



the
**ULTIMATE
GUIDE TO
GOOGLE MY
BUSINESS**

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ULTIMATE GUIDE TO GOOGLE MY BUSINESS 2020

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WHAT IS THE LOCAL PACK?

The Local Pack is the top three localized results in a Google search. It appears on desktop, mobile and in maps, although in maps you are shown more than three results.

VIA GO GULF:

46% OF ALL GOOGLE SEARCHES ARE
LOOKING FOR LOCAL INFORMATION.



Those top three positions are highly coveted. Many users don't select "more places" or scroll too far on mobile, so the higher your business listing can appear the better.

How does Google choose who ranks in the top Local Pack?

While some of Google's algorithm is a mystery, SEO professionals pretty much all agree that it comes down to the big four:

- *Google My Business Listing*
- *Reviews*
- *Backlinks*
- *Citations*

Let's take a look at each of these sections one at a time.

Over the past year, Google My Business has become a bigger ranking factor for Local Businesses, especially for the Local Pack.

Google My Business signals, like proximity, categories, keywords in business titles, etc. are now making up as much as a quarter of the ranking signals for the Local Pack.

Which means that while other things like backlinks and website structure are still important, a businesses' Google My Business listing is almost as important if not MORE important than all other ranking factors.

Let's dive deep into Google My Business, shall we?



GOOGLE MY BUSINESS



GOOGLE MY BUSINESS

Because of the growing importance of a Google My Business page for all local businesses we felt it was important to give the tools and know-how to as many business owners as we could.

28.88% OF CONSUMERS WHO SEARCH FOR A TYPE OF LOCAL BUSINESS ON A MOBILE DEVICE CALL OR GO TO THAT BUSINESS WITHIN 24 HOURS. - NECTAFY

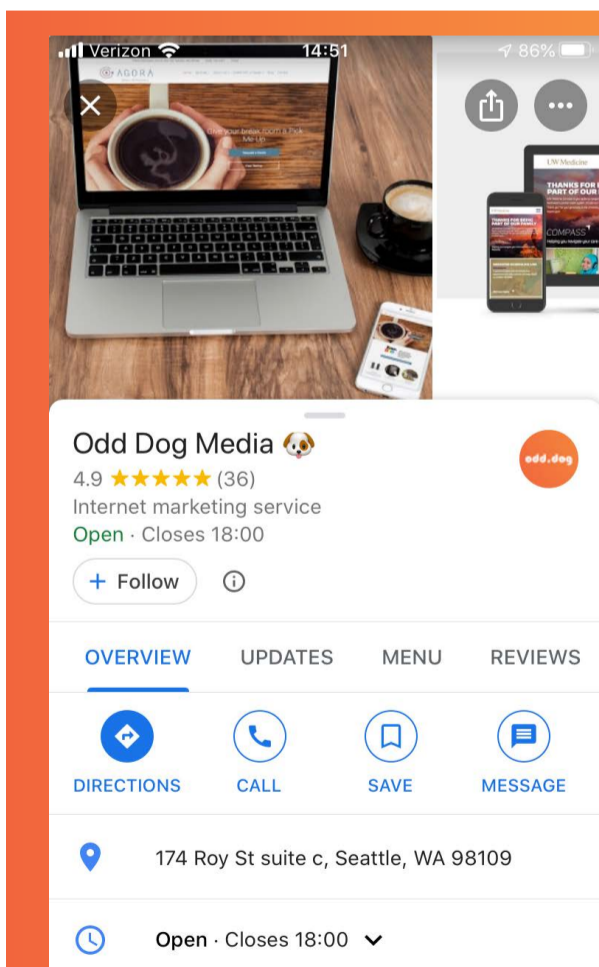
”

If you want this guide nut-shelled or the TLDR version, here ya go:

- Claim and Verify
- Fill out all of your company information
- Add photos and videos
- Manage
- Promote

Now, let's break all that down, shall we?

First, why are we here?



Google is really pushing for the first page of search results to be a business's new website. Instead of clicking through to an actual website, Google is making it easier for searchers to do almost all of their research about a company without ever leaving the search results page. When they are open. Contact information. Photos. If they are busy right now, or how long you may expect to wait for a table.

Having a fully optimized knowledge panel that shows all available information about a business has been shown to increase calls and inquiries.

We've been following the updates closely and wanted to provide you with an easy-to-follow guide to help you get the most out of your Google My Business page.



CLAIM AND VERIFY

CLAIM AND VERIFY

If you haven't already, make sure your Google My Business (GMB) page is claimed and verified.

Hopefully, you've done this already, but if not here are the steps to follow.



Search your business in Google Maps.

If you find your business, claim it and verify it with a phone call or postcard. It can be claimed if you see the text "Claim this business".

If you don't find your business, add it by inputting your information, then verify with a phone call or postcard.

What to do if:

- Your business is already verified but you don't have access.

Maybe someone else claimed it years ago with an email account you no longer have access to. It happens and it can be a pain to reclaim that profile.

However, it is worth the slight headache to get access back to the original account. Here's what to do:

DO NOT create a new account without trying to get access first!

When your location appears to be owned by another account, you should have the option to

"Request Ownership". When you do this, Google will send an email to the current owner's email on the account. Be patient as this may take a few days.

- You found duplicate listings of your business. Sometimes Google listings can be created because of a slightly different address or business name. You want to make sure there is no confusion about which listing is the correct one. Data confusion is something you want to avoid with Google as it can impact your rankings.

Cleaning up duplicate listings can be time-consuming and a real headache, which is why we never recommend creating a new listing without trying to reclaim it first (see above). But, if you do find yourself in this predicament, follow these steps to try to clean up your listings.

If you can claim the duplicate, do so.

Google will alert you to the duplicate once you have more than one listing in your account. Then follow these steps:

1. Sign in to Google My Business. In your "Account summary," click Duplicate locations.
2. Click on the location you want to remove.
3. Click "Delete this listing." See Google's step-by-step [here](#).

What if you can't claim the duplicate?

You can request ownership using the steps above, once claimed, delete it or if that's not possible, report the listing as a duplicate. The report feature takes some time, and may even require several attempts to get the listing removed.

CLAIM AND VERIFY CONT.

To report a duplicate location on Google Maps:

Open Google Maps.
Find the location you want to report.
Click Suggest an edit.
Mark the location as “Place is permanently closed or has never existed.”
Select “Duplicate” as the reason.
Click Submit.
See Google’s step-by-step [here](#).

- You own a service-area business.

If you are a service area business and serve your customers at locations that are not your office, you can specify as such on your Google My Business profile. When you set up your account, you will be able to answer the question, “Do you want to add a location that customers can visit, like a store or an office?” If you are a service area business, answer “No”.

You will then be prompted to add the areas that your business serves. You can add several cities and zip codes, or skip this step entirely..

Note: this will impact how you are shown in local results.



What about PO Boxes, Coworking spaces or other remote mailboxes?

We know it can be tempting for service area businesses to just set up a PO box in the city center of where they want to do business and hope to capture the local market that way, however, at this time, it is against Google’s TOU to use a PO Box or other remote office for your business address.

OK, now that you have your one and only Google My Business listing claimed and verified, let’s move on.

Where do you serve your customers? (optional)

You can list your service areas below. They will show up on your listing and help bring relevant customers.

Search and select areas

🔍 Manhattan, New York

You can change and add more later

Next



FILL OUT ALL INFORMATION



FILL OUT ALL INFORMATION CONT.

HOURS

Include all of your operating hours.

SPECIAL HOURS

Are there holidays that you know you will be closed for? Include them here.

Is your business closed every Christmas Day? Add that.

If you know of any other holidays that are coming up, you can set special hours now as well. Google will likely prompt you to confirm the next few months of public holidays as well.

PHONE NUMBER

This needs to be your primary business number. If you use tracking phone numbers at all, do not include them here. Google uses this information to confirm your NAP (Name, Address, and Phone number) details, so you always want this number to match all other listings of your business.

Also, make sure that it's a local number. If you have an 800 number you prefer people to use, consider getting a local number that gets routed to the 800 number. Even if you are a local company, 800 numbers tend to scare people off.

If you have more than one main phone number, up to two can be added. (no fax lines should be entered here)

WEBSITE

We prefer to use a website tracking URL on Google My Business listings. It makes tracking traffic coming from your GMB listing more accurate and easier to find under "campaigns" in your Google Analytics. We always want to see how many times our website link is clicked on in our GMB listing, vs clicked in the organic results. Yes, it's nitpicky, but it's what we do!

Example:

`/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=local&utm_campaign=gmb`

[You can create one here with Google Campaign URL Builder.](#)



While you will still be able to see Local results in your Google Analytics Dashboard, with a tracking URL you will be able to compare specific clicks to your home page from your knowledge panel.

APPOINTMENT URL

If you use a booking website to take appointments or reservations, you can add a URL that links to your system here. Depending on the booking software you use, you may even be able to integrate your booking directly into your GMB page.

This feature was released in 2018 and is still not fully rolled out yet at the time of this update. (January 2020)

SERVICES

Currently, this feature is only available for a limited number of business types, like food and beverage companies, health and beauty, and other service businesses that don't already have a third-party-provided link to a menu.

While you may see this option on your dashboard, your services may not appear on your listing as of yet.

FILL OUT ALL INFORMATION CONT.

ATTRIBUTES

The attributes that are available to select will differ depending on your industry. Attributes can range from things like “woman-led business”, “wheelchair accessible entrance”, “has Wi-Fi”, and “languages spoken”. Make sure to select all attributes that apply to your business and physical location.

Some additional subjective attributes are provided by Google visitors. For example, Google may ask users to provide feedback to questions like, is your location considered “cozy”, “popular with tourists”, or is a “good place to watch sports”.

Attributes are always being added and changing. It’s a good idea to keep an eye on these and keep them up-to-date on your listing.

BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

The business description was taken away a few years ago and just recently brought back. Assuming that SEO’s were keyword stuffing the description is one of the reasons it was taken away, be sure that your description still sounds human.

Use this space to tell a bit about your business. When did you open? Who do you serve? What sets your business apart from all the others?

Have some fun here and encourage people to find out more about you.

Menu URL

Add URL

Order ahead URL

Add URL

Reservations URL

Add URL



Menu

Add or edit items

OPENING DATE

Pretty self-explanatory. Add what year and month you opened.

INDUSTRY SPECIFIC

There are other options you may have depending on your industry. For example, if you are a restaurant, you have an option to add a link to your menu. If you are a hotel, you can add a way for people to book a room through any of your booking sites.

If you are a retail business or even a service, you can also add products to your listing.

Warwick Seattle ★

4.1 ★★★★★ 702 Google reviews

3-star hotel

Website

Directions

BOOK A ROOM

Address: 401 Lenora St, Seattle, WA 98121

Phone: (206) 443-4300

Ads Check availability

Check in

Check out

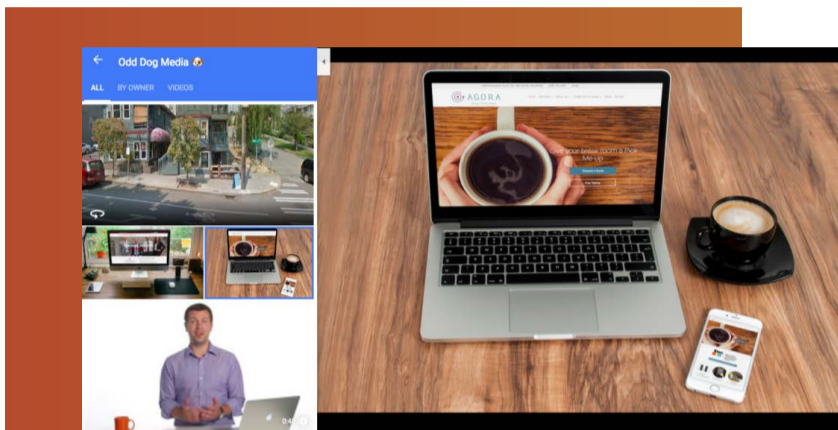


PHOTOS



ADD PHOTOS

When adding GMB photos, keep in mind what searchers are wanting to know about your business.



What does the outside of your building look like? Are you difficult to find? Photos of the outside can help people find your business.

What does the inside look like?

What about your products or services?

Within your GMB listing, you can specify what images are from the inside or outside as well as photos of your team, photos of your work, and even specify photos of food and drink for restaurants. Include several for each category that you can. Also be sure to carefully select your profile image, logo, and cover photo.

Google's photo standards:

Format: JPG or PNG.

Size: Between 10 KB and 5 MB.

Minimum resolution: 720 x 720 pixels.

Quality: The photo should be in focus and well lit, and have no significant alterations or excessive use of filters. In other words, the image should represent reality.

Sizes for each image type:

- Profile image – 250 x 250 pixels (minimum 120 x 120; maximum 5200 x 5300)
- Cover photo – 1080 x 608 pixels (minimum 480 x 270; maximum 2120 x 1192)
- Shared images – 497 x 373 pixels (minimum width 497; maximum 2048 x 2048)

If you need some help taking high-quality photos for your business, see this post,

[How to Take Better Photos for Your Business](#)

If you have the ability to take a 360-degree photo, all the better! You can even hire one of Google's partner photographers to take a 360 virtual tour of your space and have it added to your listing. These are really powerful for businesses that rely on their interior space like event venues, bars, restaurants and places of interest.

A NOTE ABOUT YOUR COVER PHOTO:

Ideally, what you select for your cover photo will be the one that is shown in your search results. However, Google will try to show the most relevant photo they can, and sometimes that means they bypass your chosen cover photo. (How rude!)

What do you do if an unflattering photo is showing as your primary?

We had this come up with a client recently where a photo of some construction was appearing on the cover photo spot even though another, better-suited photo was selected as the cover. While the photo was relevant for what they do it was pretty ugly in the search results! The photo was added under the "at work" category, but still showing up as the cover image. The only way we found a way around this was to delete the offending image and re-upload it. While this workaround isn't ideal, it seems to work for now.



VIDEO & OTHER FEATURES



ADD VIDEOS

GMB owners can also add videos to their listings. And not a lot of businesses are doing this yet so it's a great opportunity to stand out! A video is a great way to show new customers more about you and your business in a fun and engaging way. Even if it's just a walk-through of your business or a job that you perform, video is a great way to show people what you do and what to expect when choosing to do business with you.

Google's video requirements:

- Duration: Up to 30 seconds long
- File size: Up to 100 MB
- Resolution: 720p or higher



SMS

Can you accept text messages on your business phone? Adding messaging to your GMB listing will allow searchers to message you directly from the results page. This is perfect for a business whose customers need an immediate response.

To allow this, download the GMB app on your Android or Apple device and allow messaging.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

People can ask questions right on your knowledge panel. This is an important area to keep an eye on. Anyone can ask questions, but anyone can answer them as well.

To help take control of this section of your knowledge panel, here are some tips:

- Ask and answer your own questions.
You know what people ask most, so post a few questions from a personal account and answer them from your business account.
- Monitor the questions.
Google has been rolling out notifications for business owners to be alerted whenever someone leaves a question, but not all business owners have seen this live on our end yet.
- Flag any inappropriate questions or comments.
Again, this is all user-generated content, so sometimes inappropriate questions or answers may come through. Flag them for removal.
- Answer all the questions!
Even if they've been answered by someone else, answer from your business account and then thank the user who answered before you. Grab any chance you can for engagement in your knowledge panel.



POSTS

POSTS

Posts are a great way to encourage searchers to click through to your website or to prompt other actions. They are perfect for any promotions you are running, recent blog posts, events, and even highlighting products.

The calls to action include, “Book”, “Order Online”, “Buy”, “Learn More”, “Sign-Up”, and “Get Offer”. Posts can be a great way to get additional eyes on a blog post, any sales or promotions you have going on, or to encourage sign-ups.

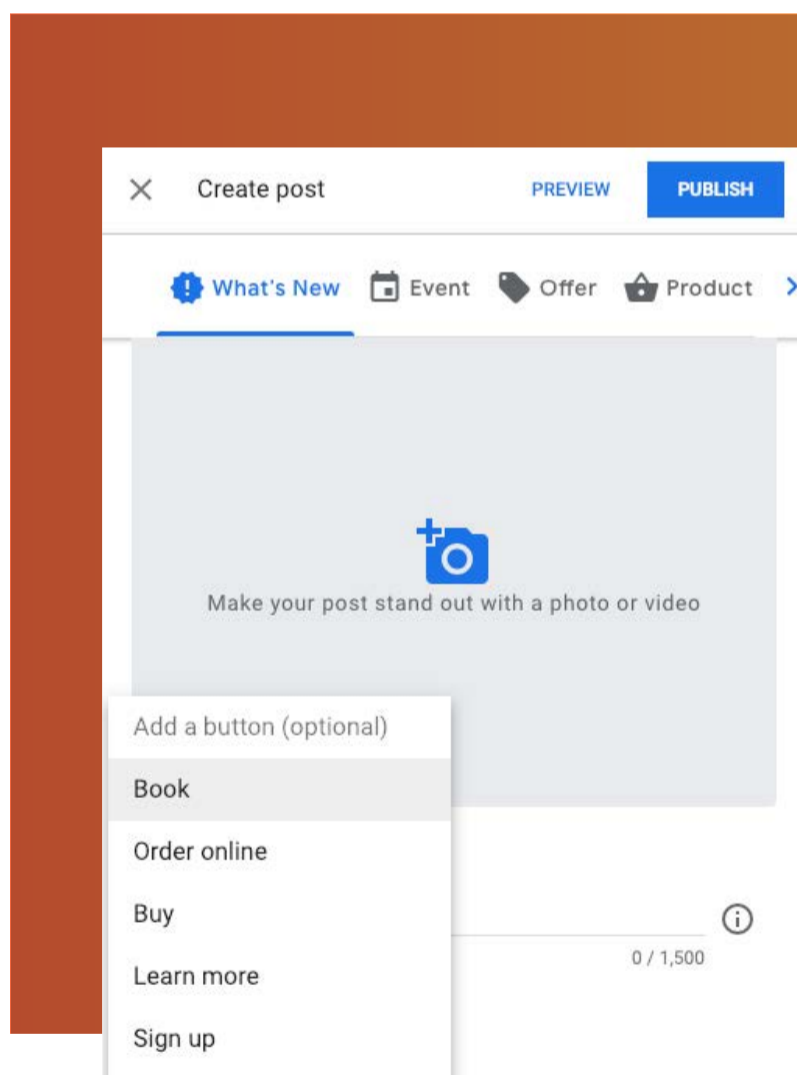
Some tips to get the most use out of posts:

- Images appear in a 4:3 ratio – so keep this in mind when selecting an image here. You can crop your image once you upload it, so make sure to preview before you publish any new post.
- Only the first 100 characters will show in the knowledge panel, so make them count.
- Posts only last for 7 days, so post often if you can. There are a few exceptions to the 7-day expiration rule, events and offers will not expire until the event and the offer are completed.
- You can have up to 10 posts at once, however only the most recent two will be shown and the following will be available in a carousel format.

Insights available for Posts can be found from the Posts tab,

- An individual post
- All posts from the last week
- All posts from the last month

Test different calls to action, images, events, and sales to see what kind of post gets the most traction.





MANAGE & PROMOTE

MANAGE

Now that you're a GMB pro, make sure you stay on top of your listing. Receive email alerts to your owner's account when someone leaves a new review or adds photos of your business. Be quick to respond to reviews and make all of your information stays up-to-date.

There is a Google My Business app available in both the Android and Apple stores that will help you manage your listing on the go.

PROMOTE

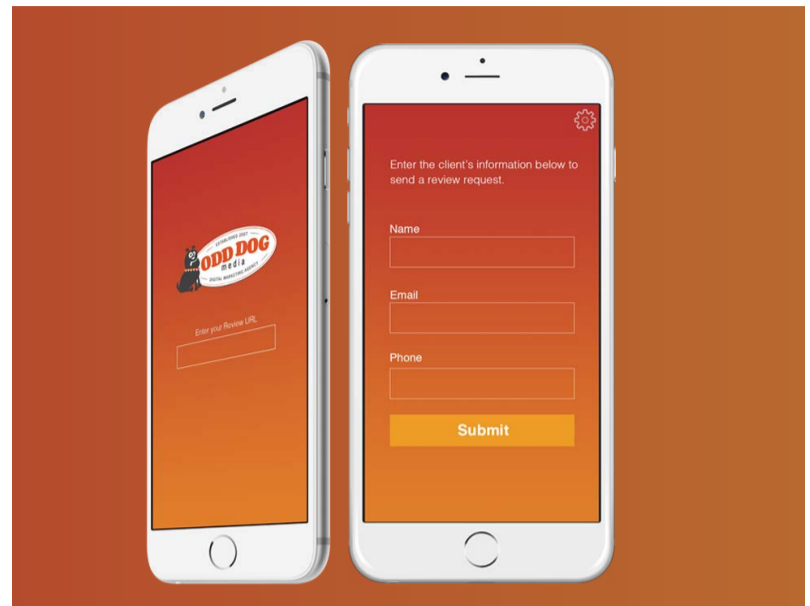
Get those reviews!

We talk a lot about Google My Business reviews here. We have seen reviews being one of the single most important ranking factors for local businesses. Since we've already talked about it a ton, I won't go into too much detail here. But here are some useful posts to help boost your Google My Business reviews:

- [Why Reviews Should be at the Top of Your Local Business Marketing Strategy](#)
- [3 Email Templates for Local Businesses Asking for Reviews](#)
- [How to Increase Your Local SEO Through Customer Reviews](#)
- [4 Ways to Use Customer Reviews in Your Small Business Marketing](#)

GET THE FREE APP

If you're looking for a free and easy way to ask your customers for reviews on the spot by texting or emailing them a direct link to your GMB listing, download our Odd Dog Review App.



The process of getting high-quality GMB reviews has just gotten so much easier. Now introducing: the [Odd Dog Review App](#).

REPORTING

Google does provide some reporting, called "Insights" on the Google My Business dashboard. Your stats can be viewed by week, month, or quarter.

Stats include:

- How customers search for your business – Direct, searching for your business by name, or Discovery, searching for your product or service then finding your listing.
- Where customers view your business on Google – Map or Search results
- Customer Actions – Visit your website, Request directions, Call you, or Chat with you
- Phone calls – broken out by day of the week or time of day
- Photo views
- Photo quantity (compared to businesses like yours)
- Queries – You can see what users are searching to find our business. This is similar to the information that is provided in your Search Console but specific to your GMB listing.

While you can only view at most a quarter at a time on the dashboard, you can download your results going back eighteen months.

From the dashboard, select "Download Insights" and follow the prompts.

GOOGLE MY BUSINESS ACTION ITEMS



VERIFY AND CLAIM YOUR LISTING

NOTE: You must have a physical address to have a Google My Business listing. P.O. Boxes and co-working spaces are against Google's terms of use and your listing can be flagged and removed if using one of those.

If you are a service area business (in other words, you don't service clients at your address) you are able to set a service area and hide your physical address. But you still must HAVE a physical address to verify.



COMPLETELY FILL OUT ALL INFORMATION

You'd be surprised at how often businesses don't do this. Make sure to add your businesses' hours, the year your business opened, your business's description, photos, and videos. Video is a new feature in 2018 and is very underutilized.



UTILIZE ALL FEATURES

Run a restaurant? Add your menu. Run a service business that has online bookings? Add a link for people to schedule appointments. It's a good idea to take advantage of any additional features that Google offers for your industry. As they are also continually releasing new features, make sure you are also regularly logging into your account to check for any additional ones you could be using.



USE POSTS REGULARLY

GMB Posts are growing in visibility, so make sure to post often and monitor what works well. Some ideas to include in your Posts; new blog content, any offers or promotions you are running, events you may be hosting, etc.

Remember, Posts (with the exception of Events) expire in 7 days, so make sure you are posting at least once a week to keep your Posts live.



WATCH FOR UPDATES

As mentioned above, Google is always rolling out new features. Make sure you are staying on top of these new offerings by subscribing to blogs like LocalU.org, Sterlingsky.ca has a great running list of all GMB updates, or ours at Odd Dog Media!

odd.dog

ABOUT US

First And Foremost A Professional Office... But We Like To Have Fun.

The name “Odd Dog” comes from our employees being a very unique breed of both right and left minded individuals. We are able to help our customers with strategies that will reach out to their target customers and entice them to become customers, while also being able to develop and integrate the technical systems to make it all come to life. This combination has allowed us to drive exceptional results and become an award winning agency.

Founded in 2008, we have worked with clients across a multitude of industries, though our specialty is in what we call “Local Businesses”. These are businesses that get their business predominantly from their local city/region. We have developed a proficiency for multi-location businesses and created technology that can scale to thousands of locations, currently being utilized by major healthcare organizations.

Odd Dog Media is a certified Google Partner with specializations in Google Analytics, Search Advertising, Display Advertising & Mobile Advertising.

OUR VALUES

We have a set of values posted at everyone’s desk as a reminder of values to keep throughout each day:

- We listen
- We show accountability
- We are respectful
- We learn eagerly
- We exceed expectations

Along with these values, we have a few mantras that you will hear all the time when working here at Odd Dog:

“Always do the right thing”

In business, the right thing isn’t always the cheapest thing and we see that as an investment in our clients, our reputation and our commitment to offering an excellent service.

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