

The Local SEO Field Guide for UK Businesses

How local businesses get found on Google, and win the customer

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Most of your next customers search on Google before anyone picks up the phone. Someone in your area types "emergency locksmith", "physio near me" or "best barber in town", glances at the three results in the map, and contacts one of them. If you are not in that map, you do not exist for that search. It goes to whoever is.

This guide is the honest version of how that map is won. No jargon, no agency fluff. Just what actually moves the needle for a UK business, in the order it matters.

The one thing to understand first

Google ranks local businesses on three things, weighted roughly like this:

1. **Your Google Business Profile** (the biggest single factor)
2. **Your website** (what it says about who you are, where you work, what you do)
3. **Your reputation off your own site** (reviews, mentions, consistency)

Most businesses have a half-built profile, a one-page website, and a handful of reviews they never reply to. That is why they are invisible at the moment a customer is ready to act. Fix those three, in that order, and the enquiries come.

Pillar 1: Your Google Business Profile

This is the listing that shows up in the map with your name, reviews and a call button. It is free, and it is the highest-leverage thing you own. Yet most businesses set it up once and forget it.

What a strong profile actually needs:

- **The right primary category.** "Locksmith", not "Security service". "Physiotherapist", not "Health service". Google matches your category to the search. Get this wrong and you rank for nothing.
- **Every service listed**, each with a short description using the words people actually search ("emergency lockout", "sports massage", "uPVC door repair").
- **Accurate hours**, including 24/7 if you cover emergencies. The hours tell Google when to show you.
- **Real photos** of real work, your premises, your team. Profiles with photos get far more enquiries than profiles without.
- **Every review replied to.** Not just the good ones. A reply to a one-star review, handled calmly, often converts the next reader better than the five-stars do.
- **Regular posts.** A short update with a call button, every week or two, signals to Google that the business is active.

The single biggest mistake here is treating the profile as "done". It is a living thing. The businesses who win keep it fed.

Pillar 2: Your website

Your website's job is to tell Google, clearly and in code, who you are, where you work, and what you do. Most small business websites do this badly because they were built once, cheaply, to "have a website".

What matters:

- **A page for every area you cover.** This is the big one. Most businesses have a single page trying to rank for every town in the service area. Google cannot tell which area you actually cover, so you rank for none of them. A unique page per area, with genuinely local content on each, lets Google rank you in each one separately. This alone can transform a business's visibility.
- **A page for every priority service.** "Emergency callout" and "planned installation" are different searches with different intent. One page cannot rank for both. Separate them.
- **Structured data (schema).** This is code that spells out your business type, service area and hours in a format Google reads directly. Most sites do not have it. With it, Google stops guessing.
- **Speed and mobile.** Your customer is on a phone, often in a hurry. A slow page loses them before it loads.

The duplicate-content trap kills more small business sites than anything else: ten near identical "we cover [area]" pages with the name swapped. Google treats that as spam. Each page has to earn its place with something real and local.

Pillar 3: Your reputation off your own site

This is the slow-compounding pillar, and it is the one that separates the businesses who rank for years from the ones who slip.

- **Consistent name, address and phone** everywhere you appear online. One listing with an old number drags the whole set down. Google reads inconsistency as a trust problem.
- **A steady flow of new reviews.** Not a burst, then nothing. A few genuine reviews every month, replied to, tells Google the business is alive and trusted.
- **Mentions on the directories that matter** for your sector. Quality over quantity. Ten relevant listings beat a hundred junk ones.

You cannot fake this, and you cannot rush it. That is exactly why it works: it is the signal that is hardest for a competitor to copy.

The realistic timeline (so you are not disappointed)

Local SEO compounds. It does not switch on overnight, and anyone who promises page one in a week is lying.

- **Google Business Profile changes** show in the map within days to two weeks.
- **New area pages** re-index in two to six weeks.
- **Rankings climb** over one to three months, then keep climbing.
- **Month two and three** typically show stronger gains than month one, because the foundation laid in month one is compounding.

The shape is a hockey stick, not a straight line. The work in the first 30 days is the foundation; the enquiries build from there.

The five mistakes that keep businesses invisible

1. **A half-built Google Business Profile.** The free, highest-leverage asset, left at 40 percent complete.
 2. **One website page for the whole service area.** Google cannot rank you in ten areas from one page.
 3. **No schema.** The code that tells Google who and where you are, simply missing.
 4. **Ignoring reviews,** good and bad. Each unreplied review is a missed trust signal.
 5. **Treating it as a one-off.** Local SEO is a habit, not a project. The businesses who win keep feeding it.
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A real example

Mr Unlocks, a mobile auto locksmith covering South East London and Kent, was invisible for most of the towns he actually served. In the first 30 days of a proper local SEO foundation, the work was: a full Google Business Profile rebuild, the right schema deployed across the site, 28 pages re-optimised, and 18 unique town pages written so each town could rank on its own.

The owner's words, first week live: he was fielding calls from postcodes he had never quoted before.

That is what a foundation does. It does not invent demand. It puts you in front of the demand that was already there, searching, and contacting someone else.

What to do next

If you want to do this yourself, work the three pillars in order: profile first, then the area and service pages, then the reputation. Be patient through the first month. It compounds.

If you would rather have it done properly, in 30 days, by someone who does only this, that is what I do. I rebuild the profile, deploy the schema, write the area pages, and report the rankings to you every month. It is priced per business, because the right scope depends on where you stand today, and the first month is refund-backed.

Book a 15-minute call and I will tell you, straight, what your situation needs: consentleads.uk, or reply to the email this came with.

No pressure, no hard sell. Just an honest read on where you are and what would move it.

Sal, Consent Leads. Local and enterprise SEO for UK businesses. Operated from the United Kingdom.
