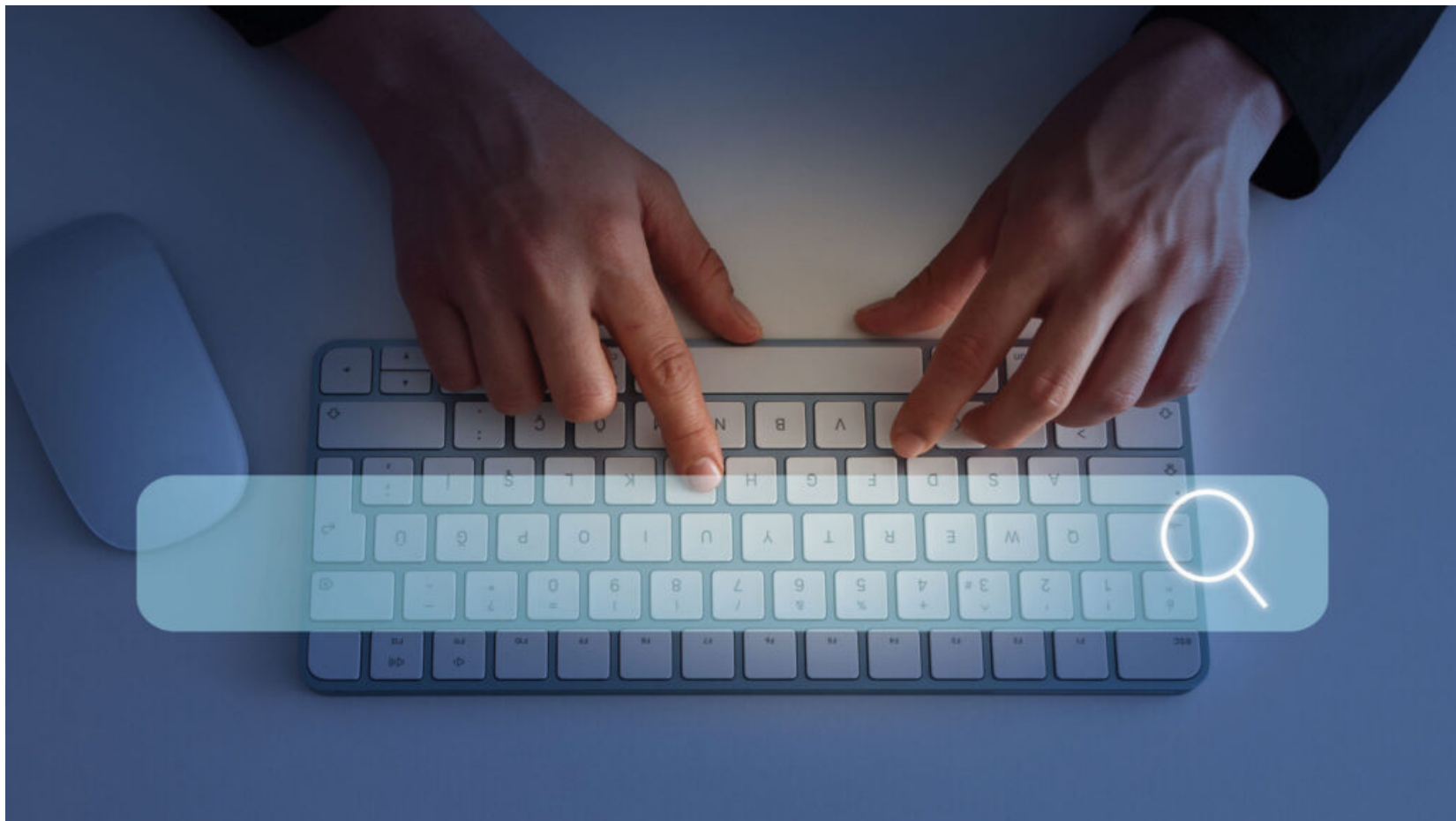


## What is NAP Consistency, and Why Does it Matter to Your Dental Practice?

03/02/2023 by Naren Arulrajah, Ekwa Marketing



NAP is a marketing acronym, which means name, address, and phone number. The short answer is that NAP consistency is the accuracy and uniformity of your dental practice's basic information. The long answer revolves around local [SEO](#) (search engine optimization), which is what it takes to put your dental practice on the map.

## **The foundation of local SEO**

Someone who searches for a dentist wants to avoid seeing results from practices in far-away cities. Similarly, they are not looking for blogs, eCommerce, or other websites without a physical presence. There is an implied parameter for search results: this person wants to find a dental practice with an office nearby. Search engines recognize location-based queries and handle them differently.

Google's local algorithm, which has several unique ranking factors, determines your placement on Google Maps. Similarly, Apple, Bing, and other online map providers use uniquely local algorithms. Therefore, optimizing for local search is essential for any location-based business, including dental practices.

One of the unique aspects of local search optimization is that it is not just about your website. It is about optimizing your practice's entire online presence. That means external websites, blogs, news articles, business directories, and any other online content mentioning a business can be relevant. These mentions are called citations and are widely believed to be an essential ranking factor in Google's local search. Moreover, citations help confirm the existence and relevance of a business.

The question is, how does Google know what dental practice is referred to in a citation? The answer is NAP. These basic details help search engines identify your practice across the web and accurately attribute citations.

## **Why NAP consistency is vital in dental marketing**

Imagine that Google finds a few old profiles that have not been updated since your practice moved. Or some listings use the practice name, and some use the dentist's name. The NAP data will be similar, but

it will not match. What happens then?

### **Impact on search result quality**

You will be disappointed if you expect Google to work it out and give your practice the full benefit of those citations. Since Google aims to provide quality, relevant results, they want to base their map listing on reliable data. Repeated instances of matching information increase the odds of the data being accurate. Inconsistencies reduce the odds of the data being exact, thus making the result less useful.

### **Diluted and divided results**

There is another possible outcome of inconsistent NAP. Some search engines and other bots may register various citations as two or more separate businesses. In that case, you are essentially competing with yourself, the benefits of your citations being divided. Furthermore, it can be confusing and off-putting to potential leads when they see multiple near-identical listings.

### **The snowball effect**

You may have been careful with your online business profiles. There might be a couple with old or erroneous information, but how bad can that be? If it were indeed just a couple, it might not be wrong. But we'll never know because the problem will stay manageable. Bots of all sorts crawl the web, aggregating business information, auto-populating directories and creating databases.

### **Common causes of NAP consistency problems**

There are a few common NAP issues that frequently crop up:

**Outdated information** – If your practice has been in business for a long, chances are some details have changed. Maybe you expanded office hours as the practice grew or had a reduced schedule during COVID restrictions. As a result, the office phone number and practice name or location may have changed.

**Variations of names** – Businesses, like people, are often given ‘nicknames.’ Lengthy practice names are often shortened or abbreviated in everyday conversation. Or people might refer to it as Dr. Doe’s instead of the official name. Similarly, there are variations of street names, town names, and designators such as Suite (STE). These details should match the letter in every entry for good NAP consistency.

**Formatting variations** – Phone numbers, in particular, can be formatted many different ways. You might include parentheses, dashes, spaces, or use an uninterrupted string of digits. You might or might not include the country code. There is some disagreement about how much, if any, impact formatting has on SEO. However, it is best to err on the side of caution and use the same format everywhere.

**Duplicate entries** – This is a surprisingly common problem that can happen in many ways. Maybe two staff members added your practice to the same directory, or someone lost the password to the old profile and created a new one. Perhaps your marketing team created a new profile when they should have claimed an existing auto-generated profile. Or maybe some forgot about the old profile and added your practice again.

### **Achieving and maintaining NAP consistency**

Start by deciding exactly how you want your business name and contact information to appear. Then, be very precise when publishing your practice details anywhere or when providing that information to anyone who might publish it.

Keep an updated database of every business directory, the social media network, and other third-party platforms where you have created a profile for your practice. If your hours of operation or any further details change, update that information promptly – everywhere.

Last but certainly not least, perform a NAP audit. You can do this manually by running queries with different variations and combinations of your business details through multiple search engines. Alternatively, you can use a third-party service or software. Correct any inaccuracies or inconsistencies that you find.

NAP consistency is a simple concept but takes work to implement. However, it is well worth the time or expense invested. Just think of the importance of a building's foundation; one seemingly minor flaw can weaken the entire structure. Similarly, inconsistencies in your dental practice's NAP can reduce the effectiveness of any other local SEO tactics.

NAP represents the details that identify citations, which are the foundation of local SEO. Precision accuracy and uniformity throughout your online presence is the key to building a solid structure for your regional marketing strategy.

---

### About the Author



Naren Arulrajah, President and CEO of Ekwa Marketing, has been a leader in medical marketing for over a decade. Ekwa provides comprehensive marketing solutions for busy dentists, with a team of more than 180 full time professionals, providing web design, hosting, content creation, social media, reputation management, SEO, and more. If you're looking for ways to boost your marketing results, call 855-598-3320 for a free strategy session with Naren. You may also schedule a session at your convenience with the Senior Director of Marketing – Lila, by clicking <https://www.ekwa.com/msm/> or simply send a text to 313-777-8494.