

LOCAL SEO FOR UK BUSINESSES

The 2026 Local SEO Blueprint

How UK Businesses Claim the #1 Spot on Google Maps

The five-step system for turning your hard-earned reputation into calls, quotes and booked work — starting this month.



AKVelora | Local SEO Studio

akvelora.com • hello@akvelora.com

READ THIS FIRST

Your reputation is already built. Now make Google show it.

If you run a local business in the UK — a trade, a practice, a shop, a service — you've probably spent years earning your reputation the hard way: good work, fair prices, word of mouth. This short guide is about a frustrating truth we see every week at AKVelora: **most of that reputation is invisible on the one platform where nearly every new customer now looks first.**

The good news is that local Google visibility is not a dark art and it is not a lottery. It is a system — a short list of things Google measures, most of which you can influence directly, many of them free. This blueprint walks you through that system in five chapters. Everything in it is practical: you could hand this to your office manager on Monday and see movement within weeks.

Read it with your own Google listing open in another tab. Tick things off as you go. And if you'd rather someone did the whole thing for you — that's what we do, and chapter five explains how.

— Aleksandar, Founder, AKVelora

What you'll be able to do by the end

- Understand exactly why the top three map results take most of the customers
- Fix the five Google Business Profile settings most owners get wrong
- Run a simple, polite review system that builds a five-star wall month after month
- Clean up the inconsistent business details that quietly hold your ranking down
- Know what to do next — yourself, or with us

CHAPTER 1

The Invisible Business

Being good at what you do and being found for what you do are two different skills. Only one of them pays the other.

Search for your trade right now — “plumber in Leeds”, “dentist near me”, “roofer Cardiff”. Before any normal website appears, Google shows a map with **three** businesses pinned to it. That box is called the **Map Pack** (or Local Pack), and it has quietly become the most valuable advertising space in your town. Unlike advertising, you can't buy your way into it.

Why does it matter so much? Because customer behaviour has collapsed onto it. Industry studies consistently find that the Map Pack takes more clicks than the paid ads above it and the websites below it — and that almost nobody scrolls past it when three good options with star ratings are sitting right there.

44%

of clicks on a local search go to the Map Pack — more than organic results or paid ads

97%

of consumers read online reviews when choosing a local business

28%

of “near me” searches end in a purchase — often the same day

What invisibility actually costs

Let's make it concrete. Suppose 1,000 people in your area search for your service in a month — a modest figure for most UK towns. If the Map Pack takes roughly 440 of those clicks and the three businesses in it split them, each is receiving something like 100–150 enquiry-ready visitors a month. Outside the top three, you're sharing the leftovers with every competitor, directory and advert on the page.

Now put your numbers in. If your average job is worth £400 and you convert one enquiry in four, every 100 clicks you don't get is roughly **£10,000 a month in work that went to the three firms above you**. For higher-value trades — roofing, driveways, kitchens — the figure is several times that. This is why we call it the invisible business problem: the work exists, the customers exist, your reputation exists. They just never meet.

The pattern we see most often in the UK

A firm with 15–25 years of trading history and a superb record on Checkatrade, Trustpilot or Which? — sometimes hundreds of glowing reviews — whose Google listing shows a handful of reviews, no photos, a half-filled profile, and sits in position eight on the map. Google can only rank what it can see. **Off Google, you're established. On Google, you're a start-up.**

The rest of this guide fixes that, step by step, in the order Google cares about.

CHAPTER 2

The Google Business Profile Optimisation Checklist

Your Google Business Profile is not a directory entry. It is the shop window Google ranks, and most owners leave half of it empty.

Your **Google Business Profile** (GBP) is the listing that appears in the Map Pack and on the right-hand side when someone searches your name. Google fills the Map Pack almost entirely from GBP data — so a thin profile doesn't just look unloved, it actively caps your ranking. Here are the five settings we find wrong or missing on the majority of UK profiles we audit, and how to fix each one today.

1. The wrong (or vague) primary category

Why it matters: Your primary category is the single strongest signal on the profile. “Roofing contractor” and “Construction company” are ranked for completely different searches, yet owners often pick whichever appeared first when they signed up.

The fix: Open your profile, choose the most specific category that describes your core money-making service, then add secondary categories for everything else you do. Check what categories the current top three in your town use — that's the market telling you what works. **Time: 10 minutes.**

2. An empty Services section

Why it matters: Google matches searches against the services you list, with descriptions. Most profiles list three vague services or none — then wonder why they don't appear for “flat roof repair” or “emergency boiler repair” searches they'd happily take.

The fix: List every service you actually sell as its own entry — the specific jobs customers search for, not umbrella terms. Add a plain-English description and, where sensible, a from-price. **Time: 30 minutes, once.**

3. Service areas that don't match where you work

Why it matters: Service-area businesses often set one town, or the whole of England. Both hurt: too narrow and you're absent everywhere else; absurdly wide and Google trusts the signal less.

The fix: Set the towns and postcode districts you genuinely serve and want work in — typically the 20–30 mile patch where your jobs actually come from. If you have premises customers visit, show the address too; verified premises tend to outrank hidden ones nearby. **Time: 5 minutes.**

4. No photos, or photos from 2019

Why it matters: Profiles with regular, real photos earn more clicks, more direction requests and more calls. Google also reads photo activity as a sign the business is alive. A logo and one van picture from years ago tells Google — and customers — nothing.

The fix: Upload 10–15 genuine photos now: jobs in progress, finished work, the team, the van, the premises. Then make it a habit — a few new job photos every week. Your phone camera is perfectly good enough. **Time: 20 minutes, then 5 minutes a week.**

5. Nobody answering questions, messages or reviews

Why it matters: The Q&A section, messaging, and review replies are all visible activity signals. An unanswered public question — or worse, one answered by a random member of the public — costs trust and enquiries.

The fix: Turn on messaging if you can respond within a day. Seed the Q&A with the five questions you're asked on every quote (do you do X, are you insured, how soon can you come). Reply to every review, good or bad — chapter three covers how. **Time: 20 minutes, then ongoing.**

Quick wins while you're in there

- Opening hours accurate — including bank holidays (Google flags outdated hours)
- Website link points to the right page and matches the phone number on your site
- Business description uses the words customers search, not slogans
- A Google Post published this month — an offer, a recent job, a bit of news

CHAPTER 3

The 5-Star Review Engine

Reviews are the currency of local search. The firms above you aren't better — they're better at asking.

Two numbers decide most Map Pack battles: how many Google reviews you have, and how recent they are. Consumers behave accordingly — most won't consider a business below four stars, and nearly three-quarters give the most weight to reviews left in the last three months. A wall of five-star reviews from 2022 is history; a steady drip of them is proof.

The problem is never that customers are unwilling — it's that busy owners ask sporadically, awkwardly, or not at all. The answer is a small **system**: the same three steps after every job, so reviews arrive without you thinking about it.

Step 1 — Make it one tap

Nobody will 'look you up on Google and leave a review'. Get your direct review link from your Google Business Profile dashboard ("Ask for reviews"), shorten it, and put it everywhere: a text message template, your email signature, your invoices, and a QR code card or sticker for the van and the counter. The rule: from their phone to your review form in one tap.

Step 2 — Ask at the moment of delight

Timing beats technique. Ask when the customer is happiest — the job's just finished, the problem's solved, they've just said thank you. Ask in person first, then send the link within the hour while the goodwill is warm. A polite nudge three days later to anyone who meant to but didn't roughly doubles the response rate. Then stop — two asks, never more.

Copy-and-paste text message

"Hi [name], thanks again for choosing [business] today. If you were happy with the work, would you mind leaving us a quick Google review? It takes about a minute and helps other people in [town] find us: [your link]. Either way — thanks for your business!"

Step 3 — Reply to every single review

Replies are read by future customers, not past ones. Thank every reviewer by name and mention the job ("Thanks Sarah — glad the flat roof's holding up after that storm"), which quietly adds the words Google likes to see. For a rare bad review: reply calmly and factually, take it offline, never argue. One graceful reply to criticism shows a reader how you behave when things go wrong — and that's worth five perfect scores.

Play it straight — it's the law, not just policy

Never buy reviews, invent them, review-swap, or offer discounts for five stars. Under the UK's Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act, fake reviews are illegal, and Google's filters remove suspicious patterns. A steady, honest ask after every job beats every shortcut. **The maths of momentum:** a firm doing 10 jobs a week that converts one ask in five adds over 100 fresh Google reviews a year — in most UK towns, that alone rewrites the Map Pack.

Reply templates you can steal

For a five-star review

"Thanks [name] — it was a pleasure sorting the [job] for you in [area]. Glad you're happy with the finish, and thanks for taking the time to say so. Anything you need down the line, you know where we are."

For a critical review

"Thank you for the feedback, [name] — this isn't the standard we aim for and I'm sorry it was your experience. I'd like to put it right: please call me directly on [number] and I'll deal with it personally."
Then stop typing. Everything else happens on the phone, not in public.

Set a weekly 15-minute slot — Friday afternoon works well — to send the week's review asks and write the week's replies. That one recurring diary entry is the whole engine.

CHAPTER 4

Local Citations & On-Page Alignment

Google cross-examines your business details across the web. Inconsistency reads as unreliability.

A **citation** is any place your business's Name, Address and Phone number (**NAP**) appear online: Checkatrade, Yell, Thomson Local, Bing Places, Apple Maps, Facebook, trade bodies, local directories. Google reads these like references on a CV. When they all say exactly the same thing, it gains confidence that you are who your profile says you are — and confidence is rankable. When they disagree, that confidence leaks away.

The mistakes that quietly cost rankings

- **Old addresses that outlive the move.** You relocated in 2021; half the web still lists the old unit. Google sees two businesses, or one unreliable one.
- **Name drift.** “J. Smith Roofing”, “Smith Roofing Ltd” and “Smiths Roofing & Building” across different sites. Pick the exact trading name on your Google profile and use it everywhere, character for character.
- **Multiple phone numbers.** An old mobile on the website, a landline on Google, a tracking number in a directory. One primary number, everywhere.
- **Duplicate or legacy listings.** A previous trading identity, a duplicate Google listing, a directory profile someone set up years ago. These split your reviews and your ranking strength in two — find them and merge or close them.

A 60-minute citation clean-up

- Write your canonical NAP — exact name, address format and phone — in a note, and treat it as gospel
- Google your business name, old addresses and old numbers; list every place you appear
- Correct the big ones first: Checkatrade/Trustpilot, Yell, Bing Places, Apple Maps, Facebook, your trade body
- Claim unclaimed listings while you're there — claimed profiles can be corrected; orphaned ones drift
- Diarise a re-check every six months — directories re-import bad data

Align your own website with your profile

Your website is your biggest citation, and Google reads it alongside your profile. Three alignments matter most: your exact NAP in the footer of every page, matching your Google listing precisely; a page for each core service and each main town you serve, using the words customers actually search; and your service pages linked from your Google Business Profile. If your web person mentions “LocalBusiness schema”, say yes — it's a small piece of code that hands Google your details on a plate.

The UK citation hit-list

Work through these in order — they cover the sources Google leans on most for UK businesses:

Google Business Profile	Apple Business Connect	Bing Places
Facebook page	Checkatrade / Trustpilot	Yell
Which? Trusted Traders	TrustATrader	FreeIndex
Thomson Local	Cylex / Scoot / 192.com	Your trade body (e.g. NFRC, Gas Safe, NICEIC, FMB)

Why this chapter is the boring one that wins

Categories, reviews and photos are visible. Citations are plumbing. But when two firms look equal on the surface, the one whose details agree everywhere is the one Google trusts with the top spot. Tie-breakers win titles.

CHAPTER 5

The AKVelora Framework & Next Steps

Everything in this guide works. The only question is whether you want to run the system — or have it run for you.

You now know more about local search than most of your competitors ever will. If you take this blueprint and work through it yourself, you will see results — and we'd honestly be delighted. But most owners we work with reach the same conclusion: the system isn't hard, it's **relentless**. It rewards the firm that shows up every week, and punishes the one that did it once in January. That consistency is precisely what AKVelora sells.

How we run it end-to-end

- **1 — Snapshot (free).** We audit your Google visibility against the three firms currently taking your calls: profile, reviews, citations, website alignment. You get it on one page, in plain English — what's wrong, in what order to fix it, and what it's costing you. It's yours to keep whether or not we ever speak again.
- **2 — Foundations.** We rebuild your Google Business Profile properly — categories, services, areas, photos, Q&A — and clean every citation until your details agree across the web.
- **3 — The review engine.** We set up the one-tap link, the QR cards, the message templates and the reply routine, fitted to how your business actually works — so fresh five-star reviews become a by-product of doing the job.
- **4 — Visibility, compounding.** Weekly posts, photo cadence, new service pages, monthly reporting in numbers you care about: calls, direction requests, quote forms. Not impressions. Not jargon.

We keep it honest and performance-focused: clear deliverables, monthly rolling terms, no lock-in contracts — we expect to be judged on whether your phone rings more this quarter than last. Local SEO is a compounding asset; our job is to make it compound in your favour, and to be easy to sack if it doesn't.

Claim your free Local SEO Snapshot

One page. Plain English. The five checks from this guide, run on **your** business, with the top three in your town as the benchmark — and the first thing we'd fix. No obligation, no follow-up pestering. A no is a perfectly good answer.

→ **Email us: hello@akvelora.com — subject line “Snapshot”**

→ **Or visit: akvelora.com**

Tell us your business name and town. You'll have your Snapshot within two working days.

AKVelora — Local SEO for UK businesses. We make Google show the reputation you've already earned.