



Janeson Keeley

Dan Smith

netFRONT

A no-cost way to promote your business >

Executive Summary:

Google Maps offers an opportunity that you probably don't know about.

By Janeson Keeley

If you travel for business, you've probably found MapQuest or Google Maps to be helpful for getting directions. They also come in handy if you ever have to defend your expenses to the IRS.

According to Charles Spencer, president of Accounting and Tax Center Inc. in Roanoke, "If you're audited and there is a question about your mileage records, you can use mapping Web sites to verify the mileage claimed in your records."

But did you know that you can also use Google Maps to promote your business?

If your business has a physical location and a listed phone number, Google Maps has generated a default business listing for you. Claim your business, and you can customize your listing to accurately reflect and actively market your business.

Go to www.google.com/maps. Search for your business by address or phone number. Click on your business name. In the bubble on the right, click "Edit," then click "Claim your business." You will be taken to the

Google Local Business Center. If you have a Google account, enter your e-mail address and password to log in. If you don't have a Google account, click "Sign up now" and set one up.


Once you are logged in to the Local Business Center, select "Edit my business information," and click "Continue."

Make sure that your business name, address, phone number, and Web site address are correct. Add a description for your business that includes terms on which visitors may search. Then enter up to five categories into which your business falls.

Specify your business hours, payment options, and details about your business. Include facts that will make your business stand apart from your competitors. Post photos (120 pixels wide by 90 pixels high) and links to videos. Create coupons that prospective customers can use for your products or services.

Once you have completed your listing, verify your listing by either phone call or post card. If you verify your listing by phone, be ready; Google will place an automated call within about 30 seconds of your request.

Log into the Google Local Business Center (www.google.com/localbusinesscenter) to update or tune your listing and to view statistics about the number of times your business listing has been viewed. Check regularly to see if anyone has posted a review of your business.

In addition to customizing your business listing, you can create a personal profile at www.google.com/profiles. FRONT contributor Patsy Stewart reports, "I claimed our company and added a strong profile including my keywords 'social media consultant.' I expected to see results in several weeks to a month. Just out of curiosity, the next day I googled 'social media consultant,' and we were the first page of the results, two for the state of Virginia and one for Roanoke. We include this step in creating an online digital footprint for our clients, and they have achieved the same powerful results." 

(Janeson Keeley owns JTKWeb, a Web site development company in Roanoke, and can be reached at www.jtkweb.com.)