

## Google My Business Listings: The Benefits and Best Practices

No matter what people are searching for, they want to find it quickly and easily. The last thing anyone wants to do is sift through a plethora of business listings, trying to find the description, then trying to find the reviews and then trying where the company is located. Wouldn't it be easy if the entirety of your business information was in one place online? There is. It's called Google My Business.

### What Is "Google My Business"?

Google My Business is an excellent platform for any business to utilize if they're wanting to gain more recognition—which every company wants. Businesses can manage their online presence across the entirety of Google with this simple and easy to use feature. But, what exactly is it? Google My Business is a tool that enables a business to fill out all their info, including contact information, business hours, the official website URL, etc. and have it reach across multiple Google platforms. When a company signs up for Google My Business, not only will their business come up in the search results, but will also be shown in locations, reviews and even maps. This makes it easy for potential customers to view your business and gather the information they need.

### The Benefits of Utilizing Google My Business

It's obvious that having a solid online presence can attract more customers to your business. An eye-catching description and positive reviews can send crowds of new customers your way. But here are just a few ways that a Google My Business listing can enhance your online presence:

- **Increases Audience Outreach:** Whether a phone, tablet or desktop computer, your Google My Business listing will be shown consistently in the search results—no matter the

device your audience uses. Google's standard search results tend to show up differently depending on the device that is being used. No matter which device a person is using, if they're looking up "landscape design" your business will show up.

- **Interacting with Potential Customers:** Utilizing Google My Business is an easy way for potential customers to view and interact with your company. It gives them the opportunity to look at the reviews, engage in discussions, ask questions and more.
- **Everything in One Place:** This is perhaps the most important benefit of Google My Business. Your business's name, address, phone number, description and reviews will be displayed in an easy to view box. Potential customers won't have to search countless pages in order to find everything they need.

### **Best Practices When Creating Your Listing**

It's important to thoroughly (and truthfully) fill out your Google My Business Listing to get the best possible results. Here are the best practices businesses can take into consideration when developing their Google My Business listings:

- **Have Reviews:** Everyone enjoys reading reviews. It can help people determine whether or not that particular company is suited for them. Potential customers can view what others have experienced—the good and the bad. Google also rewards your listing for having reviews (but they won't penalize you if you don't). It's important to ask your customers politely to rate their experience, although it can be a slow process, it has greater rewards in the future.
- **Fill Out All Information:** It's extremely important to have all the accurate information on your listing, a website linking to your business and a phone number. Also, make sure this information is in text form and not an image. This helps Google able to verify your

business's accuracy. Add photos as well! To get a general idea of what your company is about, many people want to see photos. What does the building look like? Who is on staff? This enables you to begin building a trusting relationship with your customers as they can put a face (or building) to the company.

- **Avoid Misrepresentation:** Filling out your listing truthfully and accurately will help your business more down the road. For example, linking the incorrect website to your listing can cause your page to become suspended—which defeats the purpose of gaining more customers. Another issue many businesses do is categorize their business under many categories. They do this thinking it will help them get more business by ranking for all those selected keywords. Under the Google My Business Guidelines, Google Specifically states to *“Never make false, misleading, or unrealistic claims.”* If you're a landscaping company, choose a category that best accurately describes your business. A primary category should be used as an overview of your company as a whole and not the services you offer. If your landscaping company offers a variety of services, such as power washing, you may add additional categories under the primary one.

Overall, utilizing Google My Business is an incredibly effective tool for developing a successful online marketing strategy plan. The tool is free, easy to use and can put your business on the map—literally.