



GOOGLE MY BUSINESS

2020 UPDATES – THE ROAD TO RECOVERY



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INTRODUCTION

In addition to the news that there will be a [premium Google My Business offering](#), there have been a number of updates and new functions added to the platform to tackle the needs of brands during the pandemic. While a lot of brands have had to make business decisions they'd rather not have made since the beginning of 2020, one thing is sure – brands need to make sure they're taking advantage of any positives to come out of a pretty dark year.

For that reason, we're going to run through the changes and updates to the GMB platform that have been made with the pandemic, and brand recovery in mind.

WHAT IS GOOGLE MY BUSINESS (GMB)?

With a log in/sign-up page that promises to help you 'Manage', 'Connect' and 'Understand', Google My Business seeks to be a hub for a number of Google's small business products including (but not limited to) local listing info for maps, Google reviews, 'Insights' and the latest addition 'Website'. The platform (not to be confused with Google Business Solutions) is a good starting point for any startup looking to hit the ground running.

FUNCTIONS & USES

- **Website:** - offers brands a way to enter the marketplace using a simple site customisation tool (or to 'complement [their] existing website') to quickly produce a one page website.
- **Google Posts:** - allows businesses to create content directly on Google – which then features below the GMB rich result on the right side of branded SERPs.
- **Reviews:** - provides consumers the chance to review and comment on your brand in SERPs and the opportunity to reply (whether to offer gratitude or offer a solution to complaints).
- **Insights:** - a more visual, Google Analytics-lite tool, Insights gives brands the ability to view and compare key performance metrics.
- **Book an appointment:** - appropriate businesses can funnel users directly to a landing page to book an appointment - these appointment URLs are available for any local business.
- **Messages from customers:** - an under-utilised feature, the messages function allows users to send a text message to your business straight from the GMB listing on mobile search.
- **Followers:** - one of the latest additions to the feature list, followers allows your consumers to follow your brand directly from the GMB panel.

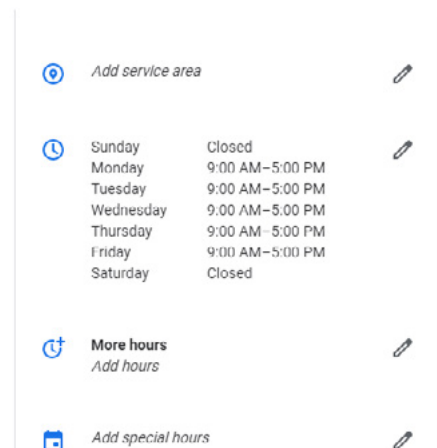
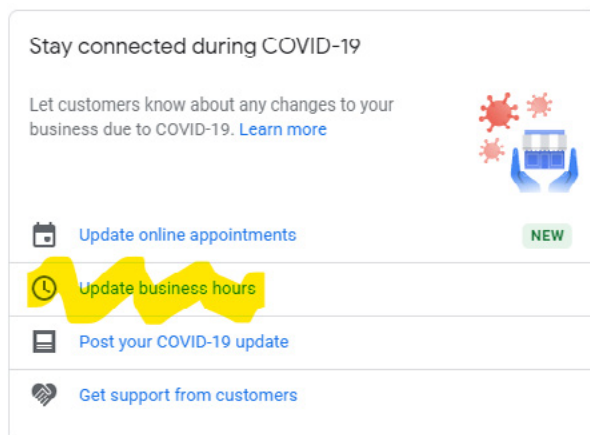
For more information on the basics, set-up and optimisation options for your GMB profile, you can download our ['Getting Started with Google My Business'](#) eBook.

UPDATING CONSUMERS

Published on the 4th June, Google issued advice for businesses facing impact from Covid-19 suggesting that Google My Business would be a good place to update consumers on changes that occur throughout the duration of the pandemic. This features 10 points to consider:

1. UPDATE YOUR OPENING HOURS

- Changed hours: - if your opening hours have been changed, or reduced, you can amend them in your GMB profile allowing consumers to see when you're open on the SERP.
- Closed temporarily: - if you've had to close your premises temporarily, you can mark it on your GMB profile as 'temporarily closed'; this allows you to reassure consumers of the temporary nature of the closure; you can then reverse this once you reopen.
- For altered hours: - you can use 'special hours' for specific small or temporary changes to opening hours.
- Additional hours: - if you're offering extended hours for, for example, key-workers or delivery, you can set 'More hours' rather than send the wrong message by changing your opening hours.



2. HIGHLIGHT AVAILABLE SERVICES (FOOD & RETAIL)

At the top of their Business Profiles, such businesses have availability – these include Eat-in, Takeaway and Delivery. This new information will appear when customers search for your business and supported attributes will show either a ✓ or X to denote availability.

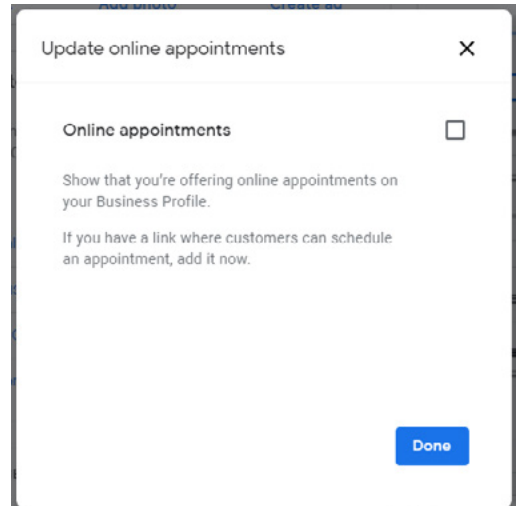
A The Lobster Pot
19 Ranelagh St · In Liverpool Central Station
Open · Closes 12AM · 0151 709 0157
✗ Dine-in · ✓ Takeaway · ✓ Delivery

 WEBSITE  DIRECTIONS

3. HIGHLIGHT ONLINE SERVICES

If you're operating an in-home, educational or professional service that has shifted to an online model for delivering services, then you can highlight them on your profile and provide a quick link to the schedule booking.

You can access this by selecting the 'Update online appointments' option in the 'Stay connected during COVID-19' box.



4. ADD A COVID-19 POST

As mentioned earlier, the post function on GMB allows you to make announcements and provide more detailed and bespoke messages in the SERP; Google suggests that your pandemic post detail the following:

- Closures or reduced hours
- Safety and hygiene practices
- Availability of gift cards to support your business
- Online classes and visits

5. USE THE GMB APP'S MESSAGING FUNCTION

As mentioned in the introduction, the GMB app offers the chance at direct communication with consumers through the messaging option. Once the function is turned on ([you can see how here](#)) you can then set an automated welcome message to new followers as well as keep in touch with consumers and answer queries.

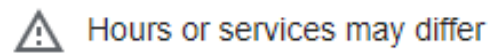
6. AMEND YOUR DESCRIPTION

As with the post suggestions, Google is also recommending that brands amend their description text to reflect the realities of your present operation – including:

- If your business is only available for takeaway or delivery
- Extra services that you provide to the community
- If your business services are delayed

7. HOURS AND SERVICES DISCLAIMER

At the moment, for brands that have yet to provide or update their opening hours, there will be a disclaimer added automatically – this will be removed once opening hours are updated.



8. HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

Google's recommendation here is just to specifically call on medical practitioners, therapists and the like to take charge of their GMB profile and use the facilities to inform patients of any telemedicine offerings.

9. HOTEL OWNERS

As with the advice for healthcare providers, this is another piece of more general advice to hoteliers to claim their GMB, but also to make note of any special offers or amenities currently on offer – giving the example of free or discounting of rooms for first medical staff.

10. KEEPING UP TO DATE

Finally, Google just offers three last points – methods of getting and keeping up to date:

- Find emerging topics and top questions people are asking by location with [Google Trends](#).
- Learn how other thought leaders are handling similar business challenges on [Think With Google](#).
- Collaborate with your staff using [shared documents](#), [video meetings](#), [email lists](#) or [chat rooms](#).

WHAT THESE CHANGES MEAN AND WHY YOU SHOULD USE THEM

Firstly, the advice offered and the responsiveness from Google to introduce these changes, combined with the fact that Google became one of the first brands to declare that work from home would be the standard until 2022, means that Google (along with many medical experts) are reasonably convinced that the pandemic is unlikely to be fully gone for the short term.

However, with experts already stating that one of the orthogonal impacts of climate change is likely to be the increasing frequency of global pandemics, it should also begin to be a concern for brands. The need for a rapid switch to digital has cost hundreds of billions to the economy this year – and that's likely to happen again, for one of any number of reasons, and it pays, therefore, to ensure that we're doing everything we can to make sure we're ready for the quick pivot.

CONCLUSION

Google My Business is one of the more useful of Google's free platforms for SMEs, but it does require a bit of TLC to make the most of it. The last few months have seen a number of fairly rapid changes to the platform and to the recommendations – however, by following the advice you can ameliorate the impact of the various lockdowns and changes this year. Not only that, the updates will set a good precedent for the need to update your profile regularly.

So, however the year has affected your business, there will be an option that will help you to better communicate with your consumers and, hopefully set you on the road to recovery.



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ABOUT US

Click Consult is a multi award-winning digital and search marketing agency with a focus on organic (SEO) and paid search (PPC). Part of global consumer brand business Ceuta Group, we have a team of 70-plus specialists and a portfolio of more than 60 clients worldwide.

Our complementary services include content marketing, outreach, social media, conversion rate optimisation (CRO) and international/multilingual search marketing. We can also offer training and consultation to support your teams or existing strategy.

Click was named Organic Search (SEO) Team of the Year 2020, adding to our long list of other awards and accolades, and also ranks within Econsultancy's 'Top 100 Digital Agencies', and Prolific North's 'Top 50 Digital Agencies'. We're also a Google Premier Partner, a Bing Select Partner and feature in The Drum Recommends.

HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

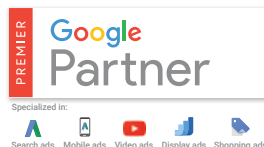
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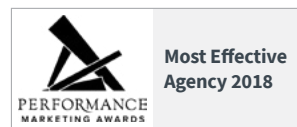
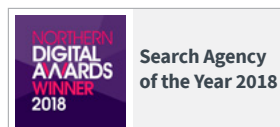
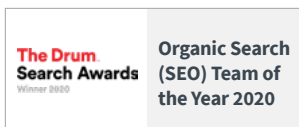
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