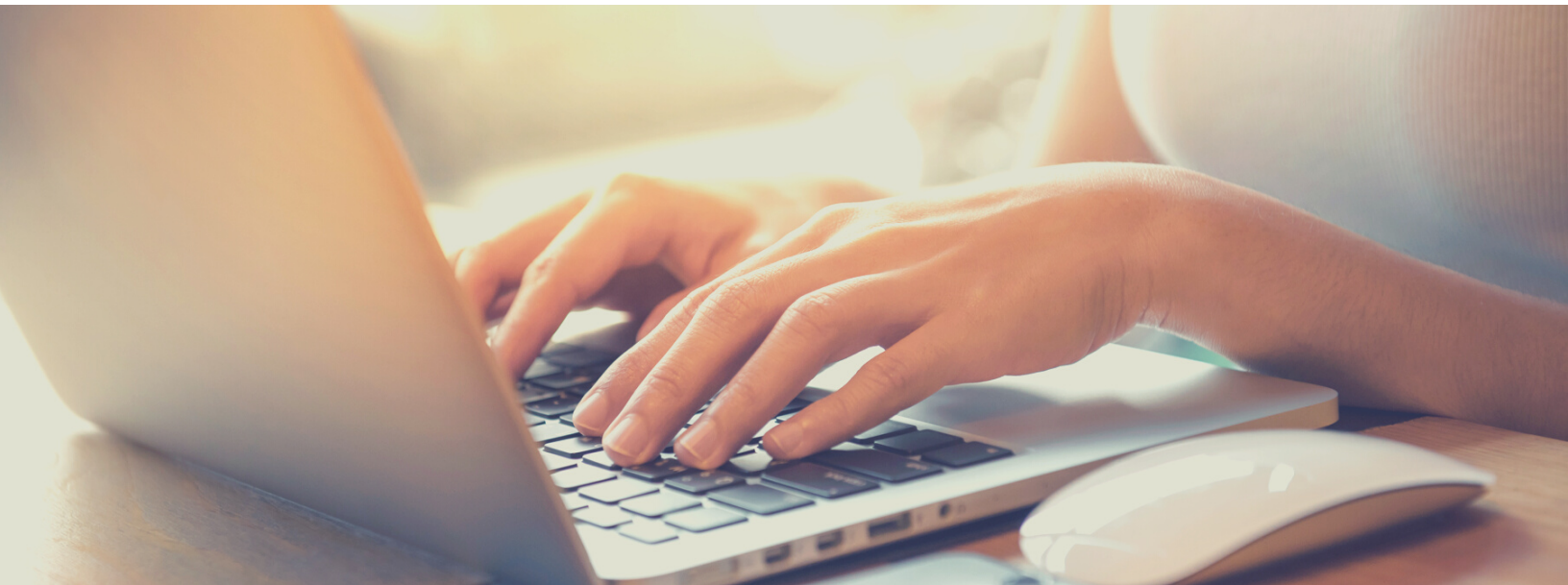**Michigan SBDC**

How to Optimize Local Citations

What are Local Citations?

Local citations are references to your business, usually mentioning your name, address, and phone number (NAP). Different than backlinks, a citation does not need to have a link pointing to your website for it to be valid. Local citations can be a powerful tool to increase local search engine ranking position and help Google to trust you more – seeing that others mention you and that you truly exist within your local area.

Why Are Local Citations Important?

Google and other search engines want to see that your NAP is being cited on other websites other than just your own. Building trust and legitimacy is important for your rankings, as search engines do not want to 'recommend' (rank highly) a site that is spammy or a business that is fake. Having local citations on Google My Business, Yellowpages, Yelp, SuperPages, and other trusted online lists will help to build trust and certify that your business is legitimate and operating in its specified location. Once search engines give more authority to your site, you will rank higher in local search results, which will lead to an increase in organic traffic, visitors, and sales.

TWO Types of Local Citations:

1. Structured: These citations are business directories such as Google My Business, Yelp, Yellowpages, Facebook, MapQuest, etc.
2. Unstructured: These citations are channels that are not necessarily business directories, such as blogs posts, forum threads, magazine articles, etc.

FOUR Ways to Create Local Citations

1. Create Them Yourself: You can either go to each directory you wish to have your business listed on and fill them out or you can use an automated system, such as Moz local.
2. Merit-Based: By being a relevant and reliable source of products, services and information, other websites such as blogs, vlogs, and even companies' web pages may voluntarily want to cite your business in their channels.
3. Paid Lists: Some industries may find a list they want to be on that requires payment, such as Clutch or Upcity. Make sure you monitor how many leads (new customers) you get from these lists, to measure your return on investment.
4. Automated Aggregation & Data Flow: Your citation in a local business data platform can be automatically transferred to others without your intervention.

Best Practices for Local Citations:

1. Google My Business is currently the number one directory, so make sure your business listed! Find more information on how to sign up for Google My Business at:
   https://support.google.com/business/answer/6300717?hl=en
2. Keep your hours of operation and contact information up-to-date. Clients may quickly get dissatisfied with incorrect information and criticize your business, which can negatively impact your reviews and reputation.
3. Keeping your information simple and accurate can avoid multiple issues, such as inaccurate information being transferred from one place to another via automated data flow.
4. Do not concentrate your efforts on having hundreds of citations. Many SEO experts say that somewhere between 20 and 40 citations in relevant channels is ideal.

How to Identify where to have your business cited:

Moz has developed a tool that informs the best websites to have your business cited on, given a specific city. See if your area is covered: https://moz.com/learn/seo/citations-by-city

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