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How to Use Google My Business

to Get More Customers

The secret to great local SEO

I've covered how important Google My Business (GMB) is before, but in this two-part article we're going to look at how you can use this free marketing tool from Google to get new customers through your door.

The biggest mistake people make when it comes to Google My Business is simply not claiming their listings. Google My Business is an incredibly useful tool and can increase your local SEO significantly, if used correctly.

Having a Google My Business (GMB) account is an essential step in improving your company's online marketing. If you don't have a Google My Business listing set up for your company, then you're losing out on a lot of potential clients, simply due to *how* people search for services.

Google My Business is a fantastic way to get your business seen by people searching for your services in their area. An optimized listing will push your company closer to the top of the search engine results page (SERP) and promote you to potential customers.

In the first part of this article, we're going to cover how to claim your profile and the initial optimization techniques to get you ranking. In the second part, we're going to look at posts, followers, questions & answers, messaging, bookings, and reviews.

If you haven't created a GMB listing yet, now's the time to do it.

Sometimes Google will automatically create a basic listing for companies, so the easiest way to find out if you have one is to search your company's name on Google. If a listing appears on the right-hand side of your screen, then you just need to claim it.

Alternatively, you can look up your business on Google Maps to see if it appears as a marker. Appearing on Google Maps (with prewritten directions) is one of the great benefits of having a listing with GMB.

If your business has a GMB listing, then all you must do is verify you own it. The most common way to verify your listing is by receiving your verification number over the phone or by postcard.

Once your listing is verified, you'll be able to edit and optimize your listing to get it promoted above your competitors.

If no listing exists under your company's name, that's no problem.



You just need to go to Google My Business and create your own listing. Once you verify your business, you're free to customize the listing however you want.

However, if you find the listing for your business has already been verified, don't panic. While it may be disheartening to see your business listing being operated by someone else, it's not difficult to reclaim as your own. All you need to do is fill out this request ownership form.

You'll receive an email telling you your request was received and will be answered within 7 days.

If your request is rejected and another person still has your business listing, the best thing to do is to appeal the rejection.

Scroll to the bottom of the email you received detailing the rejection and click on 'Appeal'. This will lead you through the steps necessary to verify the listing and take it back.

This will usually involve verification by phone or postcard but depending on the circumstances, they may ask for more information.

Optimize your Google My Business listing & get more customers

To get the most out of Google My Business you'll need to optimize your profile and make it more appealing for your audience – and for the search engines.

When I start working with new clients to boost their online reputation and upgrade their online presence, I always check their GMB listing and make sure the following features are optimized:

Business name

When it comes to the 'business name' field on GMB you need to write down your company name *and nothing else*. Write down exactly what is on

your business cards or on the sign above your office. Do not try to stuff your GMB business name with keywords or irrelevant information.

Adding your location or other keywords will be classified as spam and it could get you in trouble with Google. This is a common issue in our industry and doesn't do anyone any favors. It also looks incredibly untrustworthy to potential customers that are looking to hire you. You don't want all your hard work to get your listing going to waste!

Business categories

Your primary category tells your audience the main service you offer. It's also the category that will be published publicly so choose it carefully as it'll impact your local ranking for different search phrases.

You can add secondary categories too so be sure to add all the categories that are relevant to your business. Category options are regularly updated so check them out in case there are new ones added that suit your business and can help more customers find you.

Location, location, location

There are two things you need to take into consideration when it comes to choosing your Google My Business address.

- Physical location of your business
- Area you serve

If customers can visit your offices, store, or showroom, then putting your physical location on your GMB listing is vital.

You should also make sure that your location on Google Maps is correct and matches the written address you have down.

If customers typically don't visit you in person, you need to provide them with a general area you serve.



Hours of operation

There are two types of opening hours to fill in: regular business hours and special hours.

Add all your regular business hours to your listing and make sure they're correct.

Remember to update this if your hours change in the future – or you might end up losing a lead as a result.

You can use the 'Special Hours' feature on Google My Business to include bank holidays, special events, and vacation days etc.

Phone numbers

Add any active phone numbers to your listing. Many good companies lose out on inquiries simply because they either don't list a phone number or worse, they have an old, disconnected number listed.

Short name

It's the short name and URL for your profile that makes your business listing a lot easier to find by users.

- Short name can be up to 32 characters
- Can be changed three times a year
- Adds some personality to a listing.



Link to your website

To get the most out of your listing, you should always link to your website. The benefits are two-fold:

- People searching for your services will get the full sales pitch and appreciate everything you do once they visit your website.
- Your website will do better on Google's search results.

It's a win-win situation.

Services

Update your Google My Business listing with the services you provide. Outline your most popular products whether its mowing, trimming,



tree care, snow, and ice removal. Sell what you do and give them the answers they need so they'll call you for a solution.

You want those casual Google visitors to get an understanding of what you do before they even engage with you.

Company description

Your company description on GMB does not have an impact on your search engine ranking. This means that you shouldn't stuff it full of keywords and locations because it's not going to help you rank over competitors.

You have 750 characters to write a description of your business and you should use it to show your potential customers why they should pick you. Tell them why you're better than everyone else and what you have to

offer. You want to entice them in – show off your company's personality.

A word of advice on the description, don't use all caps.

Add photos

Adding photos to your Google My Business listing is incredibly important as it shows you as the authentic and professional company you are. You should make sure your photos are clear, high-quality pictures (not blurry/out of focus). Photos to add to your listing include:

- Logo and great cover image
- Photos of your team
- Storefront (if applicable)
- Office
- Awards or award presentations
- Anything that will show off your business/services/products

Your business is always changing and whether that's your opening times,

your product info or even what your offices look like, it is highly important to keep all your information up to date on your Google My Business so your customers can stay informed.

People don't like to spend their time searching through pages and pages of search results for what they want.

When your optimized GMB listing pops up the minute they hit that 'search' button, they are going to contact you over anyone else.

In the next part of this article, we will look at how to use GMB to actively promote your business and take online bookings. We'll cover posts, followers, questions & answers, messaging, bookings, and reviews, so stay tuned!

I hope you enjoyed this guide to Google My Business. If you want your business to dominate local SEO and build up more local listings then check out our Local Listings Builder service. ➤



This article was written by Pam Haskell, owner of the website design & development company Chili Pepper Design (cpdesignco.com). She helps businesses in the landscaping and outdoor living space create and maintain a modern web presence along with online marketing and reputation management services. Visit www.cpdesignco.com for more information.