



Digital Influence REPORT

digital excellence in Downtown Guelph case study

How Downtown Guelph helped its members **step up their digital game**

From its booming craft beer scene, award-winning festivals, array of unique eateries and shops, Guelph, Ontario, is a city to be savoured. Its sparkling rivers and views complement the historic buildings and landmarks on display throughout the city's core in downtown Guelph.

THE CHALLENGE

Like many organizations, the pandemic meant a shift in priorities for the Downtown Guelph Business Association. With more visitors going online, the need to facilitate digital improvements and sophistication for Downtown Guelph members became top of mind. **Because the pace of digital quickly accelerated during the pandemic, Downtown Guelph saw the need to offer its members an opportunity to improve and enhance their digital presence that was tailored to the needs of individual merchants.**

Because the association lacked in-house expertise, it decided to bring in a partner organization to create a digital excellence initiative.



THE GOAL

Downtown Guelph wanted to:

- **Engage** its stakeholders and offer value to its 500+ members
- **Empower** Downtown Guelph operators through digital excellence
- **Improve** the overall digital sophistication and presence of Downtown Guelph to improve the overall digital experience of the visitor

BUSINESS CATEGORY	SEO	Website Fundamentals	Mobile Optimative	Avg PageSpeed
Accommodations	62	72	91	44
Attractions	66	74	94	35
Restaurants	64	74	95	43
Retail	38	80	100	52
Total	73	93		41

Overall Digital Grade: 68

WEBSITES SCORE: 68



This program has helped our business polish and streamline our online presence and function. With so many small details that can fall through the cracks without you knowing, this program helped us to not only identify any issues, but also taught us how to fix them. **We would highly recommend all businesses take the time to participate in the Digital Influence Report program — it could not be easier to do!**



– BELLA KRIEGER
Owner, Red Brick Cafe



THE SOLUTION

The association found its solution in Simpleview’s Digital Influence Report (DIR). The ideal starting point for destinations looking to upscale the online presentation of member businesses, Simpleview’s DIR provides valuable insight that’s easy to act on and improve.

Using a “report card” format, the DIR helps destinations understand what they are doing well and highlights areas for improvement across six key areas for each participating partner:

-  Google and search platforms
-  Websites and webpages
-  Facebook and Instagram
-  TripAdvisor
-  Twitter and YouTube
-  Listings platforms



Individual stakeholder report cards are dynamic, accessible online, and track progress over time. The operator reports rank priorities for the business when it comes to making small adjustments for big improvements in its digital fingerprint.

The initiative consists of reports of each individual business and the region as a whole. It also includes a **one-on-one coaching program** catered to each business, broken into easily managed steps that owners can fit into their busy schedules.



THE PROCESS

The Downtown Guelph Business Association appreciated that the one-on-one stakeholder coaching was part of the program and not something it needed to facilitate in-house. The coaching program was designed to:

- Give each operator an **in-depth snapshot** of what they're doing well and the fixes they need to make
- **Empower operators and stakeholders** by improving their skill set and digital knowledge
- **Start with the basics** — through teaching and simple “homework” assignments, operators could improve incrementally using a prioritized list of what to fix first
- Result in an **optimized digital presence** for all businesses, including TripAdvisor reviews, online business information listings, optimized SEO practices, and more
- Strengthen and align the **network of local stakeholders** who regularly engage with the Guelph BIA

THE RESULTS

Over the three month period, every business that participated increased their report-card score, many significantly. The areas with the most significant improvements were in organic SEO and social media.

Results included improvements in:



The partners that make up the downtown business association have cleaned up their digital presence, stepped into the future, and now better welcome more patrons.



The program is quite literally a revelation: it shines a light on the work that so many of us are doing, and shows us how to do it better. With DIR, businesses can tweak and focus and reposition their digital output to improve results significantly. No more ‘dancing in the dark’ and hoping for the best. It helps us work smarter by constructing a plan based on the particular goals of individual businesses. Put me down as impressed.



— MARTY WILLIAMS
Executive Director of
Downtown Guelph
Business Association