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TO THE  
**First Page**

FREE EBOOK

 **ThriveHive**

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## ➔ Intro

Getting on the first page of Google is like hitting the marketing jackpot. You get more traffic to your website, massive exposure to potential customers, and credibility from the world's most trusted search engine.

With all of its power, many business owners see the first page of Google as a faraway place that they only dream of reaching. The truth is, getting on the first page of Google is a realistic goal for any business (yes, even yours), and can be accomplished by any person (yes, even you).

In this guide, we'll show you how Google works and walk you through six actions you can take to get it to work for your business.



## ➔ Understanding Google

### How Do Search Engines Work?

Google is a search engine, just like Bing and Yahoo. When a user types a word or phrase into the search bar, Google (and other search engines) then answer back with a list of web pages containing that information. The search is called the "query", the words and phrases used to form that query are called "keywords", and the page that displays those results is the "search engine results page", or "SERP".

However, there are billions of web pages out there, and a SERP can only fit about 10 results, so for any given query, Google will produce hundreds of SERPs. In addition, Google also doesn't just randomly list these results. It ranks the results according to how well they answer the search query.

### How Does the First Page Form?

To come up with the best results to show first, Google is constantly crawling the web and collecting information on web pages: topical, chronological and behavioral information.

Topical information comes from the text on your page. It tells Google what your page is about, so that it can determine which searches your page should show up for in the first place.

Chronological information comes from the dates on your page. It tells Google how long the page has been around, as well as when it was last updated. This helps Google to determine which pages are the most accurate and up to date.

Behavioral information comes from the data on your page. Data tells Google how many people click on it, how long they stay on it, and how often they reference it. This information helps Google determine which of its informative and accurate pages provide the best experience for users.

With these three factors, Google selects its first page results for any given query not just based on what its computers choose, but on what its users *validate* as the right choices, as indicated through their collective behavior.

### Why is the First Page Important?

You may know that the first page of Google results is important, but do you know why it's important? Here are 5 reasons:

**Exposure** | Google gets over 167 billion searches per month, but 91% of its users don't click past the first page. This means that if you're not on the first page of Google, you are missing out on 91% of potential customers.

**Visibility** | Google shows enough information about the web pages in its results listings to inform a user about your business or page, without even having to click on it.

**Relevancy** | Every page on your website has the chance to show up for specific keywords that your potential customers are looking for.

# The Anatomy of Google's First Page

Below is an example of a SERP, which you can use to visualize the concepts in this eBook. Keep in mind that this is just a general idea, subject to change. This is because the SERP varies according to query, device, location, and more, and because Google frequently changes its layout.

**Keyword** (points to the search bar)

**Query** (points to the search button)

**Meta Title** (points to the text 'About 1,200,000 results (1.21 seconds)')

**URL** (points to the first search result link)

**SEM ads, also known as paid search results and pay per click (PPC) ads** (points to the top organic results)

**Local/Maps Results** (points to the map and local business listings)

**Meta Title** (points to the title of the first local listing)

**Meta Title** (points to the title of the second local listing)

**URL** (points to the URL of the first organic result)

**Meta Description** (points to the description of the first organic result)

**Organic Results** (points to the bottom organic search results)

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# ➔ How to Get to Google's First Page



## *Optimize for Search*

Getting on the first page of Google starts with optimizing your business website for search engines. This is the process known as Search Engine Optimization (SEO).

### What is Search Engine Optimization?

Sometimes people think of search engine optimization as a way to defeat search engines, but this couldn't be further from the truth. Search engines are companies too, looking to provide their users with the answers they're looking for and best experience possible, and they have the data to identify what makes the best experience. Therefore, SEO is about getting Google to show your page first, not because you tricked it into doing so, but because it meets the criteria for a good web page, which meets the needs of its users.

### How Do You Optimize for Search?

When you optimize a web page for a search engine, you don't optimize it for any search, but for specific searches. If you recall, the words that form search queries are keywords. Optimizing your page for search tells Google what your web page is about, which helps Google know what to display in its results. Optimizing for search is about putting the right keywords in the right places of your page so that Google will know to retrieve that page for searches containing those keywords.

### Choose The Right Keywords

The right keywords are words that both describe the information on a specific web page, and words your target audience will type into Google when searching for information you can provide. They will relate to your products, services, specialities, location, and industry. The keywords you target for each of your web pages should reflect the content on that page.

## Put Keywords in The Right Places

The right places are a little more complicated. You want the body of your content to include keywords, but there are also some more specific places that you should remember.

Below are five places to include keywords for your page, so that Google can easily crawl your page and figure out what it's about:

**Title Tags** | Every webpage on your website has a title: your homepage, about us page, contact page, blog homepage, every individual blog post, and more. It is what Google uses to determine what a page is about, and it also is the title of your page as it appears in the SERP list.

**Metadata** | Metadata includes the snippets of information that Google collects on every web page in order to index them. It is also the information you see on each web page listed in its results.

**URL links** | The URL is the address of your web page such as mybusiness.com/services, or mybusiness.com/about.

**Alt Tags** | Google detects words, not images. Therefore, when uploading photos to your page, you have the option of creating a text alternative for your image. This converts your picture into words so that Google can recognize what the picture is about/contains.

Every individual page of your website has the above sections. For each page, insert keywords specific to that page into each of those sections.

### Important Note

*Google doesn't group together your website as one item. It crawls every page of your website individually, including blog posts. Therefore, you should optimize each page on your website for different keywords, so that they aren't competing with each other.*



# Search Engine Marketing

Search engine optimization is perhaps the most effective and sustainable route to the first page of Google. This is a long term process however, as Google has billions of pages to update or add to its index each day, and user behavior takes time to accumulate. In the meantime, you can use another keyword-focused strategy that yields faster results: search engine marketing (SEM).

## What is SEM?

SEM is the practice of placing paid advertisements on search engine results pages. The term "search engine marketing" used to encompass both organic SEO and paid advertising, but now more commonly refers to the latter. Consequently, SEM is synonymous with pay per click (PPC), cost per click (CPC), and paid search advertising. The SEM platform for Google specifically is called Adwords.

You can use SEM to advertise your entire business or a specific page, product, service, or offer. The ad is just the web page listing you associate with it, such as a homepage, a specific product page, or a landing page.

Advertised listings on a SERP have the same characteristics as regular (organic) listings: a title, url, and meta description. However, they are distinguished by a green "Ad" label next to them.

## Green ad label

Paid ads are the first three listings above organic results, and often make up the last one or two listings on that page, after organic results. There are ads on the second page and so forth, but they are the same ones that appear on the first page.

## How does SEM work?

With SEM, you are charged a certain amount only when a user clicks on your ad. However, since SEM also takes relevancy and user experience into account, paying more doesn't equate to showing up more. The frequency at which Google displays your ad, and who it displays your ad to, varies according to several factors. These include:

**Keyword** | When setting up your campaign, you must choose a keyword that you are targeting. This will tell Google which search queries will trigger that ad, and will help Google to rank the various ads targeting that keyword, according to their relevancy

**Budget** | Before you run your campaign, you have to determine how much you are willing to bid for your particular keyword, and the maximum amount you want to spend on the campaign as a whole. Google will then show your ad in accordance with your budget and time frame.

**Audience** | You also choose an audience for your ad to show up for. Since you are paying for each time a person clicks on your ad, you want those clicking on your ad to be those most likely to become a lead or a customer.



*SEM may not be free, but it drives more users to your website that are likely to become paying customers. Therefore you need a clear understanding on how to adjust each of the above factors to produce the biggest return on your investment.*



Google's SERPs are a list of web pages relevant to that search, but there are many different types of web pages out there—news articles, Wikipedia pages, homepages, product pages, and blog posts. As such, the third way to get to the first page of Google is by having a business blog that answers common queries related to your business. Here are five ways to use a blog to get to the first page of Google:

### 1. Optimize More Pages

As mentioned previously, Google indexes every page on your website individually. Every blog post you publish is simply another page for your website, that you can optimize for specific keywords (using the steps in method #1). The more optimized pages you have, the more opportunities you have to show up on the first page of Google.

### 2. Use Keywords More Frequently

When optimizing a web page for a specific keyword, the more frequently you can insert those keywords into the content, the better. However, you don't want your main website pages to contain too much text, and you also don't want to stuff keywords into what limited text there is. (You will then sound like a robot, which will lead users to exit your page, which will lead Google to decrease your rank).

Blog posts, on the other hand, are meant to be text-heavy. They provide ample space to go into depth on your keywords, and to insert them frequently into your content in a natural, non-robotic way.

### 3. Provide a Better User Experience

Google searchers don't want to read through a one thousand-word homepage, but they are expecting more text in blog posts. Providing in-depth and accurate information on a particular keyword in your blog post meets users expectations, and will therefore win you Google's favor.

#### 4. Take Advantage of Internal Linking

Even though Google treats each page on your website as its own entity, it does prefer websites whose pages can be crawled quickly and easily. When you link pages of your website to other pages of your website, you create a coherent network that makes it easier for Google to do its job. Blogs are great platforms for internal linking, as you can reference other related posts in your content.

#### 5. Provide Fresh and New Content

If you remember, Google takes chronological factors into account to ensure that the sites it is listing are not just informative, but also accurate and up to date. The information on your main website pages may not change as frequently and may be harder to update. However, you can publish new blog posts every week on different topics, and even update old ones with newer information.

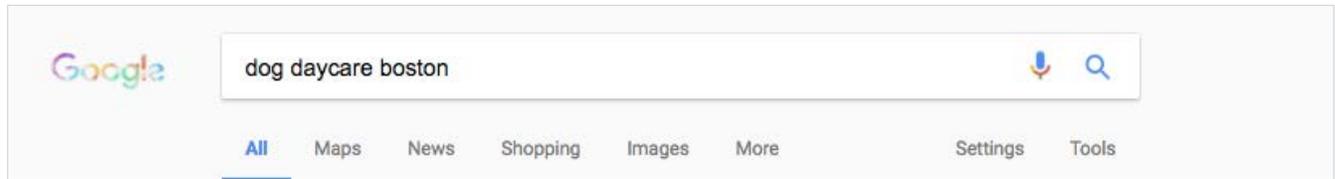


*Google rewards you for producing fresh content, using relevant keywords, and providing a positive experience for users, and blogs facilitate each of these strategies.*



## Get Listed on Google Maps

Your fourth step to the first page of Google is through Google Maps. When you perform a search on Google, you'll notice that you can search the entire web, or just images, maps, news, and other specific categories.



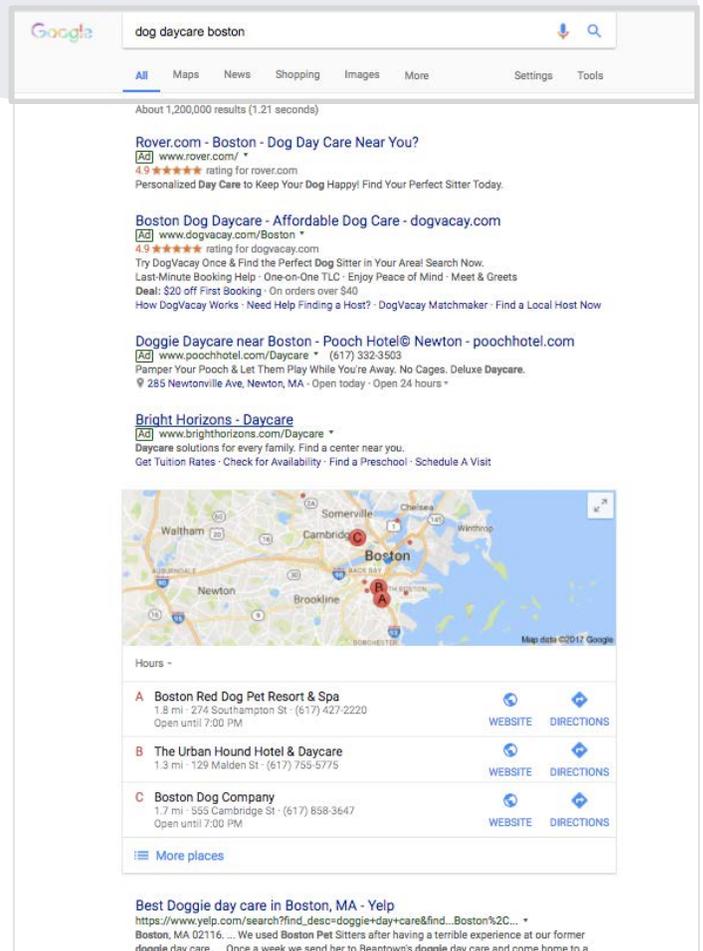
You'll also notice that the results page for a search contains a box with a map and listings. Google Maps is the channel by which you can search maps directly, and also the channel that provides the local listings in regular search results pages.

Your business doesn't appear on Google Maps on its own, nor does it appear first in local listings on its own. You need to first get your business on Google Maps, and then optimize it to rank higher.

### HERE'S HOW:

#### 1. Create a Google My Business Account

Google My Business is the database that helps Google to properly present your business information in search and maps. The more complete your information is, the easier it is for Google to index it and share it.



These are local results that are generated through Google Maps, which also get ranked by Google.

## Complete and Accurate Listing

A complete and accurate listing includes: your business name, address, phone number, website and business hours. If you have multiple locations, you can use the same account but will have to add and verify each location separately.

## Local Phone Number

Google is wary of toll free (800 or 877) numbers, as these are sometimes used with spam. Make sure you use a local number in your listing that uses the area code of your physical location, to further validate your location and your trustworthiness.

## Categories

You are required to choose a primary category for your Google My Business account, from a list that Google provides. You can also add additional categories. This is helpful for indicating the other services you provide, or for clarifying your services if the primary category you want to include is not one of Google's options.

## 2. Optimize Your Google Maps Listing

Google Maps will automatically create a listing for you based on your Google My Business Account, but you should still verify your maps listing to make sure the information is identical. There are also some additional ways to optimize your maps listing, such as:

## Photos

Adding photos to your Google My Business profile will give Google Maps a picture to show in your business listing, rather than a generic image of your map location. This is better for user experience, which Google factors into its rankings.

## Get Google Reviews

Customers can submit reviews about your business right from Google Maps. Start by asking your most trusted and loyal customers to write reviews for your business, right on the Google Maps platform. Even just a few positive reviews can quickly and significantly ramp up your rankings.

## Embed a Google Map on Your Website

You can improve your ranking on Google Maps by embedding a Google Map into your business website, such as in the contact section. This helps to further verify for Google that the information it has on you is accurate.

To embed a Google Map on your website, first make sure that the information in your contact page is identical to that which is in your Google Maps listing.

Then pull up your business listing in Google Maps.







## Get Listed in Online Directories

Online directories are the modern day version of the Yellow Pages. People rely on them to identify and compare businesses and services they need. Google My Business and Google Maps are actually online directory listings, but there are several others out there for which you should create a listing.

Online directories provide more information about your business for Google to factor into its rankings. They can also drive traffic to your website, which is another ranking factor for Google.

Get listed in the below directory sites to increase your online presence, enhance your credibility, and provide more information for Google.



Yelp



Bing Local



Yahoo Local



Superpages



Whitepages



MerchantCircle



Angie's List



Yellowbot



CitySearch



Better Business Bureau



For each of these directory listings, follow the same guidelines for Google My Business and Google Maps listings, so that your information is accurate, complete, and consistent. Make sure even the smallest details in your listing are the same, right down to using "st" versus "street", or putting "The" in front of your business name.



## Get Online Reviews

Online reviews are a go-to resource for consumers when considering a business. What others have to say about your business will always carry more weight than what you have to say about it, no matter how authentic and genuine you are.

In addition to building your business reputation online, having a high volume of positive online reviews can also help to increase your Google rankings. As you know by now, Google strives not only to be accurate and informative, but trustworthy too, and as it turns out, people trust what others—even complete strangers— have to say about your business based on their experience with it.

Ask your trusted and loyal customers to submit reviews for your business. If a customer goes out of their way to commend your service, ask them in that moment if they'd mind writing a review.

Some popular online review sites that you'll want to get on are listed below. You'll notice that most of these sites are also listed above as online directories. Many directories also contain sections for reviews, so it's important to both create a listing and accumulate reviews on them.



Google My Business



Yelp



Angie's List



Facebook



Bing Places



City Search

## ➔ Conclusion

Google may be an online behemoth, but that doesn't mean that the first page of Google is unattainable. Part of the reason why Google is so popular is because it meets the needs of individuals in their local environments—and it gets those needs right because of the data it has.

With quality content and consistent effort, your small businesses has just as much of a chance as its larger competitors of ranking on Google. As long as you align your website with Google's standards for a positive user experience, these six steps will have you on your way to the first page.



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ThriveHive is an all-in-one marketing platform that gives local businesses a better website and custom marketing plan. Get the tools and expertise to do all of your small business marketing, all in one place.

*See how ThriveHive can help your business grow!*

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