

THE

POCKET GUIDE TO

NAVIGATING GOOGLE MAPS

UNDERSTANDING THE
IMPORTANCE OF GENERATING
LEADS WITH GOOGLE MAPS



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Introduction

Make no mistake about it. Thanks to the rapid proliferation of mobile data devices like smartphones and tablets, American consumers are pretty much connected to the internet on a 24/7 basis. If you own a local business, this should be a matter of great concern to you.

Understand that American consumers are now constantly cross-referencing their local buying decisions, thanks to their mobile devices. Whether they're looking for plumbing, roofing, or local services, they all too readily consult with online resources to help them make a local buying decision. What's troubling is that regardless of the fact that you run a local institution, let's say for plumbing services, all that local goodwill is not going to do you much good in the digital mobile age. In fact, if you don't have a solid online local brand, all the goodwill in your local area is not going to do you much good.

An increasing number of these local customers are going to judge the feasibility of going with your business compared to another local business based on your online brand. This is why it's crucial for you to understand the importance of Google Maps. If you don't have a solid Google Maps presence for your local business, it's almost impossible to build a solid local online brand.

This report steps you through some key important factors that you should be aware of when it comes to Google Maps. Put simply, Google Maps enables you to get key online pieces of information set up so you can build a solid online brand for your local business. Think of it as a key ingredient that you need to put together a solid online brand.

Does this mean that you only need to set everything up properly with Google Maps and your online branding needs are met? Absolutely not. Instead, a solid presence on Google Maps gets the ball rolling. You still need to do other things to take your online brand to where it needs to be. However, a solid presence on Google Maps is indispensable. Without this key ingredient, you're just making it that much harder for yourself to build a solid online brand and presence for your local business.

Chapter 1

You Need to Establish Online Credibility for Your Local Brand

As I have mentioned in the introduction, an increasing percentage of local American consumers are determining your credibility based solely on your presence online. They don't care about the fact that your business has been handed down from generation to generation. They don't care about the fact that you have a solid local following. It doesn't matter one bit to them that you have built up a tremendous amount of local goodwill for your business. In fact, it is increasingly becoming clear that the fact that many people in your local area consider your business a local institution is truly immaterial as to whether they want to do business with you.

While your local credibility may be a big deal to people from Generation X and Baby Boomers, Millennials are increasingly making their buying decisions based solely on online signals. This is why you need to establish online credibility for your local brand. This is why you need to do this sooner rather than later. Keep the following factors in mind. You don't want to be a day late and a dollar short when it comes to understanding the profound impact of solid online credibility as far as your offline business performance is concerned.

Take Control of Your Online Brand, Otherwise, the Internet Will Take Over

The internet has a life of its own. People just don't hang out on the internet and things take care of themselves. No. You might have a solid offline brand, and that is all well and good. But if you don't take control of how your local brand is perceived online, you can bet that the internet will take over. You can also bet that the results will not be to your liking.

You have to remember that bad news travels faster than good news. Haters will hate. That's what haters do. That's their job. Unfortunately, if you let haters and critics define your offline brand, you are only making it all that much harder for you to reverse the damage. In many cases, it's almost impossible to undo the damage to your offline brand.

It Is Very Hard to Reverse a Negative Online Brand

If you simply stand by and let negative people define your offline business, it's going to be very hard to reverse that negative online brand. I'm not saying that it's impossible. What I am saying is that it will take a lot more resources in the form of time and money to undo all that negative online branding.

The good news is that it doesn't have to be this way. When people leave a negative review of your offline local business, you don't have to take it lying down. You can proactively give your side of the story. You can proactively hit negative mentions of your brand head-on and let people know that you are actively policing your brand online.

A Negative Online Brand Perception Can Poison Your Local Offline Goodwill

The main reason why too many local business owners stand by when bashers and haters leave all sorts of negative reviews of their business is a false sense of security. These local business owners and entrepreneurs think that there is a solid dividing wall between online perception and local goodwill. Sadly, this is not the case.

You have to understand that if you build up enough negative online heat, this will slowly poison your local goodwill. Increasingly, offline consumers are using online perception to color and influence their offline buying decisions. You might find yourself in the position where your local offline goodwill has eroded to zero, thanks to negative mentions of your brand online.

You Need to Be Proactive

The bottom line is you need to be proactive. You need to constantly police online mentions of your local brand. The moment you notice a bad review, make sure to air your side of the story. Make sure you give whoever is watching or paying attention the other side of the situation.

If you let all these negative reviews and blog mentions pile up, it makes it all that much harder for you to reverse this negative online perception. As the old saying goes, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Similarly, five minutes of your time rebutting a negative

review goes a longer way than waiting forever to try to undo a negative online brand.

Chapter 2

People Are Already Looking for Your Business

You might think that online people will stay online and offline people will stay offline. While you are more than welcome to think that way, you should know and understand that you are going to be harming your business if you continue to think that way. The truth is people offline are already looking for your business online. Increasingly, people are using mobile search to find local businesses.

Your local reputation is no longer enough to drive a steady stream of warm bodies through your business' physical doors. You need to be proactive in sculpting and shaping your local business' online reputation so you can drive more local people through your doors. Don't assume that people online aren't looking for your local business.

The truth of the matter is more than half of search engine queries are local in nature. That trend is only going to increase as mobile devices become even more popular. Don't fool yourself into thinking that what's online will remain online and what's offline will remain offline. Instead, be proactive and take the bull by the horns by understanding that local reputation is no longer enough to ensure your offline local business' continued success.

Make It Easy for Your Customers to Find You by Having a Solid Google Maps Presence

At the very least, make it easy for people looking for your business to find you by making sure you build a solid Google Maps presence. This means that your business name must be accurate, your address must be up to date, and your phone number is available. Also, make sure that it's very easy to properly categorize your business. If you take care of this with Google Maps, you have put together the key ingredient that review sites, local bloggers, and any other interested person will need to properly include your business in whatever they're doing.

People from surrounding areas are looking for your business. Also understand that you need

to properly position your location in such a way that people in nearby regions can find your business. Understand that not just because you think you have so many competitors, whatever merchandise or service you're offering is purely localized. This might not be the case.

In many situations, there are people from nearby areas that, for some reason or another, cannot find the merchandise or services you're offering in their local district. This is why they feel dependent on online searches to find whatever it is they're looking for. Don't leave this money on the table by failing to properly categorize your location in such a way that people can find your offerings based on a regional search.

People Looking for Related Merchandise and Services Are Looking for Your Business

Similarly, people who are looking for a broad range of services and merchandise may already be looking for your business. They might not know that you carry something related to what they're looking for. Similarly, they might not know that your offerings are actually part of the solutions to their problems. Understand this because proper categorization of your merchandise and services can explode your potential customer base. Categorizing whatever it is you're offering too minutely might block out a huge number of people who might be your potential customers. Worst of all, these people might be actively searching for local solutions such as your business.

Chapter 3

Make It Easy to Find Your Business Through Google Maps

The first step that you need to do is to make it easy for people in local and surrounding areas to find your business through Google Maps. How do you do this? First, you need to tie in with your existing social presence. This means that your Google Maps presence must have a tie-in with your website. Also, make it a point to tie in your Google Maps presence with your existing social media presence.

This is a big deal because if there is a tight integration between your Google Maps presence and your social media accounts, people can easily share the word about your merchandise or your services through their social media accounts. This can lead more warm bodies through your business' physical doors because when people share the word of your business on social media, only local people would be most interested. This means that you are filtering a wide range of people on two levels. You're filtering them based on their immediate needs and you're filtering them based on their location. You can easily explode the reach of your local business simply through a properly configured Google Maps presence that is tied in to your social media presence.

Tie-In With Custom Apps

If you have a solid Google Maps presence, you can get a lot more customers than you originally anticipated. Why? You can get a custom app program that you can promote to your existing customer base. When you give people an incentive to install your custom app, you would be able to reach out to your local customers whenever you want, wherever they are on the planet. Do you realize how amazing this is? In other words, you get a two-way communication system with proven customers. This enables your brand to become current and relevant pretty much on a 24/7 basis.

Of course, you shouldn't abuse this relationship. You shouldn't abuse this presence. But if you are able to be there just at the time they need you, not only would you be able to draw more

warm bodies through your business' physical doors. You also increase the likelihood that they would share the word about your mobile app and you would be able to explode your business' reach.

Chapter 4

Gain a Competitive Advantage

You probably don't need me to remind you of this. The truth is your competition is ramping up. The truth is more and more of your competitors are going online. Unfortunately, simply putting up a website is not going to cut it. That's not going to go far enough.

You need to make sure that your customers will find you online. And a key part of this is to have a solid presence on Google Maps. As you rank higher on Google, Google Maps becomes indispensable in putting your business front and center of the eyeballs that have the most immediate need of whatever it is you're offering.

This gives you a massive competitive advantage because there is an increasing trend towards local searches. As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, over 50% of all searches are local in nature. This is only going to grow over time. You need to be at the forefront of this trend so your local business will remain relevant for the long term.

More and More Apps Incorporated Google Maps

Another way you can gain a competitive advantage through your Google Maps presence is that more and more local buying apps are incorporating Google Maps. If you have a solid presence on Google Maps, people using existing and future apps can find your information and can go to your business. This is why you should look at Google Maps as really an indispensable raw ingredient for a solid online presence. This presence may not be readily apparent to you right now. But make no mistake about it. As more and more apps are developed to help people with their local buying decisions, you can reach these people by simply being on Google Maps.

More and More Localized Directories Incorporate Google Maps

Thanks to the increase in mobile devices, there are more and more local directory services

and apps in existence. A lot of these directories know that if they feature Google Maps, they add more value to the lives of people using their apps. By having a solid Google Maps presence, you can tap into the reach of these localized directories.

More and More Review Sites Incorporate Google Maps

While there is no shortage of localized review sites, the people behind these sites know that they can add more value to the lives of their readers if they feature a map along with their review. If you have a solid presence on Google Maps, review site owners would find it easier to review your business first since you are already so easy to find on Google Maps. Also, they know that whatever review they come up with would probably be deemed as more useful because it features a Google Maps-featured business.

Chapter 5

A Solid Google Maps Presence Is a Key Building Block of Your Online Brand

If you want to build a solid brand with your Google Maps presence, you can't do things passively. You need to pay attention to the following factors so your Google Maps listing is the best it can possibly be.

Focus on Accuracy

Make sure that the information you've listed on Google Maps is the most up to date and the most accurate. At the very least, make sure the basics are there. What are the basics? Keep the following acronym in mind: NAP. In other words, make sure your business name is accurate, your address has to be up to date, and your phone numbers are fully listed. If you have more than one phone number, make sure you list them all out.

Understand That Your Google Maps Presence Is Just the Beginning

Understand that having a solid presence in Google Maps simply gives you a basic building block for your own efforts. This means you have to do something extra. You have to build a solid site. You need to engage in online review marketing. You also have to try your hand at social media marketing. Overall, you need to be more proactive in building a solid online brand.

While a solid Google Maps presence is important, it should not be looked at as the end-all and be-all solution to all your online branding concerns. It is just the beginning. You have to look at it as a key part of a comprehensive and cohesive online branding strategy.

Conclusion

Make no mistake about it. Google Maps cannot be ignored. It's not just one of those things that are purely optional online. In fact, the way things are shipping up online, it simply can't be ignored. It's increasingly becoming indispensable.

A solid Google Maps presence leads to solid online brand formation. This is why you have to be proactive in shaping your online brand. And it all begins with a well-thought-out and strategically formed Google Maps presence.

Make it a point to add Google Maps placement to your website development checklist. Indeed, make sure your Google Maps presence is tightly integrated into your web development and marketing strategies. As the old saying goes, 'all roads lead to Rome.' A solid Google Maps presence and listing has a lot more to do with the success of your overall online branding campaign than you realize. Think of it as the digital raw ingredient of your online brand. Please follow all the tips outlined in this book so you can be well on your way to a solid and credible online brand.

Since more and more of your local business' customers are turning to the Internet to 'vet' their local purchasing choices, make sure your Google Maps presence leads the way to a solid and credible online brand for your local business.