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Online Reviews: The Local Search Secret Weapon

Brick-and-mortar businesses often struggle to earn online reviews from their customers, particularly on Google's pride and joy social network: Google Plus (AKA Google Business). Ratings, comments, and testimonials not only boost a business's reputation, but can also increase local rankings and higher placement on Google maps, making it easier for customers to discover your brand in the midst of their search results.

There are hundreds of local review sites a user can leave a review. In this post I want to push my idea of the Google + importance on the local searches and Google maps from my experience with my local clients.

In order to post a review, users (clients) must have a Google + account, which can cause some hang-ups even for the most eager clients. But most likely everyone that has a Gmail account can easily convert their account to a Google + account.

Here are some savvy tips for earning more Google+ reviews on your Google + local business page:

First step: Make sure you have verified your business on Google plus, have verified your account and completed your account 100%. If not you can start here: www.google.com/business

How to Get More Google Reviews

Simply Ask:

Ask every single past and current client and slowly build the habit of inviting them to leave their comments.

Recycle testimonials:

If a client emails in a sterling review or calls in a testimonial, reach out and ask them to post it directly onto your page. But don't get greedy! One online review per customer is plenty, even if your site is listed on multiple platforms.

Review other businesses:

Page-to-page recommendations is a way of referring people to other businesses you like and support. Post these reviews directly from your Google+ business page and use this simple strategy to boost your own visibility by leaving kind remarks on the pages of industry influencers. Chances are the businesses will even return the favor and leave kudos for you as well.

Don't push:

Invite honest feedback and comments and let customers talk about whatever topics/ aspects of your business that they want to – never push your own agenda. If you do, the push back could quickly backfire and drop your ratings or convert to an unwanted headache of negative reviews all over the internet.

Avoid giving out the URL link to your Google+ Local Page:

If too many reviews come in through the same link, Google may start to get suspicious and begin blocking some reviews. Vary your approach. Ask for reviews

verbally, via email, or a slick printed handout/
business card.

Use Google Maps as the backdoor:

The only way to leave a Google Plus Local review without a Google+ account is to go through Google maps (users will need some form of a Google account). Have customers look up your business on their Google Map smartphone app (installed on 100% of android devices and a variety of iOS devices), find your listing, and leave a review. Add a sign in your business and invite visitors to visit your page and leave their thoughts. (be cautious as this might backfire)

Respond to all reviews:

Make an appearance and respond to every review – the good, the bad, and the ugly. Embrace the less-than-perfect scores as motivation to polish up your practices, but don't get down in the dumps.

Don't cheat. Not even a little bit:

Desperation can lead business owners to take shady actions. Don't forge, purchase, or incentivize reviews. It's tough to pull the wool over Google's eyes and when you get caught – the price can be devastating.

If you need help with your Google+ Local Business Page and collecting reviews, give us a call and our savvy team of experts will be more than happy to help!

