

FREE GUIDE · 11 CHAPTERS



How to fill your week with work

The local marketing guide for service businesses: how to get customers in your area to find you first

Before you start

This guide is, literally, what we do for our clients. It is not a preview or a summary: it is the whole method, written so you can follow it yourself if you have the time.

It is written for owners of service businesses in the United States: plumbing, roofing, HVAC, landscaping, cleaning, remodeling, electrical, pest control and similar trades. If you serve a specific area and you live off the phone ringing, this is for you.

There are no shortcuts here and no tricks. There is an order of work. Do things in the order they appear and they work; start at chapter nine and they will not.

Doing it properly is ten to fifteen hours a month, every month, on top of running your business. If you have those hours, take them. If not, you know where we are.

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How your customers find you today

Fifteen years ago a service business lived off the Yellow Pages and the neighbor's referral. The neighbor's referral still rules, but now it goes through a screen: your neighbor recommends you and the person looks you up on Google anyway before calling. If they find nothing, or find something abandoned, the referral cools off.

The four paths

When someone in the United States needs a plumber, a roofer or a house cleaner, they almost always arrive by one of four paths:

1. **The map.** They type “plumber near me” and Google shows a map with three businesses on top. That block of three takes most of the calls. It's called the local pack.
2. **The regular results.** Below the map come the websites. This is where pages that answer specific questions win: “how much to replace a water heater in Houston”.
3. **The other maps.** Someone with an iPhone asking Siri isn't using Google: they're using Apple Maps. Someone in the habit of vetting contractors may open Yelp directly.
4. **AI.** More and more people ask ChatGPT or their phone assistant. Those answers get assembled by reading maps, directories, reviews and websites.

The three factors that order the map

Google publishes how it decides local pack order. Three things:

- **Relevance:** how well your business matches what the person typed. Your profile category and your site's pages define this.
- **Distance:** how close you are to the searcher, or to the place they named. You don't fully control it, but you do control how you declare your service area.
- **Prominence:** how well known you are. Reviews, mentions on other sites, links, data consistency. It's the most workable part and the part almost nobody works.

Everything in this guide pushes one of those three levers. If something pushes none of them, don't do it.

A warning about impatience

Google profile work can move in weeks. Ranking the website in search usually takes three to six months of consistent effort. It's not slow because someone is doing it wrong: it's slow because prominence accumulates. Anyone promising first place in 30 days is selling smoke.

Your site's structure

The most expensive mistake a service business makes with its website is having one page called “Services” with a list of everything it does. It feels tidy. And it's the number one reason the site doesn't show up in search.

The second most expensive mistake is the fix almost everyone attempts next: one page per service, plus separate pages per city. It sounds logical and it doesn't work.

People don't search for a service. They search for a service in a place

Nobody types “drain cleaning”. They type `drain cleaning in Katy`. And Google sends people to pages, not sites: it looks for a page about drain cleaning in Katy specifically.

If you have a “drain cleaning” page (that names no particular city) and a “Katy” page (that covers all six services you offer there), neither one fully matches what the person typed. You compete halfway on two fronts instead of winning on one.

The real rule is this: **one page for each service in each city**. Services × cities. That's your page map.

What a structure that actually wins looks like

```

Home
├── Services (index, for navigation only)
│   ├── Drain cleaning in Houston
│   ├── Drain cleaning in Katy
│   ├── Drain cleaning in Sugar Land
│   ├── Leak repair in Houston
│   ├── Leak repair in Katy
│   ├── Leak repair in Sugar Land
│   ├── Water heaters in Houston
│   └── ... and so on for each combination
├── Service area (overview map, links to all)
├── About
├── Reviews
└── Blog
  
```

The “Services” and “Service area” pages still exist, but their job changes: they're no longer trying to rank, just to organize and link through to the ones that do.

Do the math before you get excited

Six services across three cities is eighteen pages. Eight services across five cities is forty. That's a lot of work if every page has to be good, and they do have to be good.

Which is why order matters more than volume:

1. Start with the service that makes you the most money, in the city you work most. Make that page excellent.
2. Then the same service in your second and third cities.
3. Then your second most profitable service, in the same cities.
4. Services you barely sell can wait, or live inside the index without their own page.

Five well-built service-and-city pages beat forty filled-in templates.

The obvious trap: copy and swap the name

The temptation is to write “drain cleaning in Houston”, duplicate it, and change Houston to Katy. That's duplicate content, Google spots it without effort, and worse: it convinces nobody who reads it.

A service-and-city page that works contains things that could only be on that page:

- How long it takes you to reach that area and where you drive from.
- Problems typical of there (older homes with cast iron, new subdivisions with low pressure, hard water, shifting soil).
- Jobs of that service done in that city, with photos.
- Reviews from customers in that city.
- Neighborhoods and landmarks locals recognize.
- Pricing or ranges, if they differ by area.

If you can't write that about a combination, you shouldn't have that page yet.

How they link to each other

Each service-and-city page should link to the services index, to the same service in neighboring cities, and to your other services in that same city. That way someone who arrived looking for a leak in Katy easily discovers you also replace water heaters in Katy.

IN SHORT

One page for each service in each city, not one services page plus one city page. Start with the combination that makes you the most money and write it properly, not by copying.

Design that turns a visit into a message

Bringing in visits is half the job. The other half is getting that visit to message you. A site with a thousand visits a month and two calls is broken, and more traffic won't fix it.

What's visible without scrolling

On a phone you have roughly three seconds and one screen. That screen has to fit:

- What you do and where. “Emergency plumbing in Houston”, not “Integrated solutions for your home”.
- A reason to trust you: years in business, license, review count.
- A call button and a message button, large, visible, and pinned as the person scrolls.

The phone number has to dial itself

A number written as plain text is useless on mobile. It has to be a link that dials on tap. Sounds obvious, and it fails on half the local business sites we review.

Short forms or none

Every field you add to a form drops conversion. Name, phone, and one line of “what do you need?” is enough. Don't ask for last name, ZIP, property type or “how did you hear about us”. Ask that once they're already talking to you.

And if your customers live in WhatsApp, a direct WhatsApp button converts better than any form, because you're not asking them to trust before talking: you're handing them a conversation.

Heatmaps: stop guessing

A heatmap is a picture of your own page showing where people clicked, how far they scrolled, and where they paused to read. Session recordings show the full path of an anonymous visit.

With that you stop arguing opinions. Things you always discover:

- That almost nobody scrolls past the second screen, so everything important you put down low doesn't exist.
- That people click photos that aren't links, because they want to see them bigger.
- That one long paragraph mid-page is exactly where they leave.
- That the menu's “Contact” link gets used far less than the call button in the header.

The right way to use them is to change one thing a month and look again. Changing five things at once tells you nothing about which one worked.

Proof, not adjectives

“Quality service with years of experience” convinces nobody because everyone says it. What convinces: photos of your real jobs, with your truck and your crew; reviews with a name and a city; license and insurance visible; and telling people roughly what it costs, even as a range.

IN SHORT

Contact button visible without scrolling, short forms, real photos, and heatmaps so you stop guessing where people drop off.

Speed and the technical basics

Nobody hires an agency for “structured data”. But if this is wrong, everything else underperforms. It's a short list and it gets fixed once.

Speed

Almost all your visitors will open the site on a phone, often on mediocre signal. Every second of waiting costs you people, and in an emergency it costs you the whole job: they go back to the map and call the next one.

What weighs most, in order:

- **Uncompressed images.** A 4 MB photo straight off a phone is the number one cause of a slow site. They get compressed and served in modern formats.
- **Bloated templates and plugins.** Many sites load the code for twenty features the business never uses.
- **Heavy fonts and videos.** A background video looks great on the designer's desktop and kills the page on a phone.

Measure it on mobile data, not wifi, and from a normal phone, not the most expensive one on the market.

Titles and descriptions

Every page needs its own title (the blue line in Google) and its own description. If ten pages share a title, Google doesn't know which one to show.

A good service page title: **Drain Cleaning in Katy, TX | Business Name** . Service, city, business. No decoration.

Headings in order

One H1 per page, stating what it's about. Subheads in H2 and H3, in order. Don't use headings just because they look big.

Structured data

It's a small piece of invisible code that tells Google in its own language: this business is called this, it's here, it's open these hours, it charges in this range, it offers these services. For a local business it's among the highest-return work there is, because it's also what AI answers drink from.

The basics that can't be missing

- A security certificate (the address starts with https).
- A sitemap submitted to Google Search Console and Bing Webmaster Tools.
- One single version of the site (with www or without, not both).
- Alt text on images, describing what's actually shown.
- Analytics installed, so you know how many calls and messages come from the site.

IN SHORT

Compress the photos, give every page its own title, add structured data, and measure from a phone on mobile data.

The Google Business Profile, in depth

If you could fix only one thing this month, this would be it. The Google Business Profile decides whether you appear on the map, and it's free.

Primary category: the most important decision

Your primary category outweighs almost everything else on the profile. It has to be the most specific one that exists for what you do. “Plumber” beats “Contractor”. “Roofing contractor” beats “Home repair service”.

How to choose well: search your service in your city, look at the three ranking on top, and check what category they use. You're not copying: you're reading what Google already rewarded in your area.

You can add secondary categories, but carefully. Ten scattered categories dilute relevance rather than adding to it.

Services and descriptions

Inside the profile there's a services section where you can list every job you do, each with a short description. Almost nobody fills it in. Fill it completely, using the words people actually use (“drain cleaning”, not “hydro-sanitary unblocking”).

Service area or address

If you travel to customers and don't receive them at home, Google has a specific setting for that: you declare the cities you cover and hide the address. It's fully allowed and it's the correct setup. What isn't allowed is inventing an address in a city you're not in, or renting a mailbox to fake a branch: that can cost you the entire profile.

Photos

Upload photos every month, not once a year. Real photos: the job before and after, your crew working, the truck, the tools, the installed equipment. Ten to fifteen a month is a good rhythm. No stock images: they're obvious and they don't help.

Posts

Profile posts are short, carry a photo and a button. Once a week is a reasonable rhythm. They do two things: keep the profile active and take up more visual space when someone searches your name.

What to post without running out of ideas: a service with its call to action, a useful tip from your trade, a recent job with a photo, and a seasonal offer or reminder.

Reviews

Reviews move the map and move the decision to call you. Three rules:

- **Always ask, the same day.** Send a message with the direct link while the job is fresh. A week later nobody remembers.
- **Reply to all of them, within 48 hours.** The reply isn't for the writer: it's for the people who will read it.
- **Never buy or invent them.** It's the fastest way to lose the profile, and it gets caught.

Facing a bad review: don't argue details in public, acknowledge what can be acknowledged, and invite the conversation to continue privately. A calm reply to a one-star review sells more than ten five-star ones.

HOW WE HANDLE IT

We optimize the whole profile (categories, services, attributes, area, hours), keep it active with posts and photos, and upload new photos every month.

Message us on WhatsApp · +1 (726) 255-6888

The other three maps: Apple, Bing and Yelp

Almost everyone works Google and leaves the other three abandoned. There's an advantage there, because your competition isn't working them either.

Apple Business Connect

Every iPhone ships with Apple Maps. When someone asks Siri for a plumber, or searches the map from their iPhone, they aren't querying Google. If your Apple Maps listing is wrong, incomplete or missing, that whole audience doesn't see you.

Apple Business Connect is free and gets claimed much like Google. What to complete:

- Correct category and data identical to Google's.
- Service area, if you travel to customers.
- Photos and logo.
- Action links: call, website, request an appointment.

Bing Places

Bing has fewer users than Google, and it's still worth it for a reason that grows monthly: several AI assistants lean on Bing's index to answer local questions. Claiming Bing Places is half an hour of work and it puts you in that source.

You can import directly from your Google profile, which helps keep the data identical.

Yelp

Plenty of contractors dislike Yelp, not always without reason. But many people in the United States still search there, and Yelp ranks high when someone searches your name. An abandoned profile with stale data is worse than nothing.

The minimum: claim it, set correct hours and area, fill the service list, upload photos, and reply to reviews. You don't need to buy their ads to keep the profile in order.

The rule that ties all four together

Same name, same address, same phone, same category and same photos across all four. Cross-platform consistency is itself a trust signal: it tells search engines this business is real and its information is reliable.

HOW WE HANDLE IT

We claim and maintain all four profiles with the same data and the same photos, and upload new photos monthly to Google, Apple Maps and Yelp.

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Citations and NAP data

A citation is any place on the internet where your business name, address and phone appear, even without a link. NAP is those three words: Name, Address, Phone.

Why they matter

Search engines confirm a business exists by cross-checking many sources. If you appear identically in twenty places, you're a real, trustworthy business. If you appear with three different phone numbers and two addresses, the engine has to decide which is right, and when in doubt it ranks you lower.

Consistent means identical

And by identical we mean identical, down to what seems not to matter:

CORRECT	INCONSISTENT
1420 Bellaire Boulevard	1420 Bellaire Blvd.
Suite 210	#210 / Ste 210
(713) 555-0142	713-555-0142 / 7135550142
Ramirez Plumbing LLC	Ramirez Plumbing / Ramirez Plumbing Houston

Pick a format, write it once, use it always. Our citations tool builds it and lets you copy it.

A detail almost nobody considers: the name

Stuffing keywords into the business name ("Ramirez Plumbing Houston Emergency 24/7") is tempting because it sometimes works short term. It's also against Google's rules, any competitor can report it, and when it gets corrected you lose whatever you gained. Use the real name, the one on your paperwork and on your truck.

The order of work

1. **The five critical ones:** Google, Apple, Bing, Yelp and Facebook.
2. **The home-services majors:** BBB, Angi, Thumbtack, Nextdoor, HomeAdvisor, Houzz.
3. **General directories:** Yellow Pages, Superpages, Manta, Foursquare, MapQuest and company.

4. **Local ones in your city:** chamber of commerce, trade associations, county directories. These usually beat five generic directories.

Cleaning up beats signing up

Many businesses already have old listings they never created, with a previous phone number or an address from three moves ago. Finding those and correcting them or requesting removal usually moves the needle more than registering on twenty new directories.

HOW WE HANDLE IT

We lock your NAP, build out your citations over the first months, and hunt down and correct old listings with wrong data. After that they just need monitoring.

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Content that actually works

“You should have a blog” is one of the worst-executed pieces of advice in local marketing. Most service business blogs are three posts from 2019 about “the importance of preventive maintenance”. That does nothing.

Where good topics come from

Not from a downloaded keyword list: from your phone. The questions customers ask you before hiring are exactly what other people are typing into Google.

- “How much does it cost to replace a water heater?”
- “How do I know if hail damaged my roof?”
- “How often should ducts be cleaned?”
- “Do I need a permit to upgrade my electrical panel?”
- “What do I do while I wait for the plumber?”

Write down every question you get asked for a month. That's a year of content.

The three types that work

1. **Pricing.** Almost nobody publishes it out of fear, which is why these are the most frequent and least served searches. Publish honest ranges and explain what changes them. It filters out customers you don't want and attracts the ones you do.
2. **Diagnosis.** “How to tell if...”. People search this right before deciding they need a professional. If you're the one who explained it, you're the one they call.
3. **Process.** “What to expect when...”. It lowers the anxiety of hiring a stranger who's going to walk into their home.

How to write them

- Answer the question in the first paragraph. Don't make people wait.
- Write the way you talk to a customer at their front door, not like a brochure.
- Use examples from your area and your jobs.
- Add a photo of you working, not a stock image.
- Close with a clear invitation to message you, and a link to the matching service page.

Why consistency beats volume

Because a few done well, every month, without fail, beat ten at once followed by six months of silence. Consistency is the signal: a site that updates is a business that's still alive. And because each good article keeps bringing visits years later, at no extra cost.

On writing with AI

It's a useful tool for researching topics, organizing ideas and drafting. It is not a tool for publishing unread. A generic article that could belong to any plumber in the country doesn't rank, and more importantly: it convinces nobody to call you. The value is in what only you know.

HOW WE HANDLE IT

We write and publish new content every month, on the real questions in your trade and your area, linked to your service-and-city pages.

Message us on WhatsApp · +1 (726) 255-6888

Local links

A link is when another site puts your address on one of its pages. To search engines it's a vote: someone else thinks you're worth sending people to.

One good link beats fifty bad ones

People still sell “500 backlinks for \$99” packages. Those are links from junk sites that exist only to sell links. At best they do nothing; at worst they get you in trouble and then you pay to clean them up.

A link from your city's chamber of commerce beats five hundred of those, because it's real, it's local, and it's about your business.

Where good links come from for a local business

- **Local chamber of commerce** and Hispanic chambers of commerce in your city or county.
- **Trade associations** and certifying bodies.
- **Suppliers and manufacturers.** Many run an “authorized installer” finder. If you work with a brand, ask to be listed.
- **Sponsorships.** The youth soccer team, the church, the school, the neighborhood race. Almost all of them publish sponsors with a link.
- **Local press and neighborhood newsletters.** A business with a story (you opened during the pandemic, you took on an apprentice, you did a job free for a family) is an easy piece for a small paper.
- **Neighboring businesses that don't compete with you.** An electrician and a plumber can recommend each other on their “pros we trust” pages.

Few and good

You don't need twenty links a month. You need a few, genuinely earned, across the year. A handful of real local links is more than most of your competitors have, and none of them disappear when the algorithm changes. In a low-competition area you may already have what you need, and the effort pays off better elsewhere.

How to ask without sounding like spam

The mistake is sending a generic email asking for a link. What works is giving something first: actually sponsor, actually participate, offer a discount to association members, or write something useful they'd want to publish. The link follows on its own when there's a real relationship behind it.

HOW WE HANDLE IT

We earn local links from real sites related to your trade and your city, when your competition and your area call for it. No packages, no link farms, and no forcing links you don't need.

Message us on WhatsApp · +1 (726) 255-6888

Showing up in AI answers

More and more people ask the question directly: “I need a plumber near Sugar Land who works weekends, who do you recommend?” And they get an answer with two or three names, no list of ten blue results.

That changes less than it seems

The good news for a local business is that AI answers don't invent businesses: they read them. And they read exactly the same sources we're already working: map profiles, directories, reviews and websites that state clearly who you are, what you do and where.

In other words: the work that gets you on the map is largely the same work that gets you into an AI answer. These are not two strategies.

What weighs especially for AI

- **Total data consistency.** A model seeing three different phone numbers for the same business won't risk recommending it.
- **Structured data on your site.** It's literally information written in a format designed for machines to read without error.
- **Explicit answers in text.** If your page says “we're open Saturdays 8 to 2 and handle 24-hour emergencies in Sugar Land, Missouri City and Stafford”, that's quotable. If you only say it inside a pretty image, it isn't.
- **Reviews and what's in them.** Not just the star average: what people say. Reviews mentioning “came the same day” or “speaks Spanish” feed answers to those exact questions.
- **Presence on Bing.** Several assistants lean on that index.

How to check where you stand

It's free and takes ten minutes: ask ChatGPT, Gemini and your phone assistant for your service in your city, the way a customer would. Note who shows up. If your competition appears and you don't, look at what they have: it's almost always more reviews, more consistent data, or a site that explains the basics better.

What not to do

There's no trick to “hack” AI, and anyone selling one is making it up. Filling your site with hidden text or repeated phrases doesn't work either: the models answering these questions lean on verifiable sources, not on tricks from the 2000s.

IN SHORT

AI answers read your profiles, your reviews, your directories and your site. Fixing those is the strategy; there is no separate one.

What to measure every month

The classic mistake is measuring what looks good on a chart. Website visits is not a business number. Calls are.

The five numbers that matter

1. **Calls and messages from the site.** The final number. Everything else is intermediate.
2. **Calls and direction requests from your Google profile.** Google gives it to you directly in the profile dashboard. It's the fastest signal that the map work is landing.
3. **Map position for your three or four main searches.** Note: search them from different points in your area, not just from your house. The map changes with the searcher's location.
4. **New reviews this month.** How many you asked for and how many arrived.
5. **Jobs closed and where they came from.** Ask every customer how they found you and write it down. It's the most valuable data point and the one almost nobody collects.

What's not worth checking monthly

- **Total visits.** They rise with traffic that was never going to hire you.
- **Overall average position.** An average across three hundred searches tells you nothing actionable.
- **Social followers.** For a local service business they almost never turn into jobs.
- **"Impressions".** How many times you appeared while nobody did anything.

A one-page dashboard

Every month, five lines:

```
Calls from the site ..... 14 (last month: 9)
Calls from Google ..... 31 (last month: 22)
New reviews ..... 4 (asked: 11)
Jobs closed ..... 12
Where they came from ..... 7 Google, 3 referral, 2 website
```

If those five lines improve quarter over quarter, the work is working, whatever the colorful charts say.

And the most important thing of all

Answer fast. We can put you first on the map and still lose the job if you take three hours to reply. In local services, whoever answers first wins most of the time. No marketing strategy fixes that.

HOW WE HANDLE IT

Every month we send you the report over WhatsApp with these numbers and what was done, in plain language and in your language.

Message us on WhatsApp · +1 (726) 255-6888

Would you rather we did it?

Send us your business name and your city on WhatsApp. We will check your site, your Google Business Profile, Apple Maps, Bing Places and Yelp for free, and tell you what we find and what we would do first.

No calls, no presentations, no obligation. Even if you never hire us, the review is yours.

Message us on WhatsApp

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