

Step 5. You will need to create a Google account (if you don't have one already), but they won't bother you with unwanted email. I've been a Google account-holder for 5 years, and I think I've gotten two emails from them.

If you select the "call me" option, they'll call you in about 15 seconds. You answer the phone and follow the prompts, entering the PIN code they give you on your computer screen. If you prefer to get a response by mail, it'll take a few more days.

You can add pictures, coupons, etc. **BE SURE TO POST AT LEAST YOUR HOURS** and, if you're a restaurant, your menu. Also, make sure your name, address, and phone number as they appear in the original listing, are correct.

Why advertise with Google maps?

What this process will do, is help move you up the ranks of what are called "organic" search results. These are the unpaid results that you get when you use a search engine. Studies consistently show that people trust organic results more than paid. So, you get more respect from your customers by using this service, and it doesn't cost you anything!

And think about this: if you can get your site to the #1 spot on local searches for your type of business, you're talking about ad space that is the equivalent to first position in your local Yellow Pages—which can easily run you thousands of dollars a year. How do you reach #1? By putting as much information into that profile as you can.

Why do they do this for free? Because they also know that people trust organic results. So, even though they sell advertising space on their site, they also do whatever they have to do, to keep their customers happy (and coming back). What makes customers happy, is search results that are relevant to what they're looking for.

(Have you ever tried looking up a business in the online Yellow Pages? Do it some time. You'll get at least a dozen entries that are paid-for ads, for businesses 20 or 30 miles or more from where you're searching. You have to scroll down the page, or maybe even move on to page 2, before you can find what you want. That's why people don't trust paid ads—they aren't as accurate, and they make you chase all over creation.)

P.S. Yahoo offers this same service. You should complete your profile with them also. www.yahoo.com