

# Secrets of Using Google My Business for the Local Business

Terry Hinton

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# About the Author

Hi: I am Terry Hinton Owner of Bestjobmarketing and Sales. My professional online certifications include Certified Social Leads Consultant and Certified Best Year Master Plan Expert. I have been in business for over 25 years and successful online for over 10 years in marketing.

My team and I are experts in helping local businesses with Reputation Marketing (also known as Reputation Management), SEO, Video marketing, Website Design, Social media, Business Planning and Social Lead generation.

I am confident in saying we are EXPERTS marketing for local businesses. and can quickly help you gain customer confidence.

I am also confident that this book will help you understand more of what you need to do for your business and what we can do for you.

Terry Hinton

# Introduction

As a business owner, you likely already know that you have to have an online presence for your business. And while that includes having a website for the business, and possibly even a blog, it also includes having a Google My Business listing. So what exactly is this type of listing? And how does having one benefit small and local business owners?

To answer the latter question, consider that every second, Google receives 40,000 search requests. That's about 3.5 billion searches every day and 1.2 trillion searches every year around the world. That's a lot of searching, and it just proves how many people use Google to find information they're looking for. But it's not just general information such as how to get stains out of carpet or how to measure carpets for windows. Many of those searches are for products and services that local businesses are selling in the very same community as the consumer.

Consumers know this, and it's why they often turn to Google to find those products and services. Aren't convinced? Consider the following stats regarding Google and local searches.

Eight out of ten of those people searching are looking for local information such as the name of stores, the product they sell, their address, their business hours, and directions to that location. Between 30 to 50 percent of those searches lead to the customer arriving at a business that same day to learn more about their purchase; and 20 percent of those local searches lead to the consumer making a purchase at the same time. That's fairly high, considering that only 5 to 7 percent of regular searches end with a purchase.

Considering that most small businesses rely on local traffic and nearby consumers, the importance of these facts cannot be ignored by many small businesses.

Read on to learn more about the many benefits a Google My Business listing could bring for your small business, how to do it, and some tips and tricks to ensure that once you have a Google My Business listing, it's truly effective.

# Benefits of Using Google My Business

If the sheer volume of consumers using Google to find companies and products isn't enough to convince you to use Google My Business, the number of other benefits the online directory can bring to local businesses just might. Check out the biggest benefits of using this online directory before signing up for it and getting your company listed.

## **It's Free!**

Marketing costs money. In fact, it's one of the biggest expenses in running any business. So why would you not use something that's completely free to use? Any profits that are gained from using Google My Business are just that - 100 percent profit - because it's a free service. Even business owners that aren't sure about the effectiveness of the online directory have nothing to lose just by trying it!

## **Your business will be easier for customers to find**

Google My Business doesn't just tell customers that your business is somewhere nearby. It gives them the exact location along with a map making it much easier for them to find you. And in order for any business to make a profit, customers need to find them first.

## **Better visibility in searches**

If you've ever searched before on Google, particularly for a business or product, you've likely noticed that there are three options that appear below the paid ads and above the organic (non-paid) search results. These are business listings and Google generates them for users by using information in Google My Business. By having a listing that is complete and optimized, business owners can get their businesses listed in these first three spaces, which will give them more exposure within the search results. With one click, customers can find out more information about the business, or even call the business directly.

## **Put information at users' fingertips**

When customers do see a business listed within those first three listings, they'll see more than just the name of a business. Customers will be able to see a business' hours of operation, get directions, see photos of the business, get a description of the business, and call the business all with just one click or touch of their screen. With more

information at the consumer's fingertips, they can make an informed decision - and purchase - faster and easier.

## **Interact with customers**

There's a reason blog posts, Twitter accounts, and Facebook pages are becoming increasingly popular among business owners. They all provide an easy way for business owners to connect with their customers instantly. Customers can tweet business owners about a problem they're having, or leave a quick review on their Facebook page and the business owner can answer them instantly. This interaction is of huge importance because by knowing what consumers want, business owners can give it to them more easily. Now, this can all be done on Google My Business as well, giving you one more way to reach out to your customers, and one more way they can reach out to you.

## **Get customer insights**

Google My Business does more than just tell your customers about your business - it also tells you about your customers through the Insights tab. Under this tab you can learn a lot of information about your customers. That information includes visibility, engagement, and audience. The visibility section will tell you how many views your profile has received, and how many views posts and photos within Google My Business are getting.

The engagement section will let you know at a glance how customers are interacting with your posts, and how many clicks, shares, and comments they're getting. Both the visibility and engagement sections can include stats for the past 7, 30, or 90 days. They can both also be shown in chart form, giving you all the information at a glance.

The audience section will show you the breakdown of who's following you, showing the ages, genders, and countries of people that follow you. A quick glance at this can show you exactly who your target audience is.

## **Track website traffic and audience**

While the Insights tab will give you a lot of information about your posts and your audience, the Google analytic tool in Google My Business will give you even more. While Insights is good, Google Analytics will give you even more in-depth information and break it down for you even more so, letting you really fine tune your posts and content to the audiences that are following you.

## **Get and respond to reviews**

Consumers today love online reviews. In fact, 74 percent of people say that a positive review increases their trust in a local business. And 56 percent of consumers say that they first go to the search engines to find reviews about a business. 90 percent of people state that online reviews greatly affect their buying decisions and 70 percent of consumers will leave a review for a business; all the business owner has to do is ask!

All of this is important because Google My Business allows customers to leave a review for a business and, when customers search for a business, they'll see those reviews potentially seconds within entering their search query. The more positive reviews a business has, the more trustworthy the business will seem to other customers.

The dashboard within Google My Business will also allow you to monitor and respond to reviews, and responding to reviews is very important. It lets customers know that you truly care about your customers and that you'll take the necessary time for them. When responding to positive reviews, thank customers for taking the time out to review your business. And when there are negative reviews (which you won't be able to stop), respond by telling your customers what you plan to do to address their concerns.

## **Control everything from the same place**

As a business owner, you don't have the time to be going from place to place checking analytics and stats. And luckily, Google My Business eliminates the need for you to do that. Google My Business will tie in with Google AdWords, Insights, Google+, Maps, and Search, so you can customize and optimize everything you do online through Google all in the same place!

# How to Create a Listing on Google My Business

After you know the benefits of listing your business on Google My Business, you probably want to get your listing as quickly as possible. So how do you do it?

First, make sure your business is eligible for a listing. Currently Google allows three different types of businesses to create a listing: a storefront such as a restaurant or retail space; a service business such as a plumber or pizza delivery; and a brand such as a sports team or product. Currently online businesses cannot create a Google My Business listing.

Once you know your business is eligible for a listing, the first thing to do is create a Google account. Google accounts are free and will give you one space to control and use everything Google-related including Gmail, YouTube, Google Play, AdWords, and more. You can create a Google account here: <https://accounts.google.com/SignUp?hl=en>. Of course, if you already have a Google account, you can start just by signing into it.

Then head over to the Google My Business Listing Page here: <https://www.google.com/business/> and click on the 'Start Now' button. There will be a few steps to follow and quite a bit of information to fill out about your business.

You'll first need to verify that you don't already have a listing, or claim a listing that's already there. Even if you haven't added your business, Google may have created a listing pulling information from around the Web. When this is the case, just claim the listing and start adding information. The information you'll need is:

- Business name
- Country/Region
- Full address
- City
- State
- Business phone number

- Business category
- Service areas
- Additional information such as hours of operation, payment options, photos, videos

After filling in all the information about your business, Google will then want to verify your business. This is so that Google can ensure that all listings within Google My Business are real, legitimate businesses, which will help them serve users searching for those businesses better.

Verification can be done through a few different methods. The easiest is usually Google sending a postcard to the business. This verifies that the business actually is at the address provided. The postcard Google sends will have a PIN on it that you can then enter into your Google My Business listing which will verify it and allow you to start promoting it. In some cases, verification can also be done over the phone or via a text message.

# How to Optimize Your Google My Business Listing

Just like anything else in business, you can create a Google My Business listing, but that listing may not be as powerful and dynamic as it could be. That's because simply posting your business' name, address, and contact number isn't enough.

After all, there's a good chance that there are more than three businesses in your industry in the local area. And if you want your listing to rank above the others, namely in the top three spots Google reserves for local businesses in their search results, you need to add to it and know how to completely optimize it. That will give you the best listing, and the best possible ranking. Follow the tips below to help you do it.

## **Don't forget the details**

While you certainly want to make sure that you're including all pertinent details in your listings, such as the business' name, address, and phone number, you also want to make sure that those details are the same across the board. So if your website says that your business is located on "Main Street", don't use the abbreviated form of "Main St." in your Google My Business listing. The specifics of your name, address, and phone number (NAP) should be the same across all directories too, as variations can confuse Google and lower your overall rank.

Also, while you're focusing on the details, don't forget to add them to the business category. For instance, if you're running a restaurant, choosing the category "Italian Food" will get a higher rank than just "Restaurant".

Once you've got those basics down, it's time to focus on other details. Enter a brief tagline and the logo of your business. This will help you stay consistent online but these things will also attract more people, and get more views and possibly more customers. Remember to add a description of your business too, as this will also help customers. And when writing that description, don't forget to add relevant keywords, as Google will love them and you may get a higher rank for it.

## **Make sure your website is worth visiting**

Your Google My Business listing involves more than just your actual listing. It involves your website, too. Having an interesting website that provides value to readers and has

helpful and useful information helps your listing, too. Google places readability and usefulness above all other rank factors, as a website that isn't useful to readers won't help readers. But. Google also has their own rankings and algorithm factors that come into play, too. Because of this, it's important that you include keywords and metadata as much as possible into your website so that Google knows how to find it. Also, look for ways to get as many links as possible to your website, as every link will count as a vote for your website in the eyes of Google, and that will help not only your site, but also your listing, rank better within the search results.

### **Make sure you're mobile and know how to use it**

The trend of online searching has gone mobile, and there's no way to stop it. Mobile use is now much more prevalent than using desktop computers, laptops, and even tablets. Google knows this and so one of their latest algorithms places an important on the mobility of factor, and ranks mobile-friendly websites higher than those websites that aren't. Because of this, it's crucial to make sure your website is mobile-friendly, but also that you know the difference of what desktop users and mobile users are searching for.

Because mobile users are often already in the neighborhood, they're often searching for things such as hours of operation and the address of a particular business. Those who are using desktops and laptops on the other hand, are more likely to be searching for specific products and the availability of those products.

### **Include images**

Online users are all about the visual these days, meaning that they'd much rather peruse through pictures than read a long page filled with text. But this visual aspect pertains to your Google My Business listing, too. Pictures will really make your listing stand out and get the attention of those scrolling through the listings. It's important to have at least six images posted to your listing and while they don't have to be professional quality, they also need to be good quality, meaning nothing too small or grainy. This latter type won't only turn off visitors, but they'll also make your business look like an amateur. But just posting pictures one time isn't enough. Always make sure to upload new photos periodically to keep the listing fresh and to keep users interested.

### **Use Google My Business Posts**

Last year Google unrolled posts in their Google My Business listings, and they're something every business owner should take advantage of. Google My Business posts aren't the same thing as blog posts. Instead of long paragraphs of text, these are mini-

ads that show up right in your Google My Business listing. And they're a great way to get even more free advertising out of these listings! You can post about an event your company is having, a sale, a dynamic blog post you just published, new products that have just come in, and even holiday messages.

You can also do more than just 'talk at' your customers using these posts. You can include images, calls to action, and even links to another page or website. If you're on Yext, you can also create Google My Business posts right from your Yext dashboard.

### **Use the booking button feature**

Another one of Google's new features is the booking button feature. This is especially useful for businesses that rely on customers making appointments, such as hairdressers or dentists. With the booking button feature, customers can make appointments right online, bringing in even more new customers!

### **Messaging**

Another new feature, customers can now directly text you all from within your Google My Business listing. And if you don't want your personal text app being filled with messages from customers, you can use Google's Allo app to do it. Just download Google Allo from either an Android play store, or iTunes and register within the app. When someone texts you, you'll receive a notification from Allo that someone has sent you a message and you can check in whenever it's convenient (preferably sooner rather than later). Of course, you can also choose your own personal text number and get those messages directly.

### **Questions and Answers**

Yet another new feature from Google, this one allows customers to ask questions right within the listing so you can answer them. This feature is not visible within the Google My Business mobile app so you'll need to log into your dashboard to see if there are any questions that need to be answered. But if you use an Android and do want these questions available on your mobile you just have to download the Google Maps app and you'll receive notifications when someone asks a question about your business. Using this feature helps you interact even more with your customers, and it helps your customers too. After all, if one person has a question, there's a good chance another customer has the same question.

# Why Google Disallows or Suspends Listings

It can send business owners into a panic when they log into their Google My Business account and see that big red circle with the line through it telling them that the listing has been suspended. Usually this is a fairly easy fix, although often it will mean dealing with Google, which can take anywhere from a couple of days to a couple of weeks.

It's important to know as well that there are two different kinds of suspensions Google may use. The first is a soft suspension, which means that the listing cannot be managed through the dashboard, but it still appears on Google and Google Maps. This means that even though you won't be able to make changes to your listing, your business will still appear in the search engine in Google Maps, so no rankings will be lost.

The second type of suspension is much more serious and is known as a hard suspension. With this kind of suspension, Google will remove the entire listing from Google My Business and Google Maps. And when you try to pull the listing up on Google Maps it will say, 'removed'.

So why does Google suspend businesses? There are a few reasons but one of the most frustrating things about a listing suspension is that Google will not tell you why they suspended the listing. This may mean that you'll have to examine the listing and figure out what went wrong on your own, which is why knowing the most common reasons for suspension is important.

## **Your website URL is a forwarding address**

Google wants to provide the best possible information to users. And when it comes to website addresses, this means sending people to URLs that are actually the business' web address. If the URL entered redirects or refers users to landing pages, Google will likely suspend the listing. This type of infraction will typically result in a soft suspension.

## **There are unnecessary keywords in the business name field**

Keywords are important. And anyone that wants to advertise online needs to know how to use them effectively. But while keywords certainly can be a part of your Google My Business listing, they should never appear in the business name field. So unless they're actually the business name, leave out marketing tag lines, slogans, and words such as

'best' or 'affordable'. Including words that are not part of the business name field will likely result in a soft suspension.

### **Service-area businesses that don't hide their address**

Google's guidelines say that a business' address should only appear if customers actually visit the business. Plumbers, contractors, and other service-based businesses can still have a Google My Business listing, but they have to hide their address. And while it's important for any business to verify their listing with Google, it's even more so for service-based businesses. This is because although Google will allow service-area businesses, Map Maker does not. And if a business is not verified, it will likely be removed from Google Maps, along with any reviews or photos that are part of the listing.

### **Multiple listings for the same business location**

There are a lot of businesses out there, making Google My Business already pretty full of listings. In order to avoid clutter, Google wants to ensure that one business location only has one listing. And while chain stores and franchises with different locations can each have one listing, one location cannot have more than one listing. If this happens, Google will likely suspend both listings, place a soft suspension on the real listing and a hard suspension on the duplicate.

### **Your business type is sensitive**

This is one rule that doesn't seem to have a hard and fast rule, but Google may decide in some cases that a business type is inappropriate. According to Google, businesses of regulated goods, such as guns, will be allowed if there is a geographic location set and age restrictions are very clear. But there have been some instances in which Google has been known to take these down. If you're an owner of sensitive goods or a sensitive business area, it may be best to contact Google before creating your listing to ask them how you can better your chances of not having your listing suspended or taken down.

### **The listing includes a virtual office**

This is a trick some business owners do to get more listings in Google My Business, but it's ineffective and can get your listing removed. Most often it happens when a business is located in one city, but wants to get business from nearby cities at the same time. By creating multiple listings for each town, their business will rank higher for that town and potentially be seen by more customers. But if Google learns about this, the listing won't be seen by any customers. According to Google, no business should have a listing for any

location unless someone is available at that location to help customers during normal business hours.

### **The listing is for an online business**

This one is pretty straightforward. Online businesses, e-commerce stores, and any business that interacts with their customers solely online, including purchasing and delivery, cannot have a Google My Business listing. Even if a business makes products at one location and then sells them online, it will be considered to be an online business and as such, is not qualified for a Google My Business listing.

### **Spam filters are tighter than normal**

Sometimes a business owner does nothing wrong, stays within Google's guidelines, and still their listing does not show up on the search page. Why does this happen? It's due to Google's severe spam filters that will work overtime, particularly when there are many different companies in a popular industry. So how does a business owner combat this? The only real way to do it is to take the case to Google.

If a business listing has been suspended or isn't showing, the only way to take it to Google is to post on the Official Google My Business Community forum, which can be found here:

<https://www.en.advertisercommunity.com/t5/Google-My-Business/ct-p/GMB>

A business owner can state their case on this forum to a Top Contributor, who can then take the case to Google so that hopefully, it can be solved.

# Conclusion

Being listed on Google My Business is essential for every local business owner. But just having a listing up isn't enough. There are tips and tricks for optimizing your listing, and ways to make it truly stand out in a crowd. And, business owners need to know what course of action to take when things go wrong with their listing, such as when it suddenly disappears.

Creating the best Google My Business listing for your business and keeping track of it is something that can definitely take time. And if there's one thing every business owner is short of, it's time. Fortunately, there are knowledgeable online marketing consultants that can take over the task for you when you want to create the best listing possible and start taking advantage of this free form of advertising.

# Next Steps

Please contact us for further information about how we can help you claim your Google my Business listing today.

Phone: 204-914-2309

Email: [terry@bestjobmarketing.com](mailto:terry@bestjobmarketing.com) : with subject line: “claim my GMB listing”

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