

A-LINE'S GUIDE TO GOOGLE MY BUSINESS

Using Google's My Business, Maps
and Google+ to increase your
organization's visibility online.

ALINE
INTERACTIVE



A-LINE's Strategic Guide to Google My Business

When it comes reaching local customers through online searches, there's no better platform than the search engine king – Google. And when it comes to helping those customers find information about your business, there's one site you have to know: Google My Business.

What is Google My Business?

Google has always offered a suite of products to help business owners increase their visibility through the search engine. Google maps, Google+ and search all had unique opportunities to help increase searchability, and many organizations were utilizing them. However, each of the products didn't always work together. And it was difficult to ascertain the difference between the purpose of each platform.

So in 2014, Google My Business became the search engine's single place for users to provide and update information about their businesses. One profile. One dashboard. All of Google's properties populated at once.

Why is Google My Business?

Google is the first stop for most people searching online: in fact most online searches begin there. And thanks to a bias that the search engine gives to businesses who have claimed and manage their Google profiles, it's a no-brainer for any organization who wants to be found in local (and national) searches to hop on board.

Ready or Not...

Ready to start using Google to increase your visibility online? Read on for a step-by-step technical and strategic guide for using Google My Business and Google+.

Up to 65% of all desktop searches take place on Google.

Up to 89% of all searches on mobile devices take place on Google.

What should you do about it?



1. Just Get Started with a Google My Business Profile

Setting up a profile is actually pretty easy. Google My Business has a “wizard” that allows users to sign in with an email address and then, with just a few clicks, pick a category;

add some basic information including company name, operating hours, and website; as well as define the age range

of individuals that can interact with your page. You’ll also be able to review the map Google generates for your physical locations, and if necessary, make edits.



Google will then prompt you to send a postcard to yourself verifying your physical address. After receiving the card, type in the verification code and Google will update your listing as “verified.”

Google MyBusiness is like a one-stop shop for making sure your information displays correctly during searches and map queries. In all, it takes about five minutes, and you can even enjoy a donut while you do it (or so we’ve heard). It’s that easy.

If you already have various listings on Google+, Local or AdWords, you will login and see the MyBusiness Dashboard.

2. Trust, but Verify

Google is always watching out for its users and wants to make certain that the content it promotes is useful, relevant and correct.

They have a verification process for all new MyBusiness users by which owners must confirm their accounts and addresses. Most users are given the option of verifying their business through a postcard. Some are given the option of using their phone instead. You can choose whichever works best for you, but don’t skip this important step. Google will not make your page public until it’s verified. So, to ensure any efforts you put into the platform pay off, make certain you complete the verification process completely.

***Google’s verification process helps the search engine provide its users with correct and up-to-date information about the businesses it features. Without verification, your profile won’t be public.**

3. Customize your Profile to Reflect your Brand

All My Business Pages come with a Google+ profile, which gives organizations plenty of real estate and opportunities to brand their profiles.

Contact information makes it quick and easy for users to call or drive to your location. A memorable profile picture and a large cover photo should be branded with your logo, photography and corporate colors. And photo albums (called "Collections"), videos and more can give visitors a glimpse into your company, product or services. If you're feeling really snazzy, you can even give potential customers a virtual tour.

Of course, users should begin here; but the real payoff to increase searchability comes as you optimize your profile.

4. Optimize your Profile to Increase Searchability

a: Your page's description allows you to craft a brief line of introduction that succinctly describes your offerings as well as what sets you apart from competitors and similar providers. These snippets of text are actually what will show up as a description when your profile shows up in a Google search – so choose wisely! You'll want to make certain that there are enough keywords that people will find you, but not so many that you sound like a robot.

b: After you've had a profile for 30 days and gain at least 10 followers, you can claim a custom URL for your page that will make it easier for you to share your profile as well as lend credibility to your presence on the network. Just like any profile online, it's important to keep your Google MyBusiness profile updated and accurate. At any time, you can click on "Manage Your Listings" to update contact information, include new locations or branches, change your operating hours and more.

***One line of introduction:**  what do you want potential customers to know about your business? Google+ lets you determine what shows up in searches. They might as well give you the keys to the castle. Take them.

5. Start Contributing (Relevant) Content

A Google My Business or Google+ profile needs a little bit of TLC to really work its magic for your brand. And we will admit that Google+ did not take off like many analysts thought it would. It has yet to gain the traffic of Facebook, Twitter or the other social media giants. But that said, it's still vital to have an active Google+ profile because Google will rank you higher on searches when you do. It's that basic – support their team, and they'll support you back (whether your fans are actually using the platform or not).

Before you sigh and start thinking it's just too much work, remember: if you're already creating interactive content to promote your brand, it's pretty simple to just rinse and repeat on the network. For example, sharing links to your blog posts, promotions, newsletters, email messages, landing pages and more is pretty simple. Keep in mind that research shows that when images accompany posts, users are more likely to interact, share and like the content within. And while you're at it, photos are easy to create and post. Aim to add new images at least monthly.

When posting, try to remember to add hashtags – it makes a big difference in promoting the visibility of your profile. Additionally, don't forget to link back to your website whenever possible. This can help increase your SEO and your general online visibility.

Make sure that the +1 button is on your website, especially on your blog posts. Research has shown that websites that include Google's +1 button get 3.5 times the number of Google+ visits. Begin embedding Google+ content in your own blog and use it as an opportunity to share commentary and add insight to posts your potential customers might find engaging, helpful or relevant. For example, retailers can promote partner brands or service providers can comment on industry trends.

***Websites with a +1 button get 3.5x the amount of Google+ visits.**

Connect with pages and people who might have audiences that would be attracted to your brand by following them. Find communities that could have leads for your organization and join them. "+1" ("like") content that is relevant and useful to your company. And engage with users by answering questions and providing commentary. We recommend devoting just 15 minutes a week to reviewing Google+ content and commenting on at least one piece of relevant content, as well as adding at least one engaging, helpful idea within a targeted community.

6. Ride the Wave

As we see daily, the world of interactive marketing is always changing. Google My Business and its suite of platforms will most likely continue to evolve and change. But no matter where it goes, the SEO benefits that a profile gives users makes it more than worth the effort of establishing and maintaining an active presence there.

And while we all wait to see where Google My Business heads, using the tips we've shared should send more web traffic your way – only a little bit of time required.

***No matter where Google MyBusiness goes, it's worth investing time now to capture the high returns on internet traffic—especially among local visitors.**

Do More with A-LINE.

If you'd like help unlocking Google My Business, other search engine optimization tools or social media opportunities, [contact A-LINE](#). We're pretty handy at crafting plans that increase brand awareness, attract web traffic and give you the tools to grow a large base of fans, here in the Carolinas, or around the globe.

About A-LINE Interactive

A-LINE Interactive helps brands create and maintain successful web presences. We are dedicated to elevating the online presence of businesses and organizations in Upstate SC and Western NC – the regions we call home.

ALINE
INTERACTIVE
ALINEInteractive.com