10 easy (and free!) ways to improve your online presence in 10 minutes

Marketing your business online is becoming more and more essential with each passing month – but it can be a little bit daunting if you’ve never done it before!

There are loads of ways that your business can take advantage of online resources that won’t take up too much time or money, and there are many things that you can experiment with that only require a little bit of knowledge.

We have created this checklist to help you. Just find 10 minutes each week to try one of the things on this list and you’ll find your online profile begins to take off, making it easier for both local and non-local people to find you and do business with you.

1. List your contact details on an online directory

If there was someone out there (either locally or outside of the area) who was looking for the product or service you provide, odds are fantastic that one of the first things they would do is head to Google.

There are lots of online directories out there that Google really loves. If you can get your contact details on different online directories, the chances of people finding their way to your website, your Facebook page, or your front door massively increase.

**How?**

Start by adding your business listing (or claiming your listing, if your business has been automatically included) to websites like www.truelocal.com.au. Add as many contact details as you can, including Facebook and other social media accounts if you have them. If they also allow you to add photos and videos, go for it! If you can add a description, be really clear about the products you sell and the services you provide. Add as many as you can think of – your words need to match what people are likely to be looking for.
If you have more time, search for your type of business on Google. If you appear at the top, great! If you don’t, have a look at the links that do appear on the first page of Google, and try and figure out whether they’re links to the business’s own website – or whether they’re regional or industry-based directories that you could also get yourself listed on.

2. List your business on Gumtree

Gumtree is another great website that is popular with a wide range of people and is loved by Google. Create a free ad for your business on Gumtree. You can add all sorts of information, contact details, links and photos, and you can also specify your region – so people searching in your region will find you more easily.

How?

Go to www.gumtree.com.au. Create an account by clicking “Register” in the top right hand corner. When you’re ready to do your listing, click “Post Ad” in the top left hand corner.

3. Create a Facebook page

Facebook pages are great for small businesses. Thousands of people in and around your town log in to Facebook on a daily basis. They’re already there – you just need to get in front of them!

If you create a page, people can choose to “Like” it. If they “like” it, every time they log in they will get your page updates every time they log in. Think of your Facebook page as a holding pen for future customers – once they’ve liked your page, you can flash your marketing messages at them until they see one that resonates most powerfully with them, and prompts them to act. BUT, it’s a holding pen they can leave at any time – so you need to keep them entertained and interested! You can’t just throw sales messages at them all the time.
How?

Go to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com). Create a personal account (if you don’t have one already).

Once you have a personal account, create a business page at [www.facebook.com/pages/create](http://www.facebook.com/pages/create)

4. Post in Merredin Buy and Sell

Or if you’re not in Merredin, most Wheatbelt towns seem to have an active “Buy and Sell” page.

The challenge with creating your own Facebook page is that you have to work hard to build your audience. With Buy and Sell pages, the local audience has already been created for you.

How?

Log in to Facebook and search for “Merredin Buy and Sell” (and make sure you find the group, not the person!). Request to join the group.

Without bombarding people too regularly with the hard sell, post your current specials or interesting new product/service offerings every now and then.

If you’ve got a spare five minutes each day, keep a regular eye on the Buy and Sell page – you might spot someone asking for something that you can provide!

5. Create a Youtube account

You can very easily create your own Youtube Channel. This will allow you to upload and share any videos you have.
You can keep the videos private, so that only people with the specific link can see your videos. This solves the problem of sending videos to your friend or customer by email – and the email won’t go through because the video file is too big!

You can also make your videos public and searchable, and you can add links to your website, directory listing or Facebook page. It then becomes another way of attracting potential customers, and sending them to your website for more information, your Facebook page (your “holding pen”!) or into your shop.

For example, let’s say you’re a nursery, and I live in the next town and don’t know you exist. The weather starts warming up and I quite like the idea of planting a vegetable garden, but don’t know what to plant. I jump on Google and search for, “What vegetables to plant in spring in the wheatbelt”. If you, the nursery owner, has added a video you’ve made to Youtube and called it “Planting your vegetable patch in the Wheatbelt”, my Google search should find it! If your video also has details for where I can find your website, your Facebook page, your phone number or your shop, then you’ve made it really really easy for me to buy the seedlings (and potting mix, etc!) from your shop.

**HOW?**

Go to Youtube.com. Click “Sign in” in the top right hand corner. Click “Add Account” (or choose the account, if it’s listed). If you already have a Google account, enter your login details. If you don’t, click “Create an account” underneath.

### 6. Claim your Google Places for Business listing

Have you ever Googled for something and seen a Google map appear in your search listings, with pins labelled “A”, “B”, “C”, etc, marking out the locations on the map of where those businesses are, and contact details for those businesses? This is their Google Places listing.

Your business probably already has a Places listing. By claiming it, you can ensure the contact details are accurate and up-to-date, and you can also add photos and videos and have people leave reviews, too.

**HOW?**

Go to [www.google.com.au/business/placesforbusiness/](http://www.google.com.au/business/placesforbusiness/) and click “Get Started for Free”. If you already have a Google account, you can select or log in to your account. If not, you can sign in using another existing address.
Follow the setup process and you’ll have created your Google profile. You’ll need to verify that you’re the owner of the business, which will probably require them to send you a postcard and might take a couple of weeks.

Once you’re registered and verified, fill in as much of your new profile as you can.

7. Create a free blog

Blogs are websites that contain articles that people can share or comment on. You can use them to help people experience a little of the “personality” of your business; you can use them to help people use your products correctly, better or in different ways they hadn’t thought of; you can use blogs to help people understand what you do better; you can use them to blast myths about your industry; and there’s a heaps more things you can use a blog for – you’re only limited by your imagination. Basically, anything that stops people from spending more money with you can be addressed in a blog.

How?

Go to [www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com). Click “Get Started” and create your account.

If you’re feeling brave and creative, have a play with the different theme options. If you’re not that brave, just click “Post” then “Add new” – and get writing!

8. Sign up to SourceBottle

If you like writing and you’re good at it, why not go national?

SourceBottle is a website where predominantly Australian journalists and bloggers post requests when they are looking for an expert contributor. Sometimes they just want a quick quote, or they want you to answer questions, sometimes they’ll want you to write a whole
article. If they pick you, that’s your name, your business and your website that goes next to your expert opinions, right across the nation!

**How?**


Simply register your details, pick the areas you feel confident that you have expertise and knowledge to share, and wait for the emails to come in.

When you receive an email with a request you feel is relevant to you, simply click the link in the email and submit the online form explaining why you feel you can contribute.

**9. Add a social share buttons to your email signature**

Now that you’ve created all of these great social media accounts, make it really easy for people to find you on them. A great way of broadcasting that people can find you on Facebook, etc., is to add it to your email signatures.

If you access your email through Gmail, Hotmail, Yahoo Mail or AOL Mail, WiseStamp is a really good, easy and free online software that automates the whole process for you. You just need to enter in the links to your website, Facebook page, etc., and WiseStamp will format it into a beautiful, graphic signature with links and buttons. There are buttons for all your accounts, including things like Ebay, Amazon and Etsy if you sell through those outlets.

**How?**


Enter in all your contact details, pick the layout you like, then add your social media links where indicated.
10. Check into EVERYTHING!

It’s one thing creating these social media accounts, but if you’re not checking them and replying to people who reach out to you, your customers will feel like they’re shouting into an empty room, and you could miss out on some very good customers.

**HOW?**

Take at least 10 minutes at the beginning of each day (or while you’re waiting for the kettle to boil) and make sure that anyone who is trying to communicate with you through your social media channels is being acknowledged.

If you have any questions or would like further information about anything you have read, please contact:

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