MARKETING 4 THE FUTURE

THE GOOGLE BUSINESS PROFILE PLAYBOOK

How to Optimize Your Google Business Profile to Maximize New Customer Reach

Your Google listing is the first impression most customers ever get of your business — and for local searches, it matters more than your website. This playbook walks you through the exact setup, content, review, and maintenance steps we use to turn a basic listing into a steady stream of calls, directions, and new customers.

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WHY THIS MATTERS

Your Listing Is Your New Storefront

When someone nearby searches for what you do — “pest control near me,” “best dentist in Tucson,” “roof repair” — Google almost never sends them to a list of websites first. It shows the map pack: three local businesses, pulled straight from Google Business Profiles. If you're not in that pack, for most local buyers you effectively don't exist.

The numbers behind it:

- **Google is the front door.** The overwhelming majority of local purchase journeys start with a Google search or a Maps lookup — not your website, not social media.
- **The map pack takes the clicks.** The three businesses shown with the map capture most of the calls and direction requests from a local search.
- **Complete profiles win.** Google has reported that customers are roughly 70% more likely to visit — and 50% more likely to buy from — a business with a complete Business Profile.
- **Photos drive action.** Listings with photos receive significantly more requests for directions and click-throughs than listings without them.
- **Reviews close the sale.** Star rating and review count are the first trust filter customers apply — before price, before your website.

The good news: your Business Profile is free, you control it, and most of your competitors have set theirs up once and forgotten it. The six steps in this playbook are how you take the advantage they're leaving on the table.

The goal is simple: show up in the map pack for the searches your customers actually make — and look like the obvious choice when you do.

STEP 1

Claim It and Get the Fundamentals Exactly Right

Everything else in this playbook builds on a correctly claimed, verified, and consistent profile. Skipping this step is the #1 reason listings underperform.

Claim and verify

Search for your business on Google Maps. If a listing exists, claim it at google.com/business; if not, create it. Complete verification (video, postcard, or phone, depending on what Google offers your business type). An unverified profile can't be fully edited and won't rank at its potential.

Name, address, phone — exact and consistent

- **Business name:** your real-world business name only. Stuffing keywords into the name (“Joe's Plumbing — Best Cheap Plumber Tucson”) violates Google's guidelines and can get the listing suspended.
- **Address:** your real physical location. If you serve customers at their location, hide the address and set service areas instead — don't use a P.O. Box or virtual office.
- **Phone:** a local number you actually answer, identical everywhere it appears online.
- **Consistency:** name, address, and phone must match your website, Facebook page, Yelp, BBB, and industry directories character-for-character. Mismatches dilute Google's confidence and your rankings.

Hours and links

Set regular hours, then add special hours for every holiday — Google surfaces “open now” heavily in local results. Link your website, and if you take them, add appointment/booking and menu/price-list links where your category allows.

Quick win: add UTM tags to your website link (?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=gbp) so you can see in analytics exactly how much traffic and how many leads your profile sends you.

STEP 2

Categories, Services, and Attributes: Tell Google Exactly What You Do

Google matches your profile to searches based largely on what you tell it here. This is the highest-leverage section of the entire listing.

Get the primary category right

Your primary category is the single strongest ranking signal in the profile. Choose the most specific category that describes your whole business — “Pest control service,” not “Exterminator” if both exist and the former is your core. Then add every secondary category that genuinely applies; each one opens you up to another set of searches.

List every service

- Add each service you offer as its own entry, using the names customers search for (“termite inspection,” “rodent exclusion,” “weed control”).
- Write a short description for each service — what it includes, who it's for, and your service area.
- Add prices or price ranges where you're comfortable. Listings with pricing get more qualified clicks — and fewer tire-kickers.
- Revisit the list quarterly. New services, seasonal services, and services you want more of should all be reflected.

Turn on every attribute that applies

Attributes — women-led, veteran-owned, wheelchair accessible, free Wi-Fi, outdoor seating, LGBTQ+ friendly, and dozens more depending on category — appear as highlights on your listing and feed “search by attribute” queries. Check every one that's true; each is a small extra reason to be chosen.

Think like a customer: for every field in this section, ask “what would someone type into Google the day they need me?” — then make sure that exact idea appears somewhere in your profile.

STEP 3

Photos and Video That Turn Views Into Calls

Your profile is a visual listing. Customers judge your professionalism in about three seconds — from your photos. Profile photos are also one of the clearest signals to Google that a business is active and real.

What to upload first

- **Logo and cover photo** that match your branding everywhere else.
- **Exterior shots** — storefront, signage, parking — so customers recognize you on arrival.
- **Interior shots** that show the space clean, lit, and welcoming.
- **The team at work** — real people doing the actual job. These outperform stock photos every time.
- **Before-and-afters and finished work** — the proof. For service businesses, this is your portfolio.
- **Short video** — a 20–30 second walkthrough or a quick owner introduction. Video is still rare on local listings, which is exactly why it stands out.

Make it a habit, not a project

Aim for at least 10 solid photos at setup, then add 2–4 fresh photos every month. A profile that gains new photos regularly signals an operating, growing business. Use bright, high-resolution images, name the files descriptively before uploading (team-at-work.jpg beats IMG_4021.jpg), and delete anything outdated the moment it stops representing you.

One rule: every photo should answer a customer's silent question — “Can I trust these people?” Real beats polished. Your actual crew, truck, and storefront will always out-convert a stock library.

STEP 4

Build a Review Engine

Reviews decide who gets the call. A business with 4.8 stars and 300 reviews will beat a 5.0 with twelve almost every time — customers read volume as reliability. The businesses that win reviews don't get lucky; they run a system.

Ask at the right moment, every time

- **Timing:** ask right after the successful outcome — the finished job, the compliment, the “thank you, this is great.” That's when customers are happiest to say yes.
- **Make it one tap:** use your Google review link (or a QR code on invoices, receipts, vehicles, and the front desk) that lands directly on the review form. Every extra step kills your response rate.
- **Script it:** give your team one simple line — “If we earned it, a Google review helps us more than anything. I'll text you the link.” Then actually send it.
- **Follow up once:** a single friendly reminder a few days later is fine. Never pay for reviews, never offer incentives, and never review yourself — Google removes them and can penalize the listing.

Respond to every review — yes, every one

Thank happy customers by name and mention the service naturally. For negative reviews, respond calmly within 24–48 hours, acknowledge the issue, and move the conversation offline (“Please call us at… so we can make it right”). Prospective customers judge you less on the bad review than on how you handled it — and Google counts owner responses as profile activity.

Set the target: a steady flow beats a burst. Aim for a consistent number of new reviews every month rather than 50 in one week followed by silence — steady velocity looks natural to customers and to Google.

STEP 5

Stay Active: Posts, Q&A;, and Messaging

A profile you update regularly outperforms one you set and forget. Google gives you three free tools to stay active — most businesses use none of them.

Google Posts

Post like it's a mini social feed: offers, seasonal services, events, new hires, recent jobs, community involvement. One post a week is plenty. Lead with a strong photo, keep the text short, and always attach the action button (Call now, Book, Learn more). Posts appear right on your listing when customers are deciding — it's free advertising at the exact moment of intent.

Questions & Answers

- Seed your own FAQs: post the 5–8 questions customers ask most (“Do you offer free estimates?” “Are you licensed and insured?”) and answer them yourself. You control the first answers shoppers see.
- Turn on notifications so real customer questions get answered within a day. Anyone can answer a question on your listing — make sure the right answer is yours.

Messaging and booking

Enable messaging if — and only if — someone will actually respond within the hour during business hours; unanswered chats hurt more than no chat at all. If your category supports online booking or estimate requests, connect them. Every contact option you add is another path from search to sale that skips your competitors entirely.

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15 minutes a week: one post, a photo or two, review replies, and a Q&A; check. That's the entire maintenance rhythm — consistency here is what separates the map pack from everyone below it.

STEP 6

Measure It and Keep It Current

Your profile's Performance tab (in the Google Business dashboard) tells you exactly what your listing is producing. Check it monthly and watch four numbers:

- **Searches / views:** how many people saw your profile, and the actual search terms that triggered it. New terms = new category or service ideas.
- **Calls:** the money metric for most local businesses. Trend it month over month.
- **Direction requests:** a strong proxy for foot traffic and purchase intent.
- **Website clicks and bookings:** tie these to the UTM tags from Step 1 so your GBP results show up in your regular analytics.

The monthly 10-minute checklist

- Hours still right? Special hours set for upcoming holidays?
- Photos: 2–4 new ones added? Anything outdated removed?
- Reviews: all answered? Ask-system still running?
- Services and posts current — anything new, seasonal, or discontinued?
- Name, address, phone still consistent everywhere online?

Finally, protect the asset: keep your Google account credentials secure, add a second manager you trust, and never give ownership of your listing to a vendor or agency — grant manager access instead. Your profile is one of the most valuable marketing assets your business owns. Treat it that way.

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Want Us to Do It With You?

Everything in this playbook works — if it gets done, and keeps getting done. If you'd rather spend your time running your business, our team at Marketing for the Future will build, optimize, and manage your Google Business Profile as part of a complete local marketing program: SEO, advertising, social, and the follow-through most agencies skip.

Start with a free Google Business Profile audit. We'll review your listing the way a customer — and Google — sees it, and send you a plain list of exactly what to fix first, whether you hire us or not.

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Marketing for the Future, LLC has helped local and national brands turn searchers into customers since 2011. Let's make your listing the next one that does it.