

Newsletter

JANUARY 2016

2016



TRENDS

GOOGLE'S
ACCELERATED
MOBILE PAGES
(AMP)
TO GO LIVE NEXT MONTH



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GOOGLE'S ACCELERATED MOBILE PAGES (AMP) TO GO LIVE NEXT MONTH

Google's Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP) Project will roll out by February 2016. It means you have less than 20 days to prepare. So let's have a quick look at what you should be doing:

What's this Accelerated Mobile Page (AMP) Project?

The Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP) Project is an open source initiative that has been created to provide fastest content browsing experience on mobile devices. If you are planning to opt for AMP, employ the following points:

- Do not keep forms on your page
- Forget about JavaScript, as they are not allowed.
- It's a prerequisite to have a stream lined version of CSS.
- Interstitials shouldn't pop up.

However, you will still have access to analytical data & ads. It's known as Diet HTML. Click [here](#) from your mobile device to view a demo of AMP.

Opting for AMP will not only provide users a faster surfing experience, but will also please Google as they are very much obsessed by fast loading pages. And as a token of appreciation, Google will rank you higher!

AMP is basically for?

As of now it is mainly for publishers who were losing audience and thus, revenue due to slow loading pages. So if you are not a publisher or content is not a major part of your business, then you should wait and let the dust settle. But if users visit your website for the content, then opting for AMP is a no brainer.

How to create an AMP?

AMP's are abridged versions of your current web-pages. WordPress does have one AMP plugin, but it's new and thus can lack on some aspects. So either you will have to wait or just do it the old fashioned way. But don't worry, Google has published a step-by-step Guide to help you create your first AMP.

Be assured that in upcoming days Google will try to simplify the process of making AMP because it's a highly ambitious project of theirs and they are really pushing it. Expect to see many plugins and new tools in the near future. Google has already added an AMP error reporting to Structured Data testing tool.

So it's up to you, if you want to be ahead from your competitors and have an exciting start to the New Year. If your answer is yes, then you should go for it. But if your business is not heavily influenced by content, which is very unlikely, then you can wait for a while and then start along with the rest of the world.

Some Expert Thoughts

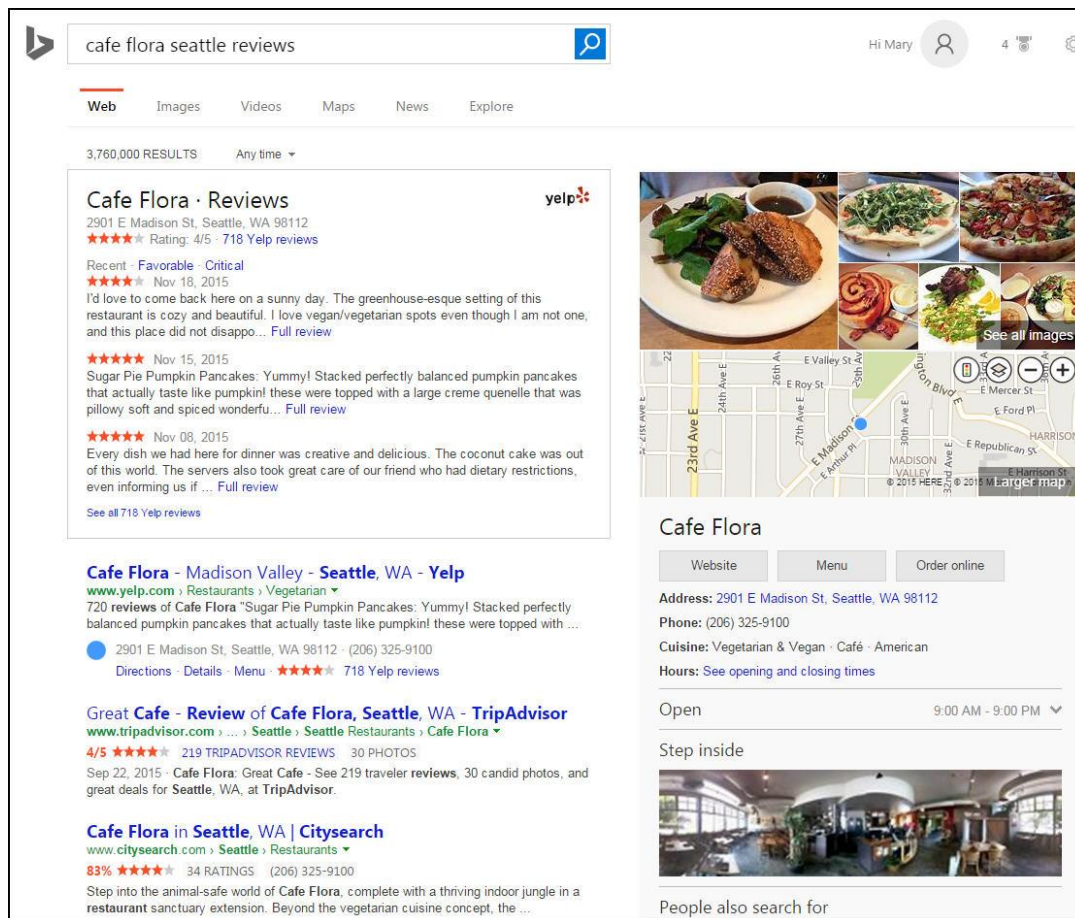
Casey Markee: Using that recipe example alone, if you have 4 sites, serving 4 banana bread recipes, and only ONE of them is serving an AMP optimized version of that content. Then in that case it would appear that the "AMP version" would rank higher. But again, SEO is all about "doing all the little things." If you are moving to https, and have a responsive site, and start converting over to AMP, then you are going to have a SIGNIFICANTLY more successful time in 2016 than if you don't. You are going to see a "Gold Rush" on the "we can move you to AMP" over the next two months. Should be interesting. Sounds like a GREAT opportunity.

John Heard: My take on AMP? It's gonna be a mess...it's also gonna be a long time before AMP's a standard. There is ONE beta plugin for WP. NOTHING else out there, no templates, nothing. Basic amp can't even handle a MENU... No JAVASCRIPT...It's like Google is shoving everyone back to 1995. Anyway, if you're wondering, "is this something I should be doing" my reply is let's wait and see how this unfolds unless you have a budget for experimentation...

2

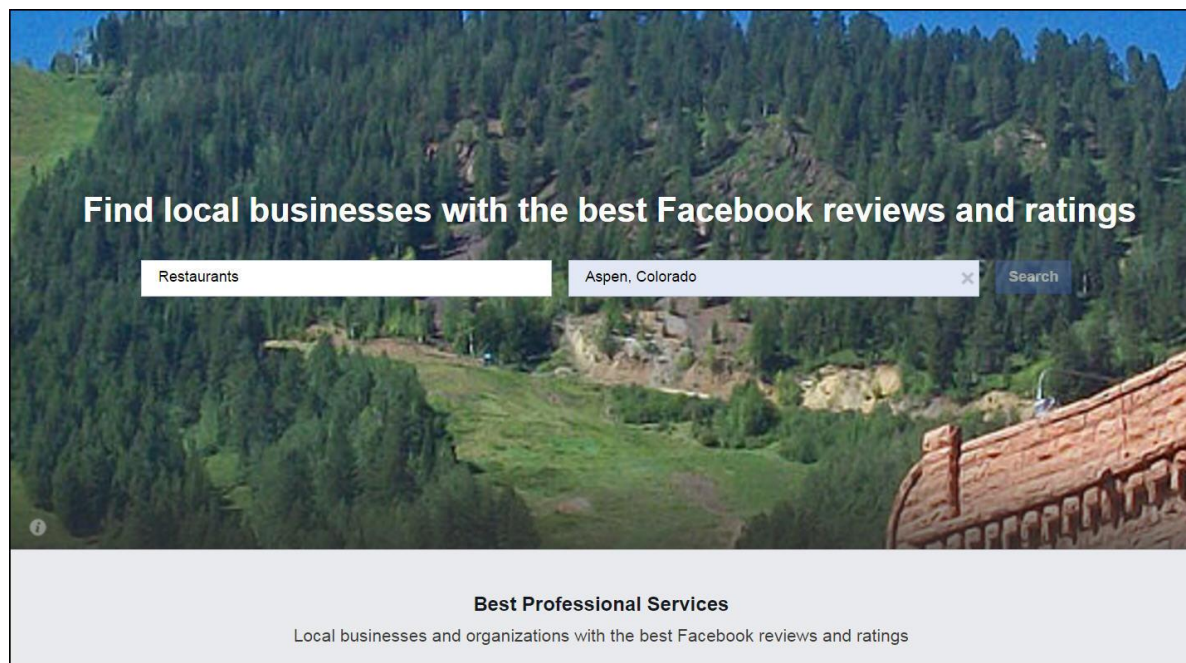
WHATS NEW IN LOCAL SEARCH FOR JAN 2016 – TOP 20 UPDATES

1. Save yourself some time & resources by diverting your efforts and focus from Google+ as it no longer has any effect on Local Search.
2. Now a search on Bing will give you fact-based answers on certain topics. For instance: A search for any business name, phone number, etc. can be seen in the SERP itself. However, it's not yet fully launched and at present is available only for a selected few topics. But you can expect more fact based answers on a wider range of topics in future.

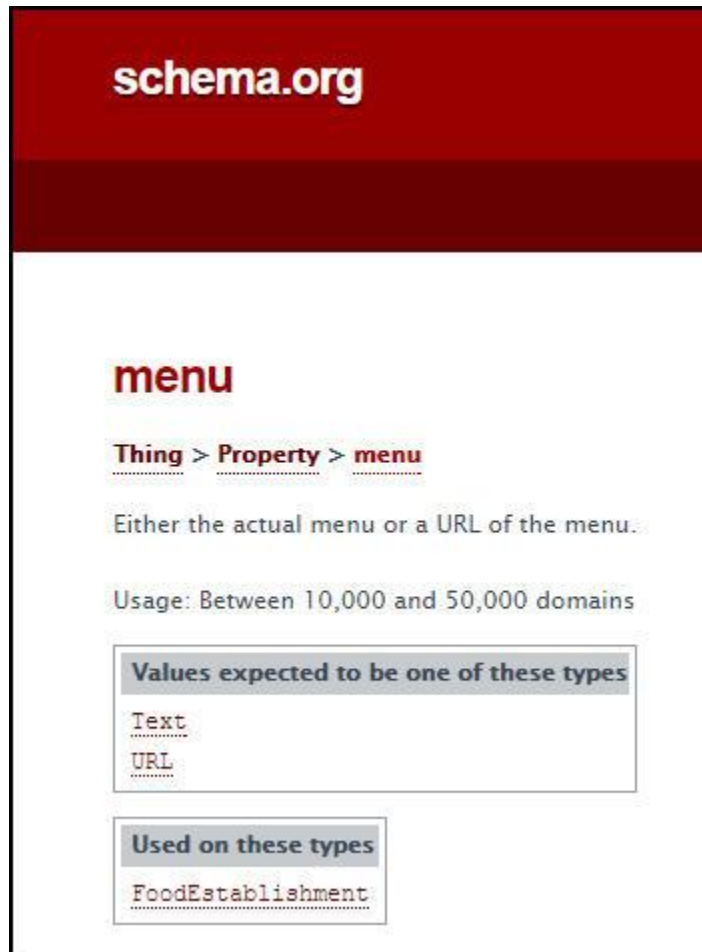


3. Facebook is trying to follow some tactics of Google +. They have strengthened the Page Plugin that enables users to subscribe to events & integrate Messenger from the page.
4. Since we all know that Google is finally dismantling Plus, it has removed Reviews from its social platform. However, there are some other ways using which you can add a [review box generator](#).
5. If you are really concerned about your content, as its importance is escalating really fast, you can have a look at Shaun Anderson's [quality rater guidelines](#) for better ideas.
6. Sometimes linktations are enough to lift your local business' rankings but in less competitive markets. Have a look at **Phil Rosek's** [list of linktations](#).

7. Now changing location on Google is not a piece of cake. But there are 4 other ways to emulate location based searches:
 - ❖ Append queries with & near location
 - ❖ [AdWords preview & diagnosis tool](#)
 - ❖ [Search By Location bookmarklet](#)
 - ❖ [Chrome developer tool](#)
8. **“CTR is a ranking factor in local search.”** As stated by a Google employee recently. However, that statement quickly changed to: The number of times it has been used before on the basis of relevance, eminence & distance.
9. **It seems like Google is taking strides towards cleaning the bad advertising that goes on at AdWords.** Google is following an FTC fine for [False Advertising](#) with a 3 week adjournment of the culpable Companies & compel them to change the ad landing pages.
10. You are all invited to Google's "Put Denver on the map event". The objective of this event is to encourage business owners to create a website for their businesses.
11. **Now start finding ways to rank on Apple Maps because it has been used 3 times as often as Google Maps on iOS devices.**
12. **You can see a BIG Penguin update anytime soon.** Many experts were assuming that the Penguin update might get launched around the New Years' time, but Google knew that rolling out a Penguin update during peak shopping season will ruin many businesses. But as of now the dust has settled and you may want to disavow the bad links if you don't want to get penalised by the updates.
13. **Google has made available API for My Business to everyone.**
14. An [interesting research](#) by Elmer Boutin indicates that **Google might start using review sentiment in local search ranking algorithms.**
15. **Facebook is also willing to make review sentiment a strong ranking factor** as they are encouraging users to go with the business that has the best reviews & ratings on their newly launched [local business search engine](#) page.



16. **Facebook & Uber join hands to enable users to book a ride directly from the messenger app.** As of now, it is available for only select users in the U.S but will soon be made available for 700 million messenger users across the globe. Facebook is also trying to team up with Lyft & if the meeting goes well then you will be able to book a Flight too, directly from your messenger app.
17. Google has become better at finding menus on hotel websites & showing the menu URL in the local knowledge panel. If you are facing any difficulties with the same, then use menu schema to sort things out.



18. A [pilot program](#) from Google indicates that multi location businesses no longer have to continually mess with the Google My Business bulk dashboard. They can simply update the individual listings using the schema on their website.
19. Google has published a [list of guidelines](#) for local business so that they can maintain high quality information on Google.

Business hours

Provide your regular customer-facing hours of operation. If applicable, you may use your current seasonal hours as your regular hours. You may also specify special hours for particular days, like [holidays](#) or special events.

Learn more

Certain types of businesses shouldn't provide hours, including those with varied hours (like schedules for different types of activities, including showtimes, worship services, or classes) and those that operate only by appointment. Examples of business that *shouldn't* provide hours include, but are not limited to: hotels and motels, movie theaters, emergency rooms, or schools and universities, transportation services, airports, places of worship, event venues, and natural features.

If your business has departments (see "[Departments](#)"), provide the business hours for each department on that department's separate listing, and provide the business hours for the main business on the main business's listing.

If your business has multiple sets of hours, refer to these guidelines for particular industries:

- Banks: Use lobby hours if possible. Otherwise, use drive-through hours. An ATM attached to a bank can use its own separate listing with its own, different hours.
- Car dealerships: Use car sales hours. If hours for new car sales and pre-owned car sales differ, use the new sales hours.
- Gas stations: Use the hours for your gas pumps.
- Restaurants: Use the hours when diners can sit down and dine in your restaurant. Otherwise, use takeout hours. If neither of those is possible, use drive-through hours, or, as a last resort, delivery hours.
- Storage facilities: Use office hours. Otherwise, use front gate hours.

20. Google will soon include the Info we provide via schema into the "knowledge panel". However, they are currently piloting this [feature](#), but will make it available to more providers in future.

Use markup on your official website to provide Google with information about local business locations. These attributes appear on the card and elsewhere throughout Google Search and Maps. For instance, a restaurant's menu URL appears prominently on the card, letting users click through to see what kind of food and drink is available.

3

2016 DIGITAL MARKETING FORECAST: 7 TRENDS TO WATCH FOR

2015 brought some of the biggest changes and updates in digital marketing. Be it the launch of [mobile friendly algorithm](#), [several Phantom Quality updates](#), [28th Panda Update in July](#), [death of Google Plus](#), [Google as a subsidiary of Alphabet](#) or the [RankBrain](#), 2015 was jaw dropping from every aspect.

As predicted, Mobile remained the focal area of Google in every facet. Not only has Google declared that a mobile optimized website is essential to rank higher, but it also launched AMP (Accelerated Mobile Pages) which took their mobile obsession one step further.

Overall we can say that 2016 is shaping up as a year of immense opportunity for website owners. But before we step into the future let's have a look at what we got right & where we went wrong in 2015.

RECAP OF 2015**1. Google and HTTPS**

Google continues to push site owners to get HTTPS. They are not only displaying "Unsecured Connection Warning" in Chrome but also sending "Google Console Warnings". Those warnings cover several practice error issues with SSL/TLS. Ignoring this will result into zero HTTPS boost for you.

2. Facebook Modification

Facebook worked tirelessly & as predicted they made a [direct play for search](#), [unleashed Atlas targeting](#) to a great extent, [expanded into Mobile Payments](#) and [upgraded their messaging](#) functionality. All these changes resulted into an enormous boost, both in their overall usage numbers & stock price. So far, Facebook played really well & it seems like they are going to shine in 2016 too.

3. Wearables Becoming Popular

Apple created a lot of Buzz when they launched Apple watch back in 2015. SEO & digital marketers' happiness was different from that of Apple enthusiasts. They were happy because now wearable gadgets are coming in fashion and it will unlock a whole new world of opportunities as they can provide us with real time data. However, the Apple watch wasn't a hit. But at-least they tried!

4. SEO Code of Ethics

Everyone thought that the SEO code of ethics will formalize in 2014. Then we thought that it will arise in 2015. But it never happened. And that's good, because it would have done more harm than good. If you'd like to know why? [Click here](#).

5. Mobile-Optimized Content

Site owners who were quick to react relished immense benefit by optimizing their website for mobiles. Google [Mobile-Friendly Update](#) also encouraged Mobile content, which was a win-win for everyone.

6. Google Algorithmic Updates

Google owned the stage by launching algorithmic updates back-to-back. They rolled out a brand new Panda update, Mobile-Friendly Update, Multiple Phantom quality updates and is about to launch a penguin update in upcoming days.

NOW LET'S LOOK AT WHAT DOES 2016 HAVE IN STORE

1. Structured Data will become a Ranking Factor

Structured data is going to play a big role in 2016. Google will also focus on Rich Snippets, Knowledge Panels & Featured Snippets. They are about to publish guidelines on "How to get Featured Snippets". Basically, Google is trying to say that we haven't made structured data a ranking signal yet, but we will do it eventually! So it's better that you get on-board already.

In case you are thinking what type of Structured Data will be good, you can go with [JSON-LD](#), as Google is really fond of it.

2. 2016 will bring more updates to Local Search

Google revamped Local Search to a great extent. The removal of Google plus from the equation, enabling users to easily [set the city location](#), [shrinking the local pack](#) from 7 to 3 results & [increased number of ads](#) totally changed the local SEO. But they are not done yet.

Google will continue to push [home services ads](#) & move SMBs to a pay-to-play model. Be ready to witness more of this kind of ads.

3. Increased focus on User Experience

Providing a great user experience is Google's paramount goal and they are just trying to serve their goal by pushing Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP), mobile-friendly content, HTTPS, and page speed. If you want to rank higher in 2016, take a mobile-first design approach.

4. Improvement in the digital assistant space & wearables

2016 seems to be really good for digital assistant space. While Cortana & Siri are getting better & better, there's one player that will join the game and bring variety to it. And that is none other than Facebook's highly ambitious project "M". Unlike Cortana & Siri it will be backed by both human/digital assistance making it unique among others.

Also, we can expect to see a lot of wearable gadgets in 2016. Thus, we recommend you should at-least be aware of [wearable SEO](#), so when needed you can employ and reap the benefits of being aware and prepared.

Beacons will become more popular overtime and they will make it easy for you to connect with your existing customers. Also, you can expect new players such as Yext & their Xone beacons to enlarge nationally, as a medium to track offline customers online & then target them with re-marketing ads.

5. Virtual Reality Monetization

Samsung gear VR was one of the top Christmas items of 2015. It comes at a minimal price of \$99, thus making it affordable to masses. Also since we all know that Facebook acquired Oculus Rift, we can expect to see more advancements in the VR space.

It is estimated that the VR revenues will go up to 1 billion dollars in the coming year and will escalate to 4.4 billion dollars by 2019. So the company which will provide the best VR gear will reign supreme and will get to have the biggest piece of the 1 billion dollar cake.

6. The downfall of Yahoo

Yahoo is still going through hard times and it seems like they will have to sell their search units to someone else. However, they have made deals with Google and Bing, but they are not getting fruitful results and the company is still struggling to survive on various aspects.

Many investors are now losing patience and blaming [Marissa Mayer](#) for not having a clear vision. Many experts are predicting that Yahoo may sell their assets to AT&T while some are claiming that Google will be the best bet.

7. Google will roll out major algorithms which will make site audit tougher

Google will roll out both Panda & Penguin updates in 2016. They can be rolled out at the same time and that will be a major issue for website owners who keep getting hit (negatively) by these algorithms.

Till 2015, it was a bit easy to identify the issues which got you penalized, but since Google's expectations from a website are growing, they are making more complex algorithms. So for SEOs it will be tough to identify the exact cause of penalty in 2016. If you are an SEO expert, it's better to understand how to [correctly audit a site](#) & [surface all website issues](#).

Final Takeaway

Your actions, predictions, and preparations will decide whether this year will be great or worse for you. We recommend that you gather as much information as you can and closely monitor any updates that have the potential to influence the digital marketing space. That way you can achieve your goals in 2016.

Yahoo search is going to add new features for mobile users & will also roll out a search algorithm update. Yahoo mobile users will witness the following changes this year.

Integration of Twitter

Celebrity searches will return with top tweets that are related to the celebrity.

Brand new image search

You will experience a new way of discovering pictures of your favourite celebrities. Click on the photo of a celebrity and then you can explore trending content that is linked with that celebrity.

Improved search experience

Latest news and happenings can be seen right on the search engine result page. Also, the search algorithms have been updated. So now you will see most recent and popular stories at the top of the news result thread.

AMP compatibility

News in Yahoo search is now compatible with Accelerated Mobile Pages. So get ready to experience faster mobile browsing.

It's good that Yahoo finally launched some updates, but we don't understand why many of their updates are celebrity focused. Maybe their brilliant CEO has some mind blowing future plans, but as of now.... the updates are not interesting and useful. But still, it's very big and pleasing news for Yahoo mobile users (if there are any).

5

USE SMART GOALS, POWERED BY GOOGLE ANALYTICS, TO OPTIMIZE IN ADWORDS

A key metric for almost any business is conversions.

Many AdWords advertisers are already measuring their website conversions, using either AdWords Conversion Tracking or imported Google Analytics Ecommerce transactions. Measuring actual conversions is ideal, because it allows you to optimize your bids, your ads and your website with a clear goal in mind.

However, hundreds of thousands of small and medium businesses aren't measuring their website conversions today. Some businesses may not have a way for users to convert on their website and others may not have the time or the technical ability to implement conversion tracking.

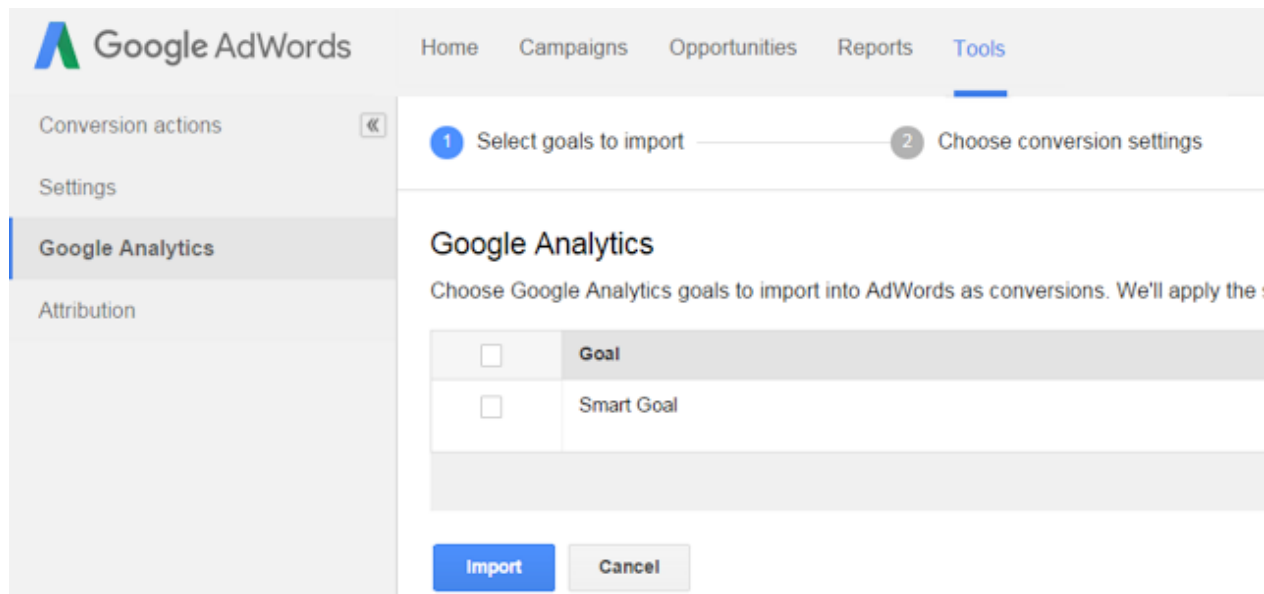
The Google Analytics team is committed to helping such users use their data to drive better marketing and advertising performance. So, for businesses that don't measure conversions in AdWords today, Google has created an easy-to-use solution: Smart Goals. Smart Goals help you identify the highest-quality visits to your website and optimize for those visits in AdWords.

Activate Smart Goals in Google Analytics

To activate Smart Goals in Google Analytics, simply go to the Admin section of your Google Analytics account, click Goals (under the View heading) and select Smart Goals. The highest-quality visits to your website will now be turned into Smart Goals automatically. No additional tagging or customization is required.

Import Smart Goals into AdWords

Like any other goal in Google Analytics, Smart Goals can be imported into AdWords to be used as an AdWords conversion. Once you've defined a conversion in AdWords, you're able to optimize for these goals.



Optimizing for Smart Goals in AdWords

One of the benefits of measuring conversions in your AdWords account is the ability to set a target cost per acquisition (CPA) as opposed to just setting a cost per click (CPC). If you aren't measuring actual conversions today, importing Smart Goals as conversions in AdWords allows you to set a target CPA. In this way, you're able to optimize your AdWords spend based on the likelihood of conversion as determined by the model.

Smart Goals will be rolling out over the next few weeks. To be eligible for Smart Goals, your Google Analytics property must be linked to your AdWords account. Note that your Google Analytics view must receive at least 1,000 clicks from AdWords over a 30-day period to ensure the validity of your data.

6

NEW TOOLS FOR MANAGING COMMUNICATION ON YOUR FACEBOOK FANPAGE

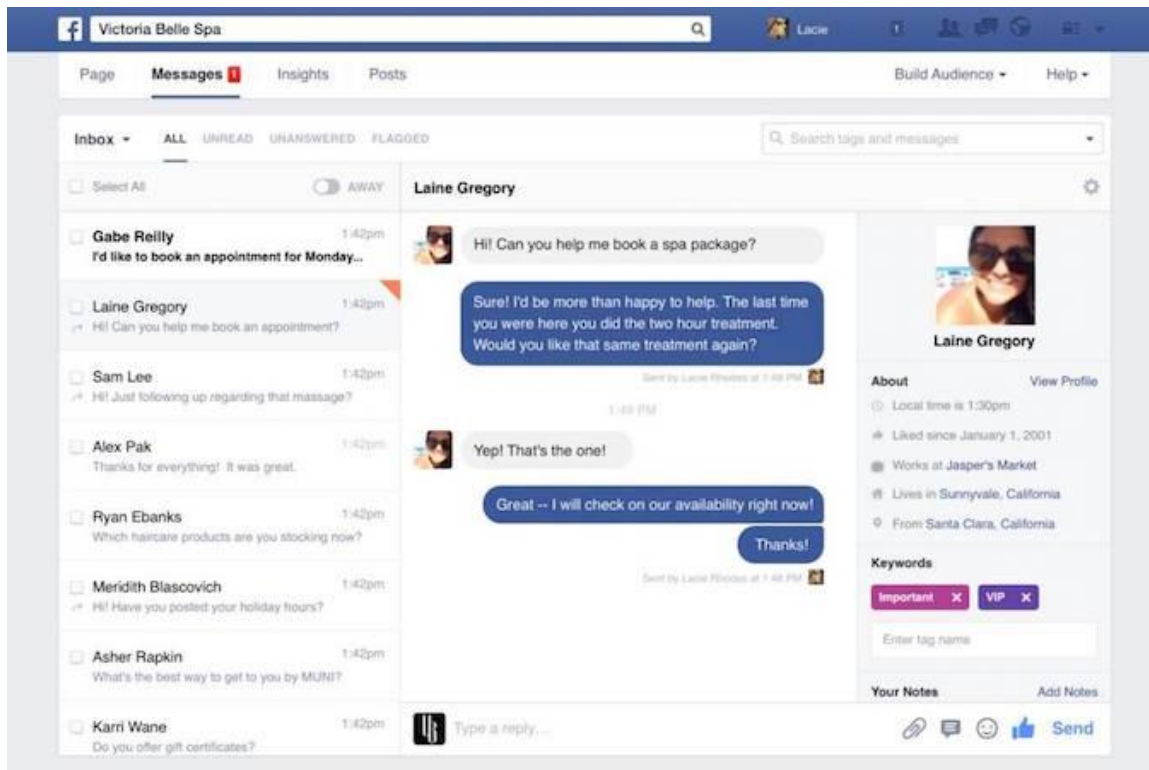
Facebook has been quite impressive so far with launching new updates. Now, they have rolled out some new features to business pages yet again and perhaps, you have already started using them.

Your response time is central to the quality of your customer service

Your response means a lot to your customers. No one can deny the fact that customers have the right to know how responsive a page or business is on a prior note before they message. To help customers know when they have to expect a respond, Facebook has revealed their new feature showcasing **response time** on Fanpages.

Earlier, Facebook had set a high standard for the feature by adding the "Very responsive to messages" indicator only to Pages where 90% of messages were responded to within five minutes. Facebook has now taken the responsiveness of pages into a new level by segmenting them as "**within minutes**", "**within an hour**", "**within hours**" or "**within a day**". The page Admin can keep it as auto or set any of the above time frames to show on their page.

Redesigned inbox tells businesses more about their customers to better serve them



This feature has already been rolled out globally. The new Page inbox not only have the stunning look but also have many improved qualities. It made easy for the Page admins to manage interactions with the Fans. While messaging a fan, the new inbox would display past interactions the user had with the page and more information about the user like DOB/City/Job will be displayed on the right side. Even Admins can add tags to categorize conversations.