readers find it easier to read, process, and recall content if they find the words familiar and they are more inclined to read content that matches their reading level. Beyond making content readable, writers also should consider content that has a clear purpose and shorter in length.

When it comes to the editorial, most writers are surprised to see how high the reading level of their text actually is. They are even more surprised at how hard it is to write well, using lower grade vocabulary and sentence complexity. You can test the readability of your content using online software. Mind you the readability formulas of online software do have limitations. You might find it easier to consult with educators in your area to rate your writing for the appropriate reading level of your audience.

Online Readability Test Tools

www.read-able.com

www.readability-score.com

www.online-utility.org/english/readability_test_and_improve.jsp

lexile.com/analyzer

Enhance Your Domain Authority

Search engines, like Google, want to provide information and promote businesses or organizations that are pertinent to the search query and try to ensure the results are accurate and trustworthy. One of the ways they do this is through domain authority. The domain authority of your website describes its relevance with your a specific industry or area of expertise. A website that outperforms the prestige of competing websites can be described as having attained domain authority. It is a sign that you have valid and credible information that people trust as a source of knowledge. The domain authority of your website is not judged by your peers, and there is no way to buy your way into a position of authority. Like everything else with Google, domain authority is based on an algorithm which curates information on many levels.

Some people might try to tell you that they have a secret technique in SEO that will guarantee your business some position in authoritative ranking. However, no matter what the search engine is, there is no way to know for sure which organization will gain the top spot in any search result. We can, however, speculate on how businesses get featured in the prime search results.

Your domain authority is perceived by search engine algorithms in the following dimensions:

- a) Prestige of a website: Domain age, public availability of the WhoIs information, website traffic, the amount of organic searches, and quality backlinks from other prestigious websites – all play a role in measuring the prestige of a website.
- b) Prestige of its authors: Have they gained prominence and recognition as experts in the field of interest promoted by the website? Prestige is measured by the prestige of others who quote them and the quantity and diversity of referrals, or backlinks, which these authors receive from 3rd parties.
- c) Quality of the information presented: Is the content relevant, interlinked and useful or valuable to the reader? The frequency of new content being added to a website or page is also considered.
- d) Competitive situation around a subject. How exclusive or original is the content? Does the website outperform the prestige of competing websites?

Search engines use artificial intelligence to sort through the billions of pages it knows about and find the ones deemed most relevant for particular queries. The algorithm has several working parts. While one aspect is improving local results, another might be rewarding mobile-friendly pages. There are parts fighting spam, demoting ad-heavy pages, or identifying copyright infringement. Some of those parts are self-explanatory.

Here's one aspect of the algorithm that needs lots of attention. It is the one that has the job of assigning web pages credit based on links from other pages and credible 3rd party sites pointing at them. Sites with lots of external links (also known as backlinks) from trustworthy domains relevant to your site rank higher and more often in voice search results.

One of your primary goals in voice search SEO should be to increase your Domain's Authority Score by link building. Here are some strategies to attain that:

- Create quality content on your website.
- You want to link to trusted sources and also editorially earn back links from trusted 3rd party sources. Share your content, and conduct outreach asking other websites for a link to specific content or pages. You want backlinks from:
 - An entity that has the potential to send you targeted referral traffic.
 - A site that topically aligns with your own website's content.
 - A trusted source.
- Add your site or page and detailed information to niche directories, business directories, citation sites.
- Find broken links in your niche. Search for links that do not work between a competitors site (or former competitor) and relevant 3rd party sites. Ask the website owner to link to your site instead. There are backlink analytic tools designed to locate broken links.
- Beware of toxic backlinks. You can think of links from other websites like votes that raise your ranking on search results. However, the vote only counts if the link is not manipulative or artificial. Not all links are good. Some can cause your website to decrease in rankings. Search engine algorithms recognize manipulative tactics to increase search rankings. These include unnatural links, links that were not editorially placed, paying for links, sponsoring or trading services for links, or the niche directories or niche sites created for this purpose. Conduct a regular audit for toxic backlinks, because if you do not find them, their existence could cause your website to be penalized in the rankings and it is hard to recover from that demotion.
- Identify link gaps to gain competitive advantage. One of the best things you can do to improve your ranking is to gain insight into your competitors' link profiles and use that information to improve your strategies and outrank them. Identify five competitors and compare the domains with a gap tool designed to make the comparison. Find opportunities in the gaps to build quality links that will improve your rankings. You might evaluate their existing content to identify a gap in information that might improve upon.

Link building increases your site's credibility and trustworthiness as a business. It places your business higher in the rankings and helps the search engine find new pages on your site faster.

Earn your Place in Google's Knowledge Panel

Assuming you have tweaked your website and completed the other recommended actions to increase your search engine ranking for voice search results: invested in HTTPS, verified your business on Google Maps, claimed your listing on multiple directories, preemptively answered questions using natural language written specifically for your audience, and concentrated on link building, etc. Now let's take a closer look at Google's Knowledge Panel.

When you conduct a search in Google for specific information or a type of business, Google's algorithm pulls information from trusted sources on the web and features an overview of key information about your query from one particular website. This feature along with links to delve deeper appears in a box on the right-hand side panel of your search results. This is known as the Google Knowledge Panel, a valuable piece of Google real estate. Since the information is boxed off, the reader's eye is immediately drawn to it. Your audience instantly sees information about your business and can contact you. This is extremely beneficial for earning valuable leads.

When you research a well-known business, people, sports team, event, or organization the knowledge panel is most often populated by results gleaned from Wikipedia because it has a very higher authority ranking. More recently, Google extended their knowledge panel processes to allow verification eligibility to more entities.

When you search more specifically for an entity such as your local business, you can use Google's verification process to claim your knowledge panel which allows you to suggest factual edits, an image, or provide authoritative feedback. The verification helps your business get discovered and stand out from the competition. You can verify your business for the knowledge panel by following the steps below:

- Search for your name or organization to bring up the Knowledge Panel you wish to edit.
- Tap on the prompt that reads: "Own this business?"
- Prove that you represent the entity by signing into either YouTube, Google+, Search Console, or Twitter.
- After successfully signing in you are now verified.

Domain authority plays a major role in how the algorithm determines which entity is featured in the knowledge panel and as you learned earlier, your domain authority is largely determined by quality content and quality links. As you work to enhance your domain authority and gain credibility the possibility of being featured in the knowledge panel also increases. It is one of the best ways your business gets discovered and stands out from the competition.

Optimize for Featured Snippets or Answer Boxes

Having a business presence in Google Maps or being featured in the Knowledge Panel is a valuable piece of Google real estate. However, the prime space is the top where you will find the Featured Snippet above the organic search results. Not only is it prime space Featured Snippets are dominating search query results.

To answer a search query, Google's algorithm automatically produces a Featured Snippet that contains a brief extract of information from a trusted website with domain authority. The snippet appears at the top third of the web page as a paragraph or a bulleted list, accompanied by an image. Voice search queries often begin with one of these words: who/what/where/when/why/how). That is why the Feature Snippet is often referred to as an "answer box".

Here is an example of a snippet for the query: What us autumn?

 **au·tumn**
/ˈɒdəm/
noun

BRITISH
the third season of the year, when crops and fruits are gathered and leaves fall, in the northern hemisphere from September to November and in the southern hemisphere from March to May.
"the countryside is ablaze with color in autumn"



● **ASTRONOMY**
the period from the autumnal equinox to the winter solstice.

Definitions from Oxford Languages

[Feedback](#)

Snippets are popular because they give answers to questions in a way that is convenient, quick and easy to read. A searcher does not have to plow through several websites to find what they are looking for.

There are currently four kinds of snippets:

1. Text definition box – designed to give searchers a direct, concise definition or description.
2. Table – data from a page displays as a table.
3. Ordered list – a list of items presented in a specific order.
4. Unordered list – a list presented in no particular order.

Google has the final say in how the snippet will appear or even if a feature snippet will appear. Google uses the feature snippet as a way to make the searcher's life easier. That may be true. Via smart speakers, the searcher gets that one answer. When people conduct a voice search, more than 40% of their answers come from a featured snippet. Since the snippets take up so much visible space on the screen, they tend to get a lot more impressions and clicks from searchers. This means the snippet is an extremely powerful SEO tactic to improve your online visibility, beat competitors, boost conversions, and drive traffic right to your site or your store.

The Featured Snippet boosts the credibility of your business. The thing is not all search terms result in a snippet and not all types of businesses can benefit from snippets. Furthermore, there's no exact formula for earning that Featured Snippet and if your business should achieve that ranking, it might not last forever if Google's algorithm deems another page is better suited to rank for a particular query.

Identifying Opportunities for Featured Snippets

A small business with a lower domain authority, smaller social following or lack of brand awareness may find it difficult to compete with the big guys whose ad campaigns inundate the various media. Still, it is possible for small businesses to rank for featured snippets and rise above other local businesses in their niche. When you can identify opportunities the Featured Snippet is a valuable piece of online real estate gives the searchers an answer to their questions and a doorway to your site.

However, if searches into facets of your type of business rarely produce snippets, a better use of your time might be spent focusing on positioning your business for the Knowledge Panel or Google Map results.

If your business is conducive to Featured Snippets you will want to concentrate on three things:

1. Identify potential content ideas,
2. Determine if Featured Snippets are attainable for your type of business
3. Figure out how you can do better than your competitors to earn the Feature Snippet

Here are some suggestions to help you do that:

- Identify search queries where you already rank: Through the Google Search Console and "Search Analytics" you can study the report to see how your pages rank.
- Take advantage of local: Remember that voice queries with the "near me" search does give a local business advantages. A featured snippet, that includes the location where you are based, presents the perfect opportunity for you to take full advantage of your local strength and compete against bigger brands, too. For the best chance of ranking play to your strengths. Refrain from trying to answer generic questions and instead focusing on queries that have a local or niche focus.
- Study your competitors' Feature Snippets: They will be instructive to give you a starting point for a list of keywords you might want to focus on when you create content.

- Ask people: What questions are people actually trying to find answers for? Ask your readers, customers, and followers how they search and which questions they ask. Besides checking in with your target audience, ask random people what questions they have on a specific topic and what would be their concerns. Looking out of the box can always give you a fresh perspective.
- Think like your audience. What terms are they using? If you have paid attention to the people that communicated with you will have a better idea of the vocabulary they choose when first communicate with you. For instance, terms you use and find common in your industry may be very intimidating and confusing to people who are unfamiliar with your type of business. Tailor your content to that audience.
- Browse for relevant questions to gain insight: Pay attention to the “People also ask” box that appears below the Featured Snippet. These questions provide huge insight into which questions Google reasons are related to each topic. Once you start expanding the questions to see the answers, more and more questions will appear. Another means of discovering untapped opportunities is to monitor questions on Twitter. These are quick ways to identify competitors and content ideas in one easy step.
- Implied questions: Seeing that the purpose of a featured snippet is to answer questions – who, what, when, where, why, how do, how to), please do not overlook implied questions found in words like: does, because, cause, and costs. Action words may also imply a question: becoming, doing, getting, making, forming or cooking. Terms or phrasing used in information intent of a search can imply that a searcher is looking for a definition or explanation. When a searcher queries “email marketing” or “pruning an apple tree in fall” what might they be their goal but to seek an answer?
- You can make a list of every keyword that is pertinent to your business. Since questions are most likely to bring up featured snippets, you are aiming to answer a question. Include long-tail key words and question key words in your list. Multiple studies confirm that the majority of featured snippets are triggered by long-tail keywords (five or more words). In fact, the more words that are typed into a search box, the higher the probability there will be a featured snippet. You can search keywords, one by one, to see which ones, if any, result in a Featured Snippet and if that snippet has been captured by a competitor. You should explore snippet opportunities by using local terms with a questions type query. You can streamline this process by using online tools to identify which relevant keywords bring up a Featured Snippet on a results page.
- Snippet tools: Keyword research tools can shows whether a query (including competitor domain) triggers featured results. You can use snippet tools to cull, identify, and organize specific snippets to target keyword phrases which make it easier for you to optimize your site and find opportunities to compete for a Featured Snippet. Some of these tools are free. You simply type in a domain, keyword, or link, and the results indicate if a Featured Snippet comes up for the entry.

People also ask

What happens in the autumn?

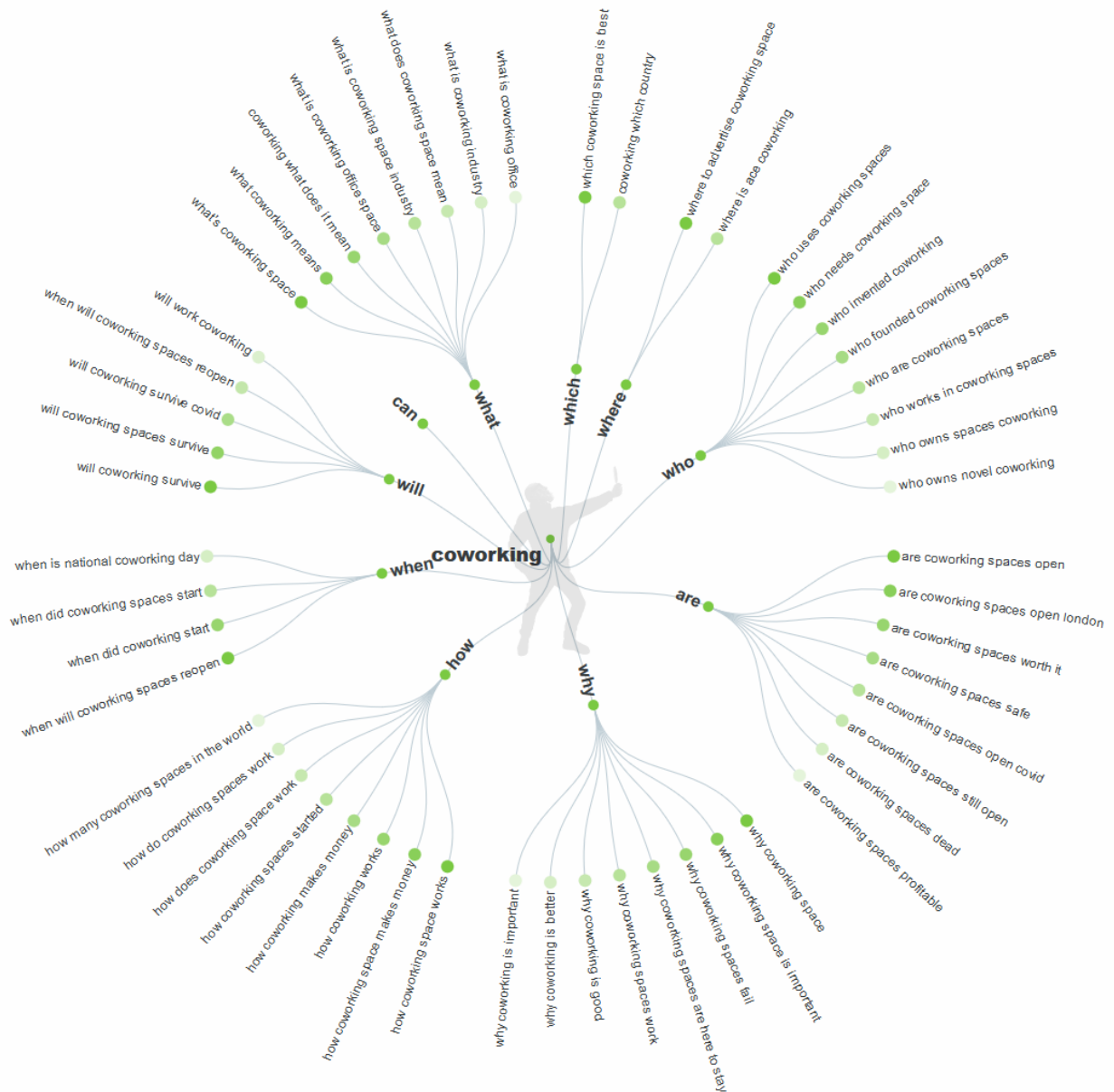
What is called autumn?

Why autumn is called Fall?

Is autumn the same as fall?

- The best place and simplest way to find out the types of questions people might be asking about a particular topic is Answer the Public - Answerthepublic.com: This is a very useful data mining tool to determine all the permutations of a questions that people are using when they search.

Shown here are all the questions answerthepublic.com found when we entered the keyword – “coworking”.



Note how the results are grouped by the type of question that might pertain to co-working. If your business was related to co-working, you would choose one or more question to answer from any of those groups and structure your content accordingly.

The Very Best Answers

Since questions are most likely to bring up featured snippets, you've got to answer how, what, when, where, why, or who.

The information for the snippet might be gleaned from more than one place on your website. Still it is more than a simple answer to a question that leads to a feature snippet. Focus on making your page the very best answer to the question and organizing it well. Google seems to love sequential steps and numbered or bulleted lists. Once a page earns a Featured Snippet, it is very likely to be featured in similar queries.

1) Organize your content to make it snippable – that is create a question and short answer. It cannot be an image of editorial. Format the editorial with headings and content to make it like a featured snippet:

- A question is either stated or implied in the query. Clearly state the question or a very close version of it and make it a “heading” on the web page page.
- Use “Paragraph Styles” to format the heading as an H1 or H2 or H3, which is determined by its positioning in the content. Organize headings by size.
- Provide a short, direct, clear answer to the question below the heading. Stay within the optimal word count. If you have studied the featured snippets you will note that most of them do not exceed 65 words.
- Organize the answer as:
 - A single paragraph (aim for 29-55 words)
 - As a list
 - Or as a table (preferably with four columns).
 - Use can use Step 1, Step 2” or “Rule 1, Rule 2
- Be factual. Add details that answer the question as fully and completely as possible.
- Include lots of attention grabbing images and make sure they are branded, captioned, and have alternate text attributes or descriptions within the HTML code that are pertinent to the subject.
- Most people love to learn visually, which is why photos and videos can engage people and help you get backlinks and rank for featured snippets.
- Provide dedicated cornerstone content on the landing page. When new visitors land on your page make sure they don't feel lost if they seek to learn more about the subject, you or your business. Gives them easily identified access to the most important content on the website.



2) Structure your web page and organize your content to address related questions in the same article: A solid article addressing many related questions is a good tactic, since Google's algorithm is proficient at determining synonymical or closely related questions. You do not need to create a separate page for each question, but you should ensure you are separating each question from the other in how you organize the page. Here is one way to combine several related questions on one page:

- A generic keyword becomes the heading or category of the editorial.
- A more specific search query becomes the title of the editorial content.
- Even more specific queries or related questions determine the subheadings of the article and thus define its structure. When multiple queries that very closely related they might actually be organized under a single subheading.

3) Include videos in your voice result and snippet strategy. Video is playing a big role in Google's strategy for answering voice search queries. Your videos can be selected for Featured Snippets, too. Google does not provide a link to your YouTube video it actually pulls out a section of the video that is relevant to the search query. Data from Bing indicates these types of video results tend to pop up more often for natural language queries.

- Make sure your video is high quality
- Include a voice transcript for each video because Google will recognize the text.
- Integrate long-tail keywords into your audio.

4) A business will always benefit from giving their customers access to resources, a how-to section, buying guide, glossary of terms, or an FAQ page on its website. If any of these resources also qualifies for a Featured Snippet it is extremely good for business.

5) Make your promotions as enticing as possible because you need people to click your link(s) and provide backlinks. However, do not mislead the searcher.

5) Once you have created the best content you can work on other aspects of SEO (choosing the best long-tail keywords, link-building, social engagement) that enhance your opportunities for Feature Snippets. Search engines rely on domain authority and need to know that they are providing an answer from a trusted source.

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