

Importance of Local Searches in Internet Marketing

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Before getting into the SEO benefits of joining a Chamber of Commerce, here are some recent events and statistics that support getting local backlinks to your website.

In October 2010, Google started emphasizing local search in their results pages. They did this by integrating Google Places information and Maps right into their search results pages. They also updated their search algorithms in the past year to serve up more local results when you search the web. This give local results a boost in search ranking.

Here are some statistics regarding local search behavior:

- 97% of people do research online before buying from local businesses
- 70% of online searchers will use local search to find offline businesses
- Over 40% of offline U.S. retail sales are influenced by the Web
- 20 percent of all Google searches are for local information—about 600 million searches a year

What's important for small businesses is that people are searching for local companies on the web even if the company doesn't sell products or services online. So, it's important to for all small businesses to have a local presence on the web.

Chamber of Commerce SEO Benefits

When you join a chamber of commerce, you automatically get added to their online business directory under your business category. You generally get to put the contact information for your business along with a short description and a link to your website into your chamber profile. Yes, a link to your website from a local organization that residents and businesses use to find services and products in their own city, town, or neighborhood. And, of course, Google values these trusted links to your website when calculating search rankings.

In addition to listing members on the chamber's website, most chambers create a paper business directory of members which is distributed to the community. Sometimes this directory is created in partnership with a local newspaper or media company. That media company may post the Chamber's business directory on their own website to increase local seo for your business even more.

The cost for a small business to join a chamber of commerce is generally between \$200 to \$500 a year. Your membership will most likely include many other benefits not listed in this article. The main one being local name recognition and connections to local prospects that are very cost-effective compared with other forms of advertising



How does Commerce Lexington's directory fit into all of this?

WEBLINK LOCAL ONLINE

WebLink Local Online is a powerful online local business directory. Stay ahead of trends and deliver measurable value to your members. Local Online drives an increase in unique visitors, unique page views and traffic from organic searches. Offering your members more benefits— with WebLink Local Online, empowerment is included.

LOCAL ONLINE BENEFITS YOUR MEMBERS

- Increases awareness. Create additional exposure and business referrals for your members.
- Drives social interactions. Facilitate social connections between your members and potential customers.
- Control over content. It is easy for members to make changes to their own listings, including logo uploads, social media and key contact information.
- User-centric. Deliver relevant localized content, including map, business name, address, website, contact form, coupons and more.
- Convenient. The directory resides on your domain and integrates with WebLink Connect™.
- Flexible. Set up multiple directories, unlimited business categories, sub-categories and industry segments.
- Control. Rotate members within the directory and offer enhanced listings.
- Powerful. Referral tracking and reports help you demonstrate added value.