

# HOW TO MARKET YOUR LOCAL BUSINESS IN THE AGE OF GOOGLE & AI

A Practical Guide for Tradies, Service Businesses  
& Local Business Owners

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# Introduction

## Why Everything Has Changed

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If you run a lawn mowing round, plumbing business, cleaning service, or any other local trade, you've probably noticed that finding new customers online has gotten harder and more confusing. Google looks different. People are searching differently. And now there's AI in the mix too.

The good news? For local service businesses, the fundamentals still work — you just need to know which levers to pull in 2025. This guide cuts through the noise and tells you exactly what to focus on, in plain language.

**WHO THIS IS FOR:** Tradies, lawn mowing operators, cleaners, gardeners, pet groomers, handymen — any local service business owner who wants more customers from the internet without a big budget or a marketing degree.

### What You'll Learn:

- How Google's AI changes affect local search (and what to do about it)
- Why Google Business Profile is now more important than your website
- Simple website tweaks that help you show up in AI search results
- Social media strategies that actually work for local tradies
- How to get more 5-star reviews automatically
- Free and cheap AI tools that save you hours every week
- A clear 90-day action plan to implement everything

## Chapter 1

# Understanding Google's AI Revolution

Google has been the dominant way people find local businesses for years. But in 2023–2025, Google made some of the biggest changes in its 25-year history — all driven by artificial intelligence.

## What Is AI Overviews (Formerly SGE)?

When someone searches 'best lawn mowing near me' or 'emergency plumber Springvale', Google now sometimes shows an AI-generated summary at the very top of the page — before any website links. This is called AI Overviews.

This sounds scary for small businesses, but here's the reality: for LOCAL service searches (the kind your customers do), Google still shows the Map Pack — those 3 local business listings with a map. This is where you want to be.

**KEY INSIGHT:** AI Overviews mostly affect informational searches ('how do I fix a leaky tap'). For local service searches ('plumber near me'), the Google Business Profile map pack is still the dominant result. This is great news for local tradies.

## The 3 Google Results That Matter for You

Result Type	What It Is	Your Priority
Map Pack	3 local businesses shown with map	<b>HIGH</b>
AI Overview	AI-written summary (rare for local)	<b>LOW</b>
Organic Results	Website links below the map	<b>MEDIUM</b>

## What Has Changed for Local Search?

- Google now rewards businesses that update their profiles regularly — not just set-and-forget
- Reviews with detailed keywords (e.g. 'great lawn mowing in Keysborough') carry more weight
- Voice search is growing — people ask questions like 'who does lawn mowing near me'
- Mobile-first: over 70% of local searches happen on phones
- Google is getting better at detecting fake or spammy content

## Chapter 1 Action Steps

- ✓ Search for your own service + suburb on Google right now — see what comes up
- ✓ Note whether you appear in the Map Pack
- ✓ Check if any AI Overview appears for your service type
- ✓ Look at your top 3 competitors' Google Business Profiles

## Chapter 2

# Google Business Profile — Your #1 Priority

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If there is ONE thing you take from this entire guide, let it be this: your Google Business Profile (GBP) is the single most important marketing asset you have as a local service business. More important than your website. More important than Facebook. Full stop.

## Why GBP Beats Everything Else

When someone searches 'lawn mowing Springvale' on their phone, they see a map with 3 businesses listed. They call one. They never even visit a website. That map listing is your Google Business Profile.

**REAL NUMBERS:** Research consistently shows that 76% of people who search for a local business on their smartphone visit or contact that business within 24 hours. The Map Pack gets the majority of those clicks.

## Setting Up Your GBP for Maximum Visibility

### 1. Complete Every Section

- Business name (exactly as it appears on signage/website)
- Primary category (e.g. 'Lawn care service') + secondary categories
- Address or service area (list every suburb you serve)
- Phone number and website
- Business hours (keep these updated!)
- Business description — 750 characters, include your key services and suburbs

### 2. Add Photos — Lots of Them

Businesses with 100+ photos on GBP get significantly more views and calls. You don't need a professional photographer — your phone is fine.

- Before/after photos of your work (lawn edges, garden clean-ups, etc.)
- Photo of yourself and your equipment
- Photo of your vehicle with signage
- Your service area suburbs (a nice local landmark works)

### 3. Post Updates Weekly

GBP has a 'Posts' feature that most local businesses completely ignore. Use it. Post once a week — a seasonal tip, a special offer, a before/after photo, a new service. Google rewards active profiles with better rankings.

#### **4. Use the Q&A; Feature**

Add your own questions and answers — this is not cheating, Google encourages it. Think about the questions customers ask you most often and answer them here.

#### **5. Turn on Messaging**

GBP has a built-in messaging feature. Many customers now prefer to message rather than call. Enable it and respond quickly — Google shows your typical response time.

### **Chapter 2 Action Steps**

- ✓ **Log into your GBP at [business.google.com](https://business.google.com) and complete your profile to 100%**
- ✓ **Add at least 20 photos this week, targeting 100 total over the next 3 months**
- ✓ **Write one GBP Post today — a seasonal tip or special offer**
- ✓ **Add 5 Q&As; that your customers commonly ask**
- ✓ **Enable messaging and set a welcome message**
- ✓ **List every suburb in your service area**

## Chapter 3

# Your Website in the AI Era

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Your website is still important — it's your credibility base and it supports your GBP rankings. But you don't need a fancy, expensive website. You need one that is fast, clear, and tells Google exactly what you do and where.

## What Makes a Good Local Business Website in 2025

- Loads fast on mobile (test at [pagespeed.web.dev](https://pagespeed.web.dev) — aim for 75+)
- Has your phone number clickable at the top of every page
- Clearly states the services you offer and the areas you cover
- Has a page for each main service AND each main suburb
- Has a clear 'About' page with a real photo and your story
- Shows real customer reviews or testimonials
- Has basic schema markup so Google understands your business type

## Writing for AI Search (The New SEO)

AI search tools (Google's AI Overviews, ChatGPT, Perplexity) all scrape websites to find answers. The websites they trust and quote share common traits:

AI systems prefer content that answers specific questions clearly and authoritatively. Instead of writing 'We provide excellent lawn mowing services', write 'We mow lawns in Springvale, Noble Park and surrounding suburbs every week, using electric mowers with no petrol fumes.' Specific, factual, local.

- Use plain language — write like you speak to a customer
- Answer questions directly (Who? What? Where? How much? How often?)
- Include specific suburb names throughout your content
- Add an FAQ section to every service page
- Mention your experience, qualifications, and years in business
- Update your content at least quarterly — fresh content ranks better

## The Suburb Page Strategy

One of the highest-value SEO moves for local businesses is creating a dedicated page for each suburb you serve. Instead of one 'Areas We Service' page, have individual pages: `/lawn-mowing-springvale`, `/lawn-mowing-noble-park`, etc.

Each page should be genuinely useful — mention local landmarks, talk about the types of properties in that suburb, include a local customer testimonial if possible.

### **Chapter 3 Action Steps**

- ✓ **Run your website through [pagespeed.web.dev](https://pagespeed.web.dev) and fix the top issues**
- ✓ **Make sure your phone number is clickable at the top of every page**
- ✓ **Create or improve suburb-specific pages for your top 5 service areas**
- ✓ **Add an FAQ section to your main service pages**
- ✓ **Test your site on mobile — does it look good and load quickly?**

## Chapter 4

# Social Media That Actually Works Locally

The biggest mistake local business owners make with social media is treating it like a broadcast channel — posting ads and hoping for customers. The businesses that win on social media use it to build community trust.

## Facebook: Still the Local King

For local service businesses, Facebook remains the most valuable social platform — not because of your business page, but because of local community groups.

### Facebook Community Groups Strategy

- Join every local community group in your service areas
- Participate genuinely — answer questions, be helpful, be visible
- Most groups have a 'Business Post Friday' or similar day — use it
- Post before/after photos — these get the most engagement
- Never hard sell — offer value first, mention your business second
- Respond to every 'who do you recommend?' post in your category

### Your Facebook Business Page

Your page supports your GBP and gives customers a place to find you, leave reviews, and see your work. Keep it active with at least 2-3 posts per week.

- Before/after photos (your best performing content type)
- Seasonal tips relevant to your service
- Customer shoutouts (with permission)
- Behind-the-scenes of your work
- Local area news or community involvement

## Instagram and TikTok

These platforms work best for businesses with very visual work — lawn mowing, landscaping, painting, cleaning. Short videos of transformations can go viral locally and drive significant enquiries.

**TIME SAVER:** You don't need to be on every platform. Pick ONE social platform beyond Facebook and do it well. If your work is visual, try Instagram Reels or TikTok. Post a 30-second before/after video once a week.

### Chapter 4 Action Steps

- ✓ [Join 5 local Facebook community groups in your service suburbs](#)

- ✓ **Post once in each group this week (follow their rules!)**
- ✓ **Set a schedule: 2-3 Facebook business page posts per week**
- ✓ **Take a before/after photo at your next job**
- ✓ **Reply to 3 recommendation requests in local groups this week**

## Chapter 5

# Email Marketing — Your Owned Audience

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Google can change its algorithm. Facebook can reduce your reach overnight. But your email list? That's yours. Email marketing has the highest return on investment of any digital channel — and it's especially powerful for repeat service businesses.

## Building Your List From Day One

- Ask every customer for their email when you quote or invoice
- Add an email capture form to your website (offer a free tip guide as incentive)
- Mention your email newsletter in your GBP posts and social media
- Use a tool like Mailchimp (free up to 500 contacts) to manage your list

## What to Send (and How Often)

You don't need to email every week. For most local service businesses, monthly or seasonal emails work best. The key is relevance — make every email feel personally useful to your local customers.

Season	Email Topic Ideas
Autumn (Mar-May)	Leaf clean-up reminders, preparing gardens for winter
Winter (Jun-Aug)	Reduced mowing schedules, indoor/outdoor jobs
Spring (Sep-Nov)	Lawn revival, spring garden prep, early booking incentives
Summer (Dec-Feb)	Keeping lawns alive in heat, holiday scheduling

## Chapter 5 Action Steps

- ✓ [Sign up for a free Mailchimp account at mailchimp.com](#)
- ✓ [Add an email capture form to your website homepage](#)
- ✓ [Import your existing customer email addresses into Mailchimp](#)
- ✓ [Write and send your first email newsletter this month](#)
- ✓ [Start asking every new customer for their email address](#)

## Chapter 6

# AI Tools to Save You Time and Money

AI isn't just changing how people search — it's giving small business owners access to capabilities that used to cost thousands of dollars. Here are the AI tools that provide the most value for local service businesses.

AI Tool	What It Does	Cost	Best For
ChatGPT / Claude	Writing content, emails, website copy	Free / low cost	All content tasks
Google Gemini	Integrated with Google Workspace	Free	Gmail drafts, Docs
Canva Magic AI	Creating social media graphics	Free tier available	Flyers, posts
Otter.ai	Transcribes your voice notes	Free tier	Writing descriptions
Sora / CapCut AI	Video editing and creation	Free tier	Social media videos

## How to Use AI to Write Your Marketing Content

You don't need to write perfect prompts. Just tell the AI what you need in plain language. Here are some prompts that work well for local service businesses:

### GBP Post:

"Write a Google Business Profile post for a lawn mowing business in Springvale. Mention spring lawn care tips and include a call to action."

### Review Reply:

"Write a professional, friendly reply to this 5-star Google review: [paste review]"

### Website FAQ:

"Write 5 frequently asked questions and answers for a lawn mowing business that serves the south east Melbourne suburbs."

### Email Newsletter:

"Write a friendly monthly email newsletter for lawn mowing customers. It is autumn and we are reminding customers to book before the rush."

### Chapter 6 Action Steps

- ✓ Create a free ChatGPT or Claude account if you don't have one
- ✓ Use AI to write your next 4 GBP posts (one per week for a month)
- ✓ Ask AI to rewrite your website homepage in plain, local-focused language
- ✓ Use Canva's AI tools to create a professional social media post template

## Chapter 7

# Online Reviews — The New Word of Mouth

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Before AI, before social media, word of mouth was how local businesses grew. Online reviews ARE word of mouth in 2025. They directly affect your Google rankings, your GBP visibility, and whether a customer chooses you over a competitor.

## Why Reviews Matter More Than Ever

- Google uses review quantity AND quality as a local ranking signal
- Reviews with keywords (your service + suburb) help you rank for those terms
- AI Overviews sometimes pull from review content to describe local businesses
- Customers read reviews before calling — most won't ring a business with under 10 reviews
- A steady flow of new reviews signals an active, trusted business

## The Simple System That Gets You Reviews

The number one reason customers don't leave reviews is not that they don't want to — it's that nobody asked them. Here is a simple system:

**Step 1:** Do great work — obvious, but reviews follow quality

**Step 2:** Before you leave the job, say: 'If you're happy with the work, I'd really appreciate a Google review — it helps my small business a lot'

**Step 3:** Send a text or email the same day with your Google review link

**Step 4:** Make the link easy — bit.ly or a QR code on your invoice/business card

**Step 5:** Reply to EVERY review — good or bad — within 24 hours

**GET YOUR REVIEW LINK:** Go to your Google Business Profile, click 'Get more reviews', and copy the link. Shorten it at bit.ly. Put it in your email signature, on your invoice, and in your follow-up text messages.

## Responding to Negative Reviews

Negative reviews happen to every business. How you respond matters more than the review itself. Always respond calmly, professionally, and with an offer to resolve the issue offline. Never argue or get defensive — potential customers are watching.

## Chapter 7 Action Steps

- ✓ **Get your Google Review link and shorten it with bit.ly**
- ✓ **Add the review link to your email signature and invoices**
- ✓ **Text your last 10 customers asking for a Google review**
- ✓ **Reply to every existing review on your GBP profile**
- ✓ **Set a goal: 2 new reviews per month minimum**

## Chapter 8

# Putting It All Together: Your 90-Day Plan

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You don't have to do everything at once. Here is a focused 90-day plan that gives you the highest return for your time investment. Start with Month 1 — don't skip ahead.

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### Month 1 — Foundation (Weeks 1-4)

- Complete your Google Business Profile to 100%
  - Add 20+ photos to your GBP
  - Get your Google Review link and send to 10 past customers
  - Check your website loads fast and has a clickable phone number
  - Join 3-5 local Facebook community groups
  - Sign up for a free AI tool (ChatGPT or Claude)
- 

### Month 2 — Content and Visibility (Weeks 5-8)

- Publish 8 GBP posts (2 per week)
  - Create suburb pages for your top 3 service areas
  - Post 3x per week on your Facebook business page
  - Set up a free Mailchimp account and import customer emails
  - Use AI to write your website's main service page copy
  - Participate in local Facebook groups at least 3x per week
- 

### Month 3 — Growth and Automation (Weeks 9-12)

- Send your first email newsletter
- Set up a review request template and use it after every job
- Create suburb pages for your next 3 service areas
- Review your GBP analytics — which searches are finding you?
- Experiment with one short before/after video for social media
- Ask your best customers for a detailed, keyword-rich review

**MEASURING SUCCESS:** After 90 days, check these metrics: (1) How many calls/messages from GBP? (2) How many Google reviews do you have? (3) Where do you appear in the Map Pack for your key searches? (4) How many website visits per month?

## Bonus

# Quick Reference Checklist

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Print this page and stick it somewhere visible. Tick off each item as you complete it.

### Google Business Profile

- Profile 100% complete
- 20+ photos added
- Service areas listed (all suburbs)
- Weekly GBP Posts scheduled
- Q&A; section filled in
- Messaging enabled
- Review link created and shared

### Website

- Mobile-friendly and loads fast
- Clickable phone number at top
- Service pages for main offerings
- Suburb pages created
- FAQ sections added
- About page with your photo
- Reviews/testimonials displayed

### Social Media

- Joined local community Facebook groups
- Business Page posting 2-3x per week
- Before/after photos being taken
- Responding to recommendation posts

### Reviews

- Google review link created
- Link added to email signature
- Link added to invoices
- Texting customers for reviews
- Replying to all reviews

### Email and AI

- Mailchimp account set up
- Email list being built

- First newsletter sent
- AI tool account created
- AI being used for content

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Thank you for reading! If you found this guide useful, please share it with a fellow local business owner. For personalised advice, visit [hems.com](https://hems.com) or [southeastlawnmowing.com.au](https://southeastlawnmowing.com.au).

— *Michael Dunstan*