

EXPLANATION OF TERMS

Business Name, Phone #, & Domain Name

A business name, a phone number and a domain that NEVER change are at the core of a SMBs online identity. Name, phone and domain; these elements are the glue that allows for both branding, and for the value of that branding to come back to the business. Pick them well and make every effort to retain them forever.

All Usernames & Passwords

All too frequently, SMBs neglect to manage the very keys to access the equity that they create across the Internet. Misplace them and entrance is barred. It seems self evident, yet frequently forgotten: Keep track of all your passwords in a secure manner. If using an outside service make access to the user names/pwds a key part of the service agreement.

Website

Provides a focal point for links, and is the key to conversion. Managing this central online presence allows the SMB to control the message. In Addition, having this central presence allows for the gathering of meaningful metrics to enable changes in content or site design to enable visitors to locate relevant information more efficiently. It also provides a platform to gather email addresses and other key pieces of information about the business's customers.

N.A.P.

The acronym for Name, Address and Phone number. The whole of the local ecosystem uses these basic identifiers to keep track of the business listing and identity. Changing them, for whatever reason, risks confusing the many directories and search engines that are tracking the specific business location. It ultimately risks confusing the customer as well.

Testimonials

Are a time-honored way of engaging a customer in the activities of a business. Repurposing this content online on the SMB website adds credibility and provides recognition to customers.

Seed N.A.P.

At the top of the local ecosystem in the US is a small number of list management companies, InfoGROUP, Localize & Axiom, that provide baseline and enhanced data to nearly every directory, search engine, check in and social place service on the internet. Seeding the right information to these upstream data providers is critical for achieving an accurate representation of your business across the local ecosystem.

Email & Client Email List

Email is a preferred communication tool and is a proven way to stay in touch with prospects and customers. It is low cost but high touch and provides a personal way of marketing to them. This information should be meticulously backed up and preserved offline regardless of where the SMB's basic email function takes place.

Claim Directory Listings

The Local Ecosystem is a fragmented place. Being sure that an SMB listing is accurate at the most prominent directories allows the business to leverage the top notch SEO of the directory for additional exposure and reinforces the prominence of the SMB listing in Google.

Directories

Local is still a fragmented environment with new and older directory based services offering more social elements like reviews, check-ins and deals to retain and attract readers. The SMBs presence there captures some eyeballs and also reinforces your presence elsewhere on the web.

Places

Places - The major search engines view the SMB Place page as search engine property, not the property of the business. Google, for example, will surface any information about the business on the Places Page that Google thinks is relevant to the searcher (i.e. a competing businesses). The SMB needs to enhance this content with the understanding that the reader should be encouraged to call, come to their location or visit their website. Only then do they become the SMB's customer and not Google's reader.

Citations & Links

These are effectively the votes upon which the search engines decide the prominence and rank of a business. They are the key element in any long-term marketing program to increase the visibility of the business's website and blog. If a URL or phone number changes, the equity value of citations and links can be dissipated.

Blog

A platform to set the record straight and establish authority is a key to proactive reputation management. A blog should be located at the same location as the domain. Building a blog on a third party platform, while easy, builds link equity for the 3rd party and not the SMB. Blog entries allow the SMB to build out relevant content to attract links, but more importantly encourages the community and the conversation to take place close to home.

Blog Comments

Blog readers can enhance and improve on your content. These comments can expand the depth and engagement of the blog writing. Blog commenter's take ownership in helping convey key messages.

Owner Review Responses

The way in which the SMB responds to reviews, particularly negative reviews, can either build or destroy online equity. It is important for the SMB to remember that their response is for future prospects as much as it is for the current, perhaps angry, customer.

Claim Social ID's & Brand

Even if a business does not have time to actively manage the many social sites, the SMB should minimally claim their brand to prevent squatting.

Reviews

Have both search and social elements. They are often a search ranking factor and provide credibility for the business at an important juncture in the consumer purchase cycle. Reviews also allow existing clients to engage on behalf of the business by highlighting the business's positives, but they are persistent and outside an SMBs direct control.

Check In Services

A social tool that can increase visitor loyalty and provide a direct way of communicating offers and deals.

Business to Business Social Web

Are a great place to build business relationships and perception of expertise. But like any social site, change can lead to loss of control and loss of equity. Don't put all of your eggs in the social basket.

Social Web

Can be used to engage both existing and new clients, build relationships and provide exposure. It is an opportunity to instill confidence and trust. Like MySpace and AOL, these properties can change course or go away. The SMB then loses not only control, but also any equity developed. The Social Web is best used to bring clients back to the SMB site or blog.

Events, Facebook Ads, Daily Deals / Coupons, Ad Words, Boost, Tags

Can be used to highlight a business to drive engagement, traffic and conversions. They can compliment search and social efforts by exposing your short-term promotions and longer term marketing efforts to new audiences.

THE IDEAS EXPRESSED HERE ARE MY OWN.

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