

YOUR WEBSITE SHOULD WORK AS

HARD AS YOU DO

The contractor's plain-English guide to getting found,
getting calls, and not getting ripped off.

[COVER PHOTO]

Work truck at dusk in a residential driveway. Ladder on the rack.
Magnetic door sign visible but not legible. Phone glowing on the dash.
Slightly low angle, warm practical light. No stock-photo smiles.

ALT: tailgate flat lay — tape measure, phone showing a map listing,
pencil, folded estimate.

- What a website actually is — and the \$15 mistake that costs \$40,000
- How to get in the map pack (it's free and most guys ignore it)
- The 12 questions to ask before you hire anybody
- What it should cost, and how to know if it's working

BEFORE WE START

I'm going to make you a deal.

You give me about ninety minutes. In return, I'll teach you enough about websites that no salesman can ever spin you again. Not "enough to build one." Enough to **buy one, judge one, and know if it's making you money.**

That's it. That's the whole deal.

This book has no chapters about "leveraging synergies" or "digital transformation." I'm not going to tell you your brand needs to tell a story. Your brand is that you show up on time and don't leave a mess. I know that. You know that.

What you probably don't know is why a guy who's been in business twenty-two years and does beautiful work is invisible on Google while some outfit that started last spring is booked out six weeks.

That's not luck. That's a system. Systems can be learned.

Let's go.

WHO THIS IS FOR

You own or run a home service business. Roofing, HVAC, plumbing, electrical, landscaping, concrete, painting, remodeling, cleaning, pest, fencing, gutters, doors, decks. One truck or twelve.

You've got one of these situations:

- **No website.** You've been running on word of mouth and it worked until it didn't.
- **A website you're embarrassed by.** Your nephew built it in 2016. It still says "Coming Soon" on the Gallery page.
- **A website somebody sold you.** You pay \$200 a month and you have no idea what for.
- **A website that looks great and does nothing.** Pretty pictures, zero calls.

All four are fixable. All four have the same root cause: **nobody ever explained the machine to you.**

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Read it front to back if you've got the time. It's built to be read in one sitting or in chunks between jobs.

If you're in a hurry, do this:

1. Read **The Five-Minute Version** on the next page.
2. Read **Chapter 7** (how to hire without getting taken) before you talk to anybody.
3. Come back to the rest when you can.

Every chapter ends with a **Do This Now** box. If you only ever do the Do This Now boxes, you'll be ahead of eighty percent of your competition. That's not a sales line. That's just how low the bar is in this industry.

There's a **Language Decoder** in the back. When somebody uses a word at you and you nod along, look it up there afterward. No shame in it. I don't know how to sweat a copper joint.

THE FIVE-MINUTE VERSION

If you read nothing else, read this.

1. **Your Google Business Profile matters more than your website.** It's free. It's the map listing. Claim it, fill it out completely, get reviews on it. This is the single highest-return thing on this list.
2. **Your website's job is to turn a stranger into a phone call.** Not to win awards. Not to impress your brother-in-law. Calls.
3. **Most people looking at your site are standing in their driveway on a phone.** If it's hard to use with one thumb, it's broken.
4. **If it takes more than three seconds to load, half of them are already gone.** Speed is not a nice-to-have.
5. **Your phone number goes at the top of every page, and it has to be tappable.** You'd be amazed.
6. **Show your face and your trucks.** Real photos of real work beat stock photos every single time. It's not close.
7. **Answer the price question.** Not with an exact number — with a range, a starting point, or how you price. Sites that dodge price get fewer calls, not more.

8. Reviews are the new referral. Ask every happy customer. Every one. Make it a step in your closeout process.

9. You must own your domain name and your website files. If you don't, you don't have a website. You're renting one, and the landlord can lock you out.

10. Track two numbers: how many calls came in, and what you spent to get them. Everything else is decoration.

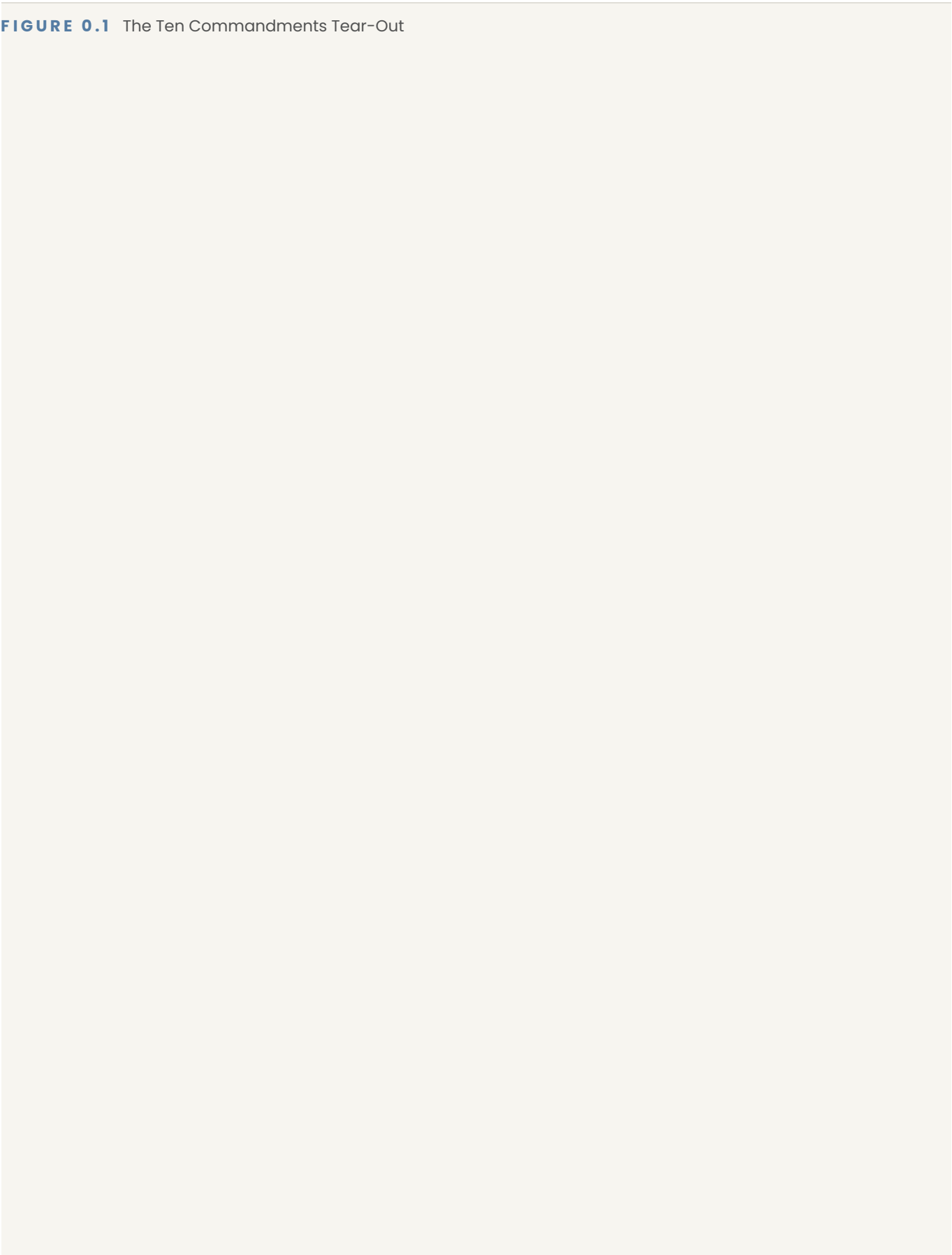
That's the whole business. The rest of this book is *why* and *how*.

THE TEN THINGS THAT ACTUALLY MATTER

Tape this inside the truck door.

- 01 ☐ **Claim your Google Business Profile.**
Free. Highest return of anything on this page.
- 02 ☐ **The website's job is a phone call.**
Not awards. Not your brother-in-law's opinion.
- 03 ☐ **They're on a phone, in a driveway.**
One thumb. Bad light. Design for that guy.
- 04 ☐ **Three seconds or half of them leave.**
Speed isn't a nice-to-have.
- 05 ☐ **Phone number on top of every page.**
Tappable. Not an image.
- 06 ☐ **Show your face and your trucks.**
Real photos beat stock every single time.
- 07 ☐ **Answer the price question.**
A range. A starting point. Anything beats silence.
- 08 ☐ **Ask every happy customer for a review.**
Make it a step in closeout, not an afterthought.
- 09 ☐ **Own your domain and your files.**
If you don't own it, you're renting it.
- 10 ☐ **Track leads and what they cost.**
Everything else is decoration.

FIGURE 0.1 The Ten Commandments Tear-Out



WHAT A WEBSITE ACTUALLY IS

Let's kill the mystery first.

A website is not magic and it's not one thing. It's three things that get rented and assembled separately, and confusing them is where most contractors get taken advantage of.

Here's the whole thing in one picture.

The domain is your address. `yourcompany.com`. You rent it from a registrar for about \$15 a year. That's it. Fifteen bucks. Anybody charging you \$50 a month "for your domain" is charging you for a Coke and calling it a bar tab.

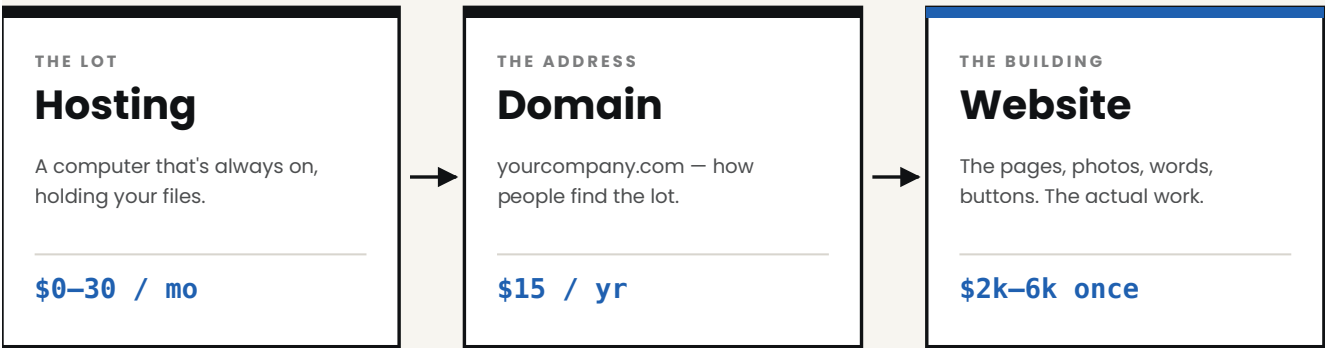
The hosting is the land it sits on. A computer somewhere that's always on, holding your files, ready to hand them to anyone who asks. Five to twenty-five dollars a month for a business your size. Some modern setups host small sites for free.

The website itself is the building. The pages, the pictures, the words, the buttons. This is the part somebody builds. This is where the money goes and where the money *should* go.

That's it. Three parts. Address, land, building.

FIG 1.1 THE SHOP YOU NEVER LOCK UP

Three things. Rented separately.



▲ All three must be in YOUR name. Your web guy gets access — not ownership.

FIGURE 1.1 The Shop You Never Lock Up

THE PART NOBODY TELLS YOU

Here's why this matters practically.

Those three things can be held by three different companies. Or by one. Or — and this is the trap — **all three can be held by your web guy in his name instead of yours.**

When that happens, you don't own a website. You're a tenant. If you want to leave, you leave with nothing. New domain, new site, new everything. All that Google reputation you built up over five years? Gone. Starting over.

I've watched contractors lose \$40,000 a year in leads over a \$15 domain registration in the wrong name.

We'll cover exactly how to check this and fix it in Chapter 7. For now just carry this with you:

The domain, the hosting account, and the website files should all be in your name, on your credit card, with your email as the login. Your web guy gets access. He doesn't get ownership.

"DO I NEED A CMS?"

Somebody will ask you this. Here's the plain answer.

A **CMS** (Content Management System) is a control panel that lets you change your own website without knowing code. WordPress is the famous one. Squarespace, Wix, and Webflow are others.

Think of it like this: a CMS is the difference between a truck you can service yourself and one where you have to go back to the dealer for an oil change.

You want some ability to change things yourself. At minimum: hours, phone number, service list, photos, a blog post if you ever feel like it.

You do not need full control of everything. You're not going to redesign your homepage at 9pm. Nobody does. Paying extra for "full customization" you'll never touch is like buying the diesel option for a truck that never leaves the neighborhood.

The honest middle ground: a site you can update text and photos on, where structural changes go back to whoever built it. That's most contractors, and that's fine.

THE THREE WAYS SITES GET BUILT

You'll run into these three. Know the difference.

1. DIY builder (Wix, Squarespace, GoDaddy Website Builder) You do it yourself with templates and drag-and-drop. Cost: \$16–\$50/month, plus your weekends. Good for: brand new, near-zero budget, need *something* up this week. Bad for: getting found on Google against real competition, looking different from every other outfit in town.

2. Template site from an agency or "web company" Somebody takes a template, drops in your logo and photos, hands it over. Cost: \$500–\$3,000 one-time, or \$150–\$400/month on a lock-in contract. Quality range is enormous. This is where most of the horror stories live.

3. Custom-built site Actually designed and built for your business, your services, your towns. Cost: \$2,500–\$15,000 depending on size and who's doing it. Modern build tools have made this dramatically cheaper than it was even three years ago — which is why \$8,000 quotes for a nine-page contractor site should now get a raised eyebrow, not a signature.

None of these is automatically right. It depends on your budget and how competitive your market is. Chapter 8 does the math with you.

DO THIS NOW

Find out who owns your domain. Go to `lookup.icann.org` and type in your web address. Look at the "Registrant" info. If it says your web guy's name or company — or if it's hidden behind privacy and you don't have the login — you've got a problem to solve. Write it down. Chapter 7 tells you what to do about it.

GOING DEEPER

Book Three in this series is entirely about what happens after the call comes in — answering, following up, and the money that leaks out of a business that takes six hours to call somebody back.

THE FIVE JOBS OF YOUR WEBSITE

Most contractors think their website's job is to "look professional."

That's like saying a truck's job is to look clean. Sure, it should. But that's not the job.

Your website has exactly five jobs. Every dollar you spend should go toward one of them. If a designer suggests something that doesn't serve one of these five, ask him which one it serves and watch him squirm.

FIG 2.1 THE FIVE JOBS

Every dollar serves one of these.

1	GET FOUND Show up when they search. If you're not on the screen, you don't exist.
2	PROVE YOU'RE REAL Kill the fear of getting burned. Real photos. Your face. License number.
3	ANSWER THE PRICE QUESTION A range beats silence. Silence makes you sound expensive.
4	MAKE CONTACT STUPID EASY Tappable number. Three-field form. One thumb, three seconds.
5	CATCH THE AFTER-HOURS CROWD Half of them look at 9pm on a Sunday. Your office is closed.

A stranger with a problem should find you, believe you, know roughly

FIGURE 2.1 The Five Jobs

Let's take them one at a time.

JOB 1: GET FOUND

Somebody's water heater just started leaking. They're standing in a wet garage with a phone.

They type: **"water heater repair near me"**

If you're not on that screen, you do not exist. Doesn't matter that you've been in business since 1998. Doesn't matter that you're better. You are not in the conversation.

This is the single biggest shift in home services in the last twenty years, and it's why guys with great reputations sometimes go quiet. The referral network still works — it just stopped being the *only* way people find you. Now it's maybe a third of it.

Chapter 4 is entirely about this. It's the longest chapter in the book for a reason.

JOB 2: PROVE YOU'RE REAL

Here's what's actually going through your customer's head:

"Is this guy going to take my deposit and disappear?"

That's the fear. Not price. Not scheduling. **Fear of getting burned.** Home service has a reputation problem you personally did not earn but you personally have to overcome.

Your website's job is to make that fear go away in about eight seconds. Here's what does it:

- **Real photos of real jobs you did.** Not stock. Never stock. People can smell stock photos and it makes them trust you less than having no photos at all.
- **Your face.** A photo of you. Of your crew. Standing by the truck. Not a headshot in a suit — you don't wear a suit.
- **Reviews, on the page, with names.** Even three good ones.
- **License number, bonded, insured.** Right there where they can see it.
- **How long you've been doing this.** "Serving Snohomish County since 2011" does more work than three paragraphs of copy.
- **A real address or at least a real service area.** Not just a form.



PHOTO 2.1

Shot list. Owner standing in front of his own truck, arms crossed but relaxed, mid-afternoon light, actual work clothes, actual dirt. This is the "prove you're real" example photo. Caption it: "This photo is worth more than four paragraphs of copy."

JOB 3: ANSWER THE PRICE QUESTION

This one starts arguments, so let me be direct.

Every contractor I've ever talked to says the same thing: *"I can't put prices on there. Every job's different."*

I know. That's true. And it's also not the point.

Your customer does not expect an exact number. They expect **to not feel stupid**. They want to know if you're a \$200 company or a \$20,000 company so they don't waste your time or embarrass themselves.

When you refuse to give them *anything*, here's what happens: they assume you're expensive and hiding it, and they call the guy who at least said something.

You have four honest options, and any of them beat silence:

- 1. Starting-at pricing.** "Most water heater replacements run \$1,400–\$2,600 installed."
- 2. Range by job type.** A simple table. Small job / medium job / large job.
- 3. Explain how you price.** "We charge by the square foot for driveways. Right now that's running \$8–\$14 depending on prep and thickness."
- 4. Publish your service call fee.** "\$89 diagnostic, waived if you hire us." That alone filters out tire-kickers and pre-qualifies everyone who calls.

The contractors I've seen do this get *fewer* calls and *more* jobs. That's the trade. Your phone rings less and your close rate goes way up, because the people calling already know roughly what it costs and called anyway.

If you're worried about competitors seeing your pricing — they already know. They're in the same market buying from the same suppliers. The only person your price secrecy is hiding information from is your customer.

JOB 4: MAKE CONTACT STUPID EASY

Somebody decides to call you. Now the site has one job: don't get in the way.

What that means in practice:

- **Phone number in the header of every page.** Big. Tappable. On a phone, tapping it should start the call, not copy it to a notepad.
- **A short form.** Name, phone, what they need. That's three fields. Every additional field you add drops completions. Asking for their address, preferred contact time, and how they heard about you before they've even talked to you is how you lose people.
- **Text option if you can.** Half of people under forty would rather text than call. It's not laziness, it's just how they operate.
- **A button that's always visible on mobile.** A "Call Now" bar stuck to the bottom of the screen. It looks pushy in a mockup. It works in real life.

FIG 2.2 THE THUMB TEST

Same content. One of these gets called.

AAA Plumbing & Heating Services LLC

stock photo of a smiling man

Name

Email

Phone

Address

Best time to call

How did you hear about us?

Message

call us: 425-298-6454

Number in the footer. Seven fields. Nothing reachable by a thumb.

(425) 298-6454 TAP

REAL JOB PHOTO

Name

Phone

What you need

CALL NOW

Tappable number up top. Three fields. A call button that follows you down the page.

FIGURE 2.2 The Thumb Test

JOB 5: CATCH THE AFTER-HOURS CROWD

Look at when people actually search for home services: evenings and weekends. They're home, they're looking at the problem, and they're doing something about it right then.

Your office is closed. Your website isn't.

So the site has to do three things at 9pm on a Sunday:

- 1. Set expectations.** "We answer messages by 8am next business day." That sentence prevents them from calling three other people.
- 2. Capture the lead.** Form or text.
- 3. Confirm receipt instantly.** An automatic reply that says "Got it, here's what happens next." Silence after a form submission feels exactly like being ignored.

This is where a lot of money quietly disappears. A lead that comes in Friday night and gets a call back Monday afternoon is usually gone. Not because you're bad — because somebody else

called back Saturday morning.

THE ONE-SENTENCE VERSION

A stranger with a problem should be able to find you, believe you, understand roughly what you cost, and reach you — in under sixty seconds, one-handed, at night.

Tape that to something. Every decision about your website gets judged against that sentence.

DO THIS NOW

Pull out your phone. Go to your own website like you're a customer. Time it. Can you find the phone number in under five seconds? Does tapping it start a call? Is there a single real photo of a job you did?

Whatever failed, write it down. That's your list.

GOING DEEPER

Job 5 — catching after-hours leads without staying up all night — is what Book Three is built around, including how small shops are now using automated answering to stop losing nights and weekends.

CHAPTER 3

THE ANATOMY OF A JOB-WINNING SITE

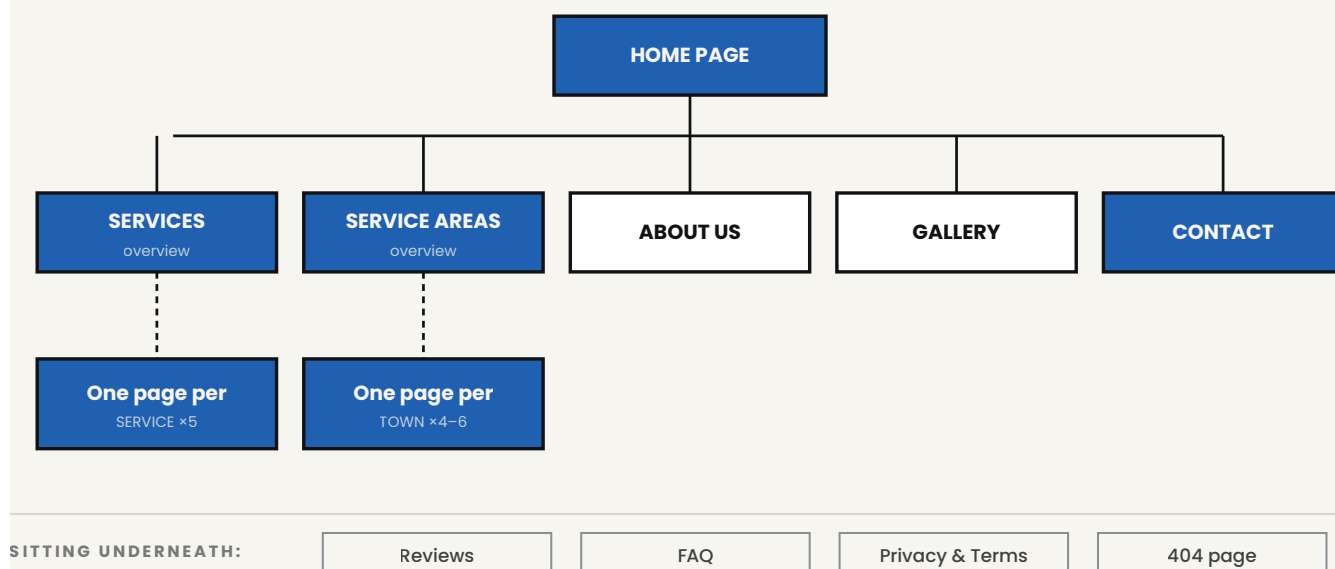
You don't need forty pages. You need about nine, done right.

Here's the whole map. Then we'll walk through each room.

FIG 3.1 THE SITE MAP

Nine pages, not forty.

Blue pages make you money. Build those first.



One page. One service. One idea. A page about eleven things is a page about nothing.

FIGURE 3.1 The Site Map

THE HOME PAGE

You get about **eight seconds**. That's not a figure of speech, that's roughly how long somebody looks before deciding to stay or hit back.

In those eight seconds the home page has to answer three questions:

1. What do you do?
2. Where do you do it?

3. How do I reach you?

Sounds obvious. Go look at ten contractor websites and count how many make you scroll to figure out what town they work in.

The top of your home page — the part visible before scrolling — should contain:

- Your company name and logo
- A headline that says what you do and where. *"Licensed Electricians Serving Monroe, Everett & Snohomish County."* That's it. That's the headline. Not "Powering Your Dreams."
- Phone number, tappable
- One button: **Get a Free Estimate** or **Call Now**
- One strong photo — your truck, your crew, or a finished job

Below that, in order:

- The services you offer, as clickable blocks with icons or photos
- Three to five reviews with real names
- Trust markers: license number, years in business, insured/bonded, any manufacturer certifications
- A short "why us" — three reasons, not three paragraphs
- Service area, ideally with a map
- Another call to action

That's the home page. Nine sections. If somebody's proposing sixteen, ask why.

THE SERVICES PAGE (AND WHY YOU NEED ONE PER SERVICE)

This is the part contractors get wrong most often, and it's the part that quietly costs the most money.

You do not want one page called "Services" with a bulleted list of eleven things.

You want a services overview page that links to **a separate page for each major service you offer.**

Why? Because of how Google works. When someone searches "furnace repair Monroe WA," Google is looking for a page that is *about* furnace repair in Monroe. A page that mentions furnace repair as bullet point number six on a list of eleven services is not about furnace repair. It's about eleven things, which means it's about nothing.

One page. One service. One idea.

Each service page needs:

- A headline naming the service and the area
- What the service is, in customer language ("furnace not blowing hot air" beats "HVAC diagnostics")
- What's included
- Roughly what it costs
- What the process looks like, step by step
- Photos of you doing that specific work
- A review from someone who bought that specific service
- FAQ — three to six real questions people actually ask you on the phone
- A call to action

How many service pages? Start with your top three to five money-makers. The stuff that pays the bills. You can add more later.

FIG 3.2 ONE PAGE, ONE JOB

Google can't find what's buried.

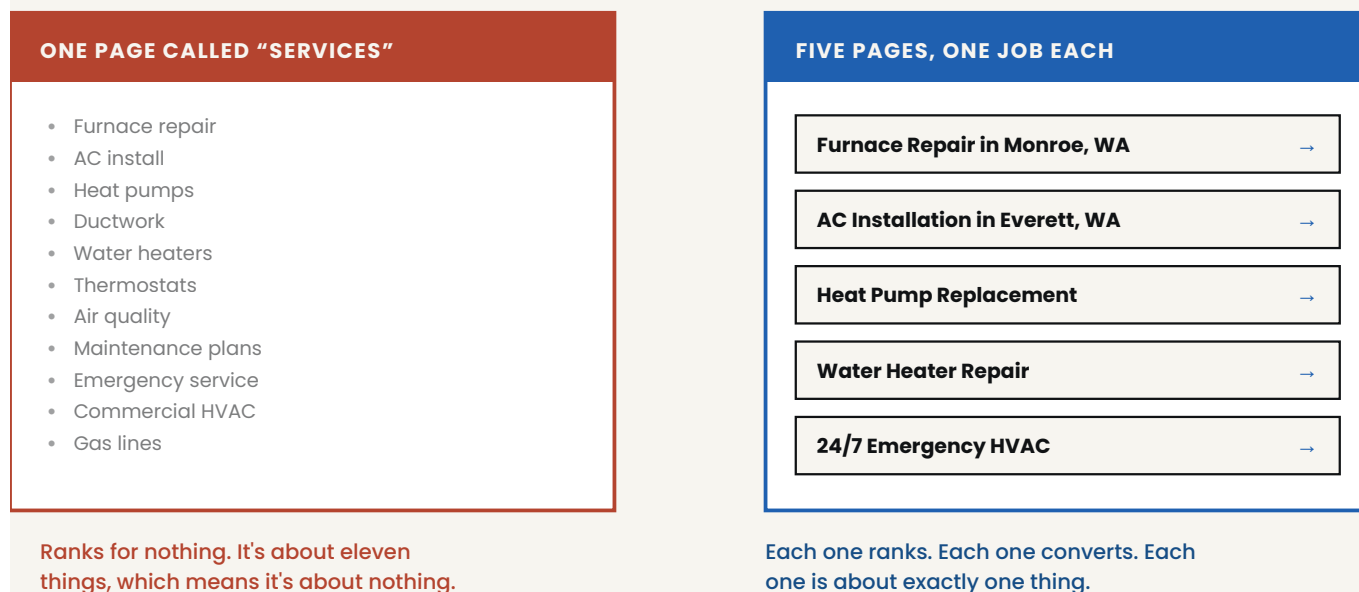


FIGURE 3.2 One Page, One Job

SERVICE AREA PAGES

Same logic, different axis.

If you work in six towns, you want a page for each town. Not one page that says "we serve the greater metro area."

A service area page for, say, Monroe should mention Monroe naturally throughout, reference actual neighborhoods or landmarks, and ideally show a job you did there.

The warning label: this is the most abused tactic in local SEO. Some outfits will build you forty city pages that are identical except the town name swapped in. Google has gotten very good at spotting that, and it can hurt you.

The rule: **only build a city page if you can write something genuinely specific about working in that city.** Six real pages beat forty fake ones. If you can't say anything true and specific about a town, you probably shouldn't have a page for it.

THE ABOUT PAGE

The most under-used page on most contractor sites, and one of the most-visited.

People go to the About page for one reason: **to decide whether to trust you.**

So give them a reason. Not a corporate history. A human one.

Include: – How you got into the trade – How long you've been doing it – Who's on the crew, with photos and first names – What you actually care about doing well – The trucks. Show the trucks. – Certifications, licenses, affiliations

Skip the mission statement. Nobody's ever hired a plumber because of a mission statement.



PHOTO 3.1

Shot list. Crew photo. Three or four guys in front of a truck, not posed like a yearbook — mid-conversation, holding coffee, one guy laughing. Late morning light. This is the "About page done right" example.

THE GALLERY

Before and after. That's the whole format.

A few rules that separate a gallery that sells from a gallery that's just a photo dump:

- **Before and after side by side**, not in separate albums
 - **Caption every one.** What the job was, what town, what it involved. "Cedar deck rebuild, Lake Stevens — replaced rotted joists and added a step-down landing." That caption also helps Google.
 - **Twelve great photos beat sixty mediocre ones.** Nobody scrolls sixty.
 - **Take the photos with your phone.** Modern phone cameras are fine. Just clean up the frame first — move the cooler, coil the hose.
 - **Compress them before uploading.** A 12-megabyte photo straight off your phone will destroy your load speed. More on that in Chapter 5.
-

THE REVIEWS PAGE

Pull your best reviews from Google onto your own site. Real names, real jobs, dates.

Don't write them yourself. It reads fake, it *is* fake, and it's illegal in ways that can get expensive.

If you've got video of a happy customer saying nice things — even shaky phone video — that outperforms everything else on your entire website. It's uncomfortable to ask. Ask anyway.

THE FAQ PAGE

Free money. Almost nobody does it.

Write down the ten questions you answer on the phone every single week. Answer them in plain language. That's the page.

It does three things at once: it saves you phone time, it builds trust, and Google increasingly pulls direct answers from FAQ content — which can put you at the top of a search without anybody clicking anything.

Starter questions: – Do you charge for estimates? – How soon can you come out? – Are you licensed and insured? – Do you offer financing? – What's your warranty? – Do you do emergency calls? – What areas do you cover? – What forms of payment do you take?

THE CONTACT PAGE

Short. Every way to reach you, in order of how much you want to be reached that way.

Phone. Text. Form. Email. Address or service area map. Hours. What happens after they contact you ("We'll call you back within one business day").

That last line matters more than you'd think. It converts uncertainty into a promise.

DO THIS NOW

Write down your top five money-making services. Not everything you **can** do — the five that actually pay. Those are your five service pages. Then list the towns you'd genuinely drive to on a Tuesday. Those are your service area pages. You just built your site map in ten minutes.

CHAPTER 4

GETTING FOUND ON GOOGLE

This is the big one. Take your time here.

SEO stands for Search Engine Optimization. All it means is: *making it more likely you show up when somebody searches for what you do.*

That's it. It's not magic, it's not hacking, and anybody who talks about it like a dark art is either confused or selling.

WHAT A SEARCH RESULT PAGE ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE

When somebody searches "plumber near me," they get four different things stacked on top of each other. You need to know which is which, because they're won in completely different ways.

FIG 4.1 ANATOMY OF A SEARCH

Four zones. Won four different ways.

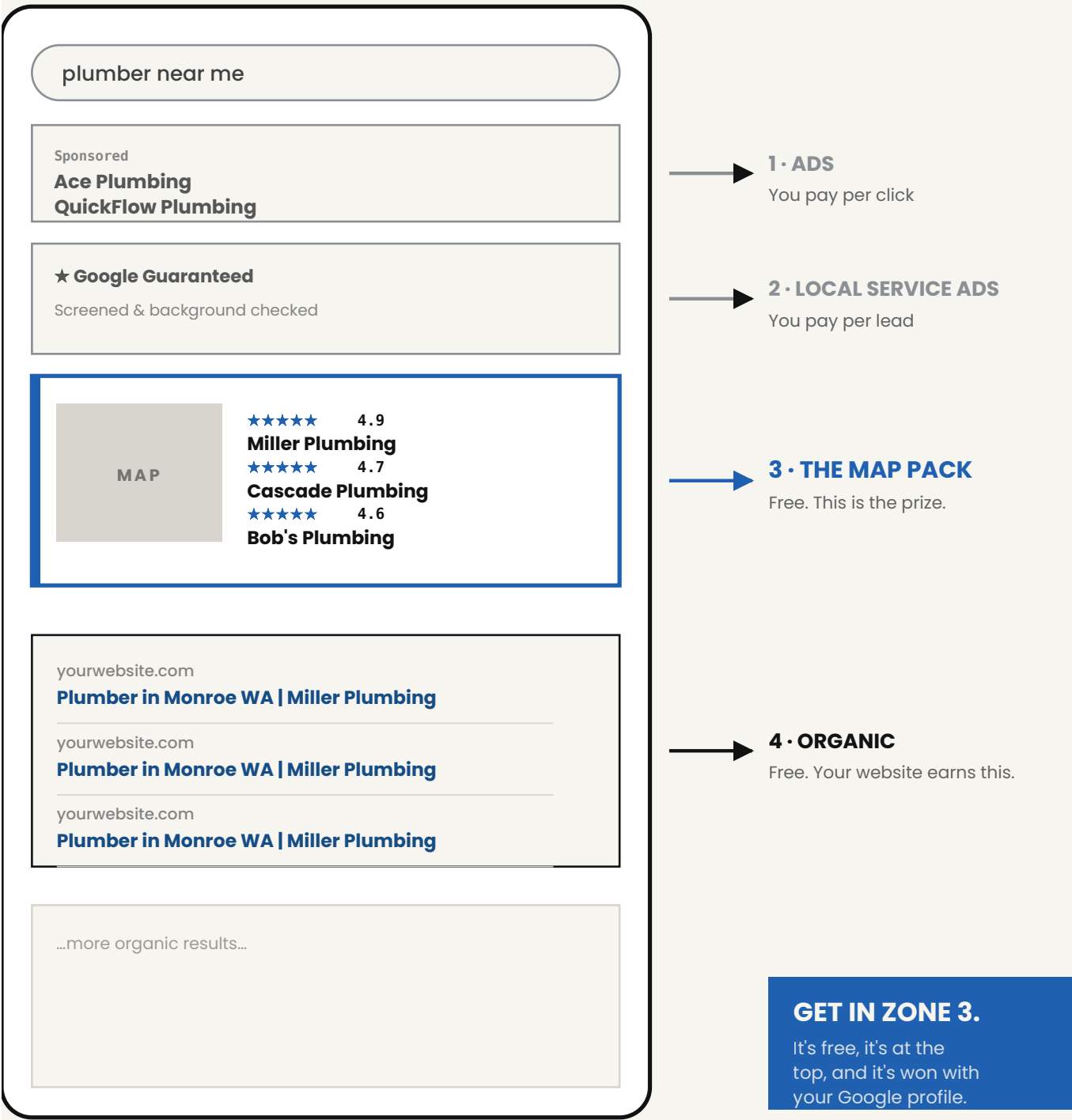


FIGURE 4.1 Anatomy of a Search

Zone 3 — the Map Pack — is the prize. Three businesses. Right at the top. With stars. For free.

Being in that box of three is worth more than any other digital marketing thing you can do. And the way you get in it is not primarily your website.

It's your Google Business Profile.

GOOGLE BUSINESS PROFILE: THE FREE THING YOU'RE PROBABLY IGNORING

Your Google Business Profile is the listing that shows up in the map. It's free. It takes an afternoon to set up right.

If you do one thing from this entire book, do this one.

Here's what "set up right" means:

Claim and verify it. Go to google.com/business. If a listing already exists for your business (it might — Google creates them automatically sometimes), claim it. Verification usually means a postcard, a phone call, or a video. Video verification has gotten common for service-area businesses, and it trips people up — Google wants to see proof you actually manage the place, which means filming yourself unlocking the door with your own key, not just walking through an open one.

Pick the right primary category. This matters enormously. "Plumber" not "Contractor." Be specific. You can add secondary categories after.

Set your service area correctly. If you go to customers instead of them coming to you, set it to the specific cities you actually serve. Do not set it to your whole state or country — Google will bury you. List the actual towns.

Fill in every single field. Hours. Services with descriptions. Attributes. Payment types. Every blank field is a small penalty.

Add photos. Then keep adding photos. Profiles with lots of photos get significantly more clicks and direction requests. Add a few every month. Truck shots, job shots, crew shots. This is a five-minute-a-week habit that pays.

Post updates. Google lets you post like it's social media. Almost no contractors do it. Do it twice a month — a job you finished, a seasonal reminder, a promotion.

Answer the Q&A section. Anyone can ask a question on your profile — including your competitors. You can also ask and answer your own. Seed it with your top five FAQs.

Get reviews. Constantly.

FIG 4.2 GOOGLE BUSINESS PROFILE

THE PROFILE INSPECTION

Work down the list in one sitting. Every blank field is a small penalty.

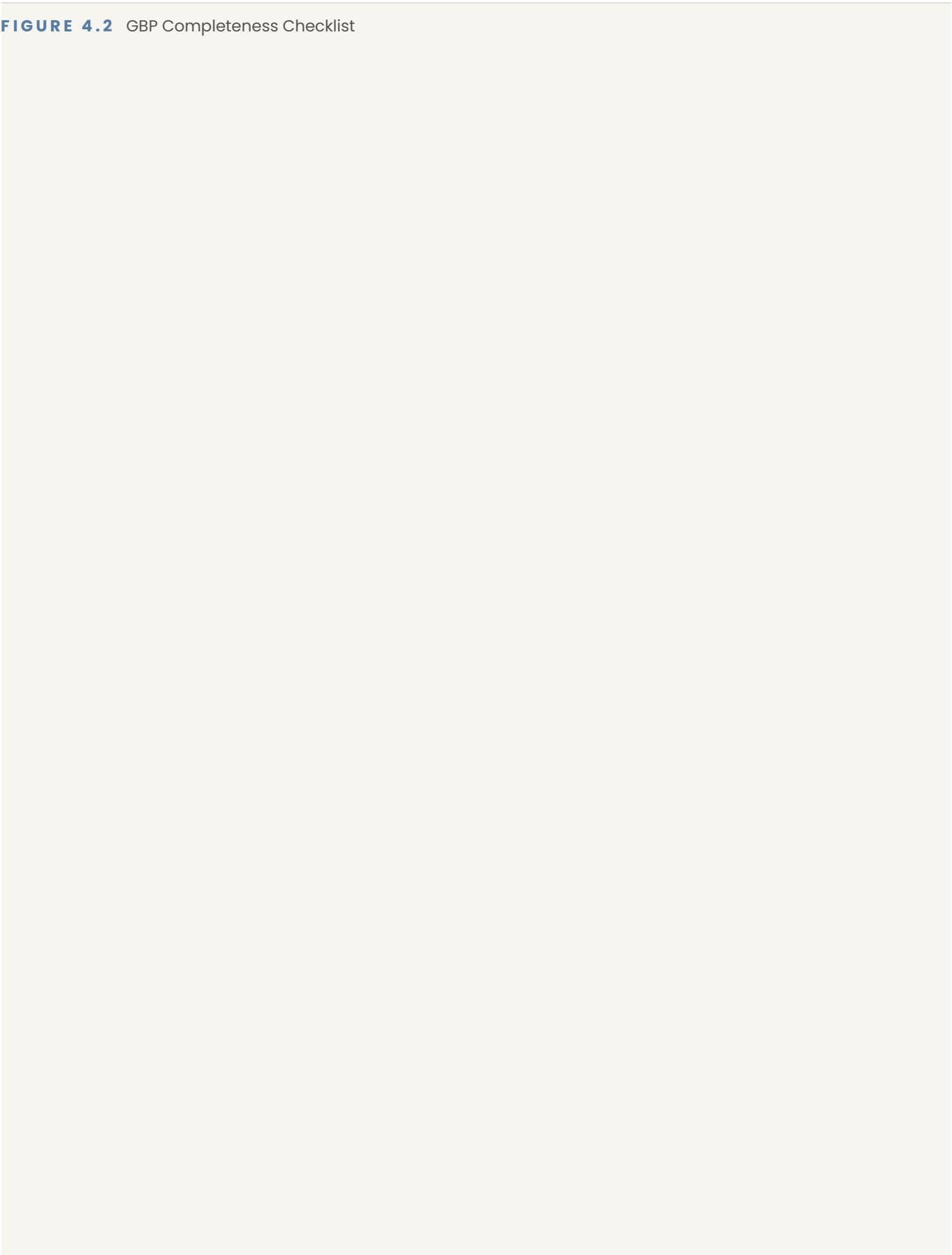
- ☐ **Claimed and verified**
Video verification? Film yourself UNLOCKING the door with your key.
- ☐ **Primary category is specific**
"Plumber," not "Contractor." This one moves rankings hard.
- ☐ **Secondary categories added**
Every service you'd take a call for.
- ☐ **Service area = actual towns**
Named cities. Never a whole state or country.
- ☐ **Hours filled in, holidays too**
Wrong hours generate 1-star reviews you didn't earn.
- ☐ **Every service listed w/ description**
Use the customer's words, not the trade's words.
- ☐ **Attributes set**
Veteran-owned, family-run, on-site estimates, languages.
- ☐ **Business description written**
750 characters. Say what you do and where.
- ☐ **20+ photos uploaded**
Trucks, crew, before/after. Add a few every month.
- ☐ **Logo and cover photo set**
Cover photo is the one that shows in the map pack.
- ☐ **Q&A seeded with your top 5 FAQs**
You can ask and answer your own. Do it before a competitor does.
- ☐ **Posting twice a month**
Almost no contractor does this. Free differentiation.
- ☐ **Replying to every review**
Every one. Good and bad. Within 48 hours.
- ☐ **Review link saved in your phone**
You'll text it from the driveway. Have it ready.
- ☐ **YOU are listed as Owner**
Not your web guy. Manager access for him is fine.

THE JOBSITE GUIDES • BOOK ONE

coyotemotive.com

If you only ever finish one page in this book,
finish this one.

FIGURE 4.2 GBP Completeness Checklist



REVIEWS: THE MOST IMPORTANT NUMBER IN YOUR BUSINESS

Reviews affect two things at once: whether Google shows you, and whether a human calls you. Nothing else does both that hard.

What actually matters:

- **Quantity.** Twenty reviews beats four, even at the same star rating.
- **Recency.** Reviews from this month count for more than reviews from 2019. A business with 80 reviews where the newest is two years old looks closed.
- **Rating.** Aim for 4.6–4.9. Believe it or not, a perfect 5.0 with 200 reviews reads as suspicious to a lot of people. A few 4-stars make you look human.
- **Your replies.** Reply to every review. Every one. Good and bad.

How to actually get them — because "we should ask for reviews" is a thing everybody says and nobody does:

Make it a step in your job closeout. Not an afterthought. A step, like cleaning up or collecting payment.

The sequence that works: 1. At the end of the job, while you're standing there: *"Hey — did we do right by you today?"* 2. If yes: *"Would you mind leaving us a quick Google review? It's honestly the biggest thing that helps a small shop like ours."* 3. Text them the direct link **before you leave the driveway**. Not tomorrow. Now. You can get a short review link right inside your Google Business Profile. 4. If they say yes and don't do it, one follow-up text two days later. One. Then let it go.

Ask ten customers, get three or four reviews. Do that every week and you'll have forty reviews in a year while your competitor has nine.

Bad reviews: you will get them. Sometimes from people who are wrong or lying. Rules: – Never respond angry. Wait a day. – Respond publicly, briefly, professionally. You're not writing to the reviewer — you're writing to the 200 people who will read it later. – Acknowledge, don't argue. *"I'm sorry the scheduling didn't go the way we planned. That's on us. I'd like to make it right — please call me directly at 555-1234. — Mike, owner"* – That response wins you more customers than the bad review costs you. Handled well, a 1-star can be an asset.

Never buy reviews. Google catches it, and the penalty can wipe out your entire listing.

KEYWORDS WITHOUT THE MYSTERY

A **keyword** is just what somebody types in.

You don't need a \$400 software subscription to figure out yours. You need to think like a person with a problem.

Your keywords are almost always this pattern:

[what they need] + [where they are]

- "emergency plumber Everett"
- "AC not cooling Snohomish"
- "gutter cleaning near me"
- "how much does a new roof cost"

Notice that last one. **Question searches matter.** People research before they buy. If you're the one who answered their question, you're the one they call.

Free ways to find your real keywords:

1. **Google's own autocomplete.** Start typing your service and town, see what it suggests. Those are real searches.
2. **"People also ask."** That box in the middle of search results is a list of questions your customers have.
3. **Your own phone.** Write down what customers say when they call. They use different words than you do. You say "condenser," they say "the thing outside that makes noise." Use *their* words on your site.
4. **Google Search Console.** Free. Shows you what people actually searched before they landed on your site. We'll set this up in Chapter 6.

Where keywords go: naturally, in your page titles, headlines, and body text. Written for a human being.

What kills you is stuffing. "We are the best Monroe plumber for Monroe plumbing in Monroe because our Monroe plumbers..." Google has punished this since 2011 and it makes you look like a bot. Write like a person. Mention the town where it's natural. Done.

THE THREE PILLARS, PLAIN

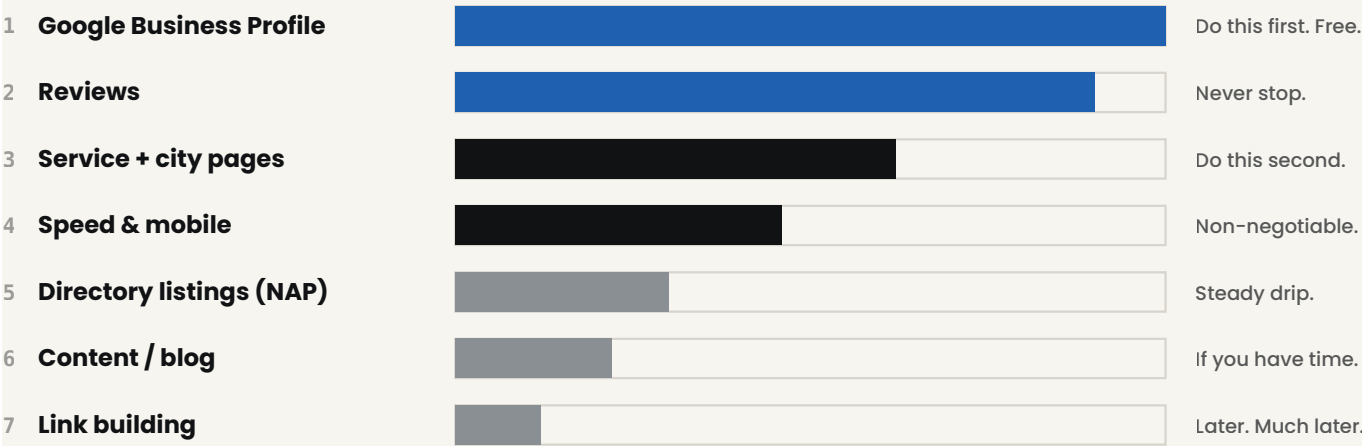
Everything in SEO is one of three things:

- 1. On-page** — what's on your website. Page titles, headlines, content, images, structure, speed. **You control this completely.** Highest return for the effort.
- 2. Off-page** — what other sites say about you. Links from other websites, mentions, directory listings, reviews. Slower, harder, still matters.
- 3. Technical** — whether Google can read your site properly. Speed, mobile, sitemap, no broken links, secure connection (the padlock — the `https`). Usually handled by whoever builds it. Ask if it's done.

For a local contractor, the practical order of operations is:

FIG 4.3 WHERE TO SPEND YOUR EFFORT

In this order. Not all at once.



HOW LONG IT ACTUALLY TAKES		
Google profile fixes	Ranking for your own name	"Plumber + your city"

FIGURE 4.3 Where to Spend Your Effort

DIRECTORY LISTINGS AND THE NAP RULE

NAP = Name, Address, Phone.

Your business is listed in a bunch of places — Yelp, Angi, BBB, Nextdoor, Facebook, Apple Maps, Bing Places, your chamber of commerce, supply house directories. Some you created. Some created themselves.

The rule: **your name, address, and phone must be written identically everywhere.**

Not "Miller Plumbing LLC" in one place and "Miller Plumbing & Heating" in another. Not "Suite D" here and "Ste. D" there. Not an old phone number lingering on a listing you forgot about.

Google cross-references these. Inconsistency makes it less confident you're a real, stable business, and that costs you map ranking.

Pick your exact format. Write it down. Use it everywhere, forever.

HOW LONG DOES SEO TAKE?

Honest answer, because you'll get lied to about this:

- **Google Business Profile improvements:** days to a few weeks. Fastest win available.
- **New website ranking for your own business name:** a week or two.
- **Ranking for competitive terms like "plumber [your city]":** three to nine months of consistent work.
- **Dominating a competitive metro:** a year or more, and you'll spend money.

Anybody who promises page one in thirty days is either talking about searches nobody makes, or lying. Both happen constantly.

DO THIS NOW

Three things, in order: 1. Search your own business name on your phone. Is your Google Business Profile there? Claimed? Complete? 2. Search "[your main service] [your town]" and write down the three businesses in the map pack. That's your actual competition. Go look at their sites and their review counts. Now you know the bar. 3. Text your last three happy customers and ask for a review. Right now, while you're thinking about it.

GOING DEEPER

This chapter is the short version. Book Two — "Getting Found" — is entirely about Google Business Profile, the map pack, reviews at scale, and local ranking, with the step-by-step setups this chapter only summarizes.

SPEED, PHONES, AND THE THREE-SECOND RULE

Two technical things matter more than everything else combined. They're both boring. Neither is optional.

MOBILE IS NOT "ALSO." MOBILE IS THE JOB.

Somewhere between 60% and 75% of the people looking at your website are on a phone. For emergency trades — plumbing, HVAC, locksmith, towing — it's higher, because the searches happen in the moment the thing breaks.

They're standing in a garage. One hand's holding a flashlight. It's dark. They're annoyed.

That's your user. Design for that guy.

What breaks on phones:

- Text too small to read without pinching
- Buttons too small or too close together to hit accurately
- Phone number that's an image instead of a tappable link
- Pop-ups that cover the screen with an X you can't hit
- Forms with ten fields
- Wide tables that force sideways scrolling
- Menus that need a mouse hover to open — phones have no hover

The test: open your site on your own phone, one-handed, walking. If you get frustrated, so does everybody else. That's the whole test. You don't need software.

Google also flat-out ranks the mobile version of your site. Not the desktop version. If your site is good on a computer and bad on a phone, Google grades you on the bad one.

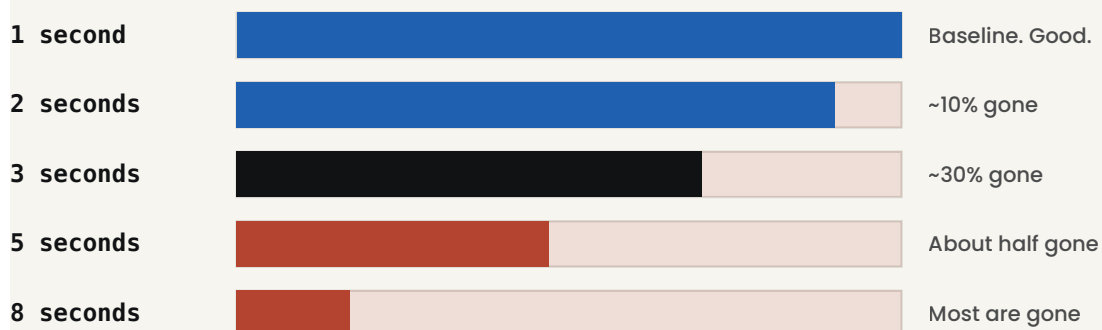
THE THREE-SECOND RULE

Load time is the most under-appreciated money leak in small business websites.

Rough industry numbers, and they're brutal:

FIG 5.1 THE BLEED

You paid to get them there.
This is where they left.



THE #1 CAUSE, ALMOST ALWAYS:

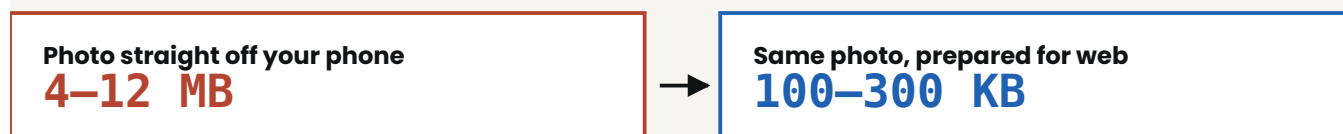


FIGURE 5.1 The Bleed

Here's why it stings: everything you do to get traffic — ads, SEO, truck wraps, yard signs — costs you money or effort. Then a slow website throws a third of it in the ditch before anybody sees your work.

The number one cause of slow contractor websites: photos straight off a phone.

A modern phone photo is 4 to 12 megabytes. A properly prepared web photo is 100 to 300 kilobytes. That's thirty to a hundred times smaller, and on a phone screen they look identical.

If you've got a gallery with forty full-size phone photos on it, that page might be 200 megabytes. On a spotty cell connection in a rural driveway, that page never loads. Ever. Your customer just sees a white screen and leaves.

Other common causes: - Cheap overloaded hosting - Video that auto-plays in the background - Too many plugins (a WordPress thing — every add-on has a cost) - Chat widgets, tracking

scripts, review widgets, popup tools all stacked on top of each other – Fancy animations and scroll effects

How to check, free: search for "PageSpeed Insights," paste in your web address, run it. You'll get a score out of 100 for mobile and desktop.

What the score means in practice: – **90–100:** excellent, you're beating almost everyone – **50–89:** typical, room to improve – **Under 50:** actively costing you jobs

Don't obsess over hitting 100. Do get out of the red.

THE PADLOCK

Look at your web address in a browser. Is there a little padlock next to it? Does it start with `https` and not `http`?

If not, some browsers will literally show visitors a warning that your site is "Not Secure." That is a spectacular way to lose a customer who's about to type their phone number in.

This is called an **SSL certificate**. It should be free and automatic with any decent hosting in this decade. If yours doesn't have it, that tells you something about who's hosting you.

A WORD ON "MAKE IT POP"

Every designer has heard it. Here's my honest advice as somebody who's built a lot of these:

Fancy animations, parallax scrolling, video backgrounds, and cursor effects mostly make sites slower and harder to use. They impress other designers. They rarely impress a guy with a leaking water heater.

What actually makes a site feel high-quality:

- It loads instantly
- Text is large and easy to read
- Photos are real and well-lit
- Plenty of white space, not crammed
- Consistent colors — two, maybe three, not seven
- Buttons that look like buttons
- Nothing moves unless you tell it to

That's it. Clean and fast reads as professional. Busy and slow reads as cheap, no matter how much it cost.

DO THIS NOW

Run your site through PageSpeed Insights. Write down the mobile score. If it's under 50, your first conversation with any web person should start with that number.

READING THE GAUGES

You wouldn't run a truck with no gauges. You'd have no idea if it was about to blow up.

Most contractors run their website with no gauges at all. They have a vague feeling it's "probably helping." That's not a business decision, that's a horoscope.

Good news: the gauges are free, and you only need to read five of them.

THE TWO FREE TOOLS

Google Analytics tells you what people do *on* your site. How many came, what pages they looked at, whether they called.

Google Search Console tells you how people *found* your site. What they searched, where you ranked, whether Google is having trouble reading your pages.

Both free. Both should already be installed. **If your web person didn't set these up, that tells you something.** Ask for the logins today, in your name.

THE FIVE GAUGES

Ignore the other 200 numbers. These five run the business.

FIG 6.1 THE DASHBOARD

Two of these pay your bills.

Three of them are just interesting.



★ = the two that run the business.

Both free. Both in Google Analytics. Both should be in YOUR name — if your web person never set these up, that by itself tells you something.

FIGURE 6.1 The Dashboard

Gauge 1: Visitors

How many different people came to your site this month.

Don't obsess over this. Traffic is vanity. A hundred visitors from your actual service area who need your actual service is worth more than five thousand from another state.

What to watch: the trend line, month over month. Up and to the right is what you want. If it dropped off a cliff, something broke — go look.

Gauge 2: Where They Came From

Analytics groups your visitors into buckets:

- **Organic Search** — found you on Google without you paying. This is the good one.
- **Direct** — typed your address in, or came from your truck wrap / yard sign / business card.
- **Referral** — clicked a link from another website.
- **Social** — Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor.
- **Paid** — from ads you're running.

This tells you what's working. If you're spending \$900 a month on ads and paid traffic is 4% of your visitors and none of them call, you now know something you didn't know yesterday.

Gauge 3: Top Pages

Which pages people actually look at.

Almost always: home page, then one or two service pages, then About. This tells you where to put your effort. If "gutter guards" is your third-most-visited page, that page deserves better photos and a stronger call to action.

Also useful in reverse: if you've got a page nobody has visited in six months, stop maintaining it.

Gauge 4: Conversions ★

A conversion is when a visitor becomes a lead. A call, a form submission, a text.

This is the number. Everything else is context.

You have to set this up deliberately — it doesn't happen on its own. Ask whoever manages your site to track:

- Form submissions
- Clicks on your phone number
- Clicks on your text link
- Clicks on "get directions"

What's a good conversion rate? For a local home service site: **3% to 8%** of visitors becoming leads is normal. Above 10% is very good. Under 2% means something's broken — usually slow load, no visible phone number, no reviews, or no pricing information.

Do the math on that. If you get 1,000 visitors a month: – At 2%, that's 20 leads. – At 6%, that's 60 leads.

Same traffic. Same ad spend. Three times the work. That's what a well-built site is actually worth, and it's why "cheap site, then buy more traffic" is usually the expensive path.

Gauge 5: Cost Per Lead ★

The number that ends arguments.

	WHAT YOU SPENT		= COST
PER LEAD		LEADS YOU GOT	

Then:

$$\text{COST PER LEAD} \div \text{YOUR CLOSE RATE} = \text{COST PER CUSTOMER}$$

Worked example:

You spend \$600/month on everything digital — hosting, site maintenance, some ads. You get 25 leads.

- Cost per lead: $\$600 \div 25 = \mathbf{\$24}$
- You close 1 in 3, so cost per customer: $\$24 \div 0.33 = \mathbf{\$72}$
- Your average job is \$2,400 with 40% margin = \$960 profit
- You spent \$72 to make \$960.

That's a 13-to-1 return. Now the question "is my website worth it?" isn't a feeling. It's arithmetic.

Run this every quarter. When somebody tries to sell you a \$1,500/month marketing package, this number is how you evaluate it in ninety seconds.

FIG 6.2 THE ONLY MATH YOU NEED

WHAT'S A LEAD COSTING YOU?

Fill this in once a quarter. It ends every argument about whether marketing is working.

STEP 1 — WHAT YOU SPENT THIS MONTH		
Hosting + site maintenance	_____	\$
SEO or marketing retainer	_____	\$
Ad spend	_____	\$
TOTAL SPEND	_____	\$

STEP 2 — WHAT YOU GOT		
Phone calls from the website	_____	#
Form + text submissions	_____	#
TOTAL LEADS	_____	#

STEP 3 — THE NUMBERS		
Total spend ÷ total leads = COST PER LEAD	_____	\$
Cost per lead ÷ close rate = COST PER CUSTOMER	_____	\$

WORKED EXAMPLE

\$600 spent ÷ 25 leads
= \$24 per lead

\$24 ÷ 33% close rate
= \$72 per customer

Run this every quarter. It's how you evaluate a \$1,500/month pitch in ninety seconds.

Average job \$2,400 at 40% margin = \$960 profit
THE JOBSITE GUIDES · BOOK ONE
= You spent \$72 to make \$960.

coyotemotive.com

FIGURE 6.2 The Only Math You Need

CALL TRACKING (WORTH KNOWING ABOUT)

Here's a problem: somebody finds you on Google, then calls the number on your truck three days later. Analytics has no idea that call came from your website.

Call tracking solves this. You use a separate phone number on your website that forwards to your real phone. Now every call to that number is provably from the website.

Costs \$20–\$50 a month. Worth it once you're spending real money on marketing. Not worth it on day one.

One important warning: if you use call tracking, your *Google Business Profile* should still show your main number, or you break the NAP consistency we talked about in Chapter 4. There are correct ways to do this. Make sure whoever sets it up knows that.

WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO EVERY MONTH

Fifteen minutes. Once a month. Set a recurring reminder.

1. Open Analytics. Look at visitors — up or down from last month?
2. Look at conversions. How many leads?
3. Do the cost-per-lead math.
4. Open Search Console. Look at your top searches. Anything surprising? Any search you're *almost* ranking for that you could build a page around?
5. Check your review count on Google. More than last month?

Write the five numbers in a notebook. In a year you'll have a picture of your business nobody else in your trade has.

DO THIS NOW

Find out if you have Google Analytics and Search Console installed, and whether the accounts are in ****your**** name with ****your**** email as owner. If your web person owns them, ask to be added as owner today. These are your business records.

GOING DEEPER

Book Six — "Know Your Numbers" — takes cost per lead all the way through to lifetime customer value, marketing budgets by revenue size, and knowing which jobs to stop taking.

HIRING A WEB DESIGNER WITHOUT GETTING TAKEN

This is the chapter people should read first, and it's the reason I wrote this book.

There is an enormous amount of predatory behavior in this industry aimed specifically at contractors. Not because contractors are gullible — because the field is deliberately confusing, and confusion is where bad actors make their money.

You already know how to spot a shady operator in *your* trade. Guy shows up with no truck signage, wants cash up front, can't produce a license, pressures you to decide today. You'd throw him out.

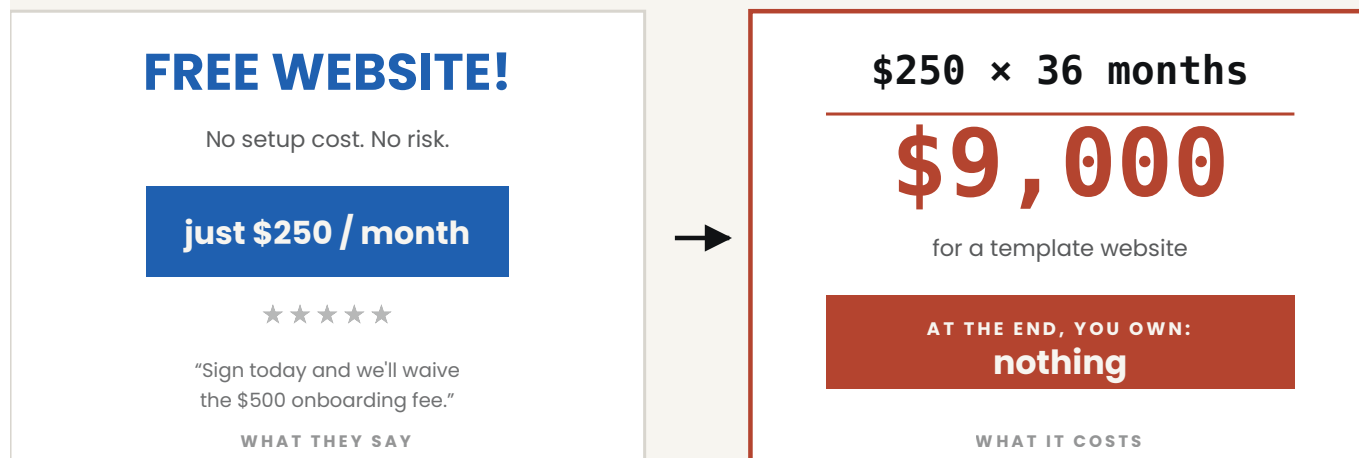
Same instincts apply here. You just need to know what the tells look like.

THE FIVE WAYS YOU GET CHARGED

- 1. One-time project fee.** You pay once, you own it, you pay small ongoing hosting. Cleanest arrangement. \$2,000–\$8,000 typical for a solid contractor site in 2026.
- 2. Monthly with no contract.** You pay a monthly fee covering hosting, maintenance, small changes. Fine, as long as you own the domain and can leave.
- 3. Monthly with a long contract.** "Free website!" then \$250/month for 36 months. That's a \$9,000 website with extra steps, and at the end you usually own nothing. **This is the most common trap.** Not always a scam — but always do the multiplication before you sign.
- 4. Retainer / marketing package.** Monthly fee covering site plus SEO plus ads plus content. \$500–\$3,000/month. Can be legitimate and valuable. Requires reporting you can actually read, or you're just donating.
- 5. Hourly.** \$75–\$200/hour. Fine for small fixes. Dangerous for whole projects unless there's a cap.

FIG 7.1 RUN THE MULTIPLICATION

The most common trap in this industry.



Not every monthly deal is a scam.

But always do the multiplication before you sign, and always ask what you keep if you leave.

FIGURE 7.1 Run the Multiplication

RED FLAGS

Any one of these, slow down. Two or more, walk.

- 🚩 **They won't put the domain in your name.** Non-negotiable. This is the big one.
- 🚩 **They own your hosting account and won't give you access.** Same problem.
- 🚩 **"You can't take the site with you."** Ask directly: "If I leave in two years, what do I keep?" If the answer isn't "everything," you're renting.
- 🚩 **Guaranteed #1 on Google.** Nobody can guarantee this. Google doesn't sell rankings, and anyone claiming a special relationship is lying. Guaranteed rankings for searches nobody makes is the usual trick — "#1 for *affordable emergency plumbing contractor Monroe WA area*," which gets four searches a year.
- 🚩 **Pressure to sign today.** Discounts expiring in 24 hours. Your website is not a timeshare.
- 🚩 **No portfolio, or a portfolio of sites that no longer exist.** Ask for three live sites and three references *in home services*. Then actually call the references. Ask: "Did it come in on time? Did the phone ring more? Would you hire them again?"
- 🚩 **They can't explain something in plain English.** A good pro can explain what they're doing to a smart person who isn't in the field. If they can't or won't, either they don't know or they're keeping

you dependent.

🚩 **Cold call claiming your website "has errors" or "isn't Google compliant."** There is no such thing as Google compliance. This is a scripted scam and it targets contractors relentlessly.

🚩 **Vague monthly SEO with no reporting.** "\$800/month for SEO." For what? Get deliverables in writing.

🚩 **They also want to run your Google Business Profile and add themselves as owner.** Manager access is fine. Owner is not. You're the owner. Always.

GREEN FLAGS

✅ They ask about your business before they talk about design. What's your best job type? Which towns are worth the drive? Who's your competition? What's a lead worth to you?

✅ They talk about phone calls and leads, not "brand identity."

✅ They give you a written scope: pages, timeline, revisions, what happens after launch.

✅ They put ownership in writing.

✅ They show you real examples in home services.

✅ They tell you what they *won't* do. Honest people have limits.

✅ They're straight about timelines and SEO expectations instead of promising the moon.

THE TWELVE QUESTIONS

Print these. Bring them to every conversation. Watch how they answer as much as what they answer.

1. Will the domain be registered in my name, with my email as the account owner?

2. If I leave, what exactly do I take with me?

3. Who owns the website files and content — me or you?

4. Will I be able to update text and photos myself?

5. What's included after launch, and what costs extra?

6. What's the total cost over three years, all in?

7. Is there a contract, and what's the cancellation term?

8. Will Google Analytics and Search Console be set up in my name?
9. How will you handle my Google Business Profile, and who's listed as owner?
0. What's your average turnaround for a small change after launch?
11. Can I see three live sites you've built for home service companies, plus references?
2. How will we measure whether this worked?

Question 12 is the one that separates professionals from vendors. If they don't have an answer, they've never been held accountable for results.

HOW MUCH SHOULD YOU BE INVOLVED?

More than you want to be, less than you fear.

They handle: design, build, code, technical setup, structure, speed, launch.

You must provide — and nobody can do this part for you: – Real photos of your work (this is the #1 thing that delays projects) – Your actual service list and rough pricing – Your license numbers and insurance details – Your towns – Your real answers to customer questions – Reviews to feature – Two hours of your time on a kickoff call

Get the photos ready before you sign anything. Every web project in history has stalled waiting on the client's photos. Take an afternoon, go through your phone, pull the fifty best before-and-afters into a folder. Do it now and your build goes twice as fast.

PHOTO 7.1

Shot list. Contractor scrolling through his phone's photo roll at a kitchen table with a coffee, laptop open beside him. Homey, unglamorous, real. Caption: "Two hours of this saves you six weeks."

WHAT IF I ALREADY HAVE A SITE AND A BAD FEELING?

Do this audit today. It takes twenty minutes.

- 1. Who owns the domain?** `lookup.icann.org` — check the registrant.
- 2. Do you have the hosting login?** In your email, on your card?
- 3. Are you under contract?** Find it. Read the cancellation section.
- 4. Is Analytics in your name?**
- 5. Are you the owner of your Google Business Profile?** Check under Settings → People and Access.
- 6. What's your PageSpeed score?**
- 7. What have you paid in the last twelve months, total?**

Now you know exactly where you stand. If ownership is wrong, fixing it is usually a polite email — most web people will transfer without a fight when asked plainly and in writing. The ones who refuse have just told you everything you need to know.

DO THIS NOW

Run the seven-point audit above. Twenty minutes. Whatever you find, you're better off knowing.

WHAT IT COSTS AND WHAT IT'S WORTH

Let's talk money plainly.

REALISTIC 2026 RANGES

Website build (5–10 pages, home service company):

APPROACH	COST	HONEST ASSESSMENT
DIY builder	\$200–\$600/yr	Fine for year one. Hard ceiling on results.
Cheap template shop	\$500–\$1,500	Coin flip. Check ownership terms hard.
Solid independent / small studio	\$2,000–\$6,000	The sweet spot for most contractors.
Full agency	\$8,000–\$25,000+	Justified at multi-crew, multi-market scale.

Ongoing:

ITEM	COST
Domain	\$15/yr
Hosting	\$0–\$30/mo
Maintenance / small changes	\$50–\$300/mo
Local SEO service	\$400–\$2,000/mo
Google Ads (the ad spend itself)	\$500–\$5,000/mo
Call tracking	\$20–\$50/mo

WHAT'S A LEAD ACTUALLY WORTH TO YOU?

Do this math once. It changes every marketing decision you'll ever make.

"" Average job value \$ _ _ × Your profit margin _ % = **Profit per job** \$ _ _ _ _ _

× Your close rate _ % = **PROFIT PER LEAD** \$ _ _ _ _ _ ""

Example — a landscaping outfit: – Average job: \$3,500 – Margin: 35% → \$1,225 profit per job – Closes 1 in 4 leads → 25% – **Profit per lead: \$306**

So every single lead that walks in the door is worth about \$306 to that business, whether it closes or not.

Now: a \$4,000 website that generates 8 extra leads a month pays for itself in **under two months**. After that it's profit.

And the reverse: if your site is generating three leads a month and you're paying \$300/month for it, you're getting \$918 of value for \$300. Also fine! The math tells you.

FIG 8.1 WHAT'S A LEAD WORTH?

WHAT ONE LEAD IS WORTH

Do this math once. It changes every marketing decision you make for the rest of your career.

YOUR NUMBERS	
Average job value	_____ \$
Your profit margin	_____ %
PROFIT PER JOB	_____ \$
Your close rate	_____ %
PROFIT PER LEAD	_____ \$

NOW ANSWER THIS	
Extra leads/month a better site would bring	_____ #
× profit per lead = EXTRA MONTHLY PROFIT	_____ \$
Website cost ÷ extra monthly profit = MONTHS TO BREAK EVEN	_____ mo

WORKED EXAMPLE

Landscaper: \$3,500 average job
× 35% margin = \$1,225 profit per job
× 25% close rate
= **\$306 profit per lead**

A \$4,000 site bringing 8 extra leads/mo
= pays for itself in under 2 months.

Now nobody can sell you on feelings again.

FIGURE 8.1 What's a Lead Worth?

WHEN DIY MAKES SENSE (HONESTLY)

I build websites for a living and I'll still tell you this straight:

Build it yourself if: – You're brand new and cash is genuinely tight – You need something up this month – Your market has little competition – You've got the patience for a weekend or three

Do it on a builder, keep it simple, own your domain, and pour your energy into your Google Business Profile and reviews instead. **A basic DIY site plus a great Google profile beats a beautiful site with an empty profile every single time.**

Hire it out when: – You're doing \$250k+ and your time is worth more than \$50/hr – Your market is competitive and you're losing to guys who aren't better than you – You've tried DIY and it's been "80% done" for eight months – You want service pages and city pages built properly – You want to stop thinking about it

The honest middle path: DIY year one. Reinvest into a real build once you can see the leads coming in. Nothing wrong with that sequence. A lot of good businesses were built that way.

THE BUDGET FRAME THAT ACTUALLY WORKS

General rule for home services: **5% to 10% of revenue on marketing.** Newer or growing businesses skew high; established word-of-mouth businesses skew low.

At \$500,000 in revenue, that's \$25,000–\$50,000 a year across everything — website, ads, trucks, signs, sponsorships, print.

Your website should be a modest slice of that, and it should be the slice everything else points at. Truck wrap sends people to the website. Yard sign sends them to the website. Ad sends them to the website. If the website leaks, everything upstream of it leaks too.

That's why fixing your website first is the cheapest marketing decision available to you. You're not adding traffic. You're stopping the loss.

DO THIS NOW

Fill in the profit-per-lead worksheet with your real numbers. Now you know what a lead is worth, which means you know what a website is worth, which means nobody can sell you on feelings again.

CHAPTER 9

THE 90-DAY PLAN

Here's the whole book as a to-do list. Free stuff first, on purpose.

FIG 9.1 THE WHOLE BOOK AS A TO-DO LIST

THE 90-DAY PLAN

Free things first, on purpose. Pin this in the shop office.

DAYS 1–7 FREE. HIGHEST IMPACT.	DAYS 8–30 FOUNDATION	DAYS 31–60 BUILD / FIX	DAYS 61–90 MEASURE & TUNE
☐ Claim & verify Google Business Profile ☐ Fill in every GBP field ☐ Add 20 photos to GBP ☐ Text last 10 customers for reviews ☐ Check who owns your domain ☐ Run PageSpeed — write the score down	☐ Pull your 50 best before/after photos ☐ Write your 10 real FAQ answers ☐ Pick top 5 services + your towns ☐ Decide your pricing disclosure ☐ Fix NAP across every directory ☐ Install Analytics + Search Console	☐ Build home, services, cities, about ☐ Tappable phone in every header ☐ Sticky mobile call button ☐ 3-field form + instant auto-reply ☐ Compress every single image ☐ Reviews on site + confirm the padlock	☐ Turn on conversion tracking ☐ Post to GBP twice a month ☐ Keep asking every customer ☐ First 15-minute numbers review ☐ Calculate your cost per lead ☐ Fix the weakest page — using data

THEN JUST KEEP THE HABITS:

Weekly, 10 min

GBP photos + ask every customer

Monthly, 15 min

Five gauges + two GBP posts

Quarterly, 1 hr

Cost per lead + fix weakest page

FIGURE 9.1 The 90-Day Plan

AFTER 90 DAYS

Then you just keep the habits:

- **Weekly (10 min):** add photos to GBP, ask every customer for a review
- **Monthly (15 min):** check your five gauges, post twice to GBP
- **Quarterly (1 hr):** cost per lead, fix the weakest page, add a service page if the data suggests one
- **Yearly:** refresh photos, update pricing, re-run the seven-point ownership audit

That's it. That's website ownership for a contractor. It is not a full-time job. It's about two hours a month once it's built right.

THE LAST THING I'LL SAY

You already know how to do the hard part.

You know how to show up when you said you would. You know how to give somebody a straight number and stick to it. You know how to fix the thing behind the thing that the last guy missed. That's the whole business, and you can't fake it, and most people can't do it.

All this website stuff is just making sure the people who need that can find it.

Don't overthink it. Don't let anybody make it sound more complicated than it is. Claim your Google profile, ask for reviews, put your phone number where people can hit it with a thumb, show real pictures of real work, and tell people roughly what things cost.

Do those five things and you'll beat most of your competition. Do them for a year and it won't be close.

Now go get the phone to ring.

THE LANGUAGE DECODER

Every term somebody's going to throw at you, in plain English.

Above the fold — What you see before scrolling. The most valuable real estate you own.

Alt text — A written description attached to a photo, for blind users and for Google. "Before and after of a cedar deck rebuild in Lake Stevens."

Analytics — Software that reports who visited your site and what they did. Google's version is free.

Backlink — A link to your site from another website. Counts as a vote of confidence. Quality matters far more than quantity.

Bounce rate — Percentage of people who land on a page and leave without doing anything. High bounce usually means slow load or the page didn't match what they expected.

Call to action (CTA) — The thing you're asking them to do. "Call Now." "Get a Free Estimate."

CMS — Content Management System. The control panel that lets you edit your own site. WordPress is the best-known.

Conversion — When a visitor becomes a lead. A call, a form, a text.

Conversion rate — Percentage of visitors who convert. Local home services: 3–8% is normal.

Core Web Vitals — Google's specific speed and stability scores. Mostly: does it load fast, does it respond fast, does stuff jump around while loading.

CPC — Cost Per Click. What you pay each time somebody clicks a paid ad.

Crawl / index — Google reading your site (crawl) and filing it away (index). If a page isn't indexed, it can't rank.

Domain — Your web address. `yourcompany.com`. About \$15/year. **Must be in your name.**

DNS — The phone book that connects your domain to your hosting. You rarely touch it.

GBP (Google Business Profile) — Your free Google map listing. Formerly "Google My Business." The single most valuable free asset in local marketing.

Hosting — The computer that stores your site and serves it up. \$0–\$30/month for a business your size.

Impressions — How many times you appeared in search results. Not clicks — just appearances.

Keyword — What somebody types into Google.

Landing page — A page built for one specific purpose, usually one ad or one service.

Lead — A potential customer who has contacted you.

Local pack / Map pack — The box of three businesses with the map at the top of local searches. The prize.

Meta description — The two-line summary under your link in Google results. Doesn't affect ranking directly, strongly affects whether people click.

Mobile responsive — The site rearranges itself to work on any screen size. Non-negotiable in 2026.

NAP — Name, Address, Phone. Must be written identically everywhere you're listed.

Organic — Free search results, as opposed to ads.

PageSpeed Insights — Google's free tool for scoring how fast your site loads.

Plugin — An add-on that gives a site extra features. Common on WordPress. Every one you add costs a little speed and adds a little risk.

PPC — Pay Per Click. Advertising where you pay per click.

Redirect — Sending an old web address to a new one. Critical when you rebuild a site so you don't lose your Google history.

Responsive — See mobile responsive.

Schema / structured data — Hidden code that tells Google specifics: you're a plumber, here's your rating, hours, service area. Helps you show up richer in results.

SERP — Search Engine Results Page. The screen you get after searching.

Sitemap — A file listing all your pages, submitted to Google so it can find everything.

SSL certificate — What gives you the padlock and the `https`. Should be free and automatic. If you don't have it, browsers warn visitors away.

UX — User Experience. Whether the thing is actually pleasant to use.

404 — "Page not found." Means a link points somewhere that doesn't exist. Fix these.

THE TEAR-OUT PAGES

[DESIGN NOTE] *These final pages are formatted to be printed, torn out, or screenshotted. Each one stands alone on a single page with no other content. Heavy borders, checkbox styling, high contrast for photocopying.*

TEAR-OUT 1: THE 12 QUESTIONS FOR ANY WEB DESIGNER

☐ 1. Will the domain be in my name, with my email as owner? ☐ 2. If I leave, what exactly do I take with me? ☐ 3. Who owns the website files and content? ☐ 4. Can I update text and photos myself? ☐ 5. What's included after launch, and what costs extra? ☐ 6. What's the total cost over three years? ☐ 7. Is there a contract? What's the cancellation term? ☐ 8. Will Analytics and Search Console be in my name? ☐ 9. Who will be listed as owner of my Google Business Profile? ☐ 10. What's your turnaround on a small change after launch? ☐ 11. Can I see three live home-service sites plus references? ☐ 12. How will we measure whether this worked?

TEAR-OUT 2: THE 20-MINUTE OWNERSHIP AUDIT

☐ Domain registrant is me (check at lookup.icann.org) ☐ I have the hosting login ☐ I've found and read my contract's cancellation terms ☐ Google Analytics is owned by my email ☐ Google Search Console is owned by my email ☐ I am the OWNER of my Google Business Profile (not just a manager) ☐ I know my PageSpeed mobile score: __ ☐ I know my total 12-month spend: \$ ____

TEAR-OUT 3: THE MONTHLY 15 MINUTES

Month: ____

☐ Visitors this month: __ (last month: __) ☐ Leads this month: ☐ Total spent this month: \$ ☐ Cost per lead: \$ ☐ Google reviews total: (last month:) ☐ Top search term in Search Console: ____ ☐ One thing I'm fixing this month: _____

TEAR-OUT 4: THE REVIEW ASK SCRIPT

At the end of the job, before you get in the truck:

"Hey — before I take off, did we do right by you today?"

(Wait for the answer. If it's yes:)

"That means a lot. Would you mind leaving us a quick Google review? Honestly, for a small shop like ours it's the biggest thing that helps. I'll text you the link right now — takes about thirty seconds."

Then text the link before you pull out of the driveway.

(If they haven't done it in two days, one follow-up text.)

"Hey [Name], no pressure at all — just floating that review link back up in case it got buried. Thanks again for having us out. [link]"

Then let it go. One follow-up only.

WHAT'S NEXT IN THE SERIES

This is Book One of six. Each one is short, plain, and free.

BOOK ONE — Your Website Should Work as Hard as You Do *You're holding it.* Websites, hiring, SEO basics, analytics, what things cost.

BOOK TWO — Getting Found The deep version of Chapter 4. Google Business Profile from claim to dominance, the map pack, reviews at scale, service area strategy, and how to beat the guy who's been #1 for six years.

BOOK THREE — The Phone Should Ring What happens after they find you. Response time and what it's costing you, following up without being annoying, handling after-hours and weekends, quoting faster, and where leads quietly die between "interested" and "booked."

BOOK FOUR — Nobody Trusts You Yet Reviews and reputation as a system. Getting them consistently, handling the bad ones, showing them off, and what to do when a competitor plays dirty.

BOOK FIVE — Robots on the Crew AI and automation for a small shop, in plain English. What's actually useful today, what's hype, what it costs, and how a two-truck operation can run like a ten-truck operation without hiring.

BOOK SIX — Know Your Numbers Cost per lead through to lifetime customer value. Marketing budgets by revenue. Pricing confidence. Which jobs to stop taking.

To get the next one when it's out: [DOWNLOAD LINK / QR CODE PLACEMENT]

FIG 10.1 THE SERIES

Six books. One per quarter. All free.

01
YOUR WEBSITE SHOULD
WORK AS HARD AS

YOU'RE HERE

02
GETTING FOUND

03
THE PHONE
SHOULD RING

04
NOBODY TRUSTS
YOU YET

05
ROBOTS ON
THE CREW

06
KNOW YOUR
NUMBERS

Every book stands alone. No cliffhangers, no gating, nothing held back to sell you the next one.

GET THE NEXT ONE FREE
coyotemotive.com/guides

[QR]
placeholder

FIGURE 10.1 The Series

WHO MADE THIS

Coyote Motive AI builds websites and automation for home service businesses. That's all we do. Contractors, landscapers, HVAC, plumbing, electrical, cleaning.

Built by AI. Directed by humans.

We use AI to do the parts of website building that used to take weeks and cost thousands — layouts, code, content drafts, image work. Then actual humans direct it, check it, and make sure it sounds like a real company instead of a robot. That's how a small shop like ours can build you something in days that agencies charge five figures and two months for.

We publish our pricing on our website, because we think hiding it is a tell.

If this book was useful and you want a second opinion on your current site, we'll do a free written audit — the same seven-point ownership check and the same five gauges from this book, run against your actual site, no sales call required. If your site's fine, we'll tell you it's fine.

coyotemotive.com

A note on this book: It's free. Give it to anybody. Print it, email it, hand it out at the supply house counter, put it on your own website if you want. No permission needed and no strings. If it stops one contractor from signing a 36-month contract on a website he'll never own, it did its job.

Nothing in this book is legal or financial advice. Prices and platform details reflect early 2026 and will drift. The principles won't.

THE JOBSITE GUIDES *Plain-English business books for people who work for a living.*

“You are not in the conversation.”

Somebody's water heater just started leaking. They're standing in a wet garage with a phone. If you're not on that screen, it doesn't matter how good you are.

\$250/month × 36 months = \$9,000.

You own: nothing.

Chapter 7 shows you how to spot it coming.

INSIDE:

- ❑ The three parts of a website, and which one you must own
- ❑ The five jobs your site has — and what to cut
- ❑ Google Business Profile, start to finish
- ❑ The review ask script that actually works
- ❑ Speed, phones, and where a third of your traffic dies
- ❑ The five numbers to check for 15 minutes a month
- ❑ 12 questions for any web designer, plus 10 red flags
- ❑ What it costs, and what a lead is worth to you
- ❑ A 90-day plan and four tear-out pages

Now go get the phone to ring.

[QR]

COYOTE MOTIVE AI

coyotemotive.com

Free. Give it to anybody. No strings.

BOOK ONE OF SIX