

# Local Business Listings: How to increase your online visibility

90% of consumers find a local business online. That's why it's crucial that your business is listed correctly on all 50+ platforms used by your potential customers – such as Google, Facebook, Bing and Apple Maps – just to mention a few. But taking care of all your Listings on all the local directories, sites and social networks can be overwhelming. Especially if you are uncertain about the purpose of each platform, and how it can impact your marketing.

In this article, we give you a glimpse of the nature of Local Business Listings, and how to complete the most relevant fields to increase your online findability.

## What are Local Business Listings?

Local business listings are online portfolios that contain information about your business – such as your name, address, phone number, hours and more.

### **Which platforms provide this information?**

Online directories, search engines and social networks – such as Google, Bing, Yelp and Facebook. Most of these platforms are free to use, but users are required to add their information manually.

### **Why are Local Business Listings important for your business?**

The goal of local business listings is to make your business more accurate and searchable online.

Ensuring that your listings are complete and consistent across various platforms is crucial for improving your search rankings, increasing your online reach among prospects, and for building credibility in your business.

## The core components of Local Business Listings

Each time you create a structured local business listing, you'll be filling out a form with a specific set of fields. Let's have a look at the most important fields, below:

- Business name
- Address
- Phone number
- Website URL
- Categories

- Description
- Social profiles
- Images
- Additional media
- Brands carried
- Accepted payment methods
- Attributes

Building your citations manually can be tricky: It is extremely time-consuming, and arduous to ensure consistency and prevent mistakes. However, if you choose the convenience of an automated location data management service such as SO Connect Listings, you'll be able to complete this information only once, and allow the system to push the data to all the various platforms.

## How to complete your Local Business Listings fields

### 1) Business name

Always use your real-world business name in this case-sensitive field.

For multi-location businesses, such as chains or franchises, do not add city names or other modifiers to the business name, as this information will be added in the location field.

### 2) Address

Always list the exact address of the location.

Specify your postal code, city and country.

### 3) Phone number

Don't forget to add your country code! This is particularly important for hotels and similar businesses: They're local, but most of their customers come from out of town.

### 4) Website URL

It is very important that the listed URL directs to a page owned by the business, and not to a third party, social profile, or anywhere else.

### 5) Categories

Most local business data platforms have a set of categories you'll be choosing from to define your business, which is usually divided into Main Category and Additional Categories. You'll typically select 1–10 of these categories. Please choose your categories carefully as they will greatly influence your search results rankings. Google's guidelines encourage you to choose categories which define your business at the most refined level (e.g. 'Italian Restaurant' is a more refined category than just 'Restaurant') and avoid category repetition (e.g. don't use both 'Hotel' and '3-star-hotel').

It's important to be as accurate as possible when categorizing your business as it makes it easy for platforms and search engines to understand which searches you're most relevant for!

## **6) Description**

This field is an opportunity to highlight the most impactful elements of your business: What will convince a potential customer to choose you?

Make your description read in a natural voice – like an elevator pitch – rather than a string of disjointed keywords. Descriptions give more substance to a local search result and add to the overall online search experience.

## **7) Social profiles**

Many platforms will give you the option to link to your Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, Pinterest and other social media accounts. It's worth completing these fields whenever possible, to direct consumers to additional forms of user experience and customer support.

## **8) Images**

According to Google, businesses with photos see 35% more clicks to their website and 42% higher requests for driving directions in Google Maps. It's therefore always a smart idea to upload as many high-quality images as possible.

**Not sure how many pictures to add – or what it should be of? (source: Hubspot)**

### ***Cover photo***

Your Google My Business cover photo is one of the most important images as it displays at the centre of your listing.

### ***Profile photo***

Your profile photo will show when uploading new photos and videos, and when you respond to reviews.

Along with your profile and cover photos, you can – and should – upload other images to make your listing more informative and engaging.

## **Manage your listings on:**



**and many more..**

	DESCRIPTION	GOOGLE-RECOMMENDED MINIMUM	SUGGESTIONS
<b>Exterior</b>	The outside of your business from different directions.	Three photos	Use pictures from different times of day (morning, afternoon, evening) so customers always recognize your business.
<b>Interior</b>	The inside of your business, with a focus on decor and ambience.	Three photos	Give customers an accurate idea of what it will look like to stand or sit inside your business.
<b>Product</b>	A representation of the types of products or services you offer.	One photo per product type or service	Show the products you're known for and make sure the photos are well-lit.
<b>Employees at work</b>	"Action" shots of your employees delivering the types of services you offer.	Three	Try to capture your employees with satisfied customers.
<b>Food and drink</b>	Pictures that represent your most popular menu items.	Three	Consider hiring a food photographer -- these are tricky to get right! If that's not in the budget, use bright and even lighting (i.e. no shadows or dimness).
<b>Common areas</b>	Photos of where your customers will spend time (think a lobby or lounge).	One photo per common area	Represent the variety of amenities you offer.
<b>Rooms</b>	Pictures of your different room and suite options (if applicable).	Three	Don't try to mislead guests. Show your wallet-friendly and high-end options.
<b>Team</b>	A shot of your management team and staff.	Three	Use pictures that show your unique culture and team's personality.

## 9) Additional media

Certain platforms allow you to upload videos, menus and links to other forms of media. This creates a richer user experience.

## 10) Brands carried

Being alerted of major brands you carry is a huge convenience for consumers, particularly when those brands enjoy a loyal following. Think of BMW, Mercedes, Nespresso, Illy Coffee and Armani, among others.

### **11) Accepted payment methods**

Always specify which payment methods you accept at your location to help your customers plan their visit. From 'cash only' to the most modern payment technologies – add all the forms of payment applicable to your business.

### **12) Attributes**

Attributes are relatively new but are expected to grow in importance.

Attributes are a set of descriptions (such as “24-hour service”, “late-night food” or “wheelchair accessible”) that further defines your business. Whether your restaurant offers Wi-Fi or outdoor seating, or you have a women-led business, attributes help consumers understand what your business has to offer. Be aware that some attributes like “cozy” or “hip” can only be added by the public, as they represent subjective impressions of your business.

## **Summing-Up**

The completeness, consistency and distribution of your local business data have a direct impact on your local search engine rankings. This, in turn, leads to web traffic, foot traffic and revenue.

Given the importance and the rapid growth of Location Marketing, it's well worth the time to be sure that your listings are accurate, complete and discoverable on the most important platforms.

Discover the convenience of our automated location data management service, Listings. Fill in the form below and we'll get in touch