

6 Google Places Mistakes That Hurt Local Rankings

Ever wonder how some businesses rank well in Google Places? Not too long ago I did.

I decided to figure it out. It didn't take me long to get fantastic results (after making some big mistakes).

Now my business ranks in the top 4 (it fluctuates) in Google Places for my town. This is a huge source of business.

My business listing receives over Google Places 2,000 impressions, and consequently hundreds of targeted visitors to my business website every month.

What is Google Places?

Google Places listings appear from local searches (i.e. "Seattle lawyers"). The Google Places listings for a business, when they appear, are at the top of Google's search engine results page. See the screenshot below:

The screenshot shows a Google search for "seattle lawyers". The search bar displays "seattle lawyers" and the search button is labeled "Search". Below the search bar, there are suggestions: "seattle lawyers", "seattle lawyers directory", "seattle lawyers for the arts", "best seattle lawyers", and "top seattle lawyers". The search results show "About 288,000 results (0.27 seconds)".

On the left side, there are navigation links: "Everything", "Images", "Videos", "Places", and "More". Below these links is a "Show search tools" button.

The search results list several law firms, each with a red pin icon, a name, a website, and a location. The first result is "Foster Pepper PLLC" with the website "www.foster.com" and the location "1111 Third Avenue #3400, Seattle - (206) 447-4400". A red arrow points from a text box to this first result.

On the right side, there is a map showing the location of the search results in Seattle, WA. The map is labeled "©2010 Google Map data ©2010 Google".

A text box with a red arrow pointing to the first result contains the text: "You want to get listed here for your main target town/city."

If you get your business listing in the top listings appearing on page 1, you will get a lot of traffic (the amount of traffic depends on how many people search for your type of service and population of the town).

What's so great about traffic from Google Places is it's FREE traffic.

Don't Have a Google Places Listing?

If your business isn't listed with Google Places – go to www.google.com/local/add/businessCenter and get an account (it's free). Then follow the steps in the remainder of this report.

Stupid Mistakes I Made With Google Places

Once upon a time I did some stupid things which resulted in my listing being totally removed. This hurt my website traffic.

I spent about a month figuring out what I did wrong. Through trial and error, and reading Google Places' guidelines, I managed to fix my listing and now rank in the top 4 (often the top 2).

Mistake #1:

Using your toll free telephone number in your Google Places listing.

Mistake #2:

Failing to submit the various types of content permitted by Google – coupons, videos, photographs, details about your business, and using up all the category fields to describe your business.

Google loves it when you upload and post content. In your Google Places account you can upload images, videos, business details, coupons, etc. Upload as much as you can – Google loves this. Be sure it's relevant and not Spam.

Get started with the free video you also have access to when you requested this report.

Mistake #3:

Inserting keywords/URLs that are not part of your business name in the Title field. Don't do this.

Google mandates that you only put your business name in the title field. Inserting additional keywords might work for a little while, but could hurt you in the long run.

Mistake #4:

Going for Multiple Listings:

- Trying to get listed in multiple towns with the same phone number (i.e. same business location).
- Trying to list different services in multiple accounts.

Don't do this. List only one location with one phone number in one account.

If you have multiple locations, each with a unique local telephone number, you can set up multiple locations. Just be very careful not to violate Google Places when doing this – you could hurt all your listings.

Mistake #5:

Failing to optimize your business website for your primary target town. Google Places considers the contact information in your website when verifying your business does business in a particular location.

Google doesn't mention that the authority your business website has will impact your Google Places listing, but I can't help but believe it does somewhat. My flagship business site (I have several websites for my business website – see my free [Small Business Marketing Guide](#) about this concept) is large and ranks well.

That said, I've seen competitors without a website or low-ranking sites do well in Google Places as well.

At the end of the day, a well-ranking website will only benefit your business if it's done well.

Mistake #6:

Failing to list your primary telephone number and contact information on every page in your website. I put my contact information in the footer of my business websites so that Google knows my business serves a particular town.

Bonus Tip #1:

Get your business contact information listed in local, state, and national directories.

Use your local telephone number as your primary contact telephone number. Do NOT use your toll free number only. Remember, Google Places links location with local telephone numbers.

Bonus Tip #2:

Get your customers / clients to write reviews on your Google Places listing. Google Places loves content to your listings. Reviews are premium content.

This is how I do it. When I've finished serving a customer, I e-mail them requesting a testimonial. If they provide one, I then e-mail them asking if they would add their testimonial to my Google Places listing.

In my e-mail I include the URL where they can add their testimonial. I also include their original testimonial so they simply need copy and paste. Make it extremely easy for them to add the Google Places review.

Additional Resources

Go straight to the source.

1. Google Places Guidelines

<http://www.google.com/support/places/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=107528>

2. Google Places Help

<http://www.google.com/support/places/?hl=en>

I get offers all the time from companies telling me they can get my business ranked at the top of Google Places ... but they want hundreds of dollars every month.

If you find a good service that delivers, it may be worth it. However, if you're a do-it-yourself type like me, with a little know-how and effort, it isn't that hard to rank well.

I read once that most websites, including business websites, don't do SEO (I include Google Places ranking as SEO) well. That means you just need to do decently in order to get extraordinary results.

I found this to be true. My SEO isn't perfect, but I consistently take action and continue learning about it – which has provided me extraordinary results from minimal investment and time.

Thanks for requesting this report. I hope you find it useful.

Results may vary. Requesting and using this report does not guarantee results. Every business and industry is unique. I'm simply reporting to you what worked for my small business.