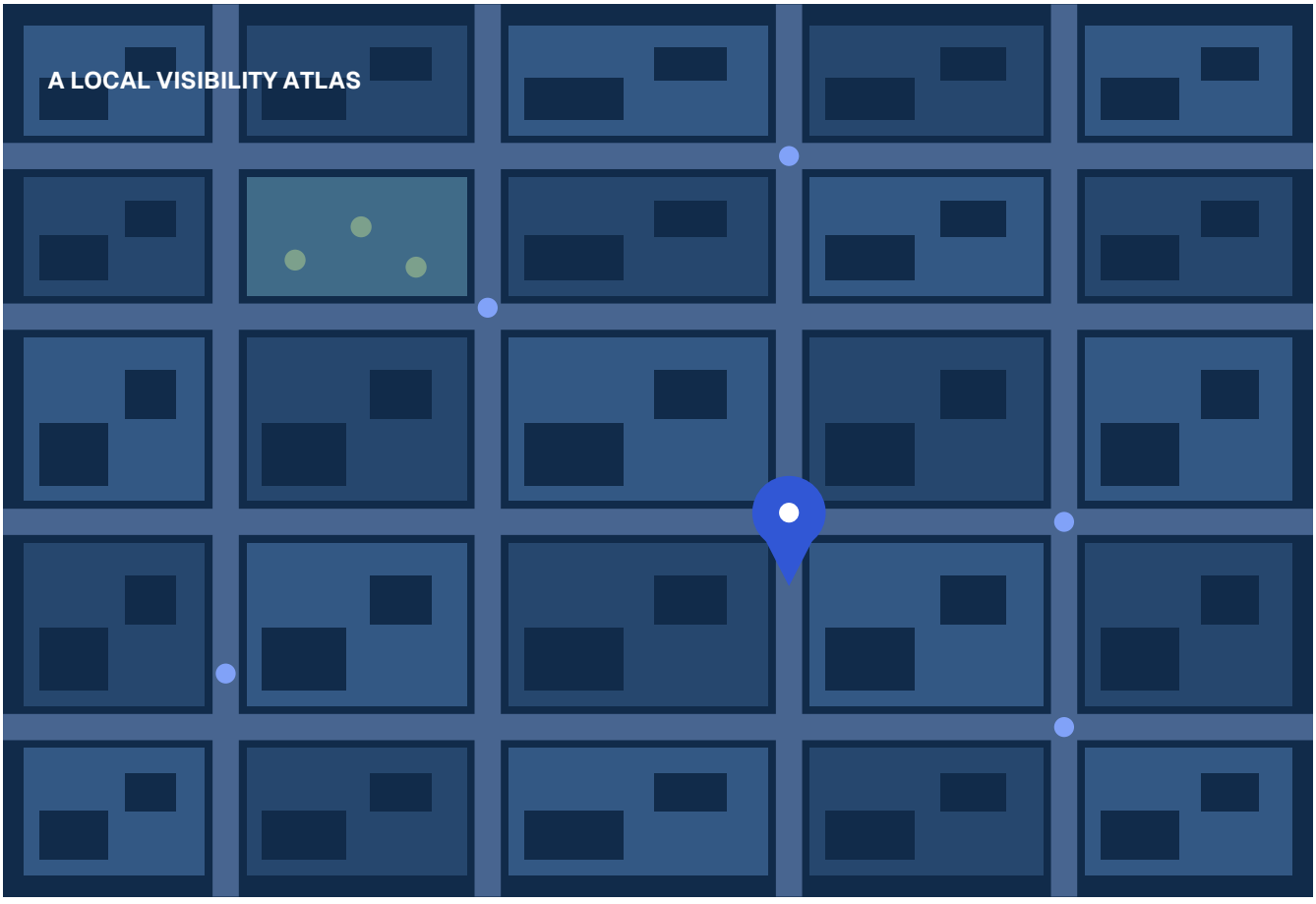
Flento

GLOBAL EDITION / 2026

Google Maps Ranking Factors Report 2026

A practical atlas of visibility, evidence and action.



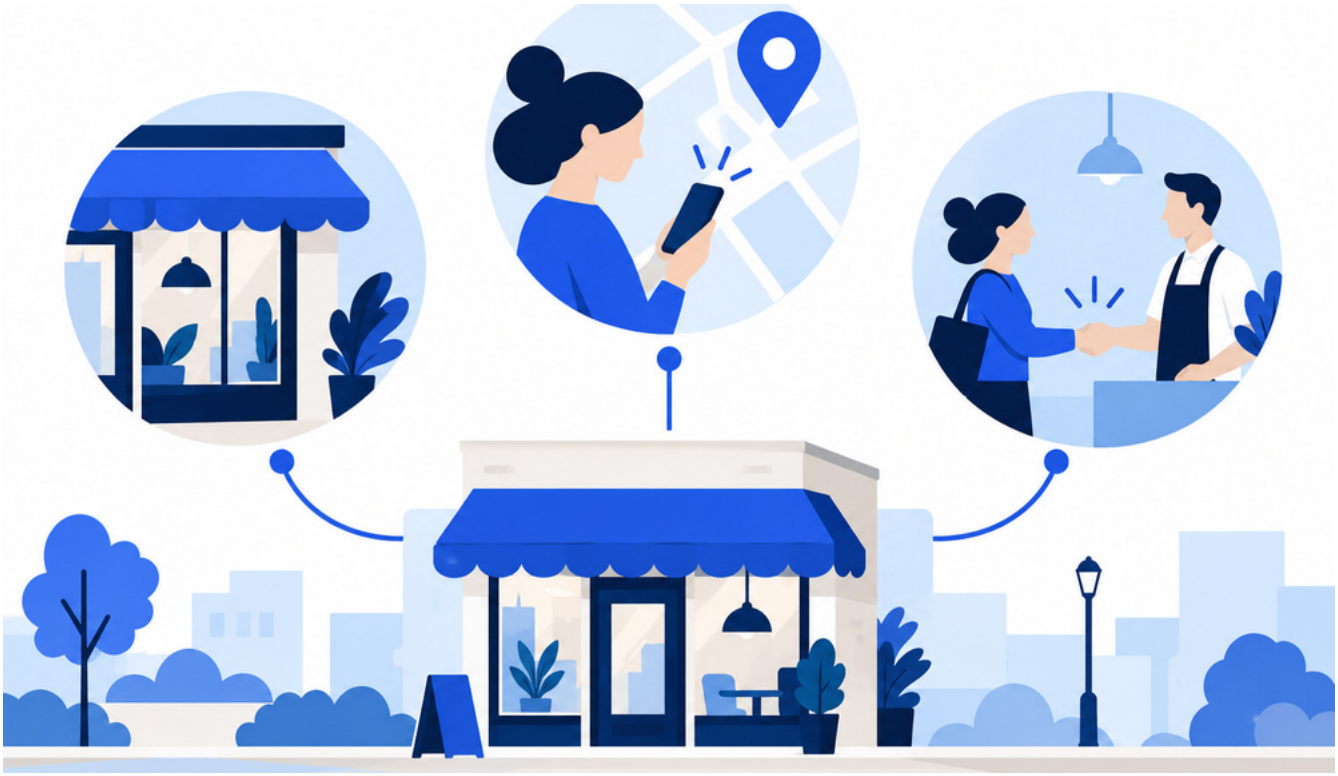
THE EVIDENCE. THE GEOGRAPHY. THE NEXT MOVE.

THE WORKING QUESTION

Win the right local searches.

Where does the business appear for the services customers need, and does that visibility lead to a valuable next step?

FIGURE 01 The practical operating sequence



START WITH REALITY

Confirm eligibility, identity and a suitable category.

SEPARATE SIGNALS

Rank, profile actions and enquiries measure different events.

PRIORITIZE EVIDENCE

Document changes and measure a defined market.

NOTE Build a trustworthy profile, then improve the customer journey.

SOURCE G01 / G02

HOW TO USE THIS REPORT

From evidence to local action.

Start with the factors, then use the measurement and execution chapters to choose the next useful change.

01 The evidence 04–07

02 The factors 08–14

03 The experience 15–20

04 The operating system 21–29

05 Sources and next move 30–32

READ THE LABEL ON EVERY CLAIM

Documented guidance, expert survey opinion and Flento recommendations have different evidential roles.

EVIDENCE STANDARD

A clear standard for every claim.

A source-based global synthesis; no original business sample, controlled ranking experiment or completed full-year 2026 dataset.

FIGURE 02 Three evidence classes



OFFICIAL GUIDANCE

Google documents define published rules and metrics.

PRACTITIONER VIEW

Survey scores express expert opinion.

FLENTO APPLICATION

Audit tools are editorial recommendations.

NOTE Global applicability does not mean measured worldwide representativeness.

SOURCE G01 / W01

GOOGLE'S FRAMEWORK

Three dimensions. One local decision.

Relevance matches the need. Distance describes location relationship. Prominence reflects how well known the business is.

FIGURE 03 A conceptual model, not an algorithm equation



RELEVANCE

Match the query with the genuine offer.

DISTANCE

Observe realistic customer locations.

PROMINENCE

Earn recognition and trust signals.

NOTE This is a conceptual model. Google does not publish mathematical weights.

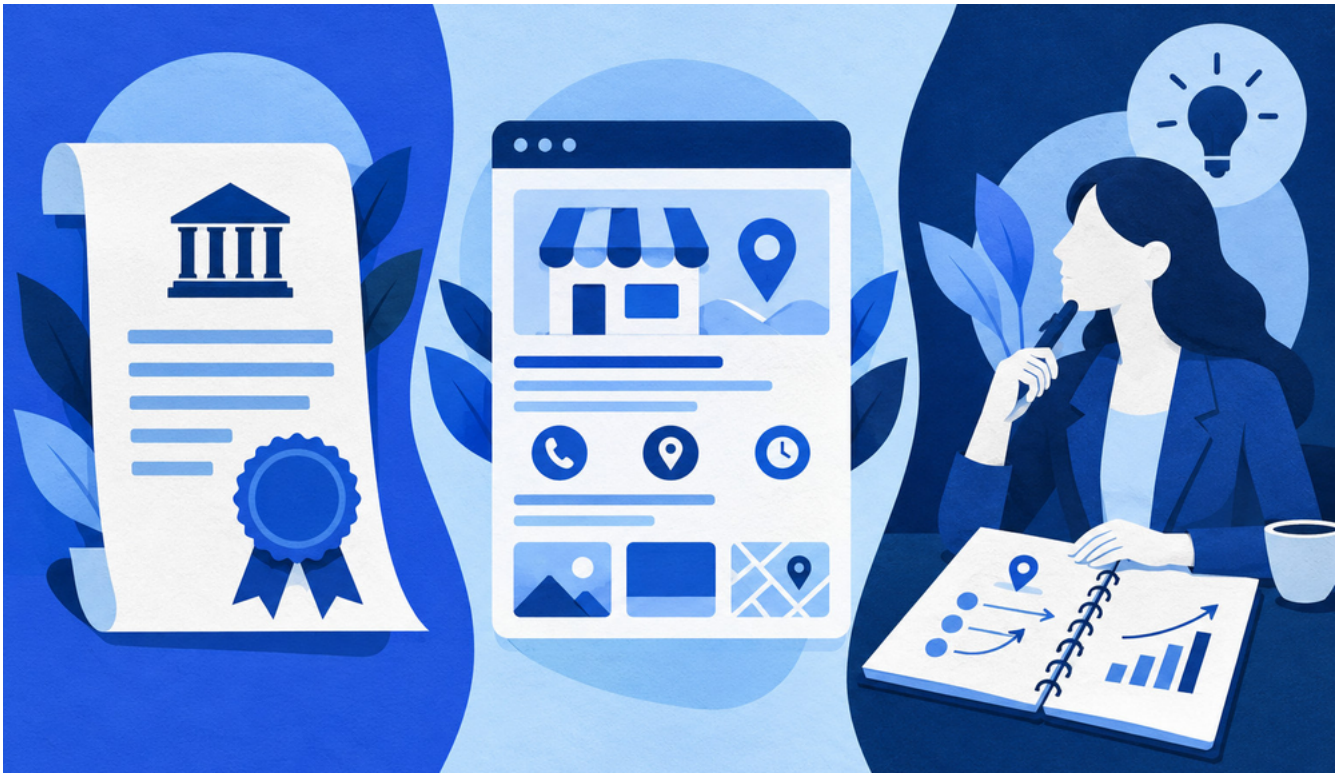
SOURCE G01

DECISION HIERARCHY

Know what is documented. Test what is uncertain.

A useful plan needs evidence labels more than a long list of supposed shortcuts.

FIGURE 04 Claim strength and operating use



DOCUMENTED

Follow published ranking and profile guidance.

FEATURE PURPOSE

Understand what each feature is designed to do.

EDITORIAL TEST

Measure the change before claiming lift.

NOTE A documented feature purpose is not an independent ranking coefficient.

SOURCE G01 / G03 / G12

WHITESPARK SURVEY

Expert scores are not algorithm weights.

Whitespark invited 47 experts to score 187 factors. The five selected point totals below are survey opinion.

FIGURE 05 Five selected factors, summed expert points



EXPERT SURVEY POINTS

Five selected factor scores from a survey of 47 experts. The values are not algorithm weights, percentages or predicted gains.

NOTE Truthful business names, locations and opening hours remain essential.

SOURCE W01 / G02

CATEGORY FIT

Choose a category that describes reality.

Google says selected categories affect local ranking. The primary category should describe the core business.

FIGURE 06 A truthful category decision



CORE OFFER

Start with what customers chiefly buy.

PRIMARY CATEGORY

Choose the most specific available fit.

ADDITIONAL CATEGORIES

Include genuine other functions only.

NOTE Record previous category, rationale, owner and date of every change.

SOURCE G03

LOCATION AND DISTANCE

Your market has a geography.

A service territory and a search observation area are different concepts.

FIGURE 07 Illustrative observation points and service area



CUSTOMER LOCATIONS

Choose realistic origins in the service market.

REPEATABLE GRID

Use the same coordinates and query each time.

READ LOCAL VARIATION

A single point does not represent a whole city.

NOTE Distance is a documented dimension of local ranking.

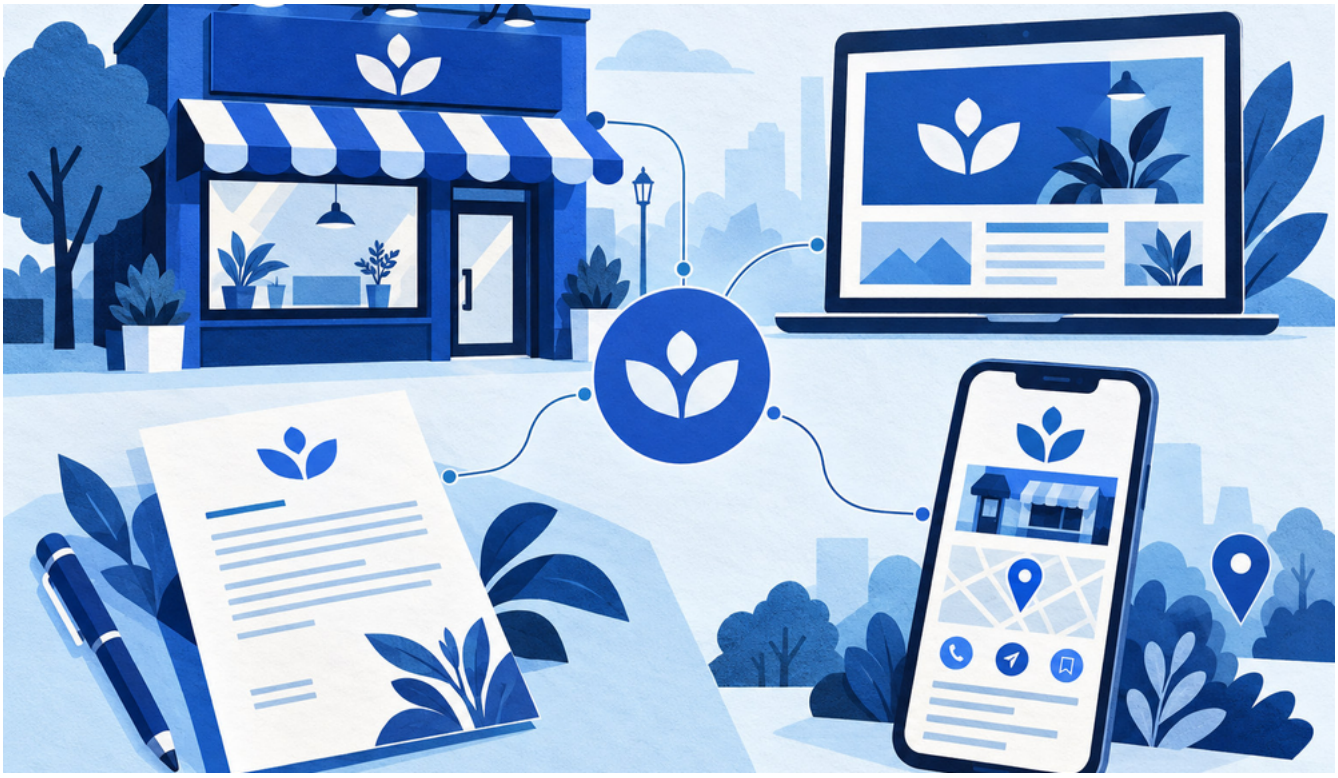
SOURCE G01

IDENTITY

Use your real business name.

Google requires the profile name to match real-world representation; extra service or location terms can breach that rule.

FIGURE 08 One identity across touchpoints



REAL-WORLD NAME

Use the name customers see in practice.

NO KEYWORD STUFFING

Do not add services or places as extra terms.

CONSISTENT RECORDS

Align the profile with legitimate public evidence.

NOTE Google requires a business name that reflects the real-world name.

SOURCE G02

AVAILABILITY

Keep hours aligned with real service.

Google supports normal hours, split-day breaks and special hours. The profile, website and booking route should agree.

FIGURE 09 Illustrative weekly verification calendar



REGULAR HOURS

Set the normal operating schedule.

SPECIAL HOURS

Update holiday and exceptional schedules.

KEEP CURRENT

Check accuracy before high-demand periods.

NOTE Represent actual customer-facing availability.

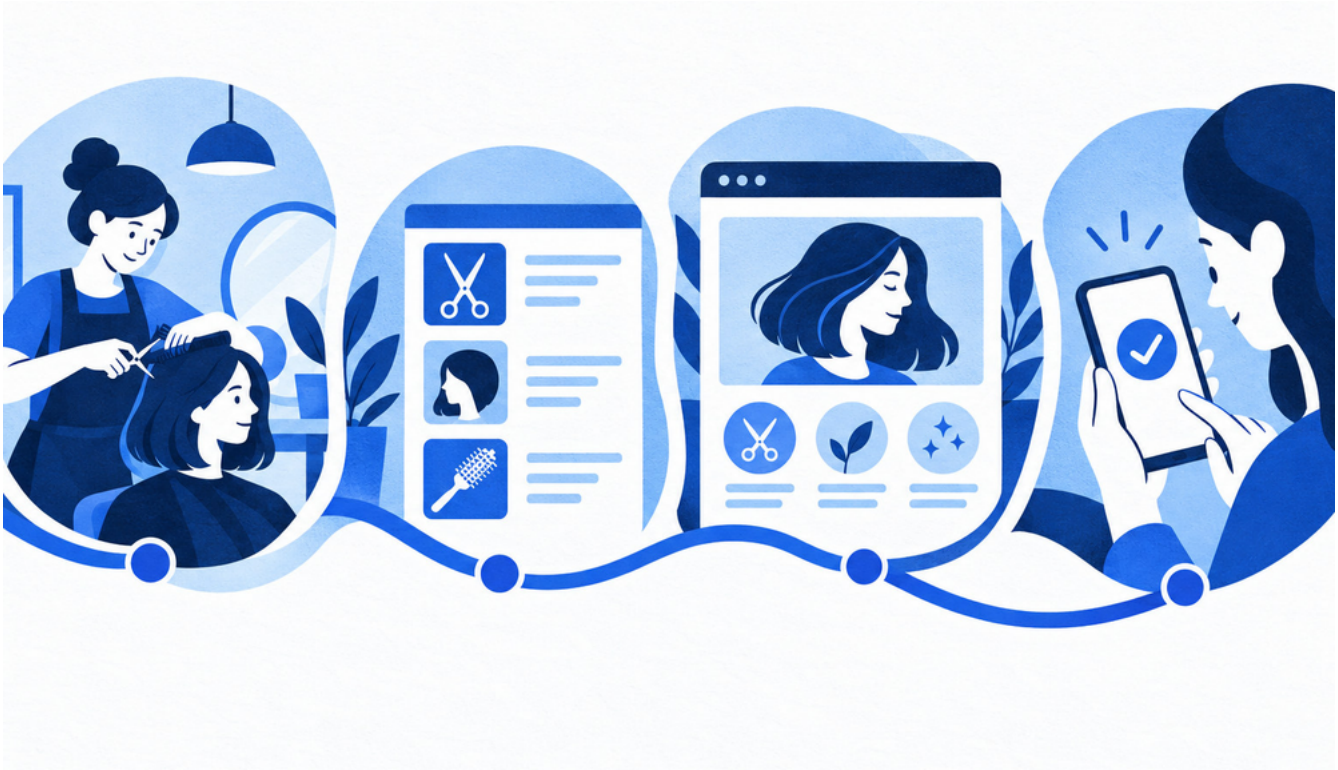
SOURCE G02

SERVICE CLARITY

Make the offer easy to understand.

The services editor supports suggested and custom entries for eligible categories. Relevant services may be highlighted.

FIGURE 10 From actual service to customer action



SERVICE FIT

Describe work the business really performs.

USEFUL DETAIL

Help customers choose the right next step.

AVAILABILITY

Keep scope and limitations accurate.

NOTE Service fields help explain the offer; independent ranking lift is unquantified.

SOURCE G12

REPUTATION

Reviews reflect the customer experience.

Google says review volume and positive ratings can help local ranking, without a universal target count.

FIGURE 11 A genuine review learning loop



ASK NATURALLY

Invite genuine customers to review.

RESPOND USEFULLY

Address questions and concerns with care.

READ THE PATTERN

Use feedback to improve the experience.

NOTE Review count and positive ratings can help local ranking; no fixed quota is published.

SOURCE G01 / G04

AUTHENTIC FEEDBACK

Protect the review process.

Google prohibits incentives, selective positive solicitation and attempts to control review content or rating.

FIGURE 12 Neutral workflow versus harmful steering



NO INCENTIVES

Avoid payment or rewards for reviews.

NO GATING

Do not selectively solicit positive feedback.

POLICY FIRST

Keep acquisition and replies authentic.

NOTE Google policies govern review collection and content.

SOURCE G04

DESTINATION QUALITY

Give the visit a useful page.

A local profile should lead to a page that genuinely helps visitors understand the service and act.

FIGURE 13 A usable local landing-page journey



CLEAR DESTINATION

Send visitors to a relevant page.

EASY CONTACT

Make the enquiry route visible and working.

MOBILE USE

Check the experience on a phone.

NOTE A good landing page supports customer action; this is an editorial priority.

SOURCE G01

EARN REAL CONNECTIONS

Choose relevance over a link quota.

Google mentions links in prominence. Search guidance also recommends crawlable links with descriptive anchor text.

FIGURE 14 A local relationship network



LOCAL RELEVANCE

Seek links that make sense for the business.

REAL PARTNERSHIPS

Favor credible local relationships.

AVOID SHORTCUTS

Assess quality and context, not raw counts.

NOTE Links and mentions can contribute to prominence; avoid claims of fixed weights.

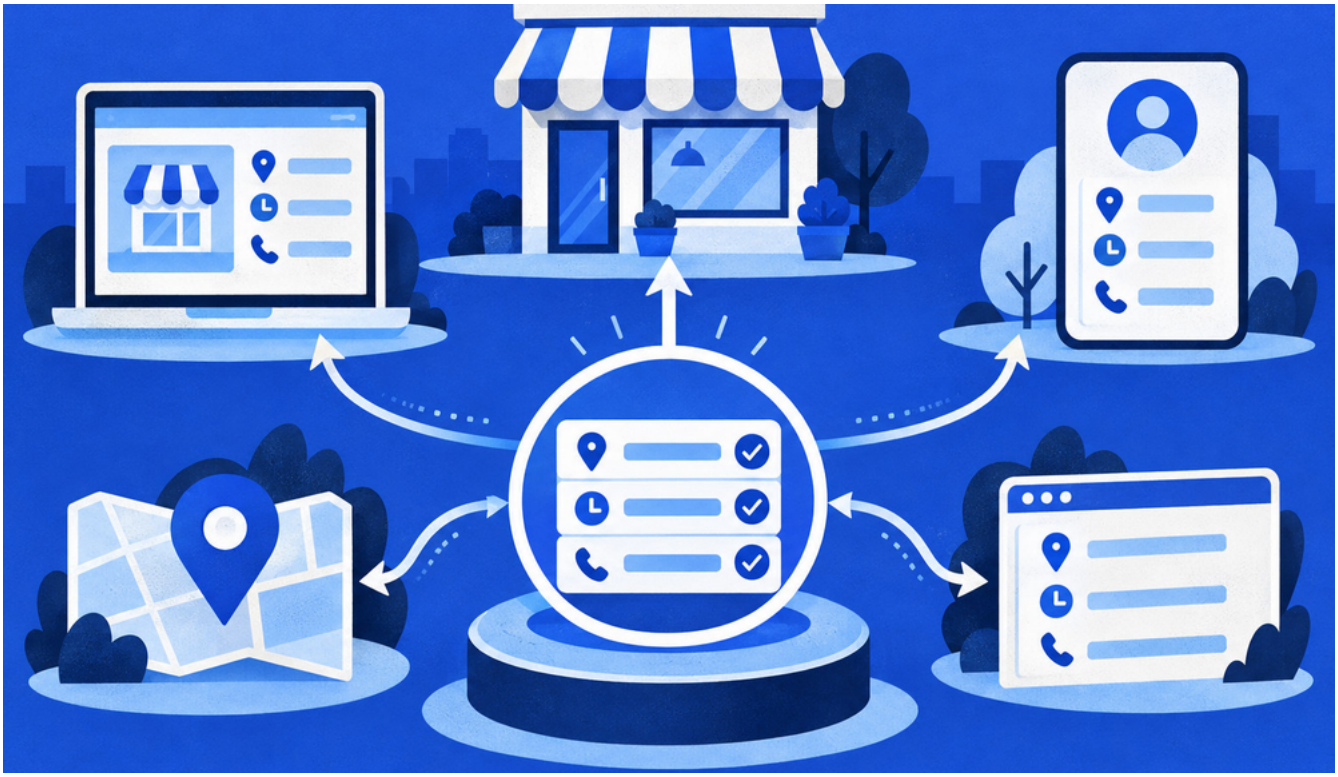
SOURCE G01

SOURCE OF TRUTH

One identity across the web.

Google may use public websites, licensed third parties, users and business owners. Keep an accurate shared register.

FIGURE 15 The information environment



ONE IDENTITY

Align name, address and contact details.

REAL LOCATION

Represent storefront or service area accurately.

MAINTAIN RECORDS

Review major listings and owned pages.

NOTE Consistency helps customers and reduces ambiguity.

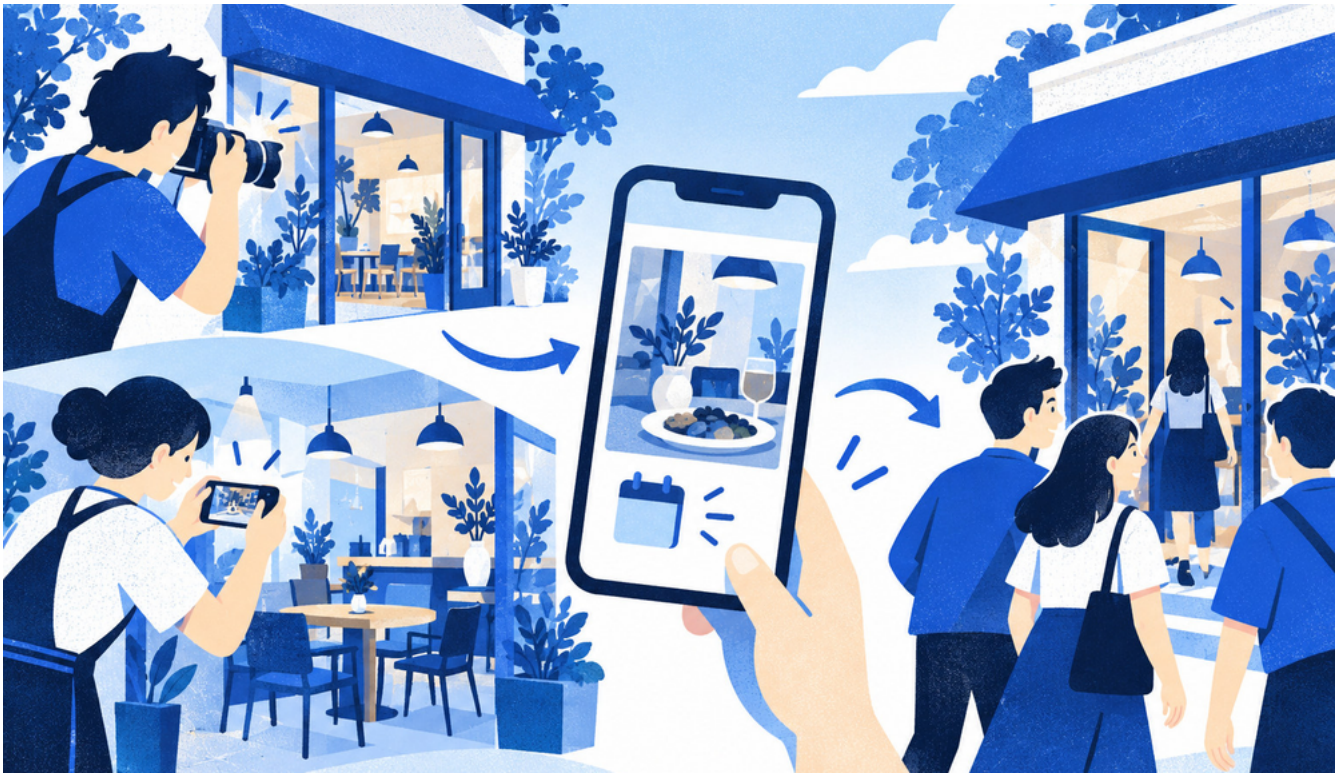
SOURCE G02

USEFUL MEDIA

Photos and posts serve a reader.

Show the real experience and give every update a purpose. Activity volume alone is not a useful goal.

FIGURE 16 Real imagery and meaningful updates



SHOW THE PLACE

Use current, representative photos.

EXPLAIN UPDATES

Publish useful posts when relevant.

MEASURE RESPONSE

Watch customer actions and enquiries.

NOTE Photos and posts have product roles; a quantified Maps ranking lift is not established.

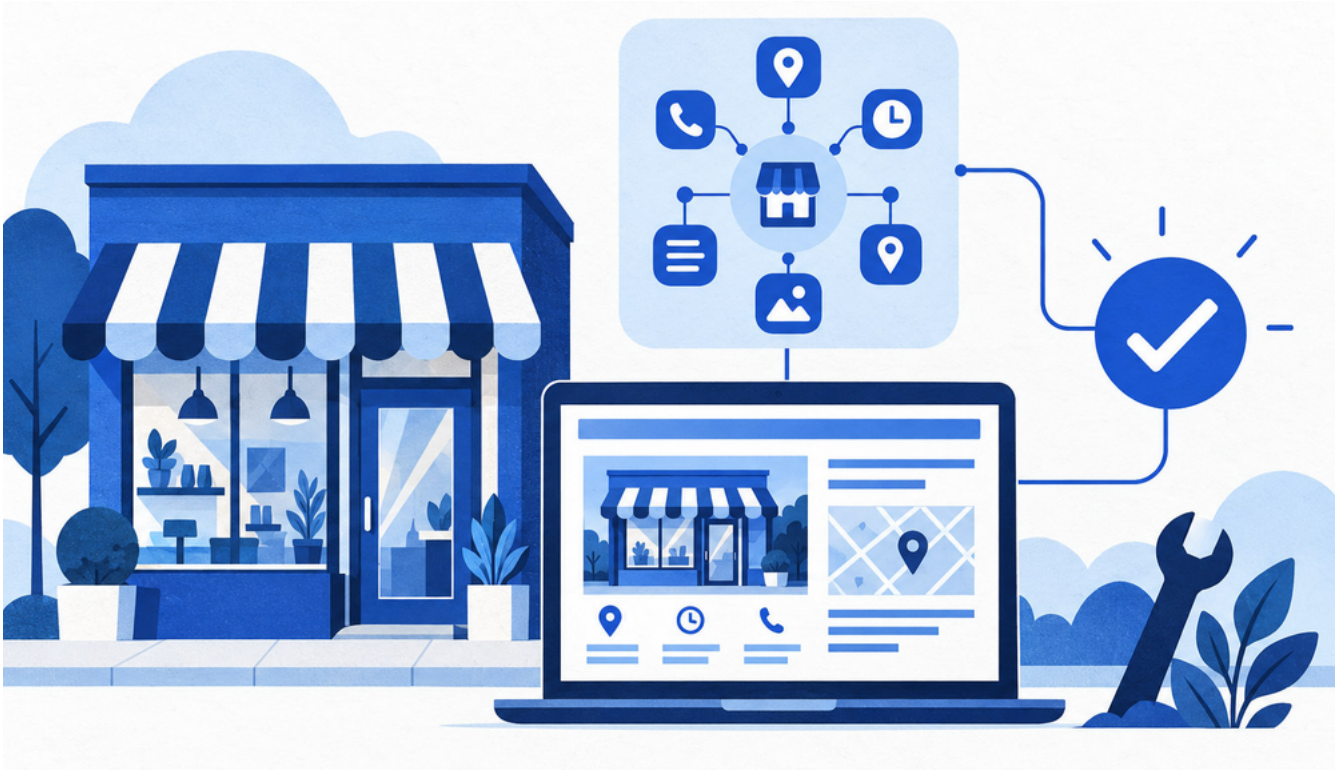
SOURCE G07 / G10

STRUCTURED DATA

Markup provides context, not a Maps shortcut.

LocalBusiness markup can describe business information to Google Search; it is not a published ranking lever for Maps.

FIGURE 17 Three maintenance checks



DESCRIBE ENTITIES

Use appropriate structured data.

MATCH VISIBLE CONTENT

Markup should reflect the page.

VALIDATE

Check syntax and eligibility.

NOTE Structured data can aid search understanding; do not promise Maps position gains.

SOURCE G11

DIFFERENT MARKETS

One framework. Different execution.

Adapt language, geography, calendar and business model to each market while keeping a shared evidence standard.

FIGURE 18 A global checklist, not measured coverage



GLOBAL FRAMEWORK

Use the same ranking dimensions.

LOCAL RULES

Confirm market features and categories.

LOCAL EVIDENCE

Judge performance in the actual service area.

NOTE The framework travels; market conditions and feature availability vary.

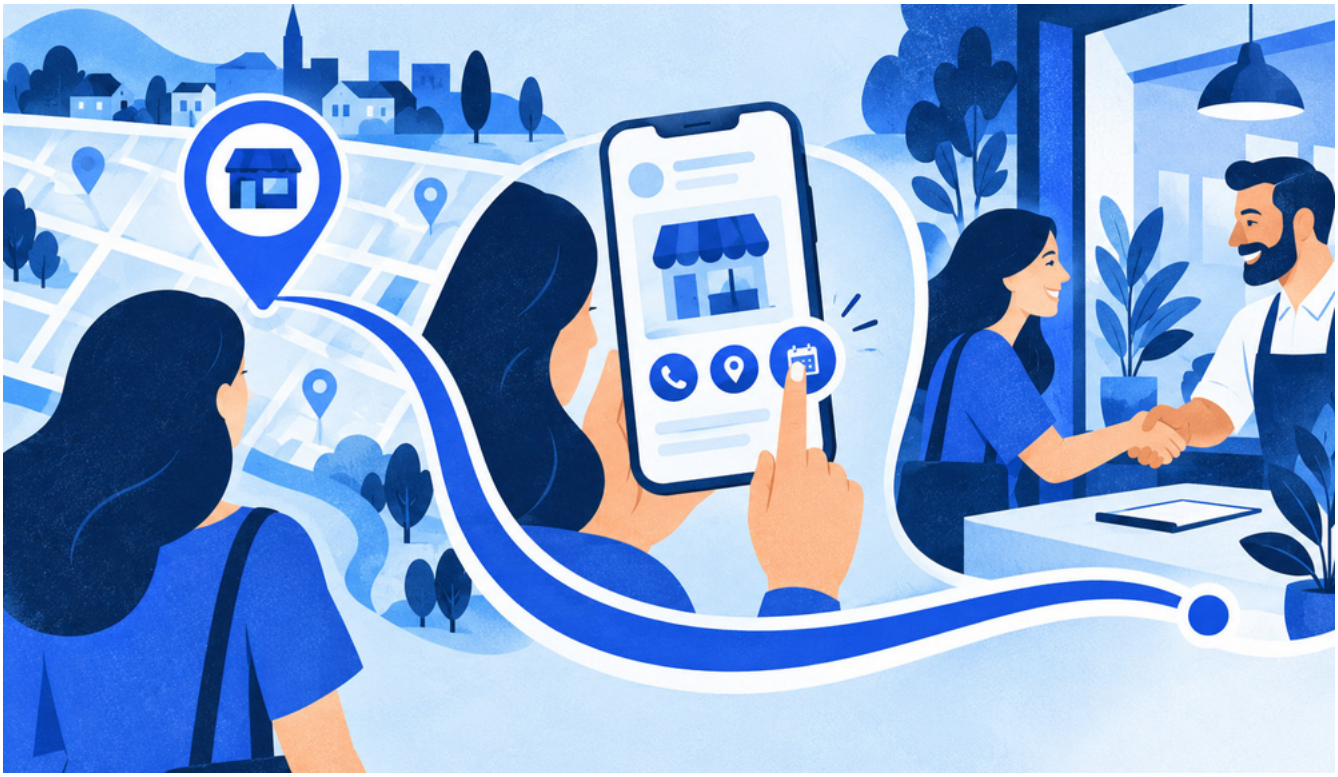
SOURCE G01

DIFFERENT UNITS

Position, interaction and value are separate.

Profile performance metrics describe actions. They are not a direct record of rank or confirmed sales.

FIGURE 19 The visibility-to-value chain



VISIBILITY

Where the profile appears.

INTERACTION

Calls, clicks and directions are actions.

BUSINESS VALUE

Track qualified enquiries and completed work.

NOTE A profile action does not by itself establish a sale.

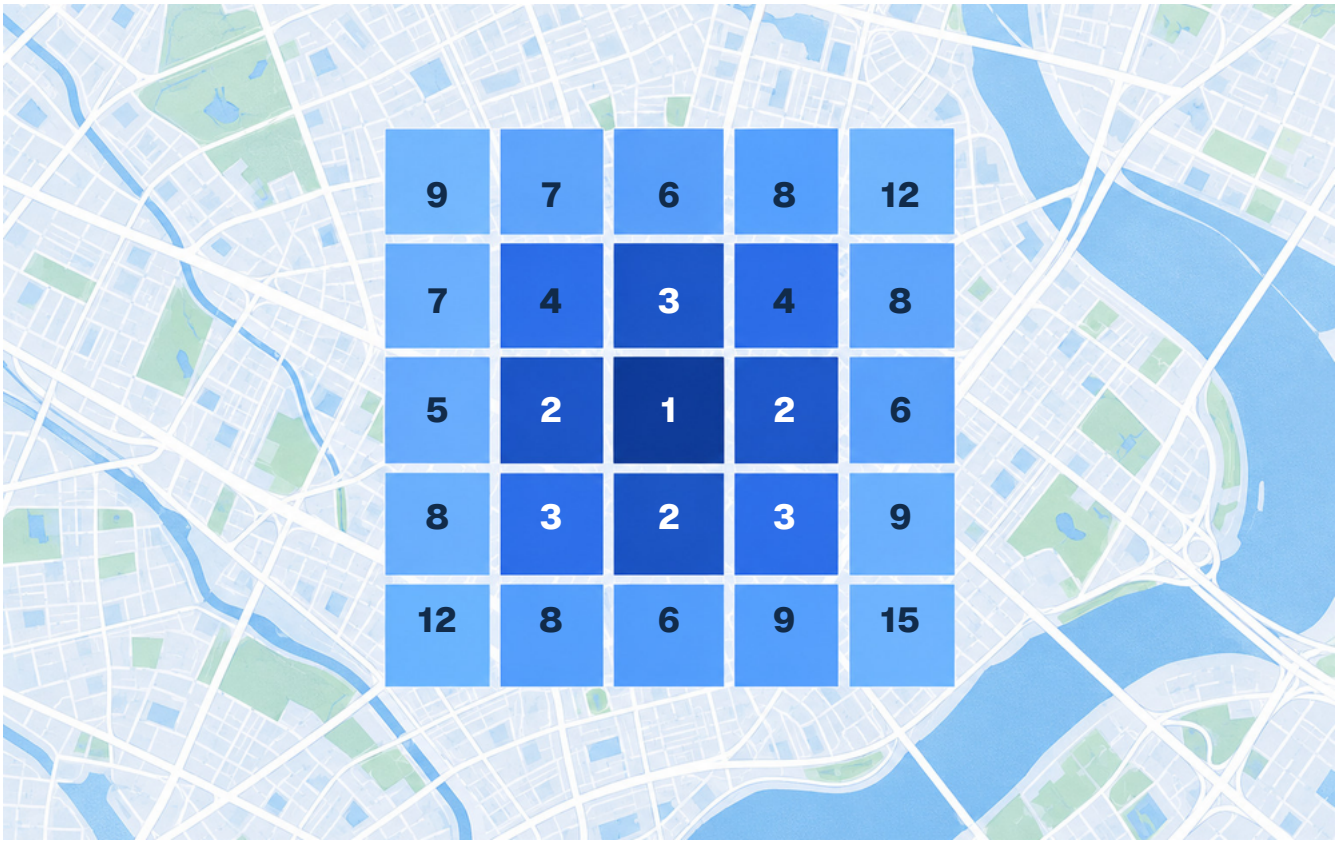
SOURCE G05

SYNTHETIC EXAMPLE

A geo-grid shows where you appear.

Each value below is a synthetic non-ad position for one query at one observation point.

FIGURE 20 Illustrative 5 × 5 grid and top-three coverage



7 / 25

28% TOP-THREE COVERAGE

Equal-weight observation points for one query; not search-volume or revenue share.

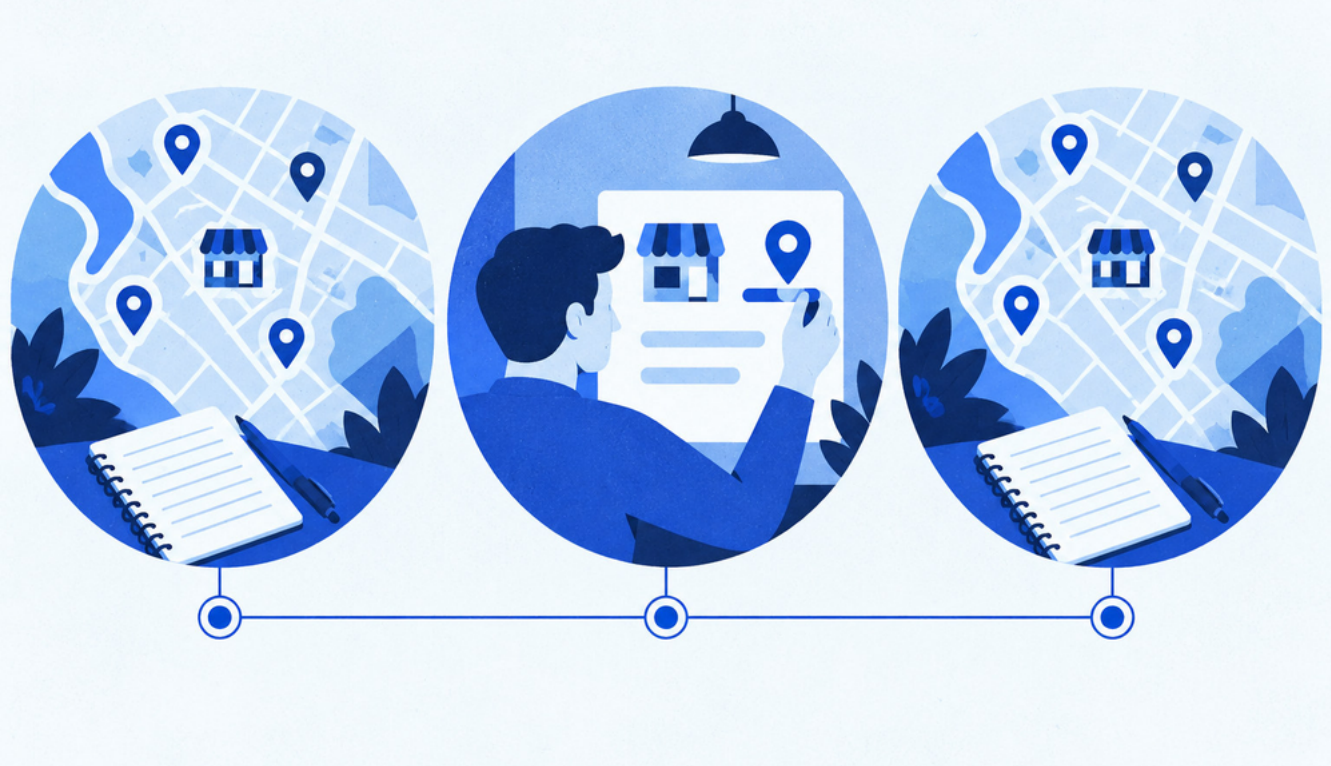
NOTE All positions are synthetic. Keep query, coordinates, language and time slot steady.

A DISCIPLINED TEST

Make improvement measurable.

A profile can move for reasons beyond your own edits. Record the change and competing explanations.

FIGURE 21 Baseline → change → compare



BASELINE

Repeat observations before editing.

CHANGE

Record one coherent correction.

COMPARE

Repeat the setup and consider other causes.

NOTE Before-and-after movement is an association, not proof of causality.

FIND THE ISSUE

Diagnose before choosing the fix.

This editorial route narrows the investigation; it does not reveal an undisclosed algorithm.

FIGURE 22 Three starting conditions



WEAK RELEVANCE

Check category, services and landing page.

UNEVEN GEOGRAPHY

Inspect coverage across customer origins.

WEAK ACTION

Audit photos, reviews and enquiry route.

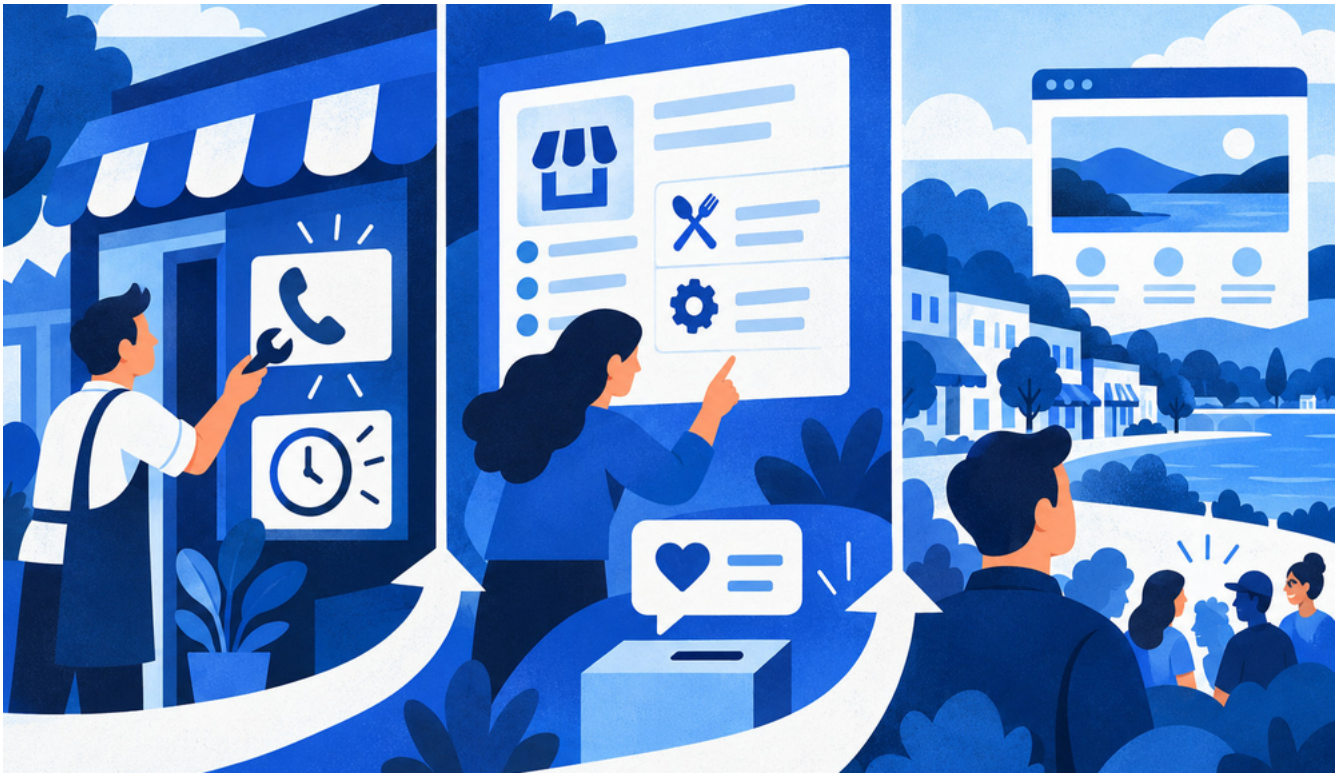
NOTE Diagnose the observed issue before choosing a tactic.

EFFORT AND USEFULNESS

Spend effort where it can help customers.

This is a Flento planning tool, not an estimate of Google factor weight.

FIGURE 23 An editorial priority sequence



HIGH CLARITY

Fix known errors and broken paths.

HIGH IMPACT

Prioritize customer and business value.

LOW CONFIDENCE

Pilot uncertain ideas before scaling.

NOTE Use evidence, effort and expected value together.

TIME TO ACT

A schedule that turns evidence into work.

Recommended sequence, not a promise of results within 90 days.

FIGURE 24 Three phases with a clear review point



DAYS 1–30

Verify reality, eligibility and baseline.

DAYS 31–60

Improve the profile and customer path.

DAYS 61–90

Repeat measurement and refine.

NOTE The sequence is a planning aid; adapt it to local conditions.

MONTHLY AUDIT

Keep the basics under control.

Assign a named owner to each group and verify that the customer-facing correction is live.

FIGURE 25 Three monthly workstreams



PROFILE

Confirm identity, category, hours and offer.

EXPERIENCE

Check photos, reviews and contact routes.

MEASUREMENT

Save the query and geographic protocol.

NOTE Assign owners and review dates to every checklist item.

A USEFUL REPORT

Report a decision, not just a rank.

Give the reader enough context to understand what happened and what the team will do next.

FIGURE 26 Minimum scorecard components



VISIBILITY

Track defined query and location sets.

ACTIONS

Report calls, website clicks and directions.

OUTCOMES

Record qualified enquiries and revenue.

NOTE State each metric definition and reporting window.

SOURCE G05

MEASUREMENT BOUNDARIES

Keep AI discovery in its own lane.

Google says foundational SEO practices remain relevant to AI Overviews and AI Mode; no special AI file or schema is required.

FIGURE 27 Two surfaces, two observation records



AI DISCOVERY

Watch how business facts are represented.

SOURCE ACCURACY

Correct owned content and profile details.

HUMAN OUTCOME

Judge whether the customer can take action.

NOTE This is an emerging observation lane, not a quantified Maps ranking factor.

ORIGINAL REFERENCES

Sources and further reading.

Select an entry in the PDF to open the publisher document.

G01	Local ranking framework	OPEN
G02	Business representation guidelines	OPEN
G03	Business categories	OPEN
G04	Service-area and hybrid businesses	OPEN
G05	Profile performance definitions	OPEN
G06	Maps fake-engagement policy	OPEN
G07	LocalBusiness structured data	OPEN
G08	Search spam policies	OPEN
W01	2026 Local Search Ranking Factors	OPEN
G09	Requesting customer reviews	OPEN

ORIGINAL REFERENCES

Sources and further reading.

Select an entry in the PDF to open the publisher document.

G10	Business Profile posts	OPEN
G11	Business photos and videos	OPEN
G12	Business services	OPEN
G13	SEO Starter Guide	OPEN
G14	AI features and websites	OPEN
G15	Business verification	OPEN
G16	Business hours	OPEN
G17	Sources of business information	OPEN
G18	Crawlable links and anchor text	OPEN

Flento

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Make local visibility more useful.

Start with an accurate business, observe the right geography, and improve the journey customers actually take.



Explore Flento

flento.io