

# Local Search For South African Businesses

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## Introduction

As a business owner, you understand how important it is to make sure your business can be found whenever someone is searching. This usually means getting your ad in the local yellow pages, advertising on local radio, and putting ads in local publications like newspapers and magazines.

However, most business owners feel the Internet can't be very beneficial to them, because it's meant solely for worldwide searches. This just isn't true. The Internet can still be enormously beneficial even to very small local businesses.

There are around 5.3 million Internet users in South Africa. This is a small fraction of the population, but most of these people are economically active. Many of these people are using the Internet to research companies in their local area.

If you don't have an Internet presence and your competitors do, you could be losing out on a lot of business!

In this report, I'm going to show you why you need to make your presence known online, and the best way to do it.

## Why You Should Use Local Search

All of the major search engines are now using some sort of local search technology to display information about companies that are based in one specific geographic location.

You may have heard it can take months for a website to make it to the top of the search engines. If you're in a highly-competitive niche, you may never be able to make it there. Fortunately, local search makes it easy to grab a top ranking in Google very quickly.

Local search results appear at the top of the results, before the standard results are shown. This means that they get a lot of attention, often more so than the actual search results.

If your business is not listed here, but your competitors are, you will be losing a lot of business. In some areas, thousands of people use Google and other search engines to find local businesses just like yours every single day!

It just makes sense to make use of this technology. It's free to submit your business, and it can make a big difference to your bottom line.

## Google Places

In December 2006, Google introduced Local Business Center and started displaying local business listings on their search result pages. Google's system started to automatically add all the businesses it could find on the Internet to its directory.

In 2009, Google introduced Place Pages, which are free web pages linked to the Local Business listings, which display more information about each business.

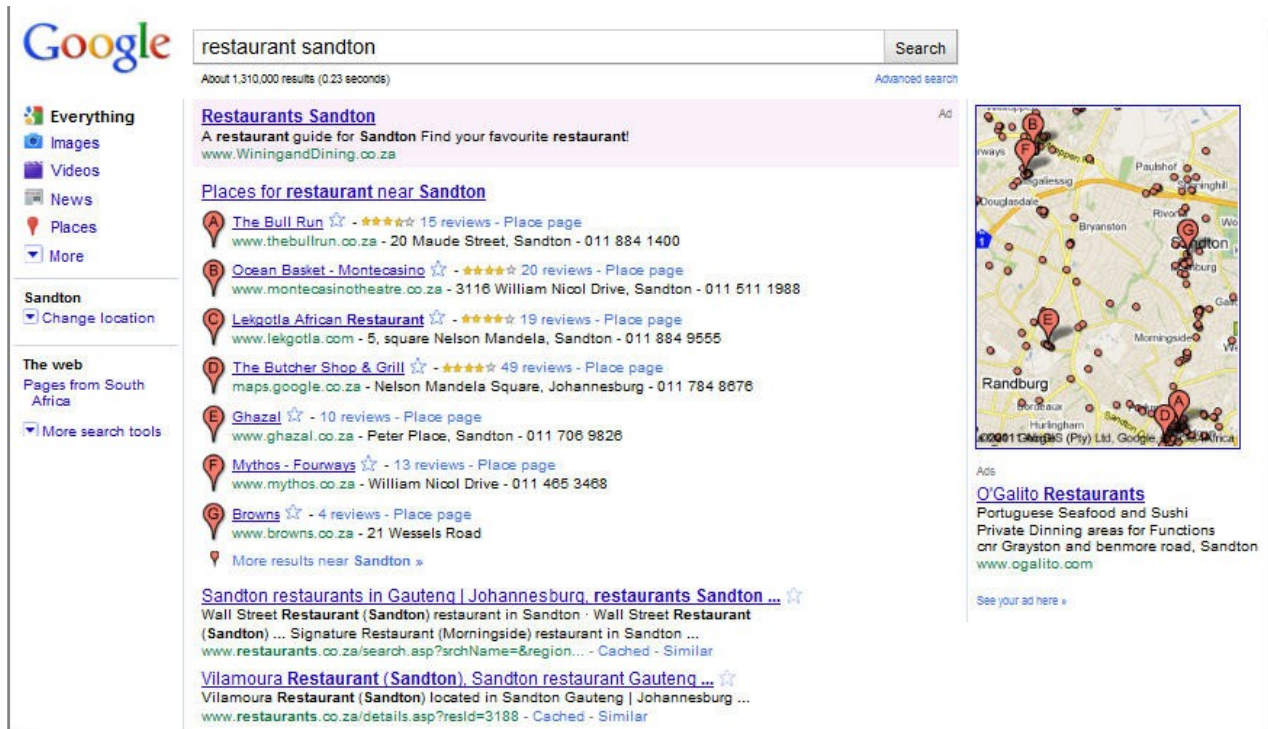
In 2010, Google rebranded Local Business Center, calling it Google Places. Using this service, you can "claim" your business in Google and customize your listing on Google Maps and other important services.

Google is the largest search engine, with an estimated 75-85% market share. Most of your online efforts should be focused on making sure your business has a prominent presence in this search engine.

While this can be accomplished by creating a website for your company and using search engine optimization techniques, it could take several weeks or even months before your site ranks well and starts to see significant amounts of traffic.

The best way to make sure your company has a strong presence is through the use of Google Places. If you have ever done a search for a local business on Google, you've probably noticed the Google Places listings at the top of the search results. They appear before the standard results, making them especially lucrative. It is very important to make sure your business has a presence here!

Take a look at this example:



As you can see, the Google Places results appear before the standard listings, making them very prominent. If you were searching for a restaurant in Johannesburg, there is a very good chance that you would choose one of the seven restaurants that appear at the top of the results.

As you can see from those results, Google Places shows users a number of different pieces of information about each business. The name of the business, the phone number, the website URL (if there is one available), as well as the number of reviews Google knows about for the business.

If a user clicks the name of the business or the number of reviews, they are taken to that company's Place Page. There is a map that shows the company's location, reviews and photos, hours of operation, and more.

Google maps South Africa | beta restaurant sandton Search Maps Show search options

Get Directions My Maps Edit this place - Owner-verified listing Print Email Link

**The Bull Run** ☆  
20 Maude Street, Sandton 2031  
011 884 1400  
[thebullrun.co.za](http://thebullrun.co.za)  
Directions Search nearby Save to... more▼

Category: Fine Dining Restaurant  
Public transport: [Sandown Bus Stop](#) (550 m)

★★★★★ 15 reviews Your rating: ★★★★★  
"Service Slick, and considering the clientele, it has to be" - eatout.co.za

The Bull Run Restaurant is a premier establishment famed for its prime cuts of exquisite South African beef - stored and served via its own in-house butchery – and an extensive selection of the fine - *From the owner*

**Details**

Ambiance: Upmarket Menu: [Menu](#)  
Email: [reservations@thebullrun.co.za](mailto:reservations@thebullrun.co.za) Foodtype: Grills, Continental, Seafood, Steakhouse  
Area: Johannesburg Num\_reviews: 6  
Business owner: [eatout.co.za](http://eatout.co.za), [tripadvisor.com](http://tripadvisor.com), [dining-out.co.za](http://dining-out.co.za)  
[More details x](#)

**Photos & Videos**

Restaurant Vouchers -70%  
Sushi, Pasta, Steaks, Pizza & Salad  
70% Off Johannesburg's Restaurants!  
[www.MyCityDeal.co.za](http://www.MyCityDeal.co.za)

[Debonairs Pizza Menu](#)  
Free Delivery. Order online.  
Easily customise toppings.  
[www.debonairs.co.za/Menu](http://www.debonairs.co.za/Menu)

[Sushi on Wheels](#)

This feature is especially helpful to users, because they can quickly and easily find the local businesses that have what they're looking for. It's also helpful for those businesses, because they can get a top listing in Google without spending months trying to get their website there the old-fashioned way.

If you're not taking advantage of Google Places, you're missing out on a lot of business. In some cases, a listing in Google Places could even double your business!

## Bing Local

Google isn't the only search engine that has a local search platform. Bing is a relatively new search engine that was developed by Microsoft to replace its ageing MSN technology.

Bing Local search is available in about 30 countries worldwide. At the time of writing, this does not include South Africa.

Like other local search systems, listings appear with a map at the top of the listings on Bing.com. While Bing doesn't have the market share that Google has, its innovative

algorithms and fresh technologies are causing it to slowly emerge, taking a larger and larger slice of the search engine pie as time goes on.

It would be a good idea to get your business listed in Bing as soon as it becomes available, while more people are focused on Google. If Bing happens to jump ahead in the market, your business will already be positioned to take advantage of the situation, while many of your competitors struggle to keep up.

Listings on Bing Local will be free, and they can be updated at any time. You can also add multiple locations if you have several different stores or branches.

## **Yahoo! Local**

Yahoo! also has its own local search platform called Yahoo Local, which is not yet available in South Africa.

Yahoo! has two levels of listings for their local search platform. The free listing is very basic and includes the company's name, URL, and a short description. The enhanced listings also include the company's logo and tagline, photos, a longer description, links to coupons, and the addition of the company's listing in up to five categories.

At the moment, enhanced listings cost \$9.95 per month.

## **Enhancing Local Listings**

There are a few things you can do to enhance your local listings, but one of the most important is to have a website. When you have a website, your URL will be displayed in your listing, which will draw attention to the listing. This is very important, because it helps you stand out from the competition.

In most cases, you don't need a complex website. Unless you plan to sell products or services directly online, all you really need is a single-page website which displays information somewhat like an ad in the Yellow Pages.

Your site should contain:

- Your business location, including a map and directions
- Information about your products and services
- Hours of operation
- Contact information

Most companies don't need much more than this on their website, but you can enhance your site's effectiveness by adding additional features. For example, if you add an email lead capture form to your site, visitors can subscribe to your email list, allowing you to

send them news about special offers, coupons, sales, and new product offerings. This will help remind your customers to shop with you, and you can offer incentives to keep them coming in.

It costs a lot more to acquire a new customer than it does to get repeat business from existing and former customers. By getting people on your mailing list, you can entice them to buy from you again and again. It just makes sense to do this, because you can turn one-time customers into lifelong buyers.

Why let people drop by your website once and leave, possibly forever, without getting them onto your mailing list? It's an efficient use of your web space to provide a way for customers to be notified about your latest offers.

## Get your Business Submitted

Submitting your business to Google Places is relatively simple, but it can be time consuming. There is a lot of information required, and it can be a little confusing if you've never done it before.

If you want to do it yourself, our [free video tutorial](#) will show you how. It explains how to create or claim your listing, and shows you the steps you can take to get it ranked within the Google Places listings.

If you don't have time to go through this yourself, or you're uncomfortable doing so, I would be happy to help you get your company listed in all of the major local search directories.

Please contact me at your earliest convenience so we can discuss getting your site listed as soon as possible. The sooner you get listed, the sooner your business will start getting more customers!

Contact me at:

[derrick@idealmedia.co.za](mailto:derrick@idealmedia.co.za)

Tel: 011 478 0622

Cell: 079 072 7530

Free Google Places Video Tutorial: <http://idealmedia.co.za/google-places-video>