

Topic | E-Marketing

Tutorial 33

Google Tools

This tutorial will review the different tools offered by Google and how to use them to maximise your online presence.

Reading time: 25 minutes

Prerequisite: None



1. What tools?

Google is the most widely used search engine however it evolved to offer many more services than its search engine rivals. Over the years, Google has developed a **series of free tools to increase your exposure on the Internet.**

You will see on the right an example of tools that you could use in your business.

This document will review the main ones that every tourism business should have set up:

- Google Places (formerly known as Local Business Center)
- Maps
- Webmaster tools
- Alerts

Google Analytics and Google AdWords are reviewed in depth in separate tutorials.

Before you start, you will need to set up a Google account:

2. Setting up a Google account

The following is a list of steps that will guide you through the process of creating a Google account.

- Type in www.google.com into your browser
- Go to the top right hand side of the screen and click on sign in
- You will be taken to a new page asking you to either sign in with your Google account details or to create a new account.
- If you have an existing account (such as Gmail, or have installed Google maps on your site) you don't need to create a new Google Account.
- If you have never heard about Google accounts, you probably don't have any so simply create one.
- You will be asked to fill in the required information for a Google account. Do so and click on "I accept. Create my account".
- After completing this Google will send you an email for verification purposes. In the email you will be asked to click on the supplied link to activate your account.
- To sign in to your Google account, go back to point 1) to 3) and sign in instead of registering for a new account.



Screen capture credit: Google

3. Google Places

Log in at: <https://www.google.com/local/add/>

Search engines have been improving for numerous years now to provide results that take into consideration location attributes such as city, area, and even where the searcher is located. This practice is known as “local search” and goes hand in hand with how tourists research – by location:

Bed and breakfast Perth

Google has started to integrate maps into its search results, based on the information provided by the business in the Google Places tool. These results show first in the search engine rankings.

Google will never reveal the mathematical formula used to rank the different properties. However, implementing the following recommendations will give you the best chance to succeed in local search

Your online presence in local search is even more essential due to the ever-growing number of phones with Internet navigation facilities.

a) Local search settings

To achieve the best results, ensure that you utilise all the fields in your Google Places listing to your advantage. This includes categories, photos, videos, getting your customer to write reviews, opening hours, and type of payment.

The more information you provide the more attention Google and your readers will pay to your listing.

b) Key things to have on my website

You need to ensure your website is search engine friendly.

Furthermore, you should:

- Ensure your business address and phone number is visible on every page (header or footer) and on the contact page.
- Try and increase the number of quality links to your website which come from local businesses or resources. These are called citations.

4. Maps

Maps are one of the most searched items on the Internet. Google Maps (<http://maps.google.com>) allows you to:

- Place your Google Places listing on the map (automatic).
- Create a personalised map especially designed for your target market (e.g. to show the different bushwalks around your property).

Google Tools

- Place any Google map (the standard or the personalised one) on your website.

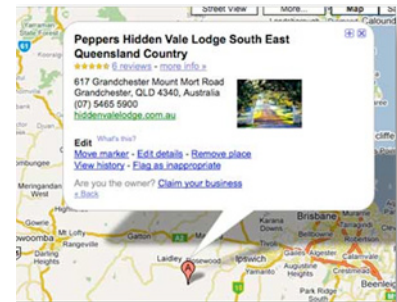
Here is the basic Google Map user guide:

<http://maps.google.com/support/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=68480>

a) *Placing my Google Places listing on the map*

Once you have enabled your Google Places listing, it will be automatically placed on the map.

If there is already a listing of your business on Google Maps but you haven't set it up yourself you need to "claim" it firstly by clicking on the edit button on your map, then by clicking on the arrow next to more and then on edit. Google will require a confirmation from you (depending on your settings you may get a phone call or postcard).



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b) *Creating my personalised map*

You can create your personalised, customised map on Google Maps and either keep it private or release it to everyone publicly. When users will search for a place or attraction which matches the one you have set up in your personalised map, Google will retrieve your customised listing and display it on the map. The user will then be able to click on it to see all the other places or attractions that are part of that same customised map.

You can of course embed this personalised map in your website.

Personalised maps are extremely useful and a fantastic way to increase your business' online visibility for free. You could for instance:

- Show the directions to your property from the centre of town.
- Show where key tourist attractions are located.
- Show public places such as bus stop, train station.

Local tourism associations should personalise their regional Google Map to showcase all their members.

To learn more go to

<http://maps.google.com/support/bin/static.py?hl=en&page=guide.cs&guide=21670&topic=21676&from=21676&rd=2>

c) *Embedding (placing) my Google Map on my website*

Embedding is an easy task and should take you approximately 10 minutes, provided you have access to your site's files or you have a content management system.

- Go to <http://maps.google.com> and search for your listing (enter your business name and location).
- Then click on the "Link" button on the top right corner. A drop down menu will appear.

- If you would like to embed the map itself in your website, copy the code located under “Paste HTML to embed in website” and paste it on your site (log into your content management system or use your site’s files to do so)
- If you want to customise the size of the Google Map image that will be integrated to your site, click on the “Customise and preview embedded map” after point 2).

If you simply want to give your clients the link via email (in a response to an enquiry for example), you need to select the code under “Paste link in email or IM”. Copy it and then paste it wherever you would like the link to appear.

For more information view this Google Help article:

<http://maps.google.com/support/bin/answer.py?answer=68478>

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5. Webmaster tools

Activating the Google Webmaster Tools will give your online visibility a boost. These tools are not only available to webmasters and you can set them up yourself.

Once again, you will first need to own a Google account.

Then go to www.google.com/webmasters/tools/ and follow the prompts.

There are many things that can be done via this tool. However, not all of them are critical. What you should aim to do is:

a) Verifying my website and submitting my sitemap

This can be done via the Dashboard once you log in.

A sitemap is a file that tells search engines how your site is organised. If you have a content management system installed, the latter should provide you with a dynamic sitemap that gets automatically updated when you make a change to your website’s structure or pages. Thus it will inform Google every time there is new page on your site.



If you do not (yet) have a content management system, there is a good chance that you won’t have a sitemap. You will need to create one manually and update it every time you add or remove pages to your site. This website <http://www.xml-sitemaps.com> will create one for you instantly.

Screen capture copyright: Google

b) Other settings

Google Webmaster Tools evolves constantly. Ensure you explore all options of the menu on the left and configure them according to your requirements.

6. Alerts

Google Alerts is a very easy way to subscribe to what the world is saying about you or about any topic of your choice! Set up as many Google Alerts based on your keywords and any new webpage mentioning them will land in your inbox!

E.g. If you are a bed and breakfast called “Gold Coast Lone Star” on the Gold Coast, create a few Google alerts: “Gold Coast Lone Star”, “bed and breakfast Gold Coast”, “tourism Gold Coast” etc. Set alerts for the name of your competitors, your staff, your State or Territory’s Minister for Tourism...

- Go to www.google.com/alerts.
- Enter the terms you want to subscribe to. Put the terms inside quotes if there is more than one (so write “tourism marketing” if you want to subscribe to tourism marketing).
- Confirm your email address.
- Repeat the same process for more alerts.
- Set up a Google account if you want to manage your alerts (however, you don’t need one to set up the alerts).
- It is free and you don’t even need a Google account.

This blog post provides further information on how to monitor your company’s online presence: <http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/4203/How-to-Use-Google-Alerts-to-Monitor-Your-Company-s-Online-Presence.aspx>.

This blog post provides information on how to further customise Google alerts: <http://labnol.blogspot.com/2006/11/google-alerts-tutorial-to-help-you.html>.

7. Key learning outcomes

- Google is the most widely used search engine in the majority of western countries. It is therefore important you leverage off the tools it has to offer to market your business
- A Google Places listing is crucial for tourism businesses. You should ensure it is as complete as possible
- Google Webmaster tools should also be setup by your web developer
- Finally, use Google Alerts to your advantage. Set up as many Google Alerts based on your keywords and any new webpage mentioning them will land in your inbox.

8. Related material

a) *Related tutorials*

- Search engines 101
- Critical components of optimising a website
- Understanding inbound links to my site
- Source inbound links
- Videos for your website