

# Get on Google to survive the tough economic climate

Tough economic times continue to place pressure on businesses large and small. However, small businesses often don't have the resources to weather economic storms as well as their larger counterparts. SMEs form a critical part of South Africa's economy, and it's important to help these businesses not just survive, but thrive.



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Claude Blatter, Google Africa's SMB Marketing Lead, shares a list of five tips that South African SMEs can use to survive and even thrive under tough market conditions.

## Embrace the Web

Research has shown that the number of "near me" searches generated on Google Search continues to grow, alongside mobile searches for "open now".

What this shows is that in moments of need, potential customers are likely to use their mobile phones to search for nearby services. For example, "restaurant near me open now", "bakery near me open now", "hair salon near me open now" and so

on.

Knowing that customers go online first to find information and services means that if SMEs want their business, they need to be present and easily searchable on the Web.

### **Show off and stand out**

With more than 1 million South African businesses findable on Google Search and Google Maps, it's important to stand out. Creating a Business Profile on Google My Business gives business owners the tools they need to do just that.

With a free Business Profile, businesses can not only ensure that their business information (name, address, business hours, phone number, products and service offerings) are easily accessible to potential customers, but they can also showcase how their businesses work through photos.

### **Connect with customers**

Globally, more than 100 billion website visits, 1 billion calls, and 3 billion directions are generated via Business Profiles on Google Search and Google Maps every month.

A Business Profile on Google My Business provides a direct touchpoint between the establishment and its customers (existing and potential). With tools for managing and responding to reviews, businesses can easily get insight into what they are currently getting right in the business as well as what can be improved from the viewpoint of the customer.

These tools also allow business owners to respond to customers by thanking them for their support and reviews and provide feedback on changes they may be making in response to customer feedback. In addition, customers can easily call a business directly from a Business Profile on Google Search or Google Maps, making it easy for consumers to get what they want easily and effortlessly.

### **Attract customers with a free business website**

Once a Business Profile is created, Google My Business pulls information from it in order to generate a free, simple, responsive and easy-to-start-with business website that can be customised by adding photos and applying different template designs.

The free website is optimised to attract new customers through buttons that let customers call, message, view menus, make reservations and place orders.

### **Verify or claim your business**

The verification process allows Google My Business to ensure that the rightful owner manages a Business' Profile. Having a verified, claimed and well managed Business Profile on Google Search and Google Maps acts as a stamp of credibility for customers. Google has partnered with Africa 118 to ensure that South African businesses are being verified and claimed.

Google My Business is available in South Africa. Visit the website for more information or download the mobile app on Android or iOS to get started.