



# Business Directory Guidebook

*How to make BLOX Business Directory work for you.*

In this guidebook you will discover a variety of tips, tricks, strategies and success stories that will help you create a business directory sure to drive revenue and traffic.

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# Chapter 1: Getting Started

## **What is BLOX Business Directory, anyway?**

**BLOX Business Directory makes your site a one-stop source for business information in your community.**

You'll have access to a business database that's over 18 million strong while offering local businesses a turnkey online presence. Participating businesses receive a profile page in the site's directory that includes a company description, phone number, location and other important information.

***"The number one reason to recommend the business directory to a business owner is the local audience — people who come to the news site are local consumers" -- Michelle Skadal, Lee Enterprises.***

BLOX Business Directory even integrates with several other BLOX applications like Calendar, Editorial, Classifieds, Banner Ads and even E-Mail Reach so various types of content can be added to a profile including images, events, videos and articles. And BLOX Business

Directory's page templates conform to current SEO best-practices, further increasing your advertisers' web presence.

## **Sounds great! But what's the setup process like?**

**With BLOX Business Directory, there is nothing to install and maintain. Out-of-the-box, your site includes most business listings in your area, and adding more is easy.**

Users won't visit a directory if it isn't easy to find so consider creating a tab on the homepage dedicated to the directory. But you shouldn't expect readers to seek out your directory—you also need to promote it! Here are a few easy ways you can advertise your directory:

**House ads:** Run ads on your site or in your print product that promote the directory to both readers and advertisers.

**Newsletter:** Send a "deal of the day" newsletter or include coupons in your newsletter offerings that link back to the listing

**Feature businesses:** Highlight businesses throughout your site to direct traffic to the listing and your directory.

Once the directory is live on your site, local businesses can claim their listing and update their information upon your approval. But don't rely on businesses to stumble upon your directory—go out and sell your product.



## Chapter 2: Attracting businesses



## ***How to get businesses on board with your directory***

Implementing a business directory can be challenging, and there's a lot of approaches you can take. While BLOX Business Directory can allow for a "set it and forget it" mentality, the key to success may be a relationship-based strategy.

Here are a few tips for this approach:

### **1) Do your homework**

Before contacting your local businesses, it is important to do some research. Do they have a social media presence? Do they have a website? Can you easily find them with Google? This knowledge gives you a better idea of their needs so you can create a personalized sales pitch.

### **2) Open discussion**

In addition to your own research, you can reach out and have an open discussion with your potential advertiser about their challenges, needs and goals. This not only lays the groundwork for your proposal, but also helps you establish a relationship. Once you have an idea of their strengths and weaknesses, you can craft a message around their shortcomings and how your business directory addresses these challenges.

Posing the simple question to potential advertisers "How do consumers find you?" can often times be an eye-opening experience for them. Word of mouth can be unreliable. Social Media is saturated with thousands of new posts every day that most users have learned how to separate and ignore the offers. The BLOX Business Directory approach is a refreshing blend of grassroots promotion with a hyper-local focus.

### **3) Live demo**

During your early conversations with potential clients, it's important to showcase the simplicity of the directory. In person or on the phone, walk them through the interface as well as the directory.

### **4) Build listings**

There's so much you can do with business listings that joining the directory can sometimes seem overwhelming to a potential clients. The simpler you make the process, the more likely a business is to sign on.

Ease them into the idea by building their initial listing. This not only gives them an easy visual of their listing's potential, but also cuts down on the work they need to do to participate—allowing them to focus on add-ons that will earn you revenue!

## 5) Stress the benefits

When discussing your directory to potential clients, be sure to highlight these main benefits.

**Integration:** Business Directory is integrated with [BLOX CMS](#), so it's easy to combine content to boost a listing's stickiness. Business owners can connect their pages to classified ads, calendar events, videos, banner ads or even email lists.

**SEO-friendly:** Business Directory page templates conform to current SEO best-practices, so your advertisers' listings are competitive for their targeted search terms.

**Local audience:** Your website brings in local eyeballs, helping the business gain exposure, awareness and in-store traffic. In a recent study conducted by [Vistaprint Digital Services](#), their poll discovered that a [majority of small businesses are discovered through online research](#). The power of online marketing is still very strong.

**Content distribution:** A business listing allows for easy content distribution such as articles, photos, videos, advertorials, blogs, press releases, testimonials, reviews and more.

## 6) Prepare promotional materials

When making sales, you'll want to have some collateral on hand such as a flyer. Not only will this help break down the directory and their options, it's also something they can take with them if they need to "think about it."

## 7) Recruitment event

Don't have the time for one-on-one conversations? You can also introduce the directory to local businesses through an event, such as a lunch and learn session. Take this time to talk to multiple businesses at once and incorporate the above steps during the event. Don't forget to follow up with interested businesses that may not have committed at the event.

EXAMPLE  
BUSINESS  
PLAN

EXAMPLE  
MARKETING  
PLAN



## **Chapter 3:** Generating revenue



*Now that you've got local businesses interested, let's make some money!*

**BLOX Business Directory is highly customizable, allowing you to create packages that best align with your market and goals.**

You'll first want to assign display ads to your Business Directory so you can start earning revenue right away. You'll be bringing in money even before you've signed on any businesses! But the big money maker with BLOX Business Directory will be the packages you offer businesses. We recommend offering tiered packages that bundle a basic listing along with additional perks and add-on services (or upsells).

You'll likely want a contract to go along with your packages. We recommend contracts are at least six months in length since you'll want this to be a long lasting partnership and real results may take a few months. To encourage longer contracts, try making the monthly fee smaller for annual contracts than shorter-term contracts. For example \$45/mo for 6 months or \$30/mo for 12 months.

When creating packages, remember the importance of volume. The more businesses you have, the more appealing your directory will be to readers and other advertisers. To quickly bulk up your directory, offer a free package with limited functionality. You can always offer upsells or encourage upgrading to a more advanced package.

Upsells work especially well with free listings, but can also benefit your top level businesses who want an additional item here or there. Here are some examples of individual upsells that can take a listing to the next level:

**Featured listing:** A featured listing is highlighted throughout your site, typically appearing in special blocks on your directory page and homepage.

**Newsletters:** You can include business' updates, listings and coupons in your own newsletter or allow businesses to send their own newsletter to their customers.

**Additional content:** Charge a small fee for additional videos, images, press releases and the like displayed on their listing.

**Call tracking:** Calls to a business's whisper number are forwarded to the business's actual number and can also be tracked so you can provide advertisers with details reports.

**Storefront:** This option gives a listing the look and feel of a full website which makes it a great upsell for customers without a strong web presence elsewhere.

**SEO management:** If they do have a website, offer to manage their search engine optimization and ensure they're following the best SEO standards. (Ask TownNews.com for provided services!)

**Social media upgrades:** Allow business' to display social media icons/links on their listing for a small fee. You can even take it a step further and manage schedule promotional posts on your publication's social accounts or manage the business' social accounts, for a higher fee.

**Coupons:** Showcasing a business' coupons on their listing is a great value for advertisers since coupons often drive traffic to the business' physical location or website.

**Native advertising:** BLOX CMS' integration capabilities makes native advertising quick and easy. (For step-by-step instructions click [here](#).) And if your advertisers prefer to write their own copy, or you don't want to create the ads in-house, it's easy to accept user-submitted content with BLOX CMS. (Ask TownNews.com for provided services!)

Now that we've discussed some options, here are some sample packages that you can tweak as you see fit:

### **Free listing**

The basic business info -- can offer individual upsells for a fee (for example include social media links or monthly coupon for a small fee)

### **Advanced listing**

Bundle the basics with a handful of upsells -- make it a value, so more people go for it over the free listing (basics + two images + one video + monthly coupon)

### **Power listing**

Listing with the most included upsells (unlimited images + 3 videos + weekly coupons)

With BLOX Business Directory you set your own pricing. Remember, keeping your packages affordable is key - you can always sell additional products to raise your bottom line. When considering price points you should keep the following in mind:

**Staff time:** If your staff is very hands on in the creation and management of a listing, you may want to charge more than self-service models.

**Competitors:** Research organizations that offer a similar solution and price accordingly to stay competitive

**Market size:** Pricing needs to fit your market - if you're a large metropolitan you will most likely be able to price your packages higher than a small town weekly.



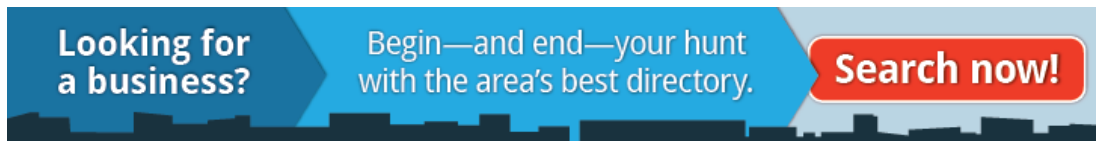
## Chapter 4: Sales collateral

## Use these materials to help promote your directory

Feel free to use the following display ads to promote your new Business Directory. We've included two standard sizes (300x250 & 728x90) for you to place throughout your site. Perhaps these will inspire you to create some additional ads

In addition, we've also included a helpful handout sheet to help your sales staff when speaking with potential clients.

### [Business Directory One-Sheet](#)



## Use these materials for inspiration



FAMILY OWNED SINCE 1903

720

Complete forecast by Advanced search

DAILY JOURNAL Edition





## Chapter 5: Retention strategies

## Congratulations on securing advertisers! Now let's cover how to keep them

**To retain your clients, put in the same effort you did to recruit them through needs assessments, follow-ups and more.**

There's no secret formula to a solid retention strategy, every client's needs and expectations will vary, but one of the most important things you can do is stay in touch. If your staff is big enough, you may even want to give each business a dedicated account manager that is their point of contact for all things business directory related.

Stay connected by scheduling follow-up appointments or simply send an email to check in with them from time to time. It's important to stay client-focused. For example, if they want a monthly call, pick up the phone! But if they'd rather you only check in quarterly or bi-yearly, then respect their wishes and contact them accordingly.

These follow ups are a perfect time to talk about the products they currently have and how they're working for them. BLOX Business Directory includes analytical reports that you can automatically send each month to your advertisers. These reports show a summary of results, daily insights and performance highlights. When it comes to progress and success, stay open and honest with your clients. If something isn't working, tell them and work with them to come up with a solution.

It's also in these conversations that upsells and package upgrades can happen. Keep the conversation open-ended in order to effectively identify opportunities. Ask questions about what's new—are there new business developments, upcoming events or big sales they want to promote? There's sure to be an upsell or package upgrade to meet these new needs!



MADISON.COM News Sports Life Fun Food Buy & Sell 52°



## Search Businesses in Madison, WI

Your guide to the best businesses in Madison. [Browse All Categories](#)

What are you looking for?

Restaurants Shopping Home Services Automotive

### Featured Businesses

 <p>Sunny Hill Healthcare Center</p>	 <p>Bpi Environmental</p>	 <p>Brothers Main Appliance &amp; TV</p>	 <p>Baraboo Chamber Of Commerce</p>
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# Chapter 6: Lee's success story

## Inside Amplified's \$150,000/month business directory strategy

*How Lee Enterprises' in-house agency successfully recruits and retains local advertisers*

"What better place to showcase your business than through the local news site?" asked Michelle Skadal, sales operations manager at Amplified, Lee Enterprises' digital agency. "When the weather changes or big news happens, people go to the local news website. By putting a business' information, branding and specials there, it places them in front of the largest local audience."

This line of thinking drives Skadal's strategy when pitching TownNews.com's BLOX Business Directory to business owners at Lee markets across the nation.

BLOX Business Directory is designed to offer local businesses a turnkey online presence while driving traffic and revenue for the host website. Under the Lee program, participating businesses receive a profile page in the site's directory that includes their company description, phone number, website links, location and much more.

"We use BLOX Business Directory as Amplified's core product to raise overall awareness of small businesses that may or may not have any existing online presence," she said.

Amplified (formerly LeeLocal), is a marketing and advertising agency within Lee Enterprises, the fourth largest newspaper group in the U.S. with 46 dailies in 22 states. Amplified calls into all of Lee's markets on behalf of the local newspaper, and offers business directory listings to the small business owners in the paper's footprint. LeeLocal launched in December 2009, and became Amplified in the fall of 2015.

Creating a successful directory is a tough task, but Amplified has had huge success in growing directories for Lee's newspaper properties.

"We have been able to secure businesses at every Lee paper, and we have had substantial revenue growth over prior year for the last three years—in 2013, we had a 42 percent increase over the previous year, 27 percent in 2014 and 17 percent increase in 2015," said Skadal. "Currently, we average approximately \$150,000 each month from BLOX Business Directory."

Amplified currently offers three packages based on six- or twelve-month commitments that range from \$200 to \$600 per month. Amplified's base package includes a profile page, a YouTube video, five promotional offers—such as coupons or specials—and registration with Google and Bing. The next two levels add services like social media management, search engine marketing and reputation monitoring. Amplified also offers banner impression add-ons.

"Due to increased product bundling, our average sale has gone from \$125 to over \$225 per customer in the past three years," said Skadal.

Phil Pracht, BLOX Business Directory product manager at TownNews.com, sees attracting local businesses as a hurdle sites often face when launching a business directory.

"Many businesses are initially unclear on the benefits of joining a directory, and some news outlets struggle to convey the advantages," Pracht said.

To address this challenge, Skadal and her team have developed a comprehensive information and outreach program.

"Getting business owners interested in this product is truly about education," she said. "Our sales representatives often invite business owners to tour the news website, set expectations on the product's capabilities and discuss how long it takes to see real ROI (return on investment)."

Skadal emphasizes the importance of local news outlets' loyal audiences when reaching out to business owners.

"The number one reason to recommend the business directory to a business owner is the local audience—people who come to the news site are local consumers," Skadal said. "The business directory profile is an effective way to gain exposure and drive traffic."

Beyond raising awareness, both Skadal and Pracht agree that BLOX Business Directory's SEO enhancements, such as keywords, SEO-friendly URLs and social media links, are major selling points.

"Businesses build authority with search engines by placing content and information on a credible site. This not only brings direct traffic (from the news site) to their website, but over time grows quality organic traffic from search engines," said Skadal. "But the fuel is in the coupons and other promotional offers. Having the ability to change them monthly helps to boost keywords, which can have a big impact on SEO."

***"The business directory profile is an effective way to gain exposure and drive traffic" -- Michelle Skadal, Lee Enterprises.***

"Updating promos frequently helps increase SEO by raising search engines' awareness of new and relevant content on the page," Pracht added.

After getting a business on board, the next step is keeping them. Amplified's retention strategy begins with "discovery appointments," where goals and expectations are established.

"Every business owner has a different vision of a successful marketing campaign. By doing a needs analysis early in the conversation we are able to tailor the program to that business," said Skadal.

The company also performs routine follow-ups with each business owner.

"After the sale, a business owner is given a dedicated account manager who calls them on a monthly basis. During this call, we review BLOX Business Directory's analytical reports, discuss updates and, more often than not, add additional products to their package," said Skadal.

Though some sites lack the personnel to offer the level of interaction that Amplified does, Pracht still sees plenty of easy perks and upsell opportunities built into BLOX Business Directory.

"We make packages customizable and provide upsell opportunities through add-ons like social media links, newsletter blasts, additional banner impressions and specialty Storefront profiles,"

Pracht said. "BLOX Business Directory even integrates with other BLOX CMS products so a business can link to a calendar event or add press releases to their profile for an additional fee."

Skadal added that BLOX Business Directory isn't just a great opportunity for publishers and advertisers. It also creates a better user experience.

"Being able to access a business' specials, social media, map to the location, phone number, website and more—all in one place—provides a one-stop shop for site visitors," said Skadal. "And that makes a healthy business directory a big win all the way around."



## **Chapter 7:** How to win back SMBs with Coupons

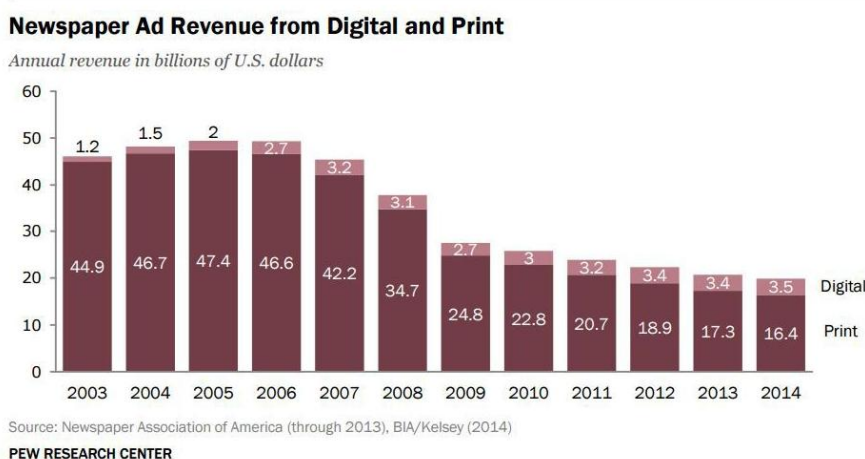
Imagine there's a new mom-and-pop coffee shop opening up in your area. They're nervous about how their new business will perform—and they should be. They're risking a great deal to create something they feel personally passionate about. Or maybe the shop has been around for a while but they are struggling to compete with the bigger, flashier place down the street, the one with the bigger marketing budget.

Now, apply that scenario to every locally run SMB (small-medium size business) in your area and so what? What can you do to help them?

As a Product Manager for [TownNews.com](http://TownNews.com), a technology company with more than 1,700 media partners nationwide, part of my job is to provide our clients with the necessary tools and solutions to help SMBs accomplish their revenue goals. One solution we have found is as simple as coupons.

## The shifting landscape

Classifieds aren't what they used to be. According to the Newspaper Association of America (as reported by the Pew Research center in 2015), print ad revenue has fallen from \$44 billion in 2006 to just \$16 billion in 2014. In that time, digital ad revenue increased but experienced a plateau at around \$3.5 billion over the last 4 years. Preliminary reports for 2015 and 2016 suggest another decrease. However, digital is now making up a quarter of total ad revenue.



That should come as no surprise to many of you. We can all agree that it's been difficult to find footing in this changing landscape. Every other week we hear about another classifieds product that claims to be the "Craigslist killer." Easier, faster, fewer strings, free—how do you compete with that?

Perhaps it's time to consider a different approach.

Rather than devoting your time and energy trying to "take back" the market, think about it from a different point of view. Why spend that time trying to compete with these 800-pound gorillas when there are other untapped channels out there?



## Creating a destination

Reposition your product and provide something the major competitors aren't—coupons for local businesses. These are time-based offers that encourage consumer purchases and foot traffic into a physical location.

For an excellent example of a coupon section look no further than the 2016 NNA first place winner for Best Classifieds Section, [Brentwood Press](#). They've placed a link on their main navigation and populated their Coupons section with image-centric ads which have been proven to increase clickthru rates. They've also associated each and every coupon with the related business. As a result, visitors quickly know what is being offered and where it can be redeemed.



**7 Introductory Offer - 500 Business Cards Free**

**A&G printing**  
A&G Printing  
3373 Main Street, Oakley, CA 94561  
925-487-6383  
Currently Open

**A&G PRINTING**  
Introductory Offer  
**500 Business Cards FREE**  
With minimum purchase of letterheads & envelopes. Call for details. Expires 1/25/17.  
**A&G printing**  
Local Family Owned & Operated  
Brentwood / Oakley  
Aandgprinting.com  
925-487-6383

Tie a coupon to the Business Directory listing for maximum impact.

## Getting started

When onboarding a new advertiser, collect six to twelve coupons and spread them throughout the year. Before you know it, you'll have gathered enough unique offers to create a compelling vertical; a destination for folks in your community to visit before they go shopping. SMBs (small-medium size businesses) that provide you with their deals would see first-hand their ROI each time someone personally hands them a coupon from your site.

Coupons are also great newsletter fodder. Let your visitors sign up to receive these deals monthly—or even weekly—depending on the volume of coupons you're receiving from advertisers.

With BLOX CMS, it's easy to analyze the number of pageviews, impressions and lead generation-based calls to action each coupon receives. You'll be able to help your advertisers make educated decisions about their current and future campaigns.

How these coupons appear on your site is really up to you but I'd recommend front-page accessibility and a section dedicated to "Local deals & offers" where users can find and take advantage of these coupons.

## **State of the Coupon Industry**

Koupon Media—a digital coupon delivery platform for major marketers—recently released their 2016 State of the Mobile Coupon Industry, which goes into great detail about the 2015-2016 trends they saw.

“Consumers are using their smartphones more while they’re shopping, and mobile coupon usage is growing as a result,” said Bill Ogle, CEO of Koupon Media. Further, their study reports that “the number of consumers in the US who used a mobile coupon in 2015 grew 18% to 92.6 million.”

Some of the strongest performing categories include Coffee, Food, Candy and Snacks. The offer types that work best with consumers are FREE services and BOGO offers.

## **Final thoughts**

By targeting those SMBs in your area and presenting offer types that are proven to engage consumers, you can generate coupons that your community will grow to depend on. The mom-and-pop coffee shop advertising with you will quickly see a return on their investments, and you’ll have created a lasting partnership that might not have been there before.

Remember, you’ve still got the one thing that these other places don’t: a dedicated audience who want to know what’s happening around them from a source that’s truly local. You know your area better than any of these larger machines out there. Leverage these advantages to give your community something that delivers real value—to both your advertisers and your readers.



## **Chapter 8:** More solutions for SMBs

# SearchBoost

**BLOX Business Directory & BLOX Classifieds join forces to create a powerful SEO upsell.**

Are you running print display ads online?

If not, you could be missing a HUGE upsell opportunity.

You know the routine, a customer schedules an ad on your site to be included in your next print cycle. The create is finished. You have the run dates. It's ready to go, right?

Not quite.

Take a step back and ask "what could we offer to improve this advertiser's campaign?" Well let's consider the market

- Print advertising, while it remains a strong source for target markets, has slowly decreased over the past several years.
- Online audiences continue to grow at a rapid rate, particularly with younger users.
- Advertisers expect more from their campaigns in a digital age.
- Retention is still just as important as making the initial sale.



So how do you maximize the reach of these ad campaigns? Bring them into the digital age. Placing your print display ads online is a powerful opportunity for your advertisers and for you.

Think this involves additional staffing and more work? Thing again. With **SearchBoost**, it's easy.

**SearchBoost** converts your print ads to SEO-friendly online display ads. We extract the information from your ad files and associate them to a BLOX Business Directory listing resulting with an SEO powerhouse.

The program is typically used as a flat-rate price increase for each advertiser but it's also possible to use **SearchBoost** as a standalone upsell for advertisers.

Ready to make those print display ads do double duty? Ask your [TownNews.com](https://www.townnews.com) [sales representative](#) about **SearchBoost** today.

# NicheGuides

Curate special sections to promote businesses in your area and their expertise.

Pictured below are a four examples of custom advertorial verticals designed around specific niche markets.

## News From Local Businesses

Sponsored stories or press releases submitted by business owners and featured on site for additional fee.

## Pet Guide

Compelling destination for all things pet related. Potential advertisers include pet groomers, breeders, animal shelters & dog parks.

## Rental Guide

Consolidated search for individual rental listings & Business Directory apartment complexes. Target independent rental brokers & small-large apartment communities.

## Readers' Choice Vote

Promote user engagement by allowing your audience to vote for their favorite sushi place or best oil change. Sell ad inventory to participating businesses.

Want to launch a niche guide? Ask your [TownNews.com sales representative](#) about today.

