



USING GOOGLE AND YELP TO BOOST YOUR VISIBILITY

By Ginger Hartford

For frame shops and galleries, platforms like Google and Yelp play a critical marketing role in building visibility and trust while helping consumers discover your services. The global pandemic and mandated social distancing mean small businesses cannot rely on walk-in traffic and must expand their digital storefronts to keep drawing in new business.

Today's consumers self-direct their own digital search for services, and their digital path to purchase is often decided for businesses based on search visibility, credibility, and top-rated customer referrals, which function as "digital word of mouth" or rave online reviews. Therefore, it is imperative for businesses to elevate and optimize their digital marketing initiatives to stand out and compete in today's marketplace. Let's dive into understanding Google and Yelp as key marketing tools and how search engine optimization (SEO) impacts your results.

FROM AN ONLINE SEARCH TO AN IN-STORE VISIT

To understand how customers decide what, when, and where they will shop, we need to understand how they search within the digital path to purchase. With a customer mindset, think about your latest purchase. We are often inspired as we engage with social media and are in "discovery mode," searching for products and services. Where did you last search for a product—on

your mobile or desktop? In your query, did you use a voice search function, asking something like "Where can I frame my child's artwork?" Or did you type basic keywords to search?

Considering how critical localization is for intent to purchase, did you use terms like "near me" or rely on localization settings to produce accurate results? Google searches that include the words "near me" doubled in the past year, meaning there is a higher likelihood for customers to visit your store when searching for a local business.

There are 40-60 billion high-value searches on Google in the US monthly. With 46% of searches having local intent and 86% of people looking up the location of a business on Google Maps, this represents a higher intent to purchase with a higher conversion rate. 72% of consumers who conduct a local search will visit a store within five miles of their current location. Considering mobile users, the likelihood of a local search resulting in an in-store visit increases 35%!

With that in mind, it's important to make it easy to find you. Be sure your website is established as an online presence, ranks high on the first results page, and is optimized for mobile to deliver a great experience for your prospective buyers. Also consider 18% of local mobile searches lead to a sale within one day, so ranking high in search results is key. Data shows that people will visit brick-and-mortar stores they initially find on-

line. However, there is a lot of data, content, and optimization, that goes into getting the search results you want.

GOOGLE MY BUSINESS

Google is a powerhouse and resource network for businesses. Google My Business (GMB) is a free tool allowing business owners to manage how they appear on Google Search and Google Maps. To begin, simply sign up and add or claim your business. This platform for business listings makes a valuable difference when producing results. Help people get to know you by managing your page and updating business information such as phone numbers and hours of operation.

Adding beautiful photos can often help make or break first impressions with prospective new customers. Images are shown to convert nearly 40% more on businesses that have them compared to those that do not. GMB offers a range of options for you to maximize your presence online. Videos add variety to further elevate ranking by content while distinguishing your business from the competition. Google photo recommendations include:

- Interior shots
- Exterior shots
- Photos at work
- Team photos
- Identity photos
- 3 exterior shots
- 3 interior shots
- 3 photos of your team providing services (photos at work)
- 3 photos of products/services you sell
- 3 images of team members

Google also has popular tools to manage and optimize SEO or search engine optimization and ranking. Google's AdWords Keyword Planner is a starting point for keyword research. Google Trends tool also helps with seasonal keyword fluctuations, and Google's data and analytics reporting dashboard are invaluable assets to monitor your performance. Many galleries and frame shops outsource this service to SEO experts for management if in-house resources are limited.



Leading search engine and review platforms like Google and Yelp can greatly boost your visibility to consumers.



● Data shows that over 60% of consumers are influenced by online reviews. Platforms like Yelp offer tools to help you gain positive reviews and respond quickly and professionally to negative ones.

TOP SEO BEST PRACTICES

- Include relevant and conversational keywords in your URL
- Write compelling title tag and meta descriptions
- Optimize images, including alt text description to improve ranking
- Publish long-form content to answer conversational queries
- Optimize the user experience of your website for desktop and mobile
- Focus on link building
- Ensure your webpages have internal linking back and forth (think cross-promotion)
- Set up authoritative backlinks with content from reputable, relevant sites to improve your business ranking (again, credible cross-promotion)

THE IMPORTANCE OF REVIEWS

Online reviews influence 67% of consumers and are especially important when making major purchases. Customers base which business to patronize on personal recommendations that they trust from reviews and ratings. These can include business or test ratings, the quality level of the reviews, reviews from family or friends, and even reviews from social media influencers. Positive reviews greatly impact buying choices, and small businesses can benefit from this consumer preference. However, it's important to constructively address any possible negative reviews. If left unanswered or unresolved, it will work against your business and cost you potential customers.

Yelp also has many similar features to help strategically grow your business and support the consumer discovery

process while connecting your community and visitors with you. Interacting with customers, building trust and consumer awareness, promoting your brand, and engaging in conflict-free resolution with reviews make customers happy and turn page visitors into customers. According to a recent survey conducted by Boston Consulting Group, small businesses that took advantage of Yelp business accounts and paid advertising saw an increase in revenue.

Turn visitors into customers by enabling Yelp business page upgrade tools such as “Business Highlights,” the “Call to Action” button, and “Request a Quote, Check-In Offers, or Yelp Deals.” It is fascinating to know Yelp has location-based ad targeting, which allows you to determine where you want your ad to be shown. Geo-targeting your ad means it will be displayed in a radius of your choice around your business location to attract nearby customers.

In terms of your marketing spend strategy, setting a daily or monthly budget for advertising is completely up to you. Strategically adjust and flex your budget to adjust your spend based on your business requirements per calendar, promotion, seasonality, or location. Yelp Connect also offers the ability to create posts and share business updates that can be automatically promoted by Yelp.

SEARCH FOR EXCELLENCE

If you are not currently utilizing these marketing tools to your advantage, Google and Yelp can give you a strong platform for success. If you are already active with both services and ready to upgrade your marketing strategies with these platforms, they have many services, resources, and expert tools tailored to produce results.

And as I mentioned earlier, don't be afraid to outsource this work to an SEO expert if there is a lack of in-house experience. To find an expert, make like a consumer: ask Google to help you find SEO marketing services near you, then check out Yelp to read and rank top business reviews to make the right decision! **PFM**



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Ginger is a highly accomplished art and design industry veteran recognized for her executive leadership and expertise in strategic marketing and global business development. Formerly with Larson-Juhl, Ginger founded EurDesign Studio as a sought-after consultant and National Conference speaker about high-level marketplace trends and design technology.