



How to market your business locally using digital marketing

This detailed summary captures the major points of the training session delivered by **Evan Mangan** on behalf of the **Local Enterprise Office Westmeath**, titled "How to Market Your Business Locally Using Digital Marketing."

Executive Summary of Course Content

The primary theme of the training was the distinction between "**pull**" marketing (being found when people search for a service) and "**push**" marketing (proactively putting your business in front of local customers). **Evan** noted that traffic from search typically converts at three to four times the rate of social media traffic because searchers have immediate "need and intent".

Major Point 1: Dominating Local Search with Google Business Profile

Evan explained that the most critical tool for any local business is a **Google Business Profile (GBP)**. He demonstrated that when users include a geographic term in their search (e.g., "Butchers in Mullingar"), Google displays a map with three featured profiles above the standard organic web results.

Key insights shared by Evan regarding GBP included:

- **Verification is Mandatory:** **Evan** explained that businesses must prove their location to Google, usually via a postcard with a code or a landline phone verification. He advised using a landline for instant verification if possible.

- **The Three Pillars of Ranking:** Evan stated that Google chooses the top three profiles based on **relevance** (matching the search), **quality** (how comprehensively the profile is filled out), and **reviews**.
- **Optimising Categories:** Evan showed how to select one primary category and up to nine secondary categories to help Google understand the business's relevance.
- **Multimedia and Descriptions:** Evan urged participants to use the full 750-character description limit to include keywords and locations. He also noted that Google prefers profiles with frequent photo and video updates (videos should be under 60 seconds).
- **The Power of Reviews:** Evan stressed that reviews are a major ranking factor. He demonstrated how to find the specific "Ask for reviews" link in the GBP dashboard to send directly to customers, which bypasses the need for them to search for the business manually.

Major Point 2: Website SEO Principles for Local Businesses

For the 33% of attendees who already had a website, and the 58% planning to get one, **Evan** detailed how Google's "Spider" (bot) crawls sites to determine rankings. He emphasized that **Google ranks individual pages, not just websites**; therefore, a business needs a dedicated page for every specific service it offers.

Evan highlighted three main factors for website SEO:

1. **Relevance:** Evan explained that the **Meta Title** (the text in the browser tab) is the most heavily weighted element for relevance. He recommended including the town and county names in the Meta Title, Headline, and Body Text of specific service pages.
2. **Trust (Domain Authority):** This is determined by how many high-quality, reputable sites link back to your website. **Evan** suggested that local directories and mentions from the Local Enterprise Office can boost this trust.
3. **Page Experience:** Evan demonstrated using **GTMetrix.com** to check website speed, noting that the "Largest Contentful Paint" (LCP) should ideally be under 1.2 seconds.

Evan also advised local businesses to embed a Google Map on their contact page and ensure their **Name, Address, and Phone number (NAP)** are consistent across all online directories to reinforce their local presence to Google.

Major Point 3: Leveraging AI for Marketing Efficiency

Throughout the course, **Evan** demonstrated how to use **ChatGPT** as a marketing assistant. He introduced a specific prompting framework: **Context, Expert, and Clear Goal**.

Evan showed how AI can specifically help with:

- Recommending the best Google Business Profile categories for a specific niche.
- Writing SEO-optimised business descriptions and Meta Titles.
- Brainstorming local backlink ideas and social media content topics.
- Explaining complex technical concepts at different "reading levels".

Evan also noted the difference between the "Fast" and "Reasoning/Thinking" models in ChatGPT, suggesting the latter for more complex strategy questions.

Major Point 4: Social Media Realities and Paid Advertising

Evan was candid about the decline of "free" social media reach, noting that the average Facebook business post now only reaches about 5% of followers. He explained that algorithms prioritize "interesting" content to keep users on the platform.

Strategic Advice for Social Media:

- **The Content Spectrum:** **Evan** explained that businesses with visually interesting products (e.g., boutiques) have it easier. Service-based businesses (e.g., accountants) must work harder by being 80% helpful/informative to build credibility.
- **Instagram Optimisation:** **Evan** pointed out that Instagram's account search only looks at the "Username" and "Name" fields. He advised participants to put their service and location (e.g., "Boutique Mullingar") in the Name field to be found by searchers.
- **The Power of Reels:** Because platforms want to compete with TikTok, **Evan** noted that Reels generally achieve higher reach than static posts.

Paid Meta Ads: For businesses wanting to "push" their message to a specific local audience, **Evan** recommended **Meta Ads** over simply relying on organic reach. He demonstrated how an ad can be targeted to a **1-mile radius around a specific street corner** or a 10-mile radius around a town like Mullingar. **Evan** stated that for approximately €5, a business can get its ad into roughly 3,000 local feeds, regardless of whether those people follow the business or not.

Participant Action Point List

Following the training, **Evan** recommended that participants prioritize the following actions:

1. **Claim and Verify Your Google Business Profile:** Go to google.com/business. If you don't have a business-specific Gmail, consider creating one first.
2. **Optimise GBP Categories:** Use ChatGPT to identify the top 10 categories for your niche and update your profile accordingly.
3. **Audit Your Website Speed:** Run your URL through gtmetrics.com. If the LCP is over 1.2 seconds, contact your web designer to optimize it.
4. **Create Service-Specific Landing Pages:** Stop using a single "Services" page. Create individual pages for your main offerings and include "Mullingar" or "Westmeath" in the Meta Titles.
5. **Secure Your Review Link:** Find the "Ask for reviews" button in your GBP dashboard. Save this link and send it to happy customers via WhatsApp or email with a personal note explaining how much it helps a local business.
6. **Update Your Instagram "Name":** Check your Instagram profile. Ensure your "Name" field (not just username) contains keywords like your service and your town.
7. **Embed a Google Map:** Take the embed code from your Google Profile and place it on your website's contact page to signal your physical location to Google.
8. **Experiment with Hyper-Local Ads:** Try a small "Boost" or ad campaign (even for €5-€10) targeting a 5-10 mile radius around your business to reach new local customers.

This was created with the help of one of our AI colleagues 😊