Google Maps 3-Pack Rankings Black Book

Hey there!

There are few things more sought-after for a local business than to get featured in the Local 3-Pack. Getting featured among the first 3 results in Google search results for a keyword might provide a business with more visibility than a 4-figure paid campaign.

But leaving the visibility aspect aside, getting featured among into the Local 3-Pack is also a performance indicator - there's a new breed of informed searchers that are specifically looking at this aspect when scouting for viable businesses for their needs.

What is Google's Local 3-Pack?

The birth of the Local 3-Pack can be dated a few years back when Google decided to feature Google Map results alongside the top local search results.

This was a successful hit and Google was quick to brand the new entry as the local pack. The local space was initially a space consisting of 7 local businesses relevant to the search query that the user has entered.

After some test phases, that number was cut back to 3 local pack results at the beginning of 2015 and it looks roughly the same to this date.
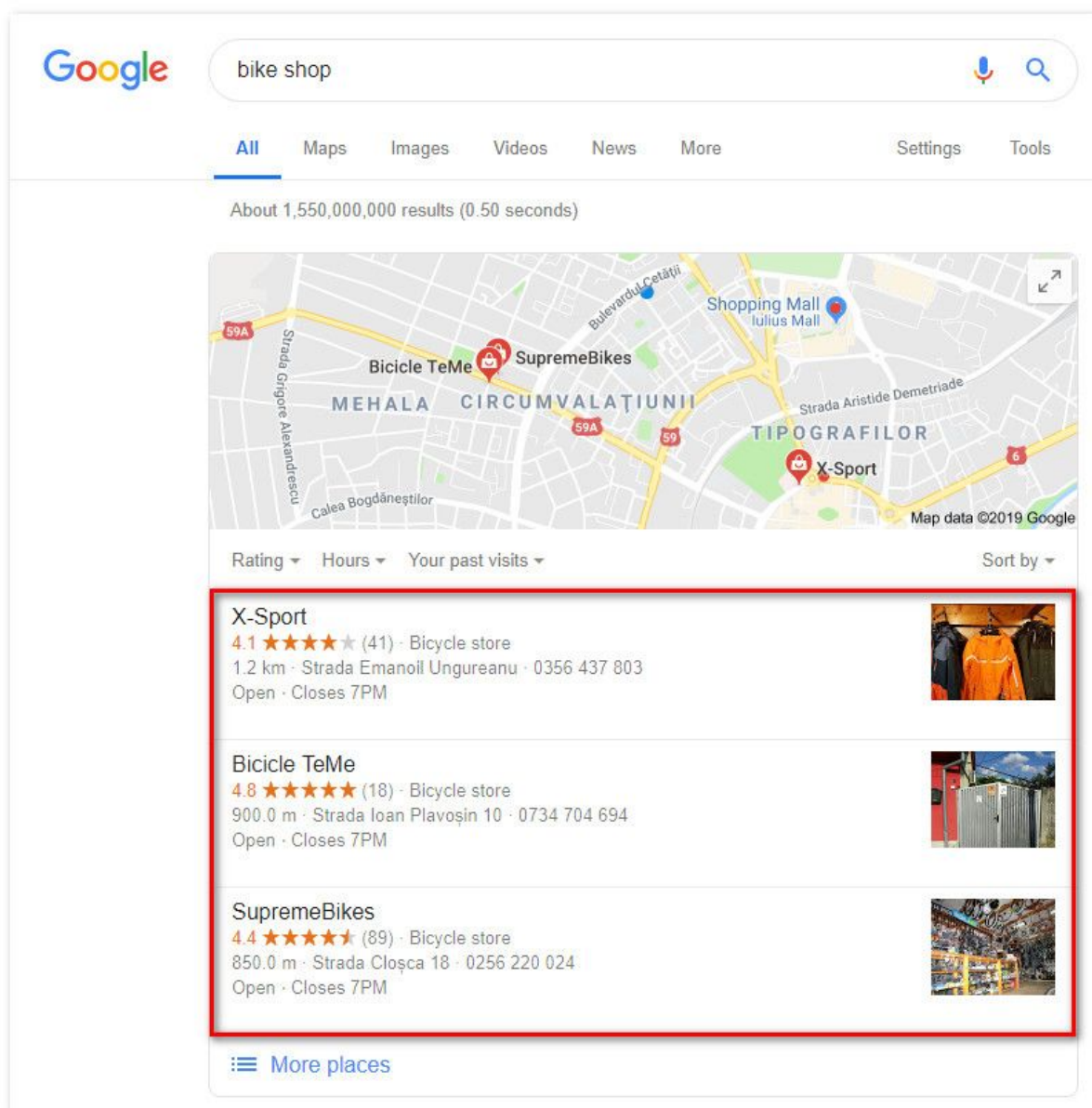
Word of caution: ranking a competitive keyword in the 3-pack is a daunting task. Especially if you don't know what you're doing.

However, if you're disciplined enough and use a system that ensures that you optimize every ranking factor that counts, you'll get there eventually.

"Which system" you ask?

The one that we are going to reveal in the pages that follow...

We called this material a black book because it contains detailed instructions with everything you need to do to maximize your chances of being featured inside the **Google Maps 3-Pack**.

But keep in mind that there's no shortcut to being the master of Local 3-Pack ranking. There are no big secrets (just a few tricks that we are going to reveal below). All you have to do is avoid cutting corners, stick with the script and you'll eventually get there.

You can apply this cheat sheet to help your own business rank among the 3-pack rank or you can turn it into your Holy Bible when it comes to helping your own clients make it to the top.

Here's what you need to do:

Phase 1: Verify & Optimize your GMB listing

According to most case studies on this subject matter, Google My Business signals are grouped as the most important factor when it comes to Local 3-Pack ranking.

Moz Lab did an extensive case study on this subject - the research material suggests that **GMB signals are the most important ranking factor** (over 25%) when it comes to Local Pack/Finder Ranking Factors.
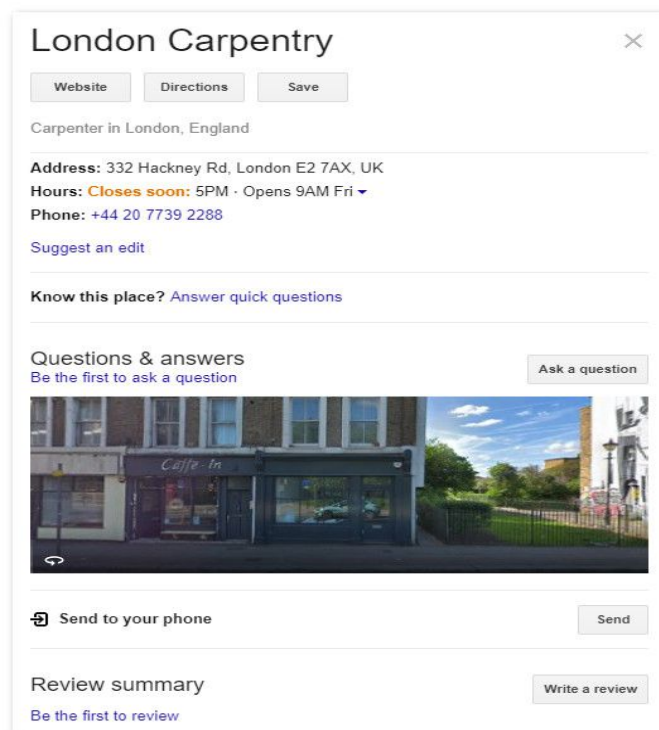
The first thing you should cover (and arguably the most important one in Phase 1) is to ensure that the GMB listing of your listing is verified. This step is extremely simple - you simply need to visit this link and add or claim your business on Google Maps.

(We advise you to do this step from a desktop computer since it's a lot easier to configure it.)

Once your GMB listing is configured, it's time to get your hands dirty optimizing it. We won't go into too much detail about it since we also included an extensive GMB guide (you can find it inside the **Members Area**).

But there are a couple of things that are still worth mentioning while we're on this subject:

- **A consistent flow of positive-sentiment reviews** helps with the local 3-pack ranking. Ensuring as much completeness and engagement as possible with your GMB page is a crucial step of optimizing for the Local 3-Pack. Responding to good and bad reviews is mandatory if you want to sen the right GMB signals to Google.

- **GMB posts are a great way of attracting more engagement and clicks** from potential customers already interested in a particular brand. This is also good for Google's algorithm since it helps with link building.

- **Rewriting location pages** is another mandatory step if you want to optimize your GMB. If you're running or managing a GMB listing with multiple locations, rewriting the location page for each listing will improve existing rankings and make you eligible to rank for additional queries.

- **Attacking spammy competitors** is another great tactic of boosting the ranking of your GMB listing. There are a few industries where GMB spam is prevalent. Reporting spammy businesses that are ranked above your business will boost your own rank up. Cleaning up GMB listings for competitors by reporting GMB listing spam, review spam, and editing listings that are keyword stuffing are all effective tactics.

Note: For more information about GMB optimization, consult the GMB Optimizer Guide inside the Members Area.

Phase 2: Link Building

Similar to how links work for general SEO, link building is also an effective tactic when trying to optimize for the Local 3-Pack ranking. Keep in mind that Google has a birds-eye view of everything related to your business (this includes your website).

The more authoritative your business website is, the better your chances of being featured in the local 3-Pack. You might think that your website is not as important when targeting the 3-local pack, but in fact, inbound link authority of a business website is one of the metrics that Google analyzes when generating the Local 3-Pack schema.
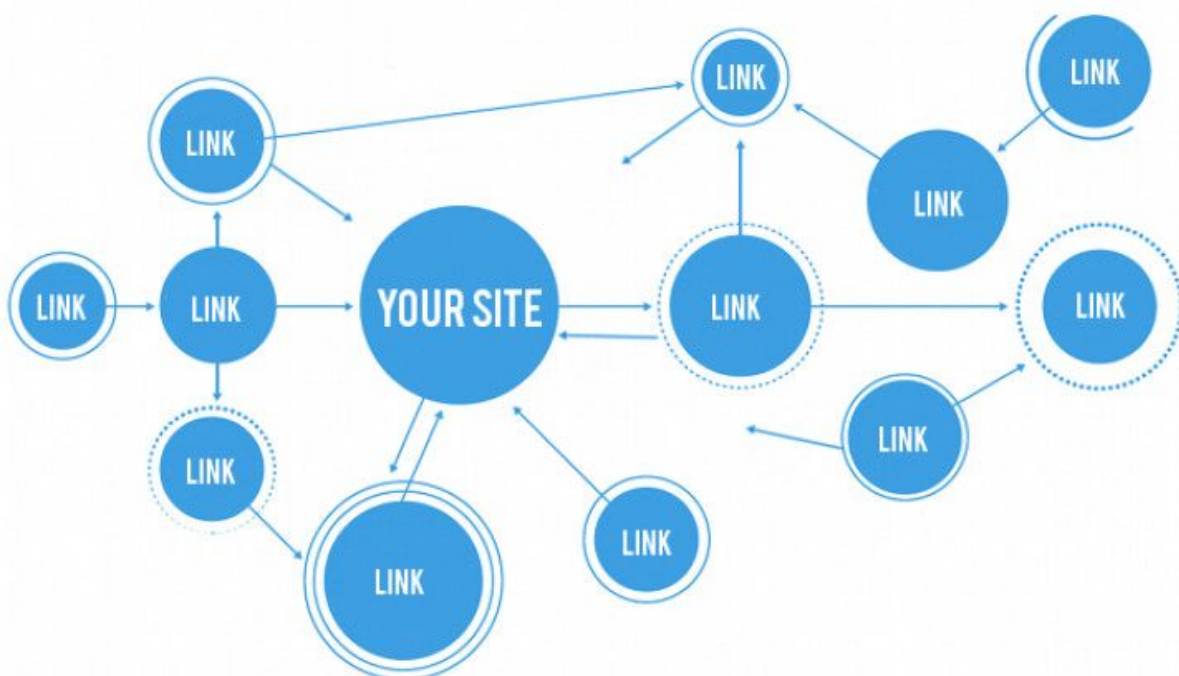
Ideally, you'll want as many high authoritative links arriving and leaving the web pages of your business. Of course, this is the short version as link building is a complex craft. But just to cover the basics, here's a selection of link-building factors that the search algorithm analyzes when generating the Local 3-Pack:

- **Inbound link authority** - Link authority is one of the most important link-building factors because it tells Google that other people find your website valuable.

- **Inbound links from locally relevant domains** - Links from relevant near sources are invaluable when optimizing for the Local 3-Pack. Since Google assigns local relevance to links from nearby sources, you need to find ways link your business (or the one you're optimizing) to the most authoritative websites in your area.

- **Link quality** - As mentioned above, the more high-authority links you manage to get for your website, the better it will rank (in generic results and in local searches). With this in mind, focus on quality content and deploy guest blogging and affiliate networking strategies to generate large numbers of quality backlinks.

- **Link diversity** - Even since the Google Penguin algorithm update, search engines have begun to factor a variety of backlinks into the mix. As of now, the best way to stay relevant in Google's eyes is to acquire links in an organic fashion from as many sources as possible.

Phase 3: Local Citation Building

A local citation is essentially an online reference of the name, address and phone number for a local business.

Citations are yet another important ranking factor when it comes to the 3-Pack. Although Moz suspects that citation signals (NAP consistency, citation volume, etc.) amounts for %11 percent, we happen to think that this number is much higher.

Let's say that you have a small rental business that shows up on TripAdvisor. The listing there will contain information about your establishment. That's your business **NAP (Name, Adress, Business).**
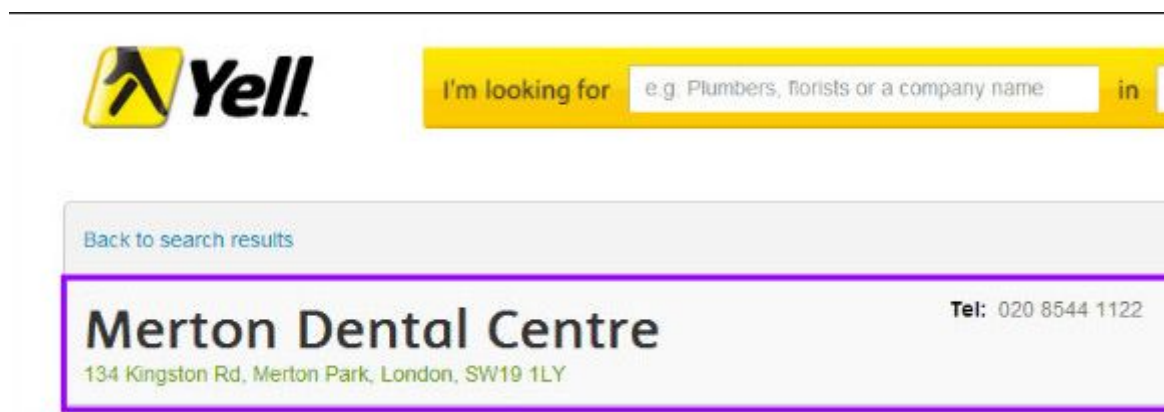
Generally speaking, the more times your site details show up across the web, the more credible your business will appear in Google's eyes.

Here are a few factors you should consider when it comes to Local citation building:

- **Citation consistency** - One of the most important aspects of citation building is to ensure that your business NAP doesn't differ from listing to listing. This apparently unimportant mistake might make Google label your business as 'spammy' and prevent you from climbing the local rankings.

- **Citation authority** - Just like inbound links, citations from authoritative sites are a lot more beneficial to your ranking. With this in mind, focus on powerhouse directories like FourSquare, Yelp, YellowPages and other directories with high authority.

- **Citation relevance -** Relevancy is another factor that you might omit to factor into your equation. Relevant domains in your geographic area (local

newspapers, blogs, local directories, etc.) will earn you an uptick in your local ranking.

We've covered Local Citations in an extensive article **(Ultimate Citation Profits System)**. You can find it inside the **Members Area**.

Phase 4: Making your business Mobile-Friendly

Once you got your citation fleet in order, let's tend to the mobile-responsiveness of your business. Keep in mind that 4 out of 5 people that are searching online for local information are doing it from a mobile device.
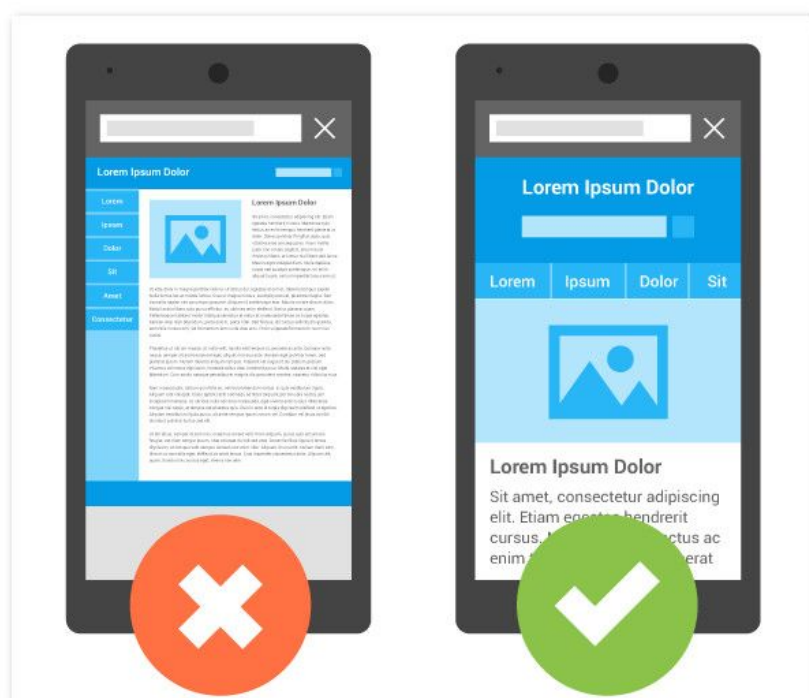
People got used to searching for information on the go, so don't go denying them that right. If your business (or your clients business) is being researched online, you need to make sure that the mobile version is as appealing as possible.

You aren't aware of a mobile version? You need to **get to work ASAP!**

Keep in mind that mobile optimization is more than responsive site design. You'll need to ensure that all your mobile visitors (regardless of their screen size) will have an optimal experience.

Here are a few factors that you should have in mind when optimizing for mobile:

- **Page Speed** - Page speed is the most carefully looked at metric by Google's mobile bots. There are a lot of ways to optimize loading speeds: browser caching, reducing redirects, minifying code, optimizing images, etc.

- **Avoid blocking CSS and JavaScript** - Following the latest advancements in crawl-bot technologies, it's crucial to ensure that you're not hiding information from the Smartphone GoogleBots. CSS, JavaScript, and images are all critical elements that will help Google bots understand and rank your content accordingly.

- **Mobile-Optimized themes** - With the rise of WordPress and other website creation tools, it's probably for the best to use a website theme that is already optimized for mobile than to try and reinvent the wheel by doing it yourself.
- **Choose HTML5 over Flash** - Most mobile browser no longer support Flash, so stay away from it. If you really need special effects for your website, use HTML5 instead. It's easier to get the hang of and it's guaranteed to work on every device.

- **Focus on Responsive web design** - Responsively-designed sites will use media queries to serve the same content to mobile and desktop users using a pre-designed grid designed to automatically adapt to the size of the user's screen.

Phase 5: Preparing the On-Page Content

Don't make the mistake of believing that the business website isn't factored in in the Local 3-Pack search. It does!

The most important thing here is to ensure that you don't accidentally abuse a tactic that will penalize your ranking.

With this in mind, avoid doing any keyword stuffing and focus on sticking to the information that's really needed.

Simplicity is key, but content is king!

Here are a few factors that are analyzed by Google when it comes to on-page content:

- **Content length** - Length is a general indicator of quality in Google's eyes. So, make sure to provide comprehensive information if you're doing blog posts, or keep it short if you're using the website for presentations and announcements. Remember, you need to send the right signals to Google.

- **Locally relevant content** - If you're trying to get featured in the 3-Pack, your content should have references to the areas surrounding your business. You can use in-content links to local sites or references to the local areas of interest.

Phase 6: Using a NAP Footer on your website Schema

Writing specific schema markup will give Google's bots increased clarity when trying to understand your website's structure.

This is not as important as some of the other ranking factors that we featured in this guide, but it's still something that might bring you one step closer to being featured in the Local 3-pack.

One simple trick that we've been using for a while with impressive results is to include a NAP (name, address and phone number) in the footer section of page.

As long as it matches your GMB profile and you remember to load this into the structured data Schema, you will boost exponentially boost the business chances of being featured inside the Local 3-Pack.

There are several tools that you can use to create the local business schema markup, but we happen to think you're better off using **Google's Structured Data Markup Helper**.

If you have the technicality for it, we encourage you to read this article - **Ultimate How-to Guide for Local Business Schema Markup** and follow through with the instructions there.

Phase 7: Focus on Reviews signals

Reviews are an ever-growing topic when it comes to the organic reach that businesses have online. The game is no longer just about getting more reviews.

It's also about how you manage the reviews that you receive organically (good or bad). Reputation management is something that you should look at carefully.

Here are a few takeaways that you should factor in when focusing or reviews:

- **Responding to reviews** - You should divide your attention so that you get to respond to all reviews (good or bad). Aside from showing publicly that you're an establishment preoccupied to please the client, you're also sending the right kind of signals to Google.

- **Reviews containing the right keyword** - Altough you can't always control this, it's worth a while to ask your customers to leave a review in which they specify the service that you provided to them. This will look good in Google's eyes, branding you as a reliable business.

- **Bad reviews** - Being one of those businesses that ignore bad reviews is bad for business. You should get accustomed (or train the business owner) to managing bad reviews (asking about the shortcomings, promising to resolve the matter publickly, etc.)
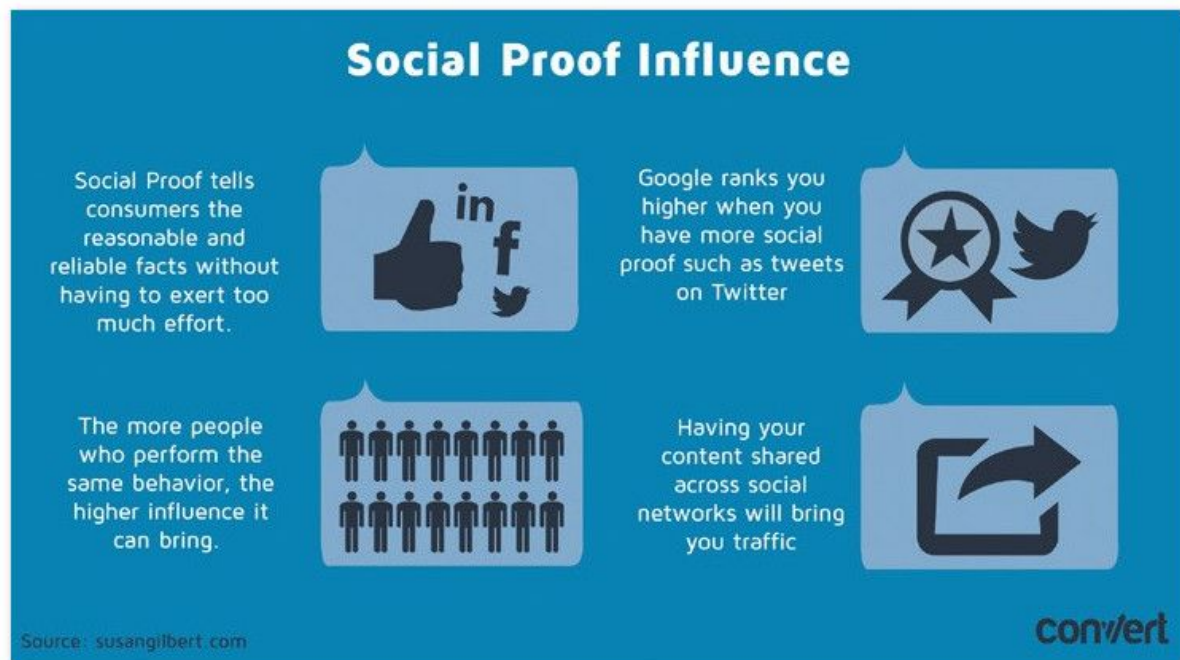
Phase 8: Social proofing

Although the way social media impacts local SEO is unclear, we can guarantee you that social proof is an important step that you need to take if you want to

rank in the 3-Pack. All search engines will look at your social signals when granting the ranks.

Generally, the more the people engage with a business on social media, the better the local SEO. Here are several social signals that are monitored for local search ranking:

- **Social media growth** - Google's algorithm is likely programmed to look at the growth of the social following when ranking a local business.

- **Brand related mentions** - Another metric that is likely factored in are brand-related mentions. Shares, likes, retweets, and the likes are definitely in the equation.

- **Consistent brand information** - It goes without saying that you need to ensure that all your social mentions point towards the right NAP.

Rinse & Repeat

That's it. Learn this 8 step process thoroughly, then start improving on it. Keep in mind that these phases were created on a general niche, now it's your job to adapt it to the business that you wish to optimize for 3-Pack Ranking.

Once you get the hang of it, you can begin banking by providing Local 3-Pack Ranking services to local businesses. You can find the best leads using **Leads Gorilla**.