

Why Is It Important to Claim Your Online Business Listings?

Have you ever 'Googled' your own business to see what listing websites generate your company profile? Have you ever seen your business in a website like Manta or Yelp, yet you don't recall adding yourself to this online listing service? As a business owner, you focus so much on how your company is marketed and branded through print, television and radio advertising, but what may be the most important media outlet is found digitally. Why you ask? Online directory listings are on the internet 24/7 and if you haven't claimed these listings, you may have the wrong information reaching potential customers, not enough information on the web, or find bad reviews or comments that could be affecting your productivity.

In most cases, online directories already have your business address listed. If that is the circumstance, all you need to do is **claim your listing**. The steps to claim your business listing varies from site to site. Regardless of the process, verifying your business listings allow you to provide a complete and accurate profile for your customers. Claiming your online listing will allow you to edit your company information, customize your profile, respond to reviews, reap the benefits of promotional offers and best of all – increases your website's search engine optimization (SEO). If you don't have time to manage all of your directory listings, there are also digital marketing services that can claim and update all of your online business profiles on a continuing basis for a fee.

Sixty percent of consumers are on Google every month to help them find a quality business. Also, 70% of internet search inquiries are for business products or services. There are hundreds of listing websites on the web. If you plan to claim your listings yourself, there are a few things to consider.

1) Create an outline of the content you will use for your listings. This includes, company name, company description, address, website, logo, contact information, video links and social media links. Make the most of expanded listing offerings to provide as much information as customers could want to help them make the decision to choose your business.

2) Begin with the top 20 listing websites most commonly used by consumers.

Angie's List, Bing, Bing Local, Citysearch, DexKnows, Foursquare, google, Hotfrog, Kudzu, Manta, Mapquest, Merchant Circle, The Business Journals, White Pages, yahoo, Yellow Pages, Yellowbook, YellowBot, Yelp

3) Claim your listings

Some listing websites allow you to click on a button that sends a verification code to your phone for immediate action. Others may send you information through the mail about how to claim your listing. Regardless of the process, it's important to verify your business listings in order to provide an accurate profile for your customers.

4) Respond to reviews

With so much online competition, reviews play an important role with business purchases. Many online directory websites allow customers to submit reviews. If you've claimed your profile, you'll have the opportunity to respond to online reviews. Responding to these reviews professionally may help you build stronger relationships with your customers. Also, thank customers for their positive feedback. Look at negative reviews as an opportunity to resolve any issues. Customers will appreciate your desire to achieve customer satisfaction, and your sales revenue may increase as a result.

5) Utilize promotional offers

Take advantage of promotional opportunities for your business. These promotions are usually by way of coupon offers. For example, a potential customer may have the chance to claim a 15% off their purchase if they visit your business within a window of time. A small cost is usually incorporated to participate, but promotional offers can increase conversions and get more customers through the door. You can also track your promotion so your business can modify the promotion or try something different.

Whether you are in a small town or located in the big city – realize the web reaches all consumers. It also applies to all businesses, and all industries. Steve Bracety, General Manager of the Prescott Resort Conference Center, increases his annual revenues by his proactive marketing approach when managing his brand, reviews and promotions through online directories. *“Managing your online reputation is mandatory in today’s market. Undesirable reviews could steer new business away from your service or product. Personalizing our responses to the customer’s experience in a timely fashion is critical, whether it be a positive or negative review.”*

As a business owner, you should be aware of how your brand is represented online. Be proactive. If you are in control of your brand and image – you are more in control of your revenue.

Donna Werking is the Founder of Northern AZ Social, a local digital marketing company in Prescott, Arizona. She assists small businesses in achieving their online goals for more than 8 years.