

10 Things You Can Do to Improve Your Website Rankings on Google *(for Fishing Charter Boat Captains)*

INTRODUCTION: The goal of every business is to have their website appear on the first page of search engine results for their most important keywords and as high up the first page as possible! On Google, there are only three ways that can happen: Paid Ads, Map Results and Website Results. Paid Ads are always at the top of the page of Google's search engine results, followed by Map Results and then Website Results.

Paid Ads such as Google Ads, continue to increase in cost year after year as more and more businesses pump money into digital advertising in a desperate struggle for clicks! In addition, paid ads are taking more and more space at the top of Google search results pages. While smartly managed online advertising can be an important part of your overall marketing plan, no one wants to have to pay for every click to their website. "Free" clicks to your website from Google Website Results and Map Results are still the best way to maintain a steady flow of traffic to your website but how do you get more of them? How do you get higher up in the rankings when someone searches for your keywords? Read on!

Map Results are found right after the paid ads on Google search results. Google typically displays the first three local map results followed by a blue "More Places" button which leads to an extended list of local map results. Appearing in the first three map results for your most important keywords is ideal and even placing in the top 10 map results for your keywords will bring a substantial amount of clicks to your website. However, Google map results are largely determined by the physical location of your business. The closer your business is located to the geographic center of your city and the center of activity for your type of business, the higher your business will likely appear on Google Maps when searches are made for your keywords. Other factors play a smaller role in determining your Google Maps ranking such as your reviews, the keywords found in your business and domain (.com) names and your website ranking but your location is always the dominant factor.

Website Results although located below Paid Ads and Map Results on Google, still offer the most opportunities for capturing "free" clicks. While Paid Ads and Map Results are limited to links to a single page on your website, usually the home page for fishing charters, any page in your website could appear on the first page of Google Website Results, depending on what's being searched for and the content of your web pages. There are a smaller number of ads and map results on the first page of Google than website results. Also, savvy internet shoppers

who like to do their research before choosing a fishing charter will often skip the paid ads and map results in favor of the top website results, knowing that the website results are the absolute best matches for their search queries. Finally, while your ads appear depending on how much you spend and map results change depending on where you're searching from, website results are consistent. If you're on the first page of Google website ranking for "your town fishing charters", you'll be there time after time no matter where you search from or when you search, unless other websites beat you off the first page.

A Word About Keywords: For fishing charter boat captains, your most important keywords would include "your city" "fishing charters", "fishing trips" and "fishing guides" as well as more specific keywords such as "Inshore fishing", "offshore fishing", "deep sea fishing" and even keyword phrases such as "shark fishing" or "cobia fishing". People search for an infinite variety of keywords in long phrases such as "fishing for redfish in Daytona Beach" or "private fishing charters for 6 people in Pensacola" or "kid friendly fishing trips". Keep in mind that search results will vary depending on the exact phrase someone searches for. Map results will vary depending on where you search from. Even your personal search history as recorded by Google can affect search results. Whether it's Google Ads, Google Maps or Google Website rankings, the important thing is proper use of the keywords that best describe your business.

Regarding Website Rankings, there is no magic bullet. Some things work better than others. Some things work better in combination with others. Some things may work great for you but not as well for other captains. On top of everything, Google algorithms, the mathematical formulas that determine Google rankings, are always changing and evolving. The good news is that the underlying principles remain the same. The website that gets the most clicks to it, links to it and searches for it, is deemed the most popular by Google for any particular set of keywords and will rank the highest.

So how do you beat the competition for a high website ranking on the first page of Google? Here are the top 10 things you can do to improve your Google Website Rankings!

1) Get a Search Engine Friendly Website

Every page of your website should be search engine ready. This is done by a process called Search Engine Optimization or SEO for short. SEO involves the proper use of your important keywords in the text and code of the pages of your website to help search engines like Google

find, read and display your web pages in its search results. Website SEO, and content writing that contains your keywords, is best done by a website designer who knows your business.

In addition, your website should be attractive, interesting and easy to use. It should convert as many visitors to callers as possible.

2) Add Original Content to your Website

Search engines like Google are looking for websites that contain useful information most relevant to the keywords in a search query. The more useful information about a particular subject (such as fishing charters) your website contains, the more likely your website will rank higher for related keywords. You don't have to be William Shakespeare! Anything you write just has to be straight talk about the thing you know best: Fishing! Here are the most common ways to add good content:

Add More Related Pages: Adding additional pages to your website that contain well written content related to your business gives your website more opportunities to be found and displayed on Google Website Results. Some examples for fishing charter websites are pages dedicated to: Inshore Fishing Trips, Offshore Fishing Trips, Shark Fishing Trips, Autumn Bull Redfish Run and Spring Cobia Run. Every page you add to your website should be SEO friendly!

Update Your Home Page: Google loves fresh content. It tells Google that your website is alive, active and timely. Adding seasonal blurbs at the beginning of each Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter as well as announcements about special seasons for species such as Red Snapper are a great way to get Google's attention and show your site visitors you are up to date.

Add a Blog such as Fishing Reports: Writing and adding fishing reports to your website is a great way to add plenty of fresh content to your website on a regular basis. Fishing reports don't have to be as lengthy as extra pages dedicated to particular aspects of your business such as Shark Fishing Trips as long as they are useful to site visitors.

Keep in mind that, like anything you do to improve your website rankings, one new page or one seasonal announcement or one fishing report is not going to change things overnight. You must be consistent over a long period of time to see genuine gains in website ranking.

3) Get More Links to Your Website

Links to your website are like votes. They help Google determine which sites are the most popular and in the end, website ranking on Google is a popularity contest. Links to your website, sometimes referred to as “backlinks”, are one of the three main criteria that Google uses to determine your site’s popularity. The others are clicks or “visits” to your website and searches on Google for your business by name. As mentioned above, the website that gets the most clicks to it, links to it and searches for it, wins!

Links to your website should be on related and popular websites whenever possible. A link on a popular tourist guide website in your city or another fishing related website is far superior to a link on a “How to Grow Orchids” website in another state. Don’t waste your time with those. Blogging about your business on related websites is a great way to get links to your website but more on that later. Also, don’t fall for “1000 links for \$10” schemes. Google is wise to that and will penalize your website for link spamming. Each website you link from should be carefully chosen and added one at a time.

So how do you get more links? For fishing charters, there are dozens of great fishing and boating related websites that invite charter boat captains to list their website for free. Examples are: Cyberangler.com, Fishin.com and Beachguide.com. Some are specific for your state such as: Floridamarineguide.com and Floridasportsman.com and some are specific for your city such as Daytonabeach.com and Pensacolafishingforum.com. Some really good ones cost a little money such as the Florida Guides Association or the BBB. Another great way to get links is to swap links with friends and acquaintances that own businesses in your town. Swapping links with local businesses such as seafood restaurants is always a good idea.

For a list of websites where you can add your link, see our paper titled “Fishing Charter Links”

Hint: To find where your competition is getting links, Google his business name and dig into the results. You may be surprised at all the websites he’s listed on!

Hint: Creating additional websites, no matter how small, are another good way to add links to your main website, especially when you “backlink” with the extra sites. Just remember to follow all the SEO rules especially regarding original content. Plus you may pick up some extra business with the extra “shelf space” as they say in the merchandising business.

4) Blog on Popular Fishing Forums

This is a great way to add plenty of links to your website and promote your fishing charter business online. Because of its powerful potential, it deserves to be mentioned separately from just getting links. Most fishing forum websites let you make a link back to your website every time you make a post or at least on your profile which you create when you register on their website. Remember, Google loves links to your website, especially on very popular sites related to fishing. Popular fishing forums can be found on national websites like Cyberangler.com, on statewide websites like Flafishingforum.com and local websites like Pensacolafishingforum.com.

Blog posts are there forever (unless someone purposefully deletes them) so the links to your website in the fishing forums just keep on giving! Don't be bashful. You're not going for a Pulitzer Prize. Just tell them what you know and have a little fun telling the world about how great the fishing is in your neck of the woods. Yes, this tactic will take a lot of your time but consistent blogging on the major fishing forums can pay off big in website ranking on Google.

For a list of websites where you can blog, see our paper titled "Fishing Forums"

5) Keep Your "Google My Business" Account Updated

Your Google My Business (GMB) account is crucial to your presence on Google. A GMB account is required to be listed on Google Maps. The link it provides to your website is the single most important link you will ever have. The business description should be carefully written and should contain a healthy number of your most important keywords. Other features such as Photos, Videos and Hours of Operation all provide important information about your business to everyone who sees it. There's even a place for posts if you find time to use it. At the very least, make sure all the information is accurate. You should always respond to any negative Google reviews on your GMB account.

Hint: Don't forget to list your business on Apple Maps used by iPhones and MapQuest.

6) List Your Website with the Major Reviews Websites.

For fishing charters, these would be TripAdvisor and Yelp. TripAdvisor is by far more popular with fishing charters than Yelp but both can be useful to have. TripAdvisor should be integrated with your website so your site visitors can see any "Bravo" or "Certificate of

Excellence” awards you may have earned and even write TripAdvisor reviews right from your website. The links to your website from these sites are among the most powerful links you can have.

7) Use Social Media

There’s ongoing debate about just how necessary social media is to website ranking on Google. At the very least, social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram are useful tools for creating a “buzz” about your business on the internet and sharing photos and information about your business to potential customers. The more exposure your business gets on social media, the more likely people will click to, link to and search for your website which all helps to make your website more popular with Google. Twitter is overkill but if you like it, go for it. It can’t hurt. Be sure to make links back to your website whenever you can on your social media posts.

8) Use YouTube

YouTube is becoming more important as a way of being seen on Google. Google bought YouTube in 2006 for \$1.65 billion and is making plenty use of it. YouTube videos are showing up more and more in Google website search results and can lead directly to business for you. Even though having plenty of YouTube videos online may not directly affect your Google website ranking, YouTube videos are now part of the Google website rankings. Your fishing charter can appear twice or more on Google website rankings as a link directly to your website and a link directly to your YouTube video.

YouTube lets you create your own channel that contains all your YouTube videos. Well filmed and edited videos can take a lot of time to produce but if you’re good at it, it can lead to a lot of traffic to your website since really good videos may be seen by a lot of potential customers.

Hint: Label your YouTube videos using plenty of keywords so they are more likely to appear in Google search results. Be sure to edit your video to include your business name. Also, the more views a video gets, the more likely it is to appear in Google search results so now’s the time to get creative.

9) Use Keywords in your Online Business Name and Domain Name

The tactic of using keywords in your business name wherever it appears on the web can be a bit tricky but definitely worth exploring. “Captain Joe’s Miami Fishing Charters” is more attractive to search engines for the keywords “Miami” and “fishing” than just “Captain Joe’s Charters”. The same goes for your domain name. MiamiFishingCharters.com and MiamiFishingTrips.com are superior to CaptainJoesCharters.com if for no other reason they contain important keywords right in the link to your website.

10) Get Plenty of Great Reviews

We’ve saved the most important for last. You can do everything else right but too many bad reviews can sink your boat. Great Google reviews play a small direct role in your Google Website and Google Maps rankings but are hugely important in creating interest in your business. This can lead to more clicks, links and searches for your website that all play direct roles in your Google website ranking. Great TripsAdvisor reviews can certainly lead to more business directly from TripAdvisor. Finally, after you’ve gone through all the trouble of getting your website found on Google, your reviews are often the deciding factor as to whether a click on your website turns into a booking.

Remember, everything you do to help improve your website ranking with Google takes time and a lot of work. The goal is to get as many “free” clicks as possible but it will cost you time. Like the man said, “Ain’t nothing free but the air you breath”. But if you have the time, the interest and a willingness to compete against your competition for a coveted position on the first page of Google for your keywords, it will eventually pay off.

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