The Software Society

The Local Business Google Playbook

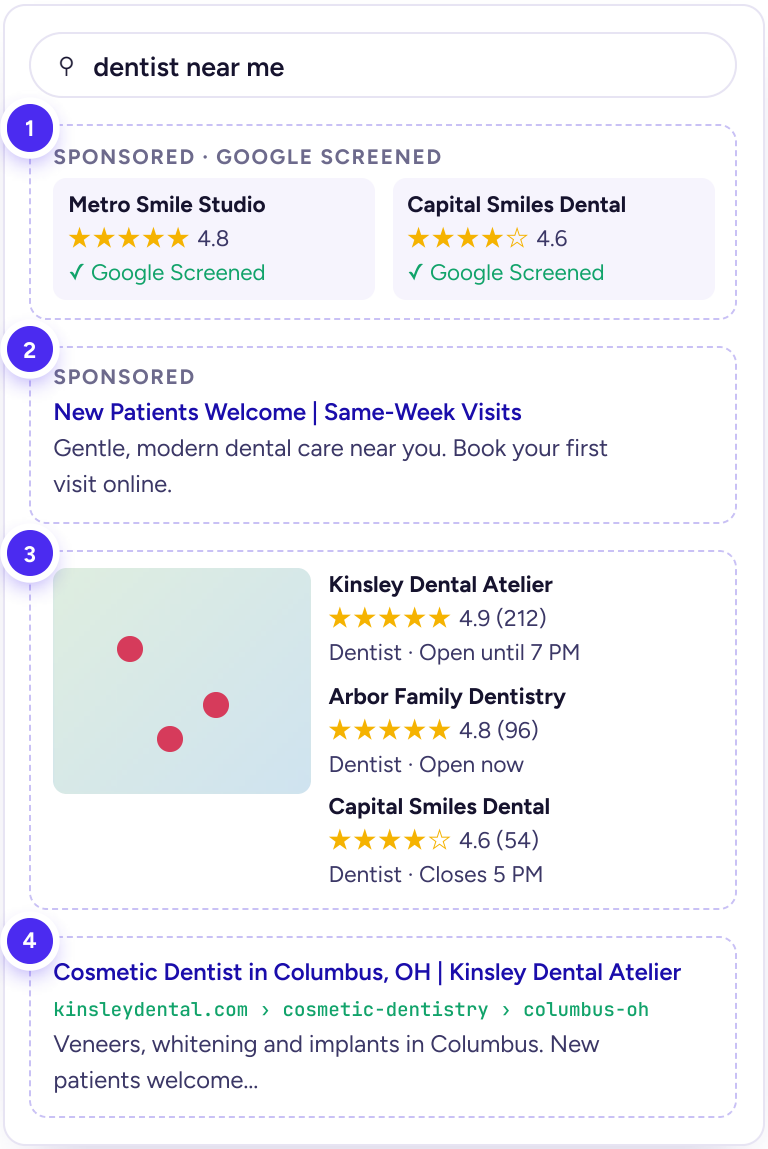
Everything a local business needs in place to show up when someone nearby searches for what you offer, and to be the one they choose. Shown, not just listed.

01 How customers find a local business
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 customers search for
09 Knowing what works
10 The routine, week by week

01 HOW CUSTOMERS FIND A LOCAL BUSINESS

One search, four places to win

When people need a dentist, a shop or a service, they search, look at one screen, and choose. That screen has four parts, and each one is won differently.



1. **Local Services Ads (Google Screened)**
   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 calls and bookings 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.

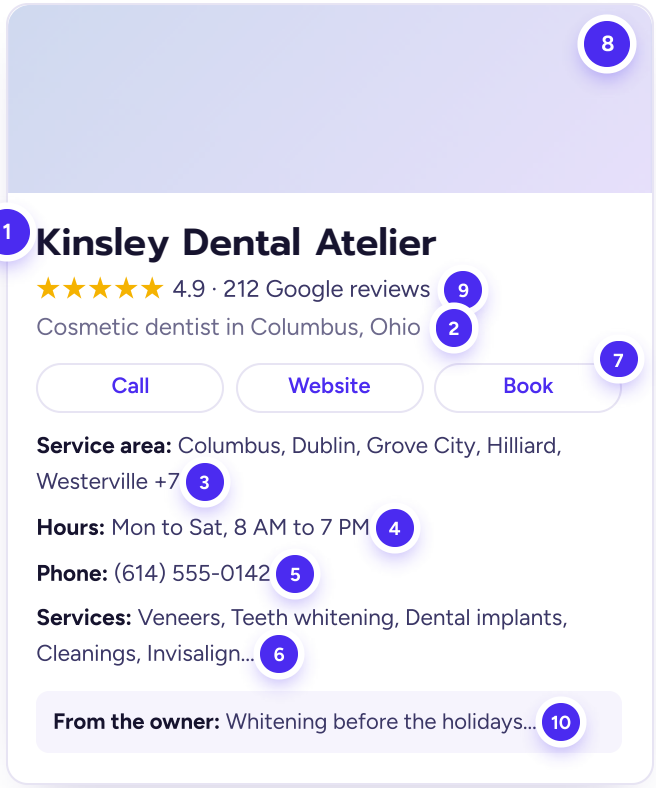
What this playbook covers

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 customers 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 sign and invoices. Adding "Best Dentist Columbus" to the name breaks Google's rules and gets profiles suspended.
2. **Primary category: Cosmetic dentist**
   The single strongest setting on the profile. Add secondary categories only for work you do, such as Dental implants provider or Teeth whitening service.
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 evening 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 storefront or office, your team, your work. 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 customer, not for Google.

03 REVIEWS THAT KEEP COMING

Ask every customer, the same day, in one tap

Customers 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 they leave the office

Hi Dana, thanks for visiting Kinsley today! If we did a good job, would you leave us a quick review? It takes 30 seconds and helps a lot: g.page/r/kinsley/review

Done! Thanks for the quick visit.

- [ ] **Get your direct review link** from your Business Profile ("Ask for reviews"). It opens the review box straight away.
- [ ] **Send it the same day,** while the visit is still fresh.
- [ ] **Use their name and the visit.** 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! Glad we could fit you in this week. We are here whenever you need us, from Grove City or anywhere nearby."

1 STAR

"Mark, we are sorry your visit started late. That is not our standard. I have asked our office manager to call you today and we will make it right."

- Thank them by name, mention the visit 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

Kinsley Dental Atelier · 1420 Riverside Dr, Suite 4, Columbus, OH 43215 · (614) 555-0142

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

Where a local business should be listed

- [ ] **The big four:** Google Business Profile, Apple Business Connect (Apple Maps and Siri), Bing Places, Yelp.
- [ ] **Social:** Facebook, Nextdoor.
- [ ] **Your industry's sites:** for a dentist Healthgrades, Zocdoc and WebMD; for a shop or studio its booking and review apps; 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.

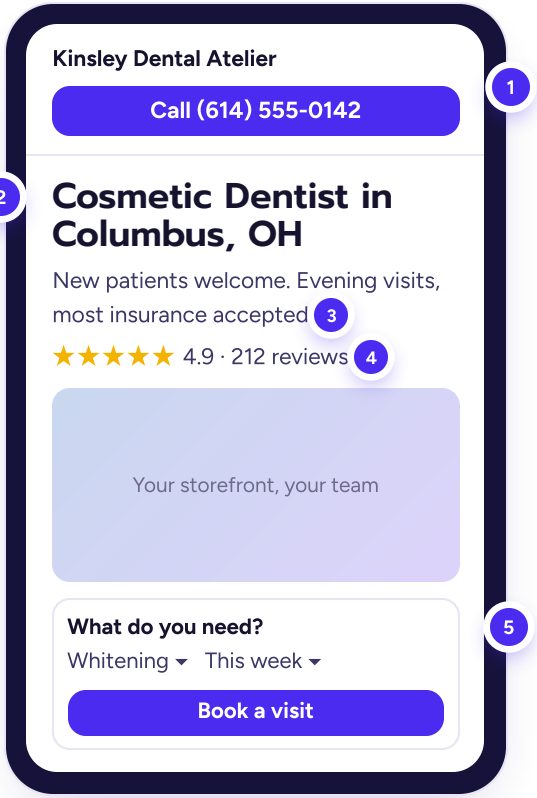
Cleaning it up

- [ ] **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.

05 YOUR WEBSITE AND ITS STRUCTURE

The first screen decides the call

A customer deciding where to go gives your site a few seconds, usually on a phone. Everything they need to call you 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**
   "Cosmetic Dentist 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**
   Service, day, 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). Photos are the usual reason local business sites are slow.
- [ ] **HTTPS** (the lock in the browser) on every page.

The structure: one page per job, per town

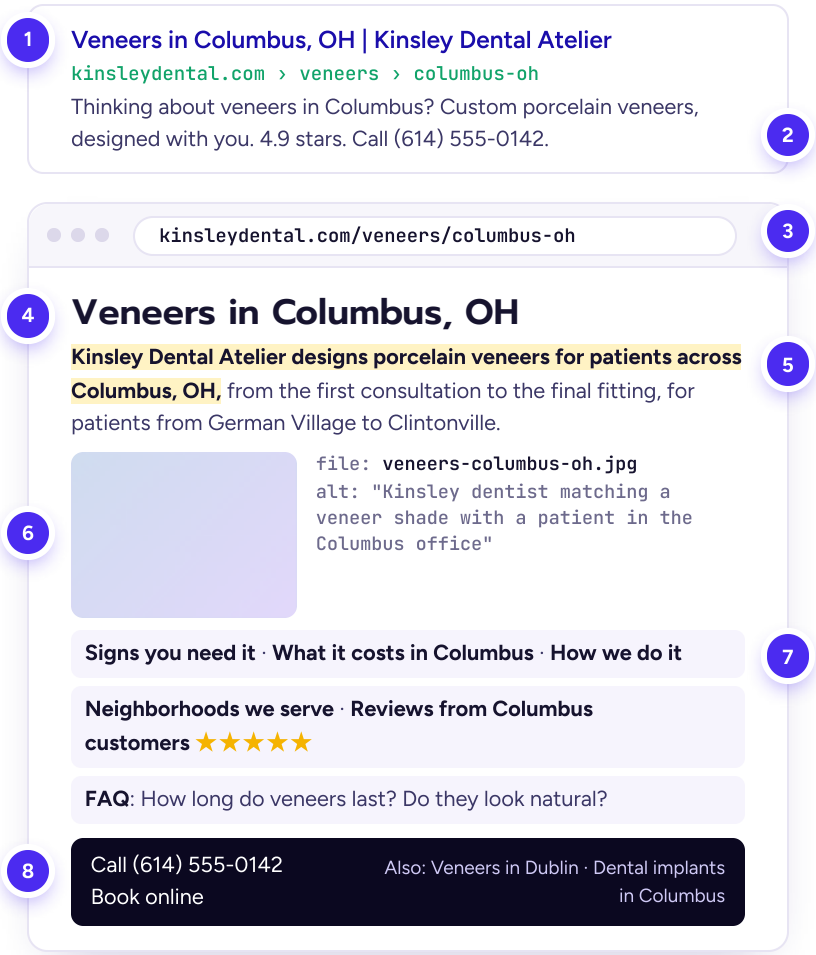
Home	Services	Service areas	Service in town
/	/veneers /teeth-whitening /dental-implants /cleanings	/areas/columbus-oh /areas/dublin-oh /areas/grove-city-oh	/veneers/columbus-oh /dental-implants/dublin-oh

One "Services" page cannot rank for veneers, implants and cleanings 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

Veneers in Columbus, OH: built right

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



1. **Title tag** (the blue link in Google): service + town + your name, about 60 characters or less. `Veneers in Columbus, OH | Kinsley Dental Atelier`
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. `/veneers/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 (`veneers-columbus-oh.jpg`, never `IMG_4471.jpg`) with alt text that describes it in plain words.
7. **Local substance:** neighborhoods, what people there ask about, 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 local business sites. Good and bad versions side by side.

ELEMENT	WEAK	STRONG
Title tag	`Home | Kinsley`	`Cosmetic Dentist in Columbus, OH | Kinsley Dental Atelier`
Service title	`Services`	`Dental Implants in Dublin, OH | Kinsley`
Meta description	(left blank)	Missing a tooth? Dental implants in Dublin, planned and placed in one office. 4.9 stars. Call (614) 555-0142.
URL	`/services-2/?p=118`	`/dental-implants/dublin-oh`
Image file	`IMG_20250312.jpg`	`dental-implant-consultation-dublin-oh.jpg`
Alt text	`image1`	Dentist reviewing an implant plan with a patient in the Dublin office
Link text	Click here	See our teeth whitening 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 customer scans for: what it is, cost, how it works, area, FAQ. Many of these work best phrased as the question people actually ask: "How much do veneers 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": "Dentist",
 "name": "Kinsley Dental Atelier",
 "telephone": "+1-614-555-0142",
 "url": "https://kinsleydental.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 CUSTOMERS SEARCH FOR

Answer the question before they search for a business

Most customer searches start with a question or a price, not a business name. The practice that answers "are veneers worth it" is the one people book when they are ready.

Question pages

- Tooth sensitivity: when to see a dentist
- What to do about a chipped tooth
- Bleeding gums: causes and next steps
- Stained teeth: what whitening can fix
- Missing a tooth: your options
- What happens at a first visit
- Teeth grinding and night guards
- Dental care during pregnancy

Cost pages

- Veneer costs in your area
- Whitening: in-office vs. at-home pricing
- Implant cost and what is included
- Cleanings with and without insurance
- Payment plans and how they work

Honest ranges and what moves the price. Customers who read cost pages are close to booking.

Decision pages

- Veneers vs. bonding: how to decide
- Are dental implants worth it?
- Invisalign vs. braces for adults
- How to choose a dentist (and red flags)
- What a new patient exam should include

The seasonal calendar: publish before the season, not during it

WHEN TO PUBLISH	WHAT CUSTOMERS WILL BE SEARCHING
September	Back-to-school checkups, fall cleanings, using insurance benefits before the year ends
October	Year-end insurance benefits, whitening before the holidays, crowns and fillings to finish this year
November	Holiday whitening and veneers, last chances to use this year's benefits
December to January	New-year benefits reset, smile goals, emergency visits over the holidays
February to March	Wedding-season smile makeovers, Invisalign starts, spring cleaning appointments
April to May	Graduation and wedding whitening, kids' spring checkups
June to August	Summer checkups for kids, sports mouthguards, implant consultations

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 customer reading on a phone stops scrolling once they have what they need.

09 KNOWING WHAT WORKS

Count calls, not clicks

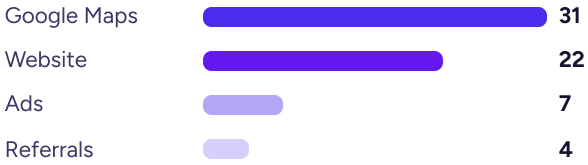
Traffic is a means. Calls and booked jobs are the result. Set these up once, then check them every month.

- [ ] **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 customer	Send the review request text. Snap two photos of your 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 set to your business type, 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
- [ ] "[Primary Service] 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 business owners we talk to would rather be serving customers 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.