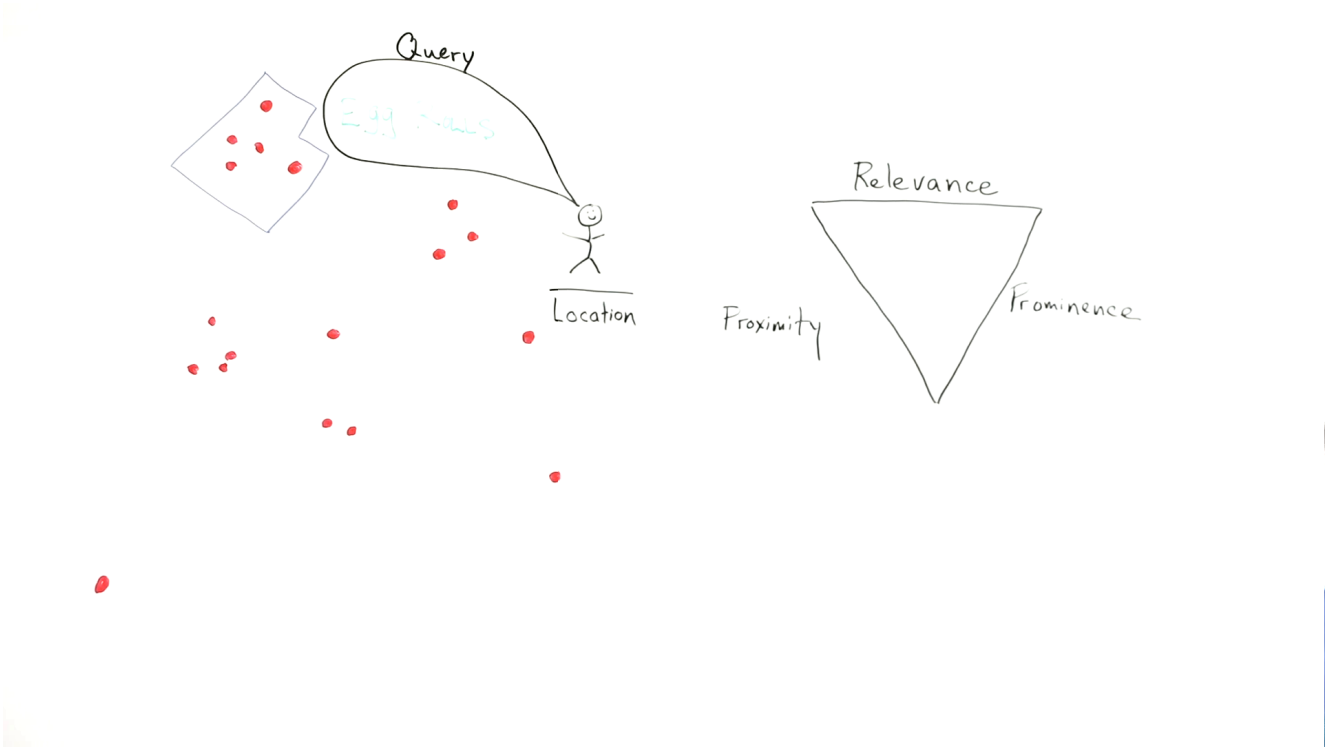
The Local Algorithm: Relevance, Proximity, and Prominence

How does Google decide what goes into the local pack? It doesn't have to be a black box — there's logic behind the order. In this week's Whiteboard Friday, renowned local SEO expert Mary Bowling lays out the three factors that drive Google's local algorithm and local rankings in a simple and concise way anyone can understand.



Click on the whiteboard image above to open a high resolution version in a new tab!

Video Transcription

Hi, Moz fans. This is Mary Bowling from Ignitor Digital, and today I want to talk to you about the local algorithm. I'd like to make this as simple as possible for people to understand, because I think it's a very confusing thing for a

lot of SEOs who don’t do this every day.

The local algorithm has always been based on **relevance**, **prominence**, and **proximity**.

1. Relevance

For relevance, what the algorithm is asking is, “Does this business do or sell or have the attributes that the searcher is looking for?” That’s pretty simple. So that gives us all these businesses over here that might be relevant. For prominence, the algorithm is asking, “Which businesses are the most popular and the most well regarded in their local market area?”

2. Proximity

For proximity, the question really is, “Is the business close enough to the searcher to be considered to be a good answer for this query?” This is what trips people up. This is what really defines the local algorithm – proximity. So I’m going to try to explain that in very simple terms here today.

Let’s say we have a searcher in a particular location, and she’s really hungry today and she wants some egg rolls. So her query is *egg rolls*. If she were to ask for *egg rolls near me*, these businesses are the ones that the algorithm would favor.

3. Prominence

They are the closest to her, and Google would rank them most likely by their prominence. If she were to ask for something in a particular place, let’s say this is a downtown area and she asked for *egg rolls downtown* because she didn’t want to be away from work too long, then the algorithm is actually going to favor the businesses that sell egg rolls in the downtown area even though that’s further away from where the searcher

is.

If she were to ask for *egg rolls open now*, there might be a business here and a business here and a business here that are open now, and they would be the ones that the algorithm would consider. So relevance is kicking in on the query. If she were to ask for the *cheapest egg rolls*, that might be here and here.

If she were to ask for the *best egg rolls*, that might be very, very far away, or it could be a combination of all kinds of locations. So you really need to think of proximity as a fluid thing. It's like a rubber band, and depending on…

- the **query**,
- the **searcher's location**,
- the **relevance to the query**,
- and the **prominence of the business**

….is what Google is going to show in that local pack.

I hope that makes it much clearer to those of you who haven't understood the Local Algorithm. If you have some comments or suggestions, please make them below and thanks for listening.

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