

Life After Launch

Directories Deliver Traffic – An Overview

By: Chris Bachman | August 14, 2016

Business directories are everywhere and you ignore them at your own peril. However, handled properly, directories can really help your website and your business grow its visibility and attract more traffic.

Directories do three main things for you.

- People search their favorite directories for businesses and being in them means you get seen more often.
- Search engines use the business information found in directories as an indicator of a business' credibility, which affects your search rankings.
- Directory pages rank in search engine result pages and when your listing is included this provides you more presence in the results pages and therefore more opportunities to be seen and clicked on.

There are roughly 1700 directories in existence although this number fluctuates weekly as more go live while others close their doors or drift into obscurity. That is a daunting number of directories but the good news is that for any given



business there are probably no more than 25 which are going to be really meaningful, maybe 50 if you include the fringe markets. This includes about 18-20 of the main directories and then perhaps another 5 of the niche directories, ones focused on your type of business or locale.

The important directories you will want to pay attention to include Google and Bing, both of whom factor in your listing with them into their search ranking factors, followed by ones such as:

- Yelp
- CitySearch
- Manta
- MerchantCircle
- Superpages
- YellowBot
- Insiderpages
- Dex Knows
- And a dozen or so more.

A great way to determine which ones you should be in is to do a local search around your favorite keywords and see what directories show up in the Top 50.

Important:

1. It is very important that your NAP, Name, Address, Phone, be consistent across all directories. Inconsistencies will have a negative impact on your website ranking.
2. Be sure to include ALL the possible categories your business should be found under. These categories send ranking signals to the likes of Google and Bing.
3. Be sure to thoroughly complete your listings, including hours, profiles, pictures, etc. The more complete it is the better the chance of it ranking by itself in the search results.

Time Involved:

If you are doing this yourself you can expect to spend upwards of 15-20 hours over a two month period getting 10-15 set up. That is because getting the listings claimed, set up properly, checking back to make sure your information “sticks”, fixing errors and ultimately dealing with customer service, will take a toll.

There are services which will handle this for you but they can be expensive or inadequate and do have limitations on what they can provide. A Google search will reveal many. Keep in mind that these companies come and go with regularity and if they have claimed your listing on your behalf and then they vanish, you will have a headache getting it back.

Aggregators:

Information brokers are known as “aggregators” and they collect information on your business from a multitude of sources such as business licensing departments, phone directories, tax records, etc. Then they aggregate this information and feed it down the pipeline to directory websites so they can populate their databases with businesses they hope to up sell enhanced listings to. The problem with this is two-fold; first, a lot of the information they sweep up is inaccurate, and secondly, when this information is sent down the pipeline it overwrites everything you have done to set up your perfect listings. Imagine a spring flood flushing out a streambed. Anything you build in the streambed between floods will be washed away when the next flood of information comes along.Ouch!

So now you need to monitor your listings and fix them whenever they begin to degrade with bad information. Or, you can hire a monitoring service.



Duplicate Listings:

Another thing you will need to contend with is what is known as Duplicate Listings. Often times there is a listing with a slightly different address or phone, usually from an earlier version of your business, or perhaps someone tried to claim your listing before and then abandoned it. In either case, the result is that there is already a listing for your business on the directory and it is going to compete with your new and perfect one. This duplicate will collect reviews, send inaccurate information to the big search engines and ultimately confuse people. You will need to deal with the directories CS department in order to get rid of it.

What will hurt you:

There are several things which can go wrong with a directory listing which will hurt you with the search engines and these items need to be paid particular attention to.

- Inconsistent NAP
- Improper or missing categories
- Incomplete listing
- Using an 800# without a regular local number
- Bad address – this includes PO Boxes, UPS store address or similar, or having no address at all.

Is it all worth it?

You bet it is! Proper handling of your directory presence is a key step in improving your online presence and website's search ranking. It also offers the opportunity to appear in more of the Top 20 spots in the search results pages, which in turn denies your competition that same exposure. More visibility, more traffic, more business.

The question to ask is whether you want to tackle it yourself or outsource the work to those with the tools, skills and patience to pull it together properly. If you do hire out just be sure to check references, find out what exactly will be done on your behalf and, perhaps most importantly, who will have the log-ins for each directory account.



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