

## 8 Tips for Improving Your Local Search Results

Getting found online is critical for many local businesses. Just check out some of these statistics from [getfoundlocal.com](http://getfoundlocal.com).

- 41% of consumers say they use a location in their search (e.g., "dentist in Chicago")
- 73% of all online activity is related to local content (Google)
- 66% of Americans use local search to find local businesses (Comscore)
- 54% of Americans have replaced phone books with the Internet and local search (Comscore)
- 82% of local searchers follow up with call/walk-in, etc. (TMP / Comscore)
- 43% of search engine users are seeking a local merchant with the intent of buying offline

It's clear that people don't just pick up the phonebook anymore. Here are eight things you can do to get your company found online by qualified prospects:

1. **Google Local Business Listing:** This is a great way to be found on Google searches, and you can list your business for free. All you need is a free Gmail account. Here are a couple of tips for the best results:
  - a. You have the ability to be listed under five different categories, so think of different services and products you offer that are likely to be keywords your customer will use when they do their search (i.e., tire repair in San Diego).
  - b. Use the "fix incorrect marker location" link if your location is not accurately tagged on the map.
  - c. Take advantage of the option to add more detail in your business listing.
  - d. Ask your frequent and happy customers to write reviews on your listing page so that your ranking can improve within the search. Good rankings will give new prospects confidence in your business.
2. **Use Online Listing Sites:** Register your business with these area-specific directories.
  - a. [www.Yelp.com](http://www.Yelp.com)
  - b. [www.ZoomInfo.com](http://www.ZoomInfo.com)
  - c. [www.local.yahoo.com](http://www.local.yahoo.com)
  - d. [www.Local.com](http://www.Local.com)
  - e. [www.TrueLocal.com](http://www.TrueLocal.com)
  - f. [www.CitySearch.com](http://www.CitySearch.com)
  - g. Check with your local chamber of commerce and ask to have your website linked on their page.
  - h. Check other directories exclusive to your industry (i.e. do a search for "plumbers directories" or "dry cleaners directories").
3. **Join the Online Coupon Craze:** Before completing a purchase online or visiting a business, many savvy shoppers now search for coupons for your products. Simply searching for "coupons for wood flooring in San Diego" yields a half a dozen results. Coupons serve two purposes: they reach out to the more price-conscious consumer, and they provide more visibility to your business.

Do the same search yourself and you will find many online services that will help you

design a coupon and list it on their site. You can even add your coupon to Google maps. Visit [http://www.google.com/press/annn/maps\\_coupons.html](http://www.google.com/press/annn/maps_coupons.html) for more details.

If you add a downloadable or printable coupon on your site, make sure the coupon page includes keywords relevant to your business and location. This improves your chances of being found when someone searches online. For free coupon templates you can visit [www.office.microsoft.com](http://www.office.microsoft.com).

4. **Tap into social networking sites:** Twitter and Facebook aren't just global services. They are also home to many prospects in your area. By setting up free accounts and posting valuable tips and offerings to your followers and fans, you open up a new and cost-effective channel to build your brand.
5. **Share your talent through blogging:** Blogs are powerful ways to get found locally. Think of each blog article you write as a tiny magnet attracting prospects to your website. As customers search for keywords relevant to your article topics, you get exposure. The key to being listed high in local search results is to include your local town and area in your blog title and keywords. If you don't have a website with a blog, a hosting account and blogging software will cost you less than \$7 a month.
6. **Connect with YouTube:** Imagine demonstrating how to change the oil in a car or replace the filter in a Jacuzzi with an inexpensive Flip camera or cell phone. You could post a new "How to..." video every week on your website and YouTube. Providing value to your clients in an easy and very personal way connects them to you like no other medium. Videos that are short, unscripted and have a little humor are the most powerful. As with your blogging efforts, your local search results are improved when you include your local town and area in the keywords of the video.
7. **Prominently display your address and local phone number on your website:** You may also want to include your address and phone number in the footer of each page. Spell out the state in one of the listings rather than making it an abbreviation, so it is easily recognizable by the search engines.
8. **Include your service coverage area on your website:** If your service covers many neighborhoods, cities or counties, make sure they are all included in your web content. If your business is in a smaller community, list the closest metropolitan city or large town.

You do not have to be an experienced online marketer to benefit from local searches. Chances are you have a staff member, colleague or friend who can help you.