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ONLINE DIRECTORY SECRETS FOR THE LOCAL BUSINESS

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The Power of Online Directories and How to Get Started Fast!

Online directories have been around for some time. And just like anything that becomes a huge trend for a little while, at some point business owners start to wonder whether or not they're still worth it. The answer to that question is 'yes!'

Online directories can be a great addition to your current small business marketing strategy. Online directories can help your small business expand its website traffic, increase the likelihood that your website will be found by interested visitors and increase your bottom line.

If you haven't taken a look at online directories and considered how your small business could use them to increase its market presence, then now is the time to start. And if you're already listed in several online directories and are beginning to wonder if they're worth all the work, or if they continue to get you new customers, the answer to that is also 'yes!' Competition for businesses today is fiercer than ever, and online competition even more so. And if you take your listing down or aren't listed in online directories, you'll be giving the advantage to your competition.

What Are Online Directories?

There are many different types of online directories available on the Internet. Each of these online directories serves a specific purpose and can be used by your small business in specific ways.

An online directory is a website submission service that allows your small business' website to be added to a specific category where it can be searched for by interested visitors. Listing your small business on an online directory increases your website's visibility on the web and helps to create inbound links to your business' website. Online directories make it easy for people to find what they are looking for. These directories can be accessed from just about anywhere that has an internet connection. This means that people could find your business' website from their home, office or even while traveling.

Every website that is submitted to an online directory is placed in a specific category. These categories can range in how they are organized. Some are organized by business-related categories, some are organized according to personal preferences and others are organized by subject. Each category consists of several websites relating to a specific topic. Each website listing features the name of the website, a direct link to the website and a short description of the website. Interested Internet visitors will be able to browse through the various categories in the directory and locate websites like yours that they may be interested in visiting. Essentially, online directories make it easier for any visitor to find your business' website.

How Do Online Directories Work?

The concept of online directories is actually a pretty simple one. Online directories are very similar to the Yellow Pages in the real world, only these listings are only online. (Actually Yellow Pages.com is now one of the largest online directories.) A directory is just a listing place for a number of websites. Any type of website could be listed in an online directory. Some online directories are huge and cover every topic that someone could create a website for, while others are very small and specific to a specific niche.

Let's use an example. Say you are a model airplane enthusiast and you want to find some websites that cater to your specific interest. You could look through a huge online directory such as Google My Business and find several dozen websites that are related to model airplanes. Or you could look for an online directory that is niche-specific, which means that the entire online directory would be based on hobbies such as model airplanes. With a niche-specific directory you may find even more websites that are based on your specific interest than what you could find on the larger directories.

Since online directories are organized by categories, finding websites that relate to a specific interest such as model airplanes is very easy. You could find information and websites about model airplanes in your local region too, if you use a regional-specific online directory. So if you live in Phoenix you could find websites that relate to both model airplanes and the Phoenix area. Online directories will direct you to websites that you want to find. All you have to do is perform a search in the online directory for a specific topic or browse through the various categories until you find the type of websites you are looking for. When you perform a search you will be given a list of all of the websites that relate to your search term. You will be presented with a number of links to these websites and each link will have a short description of what you are likely to find on the website. You can read the descriptions and choose to click on the website that best suits you.

There are many different types of websites that you could find under a specific topic as well. For example, if you search several online directories for information relating to model airplanes you may find websites that are about building model airplanes, flying model airplanes, creating historically accurate model planes, tips and instructions about how to fly model planes, websites that sell model airplanes and charters and associations that you could join regarding model airplanes. These are just a few of the examples you could find using an online directory. There are simply too many topics to list them all here.

Many online directories offer their services for free. After all, they want consumers to visit their website when they're searching for something, so they'll offer businesses a

listing in order to beef up their own website. There's nothing wrong with using a free directory service, as many of them are some of the most reputable around – such as Google My Business.

But there are many paid online directories as well. And just as there's nothing wrong with using a free service, it also doesn't mean that you should automatically discount paid directories just because they're paid. Many paid directories offer additional services such as advertising, including more in your listing, and allowing for more reviews.

In the middle between these two are online directories that offer a free basic service and have a paid option available for business owners that want to upgrade their listing. With these types of paid services, the business owner often gets all the enhanced features of a paid service, and their listing is often placed at the top of the directory's listings. That means that under these paid options, a business may be listed well above their competitors.

You can see how anyone can use an online directory to find websites relating to things that interest them. As a small business owner you can see how potential customers of yours are using online directories too. Now that you understand how online directories work it is time to see how they can work for your business.

How Do Online Directories Benefit Small Businesses?

The benefits of using an online directory for your business are many. And when a business is listed in multiple directories, there are even more benefits to reap. Below are just a few of the benefits business owners will see when using online directories.

More exposure for the business

Ask any business owner if they want more exposure and the answer will likely be ‘yes!’, ‘of course!’, or ‘doesn’t everybody?’ And there’s a chance that as a business owner, you want more exposure too. After all, the more exposure a business gets, the more potential customers they’re reaching. And being listed in an online directory can help them get it.

Online directories are long lists of businesses. And when a potential customer is searching for a business, whether in an online directory or in a search engine, they’ll likely come across many businesses. But the chances of this increase exponentially when that business is listed in an online directory.

So many business owners put an immense amount of work into their website in order to get it ranked high in the search engines and have more customers learn about their business. While that website work should never be ignored, online directories can complement that website and have the business’ name in front of the eyes of more potential customers.

More traffic to that website

This goes hand in hand with the business getting more exposure. That’s because when a potential customer sees the business’ name in an online directory, there’s a very good chance that they will visit the business’ website to learn more about the company and their products or services. Plus, with so many links in those directories pointing directly back to the business’ website, it will increase the search engine ranking for that website. That means that the website will appear higher in the search engines, increasing the likelihood that even more customers will visit the website and really ramp up those traffic numbers. And as a bonus, that increased traffic will also boost a website’s search engine ranking.

Affordable advertising

Just like all business owners want more exposure, all business owners would happily take part in more advertising if they had the budget to do so. Unfortunately, many business owners don’t have this in their budget. Luckily, being listed in an online directory can give business owners free advertising. Every time a business’ name is listed within an online directory, it promotes their name and increases brand

recognition every time a visitor or potential customer sees their listing. And while not all online directories offer their services for free, those that do charge make sure that their fee is minimal. And these paid directories often come with even more features to benefit the business owner. This makes online directories much more affordable than other types of advertising, such as purchasing a TV or radio spot.

Appear more professional

Customers are often wary of businesses they find online, but only at first. After doing some investigating and making sure that the business has an actual address, a professional-looking website, and contact information, they start to trust businesses and consider them for the product or service they need. Online directories provide all of this and customers can see at a glance that the business is legitimate, and know that if they choose to deal with that business, the entire interaction will be completely professional. Online directories are considered to be some of the most reputable websites there are because of the measures they take to verify businesses and make sure that those businesses are legitimate. Consumers know this, which is one reason why online directories are often one of the first places they turn to when searching for a business, product, or service.

Increased revenue

All of the above mentioned benefits do one thing for a business – they drive customers to a website and greatly increase the chances that those customers will make a purchase from the business. So while there are many benefits that come with online directories, it really all comes down to one: increased revenue for the business. And that's really all business owners are looking for.

Why You Should Consider Listing Your Small Business in an Online Directory

Apart from the concept that online directories will increase the amount of exposure your website gets and help with your SEO strategies, they are also a very effective way to directly target potential customers. Online directories make it easy for online users to find something they want. Studies have shown that over 80% of all purchases made by consumers are started through an online business directory. This means that the consumer first looked for a company, product or service, found the business through a directory, and then went on to make a purchase from that company. This is a very effective form of targeted advertising. The customer already needs or wants your product or service and you can directly target them by listing your website in an online directory.

Another reason why you should consider listing your small business has to do with your return on investment, or ROI. Since the potential benefits of getting increased website traffic are great compared to how much you will have to spend to list your website in an online directory, you can see a great return on your investment in the form of increased revenue. You also want to keep your brand and your company name in the minds of consumers at all times, which is something else that an online directory can help with.

What Online Directories Should You Use for Your Small Business?

Even though listing your website in many online directories will improve your website's exposure and SEO ranking, it is not effective to just SPAM your website into every single online directory you can find. You will want to take some time to consider which specific online directories will give you the best ROI. Here are the directories I recommend:

1. [Google My Business](#)
2. [Yahoo Small Buainess.com/](#)
3. [Bing](#)
4. [Yelp](#)
5. [Merchant Circle](#)
6. [Yellowpages.com](#)
7. [Super Pages.com](#)
8. [City Search](#)
9. [Mapquest](#)
10. [Local.com](#)
11. [Foursquare](#)
12. [Manta](#)

After your business is listed in these directories you can take a look at the larger and potentially more expensive general-interest directories. You will probably want to consider listing with the top 10 online directories, as these will be used by a lot of people and will offer higher relevancy and authority in the eyes of search engines. Google My Business and the Yellow Pages are large general-interest directories that you will want to list your small business in. If your website sells tangible goods you may also want to consider listing it in directories that allow users to post reviews. 88% of consumers trust business listing reviews as much as they trust a personal recommendation from a friend; and over 70% of consumers will search for reviews before using a business or buying their product.

The best way to figure out which specific online directories your small business should be listed in is to start with your competitors. Take a look at your local and niche-specific options and figure out if your competition is already listed. If they are you need to be listed too. If they are not listed, you may want to list your website as a way to beat them to the punch. In some situations, it may not make sense for you to have a listing in a specific online directory, even if your competitors are listed in it. Your goal should be to be listed in every relevant and niche-specific directory you can find as well as many of the major directories, but not so many directories that you appear SPAMMY.

In addition to listing your business in online directories, you also need to maintain these listings. It is important for your online directory listings to be up to date and accurate, or else you could just be wasting your time. If your directory information seems out of date your customers will probably look elsewhere.

It will probably take some time to see the results of listing your small business' website in so many online directories, but eventually you will see results. The best way to find the perfect combination of online directory listings for your business is to use some sort of tracking or analytics system. You will want to be able to see how many people clicked on your website links from within the directory and if your website has shown increased traffic since then. You will want to stop wasting your time with online directories that are not producing results and increase the time and effort you spend on online directories that are productive.

The Importance of NAP/NAP+W

NAP is hugely important when it comes to online directories; it's actually the backbone of all listings. NAP stands for name, address, and phone number. And when there is a website address included as well, that acronym becomes NAP/NAP+W. While business owners likely know their NAP and their NAP+W, there are some things to consider when using them within online directories.

For instance, if a business is located on Main Street, is the business owner going to use 'Street' or the short form, 'St.' With just this one example, it's easy to see how a business' NAP could quickly become confused. And having any kind of confusion in this most important information could wreak havoc on the efforts of a business owner making business listings in online directories. While there are many best practices to use when creating business listings in online directories below, NAP and NAP+W are so important, they really deserved their own section. Here's how to ensure that your business' NAP never becomes confused.

The business name

When listing in online directories, the business name should appear exactly as it does on business cards, letterhead, and any other documents or handouts the business uses. Extra information, such as locations should never be used, even if the business has multiple locations. There will be another area where this can be added so if the location isn't actually part of the business' name, it shouldn't be used.

The business' address

The business address can quickly become confused in online listings. This is because many businesses have a physical location, but they're not often at that location. Landscaping services, plumbers, other home contractors, and more often go to visit their customers instead of their customers coming to them. Although this may be the case, terms like 'remote' should never be used, and the location field should never be left blank. The chances are good that even these business owners have a physical location of their business; they need to in order to get their mail. Business owners should use that physical location and never use P.O. boxes or cross streets.

Phone number

Business owners may also want to include their phone number, especially if they want to be the one that speaks to customers and potential customers. But this isn't going to help the customer. For instance, if the business owner doesn't work at the location that is being listed, or isn't often there, and a customer calls to see if something is in stock within that location, it could cause confusion. The customer's question may not be able to be answered, and they'll likely turn to someone else to get the help they need. The

local phone number for a specific location should always be used; it will help to validate that the business is in a certain geographical area for that online directory. Toll-free numbers, call center numbers, and marketing tracking numbers should never be used.

Website

Lastly, the website can become confusing because one website is typically made up of several different webpages. So which one should the business owner send customers to? If the business listing is for a specific location and the website has a webpage for that location specifically, that is the web address that should be entered. Pages that should not be used include contact pages, as the user will be visiting the website in order to learn more information, not to contact the business. Facebook and Twitter addresses should also never be used, as there will likely be a separate area for that within the listing and marketing pages should never be used as those will also likely not be helpful to the customer. When in doubt, use the home page. This is usually the best option.

Best Practices for Listing Your Small Business in Online Directories

Now that you understand why your small business should be listed in online directories and have started locating the directories that you want to be listed in, you are ready to begin creating your business listings for submissions. Here are some tips and best practices for listing your small business in online directories.

- Start by choosing local directories and directories that are niche-specific. So if you own a model airplane hobby shop in Phoenix, make sure you find a local Phoenix business directory and a directory that is related to model airplanes. If you can find a model airplane hobby directory for the Phoenix area, you are all set.
- Once you're in local directories, start searching for larger and more generalized directories. Pick directories that get a lot of traffic and that are listed highly on major search engines like Google. A higher search engine ranking means that the directory will be considered as both authoritative and relevant in the eyes of search engines, making any links you get through these directories more valuable to your SEO strategy.
- Include all of the relevant information regarding your small business in your website's directory description. This should include your business' name, location, telephone number, contact information and possibly reviews, business hours and anything else that is relevant. Add in photos, maps or other interactive features if the directory lets you.
- Try to keep your information consistent across all of your online directory listings. This will help your website to retain its credibility in the eyes of search engines and will assist with your SERP rankings. To keep that information consistent, store it in a place you can refer to often as you make your directory submissions, such as on your phone or in a place that's easy to locate on your computer.
- Try to make your business stand out by offering an explanation of your business or any specific message the customer should know in your description.

Keep all of your information up to date. This may mean frequently updating all of your listings several times per month.

- Allow customers to leave positive reviews and use them in your listing if the directory allows it.
- Always be professional and consistent with your business' listings and message. This includes any information regarding your brand.
- If you sell products or services to a local market, make sure your business is listed in a local business directory. Include geo-specific keywords and information. An example would be: "Dave's Model Plane Shop" + "Phoenix".

Optimize your website for SEO purposes and include the relevant keywords in your meta titles and listing descriptions. Keyword research is important.

Get Listed in the Top 12 Online Directories

Now is a great time to get your small business listed in the Top 19 Online Directories. There are few other Internet marketing techniques that will offer so many benefits for such a small investment on your part. Listing your business in an online directory will increase your website's online presence and help more people find you, which can help you increase your business's revenue.

Contact us today to get your Free copy of the Top 1s Online Directories Presentation

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Next Steps

Thank you again for downloading this free report. We hope that you found it useful and it has given you the information you need to use online directories to promote your business.

If you would like additional assistance, please contact us at:

Your contact information goes here

Recommended Resources

We know the idea of submitting to online directories can be intimidating. While we hope this guide has provided you with everything you need to give you the confidence to do it, we understand you may need further information and assistance. You can always contact me directly.

In addition, I recommend these helpful resources as well.

[Free Autoresponder](#)

[Website Hosting](#)