

Google

Business View:

A new Staple in
business marketing

How
to market
your business
through offering a

360^o
tour

Vlad Blits

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Introduction

The dynamics of the business world are changing and evolving. New ideas are popping up to not only survive but to thrive in business through marketing. There is so much competition in today's market that it's hard to keep up and stay ahead of the curve. Meanwhile, new and emerging technologies and developments are rapidly changing the marketing strategies that greatly influence the choices of the consumers. One needs to understand the power of marketing and hone their skills in the evolving trends just to be competitive.

Companies and business owners are aiming to connect with people on every level and platform available and trying to create new ones every day. They are trying to measure marketing results all the time to create a better customer experience and enhance the existing one.

Every business aims to stand out from the crowd, and marketing is what I call the Sphinx of business. One strategy or trend dies and it is replaced with a better one every time.

The visibility factor in marketing is something that will never die, no matter what year it is. Because from the dawn of time (or the dawn of commerce, to be more specific), all that business owners ever wanted to do was to stand out from the crowd and be one of the best. Marketing involves how prospective customers view your business.

Customer experience is a crucial aspect of marketing when it comes to any industry. Businesses are modeled around customer centric philosophies.

The rise of information technology has had a major impact on the world of marketing. While the impact of social media is evident, not many people know how instrumental Google was in shaping the digital marketing world. They introduced the concept of SEO with their Pagerank algorithm, created one of the biggest PPC ad network with Google Adwords, and much more.

With the digital boom and almost every business having its own website or Facebook page, everyone can see what the establishment looks like through

pictures. But Google has taken this up a notch by helping businesses stand out from the crowd by creating virtual tours of their business from the inside. A kind of sneak peak to what customers can get before even arriving there.

We have finally arrived in the era where we can see the inside of a business in the most real way possible—a 360 degree virtual tour powered by none other than Google.

This book covers essential topics in digital marketing trends and how they lead to business virtual tours. So, sit back, relax, and read on to know how to make your business thrive by getting a virtual tour made for your customers.

Digital Marketing Trends

Let's face it, when marketing started to expand into the digital hemisphere, we were all overwhelmed. Business owners in particular were divided into 2 categories—the ones who knew everything about marketing online (the techies mostly), and the ones who knew zilch. The people with tech start ups embraced this new trend and cashed out on it in every way possible, while the rest never bothered and stuck to the old school ways. But now, there has been a great paradigm shift. A sort of virtual migration to say the least, in the business world.



“The bears have monetized their brand.”

These days, websites and social media pages have their presence first and then the brick and mortar follow.

What's even more interesting is that digital marketing has also changed and evolved to the point that company executives are left scratching their heads in their meetings about what new strategies to employ. The entrepreneur is trying to come up with new ideas to create a large customer base. Basically, everyone is involved in some sort of marketing in this world.

There is a stark difference between the marketer of today and the marketer of a decade ago. It is not just about good copywriting and slogans anymore, it's about search engine optimization, analytics, and a host of new skill sets which must be acquired in order to be successful. New designations have been created such as social media marketers or SEO specialists.

But for the regular business owners, marketing is a bit difficult since they know how to run their business, but not how to attract more customers. This has created a huge learning curve for people who are new at business or at least new to digital marketing and its ever changing trends.

So what does the naïve newbie do when it comes to marketing their business and gaining visibility in front of a fairly large audience and that too, without spending a fortune?

You don't have to break the bank in order to gain traction in business if you employ the right marketing strategies online.

There are a few marketing tricks that you need to have under your sleeves, and that includes offering potential customers a virtual tour of your business.

This is not a new feature, but it has been slowly gaining popularity across the US, and local businesses that have a physical presence are benefiting from it.

Before I delve into this virtual tour process I will touch upon some online marketing trends that you may be using. If not, then I highly recommend that you do.

Blogging

It is one of the most common mediums to promote a business and is also fairly effective. If you can write, then you have been blessed but if not, then don't worry, you can still work your way around this issue.

Even though It is one of the most cost-effective ways to promote a business online, it takes a bit of time and patience to gain a large audience. You have to be persistent and passionate to see the fruits of your digital labor.

In order for you to be an effective blogger, you need to dedicate some time, energy, and effort into delivering key information to your audience about the business or industry you are involved in. The information has to be engaging, valuable, and it should not read like it is spam. Spammy content will turn off your audience and they will never return, so be careful with the words you use. Your blog has to be reader friendly and easy to comprehend. Using a lot of technical jargon can be off putting as well.

You also have to be a regular blogger because this will show that you are active in the field. A blog that is not updated weekly is considered weak in the blogging community, so you always have to step up and do your part in order to engage with the readers. Don't expect a huge audience overnight because success in the long run always requires a lot of patience.

Social media

Social media has been really crucial in the promotion of brands. There are many different social media platforms that cater to all kinds of businesses. We all know how powerful social media is in taking a brand or business to the next level; playing a big role in promoting the business and makes people aware of the brands which they probably wouldn't have known any other way.

Nowadays if a business is not on social media then they are not realizing their potential and not reaching the people they can easily reach. The brand image of a business is taken up a few strong notches if it uses social media correctly.



Here are a few things you can do on social media to get ahead and stand out among the crowd. Social media is so important for businesses now that entirely new designations and jobs are created which only deal in maintaining all the social media accounts of the businesses. They are mostly referred to as ‘social media executives’.

1. Choose the social media that suits your brand

There are so many platforms of social media that you can put to good use, and many other new ones popping up each offering something unique. But for now let’s just stick to the ones that are easy to work with. Not every social media may be suitable for you, so you need to assess your target market first and then work accordingly. The biggest, common, and most influential social media is Facebook and most businesses can’t go wrong with that.

Almost every business has a Facebook page. You can choose to use other social media after that which can target your audience in a more specific way. For example, if you have a business with a B2B operation, then you will most likely be using social networks like LinkedIn, that only cater to networking among business professionals.

If your business is targeted towards millennials and young people, then using social media like Instagram, Pinterest, or Snapchat etc would be

ideal. It all boils down to what your business is about and what demographic it caters to.

2. Hire a professional

After you have got the hang of social media, it's time to get busy. You have to be fairly active on all the social media accounts that you have for your business. If at times you are in a bit of a crunch and it is hard for you to do so, then take in other members of your staff on board. You can assign a person to handle all of this or just simply hire a social media executive and all your social media accounts will be working seamlessly.

3. Be proactive

People usually get turned away by visiting a business's social page (including me) and seeing no recent post. Seeing posts that were made two to three weeks prior to the current date shows that the brand does not really want to connect with the people or does not have much to say about themselves.

Being a little tech savvy doesn't hurt. A new and emerging business or brand really needs to have some sort of social media outreach. Social media shows a bit of the more human and casual side of your business.

Instead of simply pushing your marketing materials, some casual 'behind the scenes' posts can make you seem easily reachable and friendlier to others. So at least one to two posts a day on your social media accounts separately are a standard for any active business.

4. Get involved

Posting content at a regular basis is just not enough but you need to engage with the audience by reading and replying to their comments. Answering their queries and asking them for feedback will show that you care for your customers. If there is just continuous flow of posts and

not any engagement it will just seem as if things are being posted randomly by a bot.

You need to connect with the audience on a personal level because this is essentially one of the many important human traits. You need to show them that you are not simply here to make profit but build relationships. This will be very beneficial in the long run.

Nothing can be as unprofessional or off-putting like an unanswered comment or query. Sure you have your official email on your website, but people generally tend to interact on the social media pages more because they think that their emails will be buried under heaps of other unread emails. Social media is fast and is more user friendly.

Don't always wait for others to comment or give feedback, sometimes it's best to initiate a conversation by making posts which demand some sort of involvement with the audience, such as question based posts or polls.

5. Be visually appealing

Human beings are visual creatures and the saying that a picture is worth a thousand words definitely rings true. Advertising agencies are always looking for the next big shocker in their ad campaigns because they know that people respond easily to what is shocking or pleasing to their eyes.

So try to use pictures in your posts which might be able to pique their interest. Using infographics are the latest digital trend these days as they display important data in a very visually appealing format. It makes people easily retain the important statistics simply because they were shown with a cool way.

6. Jam with the influencers

Everyone knows that starting up a new business is not a cakewalk and so marketing is another headache to deal with. Handling the social media is a daunting task, even though it may look easy. You don't need to pay thousands to advertising agencies to promote your business by using this great marketing strategy:

Influencer marketing.

It is a way of leveraging a person's credibility, someone who has already established him/herself in the media in a certain field. This will save you time, money, and energy as opposed to using other marketing strategies that usually end up breaking your wallet and have little effect.

Influencers are not usually your standard celebrities but they can be somewhat counted into them. But generally they are YouTube personalities, journalists, experts in fields, famous bloggers, and social

media celebrity and so on. Note that your influencer of choice should be someone with whom your brand can resonate with and belongs to the same field in some way. For example, if you have a cosmetics brand so instead paying tons of money to models or ad companies, just contact YouTube beauty gurus, especially the ones with a high number of subscribers.

You can start by contacting an influencer and talk about your business or product with them. Send your products for free to them and ask them to be reviewed in a video. Normally they would want to charge you for this but it would be way less than the exorbitantly high prices the advertisement firms charge. Plus having a video made by a YouTube influencer seems more real to people than a flashy commercial on TV. You can also send your products to newly emerging YouTube beauty gurus because chances are, getting free products would be good enough for them and they wouldn't charge.

7. Stay consistent and persistent

Many businesses don't stay consistent with what their work stands for.

They make the mistake of not staying true to their brand image on social media. This includes posting content that is not relevant or related to your business. This will make people lose their interest real fast. Use a theme consistently like a color scheme or design that goes with your logo instead of different colors every time.

Persistence is the key in being successful in anything and everything especially in business. You can't be successful on social media over night unless you are an already established brand. This takes some time and some effort. So, be patient and see those dwindling number of followers turn into thousands of dedicated ones some day.

Why Virtual Tours are the Next Big Trend in Business

Ok, so let's get right down to the nitty- gritty and talk about a really neat digital trend that is benefitting the local business community. You must have read about Google Business View (i.e. unless you have been really busy saving the world or living as a shaman in the Himalayas). This program gives a 3D panoramic virtual view of a business from the inside. This gives potential customers a little taste of what an establishment looks like by giving it a more up close and personal experience.

The people would be able to see the interior and décor of the place before even stepping foot in it. It would make a person feel as if they are actually there. This is great for the local business community and is especially beneficial to the new members of the business community.



Many businesses have stated that after using Google Business View and offering a 360 degree look to their establishment, many new customers have shown up to their establishments after they experienced a virtual tour of the place.



Some background about how it all started

It all began by the name of Google Business Photos back in April 2010. It was an initiative by Google to give the local business communities in the country leverage. It started by first being tested in 30 cities across the U.S and then moving on to Japan and Australia. By January 2013, this project has blown to full scale and had made its way into over 100,000 businesses being registered users of it.

It was then re-branded by Google as Google Business View in 2014. It was later re-branded (again! I know right?) To Indoor street view by Google as a solid platform where business owners can showcase their interiors to people before they can pop by.

During its pilot phase it started by giving local businesses in Portland. But soon after, in order to meet the demands of the customers and give a standard quality of service, Google started its Google Trusted Photographer program.

At the annual Street View Summit in 2016, it was further announced by Google that they would be implementing many other changes and tweaks to the program to better suit the people. It also came with a few restrictions in order to maintain quality control; one can only become a Google Trusted photographer if they publish 50 high quality and Maps-approved photos that are 14 megapixels or higher (without any photo-shopping or stitching, of course).

You might be wondering that what is the point of having a virtual tour of a business. What kind of businesses can benefit from it? Is a virtual tour right for me? Well I would be wrong if I said that it is a must and is absolutely for everybody. But for the fast pace times and the digital era that we have entered, soon this will just be a standard or a regular thing on all websites for local business owners.

Where will these virtual tours show up?

A virtual tour done by a Google Trusted Photographer is attached on the Google+ Local Page. Basically, that is where it resides. Google Maps is where it actually is displayed through and linked from. It is then embedded on the website of the business owner.

Why would a business consider this?

Would you rather go to an establishment which you have already seen, or would you take a risk by going there only to find out that it's not the place you were looking for or like.

For example, you have a date with your significant other and you are heading out to a restaurant. You want it to be a special night for the both of you. But you want to be able to choose from the new Italian fine dining restaurant or the old classic French restaurant your colleague told you about.

You go online to read reviews and try to see any pictures that will make you decide which restaurant offers a more romantic ambience and feeling. Guess what? The Italian joint has a virtual tour showcasing the night time atmosphere, classic paintings on the walls, the floral patterns on the tables and the fresh

flowers artfully placed in the centre of the table. Not only that, but you can even scroll to see the ceiling with its beautiful chandeliers. Then you see the French restaurant which just shows a menu in Lucida Handwriting. I think we all know what you will pick (heck, even I would pick that). We have a winner here everybody and the hint is Mamma Mia!

Retail businesses can benefit by getting a virtual tour done of their store as this will show the products on their shelves. This can greatly benefit them because the customers that will be able to view their store from the inside will have a higher chance of popping buy and making a purchase.

Business that are not eligible

Some businesses don't qualify for these virtual tours for a couple of reasons but mainly for the following:

Retailers who drastically change their inventory very often—it won't be beneficial for them to get a virtual tour done because if the customer comes in and that product isn't available then all the retailer will get is a disappointed customer and a bad review on Yelp! Yes. There are many finicky customers who will go out of their way and write a stink review as their God given right.

Established brands that don't need any extra introduction for example, the local bakery famous for its warm and delicious baked goods and has been around since the 70's. This bakery is synonymous in the community and the neighborhood, heck even people from other cities flock to it. Or that Michelin star restaurant that was shown on TV and doesn't need any sort of advertisement. After all, who needs anything if they have been bestowed Michelin stars?

Private Businesses such as clinics or medical establishments, real estate and other professional business offices that require some discretion. This service is only suitable for public walk-in establishments and not for appointment based places.

B2B entities also don't need this as they don't have to deal with the public.

The SEO conundrum and the rumor mill

Many people claim that having a virtual tour of your business can help it to rise to high ranks on Google Places. Some people have written it off as a rumor because Google itself hasn't confirmed it. Since we don't know how the algorithm of Google works, we can only dub it as a wise rumor for now.

But it makes perfect sense that if a business is listed in Google Maps and has pictures and a virtual tour resulting in more clicks and views, it would also be ranked higher. Regardless of this SEO myth dilemma that people have created, there is no harm in taking the leap of faith by going virtual.

How to benefit from virtual tours

So let's talk about how businesses can benefit from this little yet powerful marketing strategy that is changing the business world.

There are various ways businesses can get ahead of the game by just being a bit creative. For example, a retail store can host a scavenger hunt for their Facebook followers through the virtual tour and give prizes to those who win. This can be done all in the comfort of one's home. How cool is that? Or they can offer a limited time discount offer for the first 10 people who count the number of products on a shelf.

The benefits of having Google Business View tours

So now that you have an idea about the importance of these business tours, let's get straight to all the benefits of having them for your business. Maybe some of you need a little bit more convincing.

1. Builds trust

Google Business View helps customer's to get over any reservations they might have about any new business they are thinking about trying. After all, anyone would have certain qualms about going to a new store. Some customers are picky or introverted and doing this would at the very least put them at ease. This also gives the business a new and unique kind of credibility in the eyes of the customers. By the time the customers enter the store or the establishment, it would be as if they were already there before and would have a sense of familiarity.

2. It makes your business become mobile friendly

Google Business View makes it easy for people to see inside when they

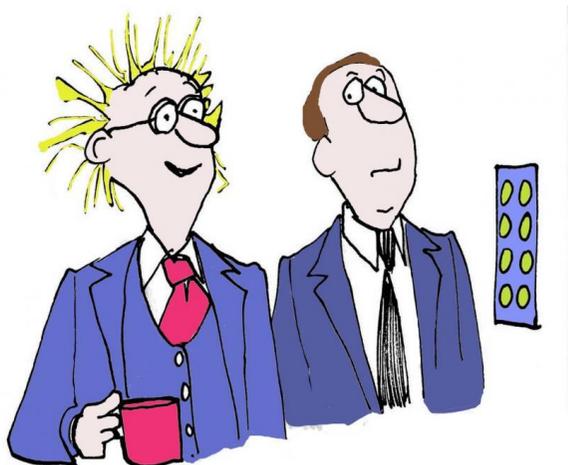


are searching and check your business on Google Places on their mobiles. Most of the people usually check Google Places on their mobile

phones anyway, because they are searching for a place while on the move looking for directions.

3. It makes your business look warm and inviting

The first priority for any business is their customers. You would want to make them feel as comfortable as possible. Google Business View helps in breeding a sense of familiarity and a very welcoming feeling for them. It shows that you have put in thought and effort into welcoming them even before they set foot inside your business establishment. If the customers and you hit it off, eventually it will just be “Cheers” where everybody knows their name.



“I woke up today and decided to upgrade my image.”

4. Shows professionalism

Business tours will make your business look more professional if the people get to see a more detailed view inside your business establishment. It will give the right impression to them and show that you are being as transparent as possible. It will also show that your business is well established with a very welcoming attitude. This is basically the primary ingredient to a successful business.

5. Makes the business be easily found

Research has indicated that having a virtual tour for businesses makes the customers more likely to visit your website and not just stick to Google Places or Google Maps. This encourages them to find out more about your business. This will generate more hits on your website and greatly aid in make you rank higher in Google searches.



6. Brings life to your business

There is no denying that a high quality virtual tour can bring your business life. People can look around, walk through and explore your business as if they are actually there. They can see different areas from inside and it will help them to make the decision of visiting your business a lot faster.

7. Powers up your brand recognition

Google Business View takes your brand up a few notches by adding itself to one of the marketing strategies you might employ for your business. People will be able to recognize your business easily and talk about it with others too. This brings us to the next point.

8. People will talk about your business for you

Once you create a customer base using Google Business View, the customers will help spread the word about your business. A happy customer is basically your walking talking marketer who does word of mouth marketing for you and tells people what kind of experience he/she had with you.

9. Improves SEO ranking



As mentioned earlier, it is not yet confirmed if Google Business View helps in increasing the rankings of a business directly, because nobody knows how the algorithm of Google works (unless they're an employee at Google). But it definitely helps indirectly to increase your chances of having a high SEO ranking. It does so by encouraging people to click on your website and that little thing makes all the difference. Also, businesses with photos and virtual tours tend to pop up in front more as opposed to the ones that don't have any.

10. Visually appealing

If a picture is worth a thousand words, then a virtual tour is worth at least 50,000 because it is a hybrid of a picture and a video; still and moving at the same time. It is inviting and says "there's more to find out, for that you have to come over". We are visual creatures and we

tend to respond to pictures more as compared to text. Even the memory our brain retains is in the form of pictures. When people see inside your business through Google Business View, they don't remember the elaborate details written on your website but they remember all the visual stuff such as the logo, pictures, and definitely the virtual tour. They would even remember what is on the left or right when they enter your place.

One of the key features of getting a Google Business View done is that along with the virtual tour, you can even get 10 full sized and high-quality photos that you can use on your website. This is really beneficial because people are being discouraged from using stock images on their websites. In addition, using stock images gives a lazy, cheap, and clichéd impression of your business. You can buy the rights from Google and are free to reuse them anywhere both online and offline.

In order for you to be unique and stand out on the web especially Google searches, this is a really great strategy and actually kills 2 birds with a stone.

11. Saves hosting expenses

There are no additional costs of hosting the virtual business tour when using Google Business View. You only have to pay once for your photoshoot. There are no hidden monthly or annual fees. This is one of the best cost effective marketing strategies you can use for your business.

12. It highlights your product display strongly

Google Business View will help you better showcase your products and displays easily to the people. Who knows after looking at the virtual tour they end up becoming the customer? There are so many possibilities that you can explore with having a virtual business tour.

13. Value added services

Google Business View is most likely to expand its services and they might enhance the entire experience altogether. For example, they could integrate their photo service with the product feed. That could mean that people can click on a specific area and it expands even more

by displaying the entire inventory to look over. It would literally break barriers and make people feel as if they are actually walking through the store. One thing is for sure, business virtual tours are here for the long run and will only be replaced with something bigger or better in the future. Therefore, it is something to be really worth investing in if you have a walk-in business establishment.

14. Highly profitable for local businesses

Google Business View is very lucrative for the local business community. This is an effective marketing strategy for not only new businesses who want to make their mark and introduce themselves, but also to the businesses who are trying to revamp their look from the inside. It will resurrect the business's reputation if done correctly. This is really useful because there is a large percentage of people who search for local businesses on Google.



15. Shareable

When you get a Google Business View, your business will be on Google +, Google Maps, your website and will be able to embed it on Facebook as well by creating a custom tab. People will be able to share it with others as well. The more people will share, the better it would be for your business. More online traffic will mean more real-life customers.

Virtual visitors will be manifested into real customers walking in through your doors.

16. Honest presentation

Remember all those websites you visited in the past and they had these beautiful stock images which made you believe that the joint will be exactly like, only to find out later that it is nothing like that? For example, many salons and health centers have websites that show a highly sanitized place with friendly aestheticians. There would be pictures of high quality products making you think that you will get a good treatment done there. But once you arrive, the place is nothing like that and they only use generic and cheap products for their customers. What a turn off right? Well, not with business tours anymore. Because they give you the real deal and what people see is what people get in real life. So this builds your credibility as a trusted business that people would want to come to.

17. Accidental customers

There are also instances where someone is trying to Google a particular business in the area close to a business which has Google Business View. That person stumbles upon virtual tour, likes what he/she sees and decides to check out the place. This is because that person's interest has been piqued by the virtual tour.



Google Business View for Different Types of Businesses

Google Business View is an ideal marketing tool and strategy for any walk-in business establishment. In fact there are many places which aren't exactly in the business category yet still are using it to create interest and awareness about themselves.

Everyday, people by the millions use Google Maps and Street view to search for or look for places. Taking this approach one step further and incorporating it into the business life is changing the dynamics of the marketing game. This creates a lot of opportunities for businesses. Virtual tours open up new possibilities for local businesses like never before.

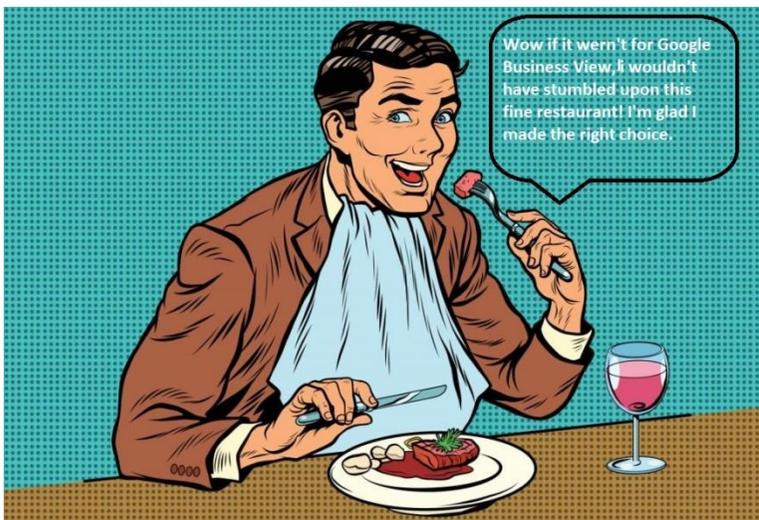


The following are the types of places that can use the Google Business View service. Note that most of the businesses are local walk in joints in an area of

town in order to attract or engage the locals more. International businesses don't normally employ this as a tool or medium generally.

Restaurants/Cafes

It's an excellent tool for restaurants because they can easily show the interior and ambience to the potential customers from the inside. If anyone is planning to eat out or dine in, they can make a quick decision just based on this. Sometimes, people get impressed with the decor inside, and then look at the menu.



Restaurants and cafes can provide customers with a 360-degree tour showcasing everything from the tables, to the bar, waiting area, and even the place where the magic happens: the kitchen itself. This will show the people that the kitchen is hygienic and conforms to the industry standards. This can greatly impact the perceptions of people and churn out positive reviews on Yelp!

Bakeries/Ice cream parlors

These are a separate category on their own simply because almost all of the focus is on the products they are selling. The baked goodies and the ice creams will be more in view. This will entice the people and attract them like bees to honey. People can show their warm and delicious baked goods or sweet and cold ice cream in a full 360-degree view.

If it's an old joint selling their classic flavors of ice cream or gelato or their popular selection of breads, croissants, pastries and cakes, all the more reason to showcase them. The only thing missing here is the delicious aroma. Who knows, maybe after a few years there would come a technology that allows us to even smell a place or product through the internet? But for now let's just take full advantage of what today's technology has to offer.

Salons



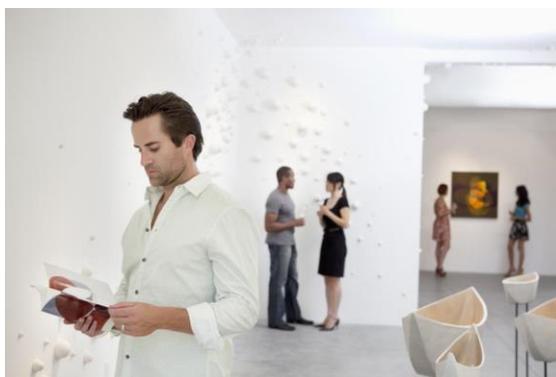
Men and women are quite picky about their grooming especially when it comes to hair. Women tend to be a bit more cautious because they have to get an assortment of other services and treatments at the salon such as make up, manicures, pedicures etc. Virtual tours can be used by all kinds of beauty or grooming service establishments such as nail salons, barber shops, tanning salons, pet salons etc.



When salons use Google Business View, they showcase their products, furniture, beauty tools, machines and instruments etc. which allows the people to get an idea of how the experience will be like. This can greatly impact how the people will view the salon and before they know it, you would have gained new customers. Art Galleries

Whether it is a gallery for rent to show potential artists where they can display their works of art or an artist getting a virtual tour done for his/her exhibition, Google Business View is right up the alley. Many artists have done virtual tours for international art buffs that can't make it to the exhibit.

Some artists do it for free while others do so by adding a bit of a fee. One can just show a little area of the exhibition to stimulate the interest of people so that they come in.



Museums

We all know that a virtual tour cannot beat actually being there physically. While it may seem that a virtual tour of a museum or a gallery will not make people come as they have already seen the items on display, virtual tours can be done smartly, i.e., don't showcase everything that is on display but just a small portion of what is offered for people to come and view. Museums, for example, can showcase a certain exhibit.

Specialty stores/ethnic supermarkets

This is a brilliant way for ethnic grocery stores and supermarkets to show their products, ranging from the food section to anything else. Customers, even before walking in, will know which aisle they have to head to purchase anything. It will save them time, and they will be impressed that you went ahead to add a virtual tour to your store. For example, Chinese supermarkets can use this for the people who want to cook authentic Chinese food need some vegetables or



brands that are only found in China and not available at the local supermarket.

Novelty stores/Gift shops

Going to a novelty or gift shop is always a bit of a gamble because, you don't know what sort of items one might find. With other stores such as grocery stores, supermarkets or pharmacies etc., people have an idea that they will get the standard brands found everywhere. If a person has a gift shop or a novelty store, they can use Google Business View to their advantage and showcase the inside of their store and sure enough, this will create a customer base in no time.



Clothing stores and boutiques

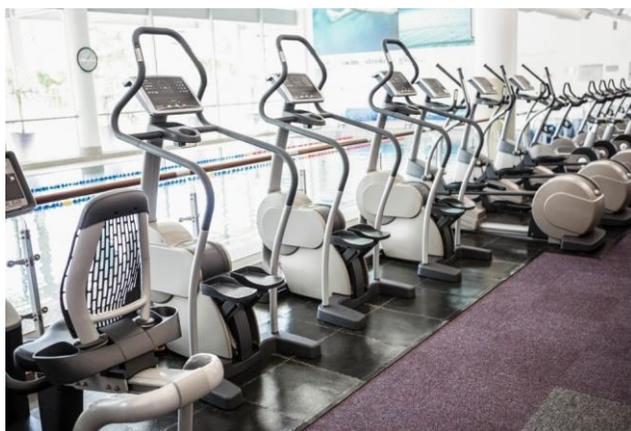
How can you even forget clothing stores out of the whole virtual tour equation? Now clothing retailers and specialist fashion boutiques can use Google Business View to their benefit and can create a lovely interior look.

Toy stores

Toy stores are not behind in the virtual tours game either. There are local toy stores using this to their advantage and having their little customers come in and pick out the toys of their choice.

Gyms/Fitness Centers

Now this is an enterprise that can take their profit and customer base to a new level because, most of the people who want to go to a gym first need to check it out from the inside before they decide to be a member.



With a virtual tour for a gym, they can see the space where all the exercise machines will be, what kind of sports equipment and facilities the gym has, and if they are to the expected standard. By seeing a virtual tour, all the fitness buffs will be easily attracted to come and check out the gym.

Spas and wellness centers are a hit or miss with many people, but if showed properly, a virtual tour can make all the difference in getting people interested.

Hotels and resorts

This again is one of the businesses that really should consider a virtual tour as one of its staples. This can both be a local and international hotel or resort. This is one that everyone can go crazy with. Show the lounge and lobby area, the rooms, business centers and conference rooms, poolside, banquet halls and restaurants etc. This can bring in more travelers and tourists to the hotel/resort.



It would make them actually feel they have been here and will create a sense of familiarity. They might even request for the room with the ocean view that they saw in the virtual tour. Therefore, hotel owners should always emphasize the most attractive part of the property.

Florists and gardening centers

Let's not forget these visually appealing stores. Imagine a colorful 360 degree virtual tour of a shop that sells plants, flowers and other gardening tools for the gardening enthusiasts out there. Florists can reap the benefits of their investment in a virtual tour by having many people come in just by seeing the beautiful display of flowers and bouquets.



Car dealerships

A 360 degree virtual of a car dealership or showroom can help people a great deal by seeing the kind of cars at display. They would be itching to come and try out the cars themselves. A car show room using Goggle Business View can greatly increase their chances of having new customers come in. Gone are the days of car dealership commercials. You don't have to waste money on those.



Car dealership commercials are the least liked commercials by people anyway. You can try using Google Business View and experience the difference yourself.

Schools/Colleges

Schools and colleges can use this feature by getting a 360 degree tour done of their classes, auditoriums, halls or sports facilities so that prospective students can get an idea of the campus interiors even before doing a campus visit.

Wedding/Banquet halls

Google Business View can benefit these businesses so much because, people who plan their weddings go through so much hassle in looking around for the perfect place for their wedding or any other event.

Getting a virtual tour done of an already decorated wedding venue will do wonders for the business as it will showcase all the fine details of the interiors. From the dance floor to the lights on the ceilings, this feature will make all the difference. These businesses can do multiple virtual tour shoots just to add to their portfolio.



Important Questions

So now that you know how important and cool it is to have a virtual tour for your business, it's time to know how to get a virtual business tour done. Well it's not a daunting task even though it may sound all high tech. It is easy as a cake walk for you. But first there might be some questions you must have that need to be addressed. So let's break it down for you.

Is every business eligible for Google Business View service?

Most of the businesses with a permanent setting and premises can benefit from and use Google Business View. However, there are some exceptions. There are certain businesses that are not eligible or simply wouldn't prefer to use it themselves for the sake of privacy concerns.

Mobile shops (stalls, street hawkers and the like) or temporary stores such as food trucks or vans which don't own or rent any land to operate their business on don't qualify to get a virtual tour done. This is because Google Business View is integrated with Google Maps. If a business doesn't have a permanent location to operate from, then it is pointless to have one done. It will also be a waste of money as well.

Is being on Google+ or Google Maps a must?

Yes, it is required to have a verified listing in Google Local, Google+ and Google Maps in order to get a virtual tour done. It is not something to stress over because getting listed on Google Local is totally free and has many other benefits. About 95% of people search for Google Local in order to locate or find out about a business. As mentioned earlier, Google Business View is integrated with Google Maps so it will be easier for people to not only find your address but also get a sneak peek inside your business. It's a win-win situation.

How much are the expenses in order to have a virtual tour done?

Ok, here comes the main part. The actual tour is hosted on the Google servers. There are no hosting fees, monthly subscriptions, or any hidden charges. Business owners need to only pay once to a Google Trusted Photographer for the photo shoot and tour. The fee is variable and solely depends between the

business and the photographer. Businesses need to always ensure that they are dealing with a verified Google Photographer.

They come with a Google verified badge and are always wearing the shirt with the badge when they come for a photo shoot. Most photographers for the virtual tour will do a pre-shoot meeting with the business owner and discuss the price and quotes accordingly.

Is privacy ensured when doing the virtual tour?

Privacy is always ensured to the highest level and businesses get to decide how much they want to show and even who they want to show. Almost all of the business show no people or staff in the virtual tour. This is done not only to maintain privacy but also to showcase the interior of the business without any other distractions.

Can a virtual tour be done by oneself or is a Google Trusted Photographer a must?

It can only be done through a Google Trusted Photographer because only he/she is licensed to carry out the virtual tour photo shoots. This is because Google wants to maintain uniformity in quality and standard. Everyone has different types of cameras so the resolution or pixels would vary resulting in different qualities of photos. A Google Trusted Photographer has to go through certain procedures in order to be qualified verified. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

Can Google Business View be viewed from cell phones or tablets?

Google Business view can be viewed from Android and iOS based tablets and phones just like on the computers and laptops.

What about copyrights and ownership?

The ownership and copyrights are given to the business owner by the Google Trusted Photographer. The photos that are uploaded are then covered by Google's online service terms.

Can someone change their virtual tour?

If someone has refurbished their interiors or didn't like the desired outcome of the virtual tour, then they can always get a new one done. They can just contact their photographer. Most of them offer discounts to their repeat clients.

What are the options for businesses who don't qualify for a Google Business View?

They can still benefit from Google+ and Google Maps listing, include their website name and people can still visit that and see regular photos or videos.

How to become a Google Trusted Photographer



So now, let's just flip the side of the coin. Knowing about Google Business View and its many benefits might have caught your interest and if you are thinking about being a Google verified photographer, you have come to the right place. Here all the steps to become one which will be broken down for your ease.

The Google Street View-Trusted Program is a certification that allows a person to become a Google Trusted Photographer. There are certain conditions and requirements that need to be fulfilled first.

A Google Trusted Photographer is authorized to upload all the photos and virtual tours directly on all of Google's platforms which are then visible to the

users on the web. The virtual tours can be viewed by users by clicking the “See inside” button.

How to get certified/verified as a Google Trusted Photographer

It used to be fairly simple to become a Google Certified Photographer but the procedures and steps to becoming one change frequently mainly due to Google’s quality control. For getting the latest update and process on how to do so, you can check out [Google’s Street View page](#). This will give the most up to date information on how to get accepted into the program.



The requirements by Google are a bit tough but then again, it is all for maintaining quality and delivering the best results for users to see online. It is assumed that a person is already a photographer or has a fairly good to excellent background in photography, as amateur photographers won’t understand the technicalities of this profession.

In order to get certified by Google, it is required for you to publish or upload fifty “360 photos”. After that is done, you will get an invitation to enter as a trusted professional in their Local Guides Program.

You need to be patient for this as this process might take long. Many photographers have been applying for this program so it takes a while for them to carefully select the right ones to represent them. It can take as long as 4-6 months to get certified before you can start doing virtual tours for businesses.

You need to ensure that all of your photos meet their requirements such as having no collages, texts or borders. The aspect ratio should be 2:1 having at least 5,300x 2,650 megapixels.

Your images shouldn't contain any promotional or advertising content. There should be no contact information such as phone numbers or e-mail addresses either.

Street View Trusted Group

It is a forum made for people who are Google Trusted Photographers. It has tons of information and resources on any issues related to doing virtual tours. The photographers can post and answer questions and know about any news or updates regarding the program. They can interact with other Trusted Photographers and share their photos with others.

How can being a Google Trusted Photographer benefit someone?

There are many benefits if someone becomes a Google Trusted Photographer. It is helpful not only for the photographers but for the customers as who get Google Business View virtual tours done. These are just some of them:

Ahead of the competition—consider being a Google Trusted Photographer as part of a special and exclusive club that is hard to get into. There are over 6,500 photographers in Pennsylvania alone. Yet out of that large number, only 22 are Google certified. Having Google on your resume makes you stand out from the crowd and gives you edge in the competition. Businesses who want Google Business View virtual tours done will only contact Google verified photographers and so 98% of the crowd is filtered out anyway.

SEO—Business owners will have their SEO rankings boosted if you do virtual tours for them. You can ask them to leave reviews or testimonials on your website, LinkedIn, or Facebook page for the work you did for them. This will also improve your credibility.

Exclusive Google Access—As a Google Trusted Photographer, you will be able to upload virtual tours directly to their servers.

Free Hosting—Google Business View can be hosted for free on Google’s servers. So there are no charges or monthly subscription that have to be paid by the business owner or the photographer.

Pano Software

Google’s desktop Pano Editor is totally free for Google Trusted Photographers to use. Therefore there aren’t any expensive softwares you have to have in order to edit anything.

Get hired easily!

Get yourself featured in Google’s “Photographer for hire” Index. This is by far one of the best things about this program. When any business is looking for a photographer to do a virtual tour for them, all they have to do is to look into the index and contact the closest Google Trusted Photographer to them and get the job done. They will be linked directly to your website through the index. So as a photographer, you won’t even have to market yourself tirelessly to others to do the virtual tour for them. Your customers will come directly to you. This will increase your customer base easily.

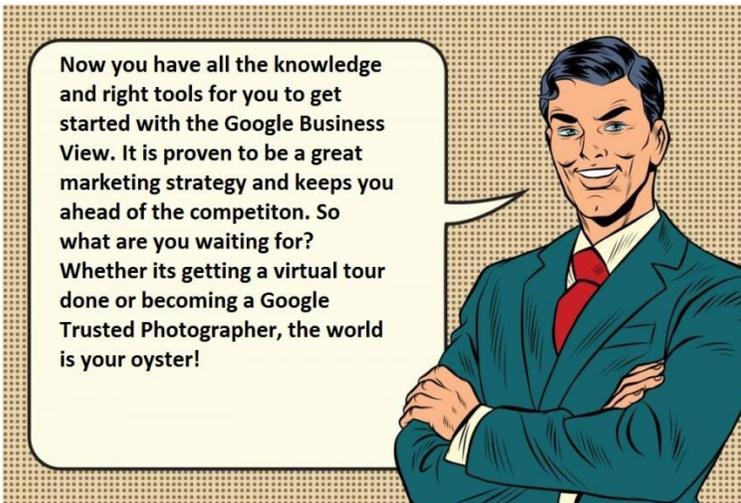
Remain Independent

Being a Google Trusted Photographer does not mean that you work for Google nor are you its employee. Your certification simply means that you have met the quality and standards of Google and have been given authorization to upload virtual tours on Google’s platforms. This recognition is big in itself. The good thing about this is that since you are an independent business entity, you get to decide your price range for people and get to keep the entire amount without giving anything to Google.

One other benefit is that many people can't report or complain any problems to Google because it is really hard to contact an actual person there for tech support. But as a Google Trusted Photographer you can get access to the forms in Google groups and report any problems you or your customers are facing. This will make it easier for you to be in touch with someone at Google.

Go for it!

So now that you have all the information about how Google Business View and the Google Trusted Photographer program, let the opportunities come to you like lightning fire and take your game up many notches.



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