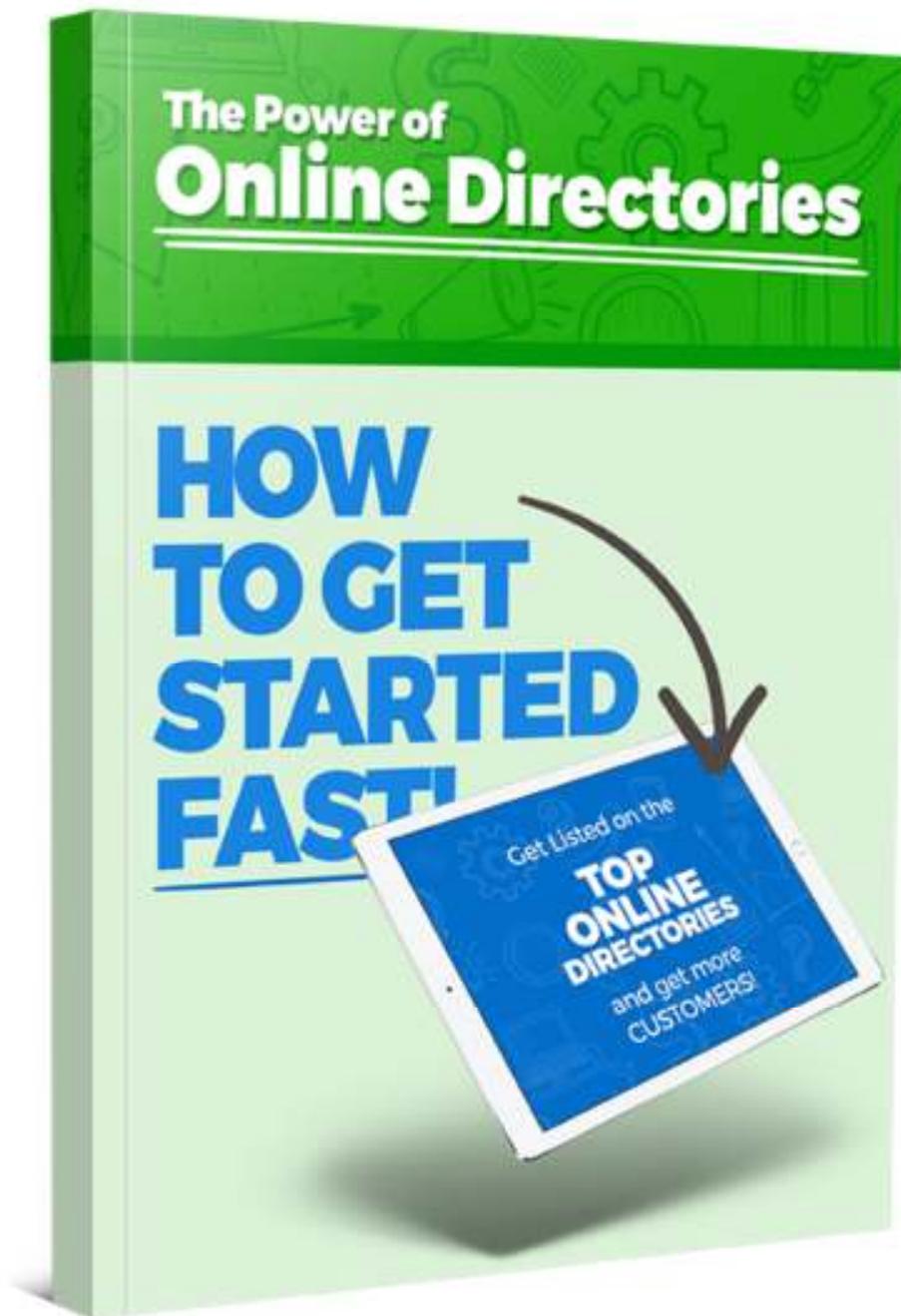


# The Power of Online Directories and How to Get Started Fast!



## **Introduction**

More and more small businesses today are using online directories to their benefit. If you run a small business, you likely spend a great deal of your time thinking about your marketing plan. Online directories can be a great addition to your current small business marketing strategy. Online directories can help your small business expand its website traffic, increase the likelihood that your website will be found by interested visitors and increase your bottom line. If you haven't taken a look at online directories and considered how your small business could use them to increase its market presence, then now is the time to start!

## **What Are Online Directories?**

There are many different types of online directories available on the Internet. Each of these online directories serves a specific purpose and can be used by your small business in specific ways.

An online directory is a website submission service that allows your small business' website to be added to a specific category where it can be searched for by interested visitors. Listing your small business on an online directory increases your website's visibility on the web and helps to create inbound links to your business' website. Online directories make it easy for people to find what they are looking for. These directories can be accessed from just about anywhere that has an internet connection. This means that people could find your business' website from their home, office or even while traveling.

Every website that is submitted to an online directory is placed in a specific category. These categories can range in how they are organized. Some are organized by business-related categories, some are organized according to personal preferences and others are organized by subject. Each category consists of several websites relating to a specific topic. Each website listing features the name of the website, a direct link to the website and a short description of the website. Interested Internet visitors will be able to browse through the various categories in

the directory and locate websites like yours that they may be interested in visiting. Essentially, online directories make it easier for any visitor to find your business' website.

## **How Do Online Directories Work?**

The concept of online directories is actually a pretty simple one. Online directories are very similar to the Yellow Pages in the real world, only these listings are only online. (Actually Yellow Pages.com is now one of the largest online directories as well.) A directory is just a listing place for a number of websites. Any type of website could be listed in an online directory. Some online directories are huge and cover every topic that someone could create a website for, while others are very small and specific to a specific niche.

Let's use an example. Say you are a model airplane enthusiast and you want to find some websites that cater to your specific interest. You could look through a huge online directory such as Google My Business and find several dozen websites that are related to model airplanes. Or you could look for an online directory that is niche-specific, which means that the entire online directory would be based on hobbies such as model airplanes. With a niche-specific directory you may find even more websites that are based on your specific interest than what you could find on the larger directories.

Since online directories are organized by categories, finding websites that relate to a specific interest such as model airplanes is very easy. You could find information and websites about model airplanes in your local region too, if you use a regional-specific online directory. So if you live in Phoenix you could find websites that relate to both model airplanes and the Phoenix area. Online directories will direct you to websites that you want to find. All you have to do is perform a search in the online directory for a specific topic or browse through the various categories until you find the type of websites you are looking for. When you perform a search you will be given a list of all of the websites that relate to your search term. You will be presented with a number of links to these websites and each link will have a short description of what you are likely to find on the website. You can read the descriptions and choose to click on the website that best suits you.

There are many different types of websites that you could find under a specific topic as well. For example, if you search several online directories for information relating to model airplanes you may find websites that are about building model airplanes, flying model airplanes, creating historically accurate model planes, tips and instructions about how to fly model planes, websites that sell model airplanes and charters and associations that you could join regarding model airplanes. These are just a few of the examples you could find using an online directory. There are simply too many topics to list them all here.

You can see how anyone can use an online directory to find websites relating to things that interest them. As a small business owner you can see how potential customers of yours are using online directories too. Now that you understand how online directories work it is time to see how they can work for your business.

## **How Do Online Directories Benefit Small Businesses?**

There are many benefits associated with listing your small business in an online directory. The more online directories you can use to list your business the more benefits you will reap. Here are some of the benefits of using online directories:

- **Exposure**

Exposure is important for all business marketing strategies. After all, the more people who are exposed to your business the more people are likely to utilize your business' services. If online visitors aren't able to see your website or even know that it exists, then they probably aren't going to purchase your products or services. Listing your business' website in online directories helps your website to gain exposure. Thousands of people use online directories every day to find things they are interested in. These are people who are actively searching for websites that are directly related to your products or services. They are already looking- all you have to do is make it easy for them to find you. Online directories will expose your business to more online visitors, which could increase traffic to your website.

- **Increased Traffic**

There are several ways that online directories can help you increase the amount of traffic your website receives. For starters, the more exposure your website has the more people are likely to visit it. But online directories offer more than just exposure from potential viewers. They also offer exposure to the various major search engine crawlers like Google and even YouTube. This increases the chances that your website will appear on major search engine results pages, or SERPs, which will allow more people to see the website when they perform a regular search. Both search engine optimization exposure and exposure to more people who are searching for your website could result in increased traffic to your small business' website.

- **Cheap Advertising**

As a small business owner you already understand the importance of advertising. You know that it helps customers to find your business and recognize your name and brand. You probably have little room in your budget for more advertising right this moment. That is one of the major benefits of listing your business' website in an online directory. Online directories are inexpensive to join and they offer a lot of exposure for the price. Some online directories will allow you to list your business for free, while others will charge a minimal fee. Either way, you are getting a lot of exposure for far less money than you would spend on a TV or radio advertisement spot.

- **Professional Appearance**

You want everything about your business to look professional in the eyes of your customers. A professional appearance enhances your status and makes customers more likely to patronize your business. Online directories help you to look like a professional business. When an online consumer sees your business listing in an online directory, they will consider your business to be an authority on the subject and a professional place to do business. Unlike a search that is performed on a major search engine like Google, where there is little difference between the legitimate websites relating to a

topic and the less than useful websites, online directories are mostly legitimate websites. Online consumers are more likely to trust what they see on online directories.

- **SEO Benefits**

Online directories offer several search engine optimization benefits as well. Firstly, these online directories offer you more inbound links. When an online visitor sees your website link in an online directory, they will be able to click on it and be instantly re-directed to your website. This is a great way to increase traffic. It is a great way to improve your status in the eyes of search engine crawlers too. The more backlinks that a search engine crawler can find, the more relevant they will rank your website. This is especially true of authoritative online directories. Being linked to a major online directory, such as Google My Business, will give your website more relevancy in the eyes of Google's search engine crawlers. This will result in a higher page ranking on the SERP. As you know, a higher search engine result page rank you get, the more people are going to click on your website link.

- **Increased Revenue**

When more people are able to find your website it increases the chances that they will visit your website. When people visit your website they are more likely to purchase your goods or services. This means that online directories can help you increase your revenue stream. Online directories are good for your bottom line.

- **Increased Brand Recognition and Customer Interaction**

When an online viewer locates your website through an online directory, they are more likely to remember your business's name and directly interact with it. Online directories can help your business stand out to customers as well. Overall, listing your small business in an online directory will help you to create a more comprehensive and effective online presence.

Listing your small business' website with several online directories will help more people find your website, whether they are specifically searching for it or if they are just browsing. In addition to gaining exposure, online directories will provide major SEO benefits, which will help search engines find your site. Increased exposure and higher search engine rankings will result in more traffic to your website, which will result in higher revenue.

There are many different types of online directories, from large global directories to small, niche and location-specific ones. Some examples of other types of online directories can include reciprocal link directories, free directories, paid directories, Business 2 Business directories, theme-related directories, small business directories and many, many more.

### **Why You Should Consider Listing Your Small Business in an Online Directory**

Apart from the concept that online directories will increase the amount of exposure your website gets and help with your SEO strategies, they are also a very effective way to directly target potential customers. Online directories make it easy for online users to find something they want. According to a study performed by Burke, 8 out of 10 people will use a print or online directory to find companies or products they are looking for. The same study also suggested that 8 out of 10 people who use these directories to locate a business do so with the intent to purchase a product or service from them. This is a very effective form of targeted advertising. The customer already needs or wants your product or service and you can directly target them by listing your website in an online directory.

Another reason why you should consider listing your small business has to do with your return on investment, or ROI. Since the potential benefits of getting increased website traffic are great compared to how much you will have to spend to list your website in an online directory, you can see a great return on your investment in the form of increased revenue. You also want to keep your brand and your company name in the minds of consumers at all times, which is something else that an online directory can help with.

## **What Online Directories Should You Use for Your Small Business?**

Even though listing your website in many online directories will improve your website's exposure and SEO ranking, it is not effective to just SPAM your website into every single online directory you can find. You will want to take some time to consider which specific online directories will give you the best ROI. The best option is to find a great combination of directories to join. If you run a small business, the best place to start may be with a local directory. This is because most people will search for businesses in their area they can patronize. Local market and niche-specific online directories can offer extremely targeted advertisements to potential local customers.

After your business is listed in these directories you can take a look at the larger and potentially more expensive general-interest directories. You will probably want to consider listing with the top 10 online directories, as these will be used by a lot of people and will offer higher relevancy and authority in the eyes of search engines. Google My Business and LinkedIn are large general-interest directories that you will want to list your small business in. If your website sells tangible goods you may also want to consider listing it in comparison shopping websites and product listings directories. Studies show that 42% of consumers will look at a comparison shopping website before they decide to purchase a specific product.

The best way to figure out which specific online directories your small business should be listed in is to start with your competitors. Take a look at your local and niche-specific options and figure out if your competition is already listed. If they are you need to be listed too. If they are not listed you may want to list your website as a way to beat them to the punch. In some situations it may not make sense for you to have a listing in a specific online directory, even if your competitors are listed in it. Your goal should be to be listed in every relevant and niche-specific directory you can find as well as many of the major directories, but not so many directories that you appear SPAMMY.

In addition to listing your business in online directories, you also need to maintain these listings. It is important for your online directory listings to be up to date and accurate, or else

you could just be wasting your time. If your directory information seems out of date your customers will probably look elsewhere.

It will probably take some time to see the results of listing your small business' website in so many online directories, but eventually you will see results. The best way to find the perfect combination of online directory listings for your business is to use some sort of tracking or analytics system. You will want to be able to see how many people clicked on your website links from within the directory and if your website has shown increased traffic since then. You will want to stop wasting your time with online directories that are not producing results and increase the time and effort you spend on online directories that are productive.

## **Best Practices for Listing Your Small Business in Online Directories**

Now that you understand why your small business should be listed in online directories and have started locating the directories that you want to be listed in, you are ready to begin creating your business listings for submissions. Here are some tips and best practices for listing your small business in online directories.

- Start by choosing local directories and directories that are niche-specific. So if you own a model airplane hobby shop in Phoenix, make sure you find a local Phoenix business directory and a directory that is related to model airplanes. If you can find a model airplane hobby directory for the Phoenix area, you are all set.
- Once you're in local directories, start searching for larger and more generalized directories. Pick directories that get a lot of traffic and that are listed highly on major search engines like Google. A higher search engine ranking means that the directory will be considered as both authoritative and relevant in the eyes of search engines, making any links you get through these directories more valuable to your SEO strategy.
- Include all of the relevant information regarding your small business in your website's directory description. This should include your business' name, location, telephone

number, contact information and possibly reviews, business hours and anything else that is relevant. Add in photos, maps or other interactive features if the directory lets you.

- Try to keep your information consistent across all of your online directory listings. This will help your website to retain its credibility in the eyes of search engines and will assist with your SERP rankings.
- Try to make your business stand out by offering an explanation of your business or any specific message the customer should know in your description.
- Keep all of your information up to date. This may mean frequently updating all of your listings several times per month.
- Allow customers to leave positive reviews and use them in your listing if the directory allows it.
- Always be professional and consistent with your business' listings and message. This includes any information regarding your brand.
- If you sell products or services to a local market, make sure your business is listed in a local business directory. Include geo-specific keywords and information. An example would be: "Dave's Model Plane Shop" + "Phoenix".
- Optimize your website for SEO purposes and include the relevant keywords in your meta titles and listing descriptions. Keyword research is important.

## Get Listed in the Top 15 Online Directories

Now is a great time to get your small business listed in the Top 15 Online Directories. There are few other Internet marketing techniques that will offer so many benefits for such a small investment on your part. Listing your business in an online directory will increase your website's online presence and help more people find you, which can help you increase your business's revenue.

Contact us today to get your **Free copy** of the Top 15 Online Directories Presentation



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