

# NEWSLETTER

MAY 2020



**Google Aims GMB to Become  
More Powerful Post**

**C**  **VID-19**

**Ideas to Update Your  
Digital Presence Amid  
THE PANDEMIC**



**GOOGLE  
SHOPPING**

**Now Allows Listing  
Your Products  
For Free**

**1****'GOOGLE SHOPPING' NOW ALLOWS LISTING YOUR PRODUCTS FOR FREE****2****GOOGLE AIMS GMB TO BECOME MORE POWERFUL POST COVID-19****3****IDEAS TO UPDATE YOUR DIGITAL PRESENCE AMID THE PANDEMIC**

# 1

## 'GOOGLE SHOPPING' NOW ALLOWS LISTING YOUR PRODUCTS FOR FREE

Serious signs of competition between Amazon and Google were first witnessed when the Popular Products feature within Organic Search was rolled out by Google. It enabled retailers to leverage Google's Merchant Feed and product schemes to get their products highlighted in Organic Search. All the participating retailers got to appear in this feature for free.

Google **announced** this year that due to the financial strain caused by COVID-19, they have sped up their timeline and are now offering businesses free of charge inclusion into Google Shopping that was initially available in the US as of May 1st, later followed by other countries.

*"Beginning next week, search results on the Google Shopping tab will consist primarily of free listings, helping merchants better connect with consumers, regardless of whether they advertise on Google. With hundreds of millions of shopping searches on Google each day, we know that many retailers have the items people need in stock and ready to ship, but are less discoverable online.*

*For retailers, this change means free exposure to millions of people who come to Google every day for their shopping needs. For shoppers, it means more products from more stores, discoverable through the Google Shopping tab. For advertisers, this means paid campaigns can now be augmented with free listings. If you're an existing user of Merchant Center and Shopping ads, you don't have to do anything to take advantage of the free listings, and for new users of Merchant Center, we'll continue working to streamline the onboarding process over the coming weeks and months."*

The Google Shopping results will appear to be quite similar to that of organic results, including Paid results at the top/bottom and Organic results in the middle.

The screenshot shows a Google Shopping search for "baby toys" with the following elements:

- Search Bar:** "baby toys" with a microphone and search icon.
- Navigation:** Home, Stores, Departments, Orders, About Google Shopping.
- Location:** Houston, TX.
- Filters:**
  - Show only:** Buy on Google (checkbox).
  - Price:** Up to \$25, \$25 - \$45, \$45 - \$90, Over \$90.
  - Condition:** New items, Used items.
  - Seller:** Bed Bath & Beyond, buybuy BABY, eBay, Target, Walmart, MORE.
- PAID RESULTS:** A row of eight sponsored product cards. A red arrow points to this section from a "Sponsored" label. A "Buy on Google" label with an arrow points to the first card in this row.
- BUY ON GOOGLE RESULTS:** A single product card for "Fisher-Price Classic Infant Trio Baby Gift Set" with a price of \$29.99. A red arrow points to this section from the "BUY ON GOOGLE RESULTS" label.
- ORGANIC RESULTS:** A row of four organic product cards. A red arrow points to this section from the "ORGANIC RESULTS" label. A text box explains that items are ranked based on relevance to search terms.

Those new to the Merchant Center should know that creating an account will let them feed product details and information directly to Google. You do not have to wait for it to get picked up from your product schema. Additionally, there are a ton of other useful features.

Google also announced building ties with various other platforms to further simplify processing sales.

*"We're also kicking off a new partnership with PayPal to allow merchants to link their accounts. This will speed up our onboarding process and ensure we're surfacing the highest quality results for our users. And we're continuing to work closely with many of our existing partners that help merchants manage their products and inventory, including Shopify, WooCommerce, and BigCommerce, to make digital commerce more accessible for businesses of all sizes."*

**Action Plan** – With this permanent change, the opportunity is here to stay. But if you are selling products online, you should definitely make it a point to get started with this as soon as possible. All you will require is a Google Merchant Center account and will have to opt into surfaces across Google in order to show up in the Organic Google Shopping results.

Know that **product markup** will help Google understand your products well for features like Popular Products. So get it done as well.

For further guidance, use **[Google's Help center page](#)** or get in touch with us to get your products listed on Google!

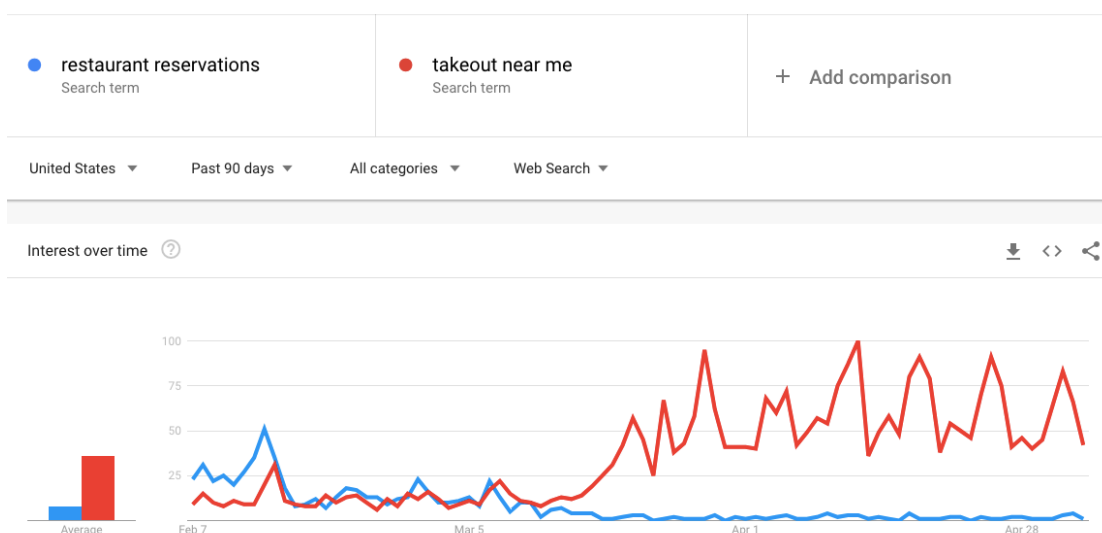
# 2

## GOOGLE AIMS GMB TO BECOME MORE POWERFUL POST COVID-19

Google My Business (GMB) has become one of the most significant aspects for local SEOs as well as the one-stop-shop for consumers to know about store hours, closures, services offered, and other relevant information.

**Shifting Engagement on GMB:** Consumer engagement has changed considerably during the pandemic, as shown by the click and call data. With this, online buying behavior has also been **impacted**.

For example, the search query “takeout near me” has **spiked way up** as compared to those for “restaurant reservations” since at-home orders came into force.

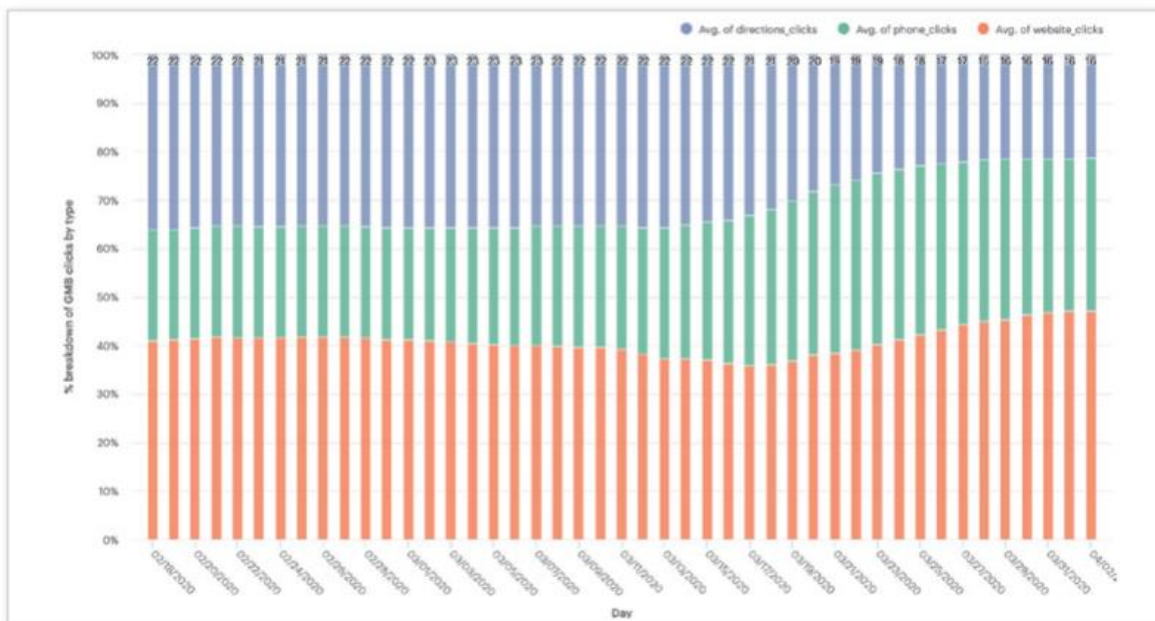


Source: <https://trends.google.com>

**Directions, Clicks, Calls, and Reviews:** Although requests for directions have come down considerably since the COVID-19 outbreak, there hasn't been much of an effect on calls and website visits driven by GMB. According to **new data from Reputation.com**, “GMB driving-direction clicks are down 60% across all verticals.” Website clicks and calls have decreased by 31% & 21%, respectively.

When it comes to GMB, Reputation.com reports a notable decline in retail, restaurant, and automotive industry but also a modest recovery in consumer engagement. This could very well be the catalyst in online shopping and e-commerce spending driven by stimulus checks and by the thought that we're almost at the end of the lockdown period.

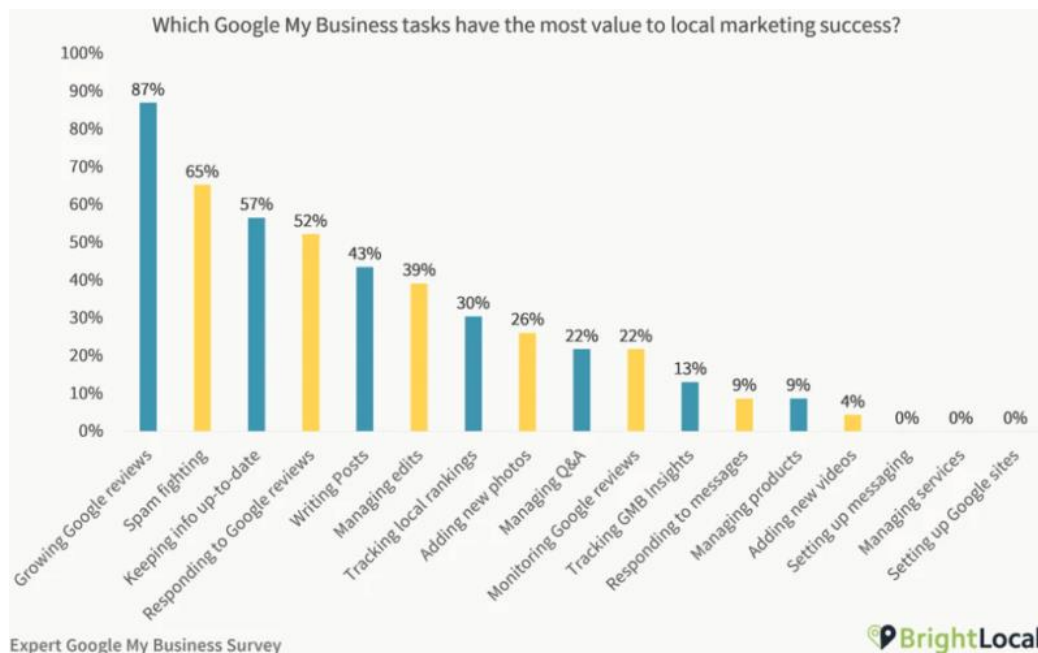
Being hit by the pandemic, Google had stopped publishing new comments from users & replies from business owners until now. **Reviews are making their way back in**, and it will be interesting to see if and how the patterns have changed amid the lockdown.



Source: <https://www.reputation.com>

**Post-COVID, GMB will continue to be a local business lifeline:** As businesses reopen, local marketers can once again turn to GMB for operating hours, products, and service availability. GMB could emerge more powerful than ever post COVID-19 with local features such as posts that allow businesses to communicate seamlessly have a high chance of gaining wider adoption and prominence, with Google possibly accelerating the rollout of other tools in the pipeline.

According to a **survey by BrightLocal**, 68% of local marketing experts said GMB was more crucial at this time than it was a year ago. Even Moz's recent Local Ranking Factors **study** concluded that the top-ranking factor for Google Local Pack and #4 for local SEO is GMB signals. Another survey by BrightLocal concluded that 87% of local marketers considered growing reviews to be the most important to local marketing success.



Not to forget the fake reviews problem faced by Google, fighting spam (fake listings, illegitimate reviews) on Google was #2 to local marketing success.

**Why It Matters:** Get ready to experience a huge evolution of GMB. Local search will be redefined and will not be limited to using tools and information to make purchase decisions offline. GMB is no longer just a way to get content to Google but rather a dynamic channel streamlining transactions between consumers and business owners.

There will be a much tighter integration of digital tools such as inventory, booking, ordering, and payments with offline fulfillment post-COVID. TheOrderingApp.com and Pointy are examples of how Google is trying to bridge the gap between digital and offline operations while being a trusted, back-office-like platform for local businesses.



# 3

## IDEAS TO UPDATE YOUR DIGITAL PRESENCE AMID THE PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 outbreak has forced people world over to stay home and this has made all kinds of businesses realize that their websites just became 10 times more important. During this time, upgrading your business's digital presence is more vital than ever before.

The smallest of changes can yield big results. Keeping this in mind, we bring to you a list of some pretty solid ideas to take your digital presence up a notch.

- Look for ways to improve your website's loading speed.
- Identify the most frequently visited pages on your website and see if you can improve the content, add videos, etc. to help with conversion.
- Create and upload explanation videos for your products and/or services.
- Upload useful blogs on a regular basis.
- Add more visually attractive elements to your website such as infographics.
- If possible, project case studies that will help users to better understand your products and/or services.
- Try and see if you can create a converting landing page for your products and/or services.
- Convert all your PDF forms to digital and if possible, add signature service as well.
- See if you can add a Review widget to your website.
- Consider going the eCommerce way.
- Shipping automation can be of great help.
- Take measures to strengthen website security.
- Backup your website.
- Ensure all the website/plugins issues, that have been on the backburner so far, are resolved immediately.
- Integrate all your current systems, including CRM, ERP, Forms, Shipping, etc.
- Update the Careers page on your website, and if you still don't have one, add it!
- Come up with a contest for your users or offer giveaways.
- If possible, add a giveaway pop-up or email form.
- Add detailed, searchable FAQ to your website.
- If you have a WordPress website, it better be on a managed platform.
- Look into WordPress site speed optimization.

### Final Takeaway

This is the perfect time for you to go for all the digital upgrades that have been taking a backseat because you were so busy with other aspects of your business. In order to ensure your business survives the