

GOOGLE BUSINESS PROFILE OPTIMIZATION GUIDE

How to turn your GBP into the #1 lead source in your business

WHO THIS IS FOR

Home service operators who have a Google Business Profile but treat it like a directory listing instead of the highest-value marketing asset they own.

WHAT YOU GET

A field-tested playbook for every part of GBP. Setup, verification, category selection, service area, posts, photos, Q&A, reviews, response protocol, conversion tracking, and the launch protocol that gets a new listing into the top of the map pack in months instead of years.

BASED ON

Field research across 200+ home service operators, multi-location franchises, and GBP optimization specialists. Every tactic in this guide is sourced to an operator who runs it at scale.

WHY GBP IS THE LEVER, NOT YOUR WEBSITE

One multi-location operator spends \$3.5 million per month on marketing across every channel imaginable. PPC, organic, paid social, traditional media, the works. Their Google Business Profile still beats every other channel on lead volume. It goes neck and neck with PPC on revenue and wins outright on leads. A single well-optimized GBP location produces seven leads per day.

That is not a small operator's anecdote. That is a \$400M+ residential service company telling you that the free Google listing outperforms millions of dollars of paid media on lead volume.

Two more anchors:

Near-me searches drive 40 to 50% of contractor traffic based on cross-industry GBP data. Those keywords are high-intent. They are won or lost at the GBP level, not the website level.

A verified physical address immediately catapults a listing to the center of Google Maps, making the business the only pin in many searches because most competitors use service-area-only profiles. Eighty to ninety percent of operators who try their home address for verification succeed.

Two free decisions, the address and the review system, will double the leads a contractor receives. That is before a dollar of paid spend.

SECTION 1: SETUP AND VERIFICATION

PICK THE RIGHT ADDRESS

The address you choose determines where you rank on the map.

GBP address proximity to the center of your target city is a direct ranking factor. An address five miles north of the city center caused one lawn care franchise to show up on the map for the wrong part of Clarksville, Tennessee, while competitors closer to downtown outranked them despite having weaker websites.

If you have a choice between two addresses, pick the one closer to the population center of your target market. If your only option is your home and it sits outside the target city, you have two options: drive a verified address closer to center (see "the customer-address verification workaround" below), or run service-area-only and lean harder on reviews and content to compete.

THE CUSTOMER-ADDRESS VERIFICATION WORKAROUND

When you cannot get a commercial space in your target city, a proven workaround is using a customer's property as the GBP verification address in exchange for a free service. Free snow removal for a season. Free lawn service for a year. The customer gets value, you get a verified address inside the city limits where you actually need to rank.

The address-versus-naming tradeoff: for a service-specific brand, a keyword-rich URL plus business name outweighs the address pin. But for a generalist contractor competing in a tight market, the verified address is still the single most powerful unlock.

THE POSSUM FILTER (DO NOT SKIP THIS)

Two Google listings in the same category within roughly 200 yards algorithmically suppress each other. This is called the Possum Filter. Never set up a GBP location adjacent to a competitor in the same category. Breaking out of the filter can take a year and a half and hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Before you pick an address, map your direct competitors' GBP locations. Stay outside their 200-yard radius.

VIDEO VERIFICATION REALITY

Google now requires video verification for address-verified listings. The operator has to show signage on trucks or the building on a live video call. This friction has slowed second-location launches across the industry. Be ready: have your truck wrapped, your sign visible, your license at hand before you initiate the call.

SERVICE AREA SETUP

For service-area-only profiles, define your coverage by city or zip code, not by radius. A list of named cities reinforces the geographic signals on your website. Match the cities you list on GBP to the cities you have service area pages for on your site. Mismatch confuses Google and weakens both signals.

Do not over-list. Listing 50 cities tells Google you are not really focused anywhere. Pick the 5 to 15 cities you actually serve and want to rank in. Quality of focus beats quantity of coverage.

CATEGORY SELECTION

Your primary category is the single most important field for what Google will rank you for. Pick the most specific category that matches your main revenue service. "Garage door supplier" outranks "garage door supplier" plus "general contractor" plus "construction company" because Google reads the primary signal and the secondary categories dilute it.

Add three to five secondary categories that match real services you offer. Skip everything else. A bloated category list looks like a small business trying to be everything, which is exactly what Google's algorithm down-ranks.

SECTION 2: FILLING OUT EVERY FIELD

Treat every field as a ranking signal, because it is.

BUSINESS NAME

Use your real legal business name. Adding keywords ("Joe's Plumbing - Best Plumber in Dallas") violates Google's guidelines and risks suspension. If you operate under a DBA, the legal DBA can include your service keyword if it is your registered name.

The DBA tactic: a single Google Business Profile can support multiple brand identities by operating under a DBA on one legal entity. Your lawn and snow brand can be the listing while the website is tailored to commercial buyers. Reviews and authority stay on one GBP. This is the play for operators expanding into a second service segment without rebuilding from zero.

HOURS

List your real hours. If you take emergency calls 24/7, list 24 hours. If you do not, do not lie. Google penalizes listings that report hours that do not match what callers experience.

Add seasonal hours when they change. Holiday closures get listed. A profile that shows accurate, updated hours is treated as actively managed, which is itself a ranking signal.

SERVICES

List every service you offer as a separate service item, with a short description. Each service can be tied to a specific city in the service area. This is one of the most underused fields. Most competitors skip it. Filling it in completely is a free advantage.

ATTRIBUTES

Check every accurate attribute. Family-owned. Veteran-owned. Women-owned. Identifies as LGBTQ+ friendly. Wheelchair accessible. Free estimates. Online estimates. Each one is a filter Google's users can apply, and each one is a chance to appear in a search that competitors will not.

DESCRIPTION

Use the full character count. Lead with the service and the city in the first sentence. Mention your years in business, your service area, and your primary differentiators. Do not stuff keywords. Write it for a human, with the geographic and service signals folded in naturally.

WEBSITE LINK

Link to a service or location page that matches the city of your verified address, not your homepage. A city-specific landing page that matches the GBP's geography is treated as the natural destination.

SECTION 3: GBP POSTS (THE WEEKLY HABIT)

Most operators ignore GBP posts. The ones who do them weekly stay in the map pack longer than the ones who do not.

GBP update frequency should be multiple times per week minimum. New reviews, GBP posts (seasonal, promos, tech photos), photos of jobs and technicians. Google treats GBP interactivity as a trust signal. The algorithm is asking: is the business picking up the phone, is it active, will it give the searcher a good experience. Interactivity is a direct ranking input.

POST TYPES THAT WORK

- **Service highlights:** "Drain cleaning in [city] today" with a real job photo, two sentences, and a call-to-action.
- **Seasonal offers:** "Spring tune-up special, 10% off through April." Time-bound, expires, then replaced with the next one.
- **Customer wins:** A before/after photo with a one-paragraph description of the job. No customer names without permission.
- **Team photos:** Your technicians, your trucks, your warehouse, your office. Real people, captioned with names.
- **Community:** Sponsoring the little league team, the food drive, the local race. Builds the community signals AI engines and Google both reward.

CADENCE

Two posts per week is the baseline. One service or job photo, one seasonal or community post. The post stays live for seven days by default before Google rotates it down the listing. Without replacement, the listing looks stale.

GEO-TAG EVERYTHING

The near-me query share (40-50% of traffic) is won by listings that have geographic signals throughout the profile. Every post should mention a city or neighborhood. Every photo should be geo-tagged (most phones do this automatically; check the settings). Geo-tagged GBP posts are the lever for capturing high-intent "plumber near me" traffic in your service area.

SECTION 4: PHOTOS (THE UNDER-APPRECIATED RANKING MOVE)

GBP listings with consistent, recent, real photo uploads outrank profiles that go quiet on photos. Yet most contractors upload photos once at setup and never again.

WHAT TO UPLOAD

- **Job photos:** Before, during, and after, on real jobs. Include the truck or technician in the frame when possible.
- **Team photos:** Your crew in uniform, your office staff, the owner. Faces build trust the algorithm and the prospect both read.
- **Equipment and vehicles:** The wrapped truck, the gear, the workshop. Signals professional operation.
- **Logo and exterior:** A clean shot of your sign or storefront if you have one.

UPLOAD CADENCE

Two to four photos per week, every week, for the life of the listing. Geo-tagged. Real. Not stock.

THE GOOGLE PHOTOGRAPHER MOVE

For operators investing in serious GBP presence, hire an accredited Google photographer to shoot your physical location. This produces a virtual tour Google embeds directly in the listing. It is a credibility and ranking signal at a level most competitors will never match.

SECTION 5: REVIEWS ON GBP

Reviews are the single largest ranking factor in the map pack and the single largest conversion lever after the listing appears. The full review generation system lives in the BurksUP Review Generation SOP. Here is the GBP-specific layer.

REVIEW VELOCITY MATTERS MORE THAN TOTAL COUNT

Recent reviews carry more weight than old ones. A listing with 30 reviews in the last 90 days outperforms a listing with 300 reviews from three years ago, on velocity-sensitive queries. This is why the new-listing protocol below front-loads volume so aggressively.

RESPOND TO EVERY REVIEW WITHIN 24 HOURS

The response is a ranking signal. It tells Google the listing is actively managed. It also tells prospects you take customer feedback seriously.

The "AEO" tactic: paste each review into ChatGPT or Gemini, ask for an "AEO and SEO optimized response," and you get a reply that includes your service keywords and your city name naturally. AEO is Answer Engine Optimization, the same response strategy that helps you appear in AI-generated answers. Two ranking wins from one workflow.

Negative reviews get a calm, professional response. Acknowledge the concern. Do not argue. Do not ignore. The response is for the next prospect who reads it, not the angry customer.

THE HOLISTIC REPUTATION PROBLEM

A common blind spot: if your GBP has 100 five-star reviews but your Yelp has 15 one-star reviews, that is a huge problem. Google evaluates reputation across the web. A negative-review concentration on any major third-party platform can override strong GBP signals and suppress conversion even when you are ranking.

The fix: respond to every review on every platform, not just Google. Yelp, Facebook, BBB, Nextdoor. The total picture has to be coherent.

THE NEW GBP LAUNCH PROTOCOL

When you open a new location or create a new GBP:

1. Enable your CRM's automated post-job review request immediately, linked to the GBP review URL
2. Pay \$10 per Google review during the first 90 days to accelerate volume (this is the only situation where review incentives are recommended)
3. Target approximately 30 reviews in the first 30 days, 90 by day 90
4. After 90 days, remove the incentive and let the in-person technician ask system run

Thirty reviews moved one lawn care franchise in Fenton, Michigan from no map pack presence to the number-one spot in the market. Not 30,000. Thirty. Velocity, not just volume.

SECTION 6: Q&A (ALMOST EVERYONE IGNORES THIS)

The Questions and Answers section of your GBP is a ranking signal and a conversion lever. Most listings leave it empty, which means the first answer that appears is whatever some random user posted, often inaccurate.

SEED IT YOURSELF

Write 8 to 12 questions a prospect would actually ask before hiring you. Pricing range, service area, response time, warranty, what to expect, how to prepare. Have a friend or employee submit each question to your listing. You then answer it from the business account.

Each Q&A pair is indexable content tied to your listing. AEO-optimized answers (questions in the prospect's own words, answers that include the service and city) get pulled into AI summaries and into Google's own "People also ask" boxes.

MONITOR FOR NEW QUESTIONS

Set up email notifications for new questions. Answer within 24 hours. An unanswered question hanging on your listing for weeks signals an inactive business.

SECTION 7: GBP AND THE MAP PACK

The map pack is the box of three GBP listings that appears at the top of local search results. Roughly half of all home service search traffic gets captured there, before the organic results begin. Getting into the map pack is the single highest-value outcome of GBP optimization.

THE LOCAL SERVICES ADS BONUS

Getting verified on Google Local Services Ads, even at a \$10/week budget, signals legitimacy to Google. The verification process for HVAC, plumbing, and electrical requires a Pinkerton background check plus a live Google video call showing the technician's face, logo on shirt, business ID, license plate, and vehicle. Passing unlocks the verified badge.

The byproduct: the legitimacy signal improves organic Google Business Profile and search rankings, even if you do not need the LSA leads themselves. The \$10/week becomes a ranking investment, not a lead-generation cost.

SHOWROOM STRATEGY FOR MULTI-LOCATION COVERAGE

The legal multi-location play: set up legitimate physical showrooms (appointment-only) in multiple quadrants of a metro market. Real photos, accredited Google photographer, geo-tagged images for each. Multiple legitimate GBP listings expand local pack coverage across a large service area without violating duplicate-listing rules.

This is the playbook top operators use for dominating big metros. It is overkill for a single-market operator. For an operator with multiple legitimate locations, it is the structural unlock.

SECTION 8: CONVERSION TRACKING ON GBP

Ranking is half the job. Knowing what the listing produces is the other half.

THE 80% CALL-BUTTON REALITY

Roughly 80% of Google Ads clicks in multi-location franchise network data are on the "call now" button, not the website link. The same pattern holds for GBP. Most prospects who find you in the map pack are calling, not browsing.

This changes how you track. The website analytics will under-report what GBP produces because the conversion happens by phone before the prospect ever reaches your site.

SET UP CALL TRACKING

Use a call tracking number specifically on your GBP listing. A call tracking platform lets you assign a tracking number that forwards to your real number. Calls from the GBP get attributed correctly. Recording the calls (where legal) gives you the script gold and the close rate data.

TRACK UTM-TAGGED WEBSITE CLICKS

For the 20% who click the website link, tag the URL with UTM parameters (utm_source=gbp&utm_medium=organic). Google Analytics will then separate GBP-driven traffic from the rest of your organic.

THE CONVERSION THAT CLOSES THE LOOP

Install Google conversion tracking on your thank-you page (covered in the Local SEO Checklist). Once Google sees which visitors convert, the algorithm improves what searches it shows your listing for. A profile that converts gets shown more often to the audience that converts.

IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

Setup:

- ☐ Address verified and as close to the target city center as possible
- ☐ Possum Filter checked (no competitor in same category within 200 yards)
- ☐ Video verification completed with truck signage visible
- ☐ Service area listed by named cities, 5 to 15 maximum
- ☐ Primary category is the most specific match to main revenue service
- ☐ 3 to 5 secondary categories chosen, no padding

Fields:

- ☐ Real business name, legal DBA if used
- ☐ Accurate hours, holiday closures updated
- ☐ Every service listed individually
- ☐ All applicable attributes checked
- ☐ Full description with service and city in first sentence
- ☐ Website link points to matching city/service page, not homepage

Posts and photos:

- ☐ Two GBP posts per week minimum, geo-tagged
- ☐ Two to four real photos per week, every week
- ☐ Logo, exterior, team, equipment, job photos rotating
- ☐ Google photographer engagement (when budget allows)

Reviews:

- ☐ Automated post-job review request linked to GBP URL

- ☐ In-person technician ask training in place
- ☐ Response to every review within 24 hours
- ☐ AEO/SEO-optimized response language used
- ☐ Yelp, Facebook, BBB, Nextdoor monitored and responded to
- ☐ New GBP launch: \$10/review incentive, 90-review target

Q&A:

- ☐ 8 to 12 seeded questions and answers in place
- ☐ Email notifications on for new questions
- ☐ All questions answered within 24 hours

Tracking and ranking:

- ☐ Local Services Ads verification submitted (where eligible)
- ☐ Call tracking number assigned to listing
- ☐ UTM-tagged website link
- ☐ Conversion tracking installed on thank-you page

WHAT THIS PRODUCES

Operators running this system report that GBP generates more leads than every other marketing channel combined, even alongside paid media budgets in the millions per month. A verified address plus 30 reviews will double a contractor's lead flow before any paid spend. Across the industry, 40-50% of contractor traffic is captured through near-me searches, which are GBP queries first and website queries second.

The pattern is consistent: operators who treat the GBP as the asset, not the website, win on lead cost.

Start with the address. Then the categories. Then 30 reviews in 30 days. Posts and photos become weekly habits. Q&A gets seeded once and maintained. The whole system is free except for the time to run it.

The contractors still treating GBP as a directory listing in 2027 will be paying \$80 a lead to platforms that own the customer relationship. The contractors who treat it as the primary asset will be picking up the phone.

Tactics in this guide are sourced from field research across 200+ home service operators, multi-location franchises, and GBP optimization specialists. Full source index available in the BurksUP Field Intelligence Library.

• WHAT'S NEXT •

READY TO *INSTALL* THIS?

BurksUP builds the marketing systems that make home service operators findable, bookable, and referable. This guide is the playbook. We're the team that installs it.

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