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Executive Summary

The customer's path to purchase is changing. Technology, consumer preferences and, often, managerial decisions at major search companies can reshape industry strategy. In September 2015, Google published a survey commissioned from Ipsos, a global market research firm, and the journal Harvard Business Review, called "Consumers in the Micro-Moment." It explained the intimate relationship between consumers and their mobile phones. In a series of reports about the use of micro-moments in marketing strategy, Google outlined a compelling search-based strategy for responding to a consumer's interest immediately through thoughtful experience design. The Google Micro-Moment site contains many examples and case studies about its increasing emphasis on mobile user experience.

<https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/collections/micromoments.html>

In the months since the report appeared, Google demonstrated that micro-moment thinking is more than good advice, it was a statement of a new ranking policy in local search and Google Adwords generally that promotes mobile-friendly sites over other results.

We discuss mobile's impact on the path to purchase. Additionally, through BIA/Kelsey proprietary research and other third party data, we explore how many businesses are failing to keep up with competitors' local presence and consequently losing opportunities to be in front of consumers making buying decisions. There's a lot more involved in winning a sale than simply having a web presence in the 2016 style now that mobile phones own the online landscape.

Working with Advice Local, BIA/Kelsey explored best in class strategies for a solid foundation that agencies, publishers and SMBs can use to ensure they are present in consumer's moments of need. Ensuring consistent name, address and phone number (NAP) data, with business hours and physical locations listed is only part of the equation. Taking control of local digital presence is just the first step. A plan for continued monitoring and measurement is critical to the success of any local presence management strategy.

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Consumer Micro-Moments and Path to Purchase

In 2015, Google along with the market research firm Ipsos and the Harvard Business Review released a study, that changed how the marketing industry thinks about the consumer path to purchase. “Consumers in the Micro-Moment” demonstrated that consumers’ use of their mobile phones has changed the consumer purchase journey to hundreds of real time, purchase driven micro-moments. Eighty-seven percent of respondents said they “always” have their phone on or near their person. Moreover, 91 percent said they consult their phone in order to search for product information, alternative prices and options, and other decision-supporting data when making a purchase.

Supported by extensive evidence that mobile browsing is on the rise and survey respondents’ statements that they tend to rely on the first relevant information they find, regardless of the source, Google made a significant change to its search algorithms. Mobile-friendly sites now receive an explicit boost over other sites in Google search results. This introduced an opportunity for companies to dominate a market niche by delivering better mobile search experience, and many new intermediaries and brands rushed into the mobile breach to provide fast, easy-to-find information, often displacing more established players with the same information, or more.

Google found that the linear consumer path to purchase has morphed into a winding path driven by micro-moments, which the company defined this way: “Micro-Moments are critical touch points within today’s consumer journey, and when added together, they ultimately determine how that journey ends.” Micro-Moments allow people to understand what they want and how to purchase it faster. According to Google, these micro-moments are speeding up and transforming the way consumers’ shop, especially when and where they shop.

Figure 1: Examples of Consumer “How To” Moments



Top Rising Hair-Related “How To” Searches

prom hair
prom hairstyles
balayage

how to balayage
man bun
silver hair

mens hairstyles
short curly hairstyles

Source: Google, 2015



Consumer micro-moments create an intense need or intent to buy, visit, research, or contact a business and hold great opportunities for businesses that are present in these moments (“Micro-Moments and the Shopper’s Journey.” Harvard Business Review, Sponsored by Google, September 2015). Often consumers are looking for answers near them, the researchers concluded.

Google has taken this into consideration and incorporated micro- moment search prompts into its local search and results user interface. For example, when a consumer begins to type a search term in Google, no matter desktop or mobile, the autocomplete and results predict for them what they need. The autocomplete predictability is based on micro-moments both Google created and tested and what Google gathers from global and local search results as trends. The autocomplete is only one of many changes Google has made to respond to the new consumer journey.

As noted, Google’s recent mobile ranking changes give a better ranking to mobile-friendly websites. Google is also reconfiguring its AdWords and customer management tools in support of micro- moment thinking. For example, the ability to create and edit location information in the My Business API is critical to a business being discovered in the moment. Small businesses and search engine marketing providers must take note of, and use, these changes to improve their results in the eyes of Google and the customer.

Technology Drives Consumer Micro-Moments

Consumer use of technology constantly changes. The way they research and discover local businesses may sound like what consumers did with the phone book, but it represents a very different customer engagement, with clear calls to action and linking or other interactive features that immediately engage the consumer’s intention. Today’s marketers need not only to “catch up” with the latest technology, they need to reconfigure the way they market through multiple channels in order to stay in the game.

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In our “always on” connected world, smartphones have made it easier for consumers to multitask and get immediate responses to wants and needs. While Google finds that the majority of micro-moments happen on mobile devices, consumers on average use three different connected devices and go online multiple times a day from at the least three different physical locations.



An example of a micro-moment is the “I didn’t plan for” moment. A 2015 Pew Research Center study on smartphone usage found 53 percent of owners have used their phone to get help in an emergency (¹Smith, Aaron. “U.S. Smartphone Use in 2015,” April 1, 2015, <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/04/01/us-smartphone-use-in-2015/>). They reported a need for a local solution: flat tire, assistance, water leak, etc. How can businesses become the go-to in these “I didn’t plan for” micro-moments? Being there for consumers in their moment of need is about providing exactly what is needed in that context, immediately, according to the Harvard Business Review.

Small businesses that have a solid local digital presence can be present with the information consumers need to make purchase decisions in “I want to learn/buy/know/go/do/plan” moments they encounter throughout the day.

Figure 2: How Smartphones Help in a Jam

How Smartphones Help in Emergencies

53% of smartphone owners have used their phone to get help in an emergency situation; here are some recent situations they describe

Car accident / flat tire / roadside assistance	50%
Report a possible crime	14
Medical emergency / call doctor	8
911 / emergency call (general)	5
Lost / stranded / need directions	3
Fire, gas leak, water leak	3
Locked out of house	2

Pew Research Center American Trends Panel survey, October 3-27 2014.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Source: Pew Research Center, 2014

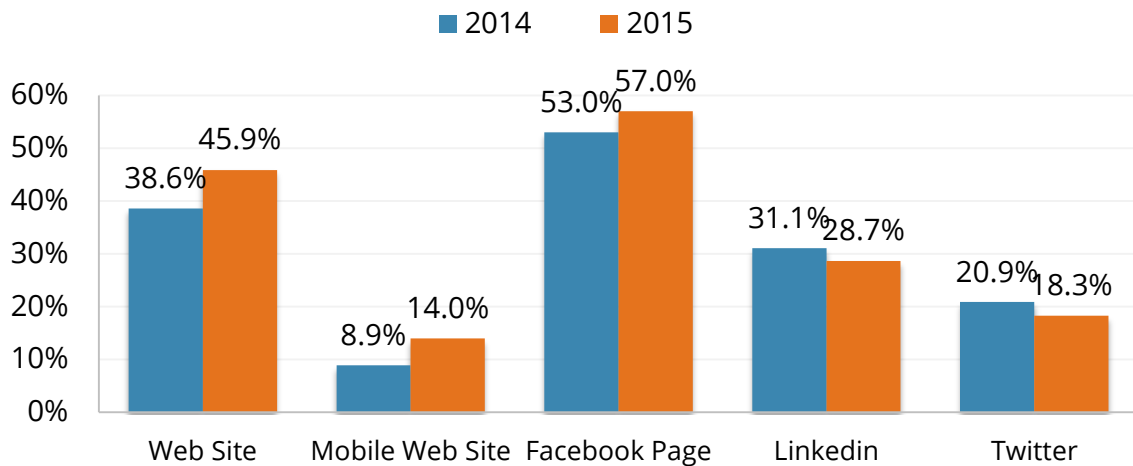
Are Businesses Present in The “Moments”?

Small businesses say their primary challenges are attracting customers, targeting business opportunities, generating web traffic, and finding new business (“Primary Challenge Faced By US Small-Business Owners, Q1 2016”. Wells Fargo & Gallup, February 2016). The best digital paths to attract new customers are to have a solid digital presence, including a website and comprehensive business listings coverage with up-to-date business information. But SMBs also need a strategy. Small businesses are slow to build a solid digital foundation. According to BIA/Kelsey’s 2015 Local



Commerce Monitor™ (LCM) Wave 19 survey of small businesses, only half of small businesses in the US have a web site and 14 percent have a mobile-friendly web site. Use of simple, low cost digital presence advertising is not increasing much among SMBs year-over-year, which could relegate them to failure in the micro-moment market.

Figure 3: SMBs Using Select Digital Media (2016)



Small businesses have even less adoption of mobile presence, where a majority of consumer micro-moments happen. Buzzboard, a San Francisco-based marketing management software developer, found that 90% SMBs do not have a mobile optimized website and 50% have no phone number on their digital properties. In BIA/Kelsey's LCM Wave 19 study of small businesses we found similar results. SMBs lack a specific marketing message strategy and fail to prioritize investments in managing digital presence. The result is the setting for low-performing advertising campaigns with sub-optimal conversion rates.

Case Study – Moving Companies

Another example of SMBs failing to be prepared to address consumers in their micro-moments is the case of consumers who are moving their household. People pursue big goals like moving in small moments, making a series of decisions about home location, job transition, the logistics and labor involved in the move, and so forth. It is not a single motion, but a series of transactions related to moving.

Google found that 90 percent of consumers who have a smartphone make progress towards those goals while away from home. Consumers considering a move need accurate pricing and quote information quickly. The typical moving company's primary opportunity to drive revenue is the founded on the ability to follow up on leads with specific quotes.



Advice Local studied the analytics for their moving company clients' campaigns and found that a majority of searches came from mobile devices. Additionally, consumers were dropping off movers' mobile sites once they reached the moving quote form. Advice Local redesigned the mobile moving experience, including addressing the issue of abandoned quote forms.

The key insight from Advice Local: consumers liked the convenience of searching on mobile, but did not like filling out the request form for a quote on the smartphone. The company devised a new solution for moving company clients called "Click to Quote," implementing it into the clients' mobile site experience. Moving clients saw a substantial increase in calls and quotes coming from mobile users, and in just a year, they tripled their customer acquisition from mobile phones.

Knowing when not to use old website-based forms approaches helped engage the mobile customer.

Best In Class Local Presence Strategies for Businesses: Advice Local

Local presence management has many moving parts. There are many building blocks that can be arranged to provide services to a specific business. To have best in class local presence management strategies, **a business must understand what makes up presence management, which includes the following:**



Local Presence

All of the information surrounding a business's actual physical location, such as where to find it on a map, business hours and its name, address and phone (NAP).



Online Presence

All of the information, processes, and marketing for a business that is presented online. Consumers usually conduct a Google search to find this information, which includes the website, any social media pages, blogs, online reviews from multiple sites, any search engine optimization (SEO) done, and pay-per-click (PPC) advertising just to name some of the options for an SMB.



Local Presence Management

This refers to the seamless merging and control of local and online presence components to positively affect and cultivate a brand's or business's presence in search engines.



Here are 10 areas that must be considered to have a Best in Class local presence management strategy.



1. Use a Mobile Optimized Website

In 2015 Google announced mobile search had overtaken desktop searches, which suggests consumers are making more buying decisions from the small screen and will continue to shift their buying to mobile. Make sure the business is ready to serve your target audience by having:

- A mobile-ready site which loads quickly (Google AMP)
- Clear call-to-action buttons to help consumers contact you (Click-to-call or email)
- Special offers for mobile consumers to increase engagement and brand loyalty



2. Use Consistent Citation Data

Having consistent citation data; name, address, phone number (NAP) and business hours; makes it easier for search engines and consumers to find the business. Citations, including any mention of the business, anywhere online, affect website authority, which affects search placement. And having a top spot in results like Google's three-pack, its featured listings, means more consumers have the opportunity to interact with the brand.



3. Optimize Online Presence in Relevant Directories & Data Aggregators

All local businesses should be listed on major directories such as Google My Business, Bing Places and Yellow Pages. Many of these citations are created on the fly and must be claimed by a representative for the business, in order for it to be beneficial. Submission to major data aggregators also gets the listing into many major directories, all at once, raising its visibility. To increase the chances of being found by consumers, businesses should also list in niche directories for their industry. For example, attorneys would benefit greatly from being listed in FindLaw or Justia, while realtor.com is an ideal niche directory for real estate agents.





4. Have Local-Focused Website Content

Businesses with multiple service areas, stores or venues need to have separate web pages for each location. And local business websites should make references to its geographic areas in their content and SEO-friendly page elements, such as page titles and headers. Examples of content with a local focus include:

- A heating contractor addressing the local climate in posts
- A hotel addressing nearby attractions and activities and ways the hotel helps guests get there

This carefully-crafted website content should also be shared on a brand's social media pages to engage with the locals.



5. Serve the Local Community's Needs

A local business is a part of the community it serves, and providing content such as helpful or entertaining information is one way a business can give a boost to its local presence. Businesses should also get involved in their communities by finding causes or complementary businesses to partner with to engage new customers and to solidify their presence in the minds of consumers. While building relationships with the people, successful businesses will make it a point to include community influencers in their efforts, too.



6. Engage Social Media Channels

It is consistently said that it is difficult to measure the ROI of social media, but this does not mean the channels should be ignored. Providing helpful information, like infographics about the target industry or holding contests and posting deals and specials is likely to catch the eye of consumers who will share the business's information with their networks. In the same way community involvement draws in locals, having lively and relevant social media pages creates new fans and followers, which can drive traffic to brick-and-mortar locations.



7. Have Accurate Map Applications and GPS

Consumers have to be able to find a business to engage with it. Ensuring the business is correctly located on Google Maps and in syndicated listings for mapping companies that populate GPS devices, is a key component of local presence management. Make sure to claim the business, and verify that it is displayed correctly on maps and GPS devices.





8. Stay Engaged With Customers, Monitor Your Reputation

Keep a sharp lookout for the business in various media. Whether checking review sites to ensure customers are taken care of or watching a Twitter feed to see if the brand or industry is trending, remain attentively engaged. A brand can go from hero to zero with one rogue post or lack of social response in a timely manner. Be sure to listen carefully, operate according to existing “best practices” and involve professional reputation management if necessary. Consumers want to work with a trustworthy business. Maintaining a healthy online image plays a huge role in maintaining trust.



9. Monitor Your Metrics

Local presence management can’t neglect the importance of conversion goals and strategies to attain them. Having creative and informative content is only one part of a larger puzzle. Knowing important details like where website traffic is coming from, how long visitors remain on certain pages and if consumers respond to calls to action are signals for local presence managers to use in campaigns. Utilize free applications like Google Analytics and Webmaster tools. They are worth their weight in gold for monitoring this vital information.



10. Take Control of Your Local Presence

Work hard to get the chance to provide an excellent experience for clients and customers. Presenting accurate data, to the right sources is both the first and final puzzle piece in customer service. Consumers can only engage online with businesses and brands they can *easily* find; this means a basic search by industry, category or a direct query for the business name are required to lift the site, service or app atop page one.

Ensuring consistent NAP data, business hours and proper locations listed, relevant content targeting the proper keywords and phrases will see the listing doing well in local presence management metrics.

Taking control of an SMBs local digital presence is just the first step. A plan for continued monitoring and measurement is critical to the success of any local presence management strategy.



About BIA/Kelsey



BIA/Kelsey is a market research and analyst firm that focuses on all things local. Local media is an increasingly dynamic area of ad spending, and is quickly evolving with emerging digital platforms like mobile, social and search.

Over the past three decades, BIA/Kelsey has been an authority on these developing technologies as well as their forbearers in traditional media, which continue to transform as they likewise compete for local ad dollars and consumer affinity.

Through a growing suite of products that includes research reports, articles, conferences, and client consulting, BIA/Kelsey analyzes the business, financial, social and technology trends affecting local media.

Readers, event attendees, partners and clients are given the inside track on critical data, analysis, and recommendations needed to grow and transform in a rapidly evolving media and advertising landscape.

About BIA/Kelsey Sponsored Research



BIA/Kelsey Sponsored Reports are commissioned by companies that wish to spotlight areas of coverage. BIA/Kelsey maintains full editorial control and applies longstanding standards of editorial practice and objective market analysis.



About Advice Local



Founded in 2009, Advice Local offers superior local presence management technologies and services to small-to-medium-sized businesses, channel partners, agencies and national brands. To date, they have helped more than 300,000 business locations reach mobile consumers, across a network of more than 200 directories, search engines, online profiles, applications, mapping solutions and social media partners; these include Google, Apple, Bing, Facebook, Foursquare, Yahoo and Yelp.

Their local search technologies and agency services have the bandwidth to enable millions of businesses to tap into the power of accurate location data. This, in turn, drives face-to-face and digital interactions, intended to boost customer engagement, build audiences and increase sales, through an all-inclusive, white-label, SaaS-based dashboard and marketing platform.

