Apple gives small businesses a direct link to its listings and a way around Google

Apple will soon start displaying more detailed and accurate business listings, all thanks to the company's new Business Connect tool.

The tool gives businesses the ability to tweak store hours and fill out their listings by adding header images and other photos to their place cards, which appear on Maps, Messages, Wallet, Siri, and other apps. Through Business Connect, companies can encourage customers to place orders or make reservations by linking to sites like Instacart, OpenTable, or Booking.com through Apple Maps.

Businesses can also take advantage of something called Showcases, a feature that lets companies list special offers, seasonal menus, product discounts, and more. Business Connect is available globally starting today, while Showcases is now available to all businesses in the US and will launch in other countries in the "coming months."

According to *TechCrunch*, Apple's still not getting rid of its Yelp integration, as Apple Maps will still surface photos, reviews, and menus hosted by Yelp. But Business Connect will let companies build upon these listings by adding information that maybe Yelp doesn't have. Businesses can sign up for the program with their existing Apple ID, and once it's verified, they can proceed to claim and manage their place card for free.

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Apple Maps previously used a tool called the Apple Business Register to provide basic information about a business, photos, reviews, and ratings. While this relied on data from sites like Yelp, TripAdvisor, and Foursquare, the new system gives companies more control over their information. That not only helps business owners better promote their companies, but it’s also a plus for users, as we won’t always have to guess whether a listing’s information is up to date.

Apple benefits from Business Connect as well, as it strengthens the company’s information database, better positioning itself as competition for Google and Facebook, which also have business listings. While Google has long offered ways for businesses to customize their listings on both Search and Maps, Facebook has also become a notable hub for businesses and even expanded the availability of this information across Instagram and WhatsApp.

“We created Business Connect to provide Apple users around the world with the most accurate information for places to eat, shop, travel, and more,” Eddy Cue, Apple’s senior vice president of Services, says in a statement. “Apple Business Connect gives every business owner the tools they need to connect with customers more directly, and take more control over the way billions of people see and engage with their products and services every day.”

https://www.theverge.com/2023/1/11/23550077/apple-business-connect-maps-listings