

myweeklymarketing.

Janice Hostager: 0:04

I'm Janice Hostager. After three decades in the marketing business and many years of being an entrepreneur, I've learned a thing or two about marketing. Join me as we talk about marketing, small business and life in between. Welcome to My Weekly Marketing.

Janice Hostager: 0:33

What if I told you that one of the most powerful tools in your small business arsenal is absolutely free and hiding in plain sight? I'm talking about the Google Business Profile, that free listing that shows up when somebody Googles your business, and how to optimize it to actually bring you more clients, more calls and more credibility. Joining me today is Marilyn Jenkins, a digital growth strategist who literally wrote the book about the subject called the Google Business Profile Training Guide. As the founder of MJ Media Group and the Law Marketing Zone, she brings decades of experience to the table, and today we're taking a deeper dive on one of the most underutilized tools in local marketing. Google Business Profile isn't just a digital listing. It's your storefront on the world's biggest search engine.

Janice Hostager: 1:17

So if you've ever wondered how to get more visibility and search results without spending a fortune on ads, this episode is for you. Let's dive in. Well, hey, Marilyn, how are you today?

Marilyn Jenkins: 1:28

I'm doing great. How are you?

Janice Hostager: 1:30

Good. Good, thanks for joining me. So I love talking about Google Business Profile because I think it's such a jewel that we have this available to us as small businesses. So what is it? First of all, let's talk about what it is and why people should pay attention to it.

Marilyn Jenkins: 1:48

Well, if you, if you're old enough to remember the yellow pages, think about. Every business had a listing, whether you paid extra to be bold or any of that kind of stuff, right? So it's almost like Google wanted the same. They wanted a directory of every

business. So imagine them importing the yellow pages and then keeping every business updated. So that's what it is. So every business is on the map. Every business listed has a Google Business Profile. If you have a new business, you can simply go and add yourself to it, and it's the way of Google being able to give users everything they need in their local search. So that's really what it is. Is your business online? Think of it as a webpage for, if you will, for specifically your business, and it's free?

Janice Hostager: 2:35

Yeah. What could be better than free, right? For somebody who's like saying never touch their Google Business Profile. What's the first thing that they should do today with?

Marilyn Jenkins: 2:46

I would search for your business name and then, if you've never done anything with it, there'll be a link on the Google Business Profile and it's a little box to the right that has all the detail and a little map above it and it'll say manage this listing or own this listing. So, depending on your location, sometimes the wording is a little bit different, or maybe it says own this business. So click on that so that you can take it and you need to verify that you own it and then start using it. And the key here is Google is the number one search engine because it gives their users what they want, right? So if you want business and people are searching in your local area for your business, you need to give Google what they want so they can give their users what they want. And that's all your information about your business, so that they know what type of searches to show you for.

Janice Hostager: 3:35

And what if you're not a local business and let's say you don't have a brick and mortar? Is it still relevant then?

Marilyn Jenkins: 3:42

It's still relevant. If you are local but you don't want your address listed. Now, you won't come up in the map pack. So if you'll look now when you do a search locally so say, for pizza restaurant near me, you'll get the map and you'll get three listings of the people that are the closest three businesses to you. If you don't list your address, you're not going to be in that. However, if someone's looking you up, your Google Business Profile will show up so you can still get used from it. When it comes to being like a global business or a nationwide business, it's not as important.

Janice Hostager: 4:18

Is it relevant to like your Google listings? I mean, does it help your SEO in the long run?

Marilyn Jenkins: 4:24

Yes.

Janice Hostager: 4:24

Okay.

Marilyn Jenkins: 4:25

Indeed, it does a lot, because it used to be called Google My Business and people used it to store reviews. That was it. Well, when they upgraded it, they always changed the name. When they upgraded, they changed it to Google Business Profile and they added so much more to it. So, instead of having one or two categories, you can now have up to seven and in some locations you can have more. The categories is the very first, most important thing that Google uses to know where to show you right and whenever someone locally searches for whatever. We now also have products and services, which are places to put more keywords, more information about what you offer and update periodically. And then, if you think about, do you have a blog? Do you post information? They have posts that live on your, your Google Business Profile for six months and then can be replaced, so there's so much information you can tell Google about the types of businesses that you want.

Janice Hostager: 5:22

That's really so nice that I feel like that every business should be utilizing it just for that reason for sure.

Marilyn Jenkins: 5:29

Exactly.

Janice Hostager: 5:30

So, are there some easy ways to optimize their profile that people sometimes overlook, or what are the most common mistakes you

Janice Hostager: 5:37

see that people make?

Marilyn Jenkins: 5:41

If you were, say, old school, and you said, like Maryland's plumbing in ABC town for plumbing, home plumbing, that's the name of your business. So you see what I did there. I keyword stuffed what I do and the town. So they are not approving Google Business Profiles anymore that don't have your actual business name in them. So that's kind of the thing. Remember years ago, people would do four A's to be at the beginning of their category.

Janice Hostager: 6:12

Yeah

Marilyn Jenkins: 6:13

You know, A, A, A, A, plumber, right, unless that's your legal business name, you'll not be able to use that. And that's the biggest thing, that keyword stuffing and then faking it. Not really faking it, but doing it, one like, say, you have an aunt that lives in the town over and you want to be listed in that town, so you use her address. Right, it's not a real address. You can't verify that you own that address or you do business out of it. So those are the two big things and Google's cleaning those up just by not approving them or disallowing them.

Janice Hostager: 6:43

Oh, interesting. So now I work out of my home but I have a PO box that's in an actual different town, I mean it's nearby. Is that something that can be allowed by people that have their PO boxes somewhere

Janice Hostager: 6:55

else?

Marilyn Jenkins: 6:56

It was at one time when they were mailing out the postcards. But now what we've noticed over the last probably eight or nine months 90% of the verifications are requiring a video. Now you have to show your signage out front, using the key to unlock the door, going in and showing customer-only places and employee-only places, and all of this in one cut in 90 seconds. So if it's a PO box, it just doesn't qualify.

Janice Hostager: 7:21

Really. Okay, interesting, so you just leave the address off altogether.

Marilyn Jenkins: 7:25

Yeah, when you go into the management portal, which they have upgraded, the management portal, it's so easy to use and there's even a gas gauge on some people's that show how complete it is, which is very helpful. But in there you can say where your address is. You don't want to show your address, you're not going to show up in the map pack, which is ideally what you as a local business want, but if someone's looking for something in your area you could come up as on the side.

Janice Hostager: 7:51

Okay, okay. So if you weren't wanting to show your location actually? And can somebody use their profile to show up higher in search results without paying for, like ads or or having their map inside? I know you mentioned that just having the profile is beneficial. What about increasing your, your search results, your SEO, based on what you put into your profile? Is there something that, in particular, that works really well, like blog posts or what? What do you recommend for that?

Marilyn Jenkins: 8:24

Yes, exactly, and it does normally in most places. Very few places, I should say. Ads are showing up in the map pack, but for the most part they're not, so any listings are. There's always three organic listings in the map pack, right? By, now...

Marilyn Jenkins: 8:42

Think about what's happening right now. Since Google has rolled in AI into their search results. Only about 50% of the searches equal a click right, so it's called zero-click search results is what's happening in Google. That means when someone asks a question or searches for something, Google gives them the answer right there. They don't have to go anywhere to get it, right?

Marilyn Jenkins: 9:13

So if you've taken your Google Business Profile, you have chosen as many categories in priority of the business that you want and you put yourself in there.

Marilyn Jenkins: 9:17

You know, if you're a home construction and you want to focus on kitchen remodeling, that should be your first category, right, and then lesser priority down. Now using blog posts that have your keywords in them, absolutely. Making sure that you have your services listed out and periodically add more to it or change it. If there's a special, you want to make sure that you have your hours that are correct and, especially if there's a holiday coming up, you edit your hours. Because in the Google Map Pack, Google will

say near a holiday last you edit your hours. Because in the Google map pack, google will say near a holiday last updated on the listing. So you want to make sure yours wasn't last updated last year, right? So that's super important and one of the big, big important things is is to reply to every review, and this sounds really complicated, but it is not. You need to do a little something every week on your Google Business Profile because I can guarantee you that your competition, especially if it's a franchise, is not doing it.

Janice Hostager: 10:16

Is Google paying attention to that as well?

Marilyn Jenkins: 10:18

Yes, that's the engagement part. You're giving them more information every week, you're doing something every week and you're keeping your hours updated. Now, just as an example, I had a pet store that we were working with and, out of the blue, their Tuesdays they had no walk-in traffic and they were like what's going on? Like the third Tuesday, it's like what's going on here. I'm like check your hours, because the hours is something that the public can change if they believe it's different. Someone went in and made it look like they were closed on Tuesday. So when people do check the hours and so they updated it, so it shows updated by the owner, and their traffic started coming back in on Tuesday. So it was just simple as that.

Janice Hostager: 11:03

That's really interesting, so somebody could actually sabotage your listing.

Marilyn Jenkins: 11:07

It can.

Marilyn Jenkins: 11:08

And if you, you know, in the beginning you asked me what if you've never owned it, your competition can't. They could actually take it and put their phone number as the business so that they then hijack.

Janice Hostager: 11:21

Wow.

Marilyn Jenkins: 11:23

They might not get away with it long if they have to go into a review, a verification review,

Janice Hostager: 11:28

Okay.

Marilyn Jenkins: 11:28

Because they can't prove you know, the signage, the key. They can't prove all of that, but they used to prior would be able to do that. They could go in and change the address, get the postcard and verify and go forward.

Janice Hostager: 11:41

Wow, that's just nasty. That's, I guess, this world that we live in, right?

Marilyn Jenkins: 11:47

It is, isn't it?

Janice Hostager: 11:50

So what's your advice on responding to negative reviews? You talked about reviews. What about the bad ones?

Janice Hostager: 11:56

You recommend people go in as well.

Marilyn Jenkins: 11:59

Yes, all of them especially. So, think about your reviews. Your replies are not necessarily a reply to that reviewer. It's a reply to your future customer. It shows Google that you care about the customer experience, which is why they're the number one search engine. So, even if it was your fault, professionally apologize. If it wasn't your fault, explain that as professionally as you can, without pointing fingers. And if it's a disgruntled employee, ex-employee, or maybe it's just something dude I don't even do car repair, I'm a bakery. Just professionally, reply that. Just be clear. Just be professional, and that's the best. Be kind and be professional, but reply to everyone and if you can use your keywords in your location without it sounding weird.

Janice Hostager: 12:50

Right, right.

Janice Hostager: 12:51

So your keywords in your location. So give me an example of that.

Marilyn Jenkins: 12:55

So like yeah, I mean, if you're replying, so say it's a positive review. Then you could reply and say thank you so much for visiting us. We appreciated doing business with you and helping you with your plumbing needs in XYZ town. So plumbing, or maybe you did, you baked them a cake or I mean whatever you know, whatever your main category is, we were happy to help you do this in town.

Janice Hostager: 13:18

Gotcha.

Janice Hostager: 13:19

Gotcha. So where does Google Business Profile kind of fit in the overall marketing strategy? So I work a lot with marketing strategy, right, so I would listen to the awareness stage really, but I bet it could kind of be in the consideration stage too. Would you agree with that?

Marilyn Jenkins: 13:39

I think if you're a local business with an address, it is imperative that you do it, because it's the biggest search engine. It's where everybody is going to ask questions and now, especially with AI there, give them as much information as you possibly can and you will benefit from that. Again, the number of reviews is what used to kind of rank in Map Pack, and the Map Pack used to be seven. Now it's three, so it's even more important. Google will potentially and in many cases we've seen give someone with less reviews a higher ranking because they have more information on Google Business Profile.

Janice Hostager: 14:13

Okay. So when you said it used to be seven, you mean seven businesses would show up in the search results, is what you're saying?

Marilyn Jenkins: 14:17

Right, and now it's three.

Janice Hostager: 14:19

Now it's three, okay, okay. So how often do you think that people need to update it?

Marilyn Jenkins: 14:24

I would say at least weekly, do something a little weekly. So maybe Thursdays are the slowest day in the business. So Thursday morning you go in and you check for reviews and you reply to them, or you put a new service or a new product so say you've got something coming out over the weekend. Update something, add a new photo. Photos are great and especially if you turn your location services on. If you are the business that goes out of your office to do repairs or whatever, make sure location services are on and take a picture of you or your team or your truck, wherever you are, and post that. What that helps is also tells Google that I am relevant further away from my office.

Janice Hostager: 15:06

Okay, okay, and a couple weeks ago, when we chatted for the first time, I was telling you about a client that I had that had multiple locations. Now, hers was a little tricky because they work in a hospital setting, so they have an office in hospitals, and you were telling me that, absolutely, it's possible to have multiple locations listed, right?

Marilyn Jenkins: 15:27

Yes.

Janice Hostager: 15:28

And so tell me what you said. I don't know if you remember this, but you said that each office needed to make sure you had a suite number, correct?

Marilyn Jenkins: 15:35

Yes, and that's the thing, because you can't use the hospital's address or Google's going to say that's a hospital. But think about, hospitals have doctor's offices in them, they have therapy offices in them, so any of that type of thing. So if you can show that here's the address and here's my office and you've got a name on your door, this is my business and then go into the office I'm thinking the video, you know that verification but as long as you have a number on the door, you've got a suite number, and a hospital is a business location that has multiple business inside of it, so it's valid. I would just, you know, be careful with multiple locations, in that I would get one verified and approved first, then get the next one. Unless you are new to Google Business Profile and you already have like five locations, then try to get them each verified, but I would just, you know, one at a time works that way. You're getting one focus.

Marilyn Jenkins: 16:31

The Google Business Profile is one of the few places in Google that you can actually talk to a real person. Now, it might be by chat, but within your management portal, you can

reach support and a real person will talk to you. That's probably fast going by the wayside with them implementing so much AI, but right now you can reach someone because that's how important this profile is to the big Google system.

Janice Hostager: 16:57

Oh, that is so cool. I remember you telling me that and I was shocked honestly, because so many I mean any big corporation it's almost impossible to talk to a real human being.

Marilyn Jenkins: 17:06

So that tells me how important the Google Business Profile is to their search results.

Janice Hostager: 17:11

That's really interesting so there's no way to really, as your business grows, you can keep your Google Business Profile is what you're saying. It's not like it's not just for small businesses.

Marilyn Jenkins: 17:21

No, no, no. And the other thing is you also want to make sure that if you're taking over a business no, I'm saying that wrong If I'm renting an office and starting my business, that another business was in, if you search that address, you can see who else used it. So as soon as you start your Google Business Profile or you update your address, you want to make sure you tell Google that this is a duplicate and those people aren't here anymore. Okay, and that will help you get better juice on your, on the address and it won't be confused.

Janice Hostager: 17:55

Yeah, yeah. What do you see coming up that Google's going to be doing with these? Do you think they're going to stick around?

Janice Hostager: 18:01

So many things that Google does, they

Marilyn Jenkins: 18:04

The Google Business Profile is I think the 11th iteration of Google Places, so it's not going anywhere but every time there's an iteration, there's new features, so I think that's what I think is going to happen is with the AI and also with the zero-click searches,

Marilyn Jenkins: 18:22

It's more important than ever. If, like I said, 50% of searches are clicking, that means 50% of people who ask Google a question are never getting to the bottom, where the organic searches are, much less getting to the ads right. So the AI is at the top and then the Google Business Profile is to the right. So it's super important that, no matter what the changes are, make sure you keep it. Do not give your login and password to anyone. If you hire someone to help you manage it, you make them a manager okay, so that you still own it. This is a massively important piece of intellectual property for your business. It's more important than your website and, yes, I said that out loud.

Marilyn Jenkins: 19:05

Yes.

Janice Hostager: 19:05

Okay, good to know. Yeah, because I know that I've had them set up, because I've had multiple businesses and I've had them always set up and you kind of set them up and forget about them. Or at least I do, but and I know my clients or at least I do and I know my clients that seems to be the case as well. But really putting some time and energy into that is going to benefit you overall, is what you're saying.

Marilyn Jenkins: 19:24

Yeah, and if you've got a point of sale, it's a really good idea to print out a QR code and have it attached to your point of sale for reviews and it's the URL to the pop-up window and just make asking for reviews part of your process. When you finish a job or a sale or whatever, ask for that um, and then you know. So watch those start growing and you'll see your rank can get better as well oh, super, super interesting stuff.

Janice Hostager: 19:53

Where can people find out more about you and if they need some help with their Google Business Profile, because, honestly, I can tell you that setting it up can be a real pain sometimes, especially with the verification process. Right, absolutely, how can they find out more about you or Google Business Profiles in general?

Marilyn Jenkins: 20:10

They can reach me on LinkedIn. I'm Marilyn Jenkins. I also have a book, the Google Business Profile Training Guide, available on Amazon, and you can reach me at mjmediagroup.co.

Janice Hostager: 20:23

Awesome, and I will put those links in the profile for today. Thank you so much, Marilyn. This was super informative. I need to go update my Google Business Profile right now.

Marilyn Jenkins: 20:35

Well, thank you for having me. This has been a blast.

Janice Hostager: 20:37

Thank you. If today's episode got you thinking about your own Google Business Profile and maybe even scrambling to check it out to see if it's up to date, then I'm right there with you. For a transcript and links to anything we talked about today, visit the show notes at myweeklymarketing.com/111. If you found this episode helpful, be sure to follow and subscribe so you don't miss future episodes. And hey, if you know a fellow business owner who could use a little help showing up on Google, share this episode with them too. Thanks for joining me today. See you next time. Bye for now.