

HOW TO OPTIMIZE A GOOGLE BUSINESS PROFILE

HOW TO OPTIMIZE A GOOGLE BUSINESS PROFILE

What's the first thing you do when you need a service or product? **There's a good chance that you search for the service or product on Google.** In fact, 63 percent of the population begins their shopping journey with an online search and Google continues to dominate search engines with an 86.19% market share. **Therefore, ensuring your business is visible on Google is a no-brainer.**

There are many ways of increasing your business' visibility on Google. One effective way is by using Google's business listing also known as **Google Business Profiles**. This listing will help potential customers to find your business much quicker and will increase traffic to your website. It's easy to use and the best part is that it's free.

WHY OPTIMIZING YOUR GOOGLE PROFILE BUSINESS IS IMPORTANT?

Many businesses miss out on the many benefits that optimizing their business profiles on Google offers simply because they don't truly understand how important their Google Business Profile is. **There are many benefits to optimizing your profile.** These include:

Improving customer engagement

Google has a large market share because it is continually improving in an effort to meet the needs of internet users. One of Google's main goals is to help visitors get the information they need in the shortest time possible. Google continues to make changes to ensure that it can provide as much relevant information to visitors as possible. Google's search engine results pages now feature extra information such as Google Ads, Snippets, images, and much more. More users are now entering and exiting the search engine without visiting a website. This is because they are able to get the information, they need on the search results page. **Optimizing your Google Business Profile will increase your visibility on relevant search results pages and boost engagement.**

Boosting local ranking

An optimized Google Business profile will go a long way in boosting your ranking on local results. Google will consider your proximity to the internet using a signal to rank you higher in relevant search results pages. This will mean greater visibility and increased business. Consumers will also view you being listed higher in local search results as a sign that your business is legitimate and trustworthy. You will convert more customers without spending more on advertising.

TIPS TO OPTIMIZE YOUR GOOGLE BUSINESS PROFILE

Now that you understand the importance of having an optimized profile, it's time to get to work and actually ensure that you stand out from the competition. Below, we discuss **simple yet effective ways to optimize your Google My Business Profile** and reap the benefits for your business.



Claim your Google Business Profile

This seems like an incredibly elementary, obvious thing but you'd be surprised at how many businesses have not claimed their Google Business Profile or don't know how to access it. The key takeaway here is to **find "Claim Your Business Profile"** at <https://www.google.com/business/>. Start by clicking "Manage Now" and follow the prompts to find and claim your listing.



Avoid stuffing your Business Profile name with keywords

It's tempting to want to use relevant keywords in your Business Profile name. After all, when it comes to SEO, getting a few keywords into your titles and headings is one of the most effective ways to improve ranking. However, **your Business Profile name is about much more than just getting a higher ranking. It is about getting visibility for your brand.** That means using the actual name of your business on the profile.

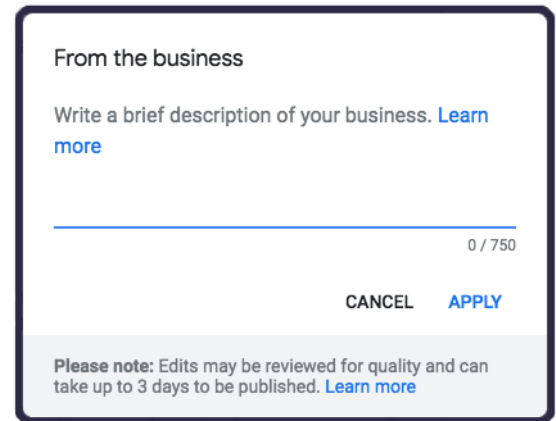
A screenshot of the Google Business Profile name input field. It shows a box with the label "Business name" and a placeholder text "Enter your business name as it appears to customers in the real world." Below this is a text input field containing the text "New Name".

Use your business' actual name, address, and a working phone number. This information should be updated whenever there is a change in your contact information. Ensure that the information is consistent with other online profiles your business has such as on social media and other listing sites. If you're wondering about the consistency of your information across the web, contact us for a full audit and we'll show you how to clean up your listings. Be very careful to include precise information about your business such as your street address if you have one, operating hours, email address, and other ways that you can be contacted.

Use your entire description space

Your description space is where you get to tell internet users what your business is about. This is your opportunity to show them why they should consider your business over the competition. You should therefore maximize your use of the description space.

Google allows you 750 characters to use to describe your business. Aim to include all the key information in the first 250 characters of the description. **You can repurpose content from your about us page on your website or even your mission statement.** However, **don't make the mistake of repeating information that will be visible in other sections of your Business profile, and you definitely should not duplicate information from your website.** You should instead focus on showing visitors what sets you apart from the competition. You can include keywords, specific services, specific areas you cover, and even keyword-rich testimonials describing how you have taken care of your customers.



The screenshot shows a text input field for a business description. At the top, it says "From the business". Below that, it prompts the user to "Write a brief description of your business." with a "Learn more" link. A horizontal line separates the text area from the character count, which shows "0 / 750". At the bottom right of the text area are "CANCEL" and "APPLY" buttons. A grey footer bar contains a "Please note" message: "Edits may be reviewed for quality and can take up to 3 days to be published." with another "Learn more" link.

Complete the products and services sections

Many business owners neglect to list their products or services in their Business Profile. This leaves your profile incomplete. You're leaving out vital information and that means visitors have to guess or assume the rest. **The products and services section is a great opportunity to showcase what you offer and really draw in those visitors by showing why you're the better choice.**

Take the time to list your products (or product categories) and services. Provide full descriptions of everything you include in the list. **It is important to ensure that the information you provide on your profile matches what is on your website.** Be consistent. Add images for products and calls to action to encourage viewers to click.

Encourage customers to ask questions

Many internet users searching for your services or products have similar questions as those that your customers had when they were on their purchasing journey. **The answers to these questions could be the final push that a potential customer needs to make that purchasing decision.**

Encourage customers, followers, and other users to ask questions in your Q&A section. Be sure to answer their questions as completely as you can. You can even include links to pages on your website that will provide more information. Include keywords in answers whenever you get the opportunity to.

Add Photos

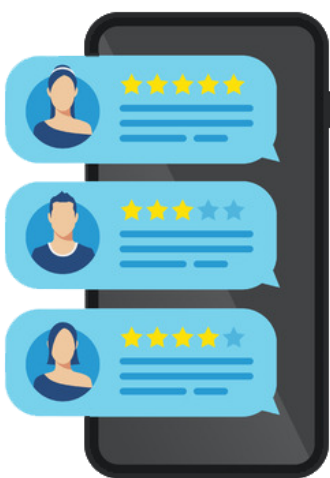
Images are the best way to grab attention. They are also an effective way to increase a customer's trust. This is especially true when the photos are not stock photos but actual images that can be related to your business. **Photos of your business will let internet users know that your business is a legitimate one.** This will increase the chances of visitors engaging with your business.

Use exterior or interior shots of your business, employees, action shots around the office, and otherwise engaging photos that will attract attention. Be sure to include relevant keywords in your photo titles before they are uploaded, and also remember to geo tag the photos. This will not only show where your business is located but also increase your business's visibility on relevant local search results pages. Your images will appear on local searches more often.



Have an automated online review strategy

Reviews from customers are crucial when you want to get and stay ahead of the competition. Online reviews are like what word of mouth recommendations are in the traditional world of marketing. **The average customer will read reviews from other customers before making their final purchasing decision.** You, therefore, want to have a large number of positive reviews to influence potential customers to make a positive decision.



Automating the review process will make it easy for customers to leave reviews. For example, you can have software that sends texts to customers after they have received services (contact us to learn more about this). The text may thank the customer for choosing your services and encourage them to leave a review. Include a link in the text that directs the customer to your Google Business Profile where they can leave a review.

You need to have many more reviews than your competition to get potential customers to gravitate toward your business. For example, if your nearest competitor has 20 reviews, you should aim to have at least twice as many, and the more you get, the higher the likelihood you'll generate trust.

Provide customers with guidance on writing reviews

Most customers are willing to leave positive reviews. However, they are not sure how to write a review. **Provide your customers with a simple guide on the type of information that they should include in the review.** For example, encourage them to say where they are from and what exactly it is that you did for them or what product they purchased from you. They can add more information if they would like.

Please note that you should only be encouraging customers to leave information about their experience and not coercing them to give a *positive* review. **Potential customers are more likely to trust reviews that offer specific information.** Geographical information also helps to increase ranking on local search results pages.



Respond to all reviews

Many businesses receive reviews from customers and let them be. However, this is a missed opportunity to engage with customers and show them how much you appreciate them. **Responding to reviews is also a chance to show potential customers your brand's human side and what they can expect when they choose you.**

Make an effort to respond to each and every customer review. Make your responses even more personal by addressing the customer by name and thanking them for their patronage. Not only will this attract potential customers but also increase the chances of repeat business from past customers.

Respond to negative reviews too

Many businesses owners run away from negative reviews. They wish that these reviews could be buried in the depths of the internet. However, **negative reviews are also a great opportunity to gain trust with both past and potential customers.**

Instead of avoiding negative reviews, do your best to address the issues that have been brought up by the upset customer. Apologize to the customer for the negative experience they have had and take ownership of any mistake that was made. Offer them a solution such as giving them your contact information to get in touch with you directly to resolve the issue. You may also offer them a freebie such as a discount or a gift voucher in the way of an apology.

Give customers incentives to leave reviews

Many customers are willing to give reviews but may forget or are simply not motivated enough to take the time to write a review. **You can give them the kick they need to leave a review by offering them freebies such as a discount on their next purchase or a gift voucher to use when they leave a review.**



Be careful not to demand that your customers leave positive reviews. Simply ask them to leave a review. In most cases, customers will leave you a positive review if you did a good job.

Post regularly

You can use your Google Business Profile to publish posts. These may be posts about events, offers, updates on your business, or other relevant information. Posts are a great way to include keywords in your Business Profile and improve your ranking on local search results pages. Posting regularly helps to drive engagement and establish your business as an authority. **Potential customers are more likely to trust a business that appears to be active and that provides them with useful information.** Your posts may be what differentiates you from your competitors.

Stay up to date with features on Google Business Profiles

Google continually updates its services and provides new features that offer businesses new ways to engage with their audiences. For example, Google has added a messaging feature that allows internet users to message your business directly. This ensures your business is more accessible to users and gives you yet another opportunity to engage with customers. Potential customers don't have to visit your website to get in touch with you directly. This is easier for users as well as businesses.

Make good use of any new features that Google adds to the Business Profile to increase engagement with your customers. Take every opportunity you can to ensure customers have a good experience.



The Takeaway

Many businesses don't realize the power of their Google Business Profiles, but they are extremely valuable. Optimizing your Google Business Profile will certainly increase your brand's visibility and increase engagement, while also increase your local rankings. It's also completely free. Interested in having us audit your Business Profile? Grab a spot at scdigital.com/localseo