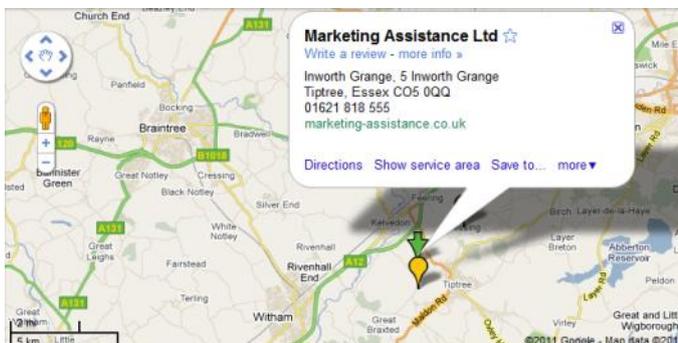


## LOCAL MARKETING

Whilst one of the delights of the web is its ability to promote nationwide – if not worldwide – at a reasonable cost it would be a mistake to ignore the local market. After all, this was probably the backbone of your business until the web hove into view. A simple test is to type the name of your product or service into Google together with the name of your town or county and see if your business shows up. If it doesn't, you may be missing a major marketing opportunity. So what steps can you take to make sure you are well represented in the local market?

### 1. List your business in Google Places

Google Places, the new name for the Google's Local Business Centre ([www.google.co.uk/places](http://www.google.co.uk/places)), lets you locate your business on Google maps so customers can find you based on location (see box). It enables you to pinpoint your business on Google maps and even list opening and closing times, contact information and show pictures of your premises.



### 2. List your business in local directories

I am sure you have received thousands of emails offering to list your company free-of-charge in a local directory . . . and you have probably put them straight in the waste basket. But hold on, whether you use them yourself or not, many of them promote the listed companies more widely on the web and so you may get some free publicity without any effort on your part. Some charge for this service, some don't. Local directories often allow you more space for a much longer listing than the main ones so you have a much better chance to explain the nuances of your product or service in a local directory than the main internet directories. But be aware, we have a list of 26 active directories in our small corner of the coun-

try (and counting) so some prioritising will be in order.

### 3. Buy some local URLs and point them at your web site

For a very small cost you can buy a URL which features a local connection– your town, county etc – and re-code the web forwarding to point it at your main web site. Probably the best value promotion available at the moment.

### 4. Have a local web page with local meta tags

Every SEO expert has their own special recipe for getting high rankings in the search engines but what most will agree on is the importance of having the right title in your meta tags. Assuming that your aim is to optimise your local traffic without threatening your out-of-area business it makes sense to add a dedicated page to your web site which is aimed at the local market. The web page title should mention your town, county or region. Your description and keywords can home in on local needs and local problems.

### 5. Have a PPC advert for your local marketing

One neglected setting in Google Adwords is the ability to geographically limit the area in which your advert can be seen. This can be done by specifying the town, the county, the country or even the distance from your location. This facility is best used by setting up a unique campaign with its own keywords. Restricting each advert to a very small number of keywords keeps such campaigns under tight control so that you can see what is working and take appropriate action. The delight of this function is being able to eliminate click thru's coming from outside your area of operation and so you don't incur out-of-area charges. This function is not 100% reliable. It uses the IP code of your equipment to determine location so it can produce strange results.

Having a strong local presence on the web has been neglected by many in the rush to promote more widely. It is a neglected opportunity.

February 2011