

What Is Foursquare?

A Business Guide to Location Based Marketing

By:

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Integrating Your Marketing Channels Effectively

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What is Foursquare: A Business Guide to Location Based Marketing

Welcome to Da Li Social’s unique [Foursquare Guide](#). We’ve designed this guide so that any business, whether small, large, retail or even a local ‘mom & pop’ operation, can easily understand exactly what [Foursquare](#) is and how to harness the opportunities geo-social networks like Foursquare offer for location based marketing.

In this easy to read business guide to Foursquare marketing you’ll find the basics, from understanding what a geo-social or location based social network is, to how to set up and manage specials for your location(s). This guide also delves into the unique features of Foursquare such as badges and mayors.

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Foursquare Basics

What are Geo-Social Networks & Location Based Marketing

Foursquare is a geo-social network. A lot of people wonder, “What the heck is a geo-social network?” Basically, a geo-social network is a community that’s primary service is to provide some type of engagement with community members or entities that are geographically or physically close. There are several types of geo-social networks and review sites that have morphed into offering geo-social community features, and with their growing popularity, it’s something local small businesses not only should be paying attention to, but be involved with and utilize to their advantage.

Geo-social networks offer businesses of all types and sizes, especially small businesses, the opportunity to get involved with location based marketing tactics and strategies. If you want the opportunity to reward your most loyal and most actively engaged customers, then participating in location based marketing, such as implementing a Foursquare marketing tactic, is one of the ways your small business can be more successful at it.

What is Foursquare

The biggest geo-social community out there is known as Foursquare. Foursquare allows community members to “check-in” to local establishments at a user’s current location. The check-ins can be posted on other social networks such as Facebook and Twitter and the community member is rewarded with points and the possibility of unlocking badges and mayorships for multiple check-in. We’ll discuss badges, mayorships and the points system later in this guide.

According to [Foursquare](#) itself, they describe their location based community as:

Foursquare is a location-based mobile platform that makes cities easier to use and more interesting to explore. By “checking in” via a smartphone app or SMS, users share their location with friends while collecting points and virtual badges. Foursquare guides real-world experiences by allowing users to bookmark information about venues that they want to visit and surfacing relevant suggestions about nearby venues. Merchants and brands leverage the Foursquare platform by utilizing a wide set of tools to obtain, engage, and retain customers and audiences.

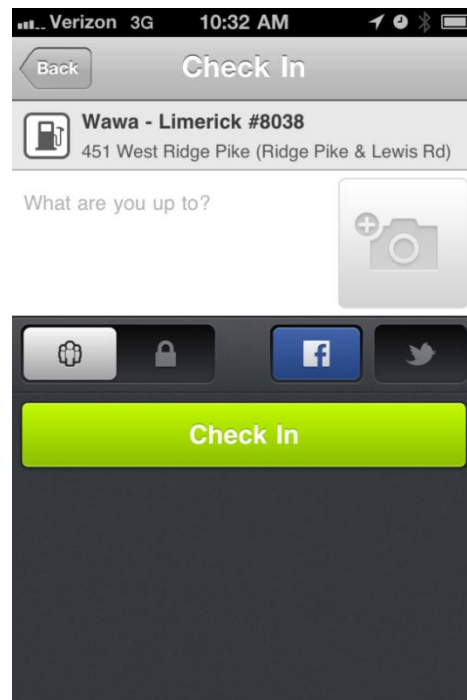
As of April 2011 Foursquare had:

- Over 10 million users worldwide
- Over 3 million Check-ins per day, with over 750 million check-ins total
- Over 500,000 businesses using the Merchant Platform

Foursquare can be run by both web and mobile applications, however, primarily check-ins are executed by smartphones such as iPhone's, Android's and Blackberry's. Special mobile applications designed by Foursquare for each specific mobile platform can be downloaded for free from Foursquare's web site or via the various platforms' app store.

What are Check-ins

A check-in is when a Foursquare user chooses either the web application or mobile application to let the Foursquare community know where they are. Foursquare will assign points at the check-in based on how close to the location the smartphone or the computer/tablet is.



Users can add messages to their check-ins as well as photos. When they add messages and photos to their recent check-ins they'll appear in the user's profile (and to other social network postings if connected).

According to Foursquare:

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You should check in when you go to a place and spend some time there. We don't set limits on check-ins, but if our system thinks you're checking into too many places in a short amount of time, checking into places that are too far to reasonably travel between, or consistently checking into places that are far from where your device thinks you are, we won't award points, badges, or mayorships for your check-in.

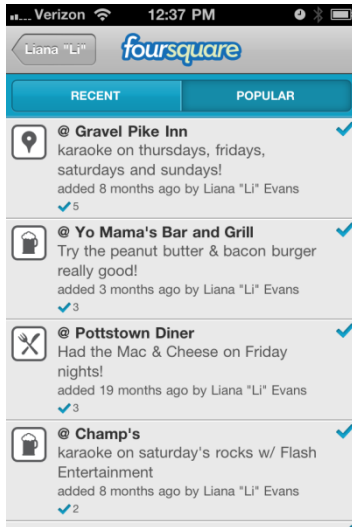
Interaction with Other Social Networks

Foursquare allows their community members to connect their Foursquare profiles with other social networks and communities such as Facebook and Twitter. Foursquare also has a public API (application program interface) that can allow programmers to access Foursquare data to display on blogs, forums/message boards and interact with other social applications.

Community users of Foursquare can choose to have check-ins, mayorships and badges post to their connected profiles.

What are Tips & To Do's on Foursquare

Tips and To Do's on Foursquare are very similar in nature to basic reviews of a location. Foursquare users are encouraged to add tips such as "try the sushi" or "smoking bar without smoke eaters" to the establishment. There are no restrictions to adding tips or to do's to a location.



According to Foursquare:

Foursquare has come to be as much about sharing experiences as it has about connecting with friends and discovering new places. Every Foursquare user has the ability to create both "Tips" and "To-Dos" for places. Tips are generally things you'd recommend to others ("Go to PDT and try the bacon-infused Old Fashioned") while To-Dos are more "notes to self" ("Remember to come back and try the pesto noodles").

Whenever you check-in to a location, we'll try to pop-up a tip that one of your friends has left nearby (you'll be surprised how often these help you choose what to order at a bar or restaurant!). And, of course, you can take these Tips and To-Dos with you on your phone so wherever you happen to be, you'll always have a recommendation of something interesting to do nearby.

Foursquare's Points System

Foursquare awards points to community members who check-in to establishments. Depending on several factors, different points are awarded to each check in. Generally for each check-in after your first time you are awarded one point.

If you check into a location several times a week, are a mayor or manage to open a badge, additional points can be added to the score. When you check-in you are shown your total points for the check-in and below the total the system shows you where you are ranked against your friends in the community.

Becoming a Mayor of a Foursquare Location

One of the rewards that Foursquare awards to loyal users who consistently check-in to establishments is crowning them mayor of the location. Only Foursquare users who have photos on their profiles can qualify for being a mayor.

Foursquare's definition of a mayor is:

*A mayor in Foursquare is the user with the most number of *days* with check-ins at a specific place within the past 60 days. Only one check-in per day counts towards your mayorship tally. If*



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you have a lot of check-ins that seem fake or consistently far away from where you are checking in, these check-ins will not count towards the mayorship total. Lots of businesses are now offering specials for the mayor of venues, so be sure to keep a look out for specials nearby when you're looking at the places tab in the app.

Foursquare Badges



Foursquare started the phenomena of awarding badges to Foursquare users based on certain criteria of multiple check-ins. This criteria is usually one user checking into a series of locations that qualify for the badge, or as in the case of the Swarming badge, where a user checks into a location with a lot of other Foursquare users at the same period of time (this tends to happen in airports, or special event venues such as a concert).

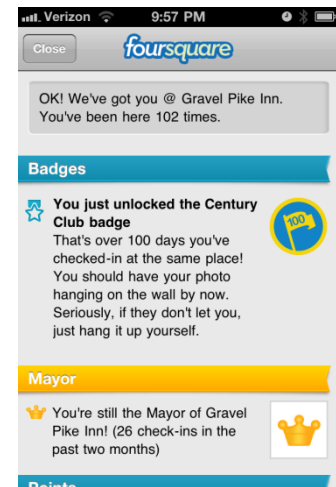
The most common Foursquare assigned badges involve checking into more than one location that has something like a photo booth or is tagged as a karaoke bar to unlock a certain badge. When Foursquare first started out badges were created and assigned by Foursquare. However, in the past 2 years, Foursquare has developed “Partner

Badges” where companies’ partner with Foursquare to create badges based on their brands or specific opportunities.

Foursquare defines their badges and partner badges as:

Badges are little rewards you earn based on your check in habits (for example, frequenting too many karaoke bars, eating lots of pizza, taking your kids to the playground). We're constantly adding new badges, and you can earn fun badges from some of the brands we partner with.

To unlock partner badges, you must first "follow" the [brand page on Foursquare](#). Once you follow different pages, you will be able to see their expert tips on relevant venues and maybe even special instructions on how to unlock their partner badge(s)!



Harnessing Foursquare for Your Business

Claiming Your Establishment

One of the most important things for a business trying to use Foursquare to do is to ensure that they claim their business on Foursquare. This will verify that all the information about your location is correct, from address to hours of operation. It's vitally important to claim your establishment in Foursquare.

There is another important reason for staking your claim for your establishment in Foursquare. Once a business claims their location they can then begin to participate in the merchant platform (discussed further on in this guide). Participating in the merchant platform will allow a business to offer specials and deals to their loyal patrons who are checking into the location through Foursquare.

The screenshot shows the Foursquare interface for the 'Spring Valley Branch YMCA'. The header includes the Foursquare logo and user information for 'Liana "Li" in Schwenksville, Pennsylvania'. The main content area displays the venue's name, address (19 Linfield-Trappe Rd, Township Line Road, Limerick, PA 19468), and contact number (484) 984-2000. A map shows the location with a red pin. To the right, statistics are shown: 20 check-ins, 117 total people, and 1,095 total check-ins. Below the statistics, the 'Mayor' section shows 'Jen Z.' with 28 check-ins. A red arrow points to a 'Claim here' link at the bottom right of the page.

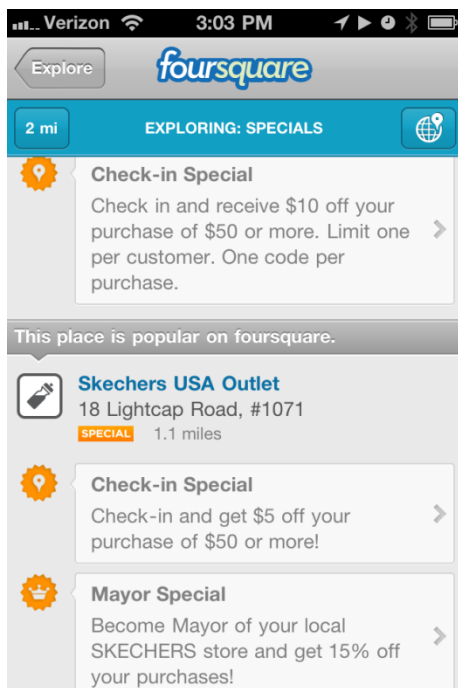
There is one issue that businesses in Foursquare should be aware of: community members who are checking into places can add your location several times just so they can become mayor (which is against Foursquare rules). These people tend not to be serious consumers, but are rather people using Foursquare to participate in the game of collecting mayorships. Once you claim your business's real location, you can request from Foursquare to remove all duplicate location listings.

Merchant Platform

With its new Merchant API (*Application Programming Interface*) Foursquare allows merchants to create specials using any technology they want. These specials may consist of partnerships with companies like Yext, whose power listings show businesses how they look on the Internet. It allows small business merchants to have the same experience and opportunities as larger agencies and retail store chains who manage different locations.

The new API also allows merchants to set options for the type of special, the rules for the special and finally, your offer's description. These tools are now available on all business platforms so that businesses large and small can share the same specials and more importantly allows small businesses to get clients they might otherwise never have gotten.

Specials, Offers and Deals



Specials have been a popular part of Foursquare for some time. The idea of getting a free appetizer or a bottle of wine with a number of check-ins has always been a huge part of the process for participants interested in more than just collecting mayorships.

A Foursquare special is an offer unique to your establishment that you create for new visitors or loyal customers who check-in on Foursquare. After you have claimed your business on Foursquare, you can get started by setting the rules and redemption method behind your specials by clicking "manage specials" on your venue page. Your specials will be approved as long as they follow these guidelines:

1. Businesses must be able to instantly fulfill the offer. Advertisements and general messaging are not permitted.
2. The special must only be offered to Foursquare users. It cannot be another offer that the general public is eligible for.

Here are a couple examples of specials:

- 1) Customer loyalty offer (or X check-ins in Y days):
"Check in to Joe's Pub 3 times in a week and get a free appetizer!"
- 2) Mayorship Offers:
"One free dessert per week for the current mayor!"

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Note: Foursquare will routinely check to see that your specials meet the guidelines.

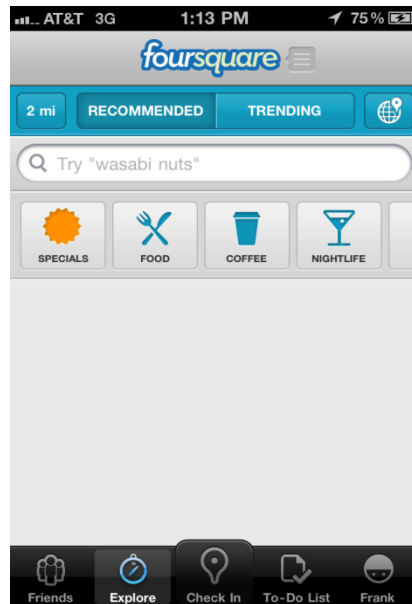
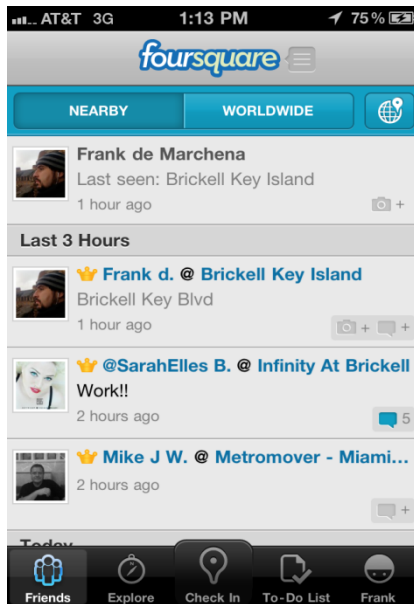
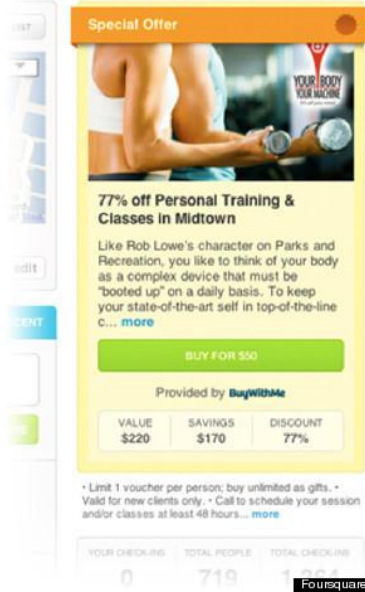
In late June of 2011, Foursquare decided to up the ante a bit and started offering nationally based offers. The first offer was with American Express and a series of national chains. This allowed American Express customers to link their accounts to their credit card, therefore receiving credit for purchases.

In early July 2011, Foursquare announced that specials would now include 'Deals'. These, unlike specials, would be those deep discounts that consumers can purchase ahead of time as opposed to the "get it now mentality" of Foursquare's typical specials. In order to do this, Foursquare made agreements with five different companies who offer these types of discounts. These include:

- [LivingSocial](#), with their handpicked experiences that you can share with friends all over the world
- [Gilt City](#), which unlocks insider access to the best of your city, like exclusive menus and tickets to sold-out shows
- [zozi](#), focusing exclusively on unique experiences and activities like moonlight kayaking, cycling, wine tasting, and shark diving
- [BuyWithMe](#), for discovering the best experiences in 13 cities across the U.S.
- [AT&T Interactive](#) (Deal of the Day from YP.com), with over 50% off their daily deals for real life in Atlanta, Dallas/Ft. Worth and Los Angeles.

The unique part of this type of experience is that going forward these types of specials can be tailored specifically to consumers based on their friends, their location and the companies they follow. It allows consumers to choose the special they like from their favorite place or to learn of new places to visit based on the recommendations they received.

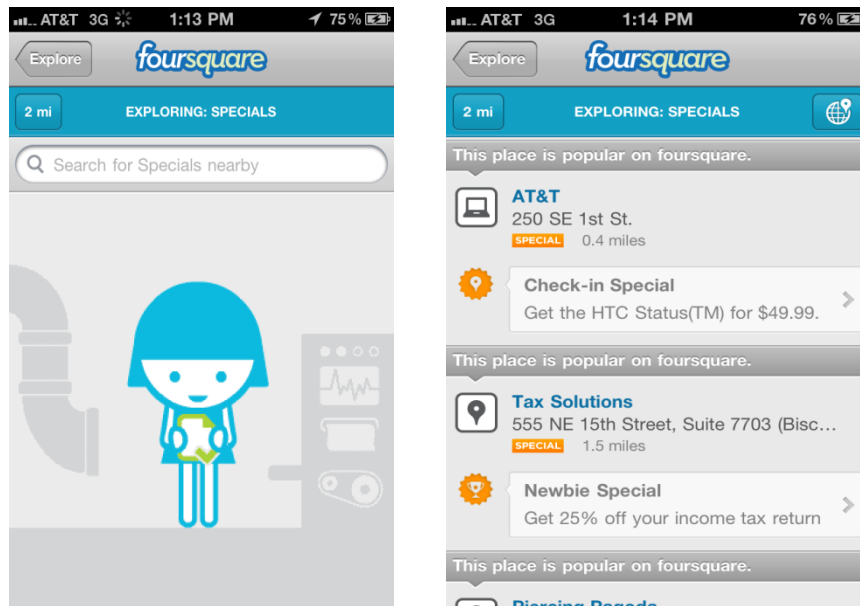
Incidentally, this feature has been available for some time now but it was buried and took more than a few clicks before it could be located. With the new redesign of Foursquare's application it is now available under the "explore" option and then "specials".



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Consumers can now find and purchase these specials on Foursquare.com as well.

Business Pages

For over a year Foursquare has been quietly working on Business Pages. Last year they have helped over 3000 businesses by building pages for them on Foursquare, which was a very manually intensive process only open to bigger companies and agencies like Intel, MTV, the New York Times, Tiffany & Co. and NASA, to name a few. This summer Foursquare launched the Business Pages feature so that all brands, organizations or publications can now create a page, gain followers, share tips, check-in to places and reach their fans in as little as 10 minutes.

Creating a Business Page on Foursquare

Creating a page is as easy as following directions. In fact, any business can have a presence on Foursquare in the time it takes to brew a pot of coffee.

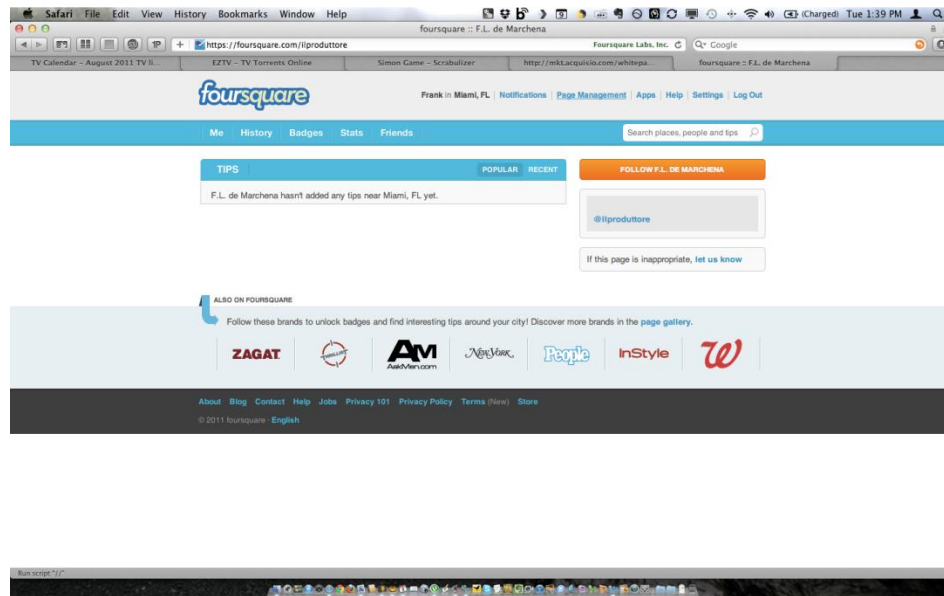
You need only 3 things to create your very own Foursquare page:

1. A Foursquare user account – if you don't have one, you can sign up [here](#).
2. You need to agree to their Terms of Service.
3. A Twitter account for your business. Your new page's link will be Foursquare.com/twitter_name

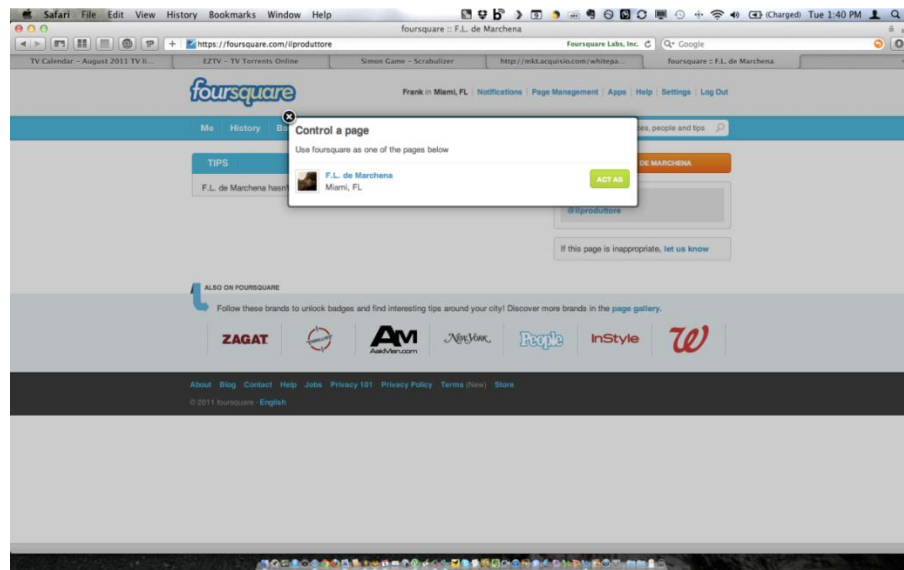
Once you have these in place you can go [here](#) to create your own page by following the directions.

Managing Your Business Page

As with your regular Foursquare account, you can make changes to your page via the web only. Logging into Foursquare.com, you can select “Page Management” in the links in the top right corner of the site.

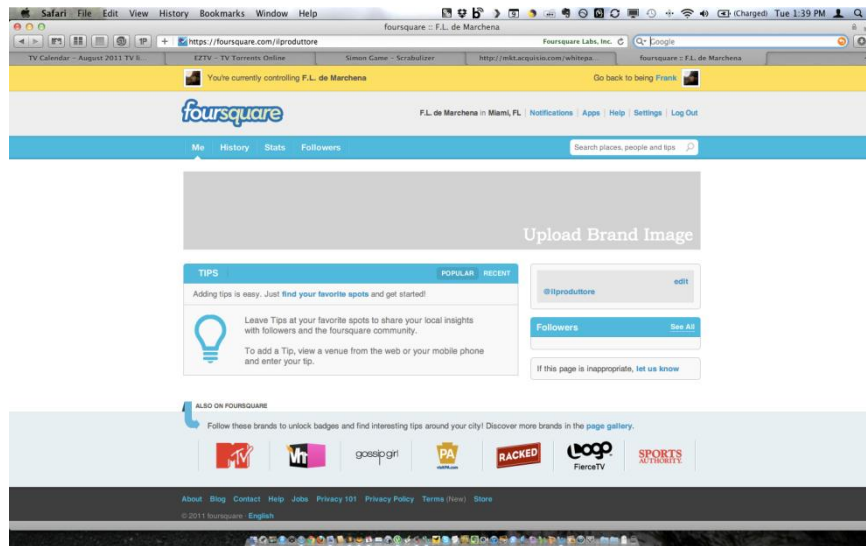


If you manage multiple pages a small dialog box will pop up on your screen asking you to select the page you would like to be represented as. This is known as “acting as a page”.



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While you are “acting as a page” you will see a yellow navigation bar at the top that will be your window back to your regular account.



It is also important to remember that while you are acting as your page, all actions that you undertake will be as your page and not your personal account.

Some things to remember about managing your Foursquare Business Page:

1. To leave a tip from your page, visit any page on Foursquare.com and add a tip in the “tips” box on the left hand side of the page.
2. To add additional managers after the setup of a page, go to “settings” and scroll down until you see “managers” and enter the Foursquare user ID you wish to add.

Custom Badges

Brands can now create custom badges in partnership with Foursquare. These custom badges are designed by a business rather than by Foursquare. Creating custom badges can help promote your business within the very active and loyal Foursquare user base.



Custom Badges Example: Custom Badges for Universities

Custom badges must go through an approval process with Foursquare and not all custom badge requests are approved. They will cost a significant amount, which businesses should budget for. There is a minimum commitment to Foursquare of \$25,000 a month for 3 months needed to create a custom badge. Once a request is submitted, the approval process generally takes two weeks to complete. Foursquare is very clear in pointing out that they will only accept badges that are a clear and logical fit, as they are for the moment not capable of creating badges for all brands. You can find the process to approve a custom badge [here](#).

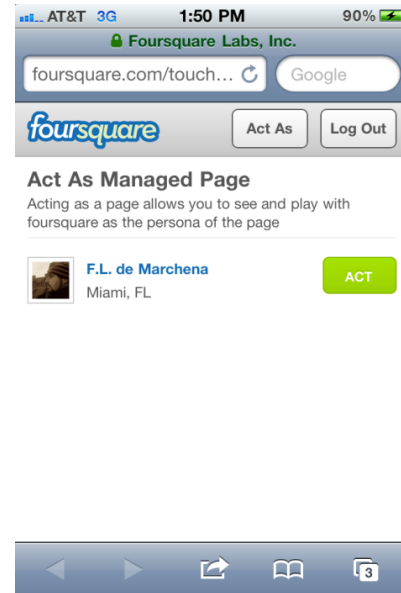
Some examples of the more popular custom badges are:

- The [historian badge](#) is earned by checking in at two [History Channel](#) approved attractions.
- [Zagat](#) offers followers a [foodie badge](#) for five check-ins to Zagat-rated venues.
- [MTV's Foursquare followers](#) can earn the Jersey Shore "GTL badge" by checking in to a gym, tanning place, beach or laundry business in the course of a seven day period.

Checking- in to Your Business Page as Your Business Page

Unfortunately for the moment you cannot use the Foursquare mobile phone applications to check-in to any locations as your page identity. Right now there are only two ways to do it:

1. Checking in via Foursquare.com
2. Go to http://Foursquare.com/touch/switch_accounts on your phone's web browser. It is important that you are logged in to the Foursquare app on your phone or in your browser first. Once there the instructions are simple. Just select "act as the page" you wish to check-in from. Again, you will see the yellow navigation bar at the top. Next, you just search for your venue and check-in. Simple as that. When you are done, hit the "resume" button and your account switches back. Remember you can only check-in as your page in this way.



Have Any Questions?

If you have any questions about this "What is Foursquare" guide please feel free to [email us](#), Tweet at us ([@DaLiSocial](#)) or stop by our [Facebook Fan page](#) and drop us a comment. We'll be happy to answer any questions you may have about Foursquare and how to leverage it in your online marketing strategy.

We also have an array of other [free online marketing resources](#) that covers other social media topics that you can download for free:

- eBook: [Social Media Myths](#)
- eBook: [3 Keys to Content Creation and Success in Social Media](#)
- presentation: [Search Engine Strategies Chicago 2010: Killer Facebook Marketing Tactics](#)
- presentation: [Internet Summit 2010: Integrating Search Marketing \(SEO\) & Social Media](#)

About the Authors

Liana "Li" Evans



Liana "Li" Evans is the author of the award winning [social media marketing book](#), **"Social Media Marketing: Engaging Strategies for Facebook, Twitter & Other Social Media"** and she is the CEO and President of [Da Li Social](#) as well as an adjunct professor for [Rutgers University's Mini MBA Program](#). Liana has also been featured in the books *Online Marketing Heroes* and *Video Marketing An Hour a Day*.

As an established online marketing industry veteran with over 15 years' experience she's focused her unique skillset to specialize in Integrated Marketing and how companies can successfully strategize integrating all online marketing channels as well as offline traditional media. Her deep technical background combined with a public relations background enables her to partner with clients for establishing successful online marketing campaigns that combine cross channel tactics cohesively.

Li was the Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Social Media Marketing architect for such companies as QVC, Comcast (Fancast) and has consulted with several other different sized companies such as AOL MovieFone. Her wealth of knowledge in dealing with large e-commerce and content sites allows her a wider perspective into what it takes to launch successful marketing campaigns in the online space.

Frank de Marchena



Frank de Marchena was the PPC Specialist for LiBeck Integrated Marketing. With background a rich financial background, Frank was looking for a change of pace when he was tapped to be part of the pay per click marketing efforts of several clients. His deep financial background lends well to understanding the needs of managing large scale PPC Marketing campaigns and justifying spending budgets and showing the ROI on such campaigns.

Frank has worked for 12 years in Operations at companies such as Putnam Investments and TIAA-CREF. His clients included Fortune 500 companies, like Abbott Laboratories, Coca Cola and Viacom and institutions of Higher Learning like Florida State University and Villanova. His area of expertise was Market Forecasting and Client Relations. He has worked tirelessly to ensure that the futures of his clients were well attended to.

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About The Company: Da Li Social



Da Li Social was created with the idea to help businesses of all sizes and all types succeed in integrating their online marketing efforts cohesively together and also ensuring their offline efforts also integrate with the overall online marketing picture. So many companies are bombarded with agencies telling them what they “should” be doing, but are they really explaining “why you should” do what they are promoting to you?

Da Li Social doesn’t just have a laundry list of “social media sites” we put our clients on. Before we recommend any tactic of a strategy is implemented, we research to make sure it’s right for each and every clients end goals.

With over 25 years of combined experience in programming, public relations, search marketing, social media, website usability / conversion and analytics the Da Li Social team partners with their clients to implement strategies that are both efficient and successful.