
A PLAIN-ENGLISH GUIDE FOR BUSINESS OWNERS

Getting Found on Google

How to rank in Google Search, Google Maps, and Local Services Ads — step by step, no IT degree required.

A NOTE FROM THE FOUNDER

I'm Andrew, founder of 14er Digital. We're named after Colorado's 14,000-foot peaks for a reason: we're based here, and we work almost exclusively with businesses across the Denver metro and surrounding communities — Denver, Aurora, Lakewood, Arvada, Westminster, Thornton, Centennial, Littleton, Highlands Ranch, Parker, Golden, Boulder, and up and down the Front Range.

That matters more than it sounds. A national agency optimizing your listing from a call center doesn't know that a Lakewood roofer competes in a completely different market than one in Parker, or how searches shift along the Front Range with the seasons. We do — because these are the only markets we work in.

This guide holds nothing back. Every step is something you can do yourself. My bet is simple: once you see what's actually involved, some of you will do it yourselves (great — this guide is my gift), and some of you will want it done for you. Either way, you'll know exactly how Google decides who gets the call.

— Andrew, 14er Digital

WHY THIS GUIDE EXISTS

When someone in Aurora needs a plumber or someone in Highlands Ranch needs an accountant, they almost never scroll past the first screen of Google. They type “*plumber near me*” or “*accountant Highlands Ranch*,” look at the first handful of results, and call one of them. If your business isn't in that handful, the call goes to your competitor.

The good news: getting into that handful is not magic, and it's not reserved for big companies with big budgets. Google rewards businesses that do a specific set of things consistently. This guide walks you through those things in plain English.

Google gives you **three separate ways** to appear when a local customer searches:

PLACEMENT	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	HOW YOU GET THERE
1. Local Services Ads	The very top of the page — business name, star rating, phone number, and a blue “Google Verified” badge	Pass Google's screening process and pay per lead (not per click)
2. The Map Pack	A map with three highlighted local businesses, just below the ads	Optimize your free Google Business Profile
3. Organic Results	The traditional list of website links below the map	Build a helpful, well-structured website (SEO)

Most businesses show up in one of these at best. Businesses that show up in **all three** dominate the page — a customer sees their name two or three times before they've scrolled once. That repetition builds instant trust, and it's why these businesses capture a disproportionate share of local customers.

★ WHY ALL THREE MATTER

Picture a homeowner in Westminster searching for “furnace repair.” If you hold a Local Services Ad, a Map Pack position, and an organic result, your business name appears three times before they scroll once — and they haven't clicked anything yet. A competitor holding one placement appears once. That repetition is the whole point: it reads as prominence to the customer and as relevance to Google, and it's why the three placements are worth pursuing together rather than one at a time. The work overlaps more than you'd expect — the reviews that lift your Map Pack ranking also lift your LSA ranking, and the website that earns organic rankings also strengthens your Business Profile.

BEFORE YOU READ ON: SCORE YOURSELF

Give yourself one point for each “yes.” Be honest — this is the same 15-point check we run at the start of every audit.

#	QUESTION	YES?
1	Have you claimed and verified your Google Business Profile?	☐
2	Is your primary category the most specific one available (e.g., “Roofing Contractor,” not “Contractor”)?	☐
3	Are your services listed individually on your profile, with descriptions?	☐
4	Have you added new photos to your profile in the last 30 days?	☐
5	Have you received 5+ Google reviews in the last 90 days?	☐
6	Do you reply to every review — including negative ones?	☐
7	Is your name, address & phone number identical on Google, your website, Yelp, and Facebook?	☐
8	Have you posted an update or offer to your profile in the last 2 weeks?	☐
9	Does your website load in under 3 seconds on a phone?	☐
10	Does each of your core services have its own dedicated page?	☐
11	Do your page titles include the cities you serve (e.g., “Water Heater Repair – Arvada & Westminster”)?	☐
12	Do at least 3 reputable local websites (chamber, associations, news) link to yours?	☐
13	Are you running Local Services Ads with the Google Verified badge?	☐
14	Do you answer LSA calls within a few rings, every business hour?	☐
15	Do you know which placement (ads, map, organic) generated your last 10 customers?	☐

12–15

You're in rare company — the rest of this guide will help you defend the lead.

7–11

Solid foundation, but you're leaving calls on the table in at least one placement.

0–6

You're likely invisible for most searches in your market — and the fixes are very achievable.

■ FREE AUDIT

Scored under 12? That's exactly what our free visibility audit measures in detail. Book 15 minutes at 14erdigital.com/contact — or email sales@14erdigital.com with your business name and city, and we'll send your scorecard within 48 hours.

PART 1 OF 3

Google Maps & the Google Business Profile

The highest-impact free marketing move available to any local business.

What it is

The “Map Pack” is the boxed map with three business listings that appears near the top of Google for local searches. Those three spots come from **Google Business Profiles** — free listings that show your hours, phone number, photos, reviews, and directions. The same profile also powers how you appear inside the Google Maps app.

Why it's so impactful

The Map Pack sits above the traditional search results and shows ratings and phone numbers right on the page, so customers can call you without ever visiting a website. For “near me” and service-type searches, it captures a large share of all clicks and calls. It's also the placement where a small local business most consistently beats larger competitors, because Google's map rankings are driven by three factors you can directly influence:

RELEVANCE

How well your profile matches what was searched.

DISTANCE

How close you are to the searcher.

PROMINENCE

How well-known and trusted you appear — driven heavily by reviews.

You can't move your building, but you can win on relevance and prominence — and a strong profile regularly outranks closer competitors. In a spread-out metro like Denver, where searchers in Thornton and searchers in Littleton see different map results, this is doubly true: you don't have to win the whole metro, just your slice of it.

Step-by-step: ranking in the Map Pack

01 Claim and verify your profile

Go to **google.com/business**, search for your business name, and either claim the existing listing or create one. Google verifies you own the business — often by video, postcard, or phone. Until you verify, nothing else matters.

02 **Choose the right categories**

Your *primary category* (“Roofing Contractor,” not just “Contractor”) is the single most influential ranking factor on your profile. Pick the most specific option that matches your main service, then add secondary categories for everything else you do.

03 **Complete every field**

Hours (including holidays), phone, website, service areas (list your actual metro cities — Denver, Aurora, Lakewood, etc.), services with descriptions and prices, and a business description that naturally mentions what you do and where.

04 **Keep your name, address, and phone identical everywhere**

Google cross-checks your profile against your website, Yelp, Facebook, and dozens of directories. Mismatches (“123 Main St.” here, “123 Main Street, Suite 2” there) erode trust. Pick one exact format and use it everywhere.

05 **Add photos, and keep adding them**

Real photos of your work, team, vehicles, and location — a few new ones each month. Profiles with fresh photos get more clicks, calls, and direction requests.

06 **Build a steady stream of reviews**

This is the engine of “prominence.” Ask every happy customer, make it effortless (Google gives you a direct review link you can text or email), and reply to every review — positive and negative. Consistency beats bursts: a few reviews every month outperforms fifty at once followed by silence.

07 **Stay active**

Post updates, offers, and photos of recent jobs; answer questions in the Q&A section; keep hours current. Activity signals to Google that your business is open, engaged, and worth showing.

✓ RULE OF THUMB

Treat your Google Business Profile like a second homepage. For many local businesses it gets seen more than the actual website.

■ WHAT WE'D DO HERE

A category and competitor analysis for your specific suburb (the winning primary category in Lakewood is sometimes different than in Aurora), a full profile build-out, and a done-for-you review system that texts customers a review link automatically. This is usually where clients see the first jump in calls.

PART 2 OF 3

Google Search — SEO for Your Website

The long-term asset that compounds over time.

What it is

Below the ads and the map are the “organic” results — the traditional list of website links. Ranking here is called SEO (search engine optimization). Unlike ads, you can't buy these positions; you earn them by having the website that best answers what the customer searched for.

Why it's so impactful

Organic rankings are free traffic that keeps arriving month after month, whether or not you're spending on ads. They also feed everything else: your website's strength is part of the “prominence” that ranks your Map listing, and customers who see you in the map almost always check your website before calling. A weak site quietly costs you customers you never knew about.

Step-by-step: ranking in organic search

01

Get the foundation right

Your site should load fast, work perfectly on a phone (most local searches happen on phones), use a secure address (https://), and make your phone number tappable at the top of every page. If a page takes more than a few seconds to load, customers — and Google — move on.

02

Match your pages to what customers actually search

Customers don't search “our services.” They search “*water heater replacement Arvada*.” Give each core service its own page, titled the way a customer would search for it, and describe the service in normal language: what's included, what it costs (or what affects cost), and why they should choose you.

03

Prove where you work

Put your city and service area on your homepage, in page titles, and on your contact page. In the Denver metro this is a genuine edge: a well-built page for “Furnace Repair in Westminster” faces far less competition than one targeting all of Denver. Build a genuinely useful page for each major suburb you serve — local photos, local reviews, local details, not copy-pasted text.

04 **Answer real questions**

A simple FAQ or occasional article (“How much does a roof replacement cost in Denver?”, “How often should my furnace be serviced before a Front Range winter?”) captures customers early in their decision and shows Google you're an authority on the topic.

05 **Earn mentions and links**

When other reputable websites mention or link to yours — your local chamber of commerce (Denver Metro, Aurora, West Metro), trade associations, suppliers, community news, youth-sports sponsorships — Google reads it as a vote of confidence. A handful of quality local links beats hundreds of junk ones.

06 **Keep listings consistent and reviews flowing**

The same name/address/phone consistency and review momentum from Part 1 directly strengthen your organic rankings too. The systems reinforce each other.

✓ SET EXPECTATIONS

SEO is a compounding investment, not a light switch. Meaningful movement typically takes 3–6 months — which is exactly why competitors who started earlier seem hard to catch, and why the best time to start is now.

★ WHAT TO EXPECT

Suburb pages behave in a way that surprises most owners: nothing, then everything. A new page targeting “Furnace Repair in Westminster” will typically sit unranked for several weeks while Google evaluates it, then climb quickly once it has enough signal — because it's competing against a handful of genuinely local pages rather than every HVAC company in Colorado. That's the strategic advantage of building suburb by suburb: instead of fighting one very hard battle for “Denver,” you're winning five much easier ones across Arvada, Westminster, Thornton, Littleton and Centennial. Track each page's rankings separately — a single blended “traffic” number will hide which suburbs are working and which need more.

■ WHAT WE'D DO HERE

Keyword research scoped to your actual suburbs, a page-by-page rebuild plan, suburb pages written for humans (not spam), and monthly reporting in plain English — which pages ring the phone, not vanity numbers.

PART 3 OF 3

Google Local Services Ads

The fastest route to the top of the page — and you only pay for real leads.

What it is

Local Services Ads (LSAs) are the listings at the **very top** of Google for service searches — above regular ads, above the map, above everything. They show your business name, star rating, and phone number, along with Google's blue **“Google Verified”** badge (which in late 2025 replaced the older “Google Guaranteed” and “Google Screened” badges). To earn the badge, your business passes Google's screening: license and insurance verification plus background checks, handled through Google's third-party partners.

Why it's so impactful

You pay per lead, not per click. Traditional ads charge you every time someone clicks — even tire-kickers. LSAs charge only when a potential customer actually calls or messages you through the ad. Typical home-service leads run roughly \$25–\$80 depending on your trade and market, and you can dispute clearly invalid leads.

The badge sells trust before you say a word. “Google Verified” tells customers that Google itself checked your license, insurance, and background. For high-trust decisions — someone entering your home, handling your money, caring for your family — that badge measurably increases calls.

It's position zero. No amount of SEO can place you above LSAs. In competitive Denver-metro trades — roofing after a hailstorm, HVAC in a July heat wave — LSAs are often the difference between a full schedule and a quiet phone. If your competitors run them and you don't, they get first shot at every customer, every time.

Step-by-step: getting ranked in Local Services Ads

01 Check eligibility

LSAs cover a wide and growing range of categories — home services (plumbing, HVAC, roofing, electrical, cleaning), professional services (law, real estate, financial planning), health and wellness, and more. Search “Google Local Services Ads sign up” to see if your category and area qualify.

02 **Create your profile and submit documents**

You'll provide your business license, proof of general liability insurance, and (for some Colorado trades) workers' compensation coverage. Google's verification partner confirms everything is current.

03 **Complete background checks**

Owners and relevant employees complete a free background check through Google's screening partner. Checks typically clear in under a week; full approval commonly takes a few weeks, so start before you need the leads.

04 **Set your budget and service details**

Choose a weekly budget, the specific jobs you want (you can exclude work you don't do), and the ZIP codes you serve — you can target Centennial and Parker while skipping downtown, or vice versa. Pause anytime; great for filling slow weeks.

05 **Answer the phone**

This is the part most businesses miss: **your responsiveness directly affects your ranking**. Google tracks how often and how fast you answer calls and messages. Miss calls and Google shows your ad less; answer promptly and you rise. Pair LSAs with a plan for who answers, every time.

06 **Keep reviews flowing**

Your LSA ranking and click-through rate lean heavily on your review rating and count — the same reviews powering your Map Pack ranking. One review strategy feeds all three placements.

★ RUN THE MATH FIRST

LSA economics are easy to sanity-check before you spend a dollar. Take your average job value and multiply it by your close rate on inbound calls — that's what a single lead is actually worth to you. If plumbing leads in your category run \$30–50 and you close roughly one in three at an average ticket of \$400, each lead is worth about \$130 against a \$40 cost. That works comfortably. If your average ticket is \$90, the same lead price doesn't work, and no amount of optimization will fix it. Run that number before you set a budget — it's the single best predictor of whether LSAs will pay off for your business, and it takes about two minutes.

■ WHAT WE'D DO HERE

Handle the entire verification process (it's paperwork-heavy and easy to stall), structure your job types and ZIP targeting for the metro, dispute invalid leads so you don't pay for junk, and monitor your answer rate — the hidden lever most agencies ignore.

The New Frontier: AI Search Is Already Changing Who Gets Found

One more reason to act now rather than later: how people find local businesses is shifting under everyone's feet. Google now answers many searches with **AI**

Overviews — an AI-written summary at the top of the page that names specific local businesses. And a growing share of customers skip Google entirely, asking ChatGPT or other AI assistants “who's the best electrician near me in Thornton?”

Here's what most business owners don't realize: **these AI answers are built largely from the same signals this guide teaches.** A complete Google Business Profile, a steady flow of detailed reviews, consistent business information across the web, and a website that clearly explains what you do and where — that's what AI systems cite when they recommend a business.

In other words, the work in this guide isn't just about today's rankings. It's about being the business the machines recommend for the next decade. Businesses that build these foundations now will compound their advantage; businesses that wait will find the door increasingly hard to reopen.

■ WHAT WE'D DO HERE

We track how your business appears in AI-generated answers (not just traditional rankings) and optimize for both. Ask about AI visibility tracking in your audit.

How the Three Work Together

These aren't three separate strategies — they're one system. Improving any one lifts the others, and a business visible in all three placements owns the first screen of Google in its market.

REVIEWS

Boost your Map Pack ranking, your LSA ranking, and the trust that converts organic visitors.

WEBSITE

Strengthens your profile's prominence and closes the customers the other two placements attract.

BUSINESS PROFILE

Confirms your legitimacy for everything else Google — and now AI — says about you.

Your first 90 days, at a glance

TIMELINE

FOCUS

Weeks 1–2

Claim and verify your Google Business Profile. Fix categories, hours, photos, and services. Standardize your name/address/phone everywhere. Begin the LSA application (documents + background checks).

Weeks 3–6

Launch a simple review system — ask every happy customer. Fix website basics: speed, mobile, tappable phone number, one page per core service. LSAs go live; set a budget and answer every call.

Weeks 7–12

Add suburb-specific service pages and FAQs. Post to your Business Profile weekly. Pursue 3–5 local links (chambers, associations, sponsorships). Review what's generating calls and double down.

Do It Yourself — or Have It Done Right

Everything in this guide is genuinely doable by a business owner. It's also genuinely time-consuming — and Google changes the rules constantly (the verification badges were overhauled just months ago, and AI Overviews are rewriting the results page as you read this). Every week your competitors hold those top spots, they're taking calls that should be yours.

That's what we do. **14er Digital** builds and manages complete Google visibility systems for Denver-metro businesses: Business Profile optimization, local SEO, Local Services Ads management, and AI visibility tracking — handled end to end, reported in plain English.

GET YOUR FREE VISIBILITY AUDIT — TWO WAYS, BOTH UNDER A MINUTE

1. Book a 15-minute call

14erdigital.com/contact

2. Or send one email

Sales@14erdigital.com — business name
+ city

Within 48 hours you'll get your 15-point scorecard, where you rank today in all three placements, what your top three competitors are doing, and the highest-impact fixes — yours to keep whether you hire us or not. No pressure, no obligation.

TEAR-OUT PAGE

The 90-Day Google Visibility Checklist

Print this page and check items off as you go.

GOOGLE BUSINESS PROFILE & MAPS

- ☐ Claim & verify profile at google.com/business
- ☐ Set the most specific primary category + secondary categories
- ☐ Complete hours, phone, website, service areas, and all services
- ☐ Standardize name/address/phone across Google, website, Yelp, Facebook
- ☐ Upload 10+ real photos; add new ones monthly
- ☐ Text/email every happy customer your Google review link
- ☐ Reply to every review within 48 hours
- ☐ Post an update or offer weekly

WEBSITE & ORGANIC SEARCH

- ☐ Test mobile speed (under 3 seconds) and fix if slow
- ☐ Make your phone number tappable on every page
- ☐ Build one page per core service, titled the way customers search
- ☐ Build one genuinely useful page per major suburb you serve
- ☐ Add an FAQ answering your 10 most common customer questions
- ☐ Get listed by your chamber of commerce and trade associations
- ☐ Earn 3–5 local links (sponsorships, suppliers, community news)

LOCAL SERVICES ADS

- ☐ Confirm your category qualifies for LSAs
 - ☐ Submit license, insurance & workers' comp documents
 - ☐ Complete background checks (start early — approval takes weeks)
 - ☐ Set weekly budget, job types, and ZIP codes
 - ☐ Assign someone to answer every call — responsiveness affects rank
 - ☐ Dispute invalid leads promptly
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✓ STUCK ON ANY BOX?

That's what the free audit is for. Book at 14erdigital.com/contact or email Sales@14erdigital.com with your business name and city — scorecard delivered within 48 hours.
