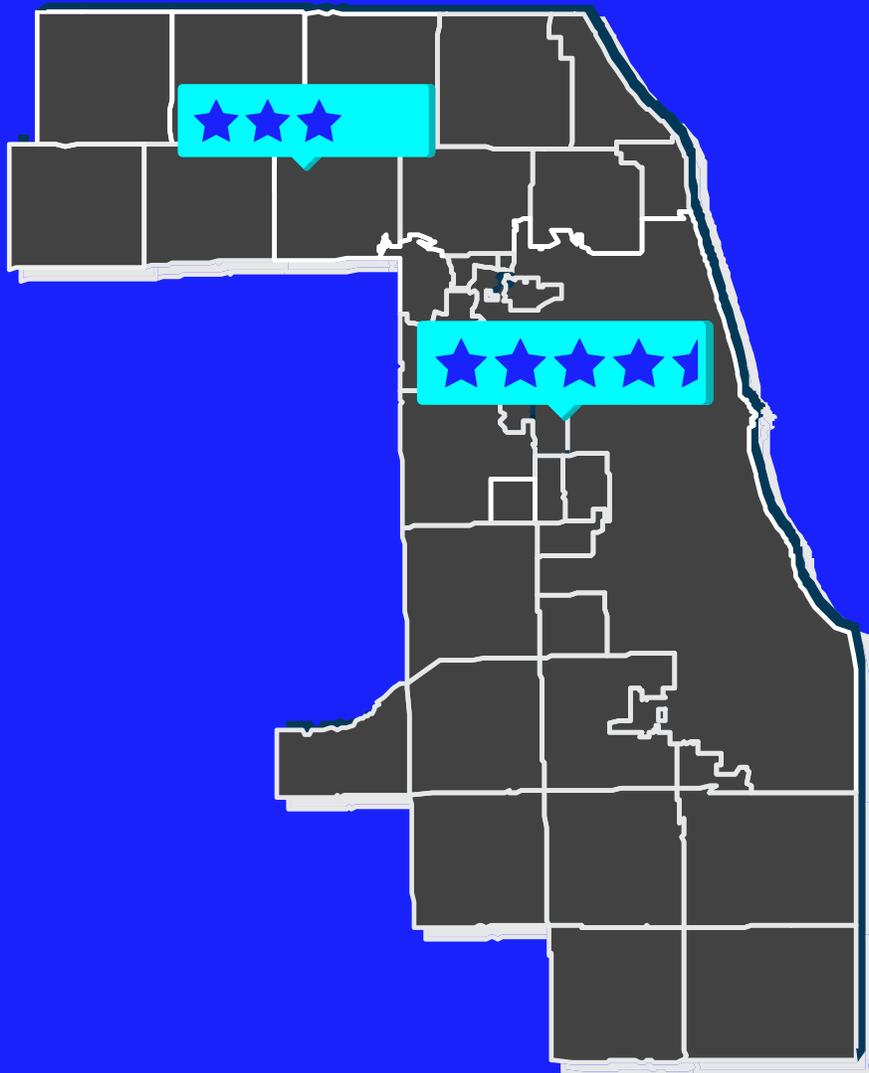


How to Succeed in Chicagoland Search



INTRODUCTION

Whether you're a native or a transplant, everyone can acknowledge that Chicago is...well, pretty awesome. Chicago is one of the few cities in the world that offers everything under the sun – a sports team in every major league, over 7,000 restaurants with everything from the world's best hamburger to whole roasted goats, a place to drink on every corner, 40 museums and over a dozen universities. Every nationality, age group, income level and industry is represented in the city and its suburbs.

As glorious as this all sounds, there's one downside – due to the diversity of businesses and the size of the Chicagoland area, marketing your local business is exceptionally hard. Competition is in every single area, from recruiting companies to pizza shops. And in order to attract business, you need to stand out. When someone searches for your service or product in Chicago – **are you showing up?**

The following is intended as a basic guide to help Chicago businesses rank better in local search results. This guide assumes you already have most of the basic SEO elements in place. If you're just starting with SEO, the best place to begin your journey is [Moz's Learning Guide](#) which takes you through all the basics of SEO. Once you've mastered that, then and only then, is it time to dive into the local side of things.

UNDERSTANDING THE CHICAGOLAND AREA

The City of Chicago is by far the largest segment of the Chicagoland market, with approximately 3 million residents. Keep in mind that proximity-to-user is a factor, but that factor is only a true influencer in high-volume industries. So, a pizza shop in Pilsen is going to find it difficult to rank in Lincoln Park. However, specialty retailers – a scuba diving equipment shop or a Ferrari dealership – are going to find it much easier to rank across the entire city.

While Google bases many of its results on your physical location and service areas, it's still important to understand the layout of Chicagoland. Obviously, Chicago is the major market to target – but by targeting neighborhoods and specific suburbs, you can better differentiate yourself and compete in a smaller arena – a good thing for small businesses. The map on the following page allows you to understand a few things:

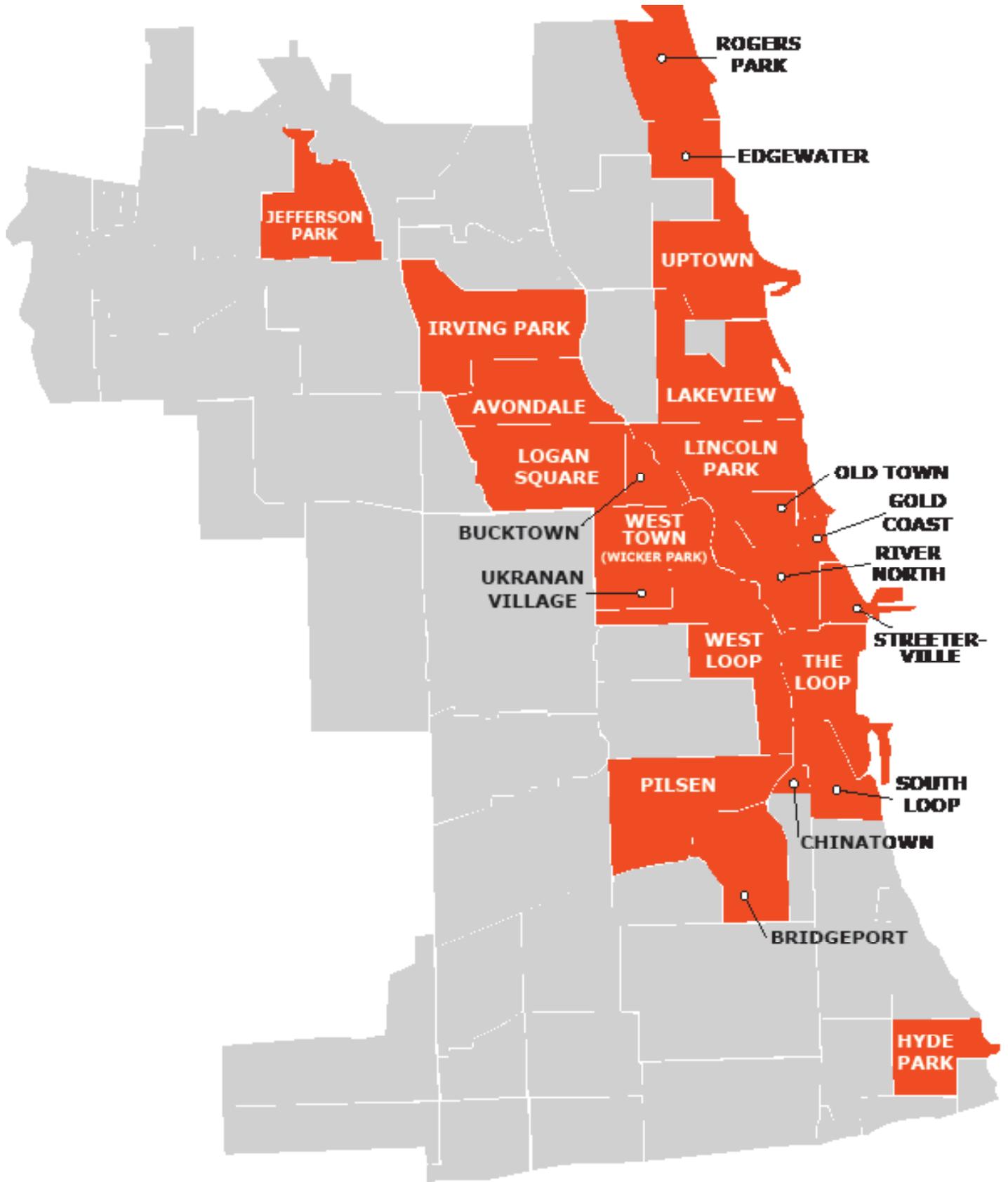
► **Targeting Nearby Neighborhoods/Towns**

If your business is in Naperville – it's probably a good idea to also target Aurora and Downers Grove as they are major markets close to Naperville.

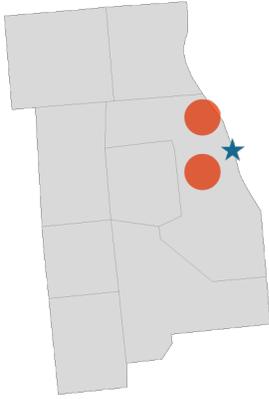
► **Targeting an Extended Market**

Many businesses serve the majority of the Chicagoland area – many companies based out of the North Shore area also service the Northwest suburbs such as Barrington. Understanding which suburbs and markets are where, can help you can best choose where to optimize your business.

► The City of Chicago - Key Neighborhoods to Target



► Major Chicagoland Cities + Suburbs to Target



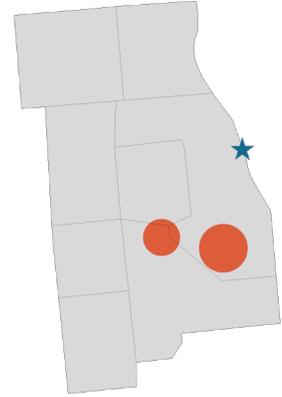
► Surrounding Cities

- Evanston
- Skokie
- Oak Park
- Cicero



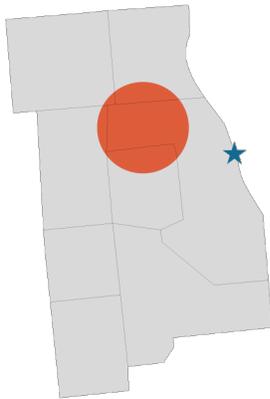
► Southwest Suburbs

- Naperville
- Aurora
- Wheaton
- Downers Grove
- Lombard
- Elmhurst
- Hinsdale



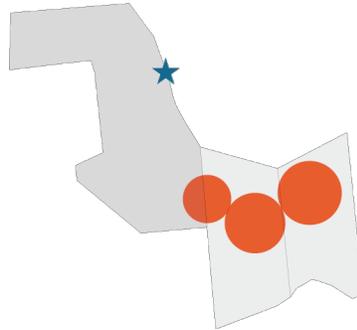
► South Suburbs

- Orland Park
- Tinley Park
- Bolingbrook



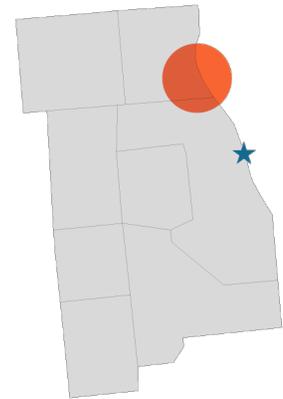
► Northwest Suburbs

- Arlington Heights
- Barrington
- Palatine
- Hoffman Estates
- Buffalo Grove
- Schaumburg
- Elgin
- Crystal Lake



► Northwest Indiana

- Munster
- Crown Point
- Valparaiso
- Merrillville
- Schererville



► Northshore

- Glenview
- Wilmette
- Winnetka
- Glencoe
- Highland Park
- Northbrook
- Lake Forest
- Deerfield
- Libertyville
- Lincolnshire

THE LOCAL SEARCH ECOSYSTEM

Local search, for the most part, relies on the same set of factors as traditional SEO. The process for a local business isn't significantly different from a national brand. A strong website that's mobile friendly, secure with HTTPS and well-structured is a must. Keywords in the title tags and on the page along with quality content is essential. Creating a strong inbound link profile is also key.

The biggest difference between traditional SEO and locally focused SEO is citations and reviews. In addition to the standard factors that apply to any business, Google looks for the following when evaluating a local business.

► Citation Sources

Citation sources are generally the same as review or directory websites that provide information on local businesses. Yelp and Yellowpages are two common examples and two of the most important citation sources.

Before we get into optimizing these review profiles, you must first claim them and confirm your ownership of the business. This is typically accomplished through one of two methods:

Postcard: A postcard with a PIN is sent to your physical address, which you use to claim the listing.

Phone Verification: The site calls you with a code that you then enter into the website.

Once you have claimed your profiles and have control of them, you'll need to optimize them. Profiles on these types of sites should include the following:

- Business Name
- Address
- Phone Number

The business name, address and phone number should remain consistent across every citation source.

► Citation Sources: Make the Most of Your Local Listings

Use the same business name everywhere

Pick one name and stick to it on every listing you create. Not “ABC Car Service” then “ABC Car Service Center” then “ABC Auto Repair.”

Keep street abbreviations consistent

Don't switch between Maple Avenue, Maple Ave and Maple Av. The same goes for city and state. “Chicago, IL” and “Chicago, Illinois” are not consistent. Choose one format and stay with it.

Avoid using names of neighborhoods in listings – they aren't specific or consistent. For example, everyone has a different definition of Wicker Park's boundaries.

Detailed Descriptions

1 to 2 paragraphs detailing what your business does, competitive advantages and the primary services offered.

Photos

Use photos of the business and product offerings (or for service businesses, pictures of your team in action).

Reviews

Ultimately, the more reviews you have, the better the performance of your local listings. Aim for at least 5 on Google+ and Yelp! and at least one on every other major review site such as Yellow Pages.

► Respond to reviews

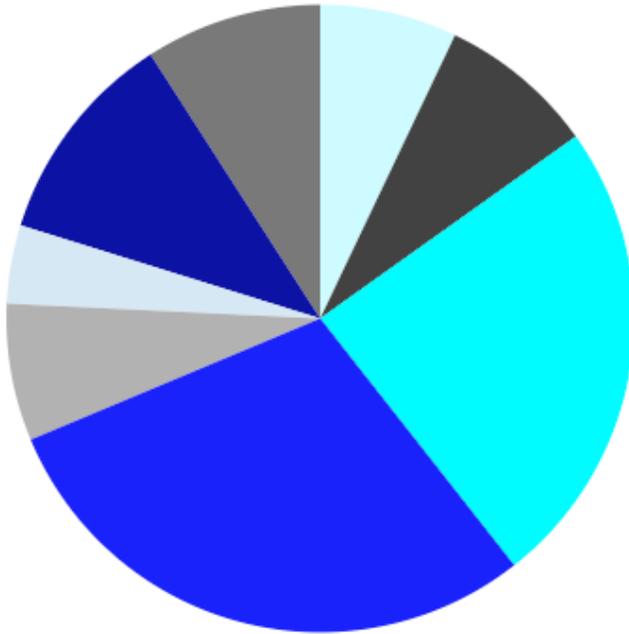
Thank customers who are happy with the service, and try to resolve issues with customers who aren't. Several clients have told DTC that they've even earned new business from their responses to bad reviews.

► Reviews don't just help you rank well

90% of consumers say that their buying decisions are influenced by online reviews. It's hard to make an informed decision as a customer without reviews.

Below are the results from the 2017 Localized Organic Ranking Factors from Moz. The biggest factors are our traditional SEO signals – on-page and link quality – but they only make up 53% of the overall. The quality of your Google+ page makes up 15%, Citations make up about 14% and reviews make up about 8.5% of the ranking algorithm.

OVERALL RANKING FACTORS



Much like links, not all citation sources are created equal. Unfortunately, the weight of each factor in Google’s algorithm is not known. The Moz survey, this ebook and any SEO campaign is based on best knowledge – what’s been shown to be effective through many, many campaigns and experiences with clients in many different industries.

It’s a theory – much in the way that gravity is also a theory. We can never confirm it 100%, but we can draw some pretty strong correlations.

My Business Signals (7%)
Categories, Keyword in business title, Proximity, etc.

Review Signals (7%)
Review quantity, Review velocity, Review diversity, etc.

Citation Signals (8%)
IYP/Aggregator NAP consistency, Citation, Volume, etc.

Social Signals (4%)
Google+ authority, Facebook likes, Twitter followers, etc.

On-Page Signals (24%)
Presence of NAP, Keywords in titles, Domain authority, etc.

Behavioral/Mob. Signals (11%)
Clickthrough rate, Mobile clicks to call, Check-ins, Offers, etc.

Link Signals (29%)
Inbound anchor text, Linking domain authority, Linking domain quantity, etc.

Personalization (9%)

THE CITATION SOURCES THAT MATTER THE MOST

There are thousands of local directory sites out there – fortunately, you don't have to worry about every one. Instead focus on the ones that drive 99% of the traffic and value to local search engine results.

► Major Citation Sources

These are the key citation sources for any business in Chicagoland (and elsewhere). Start here and make sure your profiles on these sites are as fleshed out and informative as possible before moving onto other tasks.

- Best of the Web
- Bing Places
- Citysearch
- Facebook
- Foursquare
- Hotfrog
- Insiderpages
- Yelp!
- Yahoo! Local
- Yellowpages

► Secondary Citation Sources

If you're investing in local search or are in a competitive market (such as an online marketing company in Chicago), you should spend the time to claim and optimize profiles on these sites.

- Angie's List
- Better Business Bureau
- City Data
- DexKNows
- InfoUSA
- Manta
- Merchant Circle
- Service Magic
- Superpages
- Thumbtack
- Yellowbook
- Wikipedia

► Data Feed Network

A data feed takes the information you give it and pushes that information to its network of sites. Many sites will use data from both users and the data feed provider to ensure accuracy.

- Axiom
- Neustar
- Factual
- Yext

► Top Local Citation Sources

These tend to be a blend of the national players (Yelp, Citysearch, etc.) and major local publications (New York Times, Forbes, Chicago Tribune, etc.).

1. Yelp.com
2. Yellow Pages
3. Citysearch
4. Yahoo! Local
5. Chicago Tribune
6. Superpages
7. Facebook
8. DexKnows
9. Northwest Indiana Times
10. YouTube

► Top Content Publishers

In addition to being high-authority websites, local publications provide exposure opportunities. Links from the sites below provide additional link equity from their high domain authority and expose your business to many Chicagoans.

TOP 20 CHICAGO CONTENT PUBLISHERS

Rank	Publisher	Vertical	Domain Authority
1	Chicago Tribune	News	94
2	Chicago Sun Times	News	89
3	Time Out	Local Events/Soft News	89
4	Chicago CBS Local	News	89
5	Crain's Chicago	Business	81
6	Daily Herald	News	81
7	NBC Chicago	News	81
8	ABC 7 Chicago	News	79
9	Chicago Magazine	Local Events/Soft News	79
10	WGN Chicago	News	79
11	Chicago Reader	Local Events/Soft News	79
12	Fox 32 Chicago	News	75
13	Chicago Now	Local Events/Soft News	74
14	Chicagoist	Local Events/Soft News	73
15	Northwest Indiana Times	News	72
16	Red Eye	Local Events/Soft News	71
17	Built In Chicago	Technology	65

SO...HOW DO I SUCCESS IN CHICAGOLAND SEARCH?

You'll succeed in Chicagoland search the same way that one succeeds as a citizen of Chicago – hard work! If we were to lay out a basic framework for local businesses looking to compete in the Chicago area, it would look something like this:

► Start with SEO Fundamentals

Make sure your site is mobile-friendly, quickly loads, doesn't have excessive images and has quality content on the page. Sitemaps should be updated in XML format and Robots.txt files should not block on-site resources.

Build Great On-Site Pages

The pages of your website should contain at least 400 words, building for distinct services and service areas. Every page should have an appropriate title tag, meta description and internal links on the page.

Get Listed

Ensure your business is listed, with descriptions, photos and reviews on major citation sources. Once you've hit the major citation sources, move onto the secondary citation sources and Top Chicago Citations list. We recommend handling major and secondary citation sources manually before submitting to a data feed source such as Yext! or Neustar Localeze.

Get Mentioned

This is the hardest part of the equation. Provide great content that helps customers and tells an interesting story, rather than promoting your brand or services. Be active in the Chicago community, work with schools and neighborhood organizations – build relationships. Those are the types of things, along with awesome content, that get you noticed on publications.

Of course, this isn't all it takes to succeed in Chicago OR in SEO – but we do hope this guide provides a jumping-off point for you to improve your presence in local search results.