

Local Marketing: How Buyers Find You Even If They Don't Know Who You Are or That You Have What They Want

By Kurt Scholle

For most NACTA members the biggest shopping days of the year are right around the corner. What is your strategy for getting more customers during the holiday shopping season? Whether you own a website or not, here are some FREE and inexpensive ways for more buyers to find you 24/7/365.

To Be Found You Need to Be Findable

According to Google, more than 80% of users search for stores and local service providers online before visiting them, which means that it is important for your business to show up in "Local Search." Your prospects will use search engines, review sites and local directories looking for recommendations.

Local Search Marketing can include many things from optimizing a website for both the types of products you sell and the communities that you serve, to getting listed in local business directories and review sites.

Being listed as a 'gift shop' might attract people who aren't necessarily thinking of Irish goods. Many directories will allow you to classify your business 3-5 ways, like 'clothing store,' 'home furnishings' or 'book store.'

Even a simple approach can give you a much more competitive edge, resulting in higher sales with minimal effort year around.

Most online listings come from information scraped from large data aggregators, like Acxiom, Yellow Pages and InfoUSA. Conflicting or incomplete information can result in incorrect or multiple listings.

How Bad is It?

Use the free tool at <https://moz.com/local> to see where you are. Simply enter your business name and zip code for a free report. Use the name the public would know you by, such as Sean's Irish Gifts and NOT your legal name (E.G. O'Malley Enterprises, Inc.)

You may see more than one listing for your business, some with very slight changes in the name. You may see one or more "verified" listings. You'll want to optimize only one.

The report will show you graphically how many of your listings are Complete, Incomplete, Inconsistent and Duplicates. We see many listings that are 50-60% complete and benefit from revisions. A score above 80-85 is acceptable, but there is still room for improvement.

You could contact all of the Primary Sources, Direct Network and Indirect Network sites to correct information on file, but MOZ can do it all for you for \$80 annually.

Having an accurate presence on Google+, Yelp, CitySearch, YP and the rest will cover most places your customers will look to find you.

The Importance of NAP

The format of your Name, Address and Phone number help the data aggregators get your information correct and complete. ALWAYS use the same exact format for this information! If you shorten 'Incorporated' to 'Inc,' then show it that way every time. If you put a period at the end of Inc, then do it always. If your address is '104 East Main Street,' then DO NOT use '104 E. Main Street' or '104 East Main St.'

Highways are often problematic. We may think of the address as '104 Rt 83,' but it may actually be something like "104 North State Route 83."

Check with your post office to see how they have your address formatted.

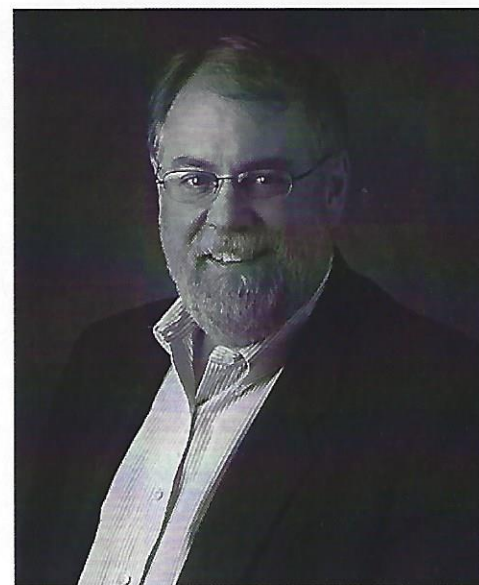
Verify that the map data is correct. We had a restaurant client once who was still listed as the hardware store that preceded it. Another client location was shown on maps a mile away from their actual location.

Give Them More

Local search engines and directories often allow you to post pictures to your listings. Use an outside picture to help people find your location for the first time. Use your logo and professional pictures of top merchandise too.

Many of the directories allow you to list your hours of operation. Make sure you change them for the holidays or by season. You don't want people to go elsewhere not knowing you have expanded Christmas hours.

Claim your business for free at Google.com/MyBusiness.



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