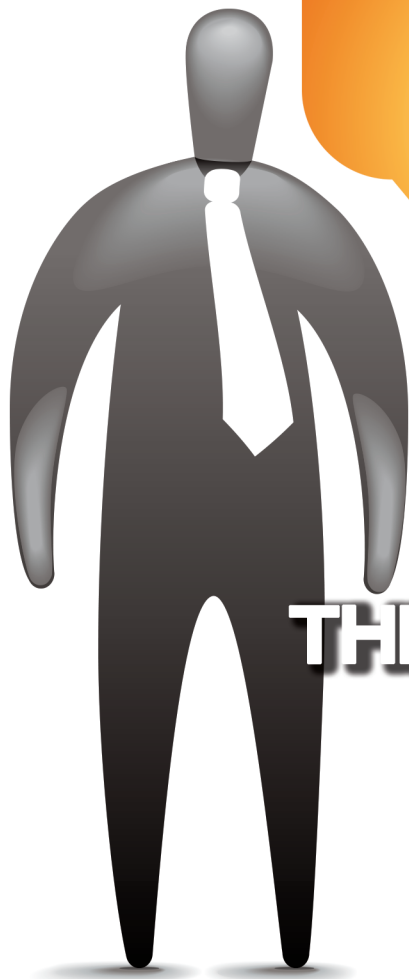


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## CHOOSING THE RIGHT PARTNERS

Do You Have What It Takes to Repair Aluminum?

Shifting Your Thinking About Work Schedules

Considering a Cosmetic Reconditioning Program?

“Lifetime Fluids”

# YOUR SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION GUIDE

## CLAIM YOUR BUSINESS LISTINGS AND DOMINATE LOCAL SEO

BY PETER MARTIN

Car dealerships big and small rely heavily on the local community for sales more than any other business. There was a time when simply hanging a colorful banner and some signs would bring people in by the droves. Then, it was all about purchasing a page in the phonebook, producing a TV ad, or a radio spot. Those things are still good to have on your marketing plan in today's world, but the serious return on investment is in SEO – search engine optimization. Dominating the local search results online is the single most important thing to do for your dealership because it reaches your customers when they're looking to buy your service.

97 percent of consumers start their search for a local business on the Internet. More importantly, 70 percent of mobile searches and 59 percent of consumers who used a PC lead to action within one hour. That ends up

being around two thirds of consumers running a search query on a weekly basis.

You may be wondering: what exactly is a local search? A search is considered local when a person includes the name of the city and/or town within the search term (example: Hyundai dealers in Houston, TX). Since the majority of consumers are looking for your business in this way, it is terribly important to have accurate information shown across the web.

Major search engines such as Google, Yahoo, and Bing rely heavily on 3rd party data providers for nearly all the data that shows up in their local business listings. There are five different types of directories that house business data: data-aggregators, horizontal directories, industry-specific directories, region-specific directories, and unstructured citations.

**Data-aggregators** are organizations such as Localeze and Acxiom that compile information from detailed databases on businesses and then sell that information to others. These types of data providers basically feed your business info into a ton of other influential third-party sites, including Google.

**Horizontal directories** are listings on review sites such as Yelp and Yahoo. These listings are free to manage and increase our business' relevance and prominence in a specific city or region. They are almost always connected to maps and mobile searches.

**Industry-specific directories** are sites such as Carhelp and DealerRater. These are sites that are only focused on the business information in your industry. Many times, these listings are organized geographically, so it's very beneficial for you to have your listing included on them.

**Unstructured citations** can come from a ton of different places, blogs and social media being the main ones. They include the business name, address and phone number, but not in any particular order. (That's why they're considered unstructured.) Popular sites in this category are Facebook, YouTube and Twitter.

By ensuring the information across all of these types of directories is accurate on your business, you are increasing your local SEO exponentially.

It's not hard to notice that Google maps holds a dominant spot in search engine results. When people are searching for a local business, they want to know exactly where it's located. It's the single most clicked on feature in any search result or listing and leads consumers back to your website. It's also the most eye-grabbing piece in local search results.

Mapping is also huge in the mobile-sphere; 80 percent of smartphone owners use their phones for GPS and to find local businesses. The ease of use is what makes this so popular among people looking for a service. It provides all of your information in one spot with intuitive design and easy-to-find directions. By ensuring your business has a marker on maps, you are guaranteeing a presence on local search.

Now that you know the importance of local directories and listings, it's time to get into the nitty-gritty of what information you need to include. Every site is different in the way they are organized, but the information is basically the same. I'm going to go over the top 3 things every listing needs and why.



Categories are the single most important part of your listing (under your name, address, phone and website). Search engines use this information when deciding which businesses to show for a particular search query. Many times, if your business isn't categorized properly (or at all), it isn't showing up in local search. People run their search based on the category of business they are looking for. This idea stems back from the days of the Yellow Pages. It's simple and easy to find exactly what you're looking for if it's organized and straightforward.

Many business listings have an option to use more than one category under your primary category. A lot of dealerships don't put a lot of thought into this when they really should. You can double your traffic if you choose the right keywords. Make sure your categories are relevant and describe what your business is rather than what it offers.

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### Keyworded Business Description

Your business description is what connects your listing to the people. It tells them all about your history and who you are. It needs to be appealing to readers and also contain SEO keywords that will help you get found. Do not write a business description that just has SEO keywords in it and doesn't make any sense. The keywords need to be sprinkled in tastefully. You can use Google AdWords to find the hot keyword search terms to use.

### What's Next?

Now that you know the basics about your listings and what they need, you need to start getting out there and claiming your listings. I'm going to go over the main ones to focus on first, with a small list of others that should be utilized. Claiming and optimizing your listings takes time, so be patient. It's not something that is going to immediately shoot your listing to the top overnight.

**Google+ Local** - Google is THE provider for search and maps. By claiming and optimizing this listing, you are staking claim on both mobile and desktop searches. It's also directly connected to all android devices. Best of all, it's free. The process can be a little lengthy, but when done right, you won't regret it. Before you do anything though, run a search to see if you already have a Google Local business page. If you do, all you have to do is claim it and fill in all the blanks from the information I gave you above. If you don't, you'll have to create one. There are countless guides out there on this.

**Bing Places for Business** - Bing is the second most used search engine. This is an opportunity for you to increase visibility on the web. Bing is also connected to Apple's iPhone as the default search engine for Siri. The mobile presence alone should be enough to convince you the importance of this listing.

**Yahoo Local** - Coming in as a close third, Yahoo Local is equally important. You can add or claim a basic listing for



free, but if you want to enhance it with photos etc. it'll cost you. This is the one listing where I would say a photo doesn't matter as much. As long as you have your business name, address, phone and website information on there, you're covered. You also have the option to add products and services to this listing for free. This is beneficial when someone is looking for a particular make of car you offer.

**Other Listings** - Once you claim and optimize the above three, you should get working on these listings as well. Yelp, Yellow Pages, Localeze, infogroup, Superpages, CityGrid, hotfrog and Nokia Here.

If you want to dominate the local pack, get out there and start claiming those listings. Using my guidelines, you'll be on your way to the top of the search results.



*Peter "webdoc" Martin is renowned for creating innovative and cutting-edge programs, systems and tools to facilitate the auto dealer's success in today's market. Martin is the President of Cactus Sky Communications and the Co-Founder of ADT (Automotive Digital Training), a comprehensive web-based video-on-demand training and testing platform for the auto industry. Cactus Sky Communications is recognized as one of the premier digital marketing companies in the country.*