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For A Limited Time, Google Offers Tax And Accounting Professionals Free Coupon Ads

By Joe Dysart

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[Tax Season Survival Guide](#)

Apparently, there is such a thing as a free lunch — at least in Google Land. The Internet search Goliath is offering tax and accounting professionals and all other U.S. businesses free coupon advertising on its Google Maps site (<http://maps.google.com>)

in an effort to get more businesses to “think Google” for local advertising. Essentially, the coupons pop up on Google Maps when a visitor types in a zip code or town name, along with an industry keyword.

A number of practitioners are already advertising on the Google Maps system. A search on Google Maps for “CPA New York, New York,” for example, brings back sponsored links to Dwarka P. Kalantry (<http://kalantry.com>), Ratafia & Company (<http://www.ratafia.com>) and Lenard A. Silverman (<http://lencpa.com>).

Advertising via Google Maps’ “sponsored links” guarantees high placement in search engine returns when Web users enter in specific keywords, such as CPA New York.

Moreover, similar searches for accountants in other zip codes yield similar sponsored link results. With Google’s coupons, tax and accounting firms

across the country can also enjoy the same kind of exposure offered under the

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saw 23 million visits from Web users in June 2006 alone, who used Google Maps to get driving directions, generate maps of specific areas, and find businesses located in a particular town or zip code.

The service also enables users to get additional information on a business, such as a firm's phone number, street address, hours of operation, directions to the firm, Web and e-mail addresses, user reviews and similar info, by clicking on business names returned by the search.

In practice, creating coupons for Google Maps is a snap. Any practitioner can simply sign up for a free account at Google Local Business Center (www.google.com/local/add), click on the "Coupons" tab, and follow the online prompts to auto-generate their own coupon from a template in about five or 10 minutes. No graphic design skills are necessary, and you don't have to be a champion wordsmith. Essentially, if you have the wherewithal to keypunch in your business name and a few words about your coupon offer, Google Maps will do the rest for you.

"The coupon creation process is very simple, which suggests businesses will use it," says Greg Sterling, an analyst with Sterling Market Intelligence (<http://gesterling.wordpress.com/about>), a market research firm that monitors local search advertising. The fact that 70 percent of U.S. households now use the Web as an information source when shopping locally, according to a March 2005 study from the Kelsey Group (www.kelseygroup.com), may also help convince businesses to take Google up on its offer.

For established firms already in Google's database, the coupons generally appear online in about a week or so, after Google calls to confirm that the business has actually posted a coupon to its Maps site. Brand new businesses

or businesses not on Google's radar may have to wait up to six weeks to

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its own, unique identifier number generated by Google to help prevent coupon fraud. This latest freebie from Google represents an enhancement of its aggressive strategy to build a comprehensive, easily accessible database of businesses throughout the United States, and leverage that database to sell local advertising.

Back in March 2005, Google first went live with the Google Local Business Center, which offers businesses the ability to get listed for free in Google's database, as well as update their listing at any time. Ultimately, Google hopes to profit from its free coupon program by eventually offering businesses the opportunity to feature those coupons on its primary search tool, the Google search engine (www.google.com).

Google search offers businesses a much broader base of users than Google Maps, and is already used by thousands of businesses as an advertising tool. In the meantime, the company is courting the business community with a number of other free promotional services, including the following:

GOOGLE'S WEBMASTER TOOLS

Your website can rank higher in Google's search engine returns after you tweak the site's design with these tools. Specifically, GWT will detail for your webmaster why certain pages on your site are tougher for Google to track and why. GWT will also identify the most popular search terms being used to find your site and allow you to identify and correct any site design "violations" that are preventing the site, or some of its pages, from being listed by Google.

GOOGLE SEARCH FOR WEB SITES

Instead of reinventing the wheel, you can use the same search technology Google uses for its search engine as a search engine for your own site. **Price:**
Free.

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GOOGLE BOOK SEARCH

While this service is primarily designed for publishers, Book Search can also be used by companies offering extensive white papers, educational materials and similar promotional items. This Google service offers info-seekers a preview of a few pages of your book, as well as a link to where they can buy the book online.

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