

Location, location, location



Location Marketing for Business

A step-by-step to getting your offline business set up on local social media.

<http://www.sarkemedia.com>

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Introduction

What's the first thing you do when you need to find a shoe repair store in your area?

You get on your computer and search for "shoe repair shop + your local town" (or your local city is).

And what do you do when you're out on the town and need to find a restaurant nearby?

You get on your mobile phone and search for your preferred restaurant, typing in the area you're near.

Not sure which restaurant to pick?

You go onto a review site like Yelp! To see what people are saying.

Want to see if there are any good deals going on nearby?

You head over to one of the big daily deal or coupon sites.

What does this mean for local business?

You MUST be using local social media as part of your marketing strategy if you want to truly build your business in today's environment.

This means that not only do you need to make sure your business can be found through search engines, but that people can then interact with your business online. You need to make it easy for them to find you, talk to you, let their friends know about you, comment about you, and give you feedback about your business (good or bad).

In this Kindle guide, we're going to discuss how to maximize the benefits of local social media sites, and how to get set up on the biggest sites, including:

- Yelp
- Google Places (Google+ Local)

-
- Bing Maps
 - Foursquare
 - Meetups

We'll also talk a bit about some other local social opportunities there are out there, such as niche-specific forums and daily deal sites.

Once you've gotten your accounts set up, we've also provided a worksheet you can use to brainstorm ideas for special offers. To get the worksheet stop by this page and [ping me a message to get a copy and a free consultation](#) - So take notes on things you learn as you explore each site.

Ready? Let's get social!

Local Social Media for Offline Businesses – The Importance of Being Social

Social media sites like Facebook and Twitter are essential for the marketing of any business. However, the popularity of locally based social media sites is growing steadily. These are sites that are connected to geographical locations offline. They allow customers to find the local businesses and services they're looking for. Through interactive features, customers can get coupons, check-in to locations, and write reviews for others to read.

Social media isn't just for high-tech businesses. Any offline business can leverage the popularity and marketing power of local social media. Here are the reasons your company needs to market on local social media sites.

Getting Your Business Found

The simplest reason to get involved in local social media is so prospective customers can find your business. Sites like Yelp and CitySearch list businesses and offer search features. When your customer is wandering around looking for the goods or services you offer, they can easily find your profile through one of these sites.

Spreading the Good Word

When customers enjoy your products or services, they can tell their friends and connections on local social media, which helps you get exposure. Customers can write reviews and recommend your businesses to friends, providing the greatest P.R. in the world: word of mouth.

Offer Deals and Promotions

Through local social media, you can offer special deals and promotions to get new customers through your door. You can reward loyal customers or those who tell their friends about your business by giving them coupons and deals.

Content Your Customers Can Use

Offline businesses can offer useful content through social media sites. This content may take the form of articles, videos, images, resources, or

anything else that helps your customers solve their problems. Content is brought to them courtesy of your business, which helps you gain exposure. This way, you can build trust and establish yourself as a helpful expert in your field.

Keeping in Touch

Since nearly everyone uses social media, it provides a great touch point with your customers. Simply by getting on the site and interacting with your customers by commenting, sharing, liking, and talking to them, you can build a relationship with them. Then, when they want the products and services you offer, you'll be the one they choose.

SEO Benefits

If you have profiles on major social media sites, they'll appear in search engines. When someone does a local keyword search, looking for something like 'plumber in Essex,' your local social media increases the chances of your profile appearing in search results. This gets your business more exposure and more new customers.

A Free Marketing Tool

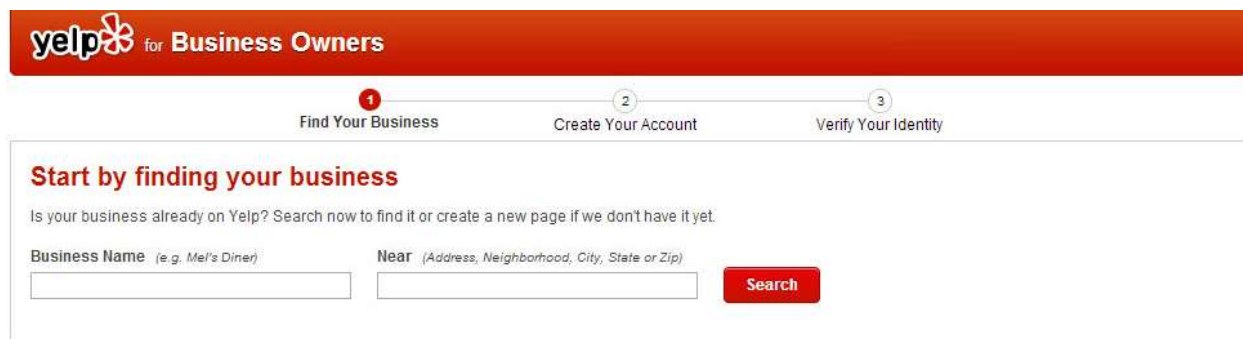
The main reason offline businesses should use local social media is that it's free and easy to use. It only takes a small amount of time to get set up, but once you're set up, maintenance takes just minutes a day. This is the kind of free advertising businesses have always dreamed of.

How to Set Up Your Business on Yelp

Yelp is a site that allows customers to find and review local businesses. It was founded in 2004 and is now one of the world's biggest location-based social media networks. Businesses can create or claim their listing to message customers, offer promotions, and take advantage of other features. In order to take advantage of Yelp for your business, you need to create a Business Account rather than a regular personal profile.

Claiming Your Listing

Your business may already have a listing on [Yelp](#) if someone has already reviewed it. Before creating a new profile, search the site for your business. If it's there already, you can claim it and take control of the listing.



The screenshot shows the 'yelp for Business Owners' header in an orange bar. Below it is a three-step progress bar: 1. Find Your Business (active), 2. Create Your Account, and 3. Verify Your Identity. The main content area is titled 'Start by finding your business' and includes the text 'Is your business already on Yelp? Search now to find it or create a new page if we don't have it yet.' There are two input fields: 'Business Name (e.g. Mel's Diner)' and 'Near (Address, Neighborhood, City, State or Zip)'. A red 'Search' button is positioned to the right of the 'Near' field.

If you find a listing that appears to be yours, verify your phone number and other basic information to make sure it's your business and not one that's similarly named. Then, click the button that says Unlock This Business Page.

yelp for Business Owners

1 Find Your Business 2 Create Your Account 3 Verify Your Identity

Start by finding your business

Is your business already on Yelp? Search now to find it or create a new page if we don't have it yet.

Business Name (e.g. Me's Diner) Near (Address, Neighborhood, City, State or Zip) **Search**

Business matches for "pizza factory" near "old tappan"

Pizza Factory Category: Pizza	5 reviews 119 University Pl New York, NY 10003 (800) 824-7569	Unlock
Carmines's Pizza Factory Categories: Pizza, Catering	57 reviews 366 8th St Jersey City, NJ 07302 (201) 386-8777	Already unlocked
Santa Lucia Pizza & Pasta Factory Category: Pizza	5 reviews 1155 Hendricks Cswy Ridgefield, NJ 07657 (201) 842-7010	Unlock
New York Pizza Factory Category: Pizza	5 reviews 596 Market St Newark, NJ 07102 (973) 465-7474	Unlock
New York Pizza Factory Categories:	5 reviews 275 Chestnut St Newark, NJ 07102 (973) 522-0210	Unlock

You'll arrive at a page where you must then enter your name, email information and a password in order to create your account and claim your listing.

Creating Your Account

If you don't find your business listing already on Yelp, you can create one by clicking on the link at the bottom of your search that says 'Can't find your business? Add your business to Yelp'.

yelp for Business Owners

1 Find Your Business 2 Create Your Account 3 Verify Your Identity

Start by finding your business

Is your business already on Yelp? Search now to find it or create a new page if we don't have it yet.

Business Name (e.g. Me's Diner) Near (Address, Neighborhood, City, State or Zip) **Search**

Business matches for "business content plr" near "old tappan"

Sorry, there were no matches. Please try adjusting your search.

Can't find your business? Add your business to Yelp

Alternatively, you can just go to the main business login page of Yelp: <https://biz.yelp.com/>. There, you'll see two options – 'Login To Your Account' and 'Create Your Free Account Now'. The link to create an account can be found elsewhere on the site as well as you explore.

The screenshot shows the Yelp Business Owners interface. At the top is a red header with the 'yelp for Business Owners' logo. Below the header, on the left, is a large grey box with the text 'welcome to yelp for business owners' and a play button icon. Below this box is a yellow button that says 'Create your free account now'. To the right of the grey box is a 'Business Log In' section. It includes a link for 'Already have a Business Account? Log in to access your dashboard.' Below this are input fields for 'Email Address' and 'Password', followed by a 'Log In' button. A link for 'Forgot your password?' is also present. At the bottom of the login section is a disclaimer: 'By logging in you agree to Yelp's Terms of Service.'

yelp for Business Owners

Unlock FREE tools to grow your business

welcome to **yelp** for business owners

Create your free account now

Business Log In

Already have a Business Account?
Log in to access your dashboard.

Email Address

Password

[Forgot your password?](#)

Log In

By logging in you agree to Yelp's Terms of Service.

What businesses are saying about Yelp

What is Yelp?
Yelp's goal is to connect people with great local businesses. [Learn More](#)

Your Profile Information

The first step is to enter the name and location of your business. If it turns out that you have a listing already and you didn't find it through the initial search, it will appear now. Otherwise, click the link that says 'Add Your Business to Yelp'.

Enter your company name and basic contact information. You'll then get a message that you need to confirm your email address in order to verify your business.

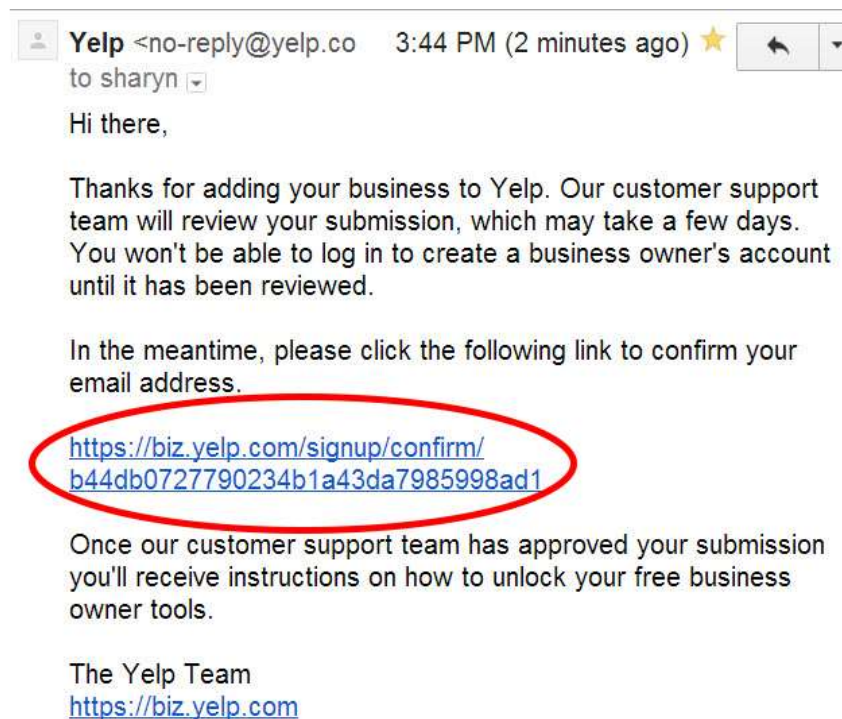
Check your Email to Submit Your Business to Yelp

To submit your business for addition to Yelp, please click the confirmation link in the email that was sent to [REDACTED]

[Go to Yelp Welcome Page »](#)

Confirm Your Email

Click the link in the email you receive. You'll then get a message that the Yelp team must review your submission, which may take a few days. You won't be able to finish creating your business account until your listing is

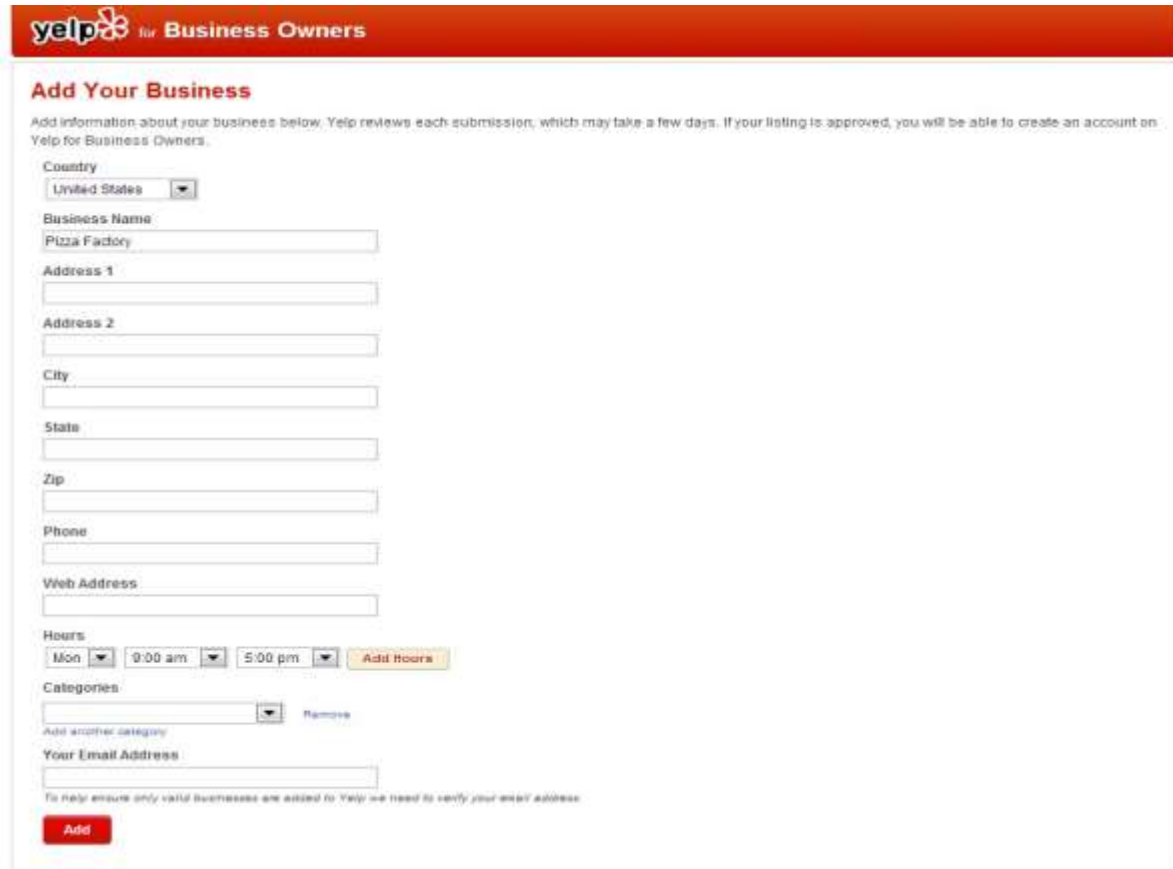


approved.

Detailed Profile Information

Once your business submission has been approved, Yelp will redirect you to a dashboard where you can enter more detailed information such as open hours, a detailed description of your business, and your products and services. Fill out all fields completely.

A complete profile looks nicer, conveys all the necessary information, and offers SEO benefits by making your profile more likely to come up in searches. You should also upload photos of you, your logo, or your business, whichever is more appropriate.



The screenshot shows the 'Add Your Business' form on the Yelp website. The form is titled 'Add Your Business' and includes a sub-header 'yelp for Business Owners'. Below the title, there is a note: 'Add information about your business below. Yelp reviews each submission, which may take a few days. If your listing is approved, you will be able to create an account on Yelp for Business Owners.' The form fields include: Country (a dropdown menu with 'United States' selected), Business Name (a text input field with 'Pizza Factory' entered), Address 1 (a text input field), Address 2 (a text input field), City (a text input field), State (a text input field), Zip (a text input field), Phone (a text input field), Web Address (a text input field), Hours (a section with a dropdown for 'Mon', a time selector for '9:00 am', a time selector for '5:00 pm', and an 'Add Hours' button), Categories (a dropdown menu with 'Add another category' and 'Remove' options), and Your Email Address (a text input field). At the bottom of the form is a red 'Add' button. A small note at the bottom of the form states: 'To help ensure only valid businesses are added to Yelp, we need to verify your email address.'

Adding More Businesses

If you manage more than one business, Yelp allows you to manage all of them under one account by simply adding them to the original account you created. You don't need to create multiple Business Accounts. Simply go to your dashboard and click the link that says 'Add A Business'.

Taking Advantage of Yelp Features

The great thing about Yelp is that it lets you offer promotions through the site. On your dashboard, you'll find everything you need to do this. Like all social media sites, you should take advantage of the special features Yelp offers.

How to Get Set Up with Google Places

Google Places is Google's local social media site. Like other geographically based sites, it's meant for people who are searching for local businesses. Customers can write reviews and businesses can use the site to keep in better touch with their customers. Google places is a great opportunity for a local business to be on the front page of Google, at no extra cost to



themselves.

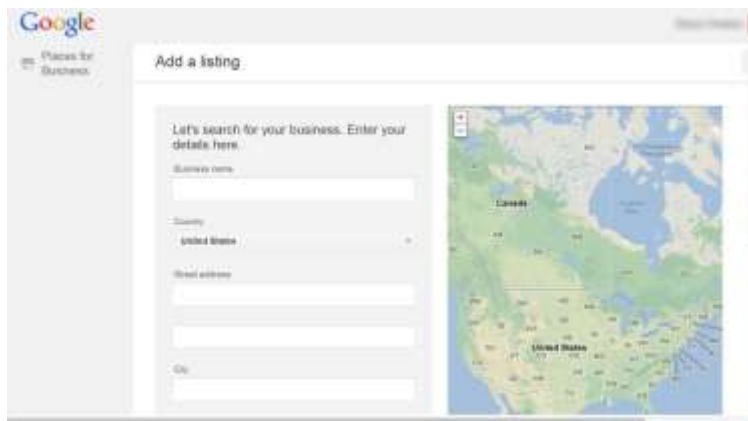
Google Places is integrated with all of Google's other products such as Google Maps, YouTube, and now Google+. Your Google Places listing will also show up in Google+ Local, a combination of Google Places and Google+, where you and your customers can interact.

Google Personal and Business Account

In order to create a listing, you first need a Google account. If you use Gmail, Google+, or any other Google products, you have a personal account already. You'll then need to use your personal account to [create a business account](#), or Google+ Page. This is an account used exclusively by businesses.

The difference between a business and regular account is that with a business account, you can choose admins and grant other users access to the account without giving them access to your personal email address.

Whenever you interact on Google products as your business, you will appear as a business to other users, rather than as a personal user. Pay attention to which account is logged in at all times, and make sure that any commenting or other activity you do as your business is on brand.



Add Your Business

On the [Google Places homepage](#), log in with your business account.



Before creating a listing, make sure there isn't one already. You'll see a tab that says 'Find your business'. Use this first to see if your particular business is already listed. It will be there already if someone has reviewed you. If you find your business there, follow the steps that Google gives you to verify that it's your business.

If your business is not already there, click 'Add a new listing'.



You'll be redirected to a page where you can fill out your basic information. For your business name, use your company's real name, which is the most familiar to your customers. Add the branch location if necessary. Here you can also add your address, phone number, and URL.

Choosing Categories

The next page allows you to add more detailed information. It will ask you to choose a category for your business, allowing you to choose up to five. Start by picking the main category that best describes your business. You're allowed to add up to five categories, and you should definitely use them all, as they give your customers more ways to find you.

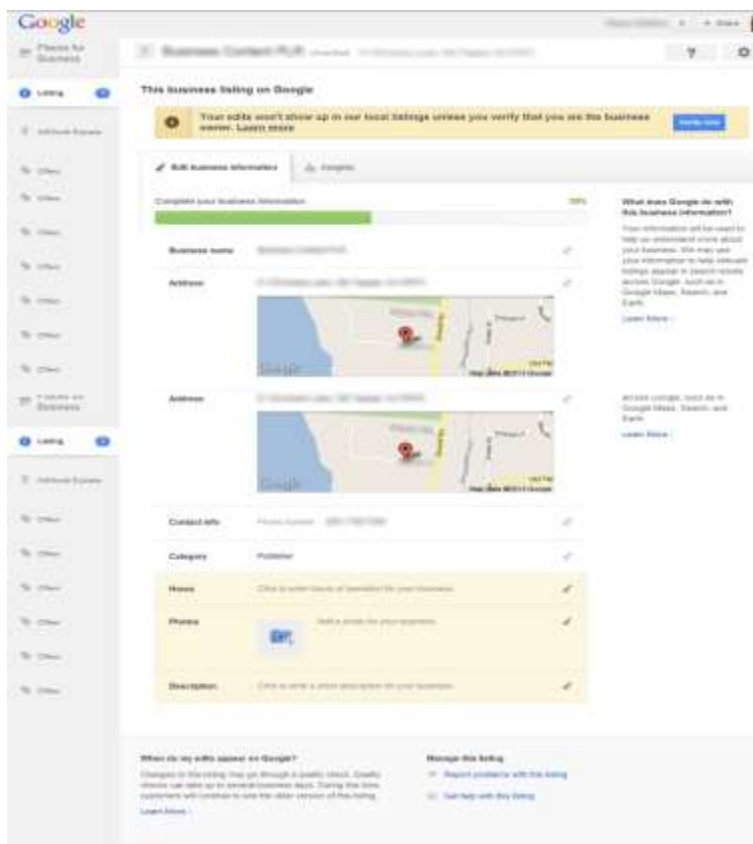
Categories are keywords that will bring up your listing in search results. Choose any that apply to you. Google will make suggestions, but you're free to enter your own. Try to imagine what your customers will be searching for. Think of all the products and services you offer and list the most important ones as categories.

More Details and Photos

You'll need to fill out other information, such as hours of operation and payment methods taken. It's important to fill out each field completely. The more detailed information you can offer about your business, the better customers will be able to find you.

At this point, you can upload photos and videos. These are important because they too will show up in searches. You're allowed up to ten photos, and it's a good idea to use them all. The main photo should be your business logo or other main image.

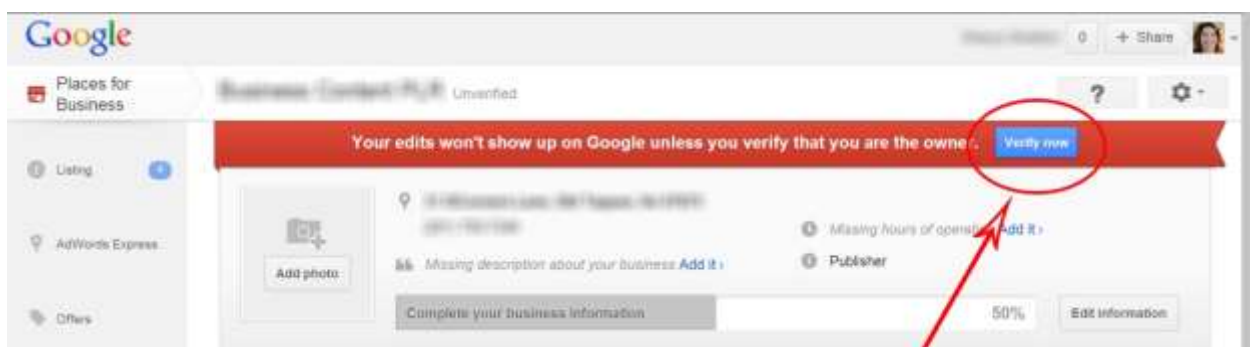
Other photos can be products or anything else that relates to your business.



Videos can be added directly from YouTube.

Verifying Your Account

The final step is to verify your account. You can do this by postcard in the mail. You'll receive a PIN number that you enter into your listing's page. Once this is done, it can still take a week or two before your listing appears



in Google+.

Google Places and Google+

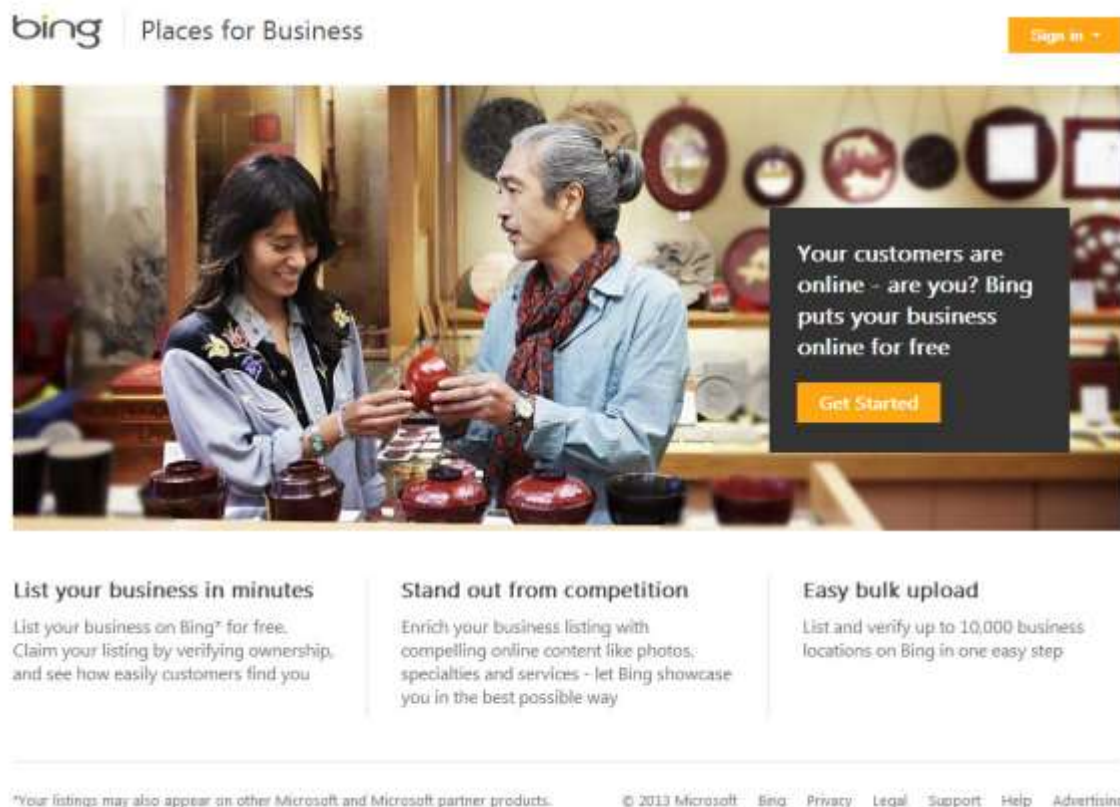
Google Places is now integrated with Google+ Local, so if you have a Places account, you also have a Google+ Local account. Be sure to take advantage of this.

With a Google+ Local listing, you can make use of the social media site's features like Hangouts. At the same time, your Google+ Local listing will not only have the social media features, but will also show reviews from your Google Places listing. This integration takes advantage of all of the features of both Places and Google+.

How to Get Set Up with Bing Maps

Bing Business Portal is Microsoft's location-based social media site for businesses. Bing is a fairly new contender, having started in 2009. It recently added this location-based service to compete with Google Places and Yelp. When you list your business with Bing Business Portal, it will appear on Bing Maps and other Microsoft products. This will get your company more exposure and allow you to better connect with your customers.

Check for Your Business



bing Places for Business [Sign in](#)

Your customers are online - are you? Bing puts your business online for free
[Get Started](#)

List your business in minutes
List your business on Bing* for free. Claim your listing by verifying ownership, and see how easily customers find you

Stand out from competition
Enrich your business listing with compelling online content like photos, specialties and services - let Bing showcase you in the best possible way

Easy bulk upload
List and verify up to 10,000 business locations on Bing in one easy step

*Your listings may also appear on other Microsoft and Microsoft partner products. © 2013 Microsoft Bing Privacy Legal Support Help Advertising

Visit the [Bing Business Portal](#) website and click 'Get Started'.

First, it will let you enter basic information about your business such as address and phone number. Before you go any further, the site will check to see if you already have a listing. If a user has created a listing to review

your business, there may be one already. If you already have a listing, click 'Claim' and you can take control of it.

If there is no current listing for your business, you can click on "Add New

Business".

You'll need to have a Microsoft account to add your listing, so either login now or create an account to be able to proceed.

Basic Business Information

Start by filling in your basic business information such as name, address, phone number, URL, and any other pertinent contact information. The site will then ask you to choose a category. Bing's categories aren't as developed as those of Google Places, but you can still make good use of them.

The image shows the Bing Places for Business 'Enter your business details' form. The form is divided into several sections, each with a dropdown arrow. The 'Online Presence' section is highlighted with a red oval, showing fields for 'Facebook address' and 'Twitter address'. To the right of the form is a map of North America with a blue dot indicating a location. The map includes a scale bar and a 'Read' button. The form has a 'Submit' button at the bottom.

bing Places for Business

Add Your Business Add Multiple Businesses Manage Your Listings

Enter your business details

Basic Business Details

United States (U.S.A.)

Business Name *

Address Line 1 *

Address Line 2

City *

State *

Zip Code *

Working Phone Number *

Enter your business details

Basic Business Details

Additional Business Details

Online Presence

Facebook address

Twitter address

Additional websites

Add another

Images and Videos

Other Contact Information

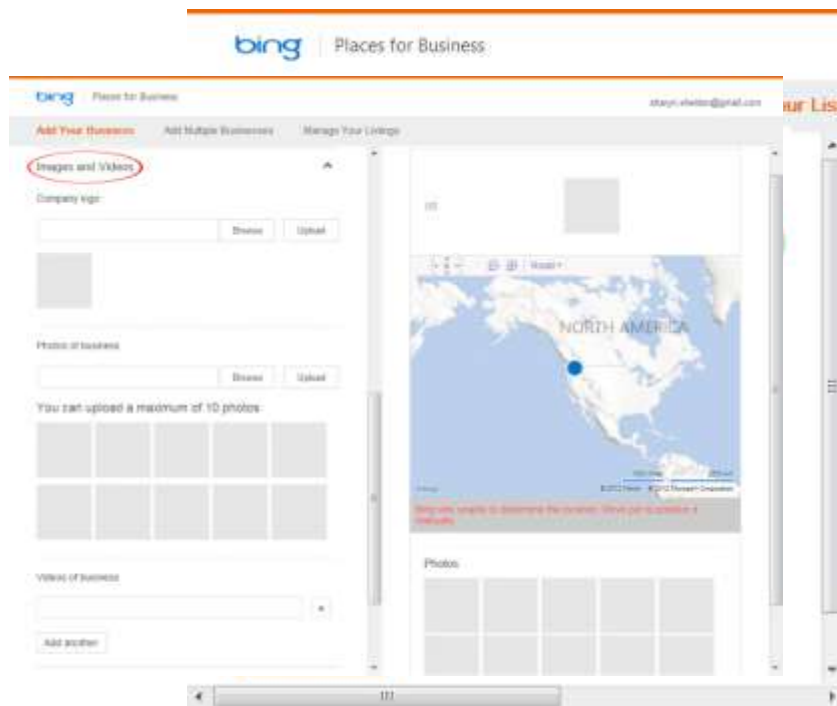
General Information

Submit

Like Google Places, you can list several categories. For these categories, use keywords you'd like web searches to find your business under. You can add up to 10 categories, and you should make the most of this option.

Another unique profile feature on Bing is that it allows you to add your Facebook and Twitter profile URLs to integrate them with Bing's service. You can do this by following the simple instructions on the Bing profile page.

There's also a section for Images and Videos where you should add your



company logo. You can also add up to 10 photos of your business, as well as videos.

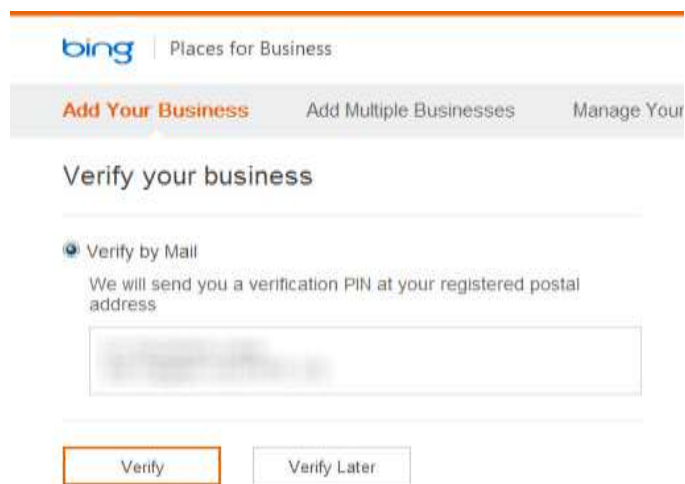
More Details

Expand any of the tabs in the 'Edit your business details' section to add more details about your business, such as hours of operation, parking availability, or products carried. There's a little down arrow next to each section that expands it.

Bing allows you to add a number of links to your profile beyond just your website's URL, and you should certainly take advantage of this. Add links to pages on your site that you'd like to draw attention to. For example, if you're a restaurant, add a link to your menu. You can also add links to specific products or services you'd like to highlight.

Verifying Your Account

One final step is to verify your account. You'll need to click on the link to verify to receive a PIN number via a postcard in the mail. It takes several days for the postcard to arrive, so most people opt for receiving a phone call with a PIN number. After entering this PIN number, it will take a few days more before your profile is live.



The screenshot shows the Bing Places for Business verification interface. At the top, the Bing logo is followed by the text 'Places for Business'. Below this is a navigation bar with three links: 'Add Your Business' (highlighted in orange), 'Add Multiple Businesses', and 'Manage Your Business'. The main heading is 'Verify your business'. Underneath, there is a radio button selection with 'Verify by Mail' selected. A text box explains: 'We will send you a verification PIN at your registered postal address'. Below this is a large, empty rectangular input field for the PIN. At the bottom, there are two buttons: 'Verify' (highlighted with an orange border) and 'Verify Later'.

Bulk Upload

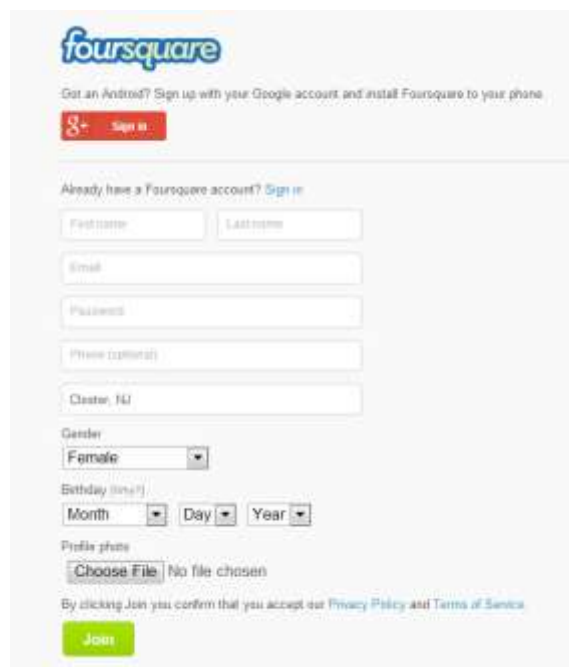
Make sure take advantage of Bing's unique special features. One of its defining features is the ability to bulk upload. This way, if you need to create 25 or more listings, you don't have to enter all of them in manually. On the profile page is a button that says '25+'. If you click this, a customer representative will contact you and tell you what you need to do to bulk upload.

How to Set Up Your Business on Foursquare

Foursquare is a location-based social media site for mobile devices and smartphones. It's designed for people who are looking for local businesses offering the products or services they need when they need them. For example, a company worker may use Foursquare during his lunch break to find a slice of pizza nearby.

Foursquare has business listings that offer information about businesses as well as ratings and reviews from other users. As a business owner, you can create or claim your listing and use it to edit information, manage reviews, and connect with your customers through the site's special features.

Before you can create or claim a business listing, you need a regular [Foursquare](#) account. If you don't already one, create it first.

The image shows the Foursquare sign-up page. At the top is the Foursquare logo. Below it, a link says "Get an Android? Sign up with your Google account and install Foursquare to your phone." There is a red "Sign in" button with a Google+ icon. Below that, a link says "Already have a Foursquare account? Sign in". The form fields include: "First name" and "Last name" (two separate text boxes), "Email" (text box), "Password" (text box), "Phone (optional)" (text box), "City, HI" (text box), "Gender" (dropdown menu with "Female" selected), "Birthday (YYYY)" (three dropdown menus for "Month", "Day", and "Year"), "Profile photo" (a "Choose File" button and the text "No file chosen"), and a "Join" button at the bottom. A small disclaimer at the bottom reads: "By clicking Join you confirm that you accept our Privacy Policy and Terms of Service."

Search for Your Venue

Foursquare calls its listings 'Venues.' Before you fill out information on your venue, search the site to see if your business is already listed. If it is, you can claim the listing.

Claim [Bi-State Plaza \(Old Tappan Road\)](#)

Over 750,000 businesses are using foursquare's [free tools](#) to reach our 20,000,000+ strong community. In just 90 seconds and for a one-time \$20 USD verification fee, you'll be able to:



Attract

customers with specials and promotions



Analyze

real-time data about your patrons



Update

information on your business' page

Still not sure? [Learn more](#) about claiming your business.

☐ I'm the owner (or working on behalf of the owner) and I agree to the [Venue Platform Terms of Use](#)

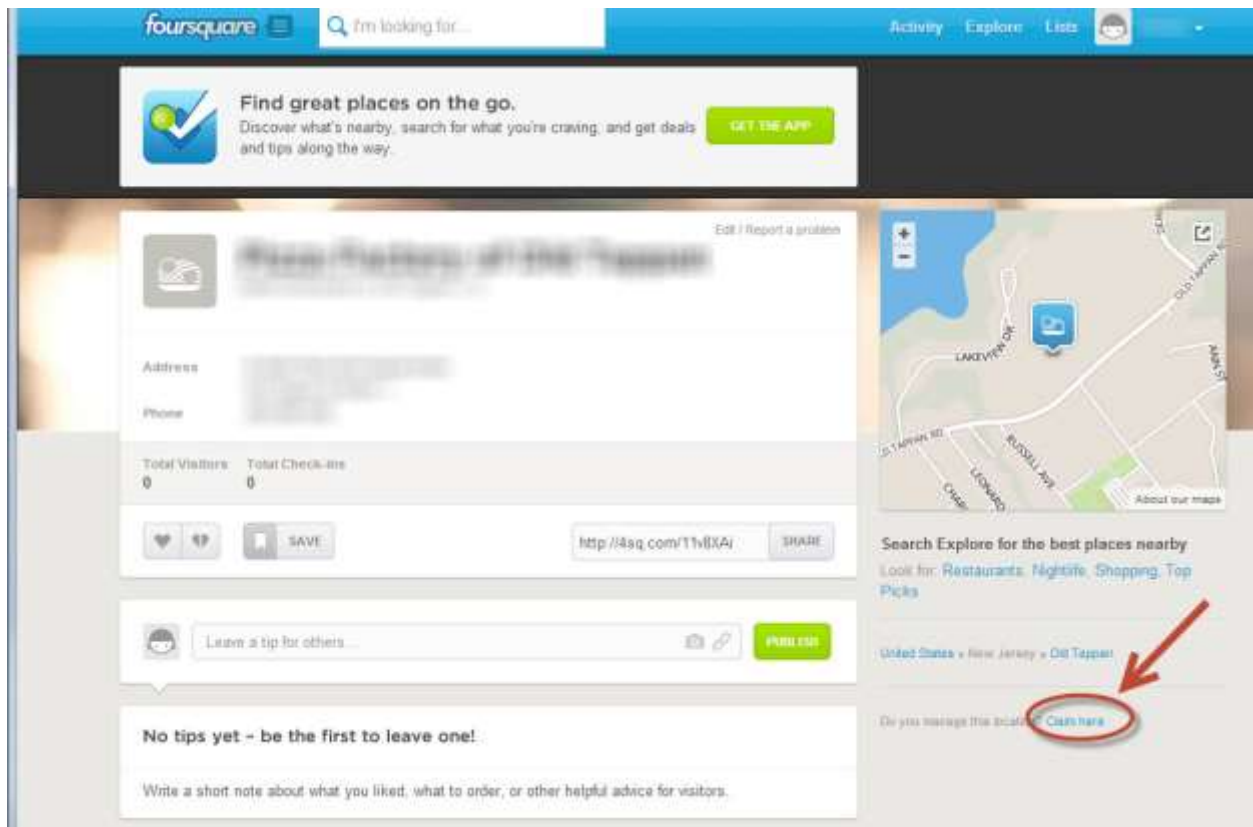
Get Started

Step 1
Terms of use

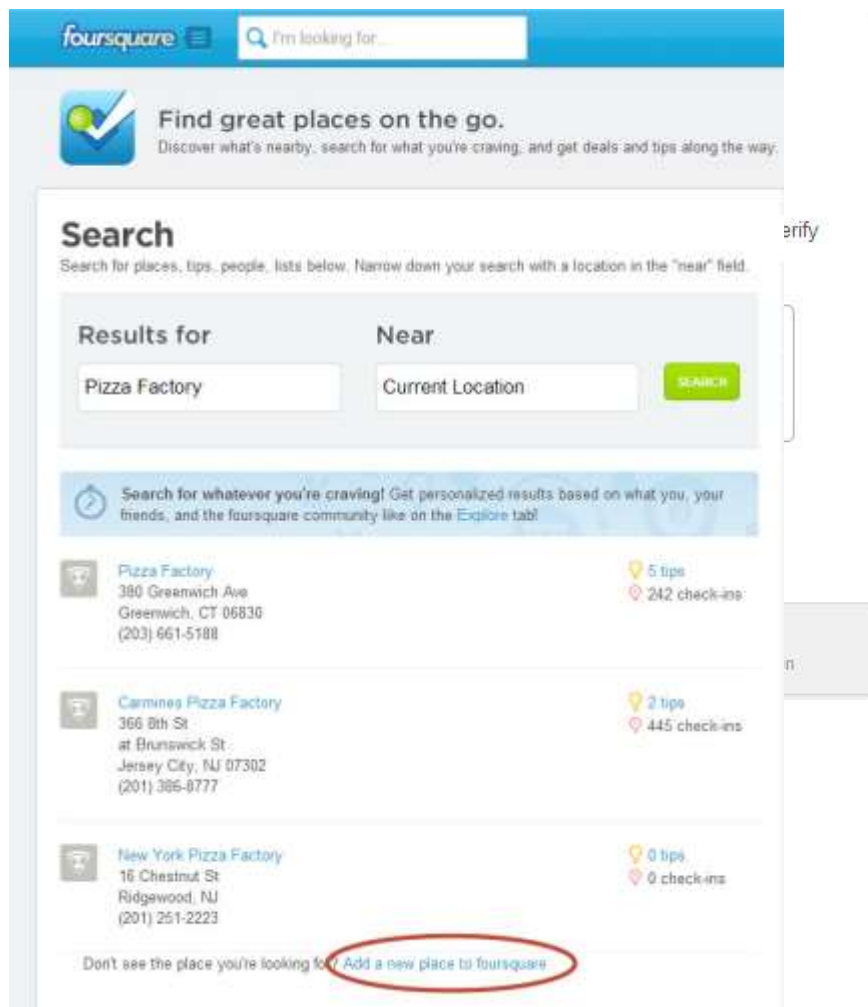
Step 2
Confirm phone number

Step 3
Final verification

[Foursquare's search](#) function is case sensitive, so don't type in lower or upper case only. If you find your listing, click the link that says 'Do you manage this venue? Claim here'.



Foursquare will then lead you through the steps to verify that it's your business, which involve agreeing to their terms and receiving a call to verify your claim at your location phone number.



Adding Your Business

If you don't find your venue on Foursquare, scroll to the bottom of the main screen where it says 'Add a new place to foursquare'.

Here, you can input your business's basic information. Enter your exact company name, which your customers are familiar with. Add your address and if you're located at a corner, you can include cross streets. This is another way users find venues. Make sure you spell your city fully and correctly, and use the abbreviated state name in all caps – for example, MO

Add Venue

Make sure you've read our [style guide](#) and [house rules](#) before saving your changes

Name:

Address:

Not sure? Check [Google Maps](#)

Cross Street:

City:

State/Province:

Postal Code:

Country:

Location:

Drag the pin to update the venue's location on the map



Twitter:

Phone:

Category:

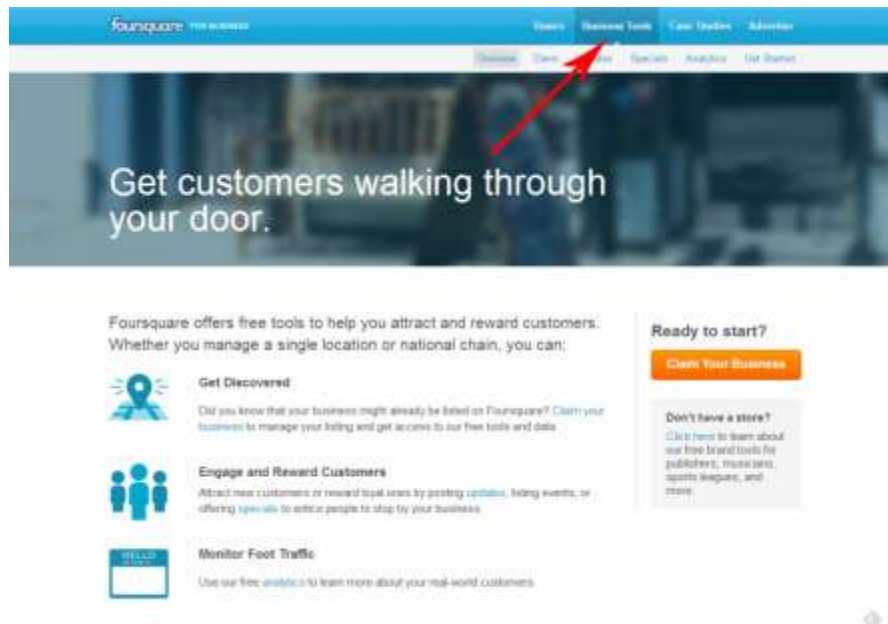
for Missouri.

Choosing a Category

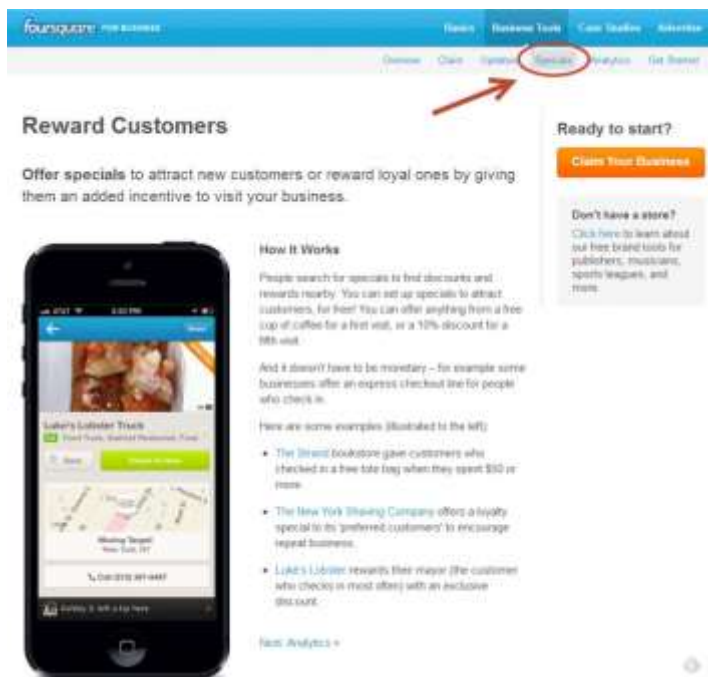
Before you click 'Save', select which category you want to put your business in. Categories include things like Food, Nightlife Spot, Outdoors & Recreation, Travel & Transport, and so on. Once you choose the appropriate category, you will be given a list of subcategories to choose from.

Business Tools

Once you've added and claimed your venue on Foursquare, you will be able to use their free [Business Tools](#). These include posting Updates about your latest products and events.



You can also create Specials for rewarding customers or attracting new customers. These could include offers of a free item or a special discount after a certain number of purchases.



Foursquare even provides you with Analytics based on the check-in data that your customers submit. Be sure to check that data and use the information when deciding what updates and specials to offer.

foursquare for business Basics Business Tools Case Studies Advertise

Overview Claim Updates Special **Analytics** Get Started

Monitor Foot Traffic

Use our free analytics to learn more about the customers coming through your door.



How it Works

When customers check in at your business, they're sharing that experience with their friends (and with Foursquare). When you claim your location, you gain access to free analytics based on this check-in data.

This means you can see who's coming in for the first time, and how often they're coming back.

Here are some ways you can learn more about your customers using our analytics:

- **Measure your success.** See how many check-ins you're getting each week, and how many of those are being shared on Facebook and Twitter.
- **Meet your best customers.** Find out who the mayor of your business is (the person who visits the most!), and learn more about your other top visitors.
- **Follow your activity.** Each week, we'll send you an email that includes key stats, along with any recent tips and photos that people have left at your business.

[Next: Get Started >](#)

Ready to start?

[Claim Your Business](#)

Don't have a store?
[Click here](#) to learn about our free brand tools for publishers, musicians, sports leagues, and more.

Integrating with Facebook and Twitter

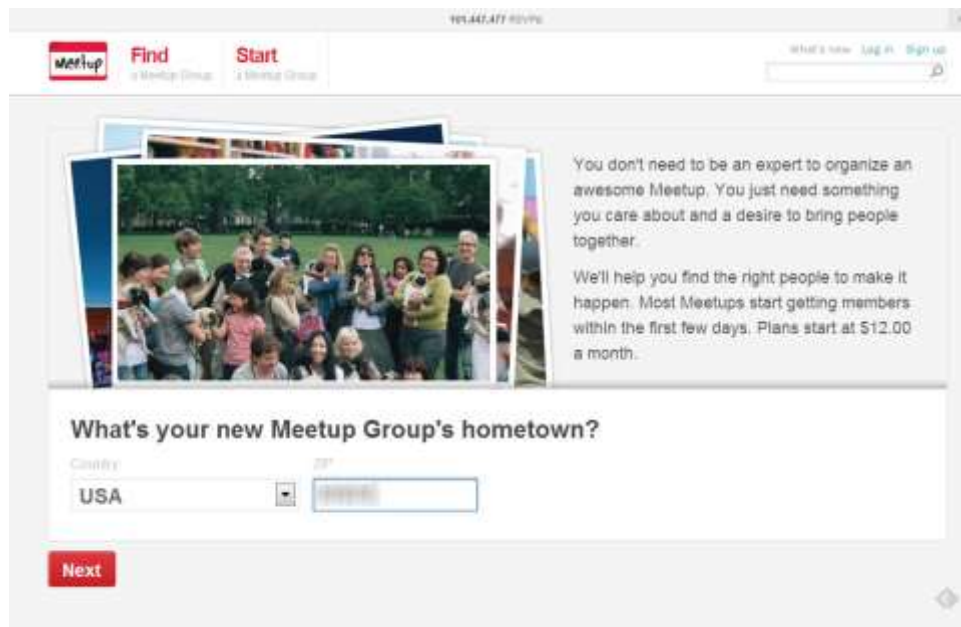
Foursquare offers a number of special features that are useful for businesses. One of the best features is the site's integration with other social media sites like Facebook and Twitter.

When you integrate your Foursquare profile with these sites, your social media followers will see your Foursquare updates and reviews on your other social media profiles. In turn, Foursquare users will see your other social media activity on your Foursquare profile. This integration across platforms allows you to leverage all of your social media for more exposure.

How to Use Meetups to Promote Your Business

Meetup.com is a site where people with similar interests can organize offline events. For businesses, it's a way to use the power of the Internet and online marketing to engage customers offline. Meetup.com is the largest social media site for organizing groups offline.

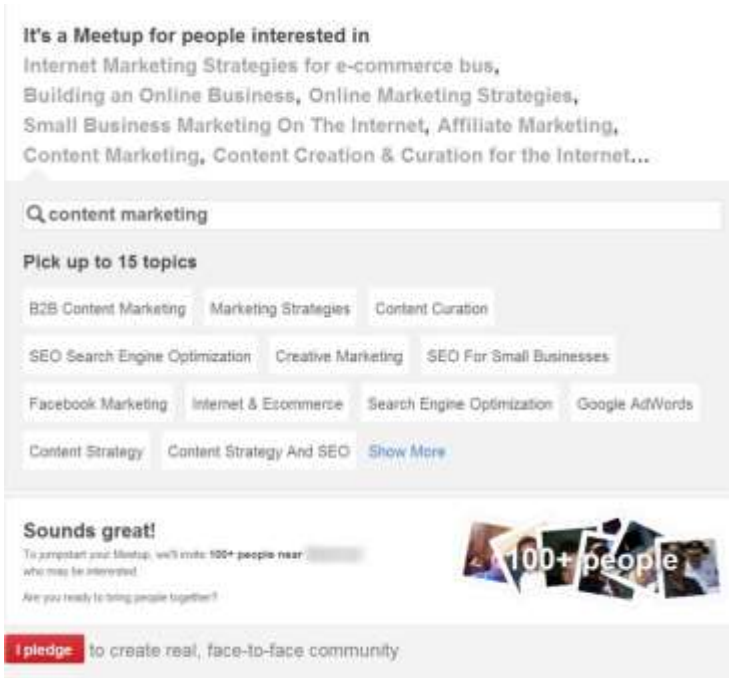
Creating a Meetup Group



The screenshot shows the 'Start' page on Meetup.com. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the Meetup logo, 'Find a Meetup Group', 'Start a Meetup Group', and links for 'What's new', 'Log in', and 'Sign up'. Below this, a large image of a group of people is displayed. To the right of the image, text reads: 'You don't need to be an expert to organize an awesome Meetup. You just need something you care about and a desire to bring people together. We'll help you find the right people to make it happen. Most Meetups start getting members within the first few days. Plans start at \$12.00 a month.' Below the image, a form asks 'What's your new Meetup Group's hometown?'. The form has a 'Country' dropdown menu set to 'USA' and a text input field for the city. A red 'Next' button is at the bottom left of the form.

The easiest way to use [Meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) for business is to create a related meetup group.

Pick a topic related to something your business does or an interest your customers have. The key to choosing a good group topic is to pick something narrow. There are already a number of meetup groups in any given area. Yours needs to be something unique.



A good starting point is to ask your customers about their cares and concerns. What would they like help with? Who would they like to network with? If you can find a specific problem your customers need help solving, it will provide a great focus for a group.

Note that your meetup group shouldn't be specifically about your business. You can use meetup groups to promote your business indirectly, but it's unlikely that your customers will want to get together with others and talk about your business. Choose a topic that's related to your business or niche, but still interesting and relevant to customers.

Holding Regular Meetups

Once you've set up your meetup group through Meetup.com, start holding regular events sponsored by your business. These can be informal groups, or they can be workshops or seminars. A meetup can be something focused and tightly organized, or just a group that gets together over coffee for topic-based discussions.

In order to be successful with meetup groups, you need to have an audience already. If you're a new business or brand that doesn't already have a customer base, it will be much harder to attract members.

Promoting Your Meetup Group

There are many ways to promote your meetup group online. Post a notice and link on your website and mention the meetup on your blog. Tell your followers on social media about it. Use the link to your meetup group as a signature in emails.

When you create your group, Meetup.com will give you a logo that you can place on your website and elsewhere online. You can get the logo from your group's 'Promote' page. It's an HTML code that you can copy and paste wherever you'd like to put it.

On your group's 'Promote' page, Meetup.com offers all kinds of resources for creating offline promotional materials that you can use at your physical location. This includes nametags, flyers, business cards, postcards, tabletop signs, and custom logos. Take advantage of these opportunities to promote your meetup offline.

Promoting Your Business through Meetup Groups

Although you shouldn't make your business the focus of the group, you can promote to the group on the sly. One way to do this is to offer freebies. For example, if you're a pet supply store, create a 'dog day in the park' meetup and give away free samples of your products. If you offer fitness products, create a fitness group and give away samples of your products during the meetings.

Networking with Meetup.com

Meetup.com is a social network and you should use it to socialize. Look for similar meetups and network with them. Join them, hang out, interact with them, and focus on forming relationships.

How to Get Good Reviews Online

Online reviews can be a blessing or a curse to your company. The review is classic word of mouth taken to a whole new level. There is a wide array of websites that allow customers to write reviews. After trying your services or products, customers can tell others about you on one of these sites.

Reviews on the Internet can reach a huge audience, so it's very important that what's written in the reviews is positive and accurate.

You don't have any control over what customers write about you. However, if you get enough good reviews, a few bad ones will hardly be noticed.

Quality Products and Services

Offer the best products and services possible and follow it up with excellent customer service. This is where many businesses fail. They ignore customer feedback about their products and don't respond quickly enough when there are problems. If you make your customers happy and try your best to deliver what they want, you will earn great reviews.

Ask for Reviews

If you offer good products and services that genuinely help your customers, you don't have to twist their arms to get good reviews. All you need to do is ask. Right after they've enjoyed your product or service, gently remind customers that good reviews help your business grow and continue providing these products. Most customers will leave a review if asked politely.

Make it as easy as possible for people to leave reviews, and you'll receive more and more. Give customers the URL to the review site where they can write their comments. If you're interacting with customers online, give them a clickable link. If you're offline, consider using QR codes. These are 3D barcodes that customers can scan with their mobile devices and be directed straight to the review site.

Offer Incentives

Many companies include reviews in their customer loyalty strategies. If you're not getting as many good reviews as you'd like, offer your customers an incentive. Make sure they understand that they don't have to say good things; they only have to leave you feedback. Offer a freebie, coupon, discount, or extra service first and let customers know it's no-strings-

attached. You may take a loss – they may not write a review – but if they don't feel forced, they will be more likely to do it.

Boost Your Online Presence

Build your online presence and connect with your customers in as many places online as possible, including Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites. Especially for your under-30 customers, this engagement will go a long way in building customer loyalty and encouraging them to interact with you, which includes leaving reviews.

Quick and Efficient Damage Control

Respond to negative reviews quickly. Negative reviews don't necessarily have to be a bad thing. They offer you an opportunity to show people that you care about customer service. Ask the reviewer about his or her bad experience and offer ways you could help fix the issue, such as offering a free replacement product or a refund. Bend over backwards, not to save face, but to make the reviewer happy. Others will see this and think more highly of you. Remember it's not just the reviewer that sees your responses but everyone reading the review after.

Get into a Routine

Getting good reviews is a numbers game. The more proactive you are in seeking feedback, the more feedback you'll get. Make it part of your regular sales process and daily routine to get customer feedback wherever possible.

How to Start Doing Local Advertising Online – Daily Deal Sites

Every offline business needs a website at the very least, and it helps to have a presence on Facebook and other social media sites. However, there's much more you can do with your business online beyond the regular social media sites. New sites and tools are popping up all the time that can help local businesses advertise online for free.

The Daily Deal

A relatively new type of social media site is the daily deal site. Daily deal sites are usually apps used on mobile devices like smartphones. A daily deal site offers discounts and promotions from local businesses that are limited in time or quantity (for example, 'today only' – hence 'daily' deals). These deals are offered to targeted customers.

The idea behind daily deal sites is to get people who are searching for local businesses in your door. The downside is that some users will take your freebie or discount and never show up again. These sites are easy for businesses to use; the real challenge is taking that one-day bargain hunter and turning him or her into a loyal, long-term customer.

Before we consider some of the major daily deal sites, it's important to understand that using these sites is not a method for generating profit. In fact, your business may lose money by offering freebies and discounted goods. It's a method of free advertising to get people in your door.

Groupon

[Groupon](#) is the biggest daily deal site. It offers coupons that are only good if used within the day to targeted users. Groupon pioneered the daily deal business model. The main advantage of using Groupon is that it's a huge site, which means that your deal will be seen by a larger audience than on other sites.

The screenshot shows the Groupon website's sign-up and login interface. At the top, a dark navigation bar contains the Groupon logo and links for 'Featured Deals', 'All Deals', 'Giftways', 'Goods', 'Mother's Day', 'Sign In', and 'Sign Up'. The main content area has a green background. On the left, a white box titled 'Sign Up or Sign In' contains two sections. The first section, 'Sign up with your Facebook account', instructs users to connect their Facebook account and includes a 'Log in' button with the Facebook logo. The second section, 'Sign up for a Groupon account', contains input fields for 'Full name', 'Email', 'Password', and 'Confirm', followed by checkboxes for 'I agree to the Terms of Use and Privacy Statement' and 'Keep me signed in on this computer', and a 'Sign Up' button. To the right of the sign-up box is a small green box titled 'Get Private To You' with a message about a problem with the Facebook verification on Groupon and a 'Learn more' link.

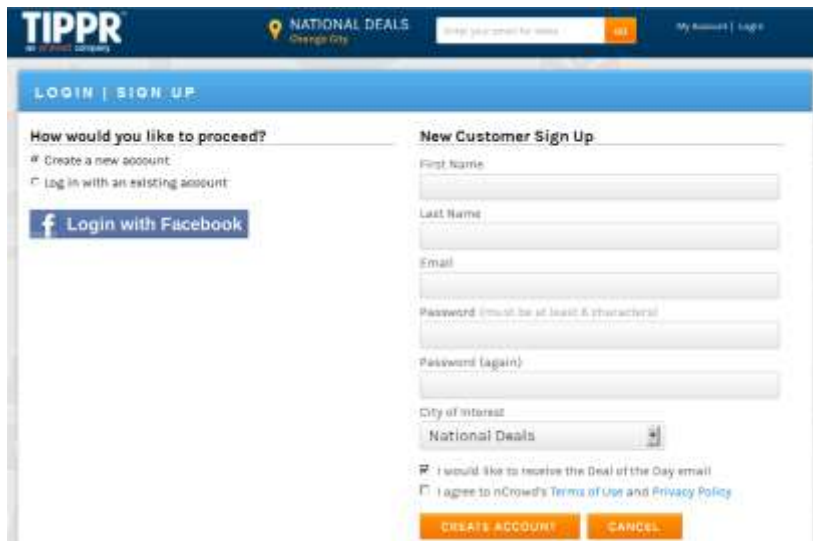
Living Social

The second biggest site is [Living Social](#). It's considered one of the giants along with Groupon, but it works in a slightly different way. With Living Social, users tell their friends about a deal through Facebook or Twitter, giving their friends a link. If three of their friends make a purchase using that link, the user gets the deal for free. One advantage for businesses is that Living Social has fewer restrictions on your promotions than Groupon does.

The screenshot shows the Living Social website's sign-up page. The header features the 'livingsocial' logo. Below it, the page is divided into two main sections. The left section, titled 'sign up or log in', contains input fields for 'First Name', 'Last Name', 'Email Address', 'Email Address Confirmation', 'Password', and 'Password Confirmation', followed by a 'choose city' dropdown menu showing 'Washington, D.C.' and a checkbox for 'Keep me logged in'. A 'Sign Up' button is at the bottom of this section. The right section, titled 'connect with facebook', features a 'log in with Facebook' button with the Facebook logo and two bullet points: 'We won't automatically post to your wall' and 'One less password to remember'. At the bottom of the page, a small line of text states 'By registering you agree to the Terms and Conditions and Privacy Policy'.

Tippr

[Tippr](#) is a site that lets you create a limited time or quantity offer which the site will then promote for you. It sends out daily deals and the number of people who buy the offer determine the price. If more people buy, the price goes down. You pay the site based on performance only.



The screenshot shows the Tippr website's sign-up interface. At the top, there's a dark blue header with the 'TIPPR' logo, a location pin icon for 'NATIONAL DEALS Chicago City', a search bar with the placeholder 'What's your email for deals?', and links for 'My Account' and 'Log In'. Below the header is a blue bar with 'LOGIN | SIGN UP'. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column, titled 'How would you like to proceed?', has two radio button options: 'Create a new account' (selected) and 'Log in with an existing account'. Below these is a 'Login with Facebook' button. The right column, titled 'New Customer Sign Up', contains several text input fields: 'First Name', 'Last Name', 'Email', 'Password (must be at least 6 characters)', and 'Password (again)'. Below these is a 'City of Interest' dropdown menu currently set to 'National Deals'. At the bottom of the right column, there are two checkboxes: 'I would like to receive the Deal of the Day email' (checked) and 'I agree to nCrowd's Terms of Use and Privacy Policy'. At the very bottom are two orange buttons: 'CREATE ACCOUNT' and 'CANCEL'.

Amazon Local Deals

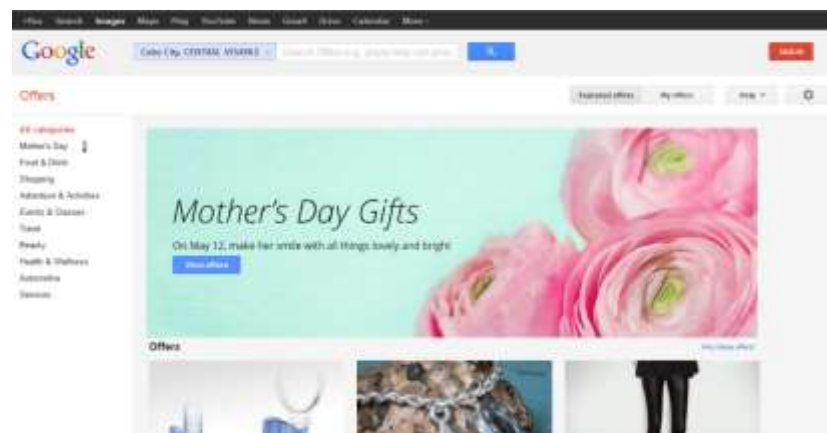
[Amazon](#) began offering deals from Living Social several years ago but as of 2012, it has started working directly with merchants. The biggest advantage of Amazon is that it has a massive customer base. If you want to offer deals through [Amazon Local Deals](#), you can work with their team to create promotions.



The image shows the Amazon.co.uk Sign In page. At the top left is the 'amazon local' logo. Below it is a 'Sign In' section with a note: '(Hint: If you are an existing Amazon.co.uk customer, sign-in using your Amazon.co.uk account.)'. The first question is 'What is your e-mail address?' followed by a text input field labeled 'My e-mail address is:'. Below this is the question 'Do you have an Amazon.co.uk password?'. There are two radio button options: 'I am a new customer, (you'll create a password later)' and 'I am a returning customer, and my password is:'. The second option is selected. Below the second option is a password input field. A yellow button with a lock icon says 'Sign in using our secure server'. Below the button are two links: 'Forgotten your password?' and 'Has your e-mail address changed since your last order?'. At the bottom, there is a small link 'Conditions of Use Privacy Notice Cookies & Internet Advertising' and a copyright notice '© 1996-2012, Amazon.com, Inc. or its affiliates'.

Google Offers

[Google Offers](#) is another system with the advantage of a large customer base. Offered by the world's biggest search engine, Google Offers is integrated with all of the company's products, such as Google+ and YouTube. You can also share your offers directly on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter.



Preventing Mix-ups

Whenever you set up a campaign with a daily deal sites, make sure that all of your staff know about the offer and know what to do when a customer comes in to redeem it. If there's a mix-up when the customer comes in and especially if the deal isn't honored, this can be a public relations disaster (as several high profile companies have learned).

Thinking Outside the Box – Alternative Social Media Channels Your Business Shouldn't Ignore

The major social media sites like Facebook and Twitter offer great ways for businesses to advertise to local customers for free. Location-based social media sites and daily deal sites are even more effective at getting customers in your door. But there's much more to the social media universe than these marketing channels. Thinking outside the box and considering alternatives can boost your business's exposure.

Your Company Blog

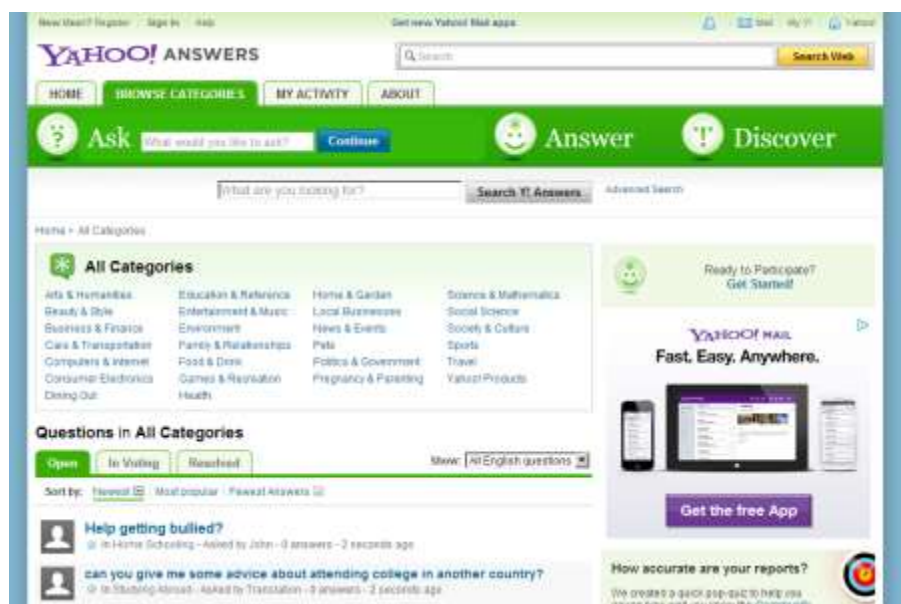
Every company needs a company blog and we often forget that this is a form of social media. The important thing about a blog is that it's not just a newsletter or magazine, but a tool that your customers can interact with.

Use your blog to start discussions in the comments field. Give your customers news about your business and ask for their opinions on it. When you let customers engage with your blog, you increase customer loyalty. Put your local promotions, links to reviews, and social media on your blog's sidebar so that readers can easily see them.

If you [need a blog please get in touch](#), and if you need someone to write and regularly update your blog for you, we can cover that too – [check out this page here](#) and get in touch -

Question and Answer Sites

On Q&A sites such as Yahoo Answers, you can answer questions related to your niche using your expertise with a link back to your site or social media profile. This is a great way to market indirectly. When you help people solve their problems or get their questions answered, they'll check out your site to see what else you have to offer. On Q&A site profiles, be sure to mention your local area in your bio box.



Linkedin also have a questions and answers section and then there is Quora.

Online Forums

Join forums related to your topic and interact with users there. Again, in your signature file and on your profile, mention the local area in which you operate. The idea with forums is not to promote, but to offer help with no strings attached. You can gradually grow your reputation and network with other users, which leads them to your products and services.

Niche Review Sites

There are major review sites like Yelp and CitySearch, but there are also small, niche-oriented review sites that are tailored to certain types of businesses. For example, there are review sites for gadgets, golf courses, certain types of restaurants, and so on. Use the same methods here that you would use on big review sites to get reviews.

Monitoring Your Online Presence

A good way to manage your online presences is to sign up for Google alerts. Whenever your business name is mentioned, the alert service will contact you and tell you where you've been mentioned. You can then respond quickly to reviews, mentions, posts, complaints, and so on. You can also find out where online people are talking about you. You may discover sites where

you didn't know you had a customer base. This offers another online channel through which you can find and interact with your customers.

You can also set up a free account at [Brand Yourself](#), here they will track position and negative mentions of your name.

10 Ways to Get People to Visit Your Social Media Pages

Creating a social media profile is the first tiny step in harnessing the power of social media for your business. Once your profile is all filled out and ready to go, you need to get people there. There are many ways to do this, and here are ten that have proven highly effective.

Populate Your Social Media Profile with Good Content

Start by writing ten or more posts that would be helpful for your potential readers. Get into a regular posting schedule where you offer a mix of news, updates, tips, funny stuff, and shared content from other users. If you struggle to do this then please [get in touch here](#)

Give Your Visitors Something to Do

If you have a great deal of content on your profile page, visitors will enjoy reading it. But even better, give them something to *do* on your page. Engage them in conversations, invite them to take surveys and polls, give them games and activities to play, and so on. Get them engaged with your profile, and they'll be more likely to spend time there and come back often.

Links from Everywhere

Make sure there are links to your social media profiles on your website, blog, email signatures, and everywhere else possible. With each link, include a call to action that says something like, 'Join our community on Facebook.'

Widgets and Buttons

Put widgets and buttons on your sites so that people can like, review, and comment easily. Your website and blog should offer easy access to your social media profiles. You can also add widgets to your Wordpress site that pull content such as status updates, reviews, and both numbers and names of followers on specific social media profiles.

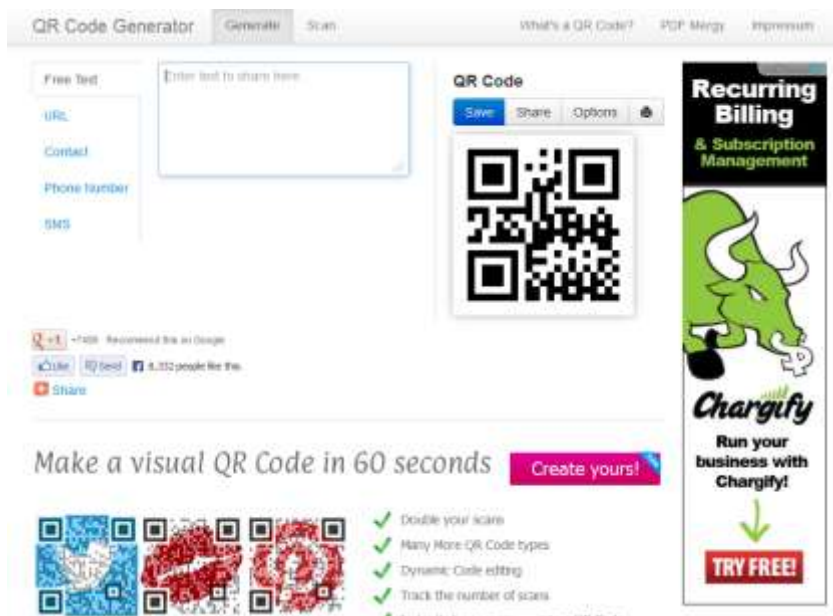
Get Offline Customers Online

Tell everyone who visits your offline location what you're doing online. Whenever you have face-to-face contact with customers, let them know that

you're on Facebook, Twitter, Yelp, Google+ Local, etc. Be sure to give them the urls of each site.

Use QR Codes

Put QR codes on all of your offline marketing materials such as brochures, receipts, business cards, products, and so on. A QR code is a 3D barcode that can be scanned with a mobile device, directing its browser straight to your social media profile.



Add to Your Offline Advertising

On all of your offline advertising, whether in print, on TV, on billboards, etc., include a call to action inviting everyone who sees it to visit you on your social media pages.

Offer Incentives

If people aren't coming to your page as quickly as you'd like them to, spice up the deal for them by offering giveaways, discounts, freebies, or other incentives. Give them a small gift for liking or following you.

Interconnect Your Social Media

Make sure that all of your social media profiles are connected to one another. Offer exclusive content or promotions on each social media channel so that people have a reason to join each one. Look for the same followers on one social media site on other social media sites.

Crowdsource

Ask your customers to contribute content to your page. For example, create a contest where they send in pictures of themselves with your products.

The most important thing is to make your social media page a place where your customers *want* to be. Create as much interaction as possible and offer value. It's tricky to get the ball rolling at first, but once it's going, it'll pick up steam by itself.

Conclusion

Are you ready to start using all those great social sites to promote your local business yet? We've covered the major ones, so that's the place to get started.

Step 1: Go get your accounts set up in these places first:

- Yelp
- Google Places (Google+ Local)
- Bing Maps
- Foursquare

Step 2: Think about ways to utilize some of the other social sites, such as:

- Meetups
- Daily Deal sites (Groupon, Living Social, etc)

Step 3: Lay out your strategy for:

- Getting good reviews online
- Getting traffic to your social sites

You'll need to fully integrate your other social media profiles (such as Facebook and Twitter), which can all get a little confusing at times. So don't hesitate to consult with a social media expert if you need one. It can speed up the whole process for you and you can build your business that much faster.

Good luck with all your location business-building endeavours

About Sarah Arrow and Sarkemedia.

Real World Experience – Practical Solutions – Award Winning Talent

When you pull back the curtain on operations at Sark eMedia, you won't find the screaming headlines and hype so typical in some circles. We don't need them, and it's not our style.

We're more James Bond and less Austin Powers. We know that if you're looking for the best team to handle your web development and social media needs, you don't want flash, you want proven results.

And that's what we've delivered. Consistently. Since 2007.

Starting with our own business, a same day courier company serving our local community. A business still thriving and evolving today.

I'm Sarah Arrow



Blogging saved our business. My blogging and social media skills and my husband Kevin's attention to detail (and passion for customer happiness) helped position our business as an industry leader. Since then we've been dedicated to helping other small business owners achieve similar results.

Along the way, Sarah's blog has been named, not once but three times, on the Forbes Top 100 Websites for Women – the only UK based website to garner the honour.

But you won't find us bragging (too much) about that, or the luncheon date we had with Guy Kawasaki in London last year, or that Tony Robbins invites us for drinks.... We might mention it here and perhaps in conversation a time or two, but we'd really prefer to talk about what we can do for you. Stop by Sarkemedia.com and say hello or join me on Twitter - [@SarahArrow](https://twitter.com/SarahArrow)