

STARTING AN ONLINE DIRECTORY

5 EASY STEPS TO GET GOING



ASSOCIATION of
DIRECTORY PUBLISHERS



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About Association of Directory Publishers

The Association of Directory Publishers (ADP) is the voice of print and online directory publishers that empowers its members to succeed in today's fast-moving marketing environment.

ADP is the only international trade association that serves directory publishers for the pursuit of collaborating, networking and sharing best practices focusing on the challenges and opportunities in our ever-evolving industry.

ADP is dedicated to its members and partner organizations to research, combine resources, advance the industry's advocacy and hold networking events to enhance their ability to successfully connect their directories' sellers to buyers.

The Association provides its members with up-to-date industry communications, research, legal and legislative support, conventions and numerous programs and services.

Today, ADP is at the forefront of nearly all important industry initiatives, including protecting publishers' competitive rights and serving as a trusted source of relevant information and data essential for the effective operation and continuing prosperity of its members.

ADP is unique among trade associations. Though, by definition, we are an organization of competitors, our grandest tradition is our members' willingness to share the industry's best practices for the benefit of all. Learn more about becoming a member of ADP today by visiting ADP.org.



Bridging the Gap Between Consumers and Businesses

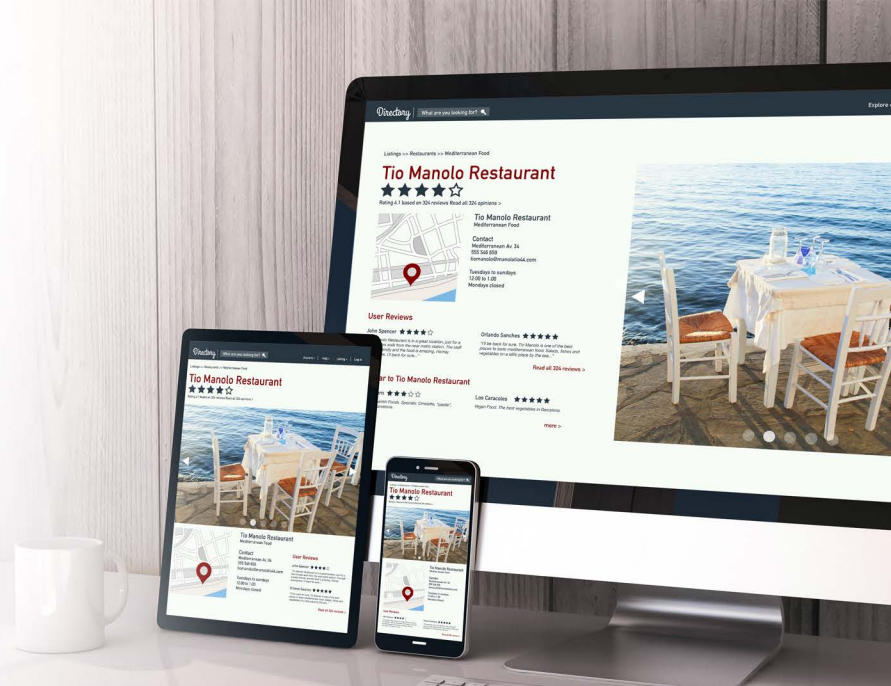
Businesses globally are finding it increasingly difficult to reach their target consumers. The largest platforms, such as Google and Facebook, are controlling much of what gets seen organically, with paid advertising becoming necessary if you want to maximize visibility. Whereas once small businesses could carve their own traffic paths reasonably easily, there is now a reliance on external platforms.

Online directories can bridge this gap between consumer and business, offering relevant information to targeted audiences. Consumers understand they can find all the information they require, comparing and contrasting many enterprises operating in their region. For directory owners, there is an almost limitless supply of companies seeking help, with the chance to build a substantial asset in any given niche.



Why Should You Start an Online Directory?

Most offline businesses choose to move online, whether as a supplement to the main enterprise or as part of a transition to a web-based operation. However, does it make sense to build an online directory at this time?



60% of Americans Choose Online Directories



According to LSA, an estimated **40% of Americans use a printed directory** at least once per year, helping make up a \$3 billion industry, while 60% of Americans — including younger age groups — prefer to use online directories. This proves that both print and online directories are an important component of a marketing plan for a local business.



78% of Location-Based Mobile Searches Lead to an Offline Purchase



One issue faced by traditional directories is convincing businesses of the benefits of placing a long-term advertisement. An online directory, though, can use accurate metrics to showcase the advantages to companies. When consumers make location-based searches on their smartphones, there is a tangible benefit to business owners in the form of sales, with a directory providing the information the searcher requires. **78% of location-based mobile searches lead to an offline purchase**, according to a study by Comscore.



71% of Surveyed Consumers Search for a Business Address Before Visiting



A high proportion of consumers — 71% — **choose to locate a business address before making a first visit**, according to a survey by Placeable. This information is the primary focus of a directory, showcasing the crucial business information, such as an address, phone number, map location and opening hours. Online directories act as the hub for an industry, assisting consumers with their most common company questions.

Steps for Starting an Online Directory

From research to implementation, it is possible to break down the process for creating a directory into manageable steps. The following outline is a broad look at this process.

1. Market Research

Market research should be conducted to ensure there is a viable audience for a directory. Research can show there are enough active companies and consumers to bring traffic and revenue to the operation. Most online directories focus either on a specific region or a business niche.

For local searches, Google My Business will feature every listed company in an area, whether claimed or unclaimed by the owners. For a particular niche, tools like **Google Keyword Planner** or **Keywords Everywhere** can highlight search volume for all related terms, ensuring there is enough interest.





2. Choose a Domain Name and Set Up Hosting

Buying a domain name is a simple process, but it is crucial that the name is memorable. Sites like **GoDaddy** and **Namecheap** can be used to search for possibilities, with the option of buying a premium domain for registered names that are considered valuable. While a .com extension has the most perceived value, there is also the option of choosing alternative domain extensions like .directory.

Hosting can be purchased along with the domain name, though it is common to buy them separately for security. HostGator, Bluehost and many other examples offer low-cost hosting that can get upgraded as traffic increases.

3. Select the Right Software

The needs of each site will vary, so it may be necessary to use a bespoke solution. A web design team can create a directory that fits precise requirements, offering complete flexibility over design and back-end functionality. An alternative approach, though, is to use existing software that is both flexible and user-friendly. **360Directories** is a turnkey solution, with SEO elements, mobile-friendly design and social media integration. Brilliant Directories has various monetization features and adaptable design and branding elements. Additionally, WordPress users can choose from many directory themes, running the site from a CMS they are comfortable utilizing.





4. Choose a Monetization Strategy

There are different approaches to monetizing an online directory, but it broadly falls into the categories of subscriptions and advertising. Businesses will pay to be featured in a directory if it brings them leads, with traffic being the determining factor. While many directories are free at a basic level, the revenue gets generated from premium listings that are enhanced and featured prominently on the page.

Advertising is usually in the form of banners, text and video advertising, offering prime results when the ad suits the search term that led a visitor to the page. Most directory advertising will get used sparingly, though, ensuring it does not damage the user experience or distract from the primary listings.

5. Promote the Website

Continuous promotion ensures businesses receive the traffic and leads they expect. SEO is a crucial method for delivering relevant traffic, with page optimization, including meta tags, body copy and internal linking, playing a pivotal role. Content marketing can offer something substantial to visitors, creating articles on topics closely related to the theme of the directory.

It can also be worth investing in paid advertising, recouping the investment with new subscriptions. An alternative approach to social media marketing can cut through with followers, possibly by showcasing businesses on a more relatable level and telling brand stories.





Final Thoughts

Running a small business online can feel like a struggle. Competition is fierce, while the leading players increasingly make it difficult for smaller operators to gain a foothold. At this point, online directories can, therefore, play a crucial role in connecting businesses with their target audience.

Directory owners can find small companies looking to grow their footprint online, along with consumers attempting to find clarity among the marketing materials competing for attention.

If you need assistance **starting an online directory**, don't hesitate to get in touch today. ADP is here to help you get started.

