

Maximize Your Online Prescene: Google Business Profiles

By Harley Rivet, President, Deep Dish Digital

Google is the largest driver of traffic to websites by a huge proportion. People spend more time on social media but they turn to Google when looking for products and services.

Having an optimized “Google My Business” and “Google Map” listing will increase your chances of being shown at the top of search results! More than 40% of searches have local intent. Search

queries that contain a location qualifier such as “nearby” or “near me” have grown exponentially (Source: Google Trends). In response, Google has put emphasis on supplying users with immediate information regarding businesses that may be nearby. This document provides an overview of how to claim and verify your Goggle Profile, optimize for local search, enhance visual appeal and engage with customers and manage reviews.

Claim and Verify Your Profile

The first step to take regarding your Google Business Profile is to make sure one exists, claim it, and verify your ownership of it.

Prerequisites:

Have Existing Profile:

- Use Google Account associated with a business email (i.e. Gmail).
- *Email for account should be accessible by multiple people*

Claim Existing Profile:

- Request ownership through link on existing Profile or Map Listing.

Don't Have a Profile:

- Physical address preferred. If not, business must make in-person contact with customers during its stated hours.
- Storefront Business (physical address except PO boxes).
- Service Area Business (no address needed).

- Online Retail (no address needed).
- There can only be one profile per business, but you can add multiple locations with sub-profiles in a “company group”.

You must meet the above requirements to have a Google Business Profile.

Google Business Profile Manager:

Is the dashboard to manage everything and has the most administrative capabilities. It is linked to your Google Account. Manage ownership of multiple business profiles, create groups if you have multiple locations, manage reviews, link other google products (i.e. Google ads), adjust settings, and contact Google support.

Business Information, fill out all sections:

Provide accurate and complete details about your business including name, industry categories, description, products/services, address, phone number, website, hours, and attributes. Failing to do so will result in an incomplete profile and hurt your search results. The business information you provide on your Google

Business Profile should be consistent with how it is listed elsewhere online (website, maps, directories, social media, etc). The most important information to be consistent is your business name, address, and phone number. Consistency helps Google's algorithm make links between the various listings which helps with your profile's search result ranking.

Optimization for Local Search

Three main areas that Google uses to rank your profile for localized searches:

Relevance:

Completeness and accuracy of information, especially chosen business categories and description with typical search keywords.

Distance:

Proximity your business is to the person conducting the search and/or the area they've specified (Google Maps listing is important for this).

Prominence:

Reputation, popularity, and presence your business has across the web (e.g. reviews, press, third-party listings).

Enhance for Visual Appeal

There are features that will help your profile to stand-out from competitors.

Ensure your profile has photos for its profile icon, cover image, and products/services. This is easily accomplished by editing your profile from the search results screen must be logged in).

Engagement & Monitoring

Google uses both reviews and owner responses as a ranking factor for profile search results. You must have a verified profile to reply to Google reviews.

Question & Answer (Q&A) is often populated by profile visitors leaving questions that you or others can answer. It's a useful feature to address frequently asked questions and enriches your profile by showing proactive customer service. Google may email your address associated with your profile when questions are posted so that you can reply quickly instead of having other visitors reply on your behalf. To maintain some control over Q&A you can actually post and answer questions yourself.

Keep your profile updated regularly since features can change and visitors may suggest changes (check it at least once a week). One of the most overlooked updates is your hours of operation yet it's one of the most used features by visitors: Update hours for holidays or unplanned closures. Depending on your Business Category (e.g. Hotels, Restaurants, Tour Operators) there may be additional features you can use such as appointment booking or links to third-party sites where reservations can be made. For hotels you can also add amenities to your profile (e.g. Wifi, Pool, Parking, Restaurant, etc). Google may automatically apply updates to your profile or users will submit updates that you can approve/decline.

You can manage your Google Business Profile on the go by using the Google Maps App on your smartphone. An excellent option if you're often away from your computer or want to add pictures to your profile that you've taken on your phone. Below is a list of the main things you can do with the Google Maps App:

- Edit profile
- Add pictures
- Post updates
- Respond to reviews
- Adjust hours

Google Business Insights allows you to track the performance of your Business Profile over a given time period. You can view the queries people used to find your business, number of profile visitors, and interactions (clicks on phone, directions, website visits, bookings, and more).



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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