The 10 KEY-FACTORS to Optimize for Voice Ranking

Hey there!

Years ago when Google began pushing the voice search technology aggressively, the majority of digital marketers started out as non-believers.

Fast forward several years and there are already numerous predictions that put voice search at **60% of the total searches by 2022**.

How did voice search get this big this soon? **Convenience.**

It's a lot easier to speak to a virtual assistant than to type in the search queries.

Plus, voice queries results are noticeably faster than traditional queries. While the average person can type around 40 words per minute, the **average speaking count is at around 150 words.**

And even if the technology is new, don't go thinking that it only appeals to millennials and younger people in general.
Close to **40% of US smartphone users in the 54+ year group are already using voice search** through mobile personal assistants apps.

Voice search is so appealing to the user because it's **perfect for on-the-go use**. An SMX study found that 15% of US adults use voice search in the bathroom and 23% of them use it while cooking.
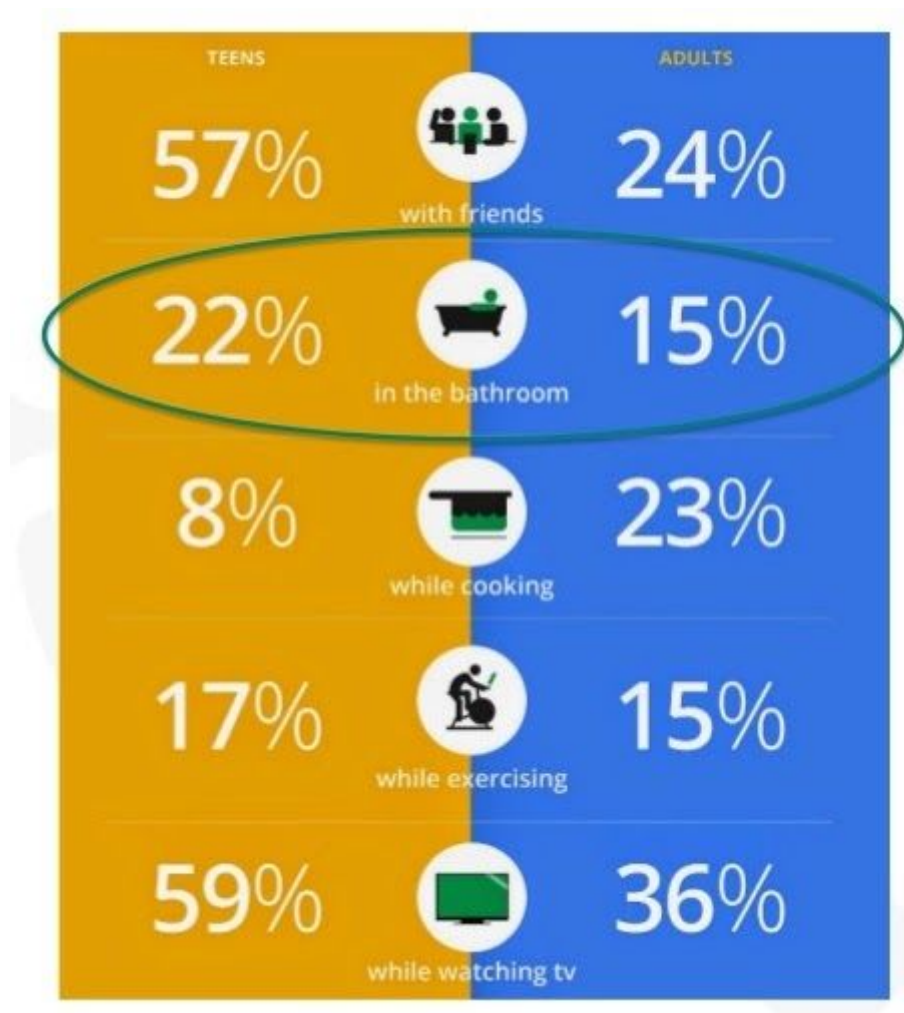
With stats like this, it's clear that were already living in a voice-activated world.

But while voice-powered AI assistants like Google Home, Amazon's Alexa, Apple's Siri and Microsoft's Cortana are all over the place, local businesses are way behind in optimizing for voice ranking.

Optimising local businesses for Voice Ranking

The rise of voice search creates an enormous opportunity for marketers that make a living out of **providing SEO services for local businesses**. By following a strict guidebook, virtually any local business can receive a traffic boost by using the power of **voice SEO**.

The internet is filled with strategies that claim to optimize websites for a better voice ranking. Some of them work and some don't, but we're not here to talk about the ones that won't make a difference.

We know that many of you make an honest living out of providing SEO services for local businesses. Because of this, we decided to create a definitive guide with field-tested strategies that can be used to **improve the voice ranking of a local business**.

No fillers and no jumping through unnecessary hoops. All the strategies presented below are things that we currently use with our clients.

This guide will take you through the most important steps that will improve the voice ranking SEO of any business and help them rank on **Position ZERO** - also known as **The Answer Box.**

The 10 KEY FACTORS of Voice Ranking

After going back and forth on how to synthesize this information to make it accessible for those of wanting to become adept in voice ranking SEO, we decided to break it down in a series of key factors.

Below you have our definitive list of ranking factors that we believe to be absolutely crucial to **Voice SEO**.

Note: Keep in mind that the list below is no guesswork. The ranking factors presented below were obtained by investigating a series of clues that Google left behind, as well as from personal experiments and case studies.

1. **Site Loading Speed**
2. **Domain Authority**
3. **Meta Tags**
4. **Rich Snippets**
5. **Mobile Optimized**
6. **FAQ Section**
7. **Optimized Images**
8. **Voicified Keywords**
9. **Optimized GMB (Google My Business)**
10. **SSL Secured website**

If you don't feel like you gained anything useful after going through this list, hold your horses because we barely scratched the surface.

Stick around as we'll break down each of these ranking factors individually and integrate them in easy-to-follow steps that can be used to pave the way towards **position zero (A.K.A The Answer Box)**.

Optimizing for Voice Ranking using 10 KEY FACTORS

Let's dive straight into the nitty-gritty of voice ranking.

Since users are changing the way in which they search for information and most businesses are still slow to optimize for it, there's an immense opportunity for marketers to get ahead of the pack.

Google's **featured snippets** have revolutionized the the whole search experience. As of now, most traditional SEO methods will not yield an increase in traffic when optimizing for voice search.

Virtual assistants answer voice queries with results from Google's answer box. This highlighted result is known as **Position Zero** and is conveniently placed above position **#1.** As you can imagine, it gains huge amounts of visibility.

Because of this, voice SEO is all about getting to **Position Zero** and remaining there indefinitely.

Sure, the top position is extremely hard (if not impossible) to get on heavily competitive queries, but that's not a problem for local businesses.

The thing is, local businesses can hugely benefit from featured snippets because they have an opportunity to truly own a niche - by **optimizing for various low-intent questions**. But we'll discuss that in detail below.

Without further ado, let's get to the actual guide.

Ensure that you're not missing anything by going through each of the steps below. Each step will break down one voice ranking factor and show you (with examples) just how important and effective it is to optimize for it.

Step 1: Optimizing the Site's Loading Speed

Page speed is an important ranking factor for mobile searches. As you might think, this also applies to voice ranking. Google considers a page loading speed to be optimal (for mobile) when it loads above the fold content in one second or less.

You might know that Google released the **Speed Update** in July 2018. This update established page loading speed as a full-fledged ranking factor for mobile search results. As you can imagine, the faster the better.

The thing is, you don't have to be a scientist to figure out if page speed is really important to voice ranking. Feel free to do a voice search and take a look at the answer box. We're willing to bet that it comes from a fast-loading website.

And it's not just Google that cares about the site loading speed. Mobile users are getting tired of slow-loading websites - **40% of mobile users are reported to leave a page if it doesn't load in 3 seconds**.

But enough small talk, let's get to the actual optimizing. There are a lot of verified techniques that will shave off your page loading times. But before we get to them, start by testing your page speed by using Google's **PageSpeed Insights**.
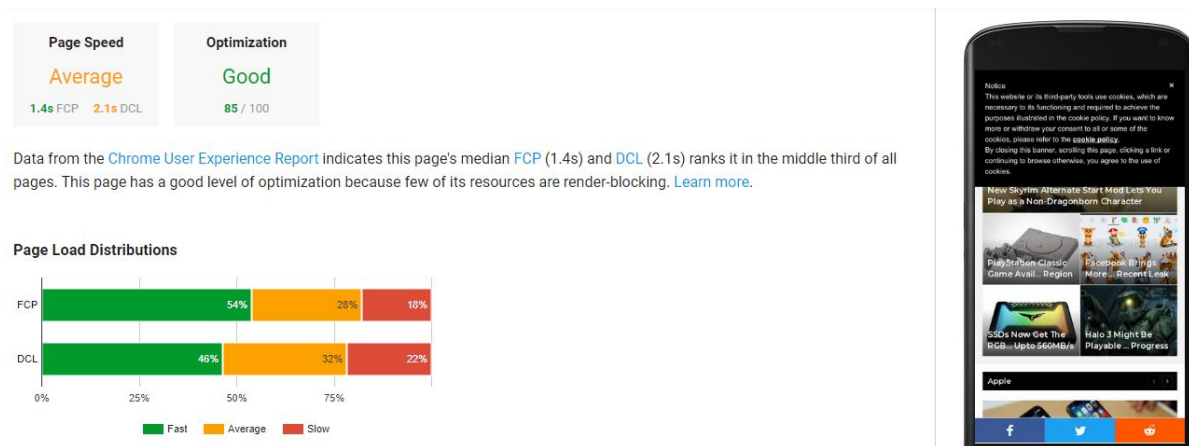
This tool will provide you with a rough estimation of your page speed optimization. As a rule of thumb, if your **Page Speed** is under **Average** and the **Optimization** score is under **70**, you got some work to do.

Page Speed Optimization tips

- Use Gzip or a similar software capable of reducing the size of your HTML, CSS and JavaScript files.
- Optimize your code by removing spaces, commas, and other unnecessary characters. You can do this with tools like CSSNano, HTMLMinifier, and UglifyJS.
- Reduce redirects as much as possible. Redirect partners will make your page to load much slower.
- Remove any render-blocking JavaScript. A browser needs to execute any pending scripts first before it can render a page. This is why Google recommends that you avoid using Blocking JavaScript.
- Optimize images with tools like TinyPNG.

Step 2: Improving the Domain's Authority

Even if their importance has dwindled with steady updates in the last couple of years, backlinks are still the foundation of Google's desktop and mobile algorithm.

Based on various case studies as well as personal experiments, we observed that **the voice search algorithm relies on domain authority over page authority**.

This means that whenever Google finds a plausible voice search answer, the voice search algorithm is more interested to see if the page belongs to a trusted website - it's not interested in how many links are pointing to the page itself.

The key takeaway here is that **Google's Voice Search Algorithm actively looks for trusted and authoritative domains**.

DA (Domain Authority) is an engine ranking score developed by Moz that predicts a website chance to rank on search engines by evaluating multiple factors (total link count, linking root domains, ranking strength, etc.

You can view a website's DA by using [MozBar,](#) [Link Explorer,](#) [Keyword Explorer](#) as well as several other SEO tools.
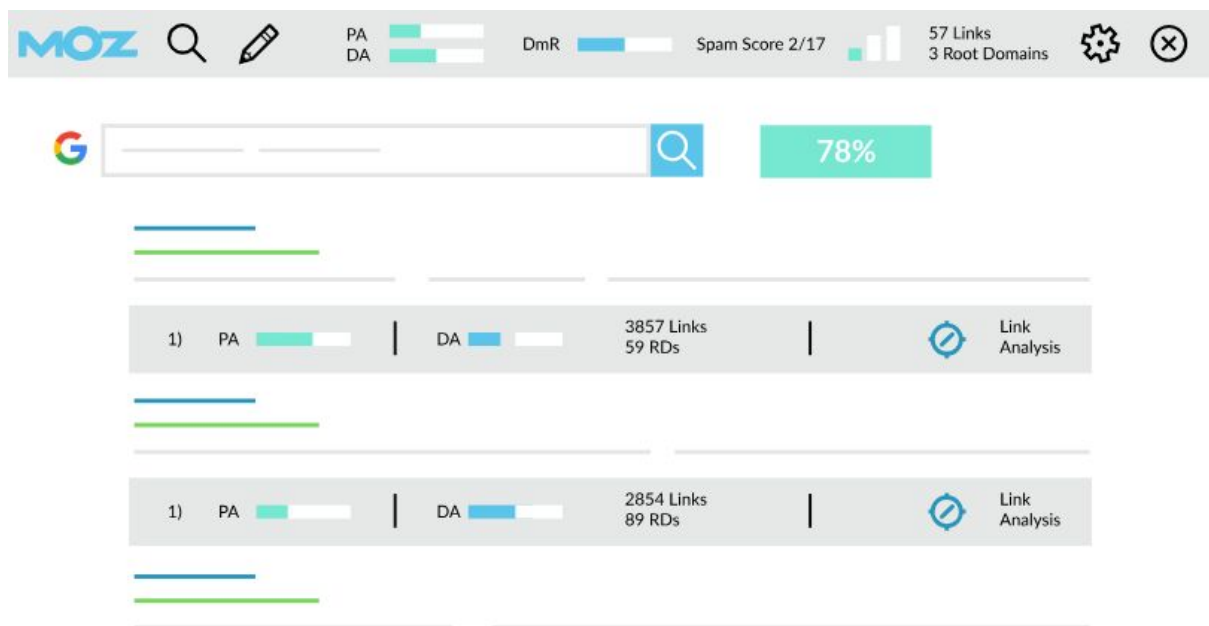
Domain Authority optimization tips

- **Focus on building your link profile** by getting more links from other well-linked-to pages.
- **Create high-quality linkable content** that gets published regularly.
- **Remove toxic links from bad sources** that might hut your domain authority.
- **Improve your internal linking structure** - By improving the user experience you'll also convince Google's crawlers that website is worthy of higher authority.

Step 3: Tailor your Meta Tags for voice ranking

Think of meta tags as helpful pieces of code that help search engines to understand the content that is featured on a particular website.

Because meta tags are used to describe actual content, you need to adapt them so that search engine crawlers understand that your content is worthy of the **Answer Box**.

There are four major types of meta tags that you need to be aware of. Some of them are not as useful as they used to be, but it won't hurt to let Google know what your site is about and what content you provide.

Here are the four types of meta tags:

- **Title Tags** - This tag is viewed by search engines as the title of your page.
- **Meta Keywords Attribute (obsolete)** - A series of keywords relevant to the page in question.
- **Meta Description Attribute** - A brief description of the page in question.
- **Meta Robots Attribute** - An attribute meant to indicate to engine crawlers what they should do with the page.

Optimizing Meta Tags for Voice Ranking

- **Add a Schema.org Markup** - This a semantic vocabulary of data that you can add to your HTML code to help crawlers read and represent your content better. You can use Google's Structured Data Markup Helper to generate and insert it into the website's code.
- **Analyze your meta tags** - Use tools like SemRush, DeepCrawl, Screaming Frog, or SiteBulb to check the status of your meta tags.

- **Use Yoast SEO to optimize titles and meta descriptions** - [Yoast SEO](#) allows you to optimize titles and meta descriptions. It is widely adopted by most webmasters.

Step 4: Optimizing for Rich Snippets to feature in Voice Searching Results

Rich snippets are organic search results displayed by search engines, but with one key difference - they have far more visual appeal and are a whole more likely to be clicked.

A featured snippet (an Answer Box) will be displayed proudly at the top of the SERP with the answer to the searcher's question. The answer comes from an organic listing, but only a summary of the content is displayed. However, Google is kind enough to link the answer to the site from where the content originates.
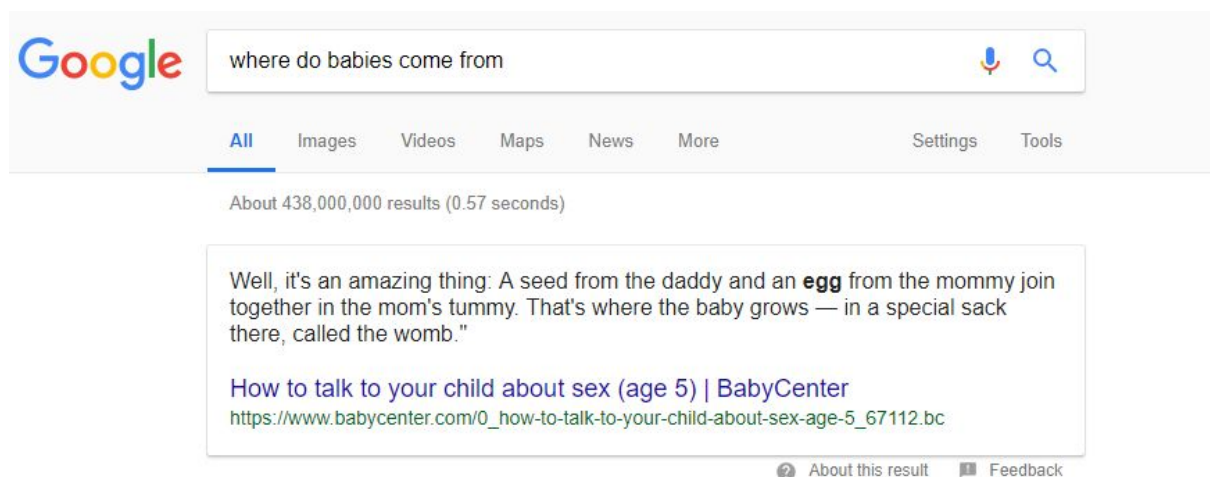
There are three types of rich snippets:

- **Paragraph snippet** - This snipped is commonly encountered on question-based queries. It's also the most common type of featured snipped.
- **List snippet** -List snippets are often encountered with how-to content, recipes and ranked lists.
- **Tables snippet** - Table snippets are a popular occurrence with results for lists, pricing, rates, and data. With this snippet, Google might only pull specific information depending on what the user is searching for.

Since voice SEO is all about getting to the top position, a series of optimizations need to be operated in order to boost the chances of being featured in a rich snippet.

Optimizing for Featured Snippets

- **Focus on Long-tail keywords** - Most featured snippets are generated from question-based searches and most voice searches come in the form of questions. Do you see the pattern? Long-tail keywords might bring less traffic, but they generate more conversions if you have the exact answer to the searcher's question. Consider using tools like Answer the Public to research what people are searching for online.
- **Feature tangential content** - Featuring tangential content will enable you to reach a wider audience which will ultimately lead to more inbound links. More Inbound links lead to a higher page authority which will boost your chances of getting your content featured. Simple, right?
- **Improve existing pages** -Also referred to as the Skyscraper technique, it's about revisiting stagnant content and improving it with new and updated information rather than creating new pages.
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Step 5: Making the website mobile-ready

Because voice search is primarily occurring on mobile devices, it's understandable why Google actively encourages webmasters to convert their websites to a mobile-friendly design.

To ensure that the website you're tending to is mobile-ready, start by reading Google's recommendations on featuring a **responsive web design**.

Keep in mind that almost all quality WordPress themes already follow Google's guidelines, so don't go thinking you have to start from scratch.

If you want to ensure that your website is mobile-friendly, you can use Google's **Mobile-Friendly Test tool**.
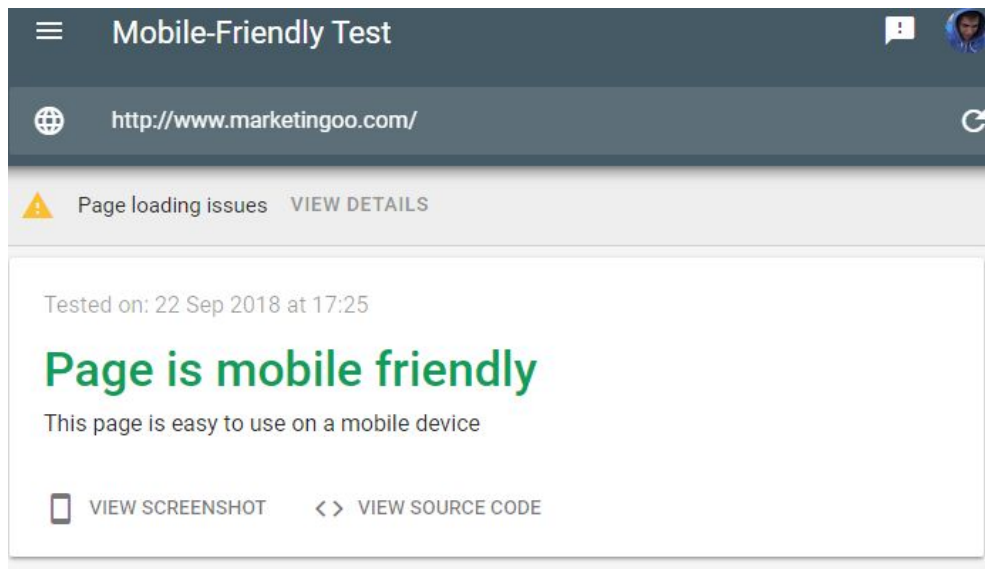
If the web-page is already optimized for mobile devices, you should get a message similar to the one above.

Oh, and keep in mind that **this tool will only scan one particular web page at a time** - this might mean that you still have pages that don't meet the requirements.

In case you're page needs to be optimised, the tool will recommend a series of steps that you need to take in order to improve your score.

Use this tool to scan and **optimize the pages that bring the most amount of traffic** to ensure that your website is mobile-ready.

Step 6: Include an FAQ section

There's a reason why we encourage all our clients to create a FAQ page on their website. This type of content is not only efficient for your overall website SEO, but it works wonders when it comes to **Voice SEO**.

The FAQ section is so essential to a well-rounded voice ranking strategy because it makes it easier to **target phrases and questions** that you know are often queried in search engines.

For the best practices, link all the most important questions on one page and make sure that the FAQ is linked on your homepage. Then, use redirects to steer users to the answer. From our personal experience, this strategy is well-rewarded by Google and all the other search engines.

If you take the time to go after **longtail voicified keywords** (we'll discuss this in Step 8) in each of your FAQ pages, you're one step closer to landing in Google's **ANSWER BOX**.
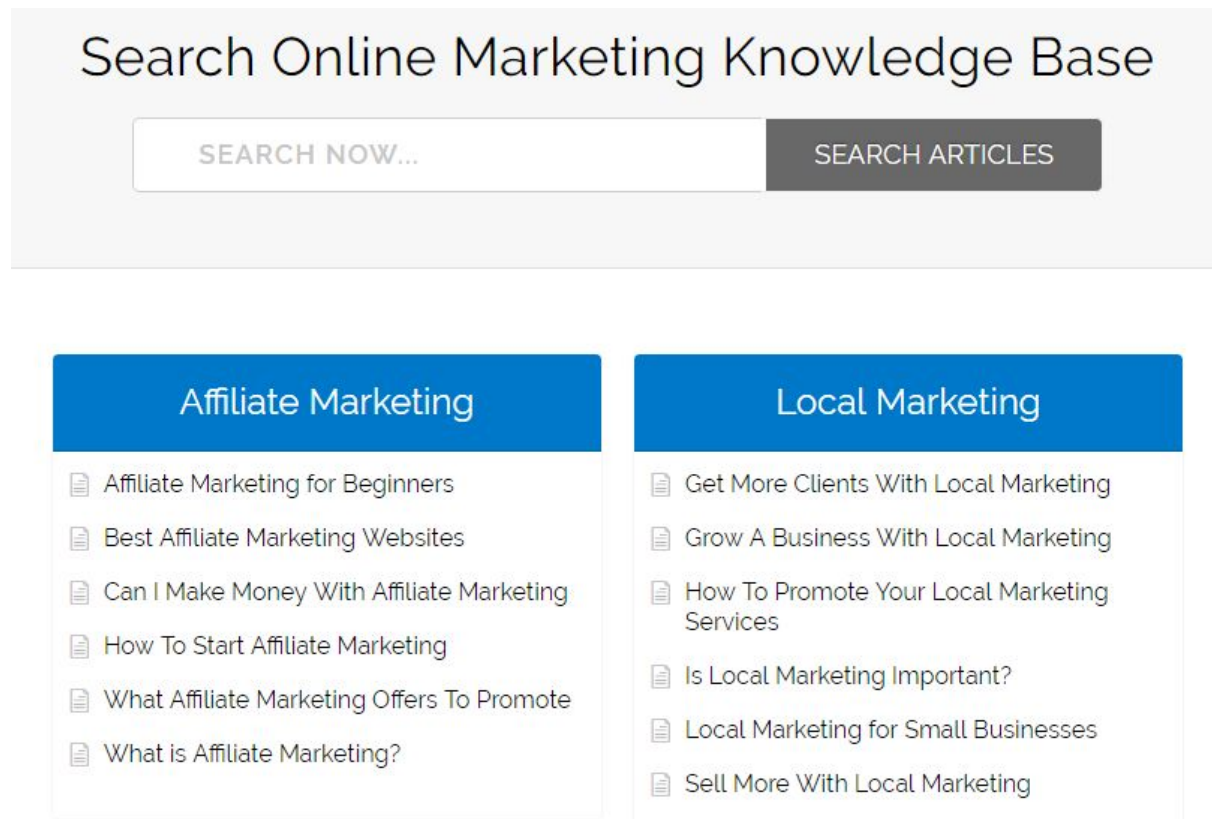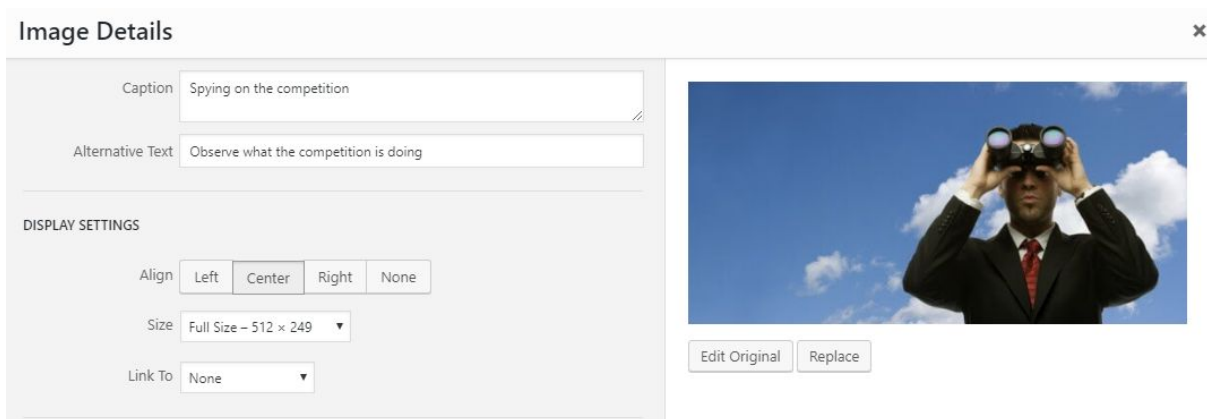

Step 7: Optimizing Images for Voice Search

Image optimization is often overlooked as a voice ranking factor because it's a visual element.

But the truth is, there are certain actions that you can take to boost your images chances of being featured in a rich snippet.

Google encourages webmasters to acknowledge the importance of imagery and take the necessary steps to ensure the maximum optimization. A good place to start is to read **Google's guidelines for image publishing.**

Optimizing images for voice search

- **Stick to page-relevant images** - By featuring only page-relevant images, you're making sure that crawling bots are not getting confused by their purpose.
- **Use the highest quality format possible** - There aren't any featured images that are of insufficient quality inside featured snippets. This should be enough to point you in the right direction.
- **Reduce the size of your images** - Because page speed is such an important voice ranking factor, shrinking the size of your images files is crucial. Consider using tools like TinyPNG, Trimage, Optimizilla or ImageOptim.
- **Use captions** - Captions are crawled by search engines similar to the way URLs are crawled. This means that anyone using voice keywords associated with your caption might just stumble upon your website.
- **Use the Alt Text attribute** - There are numerous reports and clues that point towards the alt text attribute as being extremely important to voice search. Make sure to fill the Alt Text attribute of every image that you include.

Step 8: Using Voicified Keywords

Simplicity is key when optimizing your content for voice search SEO. Keep in mind that **the average Google voice search result is written in 9th-grade level English**. With this in mind, don't overcomplicate things.

Simple-to-read content is ideal for voice search, but it's not enough. To ensure that you position your pages to be featured inside the answer box, you need to **use voicified keywords** - keywords that resemble how humans actually converse.

As a rule of thumb, a good voicified keyword is a longtail keyword of 5 to 10 words that specifically targets a user problem or keyword.

For example, instead of using the keyword **"best restaurant in Louisville"**, voicify the keyword by optimizing for a phrase like **"Which restaurant serves dinner in Louisville now?"**

To get a feel for how to voicify your keywords in relation to the niche you're targeting, you can use a tool like Answer the Public.

Simply type in the plain keyword and you'll be given suggestions on what people are searching for.
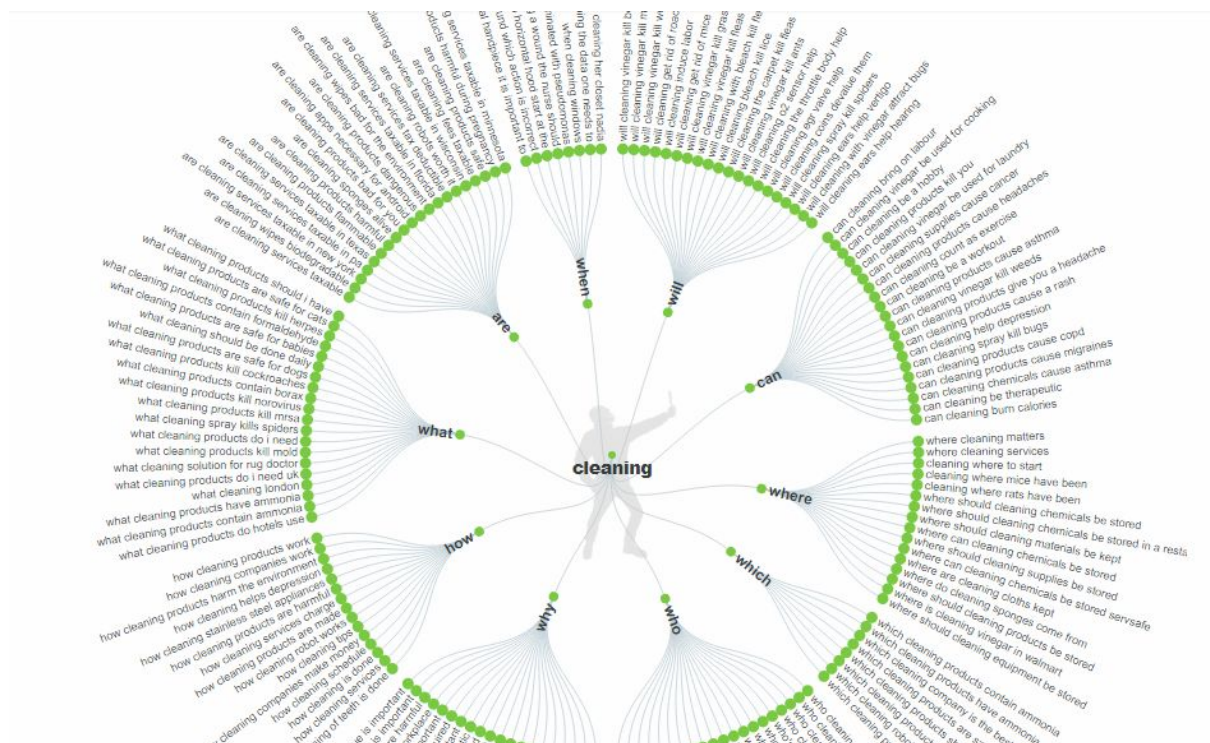
Step 9: Claiming & Optimizing the Google My Business (GMB) listing

Because a lot of people are using voice searches on-the-go, you'll notice that a large portion of them are actually **hyper-local queries**. How can a local business benefit from this, you ask?

It's simple. By claiming their **GMB (Google My Business) listing** and including it in the site's footer.
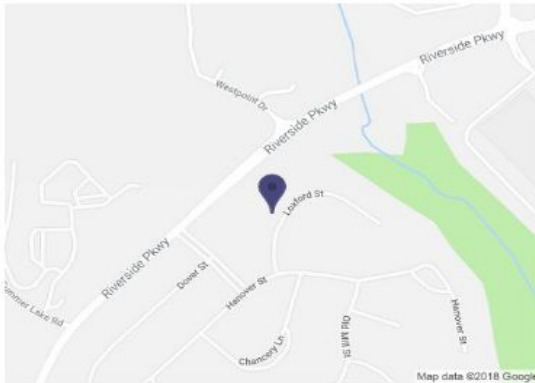
ADDRESS

9143 Loxford Street
Lithia Springs, GA 30122
United States

Get directions

CONTACT

(203) 559-5381

If a user does a voice search on a query like **"Italian pasta restaurant near me"**, Google will rely on the user location and turn to GMB listings to recommend the best option. If your GMB listing is well managed, your place might pop up among the recommended places.

But this step involves more than rushing through the creation of a GMB listing. For the best results, take the time to make your listing as comprehensive as possible. Include real pictures, create a description and respond to all reviews (good or bad).

Oh and don't forget to actively encourage customer feedback through your GMB listing.

Step 10: Securing the Website with SSL

Don't go thinking that this step is not as important just because it's the last one. All those other steps that we discussed above would be in vain if you neglect to secure your website with SSL.

An **SSL (Secure Sockets Layer)** certificate creates a secure link between a website and the visitors' browsers. Without it, Google will not feature your content in the **Answer Box** - no matter how good it is.
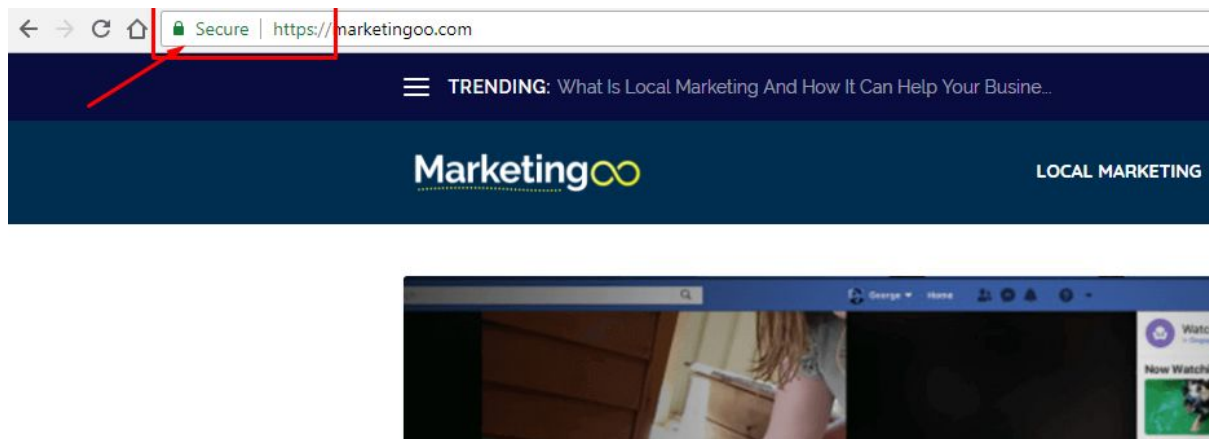
This certificate is required to ensure that all data passed between the two parties (website and visitor) remains private and secure.

But let's get back to the stuff relevant to voice search. Securing your website with SSL will allow you to utilize **HTTPS (Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure).** Google confirmed that this extension to HTTP will give your website a "**minimal boost**" in search results.

From what we observed so far, **HTTPS might play an even bigger role when it comes to voice search**.

If you're not SSL secured yet, we recommend consulting Google's Domains Help page. It includes a selection of methods that you can follow to get an SSL certificate for your website.

Selling voice raking services to local businesses

Now that you got the know-how of optimizing for voice ranking, you can apply this knowledge to help your own website rank on Position Zero.

But if you make a living out of selling SEO services, use this guide to start helping other local businesses to get to **Position Zero**. I can bet that most of your clients are not even remotely aware of the benefits of **Voice SEO**. With this in mind, start by applying the steps presented above on a personal project and practice until you get the hang of it.

Another good strategy is to start optimizing the websites of your current clients partially and blow their minds using the **RIA (Results in Advance)** method that we previously talked about.

Once you have the results to show for, set your price tag and banking out of helping local businesses to optimize for voice ranking.