Thoughts on the Implications of Google’s New ‘Place Search’

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What’s Happened

• New initiative called “Place Search” launching today
  – Companion functionality “Places Mode”

• Google eliminates 7-Pack for new SERP that surfaces more local results

• Local results surrounded by more information
  – Including third party links
  – Will become new local SEO battleground

• Google Place Pages have greater visibility on SERPs

• New ranking algorithm
Much Richer Local Experience

• The new SERP and related information effectively bring “Maps” content up to page one of the SERP

• Offers a much deeper local experience on Google SERPs

• Will likely boost Google’s position in local

• Google likely to capture even more business name/address searches

• Coming to mobile search as well
Web results and local SEO were below 7-Pack
Place Search: New Look & Feel

Most web results disappear

New page dominated by local listings

Map floats down page
Places Mode: When Query Ambiguous

Google will show a mix of local and non-local results when local intent isn’t clear.

Local results indicated by red pushpins and related information.

Users will be able to filter to all local results with Places icon in left nav.
Places Mode: New ‘Places’ Filter

The old “Maps” icon took users directly into Google Maps

Now ‘Places’ filters results and shows only local listings
Places Mode: Filtered Results

Filtered results for the same ambiguous “museum” query
Third party sites are “clustered” around listings. Reviews and Google Place pages are associated with each listing on the SERP
Most of the clustered links on SERPs appear to be coming from the same references that Google puts in Place Pages’ “reviews from around the web”
What about SEO for Publishers?

Local SEO opportunities appear to be squeezed further. Will likely be focused around “clustered” links.

Left is “before” page for “Denver Plumbers”

Directory site listing is highlighted.
What about SEO for Publishers?

Same “Denver Plumbers” search result with new Place Search SERP

Directory link is gone; businesses listed are all local
Maybe Local SEO Not Totally Dead

We also found this SERP, featuring Yelp and Superpages above the new local results, which provides some hope for local publishers.
Preliminary Conclusions

• Changes likely to further elevate profile of Google in local
  - Place Pages visibility will rise among consumers, SMBs and SEOs

• Google will “own” the name in mind searches that used to predominantly go to IYP sites

• Local SEO opportunities likely severely diminished, unless in clustered links

• Publishers must continue to improve content, strengthen brands to compete