

Applying E-A-T to Your Local Search Strategy

The Ultimate Guide for Your Local SEO Strategy
+ Why It Matters for Every Business



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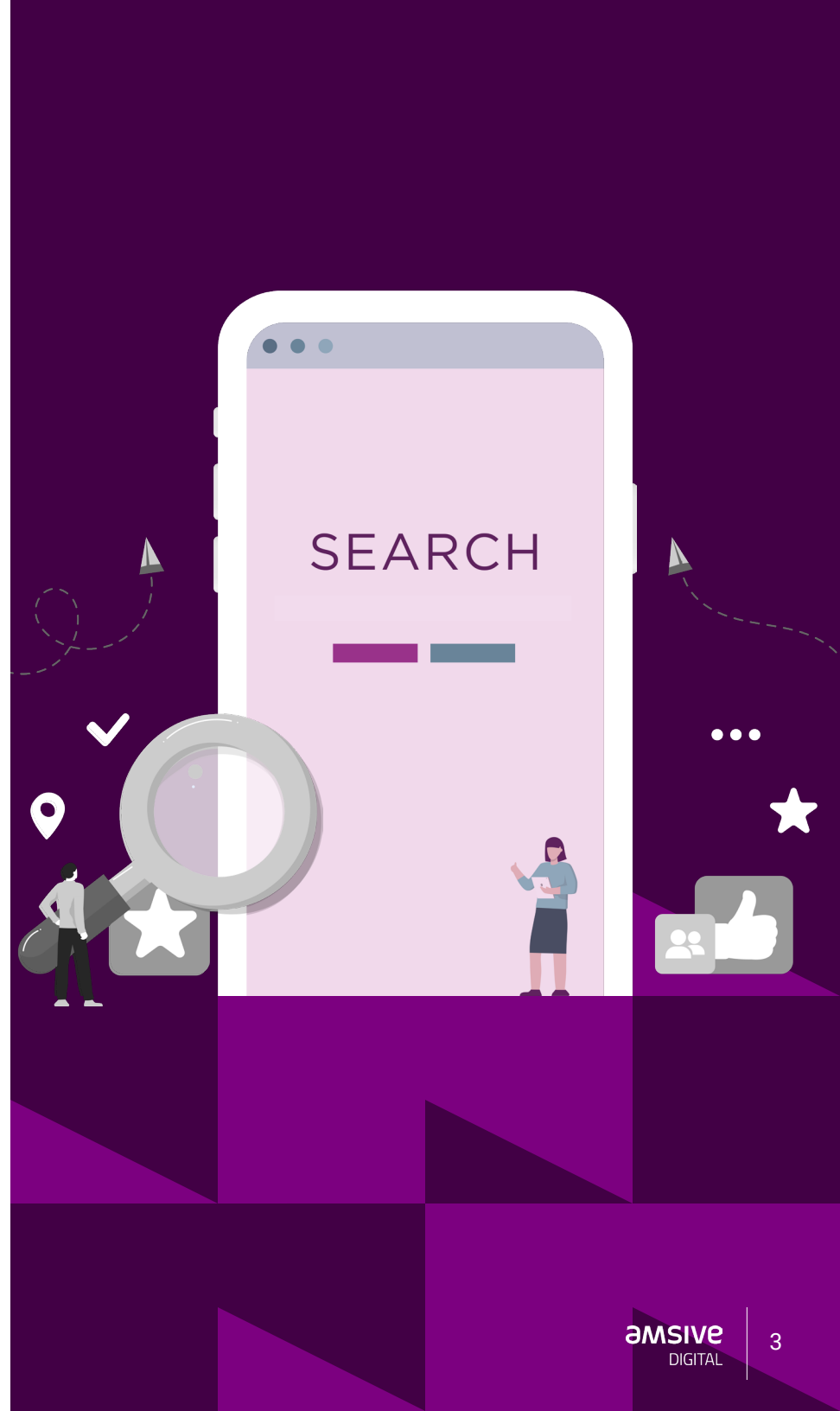
Local Search: The Big Picture

Every second, thousands of businesses are found online. Searchers are trying to solve a problem, answer a question, or find a product or service – and the best results for a local bank, tax service, or hardware store are provided to the searcher.

Your business needs to be within these first, reputable results regardless of whether it has locations nationwide or is a one-location regional leader. If not, it likely won't be easily found by customers. Why? Almost all local searchers pick businesses on the first page of search results.

Search engine optimization (SEO) can help you be the top result for people searching for answers that your business can answer. While SEO is growing more and more complex, one consistent best practice is to make sure new and returning customers find and choose your local business. How?

Be the best answer.



American Consumers' Perceptions: Why Local Businesses' Online Presence Matters

Original research based on our survey for the 2021 SearchLove / HeroConf conference shares the importance of local businesses' online search presence — and how it's only increasing as technology advances.

96%

of respondents read something online about a business that made them not want to choose that business to purchase a product or service.

49%

of respondents did **not** choose a business specifically due to its online reputation of cleanliness and hygiene, which continues to be a priority due to COVID-19.

"The local business website matters, especially during COVID-19. If their website wasn't up to date with hours, hygiene processes, or delivery protocols (e.g., curbside pickup, contactless delivery, etc.), I was unlikely to engage with them."

– SURVEY RESPONDENT

40% of respondents indicated that Google Business Profile (formerly Google My Business) is their preferred review platform.

And that number is growing by the day.

As businesses compete for prime local search space, how can yours stay ahead of your competition? What do search engines, such as Google, need so your business can be first to your customers?

They need your business, whether it has one or one hundred locations, to be the best answer for local searchers. What do all the best answers have? E-A-T: expertise, authoritativeness, and trustworthiness.

Google's E-A-T Is Crucial for Multi- location Businesses

While being the ideal answer to match searchers' question concept is complicated, good E-A-T is always part of the answer. And one of the easiest and most important ways to improve E-A-T is through something that every business has access to – their Google Business Profile (GBP).

A complete, up-to-date Google Business Profile adds a giant heap of E-A-T to your business's digital presence. This data is used for not only local search but may also be used in Google's Knowledge Graph. It's more important than ever before to guarantee your business succeeds at search – and will continue to be in the future.

An up-to-date Google Business Profile benefits every business.

We're answering the big E-A-T questions for multi-location businesses. So, you can start improving your E-A-T right now.



What Is E-A-T?

Google is continually optimizing its search algorithm – the set of rules Google uses to prioritize results. And it prioritizes results with high-quality content. How? Google has over 10,000 search quality evaluators who measure and assess website quality in live user tests. These evaluators are looking for E-A-T – expertise, authoritativeness, and trustworthiness. Evaluators' feedback is then benchmarked and used to inform future algorithm updates.

Google's search algorithm is primed to identify signals that correlate with E-A-T – and then prioritize that high-quality content.

Expertise

Authoritativeness

Trustworthiness

E-A-T Isn't New.

Originating from Google's 2014 Search Quality Guidelines, E-A-T has been used throughout Google's documentation. For example, E-A-T is mentioned 135 times in Google's Search Quality Rater Guidelines – the criteria and guidebook used to evaluate websites, authors, and content. In 2017, E-A-T was used to combat the rise of questionable news sources and conspiracy sites.

And with Google's Medic update in August 2018, E-A-T started being used to evaluate health, medical, science, eCommerce, and other sites

that Google considers "Your Money, Your Life" (YMYL). And the chaotic nature of 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic pushed E-A-T even further and focused primarily on authoritativeness. Why is E-A-T so important today?

For example, sites with clear authority for COVID-19 information, such as the CDC, were prioritized higher in the search results than ever before as authoritativeness is now considered more important than relevancy.

But E-A-T isn't just a specific algorithm update, direct ranking factor, or metric with a score. It's essential — but it's also contextual.

Google's search quality evaluators identify E-A-T through signals. A signal can be anything that contributes to a good or bad experience on your website – or even to your business.

Why Is E-A-T Vague?

Google is constantly fighting spam in its search results. To keep spammers at bay and give searchers access to top-quality results, Google keeps its search algorithm a secret. Search marketers must use speculation, data, and patents to piece together E-A-T on their own. However, there are some common E-A-T signals that search experts can agree on.

E-A-T SIGNALS

POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
Correct store hours	Bad reputation
Contact information	Deception
Positive reviews	Lack of experience
Photos	Insufficient sourcing of claims
User-friendly, performant website	Misinformation and dangerous information
Clear, authoritative content	Sales language in informational content

E-A-T in the Google Ecosystem

Good E-A-T impacts more than just your business's organic search results. Google is increasingly emphasizing E-A-T across many of its products.



GOOGLE DISCOVER



GOOGLE NEWS



GOOGLE PLAY STORE



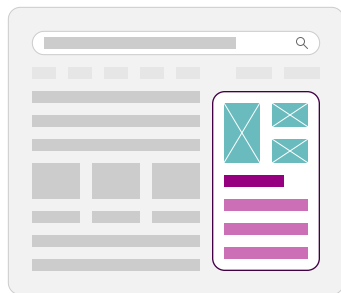
GOOGLE MAPS



IMAGES



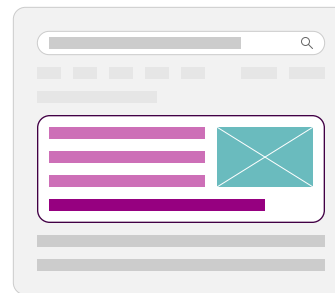
YOUTUBE



ORGANIC SEARCH + THE KNOWLEDGE GRAPH



INTERESTING FINDS



FEATURED SNIPPETS

Finance, Health, and Parenting Verticals.

Businesses that need to be extra conscious of E-A-T are “YMYL” sites. “Your Money, Your Life” can include finance, health, parenting, etc. And many of the E-A-T-related changes are happening more and more frequently on these types of sites.

What are the benefits of all these changes that keep search marketers on their toes? Spam reduction. In fact, there has been a substantial reduction in dangerous, untruthful, or spammy content with each of these updates.

The Power of Your Google Business Profile

With Google’s prioritization of E-A-T, the structured data compiled within your business’s GBP is one of the best ways to achieve a good organic search ranking. Google classifies structured data as “a standardized format for providing information about a page and classifying the page content.” In this case, your business’s data is structured within your Google Business Profile. Google then uses that data to understand your site’s content and gather information about the web and the world in general.

PERSON	ORGANIZATION	LOCAL BUSINESS
Address	Address	Google My Business profile information
Alumni of	Award	
Award	Brand	
Honorific prefix	Founder	
Honorific suffix	Founding date	
Job title	Logo	
Knows language(s)	Parent organization	
Etc.	Etc.	

To learn more about leveraging structured data, read [How to Use Structured Data to Support E-A-T](#).

E-A-T for Local Search

Local and multi-location businesses have a growing list of best practices that they can use to increase their E-A-T, including on-page signals and schemas, backlinks, reviews, expert authors, – and yes, their Google Business Profile.

“E-A-T for Local SEO is a collection of attributes a search engine might use to evaluate the prominence, proximity, and relevance of a local business entity to rank it for a specific search query.”

– ANDREW SHOTLAND, LOCAL SEO GUIDE

The Complete Google Business Profile Checklist

The last time you needed a reliable accounting firm, some tasty takeout, or a new insurance plan, you probably pulled out your phone and searched on Google. And Google showed you a list of results that best answered your search query needs. Google retrieved this information, or structured data, from Google Business Profiles.

Previously, the information encompassing a GBP lived in several places – Google Places for Business, Google Listings, and Google+ Business pages. Now, it's all in one location. So, marketers for every storefront or service area business need a complete and optimized GBP to rise above competitors – and be a leading local brand for customers and the community. Franchises, multi-location businesses, and those with even just one location need to be updating and optimizing their GBP.

Your GBP and your website are like siblings — they should complement one another, use the same keywords, and share identical information. This allows Google to provide the best user experience to users searching for your business.

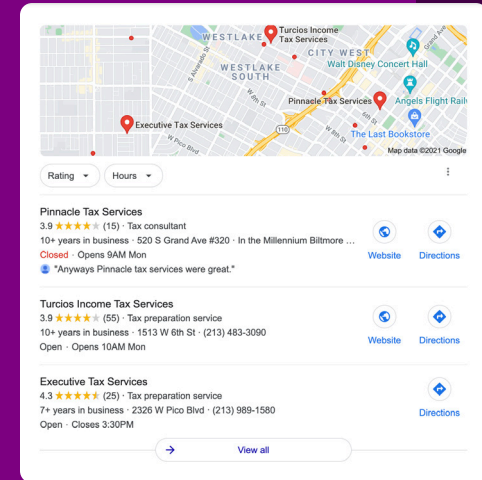
Here's everything you need to know about completing and optimizing your profile.



How Consumers Interact with a Google Business Profile

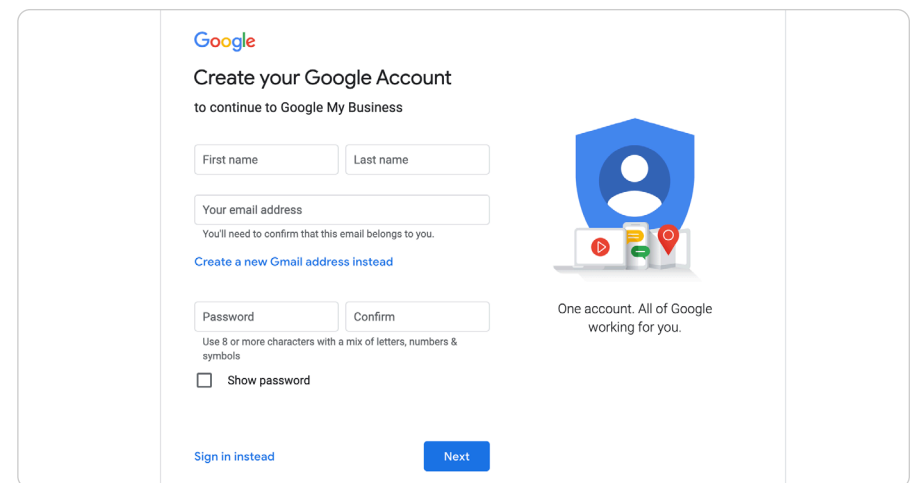
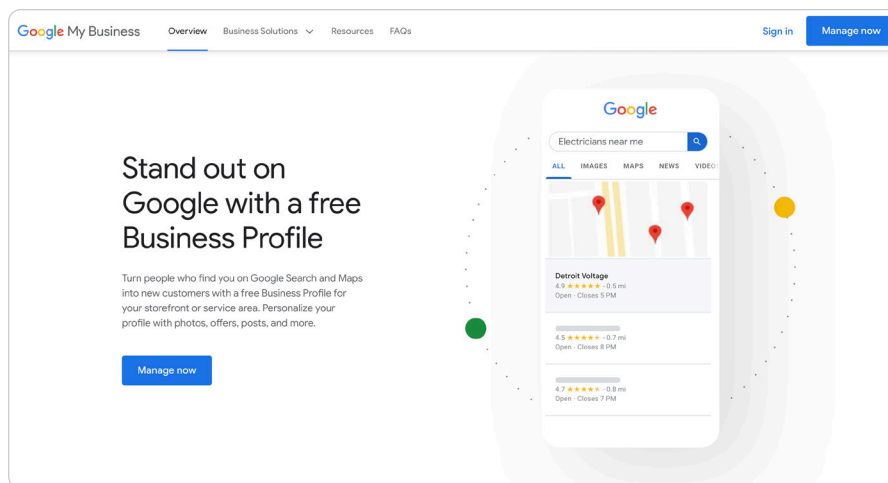
Say that I've recently moved from another state and tax season has rolled around again. I'm looking for a tax consultant. Yes, I could just use TurboTax but I prefer dealing with someone in-person and speaking to the same person on the phone. So, I search on Google for "tax consultant" and I can see the leading results on Page 1 and especially in the Local Search box.

One result is a one-location local business. A few other top results are multi-location national businesses. Why was I shown these results first? These businesses have completed, updated, and optimized Google My Business profiles.



How to Sign Up and Verify Your Google Business Profile

Before diving into optimization, you'll need to sign up for a Google Business Profile and verify your profile. [You can sign up here.](#) And once you've signed up, verify your business with Google. Once you've received your postcard in the mail – you're ready to optimize your profile.



Why It's Important to Optimize Your Google Business Profile

Optimizing your brand's GBP is one of the most effective ways to improve your local search visibility. And without it, your brand won't be able to achieve its full potential with local customers. But Google is constantly updating its algorithms.

What's the best way to effectively complete and optimize your GBP?

In short — leave no field unfilled.

Google added each field for a reason, so if your business has an opportunity to add content, do it honestly and accurately. Following is a comprehensive (but easy) checklist to optimize your profile — and be the best answer for searchers and customers.

How to Optimize Your Google Business Profile Local Listing

Instead of hunting online for every possible optimization, we've created a comprehensive checklist (that we keep current as GBP rolls out updates) to increase your chance of better visibility in search results. Our easy-to-use checklist helps you optimize for Google's most recent updates. So, you can identify what's already optimized — and what you still have left to do.

Ultimate Optimization Checklist

<p>✓ BUSINESS NAME</p> <p>The name on your logo, signage, and stationery should be listed in exactly the same way in your Google Business Profile.</p>	<p>✓ PHONE NUMBER</p> <p>How can customers call you directly? Find this section under the info tab.</p>	<p>✓ DESCRIPTION</p> <p>Share what you offer, what sets you apart, your history, or anything else that's helpful for customers to know. Find this section under the info tab.</p>
<p>✓ CATEGORIES</p> <p>What does your business do? Find this section under the info tab. You can add up to 10 categories.</p>	<p>✓ WEBSITE</p> <p>Add the web page that is relevant to this GBP account. Find this section under the info tab.</p>	<p>✓ MESSAGING</p> <p>Allow customers viewing your listing to message you directly. Respond to questions, share information, and quickly connect.</p>
<p>✓ SERVICES</p> <p>Services are listed under each category. Find this section under the info tab.</p>	<p>✓ Q&A</p> <p>What questions are customers asking the most? You can both ask and answer them here. For now, you can only access this section via the front-facing knowledge panel.</p>	<p>✓ SHORT NAME</p> <p>As of June 2021, shortnames were depreciated so users no longer can create them. If a business already has one, it will continue to work. However, shortnames are no longer available to businesses that don't already have one.</p>
<p>✓ POSTS</p> <p>COVID-19 updates will "stick" to the front of the page. Events posts have a chosen expiration date. Updates previously had a 7-day lifeline, but as of January 2021, posts are now live for an extended period and visible at the bottom of the knowledge panel.</p>	<p>✓ REVIEWS</p> <p>Read through all your reviews in one place. Use your short name to request reviews from customers. Be sure to respond to all reviews (favorable or unfavorable) with a customized reply.</p>	<p>✓ OPENING DATE</p> <p>Add the month, day, and year. Find this section under the info tab.</p>
<p>✓ PHOTOS</p> <p>Post photos and videos so customers know what to expect. Find this section under the info tab and photos tab. GMB has specific photos it prefers to have added (logo, exterior, interior, etc.).</p>	<p>✓ ATTRIBUTES/HIGHLIGHTS</p> <p>Choose Black-owned, Veteran-led, or Women-led. Also include any service options your business offers (Wi-Fi, handicap accessibility, etc.). Find this section under the info tab.</p>	<p>✓ UTM CODES</p> <p>Tip: This isn't an available option in GBP; however, a qualified digital marketing agency can add this feature to help you learn and track how customers find your website from your GBP.</p>
<p>✓ COVID-19 UPDATES</p> <p>Let customers know about any changes to your business due to COVID-19. Find this section under the info tab and home tab.</p>	<p>✓ PRODUCTS</p> <p>Use this section to share what you sell. Any product/service you offer can be listed here with a photo, price, and full description.</p>	<p>✓ SERVICE AREAS</p> <p>Service areas let customers know where your business provides deliveries or services. Find this section under the info tab.</p>
<p>✓ HOURS</p> <p>Let customers know when your business is open or closed. Find this section under the info tab. You can also add hours for upcoming holidays.</p>		

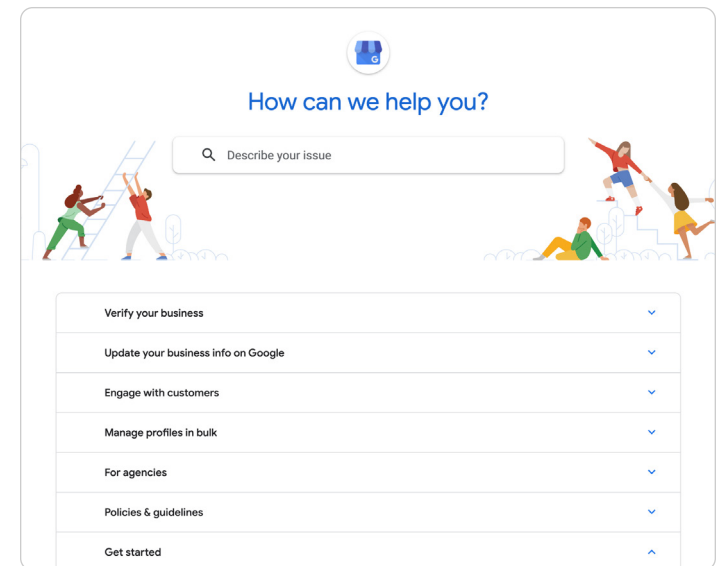
Optimizing Your Google Business Profile Is an Ongoing Process

Your Google Business Profile isn't a "one and done" project — **it requires staying up to date and in the know.**

Once the initial heavy lifting is done, you'll need to log in and check your profile regularly to see if your profile is aligned with GBP's guidelines and changes. There are also those times when a user might "suggest an edit." This change can be made without your approval. So, staying on top of your GBP can help avoid any unexpected or unwanted changes.

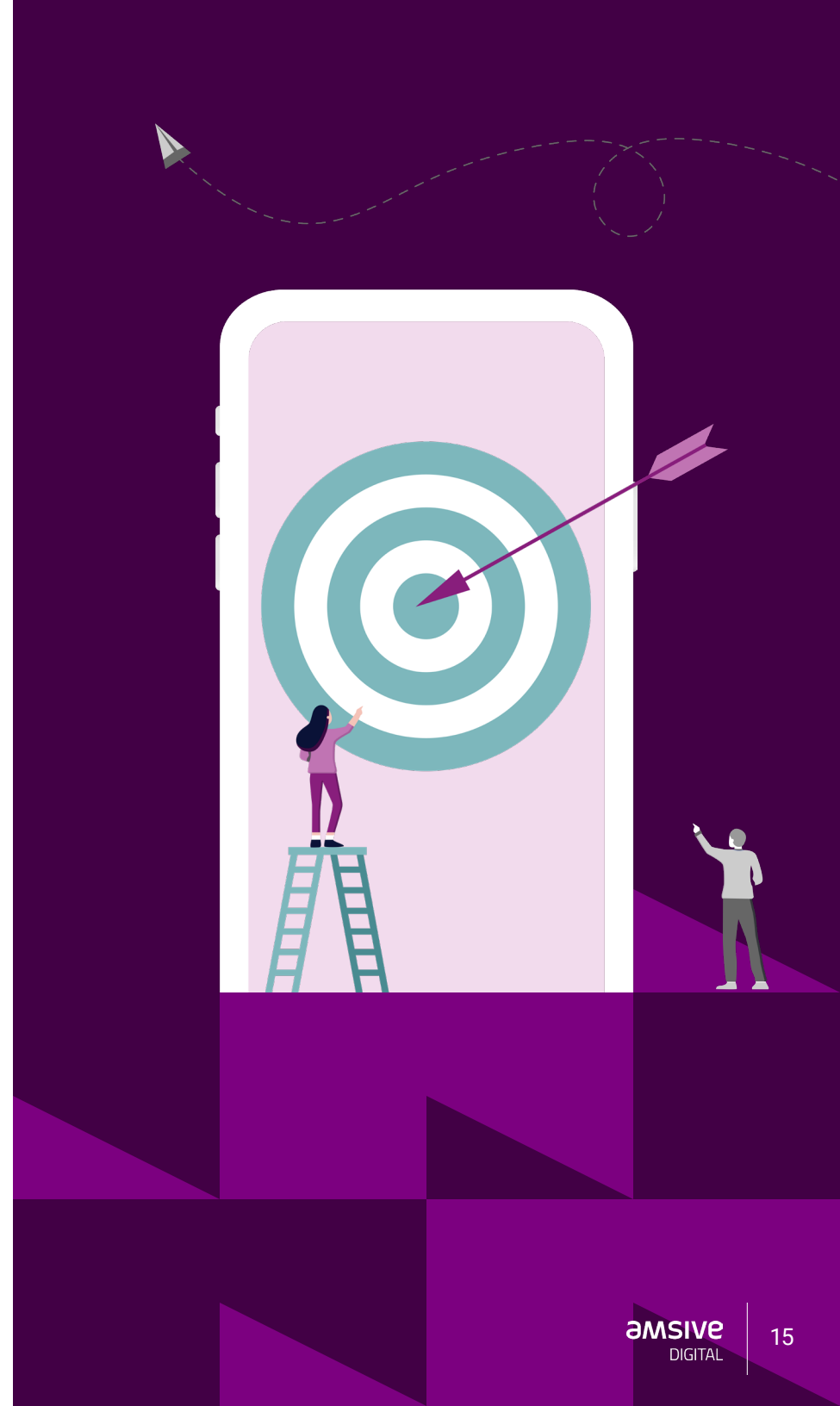
Stay Supported with Google's Team

Google is here to support businesses throughout the optimization process. General information can be found on its Help page. From getting started to managing bulk listings, answers are just a couple of clicks away. And Google also offers support services through its [chat function](#) in real time.



What's Next: Improving Your Local E-A-T

Digital marketing is ever-evolving — and Google Business Profiles are no exception. Launched in late June 2021, Google now offers local justifications. What does this mean for your business, and what should you be keeping an eye on?



Local Justifications for Your Google Business Profile

This information helps searchers understand exactly why Google prioritized this result for your search. Google's Local Search is continuing to catch up with traditional search results. Matching user intent with structured data from local businesses' GBPs is exactly what Local Justifications are here to do.

"A Local Justification is an extra snippet of text Google can display on business listings in the local packs, local finders, and Google Maps to signal to searchers that a feature of the business specifically matches their perceived intent."

– MIRIAM ELLIS, MOZ.COM

Building a Holistic E-A-T Strategy

A complete and optimized GBP is a necessary step to improving E-A-T and helping your best customers find and purchase from your business. But there's so much more to successful SEO. The on-site E-A-T of your website is just as critical to being competitive online. And it takes an expert SEO team to help create and execute these optimizations.

NEXT STEPS FOR ON-SITE E-A-T IMPROVEMENT

- ✓ Better usability, security, and performance
- ✓ Extensive author and reviewer biographies
- ✓ Content quality, performance, and authority
- ✓ Elimination of misinformation or dangerous content
- ✓ Substantiated evidentiary claims
- ✓ Better usability, security, and performance
- ✓ More transparency with users
- ✓ And more

Search success is not a sprint. It's a marathon.

Search marketing isn't monolithic. It's evolving to meet the needs of online searchers — any digital marketer can confidently confirm that. Improving your local search marketing with tools such as your Google Business Profile takes time and dedication. But SEO can be a reliable, consistent source of traffic and visibility when businesses commit to growing their local search presence.

Beyond just being a top result for local searchers, keeping your GBP complete and updated shares crucial structured data about your business with Google to increase E-A-T, accessibility, and ultimately, visibility, traffic, and conversions.

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Amsive Digital, formerly Path Interactive, is an NYC-born digital marketing agency with a national presence. We have been helping businesses grow by providing data-driven SEO, digital media, paid and managed social, analytics, creative, influencer marketing, and web design and development services.

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