



# Get your business on the map



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*In this 'social, local, mobile' world we live in, being able to pinpoint where we are, what is in our immediate vicinity and how to get there, is vital. If your business is not on the map, and you are not leveraging that data, you could be missing out not only on an effective marketing opportunity but operational and sales efficiencies too. **Paul Di Francesco** finds out more...*

Have you always wondered how Google puts local businesses on the map? Some time ago search results started presenting more and more details about the businesses that we were searching for. The listing would appear on the side of the search engine result page which displayed a Google map for directions, pictures, address, contact information, trading hours and even customer reviews. It's pretty nifty, but it didn't, and still doesn't, happen for every business. We thought it must be because it cost a fortune, but we were wrong. It turns out that by using Google Places for Business, any business owner can submit their detailed information with ease at no cost.

Here's how to do it, using the example of the well-known Bar Reggio, an authentic Italian restaurant based in Darlinghurst, Sydney.

Like many restaurants, Reggio's customer base comes from traditional means such as word of mouth, reviews in third-party magazines or the average punter walking past who willing to try something new. These are all still viable channels, but that doesn't mean it shouldn't also leverage its free listing on Google Maps to the max. Doing so may seem like a small thing, but it can have a big impact for a local eatery like Reggio's. By adding more information and enticing imagery, you can give potential customers a sneak preview of what will be in store for them and begin to set the scene and build a rapport with them before they have even stepped through the door. The seed of trust in your brand is established. And of course the more relevant information that you include then the better the search engine optimisation and the greater the traffic to your listing. So here is how the painless process works.

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## FEATURE // BUSINESS ON THE MAP

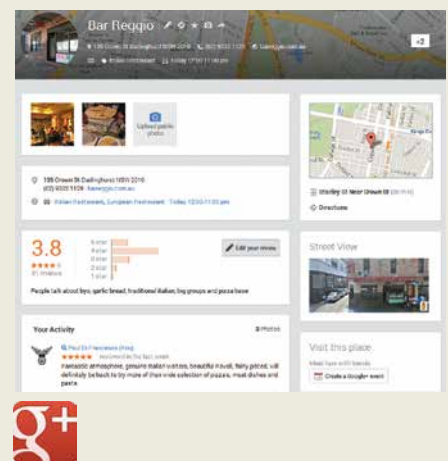
**Get on the map  
- start here**

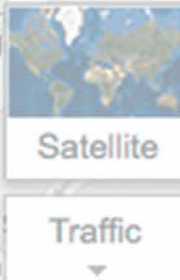
Select the relevant country for the business you are listing and add a current and active phone number.

Go to Google and search for *Places for Business*, which allows you to submit and add all the relevant information that you as a business owner want to appear on your Google listing.

You will be taken to the basic information page where you can start to add all the main details of your business such as its name and address (for Google Maps), contact details, industry categories, website, hours of operation, payment details and of course a description of the business. Your description has a maximum limit of 200 characters, so make it short but effective.

When your listing is complete Google automatically creates a Google+ page for your business. Once your listing is live users can click on the 'more info' link on it to be redirected to the Google+ social network page which is an attractive interface that brings the listing to life using social media principles. As such it includes customer reviews, directions, and also the ability for users to share information and create a Google+ event at your business location so you can start to really take advantage of being on the map.





As the business owner you can upload promotional material to your free listing (a maximum of 10 photos, 5 videos). In the case of Bar Reggio, new customers reading the listing can get an idea of the meals, atmosphere and what the restaurant looks like. We live in a visual world of information overload but generally if people like what they see, they will give it a go.

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5. After you have filled out all the necessary business information, submit the information to confirm your listing and go through Google's verification process. There are three ways you can validate your listing, all of which require you to enter a PIN. You can choose to verify by phone, SMS or postcard. If you chose the phone option Google will call you on your listed business phone number almost instantaneously and tell you your PIN which you enter online. The process is the same if you chose the SMS option.

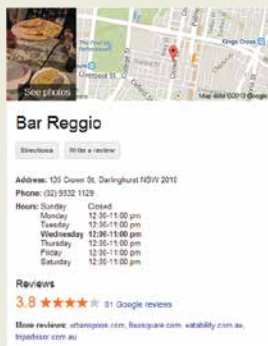
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You can choose to verify by postcard, in which case Google will send a card containing your verification PIN to your business address (generally takes two to three weeks). Once you receive the postcard, you will need to go back to your Places for Business listing to enter the 4-digit PIN. Your listing will not go live until you do so. If you are only offered the postcard verification, this generally means that the phone number that you provided does not match the listing - that's to say that Google's records conflict with the information that you have provided.

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Once your business is verified, you are good to go! Within a few days, your business listing will be live and displayed on Google.

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## FEATURE // BUSINESS ON THE MAP

Getting your business on to Google Maps is just the start. In October Google also announced a new, free, professional mapping tool, Google Maps Engine Pro, which helps you to visually transform your data by charting it on a map. By collecting business information and putting it in a visual format that can be shared across multiple devices, you can make better sense of your data in relation to real-world surroundings and therefore make potentially better business decisions. Importing information like addresses, names, office locations and sales leads from various file formats onto a map means you can now edit, analyse and share the information in a simple format.

"Google Maps Engine Pro can be as easy to use as creating a document and it gives businesses an added productivity tool to help make decisions, organise information, and plan operations using Google Maps," says the search engine giant.

Pure Fix Cycles, a distributor of custom, fixed gear bikes, uses Maps Engine Pro to identify sales opportunities across target markets, helping to expand its business.

Maps Engine Pro is built as an application on top of the Google Maps Engine platform, which provides businesses with cloud-based technology to help organise large datasets and create more complex maps. Once again, Google offers the application for free, with full access to the Maps Engine product and API, only limiting table and query limits. There is an enterprise-level account that offers extended table and query limits and enterprise support for a small fee. The Maps Engine APIs open up the platform

for developers to build applications powered by Maps Engine such as store locators, crowd-sourced maps, or asset management apps.

As Google's new application shows, maps can take businesses far beyond the realms of the marketing department. Ian McLeod, Chief Executive of Ergon Energy in Queensland shared his story about using Google Maps to save his business operations budget on Google's enterprise blog. Here is what he had to say:

"Queensland is known as Australia's 'sunshine state', and Ergon Energy is responsible for keeping its power running all day and every day. We distribute electricity to 700,000 people across a vast expanse of 1.7 million square kilometres that reaches 97 percent of the state's population. From the dry regions of the west to the tropical reaches of the north, 150,000 kilometres of power lines stretch across almost every part of Queensland, held up by twice as many poles as we have customers.

"One of the most common issues we manage is tree vegetation growing close to these power lines, which, left unchecked, causes power outages and safety issues for customers. Managing vegetation to fix and prevent these outages used to cost us \$90-100 million each year. With a distribution network this large, we had a good understanding of the condition of our assets, but we could not see the risks to the assets from the surrounding environment or measure the value customers got from our vegetation management plans. With long distances to travel inspecting, cutting and then auditing vegetation, workers often have their hands full.

"We decided that there must be a better way, and undertook a project called 'Remote Observation and Automated Modelling for Economic Simulation' (ROAMES) to uncover it. ROAMES collects high resolution digital photographs and accurate three dimensional LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) scanning data to model every wire and power pole across the whole of regional Queensland. We collect this data by flying specialised high-tech aircraft fitted with high-tech gear over the top of these power lines.

"To create the ROAMES imagery and integrate it with customer and network reliability information, we turned to the Google Maps for Business and the Google Maps API to incorporate ROAMES's high resolution 3D imagery with Google Maps and Street View to provide a view of our entire infrastructure. This allows us to identify and predict when trees are growing too close to their power lines and send our field crews out to cut intruding branches. This has significantly reduced the environmental impact of our vegetation management activities and minimised the number of outages for customers.

With Google Maps, we are not only delivering better customer service, but also saving money and handling huge amounts of data. It enables our field workers with a reliable, intuitive tool that helps our bottom line. We expect to save up to \$59 million over the next five years using this technology."

Perhaps its time to start plotting your way to chart success. ■