

Own the Map Pack: Using AI to Run Google Business Profiles That Bring In Calls

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Chapter 1: Audit Any Google Business Profile in 20 Minutes with an AI Checklist

Here's the thing most local business owners don't want to hear: your Google Business Profile is probably not losing calls because of some secret algorithm trick you haven't learned yet. It's losing calls because of five or six boring problems that nobody has looked at in two years. The wrong primary category. Hours that say you're open on a holiday when you're not. A description written by a web designer in 2019. Forty photos, thirty-one of which are the same truck from slightly different angles. Reviews nobody has answered since the pandemic.

The good news is that boring problems are fixable problems. The better news is that AI tools like ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini are very good at the grunt work of an audit: comparing your profile to competitors, spotting gaps, rewriting stale copy, and turning a messy pile of observations into a ranked to-do list. What they are *not* good at is knowing what's actually on your profile right now, what Google's current rules are this month, or whether your business really does offer the thing it says it offers. That part is your job.

This chapter gives you a 20-minute audit process you can run on your own profile, a client's profile, or a competitor's profile. It's built to be repeated. I'd run it once now, once after you make fixes, and then once a quarter. By the end of the chapter, you'll have a scorecard, a prioritized fix list, and a set of AI prompts you can reuse forever.

Why an Audit Comes Before Anything Else

People want to jump straight to tactics. Post more. Get more reviews. Add keywords. But if your foundation is broken, tactics just pour water into a leaky bucket. An audit tells you where the leaks are, and it tells you which ones matter most.

Google itself has publicly said that local results are based mainly on three things: **relevance** (how well your profile matches what someone searched), **distance** (how far you are from the searcher or the location in their search), and **prominence** (how well-known and trusted your business is, which includes reviews, links, and general

web presence). That's straight from Google's own help documentation, and it's the best framework you'll get, because it's the only one that comes from the source.

Every item in this audit maps to one of those three:

- **Relevance** — categories, services, description, products, attributes, and the language in your reviews.
- **Distance** — your address or service area setup. You can't move your shop, but you can make sure Google has your location right and you're not accidentally hiding from the people closest to you.
- **Prominence** — review count, review recency, rating, responses, photos, and how consistent your business info is across the web.

There's also a fourth factor Google doesn't put in that list but absolutely affects your calls: **conversion**. You can rank third in the map pack and still lose the call to the guy in fifth place because his photos look professional and his reviews mention the exact problem the searcher has. So our audit also checks whether your profile *convinces* people once they see it.

What You Need Before You Start the Clock

Get these ready before you start timing. Setup doesn't count against your 20 minutes.

1. **Owner or manager access to the profile** if you're auditing your own business. You'll see things in the dashboard (performance data, search terms, unverified edits) that the public can't see. If you're auditing a competitor or a prospect, you'll work from the public view only, which is fine.
2. **A browser in a private or incognito window.** This reduces personalization from your own search history. It doesn't make your results perfectly neutral, because location still matters, but it's cleaner.
3. **Your AI tool of choice open in another tab.** ChatGPT, Claude, or Gemini all work. The free tiers are fine for this. Pick whichever you're already comfortable with.
4. **A simple notes document or spreadsheet** to dump observations into. Google Sheets works fine.

5. **Your top 2–3 money keywords.** Not twenty. The two or three phrases that, if someone searched them, would most likely turn into a paying job. For a plumber, that might be "emergency plumber," "water heater repair," and "drain cleaning." For a dentist, "dentist near me," "emergency dentist," and "dental implants."
6. **Optional: a Chrome extension like GMB Everywhere**, which shows the primary and secondary categories of businesses in the search results. Google doesn't display secondary categories publicly, so tools like this save a lot of guessing. Check the extension's current pricing and permissions before installing; these tools change their free tiers often.

A word of caution on extensions and third-party tools: you're giving them access to your browser data. Install only well-reviewed tools from the official Chrome Web Store, and remove the ones you don't use.

The 20-Minute Audit, Minute by Minute

Here's the structure. The time blocks are guides, not laws. On a messy profile you'll blow past them; on a clean one you'll finish early. The point is to keep moving and not fall down a rabbit hole on any single item.

- **Minutes 0–3:** Search what your customers search. See where you show up.
- **Minutes 3–7:** The identity check — name, categories, address/service area, hours, phone, website.
- **Minutes 7–10:** The relevance check — description, services, products, attributes.
- **Minutes 10–14:** The trust check — reviews, ratings, responses, photos.
- **Minutes 14–17:** The competitor comparison.
- **Minutes 17–20:** Feed everything to AI, get a prioritized fix list.

Let's go through each block in detail.

Minutes 0–3: Search Like a Customer

Open your incognito window and search your top money keyword the way a real customer would. Try it on Google Search and on Google Maps. If possible, also try it on your phone, because a big share of local searches happen on mobile and the layout is different.

Write down three things for each keyword:

1. **Do you appear in the map pack** (the three businesses shown with a map)? If yes, what position?
2. **Who are the three businesses that do appear?** Write down their names. These are your real competitors for this exact search, which might be different from who you *think* your competitors are.
3. **What jumps out about them?** Review count, star rating, photos, "Open 24 hours," a mention like "Their technician fixed our leak same day" pulled from a review. Google often highlights review snippets that match the search — note which ones.

One hard truth here: a single search from your laptop tells you where you rank from *your current location*. Local rankings shift a lot block by block. Someone two miles north of you might see a completely different map pack. If you want to see the real spread, a grid-based rank tracker — Local Falcon, BrightLocal's Local Search Grid, or Whitespark's Local Rank Tracker are real, established options — will plot your rankings across a grid of points around your location. These are paid tools, usually priced per scan or per month. You don't need them for a first audit. But if you're managing profiles for clients, a grid scan is the single most persuasive "before" picture you can show anyone.

Also note: if you search your **exact business name** and you don't come up, or Google shows a different business, stop the audit. That's a bigger problem — a suspension, a duplicate listing, or a verification issue. Deal with that first.

Minutes 3–7: The Identity Check

This is where most of the fixes come from. Open your profile (from the dashboard if you own it, or the public view if not) and check each of these:

1. Business name. Does it match your real-world business name — what's on your signage, your business registration, your invoices? Google's guidelines say your name should reflect your real-world name and should not include extra keywords, locations, or taglines unless they're actually part of your legal or branded name. "Smith Plumbing" is fine. "Smith Plumbing — Best Emergency Plumber Dallas 24/7" is a violation.

Here's the uncomfortable part: keyword-stuffed names often *do* rank better in the short term. You'll see competitors doing it. But it's against the rules, and it's one of the common triggers for suspensions and competitor reports. I don't recommend it, and I'll talk about how to legitimately deal with competitors who do it in a later chapter. For the audit, just flag it if your own name has stuffing, and flag it if your competitors' do.

2. Primary category. This is the single most important field on the profile for relevance. Industry practitioner surveys — Whitespark's annual Local Search Ranking Factors survey is the best-known — have consistently ranked primary category at or near the top of local ranking factors. That survey is expert opinion, not Google confirmation, but practically everyone in local SEO agrees on this one.

Ask yourself: does the primary category match the thing that makes you the most money and the thing people most often search for? A common mistake is picking something too broad ("Contractor") when a more specific one exists ("Roofing contractor"). Another is picking the category for what you *used* to do. If your money is in water heater replacements but your primary category is "Plumber," that may still be right — "Plumber" is often the higher-volume category — but you want to make that choice on purpose, not by accident.

3. Secondary categories. You can add additional categories. Are they relevant? Are any missing? Are any wrong? Don't add categories for services you don't actually provide; that leads to irrelevant calls and can look spammy. Google's guidance is to use as few categories as possible to describe your core business, so "more" is not automatically "better."

4. Address or service area. If customers come to you (a dental office, a restaurant, a shop), your address should be visible. If you go to customers (plumber, cleaner,

mobile mechanic) and you don't serve customers at your address, Google's guidelines say you should hide your address and set a service area instead. Check:

- Is the pin on the map in the right place? Zoom in. Wrong pins happen more often than you'd think.
- If you're a service-area business, is the address hidden? Showing a home address as a storefront is a guideline violation and a privacy issue.
- Is the service area realistic? Google's help documentation has said service areas shouldn't extend beyond roughly two hours of driving time from where you're based. Listing forty cities doesn't make you rank in all forty. It mostly doesn't do much at all.

5. Hours. Regular hours correct? Special hours set for upcoming holidays? Nothing kills trust faster than someone driving to your location during listed hours and finding the door locked — and that person is a likely one-star review. If you take emergency calls 24/7, say so only if it's actually true. If a real human doesn't answer at 2 a.m., don't list 24 hours.

6. Phone number. Does it ring to someone who answers? I'm serious. Call it. Many owners have never called their own Google listing number. If you use call tracking (CallRail is a widely used option), the common practice is to put the tracking number as the primary number and your main business line as an additional number, so your business info stays consistent across the web. Check that this setup is in place if tracking is used.

7. Website link. Does it work? Does it go to a relevant page? For a single-location business, the homepage is usually fine. For a multi-location business, each location's profile should usually link to that location's own page, not the generic homepage. Add UTM parameters (e.g., `?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=gbp`) so you can see in Google Analytics how much traffic the profile actually sends.

8. Unverified or Google-suggested edits. In the owner dashboard, Google sometimes flags edits that came from users or from Google itself — changed hours, a changed phone number, a changed category. Anyone can suggest edits to a public listing, and sometimes Google accepts them. Check whether anything has been

changed without your knowledge. This one is easy to miss and can quietly wreck a profile.

Minutes 7–10: The Relevance Check

Business description. You get 750 characters. Google displays it in the "About" area and doesn't show it as prominently as many people assume. Most experts don't think the description has much direct ranking weight, but it does help conversion and it gives Google's systems (including its AI-generated summaries) clear information about what you do. Check:

- Is it written for customers, not search engines?
- Does it name your core services and the area you serve, in plain English?
- Is it current? Does it mention a service you no longer offer, or leave out one you added?
- Does it violate the rules? Google's guidelines prohibit URLs, promotional offers like "20% off this week," and misleading content in the description.

Services. For many categories, Google lets you list specific services, with optional descriptions and prices. This is one of the most underused fields I see. A roofing company that lists "Roof repair, Roof replacement, Storm damage inspection, Gutter installation, Skylight repair" — each with a short, specific description — is giving Google far more relevance signals than one that lists nothing. Check whether services are filled in, whether they match what you actually sell, and whether each one has a useful description.

Products. Even service businesses can use the Products section to showcase packages ("Basic drain cleaning," "Annual HVAC tune-up plan") with photos. These display visually on the profile, especially on mobile. Empty products sections are a missed opportunity.

Attributes. These are the little tags — "Wheelchair accessible entrance," "Online appointments," "Women-owned," "Veteran-led," "Free Wi-Fi," and so on. Available attributes depend on your category. Some are factual and should be accurate; some

are identity-based and are opt-in. Check that the ones that apply are turned on and that nothing is wrong.

Booking or appointment links. If your category supports it, is there a booking or appointment link? If you take online bookings, a dead or missing link is lost money.

Minutes 10–14: The Trust Check

Now look at the profile the way a nervous customer does. They're comparing three businesses they've never heard of, and they're scanning for reasons to trust or reject you.

Review count and rating. Write down your total review count and average rating, and the same for the three map pack competitors. Don't panic if you're behind. Note the gap.

Review recency. When was your most recent review? If your last review is eight months old, that's a red flag to customers ("are they still in business?") and many local SEO practitioners believe recency matters for rankings too. A business with 60 reviews and five from the last month often looks more alive than one with 200 reviews and nothing since last year.

Review content. Skim the last 10–20 reviews. Do they mention specific services and locations? Reviews that naturally say "they replaced our water heater in Plano" carry more relevance than "great service!" You can't write reviews for customers, and you shouldn't script them, but you can ask in a way that invites detail. We'll cover that in a later chapter.

Responses. Has the owner responded to reviews? All of them, some, or none? Are negative reviews answered calmly and professionally, or defensively? A clean, reasonable response to a one-star review often does more for conversion than five more five-star reviews, because it shows the people reading what happens when something goes wrong.

Suspicious reviews. Look for clusters of reviews posted on the same day, reviewers with no other history, or reviews that read like ad copy. If they're on *your* profile and you didn't solicit fakes, note them. If they're on competitors' profiles, note that too.