



# Small Business

## Local Citations Services

### The Key to Boosting Your Online Visibility

As a small business owner, you know most of your future customers will hear about you online before they meet you in person. That “digital first impression” is crucial, since it determines if they ever walk through your door. But it’s not enough to attract just anyone: You need local online traffic.

### What Are Local Citations?

When a prospective customer searches for a business “near me,” search engines like Google serve up a list of responses drawn from the local area. That’s a radius of about 30 miles, give or take. But just how

Local citations are pieces of online evidence that show your business is in a particular community. They not only help search engines understand who to include in a local list, but influence which brands reach the top of those results.

### Different Types of Local Citations

You won’t find any one page called a “local citation,” but many different websites can contribute local citations to your business. We know search engines check local citations thanks to years of experience helping small businesses get online traffic.

## Local citations include things like:

- ✓ Listings in local business directories
- ✓ Entries in the local Chamber of Commerce
- ✓ Mentions by newspapers and other local media
- ✓ Inclusion in professional and industry organizations
- ✓ Write-ups related to local, state, or regional awards

There may be more, and your opportunities depend in part on your business. For instance, if you co-sponsor an event with a local nonprofit, any page they create about the event could serve as a local citation. A small business local citation service can develop a custom local citation list for you, too.



## How Do Local Citations Differ from Backlinks?

You probably already know backlinks are essential to online success. Backlinks are links “back” to your website from another website, preferably one that’s trusted and influential in your industry. Each link acts as an “editorial vote” in the eyes of search engines, improving your rankings in relevant searches.

Some local citations come in the form of links, but not all, and even those that aren’t links are valuable.

Even when a local citation doesn’t link directly back to your website, it still associates your brand with a local area – and it can boost your visibility. Today’s search engines are clever enough to understand if a website is talking about your business through mentions of your address or phone number.

# Why Are Local Citations Important?

Local citations provide three valuable benefits:

## 1. Improving Online Visibility

The more local citations you have, the more likely it is someone in your neighborhood will get to your website through those citations. Just like many people love to shop local, there are those who prefer to get their news from the kinds of “hometown” sources that provide the best local citations.



## 2. Boosting Local SEO

Each local citation elevates your search engine optimization so you're more likely to appear whenever someone searches for a business like yours “near me.” Depending on your industry and service area, this might amount to hundreds or even thousands of website visits monthly.

## 3. Building Trust and Credibility with Potential Customers

Before buying, prospective customers want to know, like, and trust you. When they find you through local citations, they know you are more likely to understand their unique needs than a nationwide chain. Local citations offer a more personal touch and set the stage for a great customer experience.



Contact HostingCT to learn more about how local SEO can help you succeed.



# How to Boost Your Business

## The Ultimate Guide to Optimizing Local Citations

In our previous article, you learned what local citations are. Now, it's time to discover how to get the most value from each of your local citations. While any valid local citation is better than nothing, there are simple steps you can take to ensure your local citations contribute the utmost to your search engine optimization.

SEO strategy is made up of many interconnected pieces that can all yield results. With four simple steps, you can be confident your local citations will boost your rankings in relevant searches and help you connect with more customers. Let's take a closer look at optimizing local citations:





## 1. Conduct a Citation Audit

A citation audit helps you identify errors, inconsistencies, and missing information in your existing citations so they'll be more attractive both to search engines and your readers. To correct information, you'll often need to contact the writer or webmaster of the relevant local website directly.

Although citation audits require some outreach, that doesn't mean it's all manual work. You can use a variety of tools that will flag common local citation errors. These include solutions like BrightLocal, Whitespark, and Moz Local. Some of these provide a free trial period sufficient to conduct a citation audit.

## 2. Create & Claim Your Listings

Many services, including Google itself, create local business directory entries by scanning websites for relevant information. With the advent of AI that produces content automatically, even more local directories are sure to open. You maximize the SEO impact of these listings by claiming them, allowing you to update them yourself.

While some directories are automated, others require you to log in and set up your listing manually. Check out Google My Business (also known as Google Business Profile), Yelp, Facebook, Bing Places, and Yellow Pages. Be sure to provide accurate and consistent details including business name, address, phone number, and website.

Some local directories require you to verify your address by inputting a code you will receive by postal mail. With that in mind, the sooner you sign up to claim your directory listing, the better. After you update your listing, it may still take a number of weeks (up to a month) before it affects your search

## 3. Optimize Your Listings

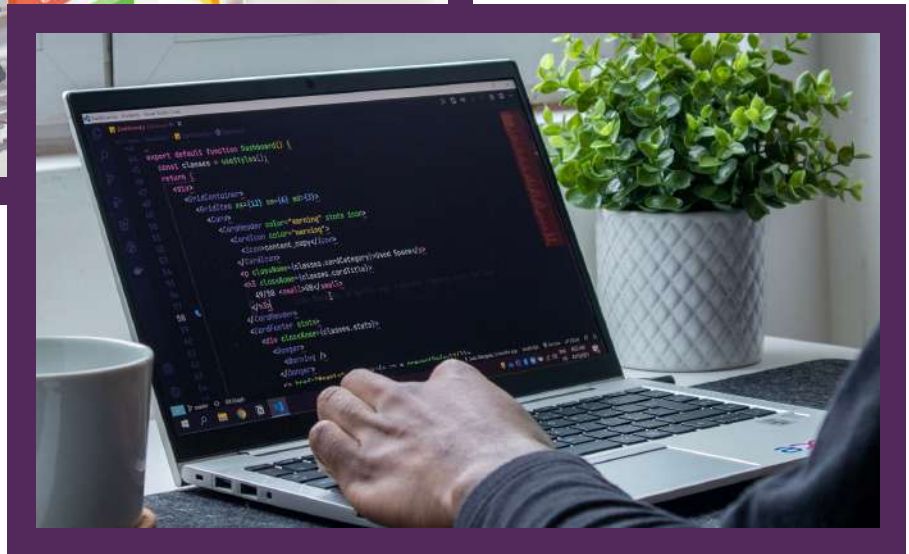
Optimizing your local listings helps them get more attention from your leads and customers.

Add high quality photos, videos, and descriptions that accurately represent your business. Include the search keywords future customers use in a natural way where possible. Encourage visitors to leave reviews – the more reviews you get, the better! Respond promptly to negative reviews and keep your listings up to date.

Visual content, like photos, is compelling when customers are choosing between two similar local businesses. Videos are another great way to capture your unique value and may help you appear higher in search results.

## 4. Build Citations from Local Websites

On top of major directories and review sites, don't overlook smaller local websites that have an outsized impact among consumers in your area. These include local newspapers, blogs, chambers of commerce, and other niche platforms locals trust. Building these citations strengthens your relevance and authority in the community.



## Local Citations Are Essential to Local Search Engine Optimization

Local citations play a significant role in improving local visibility, trust, and credibility. Follow the steps in this article and you can optimize your local citations and increase your chance of reaching those coveted top three "Map Pack" results. Remember to conduct a citation audit, claim your listings, optimize them, and build citations from local websites to maximize your online visibility and grow your business.





# How to Unlock the Power of Local Citations

## FAQs for Small Businesses

Welcome to the final installment in our three-part series on local citations. In this article, you can review the top Frequently Asked Questions about local citations. Our local citation FAQ is designed to help small business owners like you understand local citations and turn them into real business value fast.



### “What are local citations?”

Local citations are online references to your company’s name, address, and phone number on other websites, especially websites that are regularly used and trusted by people in your community. You might see this info referred to as “(NAP)” (Name, Address, Phone) for short.

### “Why are local citations important?”

Local citations are vital for boosting your company’s online visibility, local SEO, and trust and credibility with your potential customers. Search engines like Google and Bing use local citations as part of their calculations deciding which businesses are highlighted when a user searches for a business “near me.”

These “near me” searches are usually made when a prospective customer is ready to make a purchase that day. The more local citations you have, and the higher quality they are, the more likely you are to reach the highly visible “Map Pack” results that occupy the top three positions of the search page.

## “What are some examples of local citations?”

Some of the most popular local citations are found in business directories like Google My Business (also called Google Business Profile), Yelp, Bing Places, Yellow Pages, and Facebook. While some of these websites create a business directory entry for you automatically, you’ll need to sign up to claim it and update it yourself.

Other local citations take some work to find, but they are worth the effort. These come from local organizations and publications including local newspapers, neighborhood blogs, and chambers of commerce. They have high local SEO impact because real people read them to make buying decisions every single day.



## “How can I conduct a citation audit?”

Tools like Moz Local, BrightLocal, and Whitespark can scan references to your business across the Web and give you a detailed report including likely inconsistencies or inaccuracies for you to follow up on. Many of these offer a free trial so you can conduct your first local citation audit at no cost. They’ll also help uncover contact details for each citation so you can get problems corrected.



## “How often should I update my local citations?”

Keeping local citations up to date ensures they’ll provide a positive SEO impact. Citations that are incorrect or lead customers to the wrong place may harm your business. We recommend checking citations at least once a year or any time there are significant changes to your business information the public should know about.

Local citations are important, but small business owners already wear many hats. Want to stay focused on what you do best while still reaping the SEO benefits of great local citations? We can help. Contact us today to learn more about done-for-your local citation SEO and find out whether it’s right for you.

