

# The Local SEO Blueprint

How service businesses on the Georgian Bay shoreline win the Map Pack in 2026

The 7 levers that move rankings — and the 7 things you should never waste a minute on.

A free guide.

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## Why I wrote this

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I've audited dozens of trade and service businesses across Collingwood, Blue Mountain, Wasaga Beach, Thornbury, and Meaford. And the same pattern shows up in nearly every one:

The owner is doing **two or three** of the right things. They've claimed their Google Business Profile. They're collecting reviews. They have a website.

And they're losing to a competitor who's doing **seven or eight** of the right things — and ignoring everything else.

This guide is the seven things. The levers that actually move you up the Map Pack and the local results. And — just as importantly — the things you should ignore, because they either don't work anymore or they actively hurt you.

No retainer required. No sales pitch. Just the playbook.

## What you'll get out of this

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A printable checklist of:

- The **3 GBP changes** most owners haven't made
- The **review system** that compounds to "nearly impossible to outrank"
- The **website fundamentals** that decide whether Google trusts you
- The **backlink plays** that still work in 2026 (and the ones that don't)
- The **new lead source** almost nobody is building yet — until they read this

If you do half of these, you'll move. If you do all of them and stay consistent for 90 days, you'll dominate.

## Lever 1 — Your GBP name is a ranking signal

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If your business is called "Smith & Sons" and you do roofing, your Google Business Profile should say "**Smith & Sons Roofing**" — and there should be a DBA on file matching that name.

Why this matters: the GBP name field is one of the strongest single ranking signals in local search. Businesses with the primary service in the name have a massive head start on every map-pack query for that service.

**This week:**

1. Look at your GBP name today.
2. If your primary service isn't in it, file a DBA (about \$80 in Ontario, takes one business day).
3. Update your GBP name to match. *Warning: this re-triggers Google verification for 2–7 days. Don't do it in your busiest week.*

The rule of thumb: if a stranger reads your GBP name and can't guess what you do, you're leaving rank on the table.

## Lever 2 — Set your primary category to your highest-ticket service

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Your **primary** GBP category is the one Google weights hardest. Most owners pick the *broadest* category to “show up for more searches.” Pick the **highest-margin** one instead.

A roofer should set primary to “Roofing Contractor” — not “Construction Company.” A plumber should set primary to “Plumber” — not “Plumbing Service.” A landscaper should set primary to the service that drives the biggest invoices, not the most enquiries.

**Then fill every secondary category that legitimately applies.** Each one opens you up to a new set of searches. Most owners stop at one. That's the easy edge.

## Lever 3 — Build a system that produces 20+ new reviews a month

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This is the engine. Without it, every other lever caps out.

The system has three parts:

1. **An automated trigger.** When a job is marked complete, the customer gets an SMS within an hour asking for a review. Not three days later — they've moved on. Not on a business card they'll throw out.
2. **A script for your techs.** Right before they leave the job, every tech says some version of:

*“If you have a second, a review really helps us out. Just mentioning the specific work and the town goes a long way.”*

That second sentence is the most undervalued advice in local SEO. Compare:

What customers usually write	What you actually want
<i>"Great job, thanks!"</i>	<i>"Great furnace replacement in Wasaga Beach — Mike showed up exactly when he said he would."</i>

The second one is essentially free anchor text for the exact map-pack query you're trying to win.

**3. A response, within 24 hours, to every single review.** Not because review responses are a huge direct ranking factor. Because Google reads them as an "active operator" signal — and your future customers read them as a "this is who I'm hiring" signal.

**The goal:** 500+ total reviews, 4.8★ or higher, with steady recent velocity. That combination is nearly impossible to outrank in the Map Pack.

## Lever 4 — Make your Name, Address, and Phone identical everywhere

The "NAP" rule. Your business Name, Address, and Phone number need to be **byte-for-byte identical** on every listing you have anywhere on the internet.

One Yelp listing with an old phone number. One BBB listing with a slightly different suite notation. That's all it takes for Google to start questioning whether you're a real, established business.

**Your one-hour cleanup pass:**

1. Pick one canonical format. Write it down. ( **123 Main St, Suite 4** not **123 Main Street #4 . (705) 555-1234** not **705.555.1234 .** )
2. Update GBP, Bing Places, Apple Maps, Yelp, Yellowpages.ca, Facebook, BBB, your website, your email signature.
3. Then expand to industry directories (HomeStars, Houzz, Angi for home services; TripAdvisor for hospitality; the relevant one for your trade).
4. Last: regional. Chambers of commerce, tourism boards, BIAs. These punch above their weight on the Georgian Bay shoreline because most competitors skip them.

If you only do **one** thing from this guide — fix your NAP. Inconsistent listings actively pull rankings down. Cleaning them up doesn't take new content or new spend. Just one focused hour.

## Lever 5 — Your homepage isn't a location page

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Most owners point their GBP at their homepage. Their homepage talks about their brand. It doesn't talk about *the city the customer is searching from*.

The fix: a **dedicated page for each city you serve**, and the GBP points at that page.

A page that earns its rank has:

- Real content about that specific area — not template-swap text where you replaced "Collingwood" with "Wasaga Beach"
- Specific neighborhoods mentioned by name (Mountain Springs, Cranberry, Pretty River Valley)
- **Photos from actual jobs you did in that city**
- Reviews that mention the city, quoted on the page
- An embedded map with driving directions
- LocalBusiness schema with `areaServed` set correctly

Google can tell template-swap pages from real ones in seconds. The cheap version of this hurts you. The real version of this is the single biggest content win in local SEO.

## Lever 6 — Speed and structure beat pretty

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Your website doesn't need to look like a design-award winner. It needs to be **clean, fast, and structured so Google can read it**.

Three things to check this week:

- 1. Mobile page speed.** Go to `pagespeed.web.dev`, enter your homepage, look at the **mobile** score. If it's under 90, you have a problem. Most contractor sites land in the 30s and 40s — bloated hero images, half a dozen plugins, autoplay video backgrounds. Strip them.
- 2. LocalBusiness schema on every page.** This is structured data that tells Google exactly what your business is, where you are, what you offer, and what areas you serve. Without it, Google has to guess. With it, Google knows. (If your developer doesn't know what this means, you have the wrong developer for a local SEO build.)
- 3. Title tags and headings written with the words customers actually type.** Not what *you* think they search. What the **data** says they search. Google Search Console will show you the exact queries already driving impressions to your site — that's your ground truth.

# Lever 7 — The new lead source nobody is building yet

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This is the one I'd act on **before your competitors hear about it**.

AI search — ChatGPT, Claude, Perplexity, Google's AI Overviews — is starting to drive a real share of "best [X] in [city]" queries. Customers ask the AI; the AI gives one or two recommendations.

The businesses that show up in those AI answers are getting leads their competitors don't even know exist.

Two things you can do today:

**1. Make sure AI crawlers can read your site.** Your `robots.txt` should explicitly allow GPTBot, ClaudeBot, ChatGPT-User, and PerplexityBot. Many contractor sites accidentally block them.

**2. Get on Reddit, lightly.** AI assistants weight Reddit heavily. A real, verified profile that occasionally answers questions in your local subreddit or trade subreddit will show up in AI answers far more often than a polished marketing site.

You don't need a Reddit content strategy. You need to **exist** on Reddit with your real business name attached, providing the occasional useful answer.

The window on this is open right now because almost no local business is doing it. In 12 months, it'll be table stakes.

## What NOT to waste a single minute on

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The flip side of the playbook. These are the tactics that either do nothing or actively hurt you. If anyone is trying to sell you on them, walk away.

**Blogging "what is water damage" or "5 signs you need a new roof."** Nobody searching that is hiring you tomorrow. That's content marketing for billion-dollar brands. It's not lead generation for a local business trying to book jobs.

**Mass directory submissions to "500 sites."** That's a 2012 tactic. It doesn't work, and it can actively hurt your trust signals.

**PBN links and any link package off a Fiverr-style marketplace.** One Google penalty wipes years of work. Not worth it.

**Copy-paste city pages with just the city name swapped.** Google detects them in seconds and downranks them. Often worse than not having city pages at all.

**Fancy designs that destroy mobile speed.** Mobile-first means speed loss = rank loss. The award-winning portfolio site with a 4-second LCP is a ranking disaster.

**Generic AI chatbots that don't actually book a single appointment.** They intercept the call-to-call action. Unless conversion data proves they lift bookings — and it almost never does for trades — they're conversion killers, not conversion drivers.

**Service-area Google profiles in markets where every competitor has a physical office.** You'll never crack the top 3. The realistic move is to get an actual address in that market (even a coworking address counts) before doubling SEO spend.

## Working together

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This guide is the framework. It's everything I'd start with if you hired me to do a 90-day local SEO engagement.

If you'd like me to actually run the playbook on your business — audit where you sit today, lock the canonical NAP, ship the location pages, set up the review automation, and report back monthly — that's what Georgian Bay SEO does.

Three things you can do today, in increasing order of commitment:

**Email me for a free 15-minute audit.** Tell me your town and your trade. I'll show you where you're losing customers in Google search right now, and what it would take to fix it. No deck, no pitch.

Email: [lasse@georgianbayseo.ca](mailto:lasse@georgianbayseo.ca) Web: [georgianbayseo.ca](http://georgianbayseo.ca) Phone: [+1 705-539-0398](tel:+17055390398)

**Read the trade-specific GBP audit** for your category at [georgianbayseo.ca](http://georgianbayseo.ca) (plumber, electrician, HVAC, roofer, contractor, landscaper, chalet rental).

**Just do the work yourself** — this guide has everything you need. Print it. Tick the levers off one by one. If you do half of them, you'll move. If you stay consistent for 90 days, you'll dominate.

Either way, the playbook works.

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*Lasse Pettersen, Georgian Bay SEO — Collingwood, Ontario. Built in the Georgian Bay corridor for the businesses that live and die on local search.*