

September 2013

BizBuySell Article

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Must-Haves to Be Found Online

Part 3: Claiming Online Directory Profiles

Expanding on material we presented at the 2013 IBBA Spring Conference, we have created an exclusive IBBA series to help uncover online trends, what they mean for you, and actionable items to ensure your company's name will rise up in the online search ranks. Over the last few months, we reviewed company websites and what to include for an effective web presence as well as SEO essentials and how to appear in search results online. This article's goal is to help you claim free online directory profiles as a source for lead generation and brand awareness.

Are You Easily Found Online?

In today's digital age there is a strong reliance on online search as a way to discover new services; and business brokerage is no exception. Though I've exemplified Google's services in this series, search extends way beyond Google and its competitors. Today's web is accessed from a wide variety of devices which has broad implications for how you are found and represented.

Search engines and parameters are embedded within applications and apps, which are both largely location aware and socially driven. As local and social searches continue to develop, creating optimized professional profiles and building an accessible online presence will continue to become vital to remaining relevant in your community.

Why Are Online Directory Profiles Important?

In order to create a strong online presence, you have to put yourself out there. Online directories are the next step to doing that. Apart from boosting your overall web presence, online directories are essential for:

1. **Quality Control** - Manage how you appear to those who are searching for you. Ensure accuracy of your brand and identity throughout auto-generated listings online.
2. **Influencing How Clients and Customers Find You** – More entries indexed in search results will establish a credible presence and create more channels for potential clients to contact you.
3. **Local Search** – Relevant directories will pull listings with matching geographic modifiers and relevancy to the top of the results. Local directories help local clientele find you.
4. **Social Search** – Online reviews are the modern day word-of-mouth on a much larger scale. Positive endorsements from locals you've helped will positively build your brand and generate referrals.

How Can You Get Started?

1. Claim an Existing Listing – You can begin by searching for your company name in your favorite search engine to find the directories in which you already appear. Existing but limited profiles are especially common in Google, BING, and Yellow Pages. By locating and claiming ownership of these listings you can personalize them to your liking.
2. Create a New Listing – Alternately, if your top results aren't clearly identifiable, you can target high priority directories that reach your desired clientele. A few I would recommend are Google Places, Yahoo! Local, BING, YellowPages, Manta, and of course the BizBuySell Broker Directory. As most of these are free to claim and enhance, harnessing the power of these key profiles will help you earn higher recognition for your brand.

As an example of claiming a profile (and for consistency), I'll use Google:

- a. Go to Google Places for Business
- b. Be sure to complete a full profile with operating hours, photos, contact information, categories, descriptions, and location.

Note: Though Business Broker isn't an available category, entering in the next closest term to your specialty and using the descriptive areas to pack in search optimized keywords is an equally effective route.

- c. Google or any other search engine will use your descriptions and completed profile to match searchers with your business listing.

Where Can You Access Directory Profiles?

- Google Places for Business
- Yahoo! Local
- BING Places for Business
- YP.com Advertising Solutions
- Manta
- BizBuySell Broker Directory

What Else Can You Do?

If you're a current member of BizBuySell, be sure that you're fully taking advantage of the Broker Directory. It was created to help connect our brokers with buyers and sellers, and we've taken great measures to optimize it both within our site and in the search engines.

A few key tips on using your Broker Directory profile:

- Make it 100% complete – As with your listings, a completed profile will help optimize your listing and encourage searchers to click.

- Include a picture and logo – Adding professional branding will help build credibility and awareness.
- For Premium Members, select up to 5 areas served – More areas will help your profile appear in more result queries.

Extra Credit:

- Take time to write out all the descriptive fields in a Word Document so you can copy and paste your entry into all new profiles. This will not only ensure consistency, but save your work.
- There are also professional services you can hire such as www.localeze.com that will help manage updates made to your business listings by distributing changes to all the profiles you've created.

Considering the likelihood for the internet to publish incorrect information, the steps outlined above will keep your brand consistent, credible, and easy to find. Now that you've created additional space in the search results, you'll be more accessible to buyers and searchers who are looking for your expertise.

Next time we'll discuss social media profiles, how to be found on the most important platforms, and using the foundation from this series to gain more customer recognition and become an industry influencer.

Bob House is General Manager for BizBuySell.com – the Internet's largest and most heavily trafficked business-for-sale marketplace. Currently, approximately 45,000 businesses are listed for sale on BizBuySell and the site receives more than 910,000 monthly visits. BizBuySell also has one of the largest databases of recently sold businesses and a leading franchise directory.