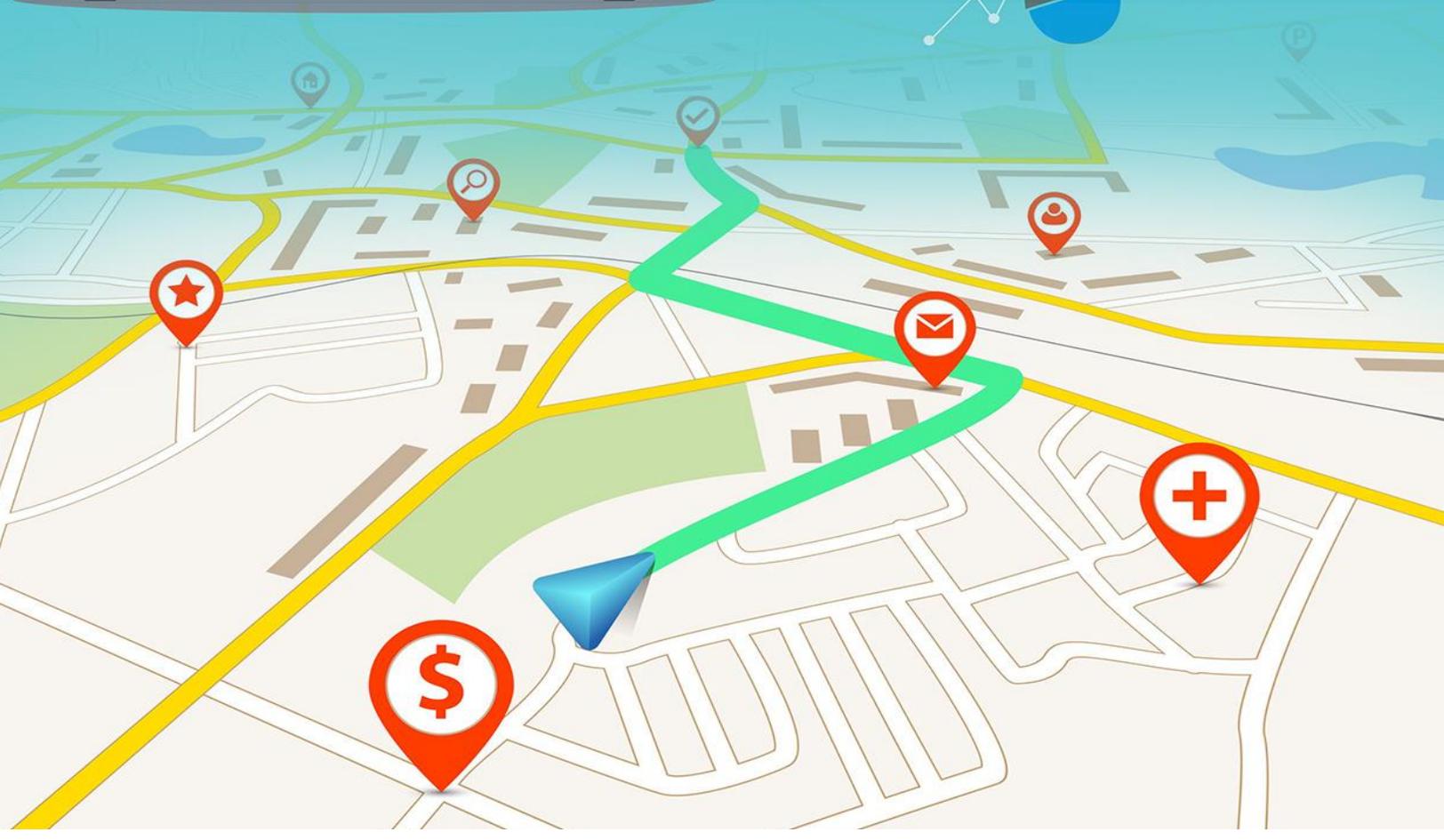
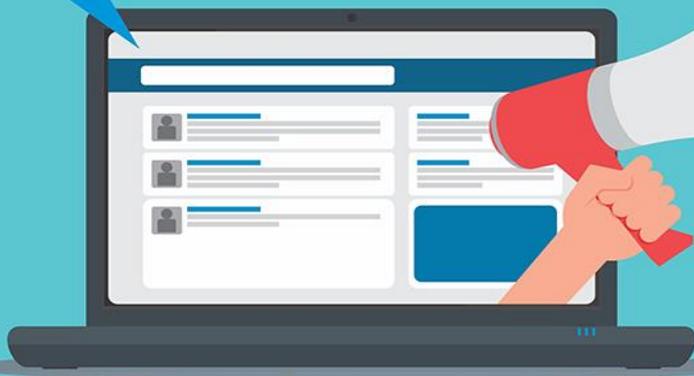


# NEWSLETTER

MAY 2016



Local Business Marketing



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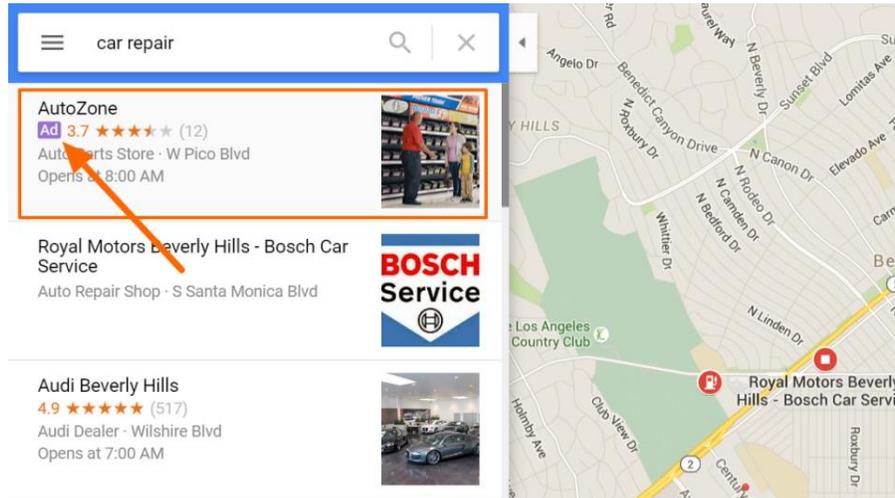
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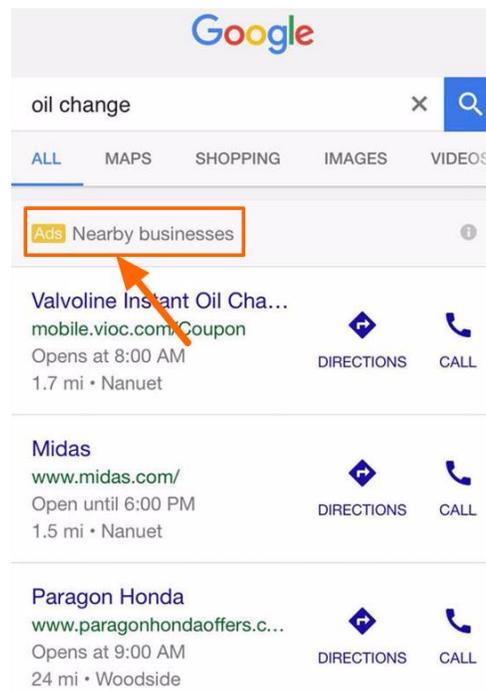
# 1

## LATEST HAPPENINGS IN THE WORLD OF LOCAL SEARCH FOR THE MONTH OF MAY 2016

- Google has started placing ads in the Local Finder. They look exactly like the organic results except the little “Ad” sign.



- Google Maps is now no longer considered part of Search Partners. Maps has been **removed** from the list of Google sites included in Search Partners in the AdWords help pages. Since the first two topics are extremely relevant to local marketers, we've covered it in detail in the next article.
- Moving on, it seems like Google is on revamping spree as they have also changed the format of nearby ads on mobile. Now the SERP looks similar to local pack followed by a Map.



- Yahoo got a new bidder for their ad platform. YP.com has shown interest in buying Yahoo's ad platform. If the deal gets closed, it will be beneficial for both the parties.
- Why you need to find all your NAP variations before building local citations. Brilliant article by Moz's Darren Shaw. Do check it out.
- Having a Google+ account is no longer compulsory to write a review. A Google+ profile was mandatory since January 2012.
- Google has recently updated their Guidelines on "How to improve your Local Search Rankings".

## Prominence

Prominence refers to how well-known a business is. Some places are more prominent in the offline world, and search results try to reflect this in local ranking. For example, famous museums, landmark hotels, or well-known store brands that are familiar to many people are also likely to be prominent in local search results.

Prominence is also based on information that Google has about a business from across the web (like links, articles, and directories). Google review count and score are factored into local search ranking: more reviews and positive ratings will probably improve a business's local ranking. Your position in web results is also a factor, so SEO best practices also apply to local search optimization.

There's no way to request or pay for a better local ranking on Google. We do our best to keep the details of the search algorithm confidential to make the ranking system as fair as possible for everyone.

- [Factual and Facebook Expand Location Data Partnership](#). The data is used across many features in Facebook including Facebook Business Pages, places search, Check Ins, and Place Tips.
- ['HERE Maps' is trying to compete against the Google & Apple Maps](#). They are trying to join hands with Microsoft & Amazon to boost up their mapping system.
- [Localizing your image alt tags](#) will be beneficial for you, said Google's John Mueller.
- You should utilize your good reviews to the fullest. To know how, check out [this article](#).
- Google's search quality Evaluator guidelines are streamlined a little. Do [check it out](#).
- BrightLocal recently conducted a survey to find out which Local SEO tasks are the most commonly outsourced. Check out the results [here](#).



- If you are trying to figure out what [Trust Flow](#) you need in a vertical, check out [this article](#) by Majestic. In case you don't know, be informed that the Trust Flow is a metric developed by Majestic to help you evaluate whether the website has a good backlink profile.
- Better Business Bureau and YP.com have teamed up to provide [BBB ratings](#) in Yellow Pages. After applying the BBB filter, users will only see businesses that have A or A+ ratings.
- Vistaprint has stepped into the [local listing business](#) and they are confident that they are going to be a big player in that space. They will use data from Neustar Localeze & will charge as low as \$10/month.
- In near future, you will be able to [make payments via Facebook messenger](#). Alright ... so this is why Facebook appointed David Marcus, the Ex-president of PayPal!
- Amazon takes on PayPal & others with the launch of [Amazon Payments](#) partner program. It will not only be convenient for buyers but also for Amazon's E-commerce partner.
- Facebook has announced that they will allow [chatbots](#) to use their messenger platform. However, it came as a no surprise because they are testing ads on the chatbots too.

# 2

## GOOGLE MAKES 2 CRITICAL AD UPDATES AFFECTING LOCAL SEARCH MARKETERS

Google likes to be in control and that's why it keeps making changes in its search algorithm, to keep businesses guessing and the search industry on its toes. This time again Google made some changes to the local SERPs. These changes will have an impact on searches pertaining to the physical location of businesses, especially retailers and service providers.

### Ads to Now Appear in Local Finder Results

Business ads find themselves in a new space, in the Local Finder results as big brands are being forced out of the local SERPs. Locating these branded ads now becomes a task as the user has to click on the "More Places" option that is being served in Google's three pack search results. Brian Barwig, the local SEO specialist spotted these ads first in the Local Finder results.



**Brian Barwig**  
@BrianBarwig

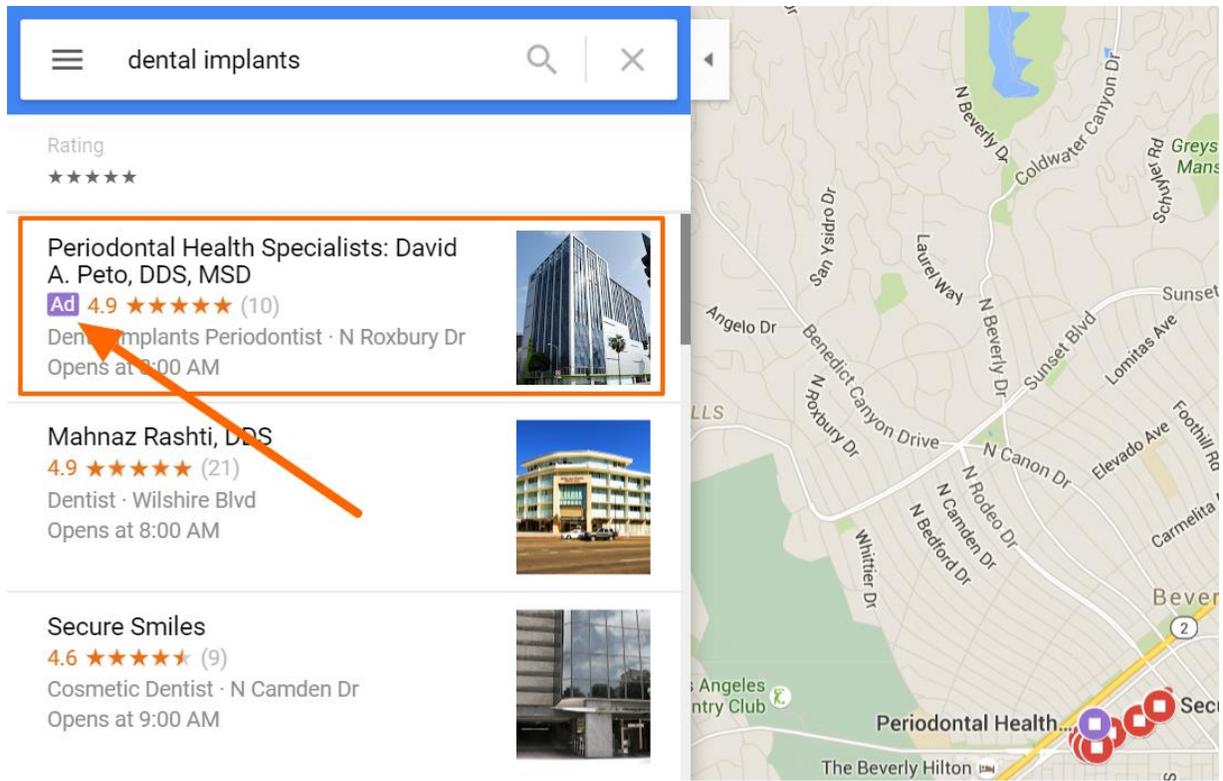
 Follow

Its happening!! Ads in the Local Finder. Anyone else seeing this? @JoyanneHawkins @mblumenthal @rustybrick  
[pic.twitter.com/DqFOGvBaEo](https://pic.twitter.com/DqFOGvBaEo)

8:24 PM - 19 Apr 2016

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Panic will set in amongst businesses with ads being moved to a new place. But this also serves an opportunity for businesses, especially the lowly ranked service providers and retailers who will now have to figure out a new way to find a place in Google's top three search rankings. They will have to do so quickly as the new functionality now requires a user to click on the "more listing" option in Google's SERPs to search for information about the bottom listed businesses. Besides that, SEOs will have a hard time figuring out how to move their clients' organic search ranking to the top of the SERPs.



The ads that now show up in the Local Finder results will make use of AdWords extensions to get a physical location for listed businesses. The process is similar to the updated Google Map feature that uses AdWords location extensions when searching for a business location. But unlike results in Maps, Business Ads listed in the Local Finder results are not pinned on the Map results.

Let's see what a Google spokesperson has to say about this new experimental test. "We're always testing out new formats for local businesses, but don't have any additional details to share for now."

## **Google Maps no longer a Search Partner**

Besides announcing a few changes in how ads will show up in Google Maps, Google has now officially removed Google Maps as a Search Partner. On one hand, Google is doing away with the regular text ads and on the other it may soon display ads along with location extensions in Google Maps. Moreover, Google has also made it known to businesses about its decision to remove Google Maps services as a Search Partner.

### **Here's what the changes in the Maps' status may mean to the users.**

1. Businesses using location extensions will now be able to run ads in Google Maps to see a surge in their click through impressions when their ads are displayed in the Maps.
2. Businesses that are search partners but opted out of the location extensions could witness a drop in their click through impressions since their ads are no longer being displayed in the Maps.

Google plans to include more businesses in Maps Ad auctions, which is why it's been included as a part of Google's search inventory. Google's emphasis on location extensions is purely on the basis of it's over dependence on structured data and feeds, which online retailers will vouch for.

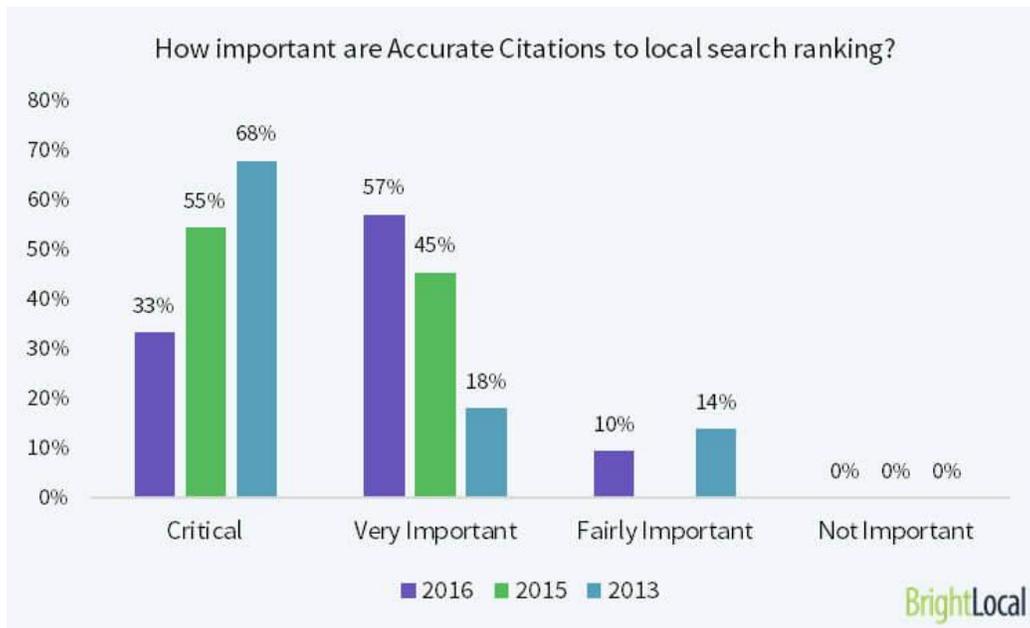
# 3

## EXPERT LOCAL CITATION SURVEY 2016

This is the latest & most intensive survey conducted on local citations. Many local search experts have provided their vast experience, invaluable knowledge & insights on the same topic.

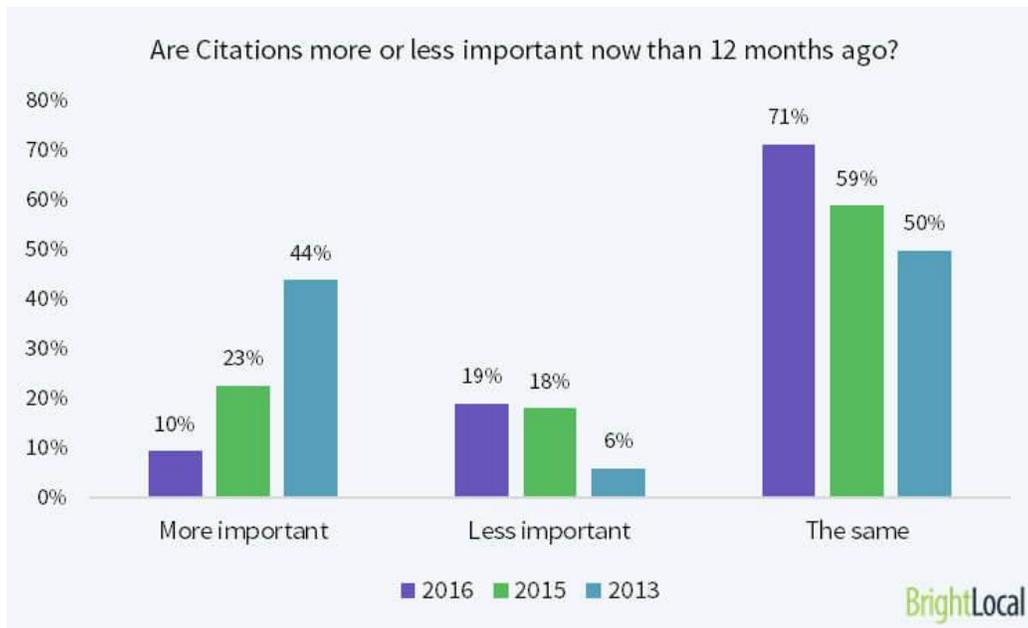
To check out the relevancy of local citations in 2016, we asked our expert's several questions which are listed below.

### How important is the role of accurate citations in local ranking?



Over 90% experts said that accurate citation is critical or very important to local search ranking. However, the percentage of experts who say that the citation is critical has fallen down to 33% from 55%. It indicates that with time, citation importance has faded a bit.

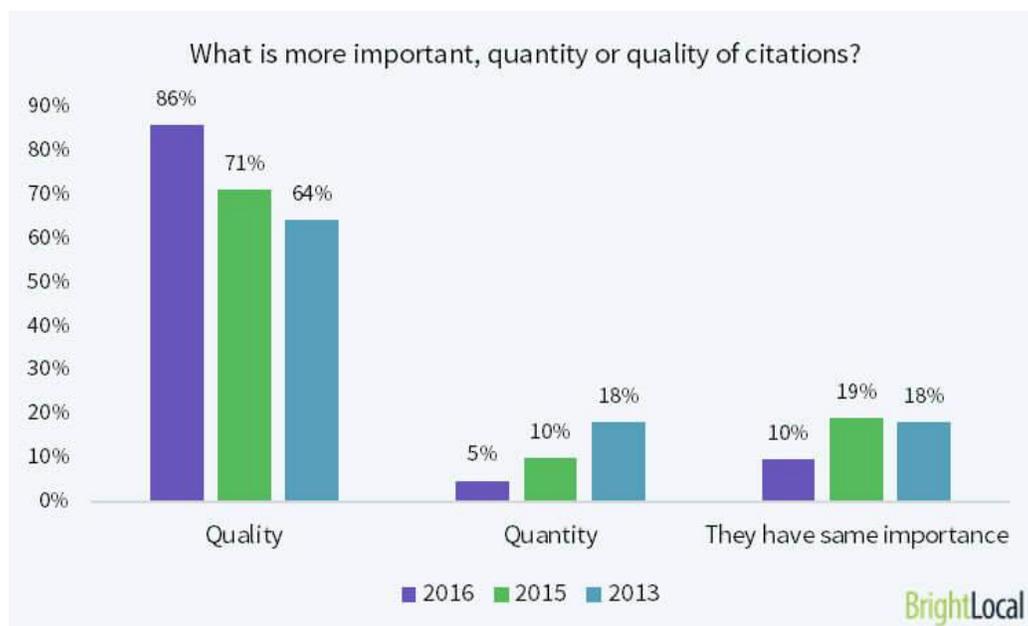
## The importance of citation has increased or decreased?



The majority of the experts said that citation's importance has remained the same. While 19% says it has lessened as compared to 2015. While 10% are saying that its importance has grown by time and will continue to grow in near future as well.

After analysis, we came to a conclusion that importance of citations has been declined over years.

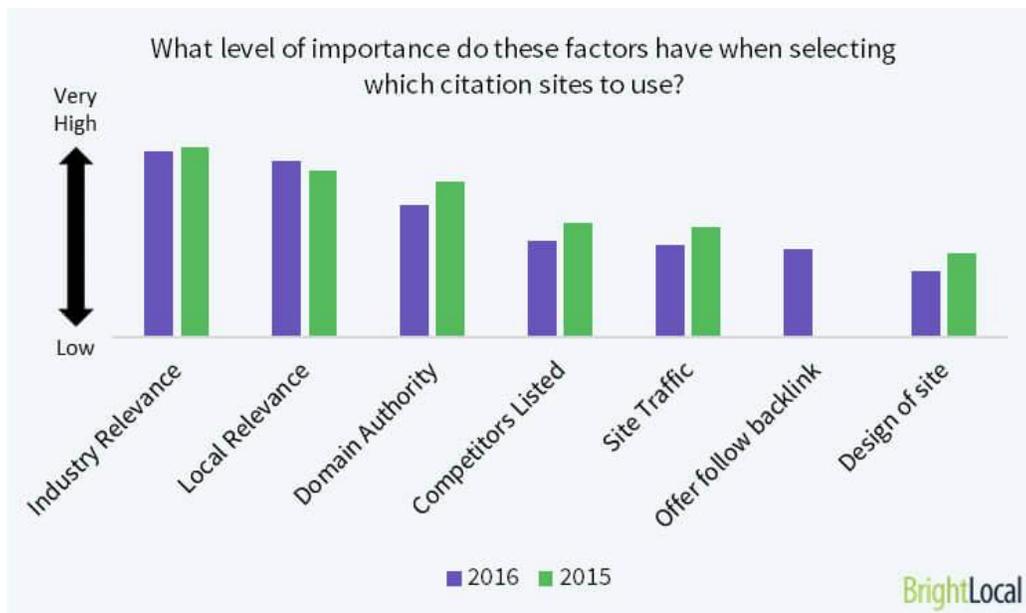
## Which is more beneficial quantity or quality of citations?



86% experts said that the quality is more important than the quantity, 10% says that both are equally important while only 5% thinks that quantity trumps quality. So we can confidently say that nowadays quality citations matters the most. And by quality, we mean the type of websites citations are built on.

However in some scenarios quantity also matters. For instance, in competitive markets such as Dentists or Lawyers.

### What is the most important factor?



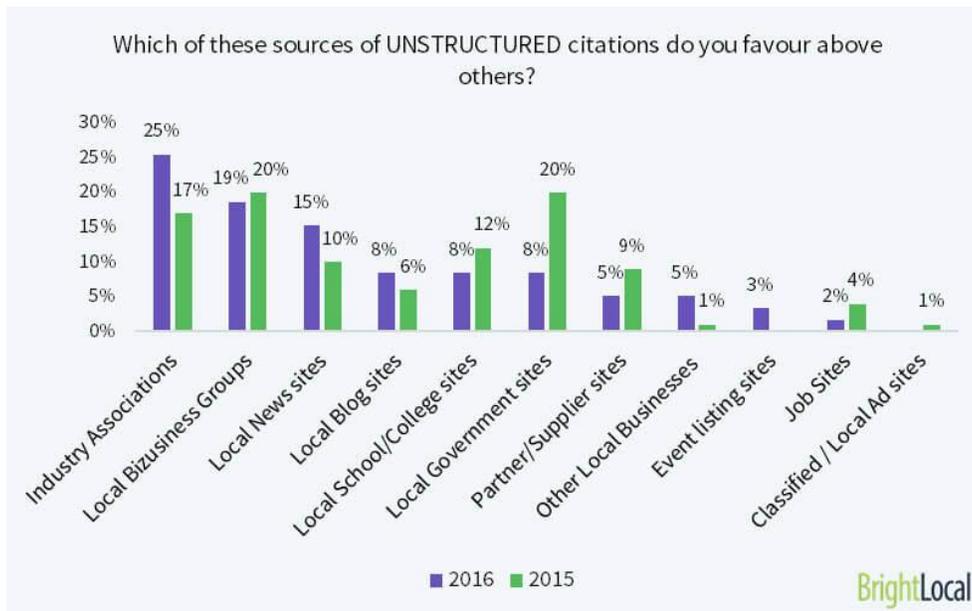
Website design and Follow backlink are the least important, the domain authority is 2nd while Industry relevance is the clear winner here. It is because Firstly, they help Google to understand about the product or service a business is providing and secondly they generally have unique and deeper content which Google adores.

## Websites that are best for structured citations?



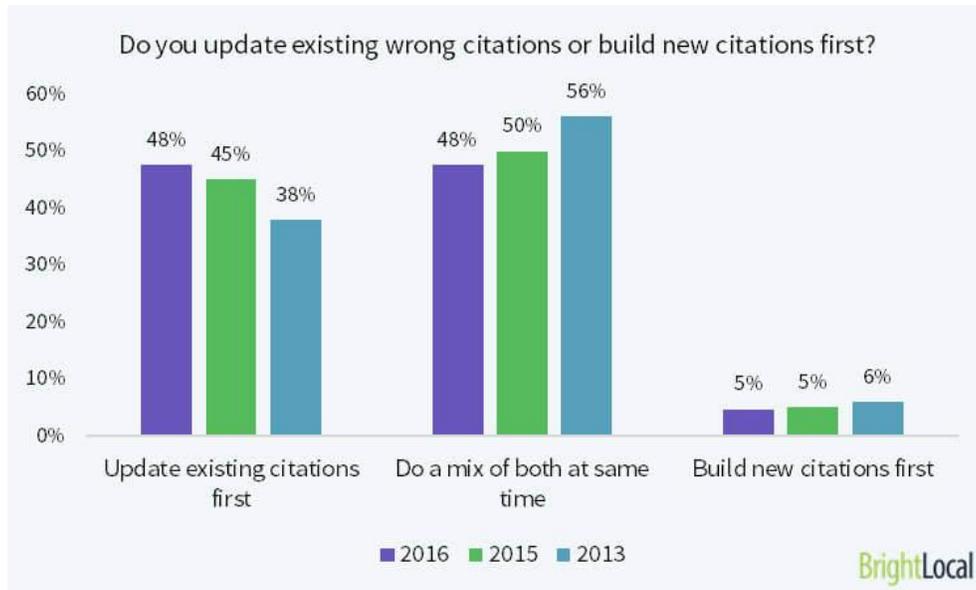
A structured citation is a mention of your business on websites/business directories. Currently, local directories offer the tremendous authority while the national Directories have lost their authoritative.

## Unstructured citations source that you will prefer?



Unstructured citations neither use mark-up to present data nor do they use any defined presentation of business data. It means that they are incomplete listing with only partial NAP mention.

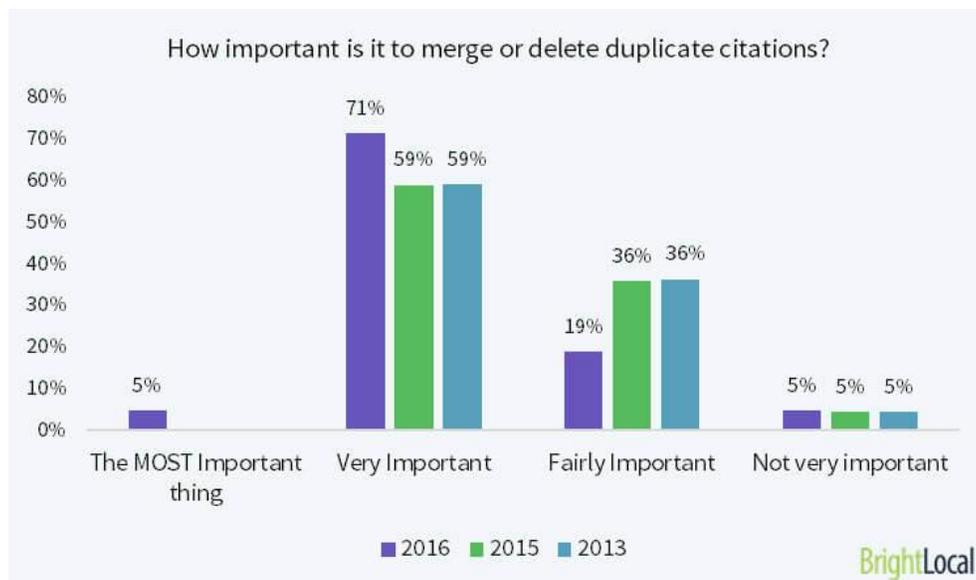
## What will be best, updating existing wrong citations or building new ones?



Experts seem divided on this topic. Half or 48% to be specific, says that you should update the existing citations first while another half 48% says that you should focus on both at the same time.

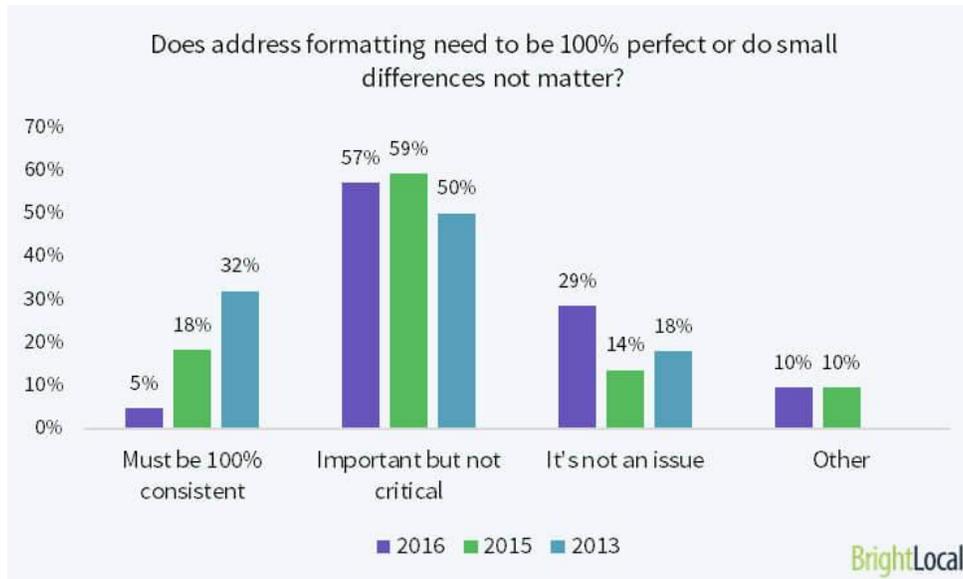
Be informed that it is vital to clean up any existing data issues since it can hinder you from achieving good local rankings. We suggest you to fully audit your current citations before you start working on the new one because that way, you can build new citation knowing that you have a strong base.

## Is it vital to merge or delete duplicate citations?



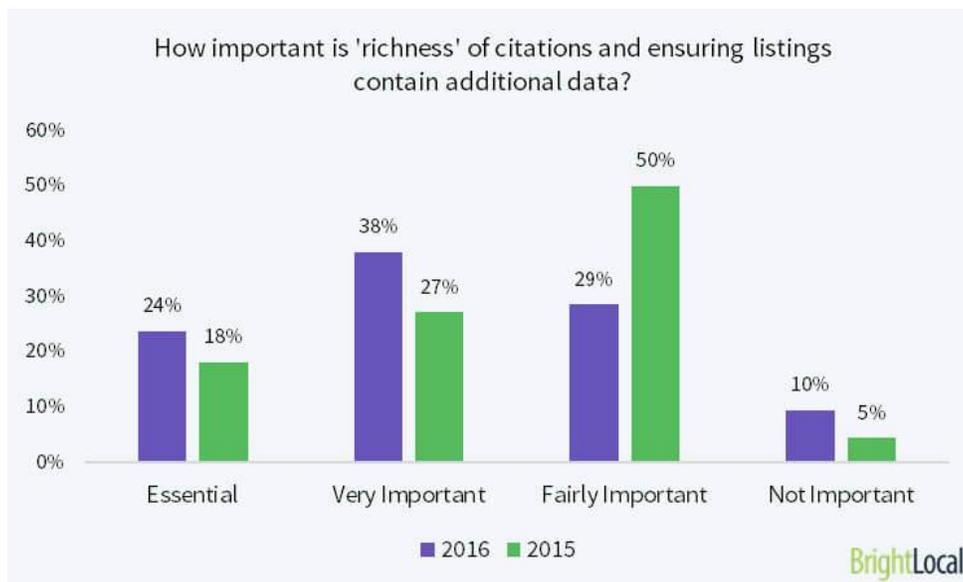
Experts say that you should tackle duplicate citations promptly. It is tricky and time-consuming but worth the effort. Also, its importance has growing year by year. It strengthens the importance of having a clean data set that google can easily understand.

## Do we have to be very careful while formatting address?



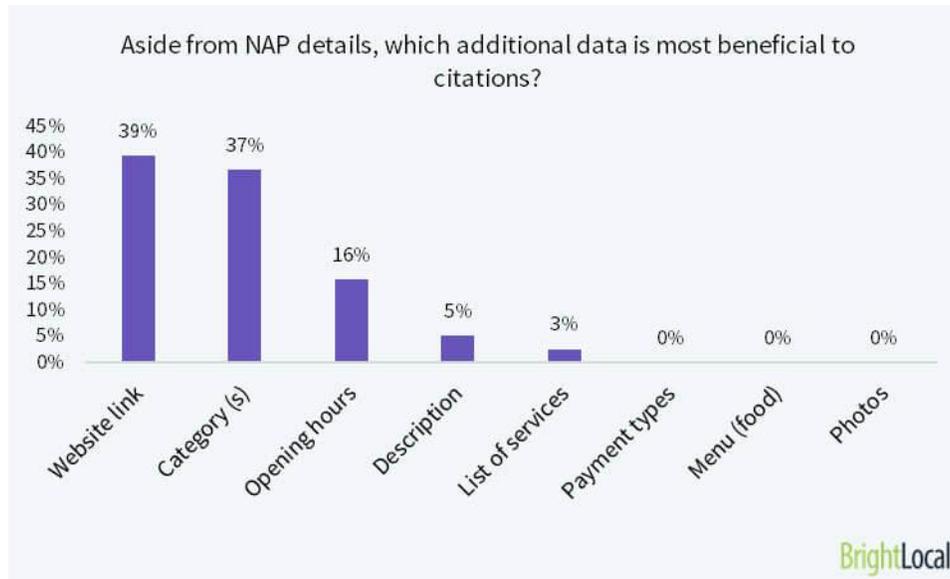
The majority of the experts agree on this that it is important but not critical.

## How important is 'richness' of citations?



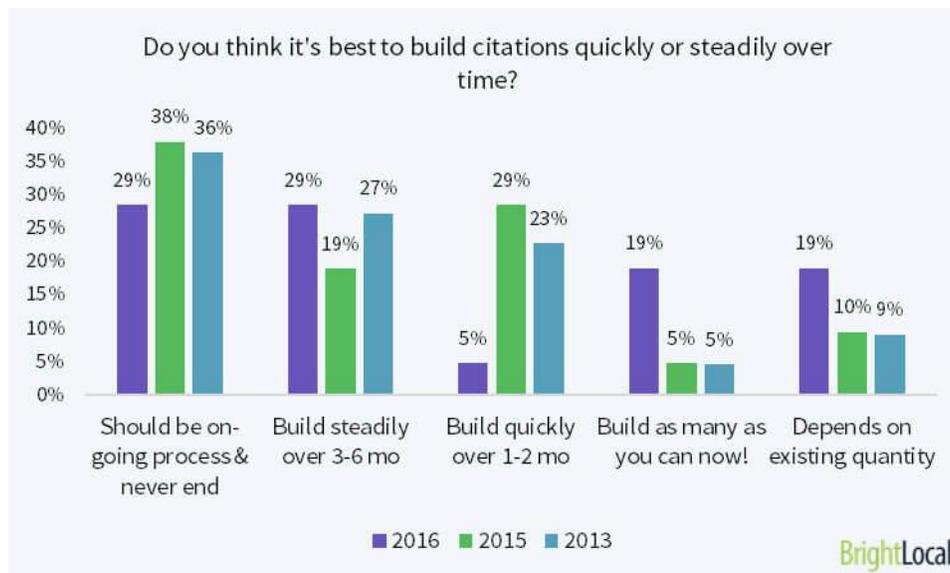
Citations that contain additional data like photos, business hours, payment details, etc. are called rich citations. The rich Citations are gaining popularity day by day. It is because it gives you the power to effectively reach to your customers even before they visit your site. So we recommend you to employ rich citations.

## Which additional data is most beneficial to citations?



Getting backlinks from an authority site is considered to be the most important factor, beyond having a correct nap. Category selection is also important as it tells Google about your business.

## Should we build citations quickly or steadily over time?

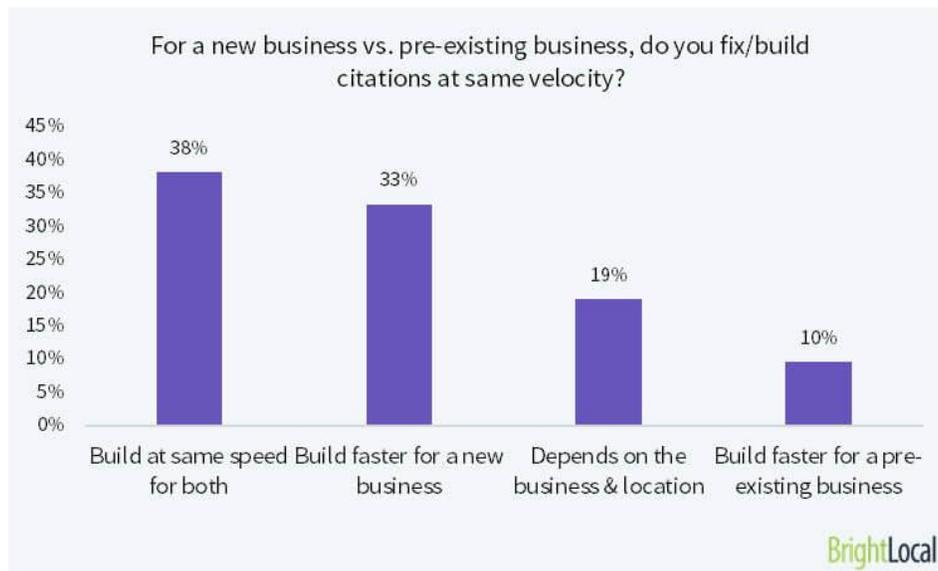


Experts are divided over this matter. The top 2 views suggest that citations should be built over 3-6 months and it should be an ongoing process.

19 percent experts said that it depends on the quantity of your existing citation. For newbies, 50 citations will be good but for established businesses, this number is not enough.

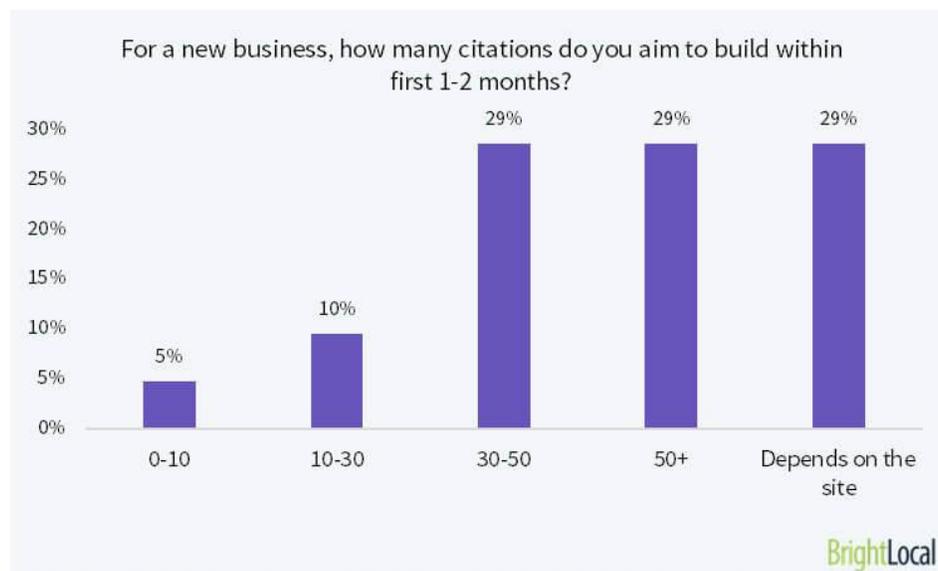
The level of competition also determines the number of citations one need to be successful.

### Do the velocity of building citations should be same for both new business & existing business?



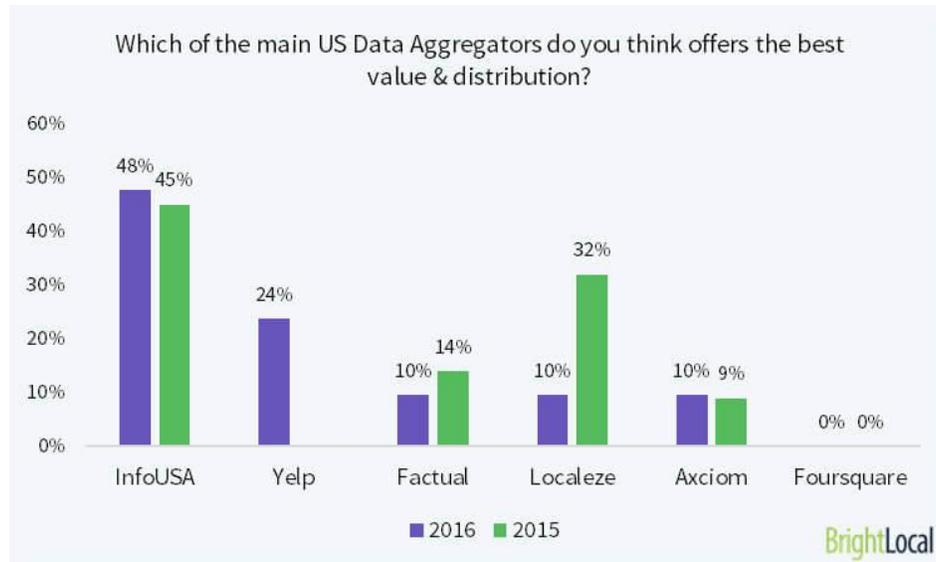
The opinion of experts is divided on this matter, Although most agree that a new business should build citations faster than the established ones.

### How many citations does a new business should build in 1-2 months?



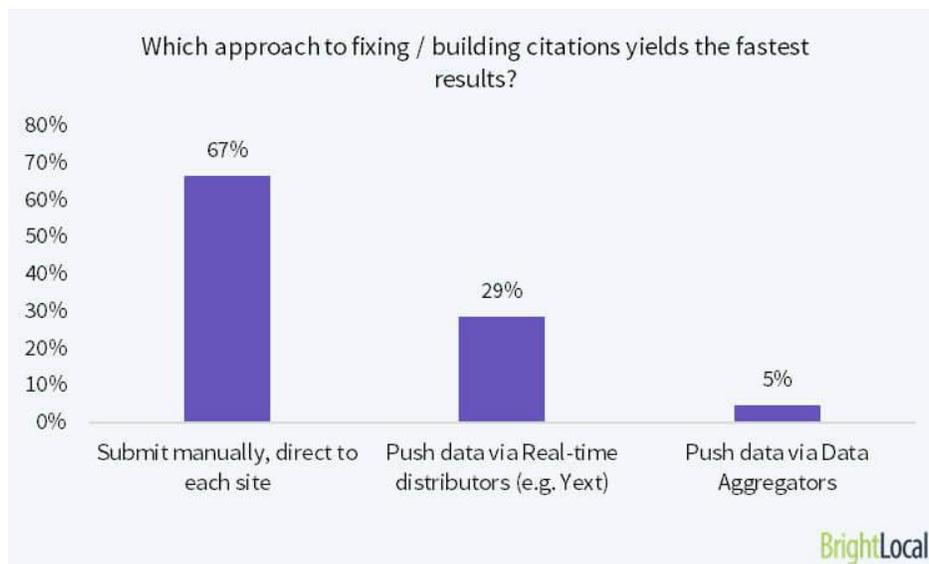
You should build at least 35 citations within the first two months. Although you can stretch it to 50 or 60 but 30 will be the minimum number of citation you will require for a new business.

### Which US Data Aggregators is good?



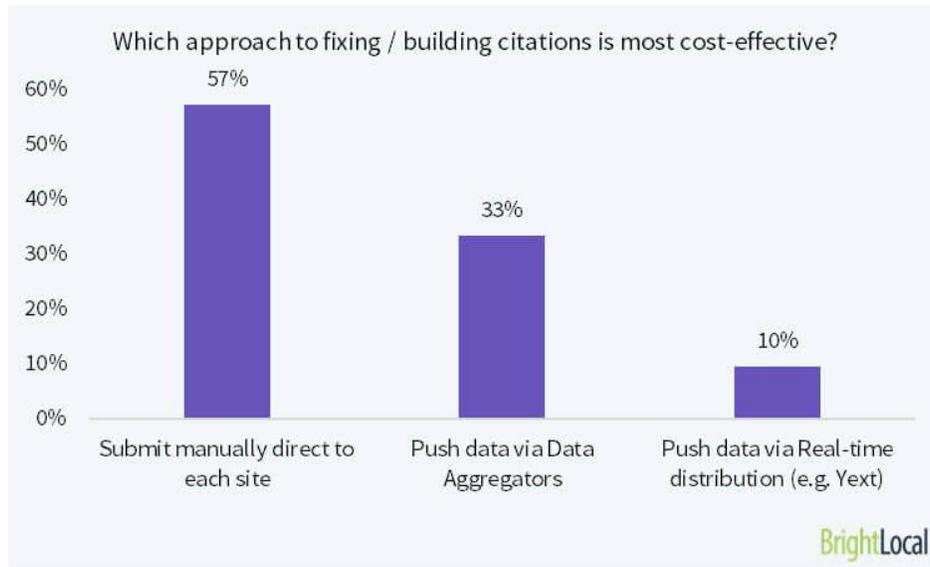
Turns out that InfoUSA is the best data Aggregator when it comes to distribution. Yelp is also a leading player in this segment despite being a citation site itself. Localeze has lost its popularity probably because they are the only site that charges (two-three hundred dollars) to add listings.

### Which approach is best to fix or build citations?



Experts suggest that Instead of using data aggregators or real-time networks prefer Manual submission. It may be time-consuming, but it delivers results faster than the other two options.

## Which approach is most cost-effective?



Manual submissions give you a combination of faster results and greater control over your listings. Submitting manually typically allows you to claim a listing so you have control over it forever more which is very important.

# 4

## HOW TO UNWIND GOOGLE'S IMPENDING MANUAL ACTION WHEN FOUND GUILTY OF USING UNNATURAL LINKS



The last thing you want as an SEO or a webmaster is to receive a message from Google's webmasters telling you a manual action has been placed on your site on account of the presence of unnatural links pointing to your site. Many honest businesses, who never participated in any link parties, paid for links or even placed ads on their sites, are left surprised when they are informed that their site is due for a manual action. So, what do you make of such an email? How do you figure out why you received this email, what it actually means and what needs to be done next? Well, if you happen to find yourself in such a situation, where you're running short of ideas then here are a few things you could do to see yourself through.

What businesses can do

For starters, you need to know that through manual action Google can only demote or remove certain web pages or the entire website linked to unnatural links. Don't link it to a change in Google's algorithms such as Panda, Penguin, Phantom, Hummingbird, etc. This is simply Google's way of manually punishing a site for using spamming tactics online.

Let's come to the point. The email that you received is nothing but a manual penalty owing to the presence of [outbound unnatural links pointing to your site](#). This simply means that after reviewing your site, Google found some links that "may" be paying you or compensating you in lieu of links.

Also, their main purpose of serving you with a notice is that they want you to do something about those links which violate the webmaster's guidelines. On a positive note, you don't need to worry about a drop in your site's search ranking, because Google doesn't really count those outbound unnatural links pointing to your site.

Now, you may not have received any payment for such linking activities, but can you think of an exchange of certain goods or services?

Here's a section from [Google's webmaster guidelines](#) that deals with manual action penalty.

**"Buying or selling links that pass PageRank: This includes exchanging money for links, or posts that contain links; exchanging goods or services for links; or sending someone a "free" product in exchange for them writing about it and including a link."**

Google recently came out with [best practices for bloggers](#) in its official blog. It clearly states that if site owners are found to be indulging in the practice of exchanging free products for reviews with links then they stand a chance of getting penalized.

So, if you happen to receive a correspondence related to a manual action penalty from Google then check the [free products reviews guidelines](#) that are listed as below.

- On the top and at the bottom of the post, place a disclosure stating that the blog post is sponsored or that it is an advertorial.
- Ensure that you nofollow all the links pointing to your sponsors, their app, their products or even their social media pages.
- You also need to review your post to make sure that it adds value to the user in terms of quality and uniqueness.

To get rid of the penalty action, closely monitor your site for the presence of any advertorial, affiliate links and sponsored content. Ensure that you nofollow any of those links pointing to your site. After doing a complete audit of your site, which includes identifying and nofollowing the links in question, you can request Google to [reconsider it's impending manual action](#) against your site as it now fully adheres to Google's quality guidelines.

In case, you need any professional advice on how to submit a reconsideration request to Google and get a successful end result, you can follow the below mentioned best practices.

- You can be nice. Control your emotions and remain calm. It can be difficult to do that in such circumstances, but avoid being confrontational when replying to Google's notice so that it doesn't hurt you later.
- Get rid of the links and then nofollow them from your end. These steps are necessary, since what Google wants to see is a serious effort being made to remove these links from your site.
- Be accurate with your details. Let Google know that you made some serious efforts a part of your corrective measures. If possible you may also attach supporting docs.
- Take responsibility for your action. To err is human. If you admit that you've made some mistakes and will not commit the same in future, you'll help your cause immensely.

Last but not the least, let Google know that you've now gone through the [webmaster's guidelines](#) and you'll be careful in your future dealings with advertisers or sponsors and their websites.

If you're still short of ideas then you could take some tips from [how to successfully submit reconsideration request to Google](#).

Finally, it will do you good to not take advice from not so credible sources, like online suggestions that recommend you nofollow every outbound link pointing to your site as a measure to escape Google's punishment. This tactic may do more harm in return.

Need professional help? We can be of assistance. Just contact our sales reps and our pros will be working for you within 24 hours.

# 5

## FACEBOOK TO UPDATE ITS NEWSFEED ALGORITHM AGAIN



It's quite natural for marketers to take utmost care when an update gets rolled out on any social networking platform; especially on a giant platform like Facebook. We all know that Facebook has been frequent with its new updates and this would definitely be an important one on their records, in recent times. The new update has more to do with the time spent in reading content, along with the Likes, shares, comments, etc. Are you curious to know a bit more about this update? Here's a perfect example for you:

You may scroll quickly through your News Feed and like a photo of your friend's graduation, followed by sharing a funny post from your sister. You keep scrolling and happen to stumble upon a post your cousin shared that lists out everything she did and saw on her recent trip. Her post even includes a photo. You spend time reading her post and the interesting discussion about the best places to eat that had broken out in the comments on this post, but you don't feel inclined to like or comment on it. Based on the fact that you didn't scroll straight past this post and it was on the screen for more time than other posts that were in your News Feed, we infer that it was something you found interesting and we may start to surface more posts like that higher up in your News Feed in the future.

What would be the challenge for marketers?

Time will be the biggest challenge, but the concept is going to be a little different here! In usual cases, the one who takes less time to get the desired result would be the winner. But here, marketers win only when they get more time or more attention of a user on a particular post. Let's wait and see how everyone prepares to overcome this challenge!