The Software Society

# The Contractor's Google Playbook

Everything a contracting business needs in place to show up when a homeowner nearby searches for a contractor, and to be the one they ask for an estimate. Shown, not just listed.


01 How homeowners find a contractor
02 Your Google Business Profile
03 Reviews that keep coming
04 Your details, everywhere
05 Your website and its structure
06 The local service page, piece by piece
07 Titles, images, links and schema
08 Pages homeowners search for
09 Knowing what works
10 The routine, week by week

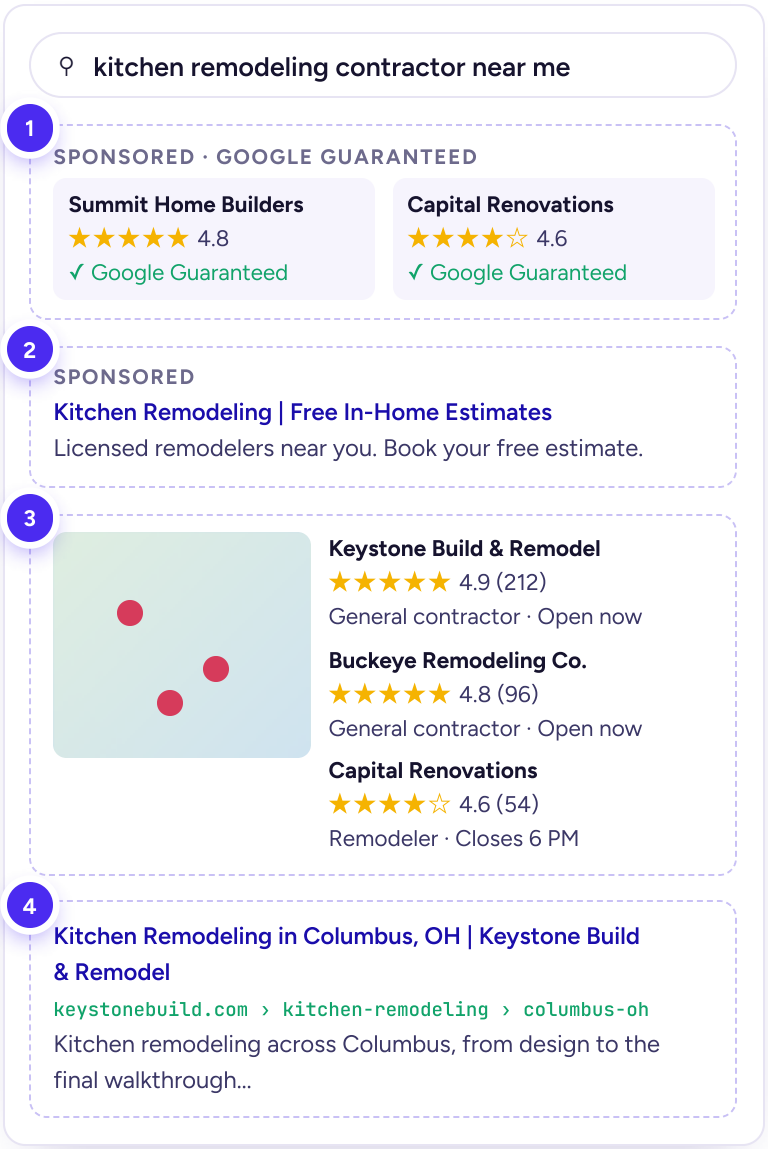



Examples use a sample company, Keystone Build & Remodel, Columbus, OH

01 HOW HOMEOWNERS FIND A CONTRACTOR

# One search, four places to win

When a homeowner is ready to remodel, they search, compare the first few names, and ask two or three for estimates. That first screen has four parts, and each one is won differently.




1. **Local Services Ads (Google Guaranteed)**
   Pay per lead, not per click. Requires a background check, license and insurance verification. Ranked partly on reviews and how fast you answer.
2. **Search ads**
   Pay per click. Stops the moment you stop paying. Useful to fill gaps, never a foundation.
3. **The map pack**
   The three businesses under the map. For "near me" searches this is where most estimate requests start. Won with your Google Business Profile, reviews and your website together.
4. **Regular results**
   Your website's pages. Won with a page for that exact service in that exact town, written and built well.

**What Google says decides 3 and 4:** relevance (does your business match the search), distance (how close you are to the searcher) and prominence (how known and trusted you are online: reviews, links, mentions). You control two of the three.

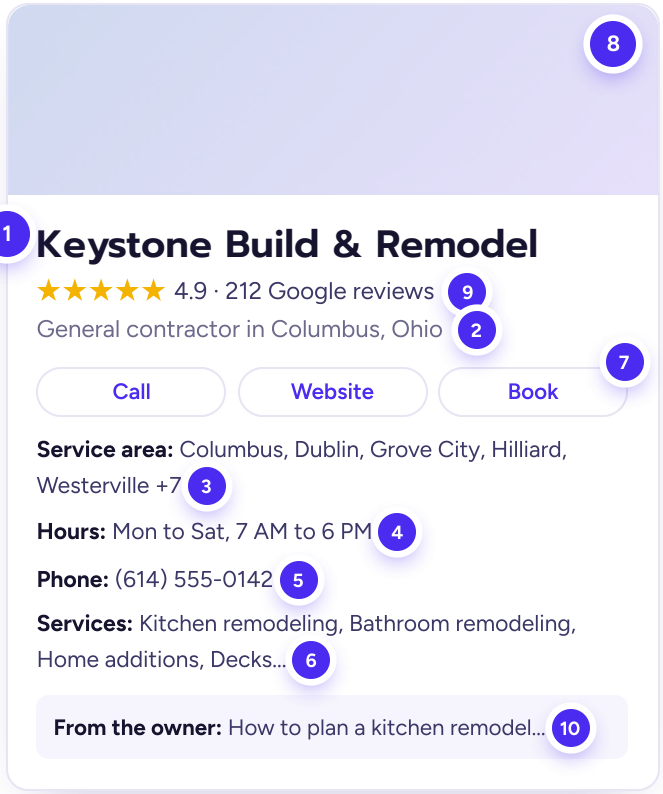
## What this playbook covers

Everything in sections 3 and 4: the free positions you earn instead of renting. Ads can sit on top of a strong foundation, but with no foundation you pay for every call, forever.

02 YOUR GOOGLE BUSINESS PROFILE

# The profile that answers before you do

Most homeowners decide from this panel without ever opening your website. Every field below is one Google uses to decide whether to show you, and one a customer uses to decide whether to call.




1. **Your real business name**
   Exactly as on your truck, yard signs and invoices. Adding "Best Contractor Columbus" to the name breaks Google's rules and gets profiles suspended.
2. **Primary category: General contractor**
   The single strongest setting on the profile. Add secondary categories only for work you do, such as Remodeler, Kitchen remodeler or Deck builder.
3. **Service area, by name**
   No storefront? Hide your address and list the cities or ZIP codes you serve (up to 20). Never use a virtual office or mailbox as the address.
4. **Hours that are true**
   Including Saturday estimate hours, and holiday hours set before each holiday.
5. **One main phone number**
   The same number your website shows. If you use call tracking, put the tracking number as primary and your main number as additional.
6. **Every service, described**
   Each with a sentence or two and a price range if you are comfortable sharing one.
7. **Booking link**
   Straight to a form or scheduler, not your homepage.
8. **Real photos, every month**
   Logo, cover photo, your crew, and before and after photos of finished projects. Never stock photos.
9. **Reviews**
   The count, the average and how recent they are all matter. Section 03.
10. **Posts and questions**
    A short update every week or two (an offer, a tip, a recent job), and answers to common questions in your own words.

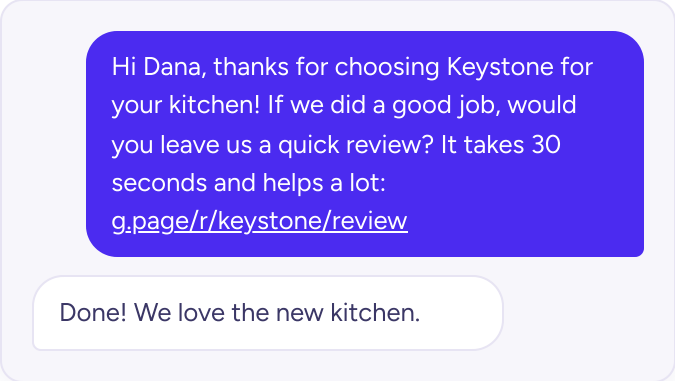
**The description:** up to 750 characters, and the first 250 are what shows before "more". Say what you do, where, and why someone should call you. Write it for a homeowner, not for Google.

03 REVIEWS THAT KEEP COMING

# Ask every customer, the same day, in one tap

Homeowners compare stars, the number of reviews and how recent they are before they call. Google does too. A steady trickle beats a burst: ten reviews this month and none for the next six looks like a campaign, not a business.

## The ask, by text, before you leave the driveway




- [ ] **Get your direct review link** from your Business Profile ("Ask for reviews"). It opens the review box straight away.
- [ ] **Send it at the final walkthrough,** while the new space still feels new.
- [ ] **Use their name and the job.** A personal text gets far more replies than a template email.
- [ ] **Ask everyone.** Every customer, every job.

## Reply to every review within two days

5 STARS

"Thanks, Dana! Enjoy the new kitchen, and thank you for trusting us with your home in Grove City."

1 STAR

"Mark, we are sorry the trim work was not finished the way you expected. That is not our standard. Our project lead will call you today to schedule the fix at no charge."

- Thank them by name, mention the job and the town.
- For bad reviews: apologize, take it offline, fix it. Future customers read the reply more than the complaint.
- Never argue in public and never share a customer's private details.

**Do not:** buy reviews, offer discounts for reviews, or only ask customers you think are happy ("review gating"). Google removes these reviews and can suspend the profile, and the FTC's 2024 rule on fake reviews makes several of these practices illegal.

04 YOUR DETAILS, EVERYWHERE

# Name, address and phone that match, letter for letter

Google cross-checks your business across the web. When your name, address or phone differ from one listing to the next, it is less sure you are one real business, and customers call old numbers. This is called NAP consistency.

YOUR OFFICIAL DETAILS

**Keystone Build & Remodel · 1420 Riverside Dr, Suite 4, Columbus, OH 43215 · (614) 555-0142**

| LISTING | NAME | ADDRESS | PHONE | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Google Business Profile** | Keystone Build & Remodel | 1420 Riverside Dr, Suite 4 | (614) 555-0142 | Match |
| **Your website footer** | Keystone Build & Remodel | 1420 Riverside Dr, Suite 4 | (614) 555-0142 | Match |
| **Yelp** | Keystone Build & Remodel | 1420 Riverside Dr | (614) 555-0142 | Suite missing |
| **Facebook** | Keystone Build & Remodel LLC | 1420 Riverside Dr, Suite 4 | (614) 555-0142 | Name differs |
| **Apple Business Connect** | Keystone Build & Remodel | 1420 Riverside Dr, Suite 4 | (614) 555-0199 | Old number |
| **Bing Places** | Keystone Build & Remodel | 1420 Riverside Dr, Suite 4 | (614) 555-0142 | Match |

## Where a contractor should be listed

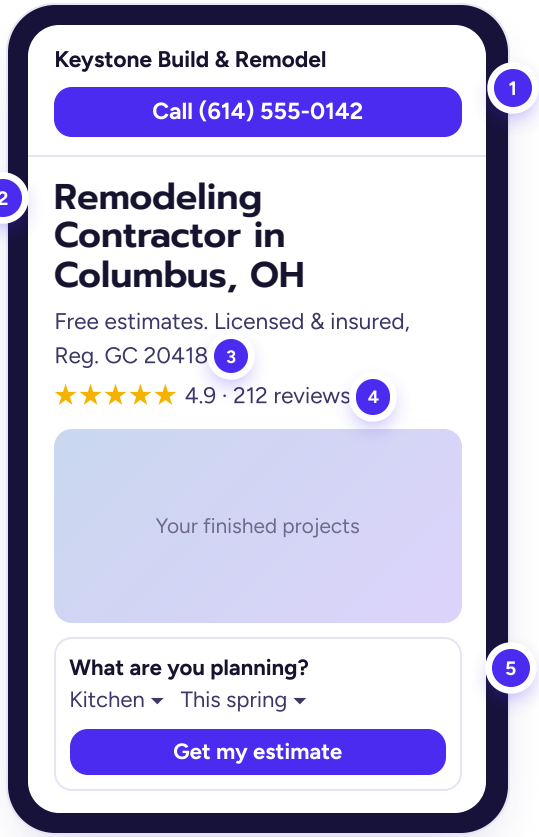
- [ ] **The big four:** Google Business Profile, Apple Business Connect (Apple Maps and Siri), Bing Places, Yelp.
- [ ] **Social:** Facebook, Nextdoor.
- [ ] **Home services sites:** Angi, HomeAdvisor, Houzz, Thumbtack, BuildZoom, BBB.
- [ ] **Local:** your chamber of commerce, your city's business directory, trade associations you belong to.
- [ ] **Data providers** that feed hundreds of smaller sites, such as Data Axle and Foursquare.

## Cleaning it up

- [ ] **Write down one official version** of your name, address and phone, and use it character for character, Suite and all.
- [ ] **Search your old phone numbers and old addresses** in Google. Every listing that still shows them gets fixed or claimed.
- [ ] **Merge or remove duplicate listings,** especially duplicate Google profiles.
- [ ] **Use the same business description** and categories everywhere they apply.
- [ ] **Recheck twice a year.** Directories quietly re-import old data.

# The first screen decides the call

A homeowner planning a remodel gives your site a few seconds to look trustworthy, usually on a phone. Everything they need to ask you for an estimate has to be on the first screen, and the site has to load fast.




1. **Tap-to-call, always visible**
   The phone number at the top of every page, as a button on phones.
2. **What you do and where, in the headline**
   "Remodeling Contractor in Columbus, OH" tells the visitor and Google the two things that matter.
3. **License and insurance, shown**
   Your license number builds trust and answers a question before it is asked.
4. **Real reviews**
   Your Google rating and count, not a testimonial nobody can check.
5. **A short booking form**
   Project, timing, name, phone. Three or four fields, not ten.

## Speed and basics

- [ ] **Test it free** at pagespeed.web.dev. Google's Core Web Vitals targets: main content shows in under 2.5 seconds (LCP), taps respond in under 200 milliseconds (INP), nothing jumps around while loading (CLS under 0.1).
- [ ] **Compress every photo** and use modern formats (WebP). Project galleries are the usual reason contractor sites are slow.
- [ ] **HTTPS** (the lock in the browser) on every page.

## The structure: one page per job, per town

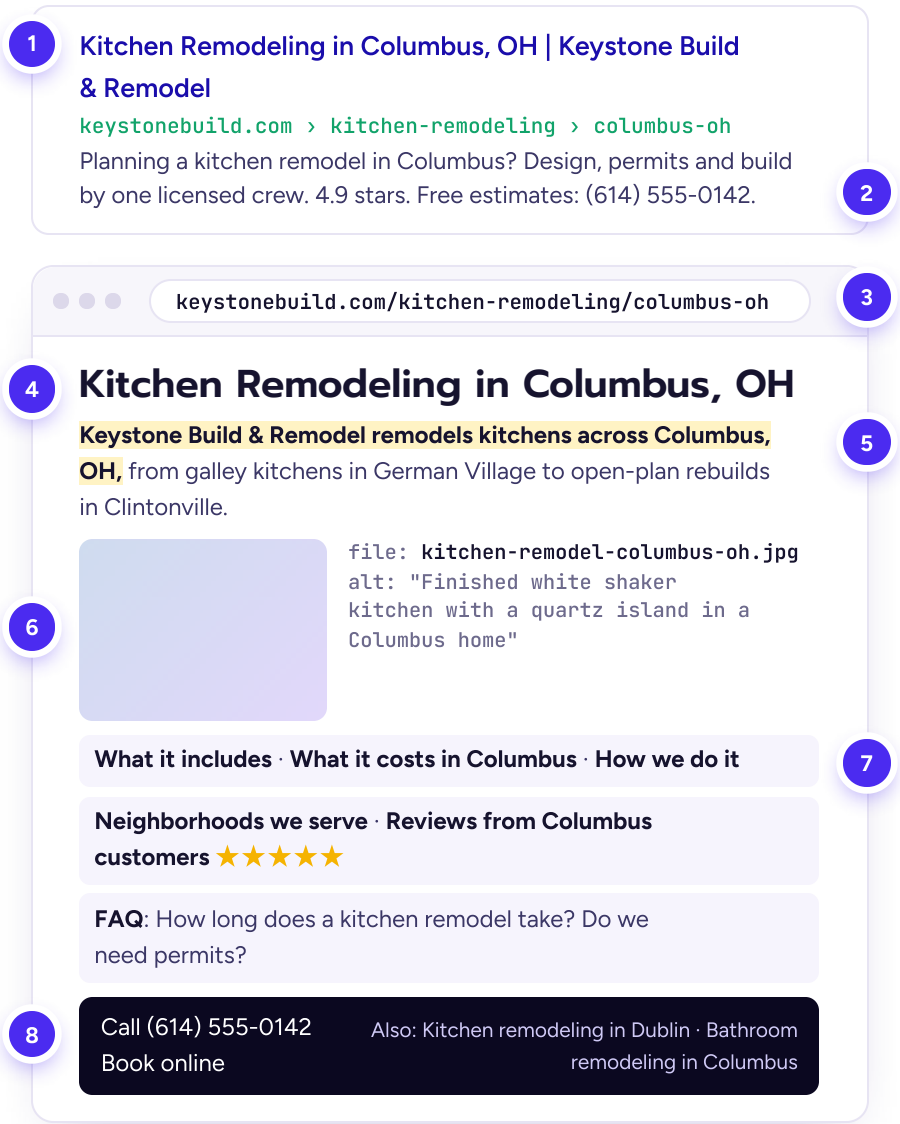
| Home | Services | Service areas | Service in town |
|---|---|---|---|
| `/` | `/kitchen-remodeling`<br>`/bathroom-remodeling`<br>`/home-additions`<br>`/deck-building` | `/areas/columbus-oh`<br>`/areas/dublin-oh`<br>`/areas/grove-city-oh` | `/kitchen-remodeling/columbus-oh`<br>`/deck-building/dublin-oh` |

One "Services" page cannot rank for kitchens, bathrooms and decks at once, and one homepage cannot rank in twelve towns. Each job and each town gets its own page, linked together. **Each town page must be written about that town:** copies with the city name swapped are what Google calls doorway pages and are filtered out.

06 THE LOCAL SERVICE PAGE, PIECE BY PIECE

# Kitchen remodeling in Columbus, OH: built right

This is the single most important page type for a contractor. The service and the town go in the same handful of places on every one of these pages. Most contractor sites miss most of them.




1. **Title tag**
(the blue link in Google): service + town + your name, about 60 characters or less. `Kitchen Remodeling in Columbus, OH | Keystone Build & Remodel`

2. **Meta description:**
the two lines under it. Problem, promise, proof, phone. About 150 characters.

3. **The address (URL):**
short, lowercase, hyphens, service then town.
`/kitchen-remodeling/columbus-oh`
NOT `/page?id=3812`

4. **One H1 headline**
with the service and the town.

5. **The first sentence**
says what you do, where, and who you are. Search engines and AI answers read the opening most closely.

6. **Your own photo,**
named for what it shows (`kitchen-remodel-columbus-oh.jpg`, never `IMG_4471.jpg`) with alt text that describes it in plain words.

7. **Local substance:**
neighborhoods, the problems common to that area's homes, real costs, reviews from customers there, and answers to the questions people ask.

8. **A way to act, and links**
to the main service page, nearby towns and related services.

07 TITLES, IMAGES, LINKS AND SCHEMA

# The details Google reads that visitors never see

These take minutes per page and are skipped on most contractor sites. Good and bad versions side by side.

| ELEMENT | WEAK | STRONG |
|---|---|---|
| **Title tag** | `Home \| Keystone` | `Remodeling Contractor in Columbus, OH \| Keystone Build & Remodel` |
| **Service title** | `Services` | `Bathroom Remodeling in Dublin, OH \| Keystone` |
| **Meta description** | (left blank) | Remodeling a bathroom in Dublin? Design to final walkthrough by one licensed crew. 4.9 stars. Free estimates: (614) 555-0142. |
| **URL** | `/services-2/?p=118` | `/bathroom-remodeling/dublin-oh` |
| **Image file** | `IMG_20250312.jpg` | `walk-in-shower-remodel-dublin-oh.jpg` |
| **Alt text** | `image1` | Walk-in tile shower with a glass door in a remodeled Dublin bathroom |
| **Link text** | Click here | See our deck building in Grove City |

## Internal links: the roads between your pages

- [ ] Every service page links to its town pages, and every town page links back up.
- [ ] Each town page links to two or three nearby towns for the same service.
- [ ] Blog posts link to the service that fixes the problem they describe.
- [ ] The words you link say where the link goes.

## Headings that tell the story

One H1 per page, then H2s for each section a homeowner scans for: signs, cost, how it works, area, FAQ. Many of these work best phrased as the question people actually ask: "How much does a kitchen remodel cost in Columbus?"

## Schema: your details in Google's language

A small block of code (structured data) on your site that states who you are, where you work, your hours and phone in a format Google reads directly. Test it free with Google's Rich Results Test.

```
{
 "@context": "https://schema.org",
 "@type": "GeneralContractor",
 "name": "Keystone Build & Remodel",
 "telephone": "+1-614-555-0142",
 "url": "https://keystonebuild.com",
 "areaServed": ["Columbus","Dublin","Grove
City"],
 "openingHours": "Mo-Su 00:00-23:59",
 "address": { "@type": "PostalAddress",
  "streetAddress": "1420 Riverside Dr,
Suite 4",
  "addressLocality": "Columbus",
"addressRegion": "OH" }
}
```

Add FAQ and Service markup on pages that have them. The details must match your Business Profile exactly.

08 PAGES HOMEOWNERS SEARCH FOR

# Answer the question before they search for a contractor

Most remodeling projects start with research, months before the first call. The contractor who answers "how much does a kitchen remodel cost" is the contractor they call when they are ready.

### Planning pages

- How long does a kitchen remodel take?
- Do I need a permit for a deck?
- Kitchen layouts for smaller homes
- Can we live at home during a remodel?
- Choosing cabinets and countertops
- Finishing a basement: what to know first
- Signs your deck needs replacing
- An addition or a move: the real math

### Cost pages

- Kitchen remodel cost in your area
- Bathroom remodel cost, budget to high end
- Deck cost per square foot
- Home addition cost and what drives it
- Basement finishing cost

Honest ranges and what moves the price. People who read cost pages are close to asking for an estimate.

### Decision pages

- Remodel or move?
- Composite or wood decking
- Design-build or hiring an architect
- How to choose a contractor (and red flags)
- What a remodeling contract should include

## The remodeling calendar: publish before the season, not during it

| WHEN TO PUBLISH | WHAT HOMEOWNERS WILL BE SEARCHING |
|---|---|
| **December to January** | Planning next year's kitchen and bathroom projects, remodel budgets, design ideas |
| **February to March** | Deck and patio planning, permits, how to hire a contractor before the spring rush |
| **April to May** | Decks, siding, windows, exterior painting, concrete patios and driveways |
| **June to August** | Basement finishing, additions, outdoor living spaces, garage conversions |
| **September** | Kitchens before the holidays, window replacement before winter |
| **October to November** | Interior projects for the winter, bathroom remodels, booking winter work at off-season prices |

**Write the answer first.** Put the direct answer in the opening two or three sentences, then the detail. Google's AI answers and featured snippets quote pages that answer plainly, and a homeowner reading on a phone stops scrolling once they have what they need.

09 KNOWING WHAT WORKS

# Count calls, not clicks

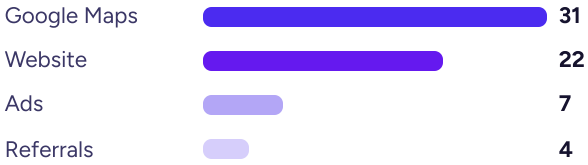
Traffic is a means. Calls and booked jobs are the result. Set these up once, then check them every month.

- [ ] **Google Search Console** (free): which searches show your site, which pages get clicked, and any errors Google finds. Submit your sitemap here.
- [ ] **Google Analytics 4** (free): visitors, where they came from, and which pages lead to calls and form fills. Mark calls and forms as key events.
- [ ] **Business Profile performance** (free): calls, direction requests and website clicks straight from your profile.
- [ ] **Call tracking:** a different number per source (Google profile, website, ads) so you know where each call came from. Keep your main number listed as additional on Google so your details still match.
- [ ] **Map rank check across your area:** your map position from a grid of points around your service area, not just from your shop. Ranking first downtown and tenth in the suburbs is common.

### October, at a glance

EXAMPLE

| Calls from Google | Booked jobs |
|---|---|
| 64 +18 | 27 +6 |




### The five numbers to check monthly

- Calls and forms, by source
- Booked jobs and their value
- Map position across your area
- New reviews and your average
- Top pages and the searches that found them

### Search Console: three reports worth reading

- **Performance, filtered by a town name.** Shows every search with "Dublin" in it that found you, and where you ranked. Gaps here are your next pages.
- **Pages with many impressions and few clicks.** Google shows them but nobody clicks: rewrite the title and description to say the service, the town and a reason to call.
- **Page indexing.** Pages Google found but did not add to its index, and why. A town page that is not indexed cannot rank.

### Signs something is wrong

- **Traffic up, calls down:** test your phone links and forms on a phone. A broken form can cost a month of leads quietly.
- **Map rank drops in one area:** check for edits to your profile you did not make, a new competitor nearby, or a suspension notice.
- **Traffic falls off a cliff overnight:** check the site is up, then Search Console for indexing problems or a manual action.
- **Reviews stall:** the ask stopped happening. Put it back into the end-of-job routine.

10 THE ROUTINE, WEEK BY WEEK

# None of this is a one-time project

Google rewards businesses that keep showing signs of life. Here is the whole job as a routine.

| HOW OFTEN | WHAT TO DO |
|---|---|
| **Every job** | Send the review request text. Snap two photos of the finished work for your profile and website. |
| **Every week** | Reply to every new review. Post an update on your Business Profile. Answer new questions. Upload new job photos. |
| **Every month** | Publish new pages: a service in a new town, a problem page, a cost page, a seasonal post. Add internal links from older pages to the new ones. Check calls by source, map position and Search Console. Fix broken links and errors. |
| **Every quarter** | Re-run PageSpeed on your top pages. Refresh your best pages with new photos, prices and reviews. Check your top competitors' profiles and pages for anything they do that you do not. |
| **Twice a year** | Audit your name, address and phone on every listing. Look for duplicate profiles. Update holiday hours and service areas. |
| **Every year** | Check every service and town you serve still has its own page. Retire or redirect pages for services you no longer offer. Review your categories and description. |

## Your starting checklist

- [ ] Business Profile verified and owned by you
- [ ] Primary category "General contractor", secondaries set
- [ ] Service area lists every town by name
- [ ] Every service listed with a description
- [ ] Real photos uploaded this month
- [ ] Direct review link saved on your phone
- [ ] Every review answered
- [ ] Name, address and phone identical on the big four
- [ ] Tap-to-call at the top of every page
- [ ] "Contractor in [Town], [State]" headline on the homepage
- [ ] One page per service, one per town, one per service in each main town
- [ ] Titles, URLs and image names follow page 08
- [ ] Schema added and tested
- [ ] Search Console and Analytics connected
- [ ] Calls tracked by source
- [ ] A publishing calendar for the next three months

The Software Society

# That is the whole job. And it never stops.

Everything in this playbook works, and a motivated owner can do all of it. Most contractors we talk to would rather be on job sites than writing town pages at 10 PM. So we do it for you.

- ✓ A new website built for calls
- ✓ 100 pages on Google in your first month
- ✓ A page for every service in every town
- ✓ Map rank checked across your area
- ✓ Your Business Profile kept in shape
- ✓ Review requests after every job
- ✓ Your details fixed on every listing
- ✓ Calls tracked, a plain-English monthly report

**$397** a month. No contract, cancel anytime.

See your new homepage free, before you pay anything.

**Book a short call at thesoftwaresociety.io**

The Software Society builds websites and SEO for local service businesses. Remote, by video and email. Past campaigns grew organic traffic 26x in 14 months.