The story of David vs. Goliath is a classic tale of how someone relatively small can defeat someone much larger. This exists today (and has for 15 years) on the Internet for small plumbers throughout America. This article will list several things you can do to be a top contender in your market on the internet.

Google search results continue to dominate Internet search. With shares ranging between 65- and 80 percent of all searches, Google is the most important search engine for plumbers.

The first thing you need to do with Google is to claim your “Google Places” page. This is FREE. I won’t go into step by step on how to do this but to get you started, go to Google and search your company name with your city included. You should (hopefully) see your company name listed with a map teardrop.

Next, click on the “Place Page” link and you are now at your Google Places page. You now need to “Claim” the page. Claiming your page is the process of gaining control over the information Google will share. They will take you through a verification process to ensure that you indeed are the owner of your business. After verification you will have full access to your page to add details about your operation plus photos, video, services offered and much more. Fill this page out completely.

With complete information in your Google Places page, Google now has better data on who you are the area you service and what you do. With a fully documented Google Places page you now have the opportunity to be listed on the map for your city alongside the biggest and baddest in your market. But you’re not done yet.

Second, you need to create a Google-friendly website with detailed information about what you do and where you do it. If you want your website to show up in Google it MUST be designed so Google can read it and put your business in the correct “categories” for future searches. For example, if you want to sell “water heater replacements in San Antonio,” you need to say that on your website. If that is important to you, you need to have a page on your website that addresses this.

Google tries to match searchers (consumers) with perfectly matched or relevant information. If your website is full of platitudes about how great you are but no specific information about where you are located and what you offer, Google will not place you in the best categories for good leads in your market. With lots of references to what you do and where you do it you now have the chance that Google will recognize your company as a good source of information for the search topic.

Many companies hire professionals to “optimize” their site for this very reason and if you are serious about winning the internet, it may be worth your investigation to get help. Larger markets have become much more competitive and the science and expertise required have increased significantly over the past couple years.

Thirdly, proactively soliciting positive reviews is critical to your success on the internet. Reviews from happy customers are hard to come by. Happy customers remember you for the future but rarely take the time to publish their thoughts on the Internet.

However, the occasional emotionally unstable angry customer can be very motivated to vent their feelings. Every business owner fears negative reviews that get published on the Internet. Consumers look for negatives and even one bad review can be very hurtful. Proactively seeking positive reviews is not easy work but you need to do it. The more positive reviews you have published, the more opportunities you have for others to find good news about you.

Seek positive reviews in multiple search engines. Google offers a “reviews” area as does Yahoo, Insider Pages, Yelp, Kudzu, Angie’s List and Customer Lobby. If your company has 50 positive reviews listed across the Internet, potential customers will see that you are a trusted company and a good one to call.

These three basics are the start to a proper internet marketing foundation. Depending on the size and competitiveness of your market, they may be enough for you to be a top result. If you are in a large market you may need to consult an internet marketing professional to beat the Goliath. RJ

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