

How Google's new Place Search will affect your business

By [Guy Levine](#), 29 October 2010

Google has started rolling out a new feature called Place Search which will change the way search results are displayed for local searches. What are the implications of Place Search for the digital marketing industry and online businesses?

The changes

While Google Instant was essentially a cosmetic change, which was more about user experience rather than how and in which order search results were displayed, Place Search will change the way results are actually displayed. At first glance, it appears that it may also affect search positions.

Previously, if you did a local search in Google, for example "dentist Liverpool", you would get a map at the top of the search page with a list of Liverpool dentists to the right of it. But the normal organic results would still dominate the page.

The difference with the new Place Search is that if you are performing what Google determines to be a local search, the old local results have now been integrated into the main organic search results, with the map now in the right-hand corner. The local listings, which would have previously have appeared in the old local results, are now integrated into the organic search results with information such as the number of reviews, images, telephone numbers and addresses extracted from their local listing. Alongside these listing is the tags (A, B, C etc) associated with the old local search results.

What this means for your business

Here are my initial thoughts on the impacts of this change:

- **Click-through rates:** Rather than instinctively clicking on the top organic search result, the eye is immediately drawn to the results with the tag, images, reviews etc. Although it is obviously still early days and this has not yet been tested, it is possible that websites showing the extra information will experience higher click-through rates.
- **Impact on pay per click campaigns:** This change may impact you if you use the Google Adwords Pay Per Click advertising system. As you scroll down the page, the pay-per-click adverts to the right-hand side are obscured by the map. This will make appearing in positions one to three

(which appear at the very top of the search results, rather than to the right) even more desirable. Expect more competition and a higher cost per click for these positions in the future.

- **More telephone calls:** Oddly, this change might lead to more people contacting you via telephone rather than through your website – with the new integrated local search results, your telephone number may appear within your listing. You may want to consider asking people who telephone your company where they have come from, so that you can track this.

Make sure you claim your Google Places listing now. Our initial testing has shown that some sites which previously did well in local search may receive a boost in the organic rankings as a result of this innovation. We also expect click-through rates to be better for those websites which have a Google Places listing appearing within the organic results.

If you handle your own digital marketing and have not already engaged with Google Places, then click [here](#) for information on how to do this. If you employ an agency to handle your digital marketing, then give them a call to make sure they are on the case. You could well be missing out on business if you don't.

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