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**What is Google Places?
(Now called Google + Local)**



As you probably already know, small businesses are always searching for inexpensive ways to promote their businesses and attract new customers. One advertising avenue that is open to all businesses is to have a Google Places page.

When local consumers search for local products and services online, businesses can show up high in the search results with a well-optimized Google Places page.

According to Google, one in five searches includes a "location," which prompted them to create Google Local. In July 2010, Google Local was renamed as Google Places.

Just as the Yellow Pages once listed services according to their locations, Google Places compiles lists of local businesses that offer the services and products that consumers search for online.

Therefore, having a claimed, verified, high-ranking Google Places listing is now crucial to every small business' local success.

Google Places in a Nutshell

Google Places (<http://www.google.com/places/>) is a free service that is a part of the Google search engine that focuses specifically on businesses and their locations. It links to Google Maps and displays a list of companies in the area that offer services or products based on the user's search terms.

For instance, if a search is made for bookstores in a specific location, all of the listed bookstores within that area will be marked on a Google Map with short reviews and often pictures and/or videos related to the business.

Google Places pages are usually generated automatically for any business that has an online presence, such as a company website. They are also generated for businesses that are already listed in other online directories such as the Yahoo directory, Bing Local, and others.

These listings are considered as “citations” and are very important in the ranking factors of Google Places pages. We will talk more about citations in a later section of this report.

When a user performs a search, Google Places listings are displayed and ranked in the search results using four simple factors. Based on these factors, each listing is given a score, which determines where it ranks in the results.

The 4 Key Google Places Ranking Factors:

1. The proximity of the business to the center of the specified search location.
2. The general SEO rating of the business listing in the Google index.
3. The quality of the citations that exist online for the business in all of the local directories.
4. The quantity of the customer reviews that are on the business’s Google Places page.

Once all of these factors have been considered, a page is given its final placement for certain local keyword phrases.

Research has shown that consumers would rather take their business to a local company than make purchase online. However, they always go online first to actually “find” a local company to do business with.

While they’re there, they also read comments from other consumers about these companies to help them make a decision.

Google Places for Local Businesses: Boost Sales by Connecting with Local Consumers
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For instance, someone in Los Angeles needs a plastic surgeon may go to Google and type in "Los Angeles Cosmetic Surgeon" and a list of cosmetic surgeons in Los Angeles will come up in the Google Places results.

[Liposuction Los Angeles | Cosmetic Surgery Visalia, Fresno ...](#)

www.dryoho.com/

Cosmetic Surgeon in Los Angeles, Visalia, Fresno, Bakersfield, offers breast augmentation, liposuction, face lift surgery and Eyelid Surgery. Dr. Yoho's Cosmetic

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[Plastic Surgery Los Angeles CA - Cosm...](#)

www.keycare.com/

★★★★★ 12 Google reviews

[Beverly Hills Body Plastic Surgery -](#)

www.beverlyhillsbodysurgery.com/

1 Google review

[Doheny Sunset Surgery Center - Cosmet...](#)

www.cosmeticart.net/

★★★★★ 15 Google reviews

[Jeffrey Hoefflin, M.D., FACS](#)

www.doctorhoefflin.com/

★★★★★ 9 Google reviews

[Steven Svehlak MD FACS](#)

www.sunsetcosmeticsurgery.com/

1 Google review

[Ivan Thomas, MD - Los Angeles Plastic ...](#)

www.ivanthomasmd.com/

★★★★★ 10 Google reviews

[Profiles Beverly Hills Plastic Surgery](#)

www.beverlyhillspfiles.com/

★★★★★ 37 Google reviews

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Google Places takes advantage of these very concrete search terms to return very precise search engine results to pinpoint the closest and highest rated businesses that match the query.

Users can then easily choose the closest business to their location that meets their needs or the one with the best customer reviews.

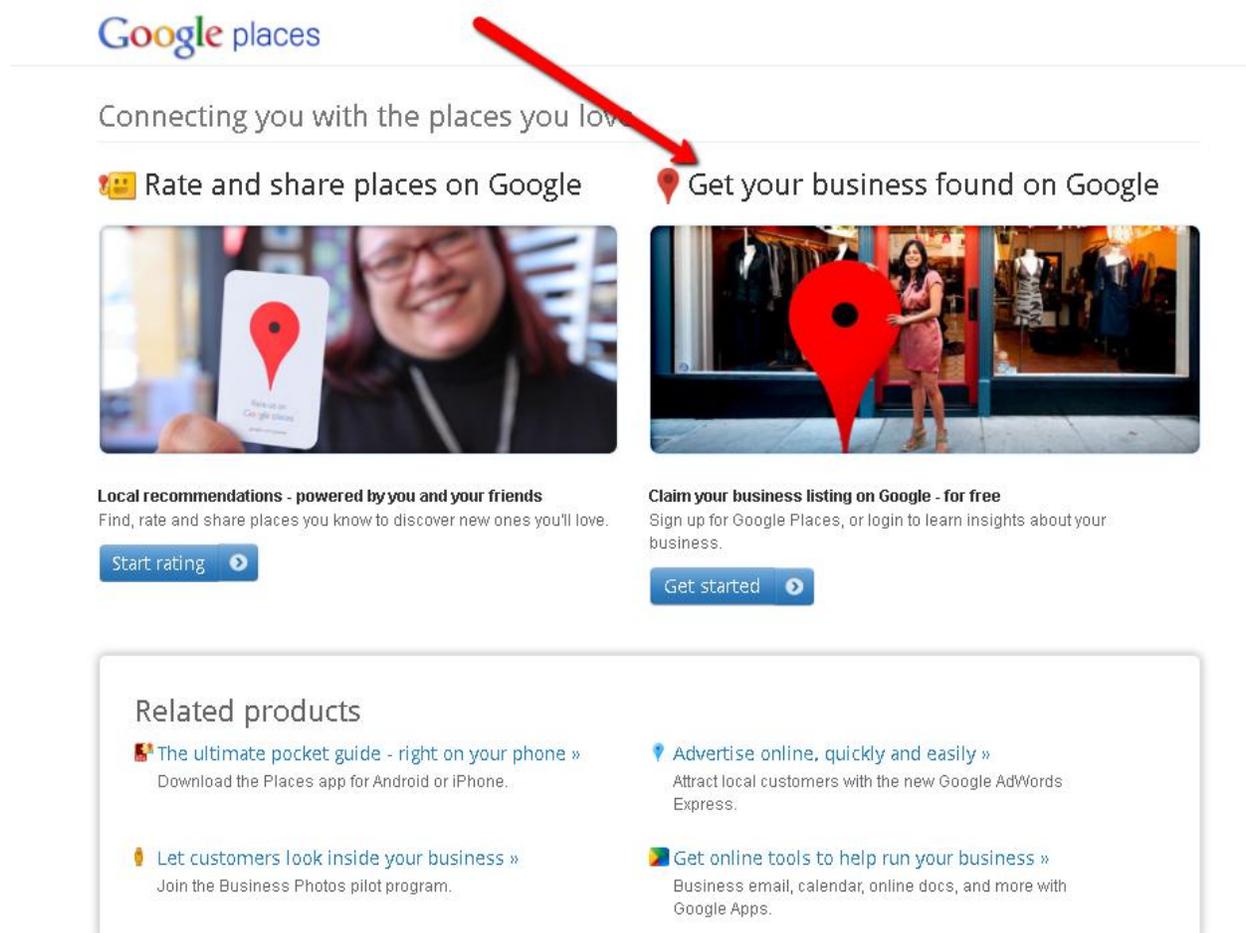
Google Places currently has 5 million listings² that have been claimed by businesses around the world, with 2.3 million of them being in the United States alone.

Because Google generates place pages automatically, there are presently 50 million Google Place pages that are waiting to be claimed by businesses.

Studies show that 20% of all of Google's 14.3 billion monthly searches include the location as one of the search parameters.

But many companies are missing out on this massive number of potential sales because they are not taking full advantage of this huge local market.

Listing Your Business in Google Places



The screenshot shows the Google Places homepage. At the top left is the "Google places" logo. Below it is the tagline "Connecting you with the places you love". There are two main promotional cards. The first card is titled "Rate and share places on Google" and features a smiling woman holding a white card with a red location pin icon. Below this card is the text "Local recommendations - powered by you and your friends" and "Find, rate and share places you know to discover new ones you'll love." with a "Start rating" button. The second card is titled "Get your business found on Google" and features a woman standing in front of a store with a large red location pin icon overlaid. Below this card is the text "Claim your business listing on Google - for free" and "Sign up for Google Places, or login to learn insights about your business." with a "Get started" button. A red arrow points from the top of the second card towards the "Get started" button. Below these cards is a "Related products" section with four items: "The ultimate pocket guide - right on your phone", "Advertise online, quickly and easily", "Let customers look inside your business", and "Get online tools to help run your business".

Google usually generates the Place pages for businesses automatically, so it isn't always necessary for a business to create one from scratch. Instead, they only have to claim the page that has been already created for their

business by going to the Google Places homepage and following the 'find your business' links.

The service is completely free and if your business doesn't already have a Google Places page, setting one up is as simple as creating a new Google account.

Filling Out Your Listing

If you already have an existing Google account, log in to your account, go to the Google Places website (<http://www.google.com/places/>), and create a listing for your business using the 'add new business' tab on the home page.

To get real value out of the Google Places listing for your business, it is important to take it a couple of steps beyond just creating the page. Your goal is to ensure that you get the highest ranked listing possible in your business niche.

In order to make your business show up at the top of all the ranked businesses listed in your area, it is necessary to make sure that your listing is fully optimized.

For starters, be sure to fill the listing out completely. Enter your real location address, phone number, email address, and website address. Be sure to choose the proper categories that fit your business profile and do not leave any sections blank and make sure you have a 100% score.

Add your service areas, hours of operations, payment options, and as many videos and photos as you can (preferably add the max of 10 photos and 5 videos). Also use the free coupon section. All of this adds to your listing's importance in Google's eyes. So fill out everything so you can to get the best results.

Claiming and Verifying Your Listing

The final, and probably the most vital, step in the process of claiming your page is to verify that you are actually the owner of the Places page.

All new users and businesses that have claimed a Places page will be prompted to do this at the end of the registration process.

Google offers three verification options; by phone, by SMS message or by snail mail. After this is finished and Google has verified ownership, Google will then connect your websites and your business details with the Places page listing for your business.

To get the most out of your listing, it is important to make sure that the verification is completed and that the connection has been done correctly by going onto Google and doing a search for your business.

The Importance of Citations and Customer Reviews

Once you have claimed your Google Places page, the next step is to make sure that it is ranked high enough to be shown in the search results.

Two factors that play a part in this process are:

Citations and Customer Reviews

Although similar, these two elements have different sources. While you can't do much to affect the reviews that you get, there is quite a bit that can be done to increase the online citations, giving your Places page a better SEO ranking.

Citations

Citations are the references to your business and its products or services that are found on the various local directories like ShopCity.com, SuperPages.com and Yellowpages.com.

Currently, Google lists the basic ones, so one way to really boost your citations is to look at your competition's citation listings. Then, add your business to those sites so you can have a citation there as well. This will put you closer to your competitors in terms of ranking.

Because the crawlers visit these sites more regularly than static pages, it is best to have a strong list of citations on sites known to have a high trust rank with Google like Wikipedia or the Yahoo directory. The more citations that appear for your site, the higher the Google ranking for your business is going to be.

The real grunt-work of optimizing your Google Places listing involves creating a comprehensive list of citations across the internet that point back to your business.

By submitting your business details to as many of the trusted sources as possible, you only increase your chance of boosting your rankings and beating your competitors.

Obviously, this process takes a lot of time, effort, and skills to get the best results. Therefore, most businesses get the help of an experienced Internet Marketer who is comfortable performing this task. While there will be an investment, this route will save you a lot of time as well as increase your exposure more quickly.

Customer Reviews

In addition to citations, Google also considers the number of customer reviews you have when ranking your listing. In fact, the more reviews you have, the better.

Having awesome customer reviews is great because that is what consumers want to see when they are trying to decide whether or not to do business with a company.

However, when ranking your listing page, Google doesn't rate the "quality" of the reviews and simply focuses on the "quantity" of reviews.

This means that even having 200 ordinary reviews is going to improve your SEO with Google more than four or five really good reviews. There is even evidence to suggest that having a lot of reviews can outweigh the quality and quantity of the citations.

Either way, encourage your customers to review your business as it can be a good, cost effective way of building your online exposure with little risk or financial investments to make it work for you.

Having reviews posted on an on-going basis is very important too. Don't ever stop asking your customers to leave online reviews for your company because even if you have hundreds of reviews, it isn't going to help your ranking if they're all over a year old.

This is because the spider bots are always searching for fresh content when updating the Google indexes.

In other words, Google loves "fresh" content and this is why it pushes your page up the ranks if you have a lot of citations and customer reviews.

Google Places and Mobile Internet Usage



Another value that a Google Places page will add to your business is the reach it has for the mobile internet market. A very high percentage of shoppers look for businesses online using their mobile devices.

Some sources estimate that 35% of all searches are done from mobile devices, so this is the perfect opportunity for any business to convert online traffic into foot traffic.

One obvious advantage is that mobile internet users have been shown to take more immediate action on their searches in the real world than PC shoppers do.

Current statistics show that Google dominates the mobile search engine market with as much as 96.8%⁵ of all mobile searches using Google. This means that the most effective way at the moment to advertise online to mobile internet users is through an optimized Google Places page.

Recent predictions show that by 2013, mobile internet usage will surpass computer or laptop usage. Therefore, having a strong web presence that is mobile-friendly will be vital to all companies in the coming years. Google have now gone one step further and openly stated that non mobile friendly website will be penalized. (You must appreciate that Google simply want to give their customers a satisfying experience and a non mobile friendly site will not do that.

One enduring challenge for most small businesses is finding a way to be competitive in their marketplace. Implementing cost effective strategies to get your company's message in front of consumers is one of the keys to successfully promoting any business.

Google Places is an avenue that every small business should take advantage of if they really want to compete with the corporate giants in their industry.

Setting up a Google Places listing page is not that difficult. However, it can be daunting and ineffective if not done properly.

If you would like some help claiming and verifying your Google Places listing, contact me at for a free consultation.

Looking forward to speaking to you,

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