

The 2026 Local SEO Insights Report

For US Service Businesses in Dental, Law, Restoration, Moving, and Carpet Cleaning

Based on 19 verified industry studies and patterns from 25+ active US client accounts.

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LOCAL SEARCH SIGNALS

58.5%

searches end with no click



VISIBILITY MOVEMENT

15.69%

AI Overview queries

97%

Consumers read reviews

5

Industries studied

DENTAL LAW RESTORATION
MOVING CARPET CLEANING



01

05

The Big Picture

- The 5 numbers that explain local search
- What this report covers
- How we built this report
- The 5 big shifts

02

26

Your Industry

- Dental practices
- Law firms
- Restoration contractors
- Moving companies
- Carpet cleaning businesses

03

50

Patterns Actions and Honesty

- Cross industry patterns
- The 5 point self audit
- What surprised us
- Why Pexnet focuses

04

63

Closing Resources

- Questions owners ask
- Free local SEO check
- The 19 sources
- Closing note

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Five numbers that define 2026 local search visibility

The report opens with these metrics because they explain where attention and action now matter most.

58.5%

US Google searches ending without a click

15.69%

Google queries showing AI Overviews

97%

Consumers reading local business reviews

19%

Consumers expecting a same day response

3x to 5x

Qualified inquiries from specific pages

WHAT THE NUMBERS SHOW

Customers increasingly choose service businesses inside Google results and review surfaces. Specific landing pages and current trust signals now carry more weight than generic visibility alone.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Foreword: Why we wrote this

If you run a dental practice, law firm, restoration company, moving business, or carpet cleaning service in the US, the way customers find you has changed faster in the last 12 months than at any point in the previous five years.

Customers used to type a search, click a website, and call. That's not the journey anymore. Now they see your business inside Google's own results without clicking. They read AI generated summaries that answer their question before they ever reach a website.

They check reviews from the last 30 days, not your lifetime review count. They tap a phone number from a Google Business Profile and never visit your homepage at all.

Most agencies are still selling SEO playbooks built for 2022. The tactics that worked then are quietly hurting service businesses now. Generic service pages are losing to specific landing pages by 3x to 5x in our client data.

Keyword in business name (a tactic some agencies still teach) is now a penalty risk. The Google Business Profile service area setting that some agencies obsess over has zero ranking impact, confirmed by controlled testing.

We built this report because owners deserve to see what's actually working in 2026, not what worked 3 years ago. The full document is roughly 15,000 words because the research is layered, and shortcuts wouldn't do justice to the businesses making decisions on the basis of it.

But the report is also built to be skimmable. Every section opens with a plain English summary. Every stat is followed by what it means for your business. Every strategy section ends with a "this quarter" action plan you can hand to your team or run yourself.

The 5 point self audit at the end of the report is something you can complete in 30 to 45 minutes on a Sunday afternoon.

If you only have 15 minutes right now, read Section 1 (the 5 numbers) and Section 11 (the self audit). If you have an hour, read the full Section 4 (the 5 shifts) plus your industry section.

If you have a weekend, read it cover to cover and run the audit on your business while the patterns are fresh.

Let's get started.

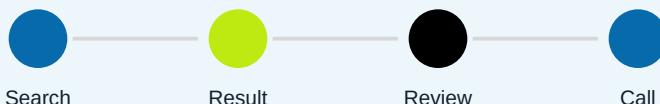
WHY THIS MATTERS

2026

Local search is now a results page journey



THE NEW CUSTOMER JOURNEY



SECTION PROGRESS



PART 01

The Big Picture

Understand the numbers and shifts changing local search.

58.5%

Searches ending without
a click

Inside this part

- The 5 numbers
- Who this is for
- Methodology
- The 5 big shifts

KEY NUMBERS

1 The 5 numbers that explain 2026 local search

Before we get into strategy, here are the 5 stats that explain why 2026 local search looks nothing like 2024. If you understand these 5 numbers, you understand 80% of what's changed.

Finding 1: 58.5% of US Google searches end without a click

The data: SparkToro's 2024 Zero Click Study analyzed clickstream data from the Datos panel and found that more than half of US Google searches never send the user to a website. For every 1,000 US Google searches, only about 360 actually reach the open web.

Almost 30% of the remaining searches end inside Google's own ecosystem (YouTube, Maps, Flights, Hotels, Google Ads).

What this actually means for you: Ranking #1 in Google used to mean someone would click your website. Now they might never click anyone's website. The answer they need (your phone number, your hours, your reviews, your address) appears inside the Google search result itself.

If your business is not visible in the Map Pack, your Google Business Profile, or an AI Overview, the customer may never know you exist.

This is the single biggest reason "rank #1" is no longer the right goal. The right goal is "show up everywhere Google shows you." That includes the Map Pack, the Knowledge Panel, AI Overviews, and the organic blue links. Each one is a different visibility channel, and each one has different optimization rules.

Finding 2: AI Overviews now appear on 15.69% of Google queries

The data: Semrush analyzed 10 million+ keywords in November 2025 and found AI Overviews showing on 15.69% of queries. That's roughly 1 in 6 searches. The number started at 6.49% in January 2025, peaked at 24.61% in July 2025, then settled around 16% by November.

The bigger story is the type of queries: commercial queries with AI Overviews jumped from 8.15% to 18.57% over the same period.

KEY NUMBERS

58.5%

US Google searches with no website click

58.5% No click

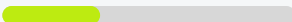
15.69% AI Overview

97% Read reviews

19% Same day reply

3x to 5x Specific pages

SECTION PROGRESS



KEY NUMBERS

1 The 5 numbers that explain 2026 local search

What this actually means for you: AI Overviews have moved past informational queries ("what is mold") and into commercial and transactional ones ("emergency dentist," "movers near me," "water damage repair"). These are the searches that actually drive your business.

If you're not structured to be cited inside an AI Overview, you're losing visibility on the queries that matter most.

There's a silver lining: Semrush data shows AI search users convert 4.4x better than organic search visitors. So if you get cited inside an AI Overview, the traffic you do get is significantly more valuable than the traffic you're losing.

Finding 3: 97% of consumers read reviews, and 89% expect a business response

The data: BrightLocal's 2026 Local Consumer Review Survey polled 1,002 US adults. The results: 97% of consumers read reviews for local businesses. 41% always read reviews when browsing. 89% expect business owners to respond to reviews. 50% are actively put off by templated or generic responses.

What this actually means for you: Reviews are no longer the last decision factor. They're the first one. Customers read reviews before they read your website. They check whether you respond to reviews, and they judge you on the quality of those responses.

A 5 second "thanks for the review!" reply now does more damage than no reply at all, because it signals you don't care enough to write a real response.

Finding 4: 19% of consumers now expect same day responses, up from 6% in 2025

The data: Same BrightLocal 2026 survey. 19% of US consumers now expect business owners to respond to their review within the same day. That's up from 6% just one year earlier. A 3x jump in 12 months.

What this actually means for you: The bar for response speed moved faster than any other metric in local search this year. A 48 hour response that used to be considered "good service" is now considered "slow." The businesses winning are responding to reviews within 4 to 6 hours,

KEY NUMBERS

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SECTION PROGRESS



KEY NUMBERS

1 The 5 numbers that explain 2026 local search

sometimes faster. And the businesses still using templated responses are losing on speed and quality simultaneously.

Finding 5: Specific pages drive 3x to 5x more qualified inquiries than generic pages

The data: Across our 25+ US client accounts in dental, law, restoration, moving, and carpet cleaning, we consistently see specific service or location pages outperform generic catch all pages by significant margins. The pattern repeats across all 5 industries.

What this actually means for you: A "carpet cleaning services" page rarely outperforms a dedicated "upholstery cleaning Houston" page. A generic "moving services" page rarely outperforms a "Brooklyn to Manhattan movers" page. A "family dentist" page rarely outperforms a "Invisalign Leander TX" page. The pattern is the same regardless of which of our 5 industries you're in.

This is the single most actionable finding in the report. If you have one generic "services" page covering all your top revenue services, you're leaving most of your potential traffic on the table.

How these 5 findings connect

Read together, these 5 numbers tell a single story:

The customer journey now happens mostly inside Google's own results (Finding 1). Half of those results increasingly include AI generated summaries (Finding 2). Reviews are the first thing customers check, and they expect a real response within the same day (Findings 3 and 4).

When customers do click through to a website, they're picking the specific page that matches their exact intent, not the generic overview (Finding 5).

The rest of this report breaks down how to win in this new environment, industry by industry.

KEY NUMBERS

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SECTION PROGRESS



REPORT SCOPE

2 What this report covers and who it's for

Most SEO trend reports cover everything and apply to nothing. They're written for general audiences and end up too generic to use. This one is different. We built it for owners of 5 specific types of service businesses, using data from 19 verified studies and 25+ active US client accounts.

If you don't run one of these 5 types of businesses, this report still has useful patterns in it. But the specific tactics and case studies are tied to the industries we actually work in.

The 5 industries we focused on

We work with these 5 niches exclusively at Pexnet. Not because we couldn't take other industries, but because depth beats breadth. Here's what each one looks like:

Dental practices. High value treatments, competitive local markets, and insurance complexity. Patients search differently for "emergency dentist" than for "Invisalign consultation." They have different fears, different timelines, and different decision criteria. Your SEO needs to handle all of these patient types simultaneously, on the same website, without confusing Google or the patient.

Law firms. Regulatory considerations, practice area specificity, and trust heavy purchase decisions. Clients hire lawyers after multiple research touchpoints, not on the first click. A personal injury client researches very differently from a family law client, even when both happen to find your firm.

Your SEO has to recognize that each practice area is essentially its own business with its own customer.

Restoration contractors. Emergency driven, time sensitive, weather dependent demand. When someone searches "24 hour water damage," they're picking the first credible result. There's no second chance. The conversion window is measured in minutes, not days. Your SEO has to win the visibility race before the homeowner has time to compare 3 options.

REPORT SCOPE

5

Service business industries studied

☒ Dental

☐ Law

☒ Restoration

☐ Moving

☒ Carpet cleaning

SECTION PROGRESS



REPORT SCOPE

2 What this report covers and who it's for

Moving companies. Route specific searches, high anxiety purchase decisions, and constant pressure from national broker websites with massive ad budgets. Companies like Moving.com, MoversCorp, and Allied Van Lines flood the top of the search results, often without owning trucks. Independent movers need a completely different strategy to win.

Carpet cleaning businesses. Review driven decisions, service type variety, and the franchise versus independent dynamic that shapes every local market. Stanley Steemer and Chem Dry dominate the major directories because corporate runs the listings. Small independents need to compete on different signals.

The common thread: all 5 are hands on service businesses with local customer bases. They depend on phone calls, not online sales. They serve a defined geographic area. They live and die by local search visibility. The patterns we found apply across all 5 industries, even when the specific tactics differ.

The 3 questions we wanted to answer

We didn't set out to write another generic "Top 10 SEO Trends" article. We had 3 specific questions in mind from the start:

Question 1: What actually changed in local search for US service businesses between 2024 and 2026? Answered in Section 4 (the 5 big shifts).

Question 2: Within our 5 industries, what's working in 2026 and what isn't? Answered in Sections 5 through 9 (the industry specific deep dives).

Question 3: What should an owner actually do this quarter to match these shifts? Answered in Section 11 (the 5 point self audit).

3 questions. 3 clear answers. No filler in between.

Who this report is for

This report is for you if:

REPORT SCOPE

5

Service business industries studied

☒ Dental

☐ Law

☒ Restoration

☐ Moving

☒ Carpet cleaning

SECTION PROGRESS



REPORT SCOPE

2 What this report covers and who it's for

- You own or lead marketing at a US based dental practice, law firm, restoration company, moving company, or carpet cleaning business
- You've worked with an SEO agency before and want to understand what's changed
- You're considering hiring an agency and want to know what good work looks like in 2026
- You're running SEO in house and want to benchmark your approach against industry research

research

- You're a marketing manager at a multi location service business in one of our 5 niches

This report is not for you if:

- You run a B2B SaaS, ecommerce, or content site (our findings won't transfer)
- You're outside the US (international local search behavior is different)
- You're looking for a beginner's guide to SEO (this assumes basic familiarity)
- You want guaranteed ranking promises (we don't offer those, and you should be suspicious of agencies that do)

How to read this report

If you're a busy owner, read in this order: Section 1 (the 5 numbers), your industry section (5, 6, 7, 8, or 9), and Section 11 (the self audit). That's 30 to 40 minutes of reading and gives you 80% of the value.

If you have an hour, add Section 4 (the 5 shifts) and Section 10 (cross industry patterns).

If you want the full picture, read it cover to cover. The report is structured so each section builds on the one before it.

REPORT SCOPE

5

Service business industries studied

☒ Dental

☐ Law

☒ Restoration

☐ Moving

☒ Carpet cleaning

SECTION PROGRESS



METHOD

3 How we built this report

Most SEO reports cite a few stats and call it research. We took a different route. Three layers of data, cross checked against each other, with full honesty about what we did and didn't do. Here's the full breakdown.

Layer 1: 19 industry studies we reviewed

We grouped our sources into 3 tiers based on how much weight we gave each one. The tiers exist because not all SEO research is created equal. A controlled experiment by a respected research company is more reliable than a recap article quoting a recap of an experiment.

Tier 1: Primary research sources. These are studies with original data collection, not summaries of other people's work. We weighted these heaviest.

- SparkToro 2024 Zero Click Study by Rand Fishkin, using Datas clickstream data. This

study is the most rigorous look at where Google searches actually go in 2024 and 2025.

- Semrush AI Overviews Study (November 2025), analyzing 10 million+ keywords. This

is the most current data we found on AI Overview prevalence across query types.

- Whitespark 2026 Local Search Ranking Factors, surveying 47 local SEO experts.

Whitespark has run this survey for years, and the year over year comparison shows what's rising and falling in importance.

- BrightLocal Local Consumer Review Survey 2026, polling 1,002 US adults. This is

the most current consumer side data on how Americans actually use reviews to choose local businesses.

Tier 2: Google's own primary sources. When Google publishes something officially, it carries more weight than a third party interpretation. We used these to verify or challenge what the Tier 1 studies said.

- Google Search Central documentation on Local Business structured data

METHOD

3

Research layers used for validation

- Industry studies
- Public datasets
- Client patterns

SECTION PROGRESS

METHOD

3 How we built this report

- Google Search Central Blog post on the E E A T update
- Google Search Central Blog post on the Quality Rater Guidelines update
- Think with Google Local Search Statistics
- Google Local Services Ads official page

Tier 3: Industry validation sources. These reinforced or challenged the Tier 1 studies. They didn't carry as much independent weight, but they were useful for triangulation.

- Search Engine Land coverage on AI Overviews
- Pew Research Center study on AI summary click behavior
- Whitespark Service Areas Impact Test 2024 (a controlled experiment)
- Whitespark 7 Local Search Ranking Factors article
- BrightLocal Consumer Search Behavior research
- Semrush AI Search Optimization 2026
- Semrush AI Search Trends 2026
- Backlinko Local SEO Statistics
- Statista US Mobile Search Market Share data
- HubSpot Marketing Statistics 2026

Every source is linked in Section 16 at the end of this report, so you can verify any number yourself.

Layer 2: Public datasets we cross checked

Reading studies wasn't enough. Studies summarize data. Summaries can be wrong, biased, or out of date. So we pulled raw public data and ran our own checks on the headline numbers.

Google Trends. We verified "near me" search trends for all 5 of our industries in the US over the 2024 to 2026 period. We looked at year over year growth, seasonal patterns, and regional differences for dental, water damage, moving, carpet cleaning, and attorney type queries. We confirmed the trends the Tier 1 sources reported.

METHOD

3

Research layers used for validation



Industry studies

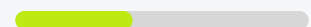


Public datasets



Client patterns

SECTION PROGRESS



METHOD

3 How we built this report

Think with Google datasets. We pulled numbers directly from Google's own consumer insights instead of relying on third party write ups. That's where the 46% local intent figure, the "4 in 5 consumers use search for local info" stat, and the 76% same day visit number came from.

Going to the source means we caught a few places where third party summaries had subtly mis stated the original numbers.

Statista mobile and consumer data. We confirmed US specific mobile market share and search behavior patterns. The 95%+ Google US mobile market share number checked out. We also verified mobile vs. desktop usage patterns relevant to local search.

Datos State of Search reports. SparkToro's data partner Datos publishes detailed panel reports. We read the full reports, not just the summaries. That's how we tracked searches per searcher, click destination analysis, and AI tool adoption rates over time.

Honest scope note: We don't have access to Google's internal data or private clickstream panels. Everything we used is publicly available. If you want to repeat our checks yourself, you can.

Layer 3: Patterns from our own US client work

This is where most SEO reports stop. They cite the research, skip the field testing, and call it a day. We didn't.

What we tracked across 25+ US clients from 2024 to 2026:

- Google Business Profile interactions: calls, direction requests, website clicks, and photo views, tracked monthly
- Organic traffic by page type, looking at which pages grew and which stayed flat
- Local Pack rankings on industry specific queries, tracked monthly
- Review velocity and response rate, including new reviews per month, response time,

METHOD

3

Research layers used for validation



Industry studies



Public datasets



Client patterns

SECTION PROGRESS



METHOD

3 How we built this report

and response rate

How we compared findings to client data. For each finding in our research, we asked 3 questions:

1. What are we seeing in our own client work that matches or contradicts this finding?
2. Is the pattern consistent across all 5 industries, or specific to one or two?
3. Where it doesn't match, what's the likely reason?

A few real examples of how this played out:

When BrightLocal said 89% of consumers expect business responses to reviews, our carpet cleaning clients with 90%+ response rates were the ones consistently outperforming in the Map Pack. That's a clean match between research and field experience.

When Whitespark ranked GBP signals as the #1 local ranking factor, we saw it confirmed across most industries. But for restoration, emergency website content carried nearly equal weight to GBP. That's a partial match worth flagging, and we cover it in detail in the restoration section.

When industry data said reviews drive everything for service businesses, our moving company clients told a different story. Route specific website content was driving more qualified inquiries than review velocity was. That's a divergence, and we report it honestly in the moving section.

How confident are we in each finding?

We use 3 confidence tags throughout this report:

- High confidence: research and client data both match (example: GBP completeness

impact on Local Pack rankings)

- Medium confidence: research is strong, client data is partial (example: AI Overview

citation patterns by content structure)

METHOD

3

Research layers used for validation



Industry studies



Public datasets



Client patterns

SECTION PROGRESS



METHOD

3 How we built this report

- Still testing: pattern is emerging, but we don't have enough data points yet (example:

industry by industry AI Overview citation patterns)

When you see a finding tagged "still testing," treat it as directional. We're sharing it because we think it's useful, but we're being honest that we don't have enough data to call it definitive yet.

Sample size disclosure. We have a strong sample for dental, law firm, restoration, and carpet cleaning clients. Our moving company sample is smaller, and we flag this throughout the moving section. Don't read the moving observations as the same level of confidence as the others.

What this report is not

Five things we want to be upfront about, so nobody mis uses this research.

1. This is not peer reviewed academic research. We didn't run controlled experiments, statistical significance tests, or primary data collection at scale. We synthesized publicly available data with field observations from our own client work.
2. This is not universal industry truth. Everything here applies to our 5 industries, in the US, in the 2024 to 2026 period. Other countries, other industries, other timeframes may look different.
3. This is not paid promotional content. We have no partnership, sponsorship, or affiliate relationship with SparkToro, Semrush, BrightLocal, Whitespark, or any other source we cite. Source selection is neutral.
4. This is not a guarantee. Past patterns don't promise future results. Google's algorithm changes constantly. Treat these recommendations as a starting point, not a copy paste solution.
5. This is not the complete picture. We didn't go deep on franchise specific challenges or multi location enterprise SEO. AI search is evolving fast, so we update this report quarterly. If you spot something we missed, tell us. We'll fix it in the next version.

METHOD

3

Research layers used for validation



Industry studies



Public datasets



Client patterns

SECTION PROGRESS



FIVE SHIFTS

4 The 5 big shifts reshaping local search

Between 2024 and 2026, local search changed in ways most service business owners are still catching up to. We pulled 5 specific shifts from the research and our own client work. Each one comes with what's happening, what it means for you, what we're seeing inside our client accounts, and what to do this quarter.

Shift 1: Most Google searches end without a click

What's happening. SparkToro's 2024 Zero Click Study, using clickstream data from the Datos panel, found that 58.5% of US Google searches end without a click. For every 1,000 US searches, only about 360 actually send the user to the open web. Almost 30% of the remaining clicks stay inside Google's own ecosystem (YouTube, Maps, Flights, Hotels, Google Ads).

Pew Research backed this up in July 2025 with their own complementary finding: users are half as likely to click on a link when an AI summary appears in their search results, and 10% more likely to end the browsing session entirely after seeing the summary.

What it means for your service business. Organic website traffic alone isn't doing the job anymore. Calls and bookings are coming from your GBP listing, AI Overviews, and Knowledge Panel directly, often without the customer ever visiting your website. The Google search result itself is now the storefront.

"Rank #1" used to be the goal. Today it matters less than showing up everywhere Google shows you. Each Google surface is a separate visibility channel:

- The Map Pack (top 3 local results)
- The Knowledge Panel (the box on the right side of desktop results)
- The AI Overview (the AI generated summary above traditional results)
- The organic blue links (still important, but no longer the only game)

Here's the part most agencies miss: zero click visibility is not zero value. When a customer sees your business 4 times across Google without clicking, your brand builds. They remember the name. They search you directly later. That branded search converts at the highest rate of any traffic source.

What we see in our US clients. The pattern holds across all 5 of our industries, but it shows up differently in each:

- Dental practices: phone calls from GBP listings consistently come in at higher volume

than calls from organic website traffic. Patients are tapping the call button directly from search results without ever clicking the practice's website.

- Restoration clients: Local Pack plus GBP direct calls dominate, because emergency

FIVE SHIFTS

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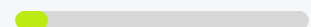
Forces reshaping local visibility

58.5%

No click

- ☒ No click
- ☐ AI Overview
- ☐ Primary asset
- ☐ Near me visits
- ☐ Reviews

SECTION PROGRESS



FIVE SHIFTS

4 The 5 big shifts reshaping local search

callers don't browse websites. They tap the call button on the first credible result. Speed of contact, not depth of research, decides the call.

- Carpet cleaning: most new customer contacts come from GBP. Website form fills are a

smaller channel than they were in 2022.

- Law firms: practice area pages on the website still drive direct consultation requests,

but only when those pages are deep and specific. Generic firm homepages don't drive new client acquisition the way they used to.

What to do this quarter. Treat your GBP as your primary business asset, not your website. The website becomes the conversion layer for the customers who do click through.

Concretely:

- Make Local Pack ranking and GBP completeness your top 2 priorities for the next 90

days.

- Optimize your website for conversion when customers do land there: clear CTAs, trust

signals, mobile speed under 3 seconds.

- Track brand mentions across the web, since zero click visibility builds branded search

over time.

If you only have time for one move this month: audit your GBP for 95%+ field completion. That single move tends to produce measurable Local Pack movement within 60 to 90 days for most of our clients. No content writing, no link building. Just complete the profile properly.

Sources: SparkToro 2024 Zero Click Search Study, Pew Research Center, Search Engine Land

Shift 2: AI Overviews show up on 1 in 6 searches

What's happening. Semrush analyzed 10 million+ keywords in November 2025 and found AI Overviews appearing in 15.69% of queries. That's roughly 1 in 6 Google searches. The number started at 6.49% in January 2025, peaked at 24.61% in July 2025, then settled around 16% by November.

The bigger story is where AI Overviews are showing up. Commercial queries with AI Overviews jumped from 8.15% to 18.57% between January and November 2025. Navigational queries with AI Overviews grew from 0.74% to 10.33% in the same period.

FIVE SHIFTS

5

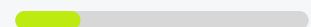
Forces reshaping local visibility

15.69%

AI Overview

- ☐ No click
- ☒ AI Overview
- ☐ Primary asset
- ☐ Near me visits
- ☐ Reviews

SECTION PROGRESS



FIVE SHIFTS

4 The 5 big shifts reshaping local search

BrightLocal's 2026 data adds another layer: 45% of consumers now use AI tools like ChatGPT for local recommendations, up from just 6% the year before. AI search is no longer a future channel. It's a current channel.

What it means for your service business. AI Overviews have moved past informational queries and into commercial and transactional ones. The searches that actually drive your business ("dentist near me," "emergency water damage Dallas," "best movers in Houston") are exactly where AI Overviews now appear most often.

Here's what most agencies won't tell you: ranking #1 in traditional Google results means a lot less when an AI Overview is sitting above you, answering the question before the user ever sees the blue links.

The good news? Semrush data shows AI search users convert 4.4x better than organic search visitors. So if you get cited inside an AI Overview, the traffic you do get is significantly more valuable than the traffic you're losing. The challenge is structuring your content so AI tools actually cite you, not just your competitors.

What we see in our US clients. The citation patterns are clear once you start watching them carefully:

- FAQ format and question style H2s get cited most often. Pages structured as "What

is X?" and "How does Y work?" show up in AI Overview citations far more than narrative pages. The AI tools are looking for question answer pairs and pulling the answer directly.

- Pages with schema markup (FAQPage, LocalBusiness, Service) pull citations consistently. Pages without schema mostly don't get cited, even when their content is good. Schema is the difference between being readable to AI and being invisible to it.

- Service pages with a direct answer paragraph at the top outperform pages with long, intro heavy openings. AI tools pull the first clear answer they can find. If your first paragraph is a marketing intro, the AI skips it and moves to the next page.

- Restoration queries are developing AI Overview citation patterns faster than dental queries. Emergency driven searches seem to trigger AI Overviews more aggressively, likely because Google wants to surface fast answers for urgent intent.

What to do this quarter. AI search optimization isn't optional anymore. Here's the action list:

FIVE SHIFTS

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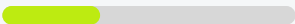
Forces reshaping local visibility

GBP

Primary asset

- ☐ No click
- ☐ AI Overview
- ☒ Primary asset
- ☐ Near me visits
- ☐ Reviews

SECTION PROGRESS



FIVE SHIFTS

4 The 5 big shifts reshaping local search

1. Add an FAQ section to your top 5 service pages. Use real PAA style questions your

customers actually ask, not made up ones. Tools like AlsoAsked or AnswerThePublic can pull these for you. 2. Implement LocalBusiness, FAQPage, and Service schema across those pages. If

you're not sure how, Google's Rich Results Test will validate your schema for free.

3. Rewrite the opening paragraph of each service page so it directly answers the page's

main question in 40 to 60 words. Save the marketing copy for later in the page. 4. Switch narrative H2s to question format. "What is sedation dentistry?" outperforms

"Sedation Dentistry Services" for AI citation.

If you only have time for one move this month: rewrite the opening 60 words of your top revenue service page so it directly answers the question someone would type into Google. Then validate the schema with Google's Rich Results Test.

That single move opens the door to AI Overview citations on the page that matters most to your business.

Sources: Semrush AI Overviews Study, Semrush AI Search Optimization, Semrush AI Search Trends 2026, BrightLocal Consumer Search Behavior, Google Search Central Local Business Structured Data

Shift 3: Google Business Profile now beats your website

What's happening. Whitespark's 2026 Local Search Ranking Factors Report surveyed 47 local SEO experts and ranked GBP signals as the #1 driver of Local Pack visibility. Engagement signals (posts, photos, clicks, calls, direction requests, and review activity) rose sharply in the 2026 weighting compared to 2024.

Citations dropped in relative importance, though they still matter for trust and consistency.

Here's a finding that surprised a lot of agencies: Whitespark's controlled 2024 test showed that Google's service area setting on GBP has zero ranking impact. The setting tells customers where you serve, not Google where to rank you.

What it means for your service business. Your GBP is now your customer's first impression, not your website. When someone searches "emergency dentist Dallas," they see your GBP card (name, photos, reviews, hours, phone number) before they see your homepage.

If your GBP is incomplete, generic, or stale, you're losing rankings you would have won, even when your website is strong.

FIVE SHIFTS

5

Forces reshaping local visibility

76%

Near me visits

- ☐ No click
- ☐ AI Overview
- ☐ Primary asset
- ☒ Near me visits
- ☐ Reviews

SECTION PROGRESS



FIVE SHIFTS

4 The 5 big shifts reshaping local search

Here's what most agencies still get wrong: they treat GBP like a one time setup task. Set the categories, write a description, upload a few photos, done. That worked in 2022. In 2026, GBP rewards ongoing engagement. Photos, posts, Q&A, attributes, fresh activity.

Businesses showing real engagement signals are actively gaining rankings. Businesses sitting on a templated description and generic categories are quietly losing them.

The agencies still selling "GBP optimization" as a one time service are leaving money on the table for their clients.

What we see in our US clients. The pattern is consistent across all 5 industries, but the specific lever that moves the needle the most varies by industry:

- Dental practices with fully optimized GBPs (95%+ field completion) consistently show

measurable Local Pack movement within 60 to 90 days. The completeness alone does heavy lifting, before any post or photo strategy kicks in.

- Carpet cleaning businesses posting weekly to their GBP (offers, before/after photos,

service updates) hold more consistent Map Pack rankings than businesses posting monthly or not at all. The frequency of fresh content matters more than the production value.

- Restoration contractors with accurate GBP categories (Water damage restoration

service, Fire damage restoration service) plus emergency related attributes ("Open 24 hours," "Emergency service") show up more often on storm driven and emergency searches. Get the category wrong and you're invisible.

- Law firms that actively answer the Q&A section convert more client inquiries than firms

that leave the Q&A empty or auto populated by Google. The Q&A is where nervous clients check whether the firm communicates well.

What to do this quarter. Here's the GBP playbook:

1. Run a GBP completeness audit with a 95%+ field completion target. Every empty field

is a missed signal. 2. Schedule weekly GBP posts covering offers, updates, and events. Consistency

matters more than fancy design. 3. Populate the Q&A section with the top 10 questions your customers actually ask, with

FIVE SHIFTS

5

Forces reshaping local visibility

97%

Reviews

- ☐ No click
- ☐ AI Overview
- ☐ Primary asset
- ☐ Near me visits
- ☒ Reviews

SECTION PROGRESS



FIVE SHIFTS

4 The 5 big shifts reshaping local search

your own answers. Don't let Google auto fill them. 4. Upload fresh photos regularly. Google rewards photo activity, and stale GBPs slide in rankings. 5. Skip the service area setting. It's a time waste. Put that energy into address accuracy and category optimization.

If you only have time for one move this month: do the GBP completeness audit and fill every empty field. That single move opens the door to 60 to 90 day ranking gains for most of our clients. No content writing, no link building. Just complete the profile properly.

Sources: Whitespark 2026 Local Search Ranking Factors, Whitespark Service Areas Impact Test 2024, Google Local Services Ads Official Page

Shift 4: Mobile "near me" searches dominate service intent

What's happening. Backlinko, citing Google's own data, reports that 76% of "near me" searchers visit a business within a day. 88% of smartphone local searchers visit a related store within a week.

Think with Google's research adds more weight: 46% of all Google searches have local intent, and 4 in 5 consumers use search engines to find local information. Statista shows Google holding 95%+ of US mobile search market share.

"Near me" searches grew 900%+ over a two year stretch, according to Google's own data published through Think with Google. HubSpot's 2026 marketing report confirms 63% of consumers prefer mobile for brand discovery.

What it means for your service business. The conversion window for local search is now under 24 hours, and often under 4 hours. The first credible result usually wins the call. Mobile first design isn't a nice to have. It's the default expectation.

Show up slow on a phone screen and you're done before the customer even reads your name.

Here's what most agencies still don't get: generic service pages are losing to local intent pages. Google picks the Map Pack winner based on distance, GBP completeness, and review signals combined. Not based on how many times you stuffed "near me" into your page content.

Google already knows where the user is. It's inferring location automatically. Stuffing "near me" into headlines and meta tags does nothing now. It might have worked in 2019. It doesn't in 2026.

What we see in our US clients. The mobile pattern shows up differently in each industry, and the differences matter:

FIVE SHIFTS

5

Forces reshaping local visibility

58.5%

No click

- ☒ No click
- ☐ AI Overview
- ☐ Primary asset
- ☐ Near me visits
- ☐ Reviews

SECTION PROGRESS

FIVE SHIFTS

4 The 5 big shifts reshaping local search

- Restoration clients show a much higher mobile share for emergency calls than desktop. Urgency drives behavior. People in a flooded basement aren't opening a laptop. Mobile optimized restoration SEO services consistently capture these emergency calls before competitors with desktop first sites can load.

- Carpet cleaning businesses see mobile "near me" searches spike on Saturday and

Sunday mornings. That's when homeowners are home, notice the stains, and want it fixed before Monday. The Map Pack winner on Saturday morning usually books that afternoon.

- Moving companies see a "research mobile, decide desktop" pattern. The initial inquiry

comes from a phone (often during a commute or work break). The actual booking decision is finalized at home on a laptop a few days later. Both touchpoints need to be optimized.

- Dental practices competing for "emergency dentist near me" type queries are seeing

mobile optimized practices dominate the Local Pack. Slow loading practice websites are quietly losing emergency patients to faster competitors.

What to do this quarter. Mobile first action list:

1. Run a mobile page speed audit with a 3 second load time target. Most sites we audit

come in at 5 to 8 seconds, which is killing conversions. 2. Make tap to call buttons prominent on every service page, not buried in a hamburger

menu. 3. Create local intent landing pages organized by city, neighborhood, or route depending

on your industry. 4. Embed mobile friendly directions and maps so customers don't have to leave your

site to find you. 5. Test how your GBP photos and posts actually preview on mobile, because that's

the screen they'll be viewed on 90% of the time.

If you only have time for one move this month: run your top revenue service page through Google's PageSpeed Insights mobile test. If it scores below 80, fix the largest contentful paint issue first (usually a hero image that's too big). That single fix has produced 20%+ conversion lifts for our clients on mobile heavy traffic.

Sources: Backlinko Local SEO Statistics, Think with Google Local Search Statistics, Statista US Mobile Search Market Share, HubSpot Marketing Statistics 2026

FIVE SHIFTS

5

Forces reshaping local visibility

15.69%

AI Overview

- ☐ No click
- ☒ AI Overview
- ☐ Primary asset
- ☐ Near me visits
- ☐ Reviews

SECTION PROGRESS



FIVE SHIFTS

4 The 5 big shifts reshaping local search

Shift 5: Review velocity matters more than review count

What's happening. BrightLocal's 2026 Local Consumer Review Survey of 1,002 US adults shows the review landscape shifted hard in the last 12 months. Here are the numbers:

- 97% of consumers read reviews for local businesses
- 41% always read reviews when browsing (up from 29% in 2025)
- 74% only care about reviews written in the last 3 months
- 44% pay most attention to reviews posted within the last month
- 80% are likely to use a business that responds to all reviews
- 89% expect business owners to respond
- 19% now expect a same day response (up from just 6% in 2025, a 3x jump in one year)
- 50% are actively put off by templated or generic responses
- 31% will only use businesses with 4.5+ stars (up from 17% the year before)

Whitespark's 2026 ranking factors data ranks recency of reviews as the 11th most influential Local Pack ranking factor. Recency, not count.

What it means for your service business. 500 reviews from 2 years ago are now worth less than 20 fresh reviews from this month. The era of review volume is over. Velocity, recency, and response rate are the new currency.

Here's what most agencies still teach (and what's hurting their clients): "thanks for the review!" template responses. Customers can spot a templated response in 2 seconds, and 50% of them are now actively put off by it.

Slow response (3+ days) damages both your GBP ranking and your customer trust on the same page where future customers are reading.

The star rating threshold also moved. 4.0 used to be safe. 4.5 is the new floor. Sitting at 4.3 stars means roughly 1 in 3 customers are filtering you out before the conversation even starts.

What we see in our US clients. The pattern is consistent across all 5 industries, and the strongest signal is steady monthly velocity beating batch collection:

- Carpet cleaning clients with steady monthly review velocity (4 to 6 reviews per month)

consistently outperform businesses that collected 50 reviews in a one time batch and stopped. Map Pack rankings hold steady when fresh reviews keep coming. They slide when the stream stops. Our carpet cleaning SEO services approach builds the request system before anything else.

FIVE SHIFTS

5

Forces reshaping local visibility

GBP

Primary asset

- ☐ No click
- ☐ AI Overview
- ☒ Primary asset
- ☐ Near me visits
- ☐ Reviews

SECTION PROGRESS

FIVE SHIFTS

4 The 5 big shifts reshaping local search

- Restoration clients with 90%+ response rates show a noticeable emergency call volume gap over competitors with weak response habits. Emergency callers are reading recent reviews before they tap your number. Response rate is part of that judgment, in real time.

- Dental practices writing personalized responses (mentioning the treatment name, the patient's first name, a specific detail from the review) drive more new patient inquiries than practices using copy paste replies. Personalization is doing real conversion work.

- Law firms that respond to reviews same day see follow up consultation requests rise.

Legal clients are anxious decision makers. A fast, thoughtful response signals the same care they'll get as a client.

What to do this quarter. Review system action list:

1. Set a monthly review velocity target of 4 to 6 new reviews per month minimum. This is

the floor that holds Map Pack rankings, not the ceiling.

2. Set a response rate goal of 90%+ across both positive and negative reviews.

3. Target same day or next day response time. 24 hours maximum, no exceptions.

4. Skip generic templates. Reply with the customer's name plus a specific detail from

their review. 5. Automate your review request system with post service SMS or email. The request

should go out within 24 hours of the service, when the experience is freshest.

If you only have time for one move this month: set up a post service SMS review request that fires within 24 hours of job completion. That single automation produces the steady review velocity Google rewards, without requiring you or your team to remember to ask.

Most businesses we audit are losing reviews simply because they're asking 5 days too late, after the customer has moved on emotionally.

Sources: BrightLocal Local Consumer Review Survey 2026, Whitespark 7 Local Search Ranking Factors, Whitespark 2026 Local Search Ranking Factors

FIVE SHIFTS

5

Forces reshaping local visibility

76%

Near me visits

- ☐ No click
- ☐ AI Overview
- ☐ Primary asset
- ☒ Near me visits
- ☐ Reviews

SECTION PROGRESS

PART 02

Your Industry

See what is working inside each service category.

5

Industry playbooks

Inside this part

- Dental
- Law firms
- Restoration
- Moving
- Carpet cleaning

PART OVERVIEW

The 5 shifts in Part 1 apply across all 5 of our industries. But they play out differently in each one. Now we get specific. Read your industry section in detail. Skim the others to see how the patterns translate.

DENTAL

5 What's working for dental practices in 2026

Dental SEO shifted hard between 2024 and 2026. Patients search differently than they did even 18 months ago. GBP driven decisions now dominate the new patient pipeline. AI Overviews are appearing on dental queries that didn't have them 12 months ago. Insurance keywords, fear related modifiers, and treatment specific searches are reshaping the path to consultation.

Here's what we see working inside our US dental client accounts right now, and what's quietly losing.

How dental patients search now

Patient search behavior moved away from generic queries toward specific intent. The shifts we observe:

- "Dentist near me" still has volume, but conversion happens on treatment specific queries like "Invisalign Leander TX" or "pediatric orthodontics Florida"
- Insurance keywords are now a regular part of the search ("dentist accepting Delta

Dental Houston," "MetLife in network dentist Atlanta")

- Fear related modifiers are common ("sedation dentistry [city]," "painless tooth extraction," "anxiety friendly dentist")
- Urgency driven queries are growing fast ("emergency dentist open Sunday [city]," "tooth pain at night what to do")

- Mobile dominates emergency dental searches. Desktop is more common for cosmetic research and treatment planning

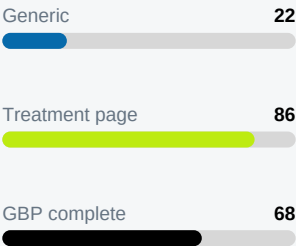
The decision making pattern is just as important as the search pattern. Patients check reviews first, then GBP photos, then your website. Recent reviews from the last 1 to 3 months carry the most weight in their decision. The star rating threshold has moved to 4.5+ for the dental industry.

Anything below that is now filtered out by a meaningful percentage of patients. Practices with active answers in the GBP Q&A section build trust faster than practices with empty Q&A.

DENTAL

4x to 5x

Qualified inquiry lift from treatment pages



SECTION PROGRESS

DENTAL

5 What's working for dental practices in 2026

The data backs all of this up. BrightLocal 2026 reports 89% of consumers expect a business response to reviews and 19% expect a same day response (up from 6% the year before). Whitespark's 2026 ranking factors data confirms GBP signals dominate the Local Pack for healthcare niches. Semrush data shows AI Overviews increasingly appearing on healthcare related queries.

Sources: BrightLocal Local Consumer Review Survey 2026, Whitespark 2026 Local Search Ranking Factors, Semrush AI Overviews Study

What we see working for dental practices

Three strategies are doing the heavy lifting for our dental SEO clients in 2026.

Strategy 1: Treatment specific landing pages.

A generic "family dentist" page doesn't convert anymore. Treatment specific pages like "Invisalign clear aligners [city]" or "dental implants [city]" drive 4x to 5x more qualified inquiries in our client data. Every high value treatment deserves its own page: implants, Invisalign, veneers, emergency dental, pediatric, cosmetic, sedation.

Each page needs:

- A clear H1 with the treatment name and city
- A treatment specific FAQ section answering 5 to 8 patient questions
- Before/after photos (where compliance allows)
- The insurance plans you accept (specific plan names, not just "most major insurance")
- A booking CTA that doesn't make patients hunt for it

The economics are simple. A patient searching "Invisalign Leander TX" knows what they want and is comparing 2 to 3 providers. If you have a page that speaks directly to that intent, you win that comparison. If you have a generic services page, you lose to the practice that has the specific page.

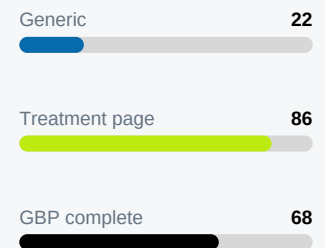
Strategy 2: Local Services Ads with the "Google Verified" badge.

Late 2025 saw Google unify "Google Guaranteed" and "Google Screened" badges into a single "Google Verified" badge. For dental practices, the verified badge has noticeably increased new patient trust.

DENTAL

4x to 5x

Qualified inquiry lift from treatment pages



SECTION PROGRESS

DENTAL

5 What's working for dental practices in 2026

LSA runs on a pay per lead model, so you only pay for qualified leads, not clicks. The cost per lead in dental LSA is typically \$20 to \$80 depending on your market, which compares favorably to traditional PPC for dental in major metros (often \$15 to \$45 per click with much lower conversion).

A strong GBP review profile combined with LSA is now one of the dominant new patient acquisition channels for our dental clients. The LSA algorithm weights review profile heavily, so practices with 50+ reviews and 4.5+ stars get surfaced first when patients click "Local Services" results.

Strategy 3: GBP completeness plus Q&A activity.

Practices hitting 95%+ GBP field completion show measurable Local Pack movement within 60 to 90 days. The completeness alone does heavy lifting before any post strategy kicks in.

Active Q&A answers covering the top 10 patient questions consistently outperform empty Q&A sections. These are the questions patients actually ask:

- Do you accept [specific insurance]?
- Do you offer payment plans?
- What's the cost for [common treatment]?
- Are you accepting new patients?
- Do you see children/teens/seniors?
- What are your COVID protocols?
- Do you offer sedation options?
- How long is the wait for an appointment?
- Do you have emergency hours?
- Is parking available?

Weekly GBP posts (special offers, treatment highlights, team updates) and fresh photo uploads (treatment outcomes, office tour, team photos) keep the engagement signals strong. Google rewards activity. Stale GBPs slide.

Sources: Google Local Services Ads Official Page, Whitespark 2026 Local Search Ranking Factors

What we saw in our US dental clients: 3 real cases

Example 1: A Texas based orthodontics practice.

DENTAL

4x to 5x

Qualified inquiry lift from treatment pages

Generic 22

Treatment page 86

GBP complete 68

SECTION PROGRESS

DENTAL

5 What's working for dental practices in 2026

The practice started at roughly 100 monthly website visitors. They had low GBP visibility, weak keyword targeting, no area specific service pages, and NAP inconsistencies (their name, address, and phone number weren't consistent across the major directories).

We ran technical SEO fixes first to make sure Google could properly crawl and index the site. Then we built treatment specific landing pages for early orthodontic care, braces, and retainers. We optimized the GBP to 95%+ completion. We laid the local SEO foundation across the top 25 directories.

Within 90 days, monthly website traffic grew to roughly 1,500 visitors. The key driver was the combination of treatment specific pages and GBP optimization, not either one alone. Either move alone would have produced gains. The combination produced compounding gains.

Example 2: A long established Florida dental practice.

This practice had existed since 1978 but was sitting at just 10 to 30 monthly website visitors when they came to us. Decades of practice success had not translated to any digital visibility. The SEO foundation was weak. On page work had gaps. Local SEO had issues. The GBP was poorly set up despite years of operation.

We ran a 12 month personalized SEO plan covering analytics setup, technical SEO fixes, GBP optimization, then on page improvements, local SEO foundation, and authority building in sequence. The practice grew to roughly 4,500 monthly visitors in 12 months.

The key driver was the foundational fix combined with sustained execution across all SEO layers, not a single hack. The 47 year reputation of the practice meant nothing to Google's algorithm. The technical and structural work made the existing reputation visible.

Example 3: A Louisiana orthodontics practice.

The practice started at 650 monthly visits and was ranking for a limited set of terms. We built out 14 service pages, 8 location pages, and 22 educational blog posts over 16 months. The practice grew to 3,500+ monthly visits, a 435% increase.

The key driver was content depth across service pages, location pages, and education content combined, not just service pages alone. Each layer added a different type of traffic: service pages captured treatment intent, location pages captured city intent, education content captured early stage research intent.

DENTAL

4x to 5x

Qualified inquiry lift from treatment pages

Generic 22

Treatment page 86

GBP complete 68

SECTION PROGRESS

DENTAL

5 What's working for dental practices in 2026

The common pattern across all 3 cases

Treatment specific or service specific pages drove the biggest gains in every case. GBP foundation was set up first, before content scaling. Local SEO, on page SEO, and authority building were executed in sequence, not all at once. The practices that tried to do everything in month one underperformed the practices that built layer by layer.

There's no overnight SEO win in dental. But there's reliable 90 day movement when the foundation is right and the layering happens in the correct order.

3 moves dental practices should make this quarter

Move 1: Build dedicated landing pages for your top 5 revenue treatments.

Each page needs a clear H1, 800+ words of specific content, an FAQ section answering real patient questions, treatment specific photos, your accepted insurance info, and a booking CTA above the fold. Prioritize the most searched treatments in your city. For most practices, that means Invisalign, implants, and emergency dental sit at the top.

Move 2: Bring your GBP to 95%+ completeness.

Rewrite the business description so it's customer focused, not keyword stuffed. Populate the Q&A section with the top 10 patient questions and your own answers (don't let Google auto fill them). Start a weekly post schedule covering offers, updates, and team highlights. Upload new photos every month so the engagement signals stay fresh.

Move 3: Automate your review velocity and response system.

Set up a post appointment SMS or email review request that fires within 24 hours of the visit. Target 4 to 6 new reviews per month minimum.

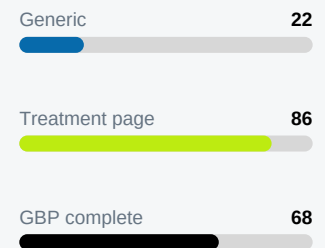
Respond to every review (positive and negative) within 24 hours with a personalized reply that uses the patient's first name and mentions the treatment or service. Skip the templated "thanks for the review!" replies. 50% of consumers say generic responses actively put them off.

If you only have time for one move this quarter: build the top revenue treatment page. That single page tends to outperform the rest of your service content within 90 days, especially when paired with even basic GBP cleanup.

DENTAL

4x to 5x

Qualified inquiry lift from treatment pages



SECTION PROGRESS

LAW FIRMS

6 What's working for law firms in 2026

Legal SEO in 2026 is being shaped by three forces working together: how legal clients search, the trust signals that move them from research to consultation, and the growing impact of AI search on legal queries. Our US law firm clients are seeing specific strategies pay off and specific old habits stop working.

How legal clients search now

Legal search behavior is now firmly practice area and location driven. The generic "lawyer" query is mostly dead for new client acquisition. Here's the pattern:

- Practice area + city queries dominate ("personal injury attorney Houston," "family law

lawyer near Lakeview")

- Comparative searches are growing fast ("best [practice area] lawyer in [city]," "top rated DUI attorney [city]")

- Urgency driven queries are common ("emergency lawyer [city]," "DUI attorney 24/7,"

"weekend bail bondsman")

- Transactional queries with intent built in ("free consultation personal injury [city]," "no

fee unless we win [city]")

- Firm name searches still happen, but they're mostly referral traffic. They rarely produce net new client acquisition

The decision making behavior matches the high stakes nature of hiring a lawyer. Clients check reviews and ratings first, then study response patterns to see how a firm communicates.

The Google Verified badge has become a real trust factor in the legal niche, more than in any other industry we work with. Attorney profile photos, bar credentials, and case results pages all influence the decision. Legal is a high anxiety purchase with multiple touchpoints before a consultation gets booked.

Single visit conversions are rare. The typical legal client visits 3 to 5 firms' websites before reaching out to one or two for consultations.

LAW FIRMS

3x to 5x

Qualified consultations from deep pages

- Practice page
- Reviews
- Verified badge
- Attorney profile

SECTION PROGRESS

LAW FIRMS

6 What's working for law firms in 2026

The data lines up with what we see. BrightLocal 2026 reports 89% of consumers expect a business response to reviews, and our experience says legal client expectations sit even higher than that average. Whitespark's 2026 ranking factors confirm GBP and reviews dominate for service based industries.

And Google's "Google Screened" badge was unified into the "Google Verified" badge for legal professionals in late 2025.

Sources: BrightLocal Local Consumer Review Survey 2026, Whitespark 2026 Local Search Ranking Factors, Google Local Services Ads Official Page

What we see working for law firms

Three strategies are doing the heavy lifting for our law firm SEO clients in 2026.

Strategy 1: Deep practice area + city landing pages.

The firm homepage alone doesn't drive new client acquisition anymore. It just sits there collecting branded search traffic. What works is a dedicated page for every major practice area (personal injury, family law, criminal defense, immigration, employment), with city specific versions of each one for multi office firms.

Every practice area page needs:

- Real depth on the area of law (1,000+ words minimum, often 1,500+)
- Attorney profiles for the lawyers handling that work
- Compliance approved case results
- An FAQ section covering 8 to 12 common questions
- A free consultation CTA that's easy to find from any scroll position

The depth matters because legal clients are checking expertise before they trust you with their case. A 400 word "Personal Injury" page that just says "we handle car accidents and slip and falls" gets dismissed.

A 1,500 word page that explains the typical timeline, the insurance company's playbook, what evidence to preserve, and how compensation gets calculated builds expertise in the reader's mind before they pick up the phone.

Strategy 2: Local Services Ads with the "Google Verified" badge.

LAW FIRMS

3x to 5x

Qualified consultations from deep pages

- Practice page
- Reviews
- Verified badge
- Attorney profile

SECTION PROGRESS

LAW FIRMS

6 What's working for law firms in 2026

The unified Google Verified badge has dramatically boosted trust in the legal niche, because legal clients are inherently nervous decision makers. They want to know you've been vetted before they call. The badge requires background check, bar license verification, and malpractice insurance verification.

LSA's pay per lead model is significantly more cost effective than traditional PPC for legal, where cost per click can hit \$50 to \$200+ in competitive practice areas (personal injury and family law especially).

With LSA you pay \$30 to \$150 per qualified lead, depending on practice area and market, instead of paying for clicks that may not convert.

A strong GBP review profile combined with LSA is now one of the top consultation request drivers for our law firm clients. The combination wins because LSA captures the high intent searches at the top of results while organic GBP captures the broader local visibility.

Strategy 3: Hyperlocal content for multi office firms.

Generic "[city] law firm" pages read as templated and convert poorly. Neighborhood specific or jurisdiction specific content shows actual local expertise. A page targeting "Cook County criminal defense attorney" outperforms a generic "Chicago lawyer" page because the specificity signals real local knowledge.

Court specific content (filing procedures, judge tendencies, county court differences, local sentencing patterns) builds authority in a way generic legal content can't match. A criminal defense firm that publishes detailed content on the local court system gets cited as a local expert. A firm that publishes generic "what to do after an arrest" content gets ignored.

Sources: Google Local Services Ads Official Page, Whitespark 2026 Local Search Ranking Factors

What we saw in our US law firm clients

Three patterns showed up consistently across our US law firm work.

Pattern 1: Practice area page depth wins.

Firms with deep, individually optimized practice area pages saw a noticeable jump in consultation requests compared to firms relying on a generic "Our Practice Areas" overview page. Practice area specific deep pages drive 3x to 5x more qualified consultation requests than overview pages.

LAW FIRMS

3x to 5x

Qualified consultations from deep pages

- Practice page
- Reviews
- Verified badge
- Attorney profile

SECTION PROGRESS



LAW FIRMS

6 What's working for law firms in 2026

This pattern is consistent across all 5 of our industries, but it shows up strongest in legal, likely because legal clients need to verify practice area expertise before they trust you with their case.

The depth signals expertise. A 1,500 word personal injury page that explains how insurance companies handle claims, what evidence preserves a case, and what compensation typically covers, reads as a firm that actually knows the area. A 400 word page that lists practice areas reads as a firm phoning it in.

Pattern 2: Review response rate moves the needle harder than expected.

Firms responding same day or next day to reviews see noticeably more follow up consultations than firms taking 3+ days to respond. Slow response creates a visible gap on the public review profile, and legal clients reading those reviews are scanning for signs the firm communicates well.

Personalized responses (acknowledging the case type, mentioning the attorney involved, within bar association compliance) build trust faster than generic templates. Generic responses can actively hurt the firm. Legal clients are especially attuned to communication quality because they're about to trust the firm with one of the most important matters of their life.

Pattern 3: Trust signals stack.

No single trust signal wins legal clients on its own. Attorney profile photos help. Bar admission credentials help. Compliance approved case results help. The verified badge helps. But the firms winning are stacking all of them together on every consultation request path. Single trust signals don't move high stakes decisions. Stacked trust signals do.

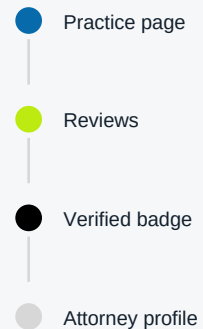
A consultation request page that shows the attorney's photo, bar credentials, recent case results, the verified badge, and 5 client testimonials converts dramatically better than the same page with just an attorney photo and a "submit" button.

The aggregate pattern: Practice area page depth combined with GBP completeness combined with strong review response rate is the dominant new client acquisition channel for our US law firm clients. Firm name SEO mostly captures referral traffic and branded search, but it's not the primary acquisition channel anymore.

LAW FIRMS

3x to 5x

Qualified consultations from deep pages



SECTION PROGRESS



LAW FIRMS

6 What's working for law firms in 2026

Sample size note: Our US law firm client sample is moderate. The patterns are consistent across multiple cities and practice areas, but we're flagging confidence as solid rather than airtight. Treat these observations as directional.

3 moves law firms should make this quarter

Move 1: Build deep, city specific landing pages for your top 3 practice areas.

Each page needs minimum 1,000 words covering the practice area in real depth, attorney profiles for the lawyers handling that work, compliance approved case results, and a free consultation CTA. If you have multiple offices, build a city specific version of each practice area page.

Don't reuse the same page across cities with just the city name swapped. Google detects that template approach and Local Pack rankings suffer.

Move 2: Prioritize review response rate and response time.

Target 90%+ response rate across all reviews (positive and negative). Set a 24 hour maximum response time as a hard rule. Use the reviewer's name and acknowledge the case type in your response while maintaining bar association confidentiality requirements. Generic "thanks for the review!" responses are actively hurting firms now.

50% of consumers say they're put off by templated responses, and legal clients are even more sensitive to it than average.

Move 3: Set up Local Services Ads for your top practice areas.

Complete the Google Verified badge process (background check, bar license verification, malpractice insurance verification). Specify your job types for the top practice areas you're targeting. Build your GBP review profile to a minimum of 20 reviews with a 4.5+ star average before launching LSA, since the LSA algorithm weights review profile heavily when deciding which firms to surface.

If you only have time for one move this quarter: build the top practice area page properly. For most firms, that's personal injury, family law, or criminal defense. That single page tends to drive more consultation requests than the rest of the firm's content combined, especially when paired with a clean GBP and active review response.

LAW FIRMS

3x to 5x

Qualified consultations from deep pages

- Practice page
- Reviews
- Verified badge
- Attorney profile

SECTION PROGRESS

RESTORATION

7 What's working for restoration contractors in 2026

Restoration is the most time sensitive industry we work with. When a homeowner is dealing with water damage, fire damage, or a mold emergency, they don't research for days. They tap the first credible result and someone picks up the phone. The SEO playbook that wins in restoration looks different from every other industry for that reason alone.

How distressed homeowners search now

Restoration search behavior is shaped by urgency. Distressed homeowners aren't browsing options. They're scanning for a fast, trustworthy answer. The patterns we see:

- Emergency queries dominate ("water damage Dallas," "24 hour fire damage restoration Lakewood")
- "Emergency [service] near me" mobile searches outrank desktop by a wide margin
- Storm related spike queries are seasonal and predictable ("flood damage [city]," "hurricane damage repair [region]")
- Insurance related queries are now a regular part of the funnel ("water damage insurance claim help [city]")
- Brand searches are minimal. Urgency means no time for brand research. Generic

emergency queries dominate

The decision making behavior is dramatically faster than the other industries we work with. The first 3 credible results in the Map Pack receive most of the phone calls. Review count matters less than recency and response rate.

A 3 month old review already feels outdated when someone is standing in 4 inches of water. GBP photos showing actual restoration work and your team in action build trust faster than stock images. And 24/7 phone availability indicated on GBP is critical.

Closed status GBPs lose emergency calls to competitors who picked up.

RESTORATION

24/7

Emergency intent demands instant visibility

Call 100

GBP 86

Page speed 74

SECTION PROGRESS

RESTORATION

7 What's working for restoration contractors in 2026

The data backs all of this. Backlinko, citing Google's own data, shows 76% of near me searchers visit a business within a day. For emergency restoration searches, that window is much tighter, often under 4 hours.

BrightLocal 2026 reports 19% of consumers expect same day responses, and our experience says restoration expectations sit higher than that average. Whitespark's 2026 ranking factors data confirms GBP categories and attributes are critical for emergency visibility.

Sources: Backlinko Local SEO Statistics, BrightLocal Local Consumer Review Survey 2026, Whitespark 2026 Local Search Ranking Factors

What we see working for restoration contractors

Three strategies are doing the heavy lifting for our restoration SEO clients in 2026.

Strategy 1: Emergency focused landing pages.

A generic "restoration services" page does not convert on emergency searches. Period. Pages built specifically for emergency intent ("24/7 water damage [city]," "emergency fire damage [neighborhood]") dominate the calls.

Every emergency page needs:

- A prominent phone number at the top of the screen (above the fold)
- A click to call button on mobile
- A response time guarantee (e.g., "On site within 60 minutes")
- Immediate action steps the homeowner can take while waiting
- Clear mention of insurance assistance
- Mobile first design (the customer is on a phone, often in a flooded room)

If your page takes 6 seconds to load, you've already lost. The customer hits the back button and calls your competitor whose page loaded in 2 seconds. Page speed isn't a nice to have in restoration. It's the entire ball game.

Strategy 2: Review velocity built for time sensitive industries.

Restoration needs a steady stream of 4 to 6 fresh reviews per month minimum. The reviews that build the most trust tell short emergency response stories ("they showed up at 2am within an hour of our call").

RESTORATION

24/7

Emergency intent demands instant visibility

Call 100

GBP 86

Page speed 74

SECTION PROGRESS

RESTORATION

7 What's working for restoration contractors in 2026

Review response rate of 90%+ is critical, and 24 hour response time is the floor, not the goal. Same day response is what separates the dominant restoration brands from the rest.

The reviews are doing more work in restoration than in any other industry because they're being read in real time crisis moments. A homeowner standing in 4 inches of water is reading reviews to decide who to call right now. The freshness, specificity, and response pattern of the reviews shape that decision.

Strategy 3: GBP category accuracy plus emergency attributes.

The correct primary GBP category is make or break. "Water damage restoration service," "Fire damage restoration service," and "Mold remediation service" each surface different emergency searches. Get the category wrong and you become invisible on the queries that matter most.

Emergency related attributes are non negotiable:

- "Open 24 hours"
- "Emergency service"
- "Online estimates available"

Storm driven searches reward businesses with accurate categories and accurate attributes. Inaccurate ones lose those calls completely.

We've seen restoration businesses with strong websites and good reviews lose to weaker competitors simply because the GBP category was set to "Cleaning service" instead of "Water damage restoration service." The algorithm matches category to query intent.

Get the category wrong and the rest of your SEO can't save you on emergency queries.

Sources: Whitespark 2026 Local Search Ranking Factors, BrightLocal Local Consumer Review Survey 2026

What we saw in our US restoration clients

Three patterns showed up consistently across our restoration work.

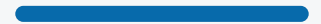
Pattern 1: Emergency landing pages with a prominent phone number create a clear call volume gap.

RESTORATION

24/7

Emergency intent demands instant visibility

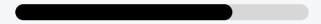
Call 100



GBP 86



Page speed 74



SECTION PROGRESS



RESTORATION

7 What's working for restoration contractors in 2026

Restoration businesses running emergency focused landing pages see a noticeable gap in emergency call volume compared to competitors using generic restoration service pages. The combination doing the heavy lifting is the phone number at the top of the page, a click to call button, and 24/7 messaging visible without scrolling.

None of those three alone is enough. Together, they're the strongest driver we've seen.

Pattern 2: Review response rate impact is stronger in restoration than in our other industries.

Restoration clients with 90%+ review response rates consistently drive more emergency calls than competitors with weak response habits. The gap is larger than the gap we see in dental, legal, or carpet cleaning.

The reason is intuitive: a homeowner standing in their flooded basement is actively scanning recent reviews and looking at how the business communicates. A 4 hour old response signals "this team is awake and operational" in a way a 3 day old response can't.

Pattern 3: GBP category accuracy is make or break.

Restoration businesses with properly set GBP categories (water damage, fire damage, mold remediation) dominate storm driven and emergency searches. Businesses with incorrectly set categories are effectively invisible on those queries. This isn't a small ranking penalty. It's a complete miss.

We've audited restoration GBPs where the owner had set the primary category to something generic like "Cleaning service" or "Contractor" without realizing the impact. Switching the primary category to "Water damage restoration service" produced visible Map Pack movement within 30 days, before any other work was done.

Sample size and confidence note: Our restoration client sample is moderate, and the observations above are consistent across a 60 to 90 day timeframe. We didn't run controlled experiments to prove cause and effect. These are consistent patterns observed across multiple clients in multiple cities. Treat them as solid directional guidance.

RESTORATION

24/7

Emergency intent demands instant visibility

Call 100

GBP 86

Page speed 74

SECTION PROGRESS

RESTORATION

7 What's working for restoration contractors in 2026

3 moves restoration contractors should make this quarter

Move 1: Build emergency focused landing pages for your core services.

Use the format "24/7 [Service] [City]" (for example, "24/7 Water Damage Restoration Dallas"). At the top of the page, put a prominent phone number, a click to call button, and a clear response time guarantee.

The page content should walk a panicked homeowner through immediate action steps, insurance assistance information, and your service area map. Mobile first design is the only acceptable approach.

Move 2: Audit your GBP categories and emergency attributes.

Match your primary GBP category exactly to your service type (water damage restoration service, fire damage restoration service, mold remediation service). Set the emergency attributes Google offers: "Open 24 hours," "Emergency service," "Online estimates available." If you operate 24/7, make sure your business hours reflect that clearly.

A GBP that shows "closed" outside business hours loses emergency calls every night.

Move 3: Automate your review velocity and response system.

Set up a post service SMS review request that fires within 1 hour of job completion, while the relief of solving their emergency is still fresh. Target 4 to 6 new reviews per month minimum. Respond to every review within 24 hours, with same day response as the goal.

In your responses, mention emergency response details (arrival time, what your team did first, how the situation was handled). Those details are trust signals for the next emergency caller scanning your reviews.

If you only have time for one move this quarter: fix the GBP categories and emergency attributes. That single change can move a restoration business from "invisible on emergency queries" to "visible to actual customers in crisis." It costs nothing and can be done in an afternoon.

RESTORATION

24/7

Emergency intent demands instant visibility

Call 100

GBP 86

Page speed 74

SECTION PROGRESS

MOVING

8 What's working for moving companies in 2026

Moving companies face a unique SEO challenge that none of our other 4 industries deal with quite the same way: national broker websites with massive ad budgets sit between independent movers and their customers.

Companies like Moving.com, MoversCorp, and Allied Van Lines flood the top of the search results, often without owning trucks. They subcontract the actual move and take a margin on the lead. Independent movers can still outcompete them, but only with route specific content, transparent pricing, and trust signals stacked together.

How moving customers search now

Moving customer search behavior has shifted toward specificity. The generic "movers in [city]" search still has volume, but it's heavily dominated by broker websites. Independent movers are winning on more specific queries.

The patterns we see:

- Route specific queries dominate ("Brooklyn to Queens movers," "Long Island long distance moving")
- Research queries are common ("[city] movers cost," "[city] movers reviews")
- Comparative searches are growing ("affordable movers [city]," "best movers [city]")
- Time pressure queries spike at predictable points ("movers available this weekend

[city]," "last minute movers [city]")

- Broker vs direct comparison searches are growing as customers learn brokers often

subcontract the actual move

The decision making behavior is slower and more cautious than any other industry we work with. Moving is a high anxiety purchase with multiple touchpoints over a typical 7 to 14 day research phase.

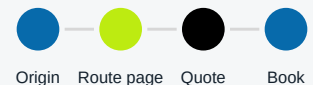
The "research mobile, decide desktop" pattern is strong: customers start researching on their phone during commutes or breaks, then finalize the booking at home on a laptop after researching multiple companies.

Reviews are scanned for specific fears (damage during transit, hidden fees added at delivery, no show or late arrival, items going missing). Transparent pricing pages significantly increase trust and reduce drop off, because the alternative ("call for a quote") feels like the setup for a sales call most customers want to avoid.

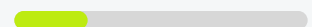
MOVING

7 to 14

Day research phase before booking



SECTION PROGRESS



MOVING

8 What's working for moving companies in 2026

The data lines up with what we see. HubSpot's 2026 marketing report confirms 63% of consumers prefer mobile for brand discovery, which matches the mobile research phase. BrightLocal 2026 reports 47% of consumers won't use businesses with fewer than 20 reviews, which is a bigger threshold than most movers realize.

Backlinko's data confirms mobile dominance for local discovery generally.

Sources: HubSpot Marketing Statistics 2026, BrightLocal Local Consumer Review Survey 2026, Backlinko Local SEO Statistics

What we see working for moving companies

Three strategies are doing the heavy lifting for our moving company SEO clients in 2026.

Strategy 1: Hyperlocal route pages (origin to destination).

A generic "moving services" page rarely converts on its own. Route specific pages drive significantly more qualified inquiries. Build a dedicated page for each major route you handle (for example, "Brooklyn to Manhattan Movers" or "Houston to Austin Long Distance Moving").

Each page should cover:

- The route distance and typical timeline
- What's included in the service (packing, loading, unloading, unpacking)
- The factors that affect pricing on that specific route
- Customer reviews from that exact route (where compliance allows)

Route specificity is the moat. Brokers can't replicate it because they're not actually doing the moves. They're aggregating leads and reselling them.

A genuine route page from a mover who has done 200+ Brooklyn to Manhattan moves can include details a broker can't fake: which buildings have notorious elevators, which routes hit the worst traffic patterns, which streets allow trucks of what size.

Strategy 2: Transparent pricing pages.

Hidden pricing is the single biggest customer fear in moving, and it's also the easiest one to defuse. Build pricing range pages, factors that affect cost pages, and what's included pages. These pages reduce drop off because they answer the question customers are afraid to call about.

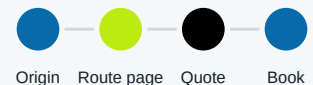
Show example pricing scenarios for:

- A studio move
- A 1 bedroom move

MOVING

7 to 14

Day research phase before booking



SECTION PROGRESS



MOVING

8 What's working for moving companies in 2026

- A 2 bedroom move
- A 3 bedroom move
- A long distance vs local pricing comparison

Keep the free quote CTA prominent on every pricing page, but give pricing context first. The pages that say "call for quote" with no context lose customers to competitors willing to show numbers, even ranges.

Strategy 3: Review content that addresses moving specific fears.

Generic "great service!" reviews don't move the needle in moving. Detailed reviews that mention damage protection, on time arrival, and no hidden fees build real trust because they directly address the fears customers carry into the decision.

Encourage a before/during/after storytelling format in your review requests:

- "Did the team arrive on time?"
- "Were all your items handled with care?"
- "Was the final price what you expected?"

Use your review responses to address specific concerns publicly (insurance process, claims handling, on time guarantees), because the next customer is reading those responses just as carefully as the reviews themselves. A response that explains your insurance coverage in plain language does more trust building work than 5 generic 5 star reviews.

Sources: BrightLocal Local Consumer Review Survey 2026, Whitespark 2026 Local Search Ranking Factors

What we saw in our US moving clients

Two patterns showed up consistently across our moving company work.

Pattern 1: Route specific page depth wins.

Clients with route specific pages saw qualified inquiries flow steadily, even in markets where national brokers dominated the generic "movers in [city]" results. Generic "moving services

[city]" pages consistently lose to broker competition, because the brokers have spent years and millions building authority on those head terms.

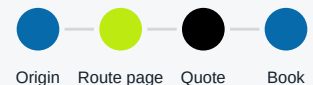
Route depth is the biggest differentiator independent movers have available. The brokers don't actually do the moves, so they can't write authentically about specific routes. An independent mover who has done 500 Houston to Austin moves can write a route page with route specific knowledge no broker can fake.

Pattern 2: Pricing transparency reduces drop off.

MOVING

7 to 14

Day research phase before booking



SECTION PROGRESS



MOVING

8 What's working for moving companies in 2026

Clients with pricing transparent pages showed a noticeably better website to inquiry conversion rate than clients with "call for quote" only pages. The drop off gap is real. Customers want pricing context before they pick up the phone. Pages that give them that context capture the next step.

Pages that withhold it lose customers to the next search result.

Sample size and confidence note: Our moving company client sample is the smallest of all 5 industries we work in. The patterns above are directional rather than definitive. We're flagging that openly: this industry needs more data points before we make airtight claims.

Our quarterly updates to this report will deepen the moving section as we add more moving company clients and observation time.

3 moves moving companies should make this quarter

Move 1: Build dedicated route pages for your top 5 routes.

Use the format "[Origin] to [Destination] Movers" (for example, "Brooklyn to Queens Movers"). Each page should cover the route timeline, the distance, the pricing factors specific to that route, what's included in the service, and route specific customer reviews. Minimum 800 words per route page so Google sees real depth, not a template.

Move 2: Create a pricing transparency page.

Build a "pricing factors" page that walks customers through what affects their final cost: distance, home size, packing services, special items, stairs, long carries, storage needs. Show sample scenarios for a studio move, a 1 bedroom move, and a 3 bedroom move so customers can place themselves in the data.

Keep the free quote CTA prominent, but give pricing context first so the page does the trust work before the sales call.

Move 3: Set up a review request system and a fear addressing FAQ.

Automate a post move review request that fires within 48 hours of move completion. In the request, prompt customers to mention specific aspects (timing, damage protection, hidden fees).

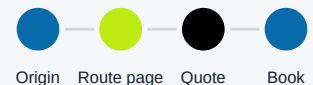
On your website, add an FAQ section addressing the exact fears customers carry into the decision: damage protection, hidden fees, timing guarantees, insurance claims. The FAQ does double duty: it builds trust on the page and qualifies for AI Overview citations on related queries.

If you only have time for one move this quarter: build one route page for your highest volume origin to destination pairing. Brokers can't beat you on route specificity. Use the advantage.

MOVING

7 to 14

Day research phase before booking



SECTION PROGRESS

CARPET CLEANING

9 What's working for carpet cleaning businesses in 2026

Carpet cleaning is the most review driven local industry we work with. Small independents are competing against franchise brands (Stanley Steemer, Chem Dry), heavily funded operators, and national aggregators that buy their way to the top of paid search. The good news: independents can still win.

The strategies look different from the franchise playbook, and they're working consistently in our client work.

How carpet cleaning customers search now

Carpet cleaning search behavior is split across service types, problems, and timing. The patterns we see:

- Service type queries dominate ("residential carpet cleaning [city]," "commercial carpet cleaning [city]," "upholstery cleaning [city]," "tile and grout cleaning [city]")
- Research queries are common ("[city] carpet cleaning prices," "[city] carpet cleaning reviews")
- Time sensitive queries are growing ("same day carpet cleaning [city]")
- Specific problem queries drive high intent traffic ("pet stain removal [city]," "wine stain carpet cleaning")

The decision making behavior is the most review driven of any industry we work in. Customers read reviews before they pick up the phone.

Review velocity carries more weight than review count, because 50 reviews from 2022 don't help when the customer wants to know if you're still operating well in 2026. The 4.5+ star rating threshold is now the floor for serious consideration.

GBP photos showing before/after carpet cleaning work are some of the most effective trust builders in any industry. And quick GBP response (same day on messages and reviews) builds trust dramatically faster than slow response.

The data confirms what we see in client work. BrightLocal 2026 reports 41% of consumers always read reviews when browsing, which is the highest review reading frequency for service decisions in their data. Whitespark's 2026 ranking factors place review signals consistently in the top 3 Local Pack ranking factors.

BrightLocal also confirms 74% of consumers only care about reviews from the last 3 months, which is exactly why review velocity matters more than total count in this industry.

Sources: BrightLocal Local Consumer Review Survey 2026, Whitespark 2026 Local Search Ranking Factors, Whitespark 7 Local Search Ranking Factors

What we see working for carpet cleaning businesses

CARPET CLEANING

4 to 6

Fresh monthly reviews as a minimum target

Old reviews 34

Fresh reviews 81

Response 73

SECTION PROGRESS

CARPET CLEANING

9 What's working for carpet cleaning businesses in 2026

Three strategies are doing the heavy lifting for our carpet cleaning clients in 2026.

Strategy 1: Dedicated service type pages.

A single "carpet cleaning [city]" generic page rarely converts well anymore. Service type specific pages (residential, commercial, upholstery, tile and grout, area rug, pet stain) drive significantly more qualified inquiries because each one captures different customer intent. A commercial property manager and a homeowner with a pet stain are searching with completely different language and expectations.

Building separate pages for each lets you speak to each customer in their own terms. Every page should have:

- Service specific photos (before/after where possible)
- A clear process explanation
- A pricing range
- An FAQ section answering common questions for that service type
- A booking CTA

We recommend 5 to 8 service type pages minimum for any independent operator serious about local rankings.

Strategy 2: Review velocity over volume.

4 to 6 fresh reviews per month is the floor we set for our clients. A steady monthly stream consistently outperforms a one time batch of 50 reviews collected during a campaign and then ignored. Post service review request automation is critical here, because manual asks always slip when the business gets busy.

One important caution: offering incentives in exchange for reviews is now illegal under the FTC final rule. Don't do it, regardless of what other agencies suggest. The fines and reputation damage aren't worth the short term review bump. The FTC has actively enforced this rule since 2024 with multi million dollar penalties against businesses caught incentivizing reviews.

Strategy 3: NAP citation consistency for smaller businesses.

Franchise brands already dominate the major directories because corporate runs the listings. For small independents, NAP citation consistency is a strong trust signal that levels the playing field.

Make sure your business name, address, and phone number are identical across the top 25 to 50 citation sources. At minimum:

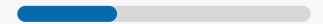
- Google Business Profile
- Yelp
- Better Business Bureau (BBB)

CARPET CLEANING

4 to 6

Fresh monthly reviews as a minimum target

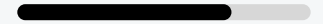
Old reviews 34



Fresh reviews 81



Response 73



SECTION PROGRESS



CARPET CLEANING

9 What's working for carpet cleaning businesses in 2026

- Yellow Pages
- Angie's List
- Foursquare
- Apple Maps
- Bing Places

Inconsistent citations confuse Google's ranking algorithm and slow your Local Pack progress. Even small discrepancies (123 Main St vs 123 Main Street, (555) 123 4567 vs 555 123 4567) can trigger Google's confidence to drop.

Sources: BrightLocal Local Consumer Review Survey 2026, Whitespark 7 Local Search Ranking Factors, Whitespark 2026 Local Search Ranking Factors

What we saw in our US carpet cleaning clients

One real client case shows how this plays out, plus the aggregate patterns we see across the rest of our carpet cleaning SEO clients.

The Atlanta case.

An Atlanta based carpet cleaning business came to us in January 2023 with zero organic traffic, minimal GBP visibility, significant technical SEO issues, on page SEO gaps, no local SEO foundation, and a poorly configured GBP.

The work happened in 4 stages over 12 months:

- Months 1 to 3 (January to March 2023): Technical SEO fixes so Google could properly

crawl and index the site. No point optimizing on a broken base.

- Months 4 to 6: On page SEO and site structure improvements, including the buildout of

service type pages.

- Months 7 to 9: GBP optimization, local SEO foundation, and NAP citation building

across 25+ directories.

- Months 10 to 12: Authority building and content expansion.

The result: the business went from 0 phone calls per month to 120 phone calls per month by the end of the engagement. The growth held steady through 2024 and 2025.

The key drivers were the sequence (technical foundation first, then optimization layers added one at a time), GBP optimization once the foundation was solid, NAP citation consistency for trust building, and service type pages for capturing service specific traffic. Trying to do everything in month one would have produced weaker results than building layer by layer.

CARPET CLEANING

4 to 6

Fresh monthly reviews as a minimum target

Old reviews 34

Fresh reviews 81

Response 73

SECTION PROGRESS

CARPET CLEANING

9 What's working for carpet cleaning businesses in 2026

The aggregate pattern across all our US carpet cleaning clients.

Businesses with steady monthly review velocity (4 to 6 new reviews per month) consistently outperform in the Map Pack. Businesses with full service type page coverage capture a broader

range of queries than businesses relying on a single generic page. And small independents with strong NAP citation consistency can outcompete franchise brands on local rankings, even with smaller marketing budgets, because the algorithm rewards trust signals the franchises can't fake at the local level.

Sample size and confidence note: Our carpet cleaning sample is moderate. The patterns above are consistent across multiple cities and confidence is high.

3 moves carpet cleaning businesses should make this quarter

Move 1: Build dedicated service type pages.

Create a minimum of 5 service type pages: residential, commercial, upholstery, tile and grout, and area rug cleaning. Add optional pages for pet stain removal, water damage cleanup, and move in/move out cleaning if those services are part of your offering.

Each page needs service specific photos, a clear process explanation, a pricing range, an FAQ section, and 800+ words of real content.

Move 2: Automate a monthly review request system.

Set up a post service SMS review request that fires within 24 hours of job completion, while the customer's satisfaction with their fresh cleaned carpet is at its peak. Target 4 to 6 new reviews per month minimum.

Keep the review request short (a single link and a simple ask), and never offer incentives in exchange for reviews. The FTC final rule on reviews makes this an active legal risk, not just a Google policy concern.

Move 3: Verify NAP consistency across 25+ citation sites.

Prioritize Google Business Profile, Yelp, BBB, Yellow Pages, Apple Maps, Bing Places, Foursquare, and Angie's List as the foundation. Make sure your business name, phone number format, and address format are identical across all sources.

A tool like BrightLocal's citation tracker makes the audit and ongoing maintenance much faster than checking sites manually. Re audit every 6 months because directories occasionally pull stale data from third parties and re introduce inconsistencies.

If you only have time for one move this quarter: set up the automated review request system. That single automation drives the steady 4 to 6 reviews per month that hold Map Pack rankings and gives the rest of your SEO work a fighting chance.

CARPET CLEANING

4 to 6

Fresh monthly reviews as a minimum target

Old reviews 34

Fresh reviews 81

Response 73

SECTION PROGRESS

PART 03

Patterns Actions and Honesty

5

Audit checkpoints

Turn the research into an audit and priorities.

Inside this part

- Common patterns
- Self audit
- Surprises
- Why focus matters

COMMON PATTERNS

10 5 patterns we see across all industries

After breaking down each industry separately, one observation stands out: certain patterns repeat across all 5 industries consistently. These aren't industry specific tactics. They're cross industry truths every service business owner should know, regardless of niche. Here are the 5 we see most often.

Pattern 1: Specific pages beat general pages

The single most consistent pattern across all 5 industries is this: specific pages outperform generic pages by a wide margin.

- Dental: treatment specific pages outperform "family dentist" pages
- Law: practice area + city pages outperform the firm homepage
- Restoration: emergency focused pages outperform "restoration services" pages
- Moving: route specific pages outperform "moving services" pages
- Carpet cleaning: service type pages outperform generic "carpet cleaning" pages

Specificity beats generality everywhere we look. Generic catch all pages show low conversion across the board in our client data. Specific pages drive 3x to 5x more qualified inquiries consistently.

Why this works. Google's local intent matching rewards specific pages for specific queries. User search intent matches specific pages cleanly. Generic pages can't provide that match because they're trying to be everything to everyone. AI Overviews also cite specific pages more often because the focused content is easier to extract clean answers from.

Action: Identify your top 5 to 8 revenue services, practice areas, or routes. Build dedicated deep pages for each one. Stop investing in the generic "services" overview page beyond a navigation hub.

Pattern 2: Engagement signals beat technical tricks

What's working in 2026 is consistent across industries:

- Weekly GBP posts
- Regular photo uploads (fresh activity)
- Q&A section actively answered
- Reviews actively collected and responded to

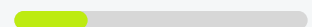
COMMON PATTERNS

5

Patterns repeating across industries

- ☒ GBP
- ☐ Specific pages
- ☐ Reviews
- ☐ Mobile
- ☐ AI visibility

SECTION PROGRESS



COMMON PATTERNS

10 5 patterns we see across all industries

- Direction requests and phone calls (passive engagement signals)

What's not working anymore is just as consistent:

- Keyword stuffing (actively penalized now)
- Geotagging photos (debunked by Whitespark controlled tests, no ranking impact)
- The GBP service area setting (zero ranking impact per Whitespark's 2024 test)
- Keyword in business name (potentially penalized if it's not your actual legal business name)

- Stuffing keywords in the GBP description (no ranking benefit, Google has confirmed)

Why this works. Google evaluates real engagement now, not technical optimization tricks. Engagement signals prove authentic user business interaction in a way technical optimization can't fake. The Quality Rater Guidelines updates have shifted the framework toward the engagement and experience pillars, and the ranking algorithm has followed.

Action: Set a weekly GBP cadence for posts and photos. Audit the Q&A monthly. Monitor reviews daily and respond within 24 hours. Drop the technical tricks that used to work but no longer move the needle. The time saved on geotagging photos and tweaking service area settings can be redirected to actual ranking factors.

Sources: Whitespark Service Areas Impact Test 2024, Google Search Central Quality Rater Guidelines Update, Whitespark 7 Local Search Ranking Factors

Pattern 3: Response speed beats response volume

How fast you respond now matters more than how often you respond. Same day review responses are dramatically more impactful than slow responses, even if the slow responses are well written. Quick GBP message replies (within an hour during business hours) increase new lead conversion noticeably.

24/7 phone availability on GBP listings (where applicable) wins emergency calls competitors lose. Same day follow up on form inquiries converts far better than 48+ hour follow up, regardless of the quality of the follow up itself.

COMMON PATTERNS

5

Patterns repeating across industries

- ☒ GBP
- ☒ Specific pages
- ☐ Reviews
- ☐ Mobile
- ☐ AI visibility

SECTION PROGRESS



COMMON PATTERNS

10 5 patterns we see across all industries

Specific data. BrightLocal 2026 reports 19% of consumers expect same day review responses (up from 6% in 2025, a 3x jump in one year). 89% expect business owners to respond to reviews. 50% are actively put off by templated or generic responses. The bar has moved fast.

Action. Set hard response time targets:

- Reviews: 24 hours maximum, same day preferred
- GBP messages: 1 hour maximum during business hours
- Form inquiries: same business day

Make these standards, not aspirations. Track them weekly and hold yourself accountable.

Sources: BrightLocal Local Consumer Review Survey 2026

Pattern 4: AI search optimization is no longer optional

Schema markup has moved from nice to have to baseline requirement across every industry we work in. The 3 schema types every service business should have:

- LocalBusiness schema for the business overall
- FAQPage schema on service pages with FAQ sections
- Service schema for individual service offerings

Content structure for AI citation matters just as much as schema. What's working:

- A direct answer paragraph at the top of each page (40 to 60 words)
- Question format H2s ("What is," "How does," "When should")
- Clear scannable sub sections under each H2

The AI Overview citation patterns we see in our work:

- FAQ format content is the most commonly cited format
- Question style H2s with direct answer paragraphs underneath are the second most cited
- Long intro heavy pages without clear question/answer structure get cited less frequently,

regardless of how good the underlying content is

COMMON PATTERNS

5

Patterns repeating across industries

- ☒ GBP
- ☒ Specific pages
- ☒ Reviews
- ☐ Mobile
- ☐ AI visibility

SECTION PROGRESS



COMMON PATTERNS

10 5 patterns we see across all industries

Action. Restructure your top 5 service pages for AI citation. Implement the 3 schema types. Add FAQ sections covering real PAA style questions your customers ask. Validate your schema with Google's Rich Results Test (free tool, takes 30 seconds per page).

Sources: Google Search Central Local Business Structured Data, Semrush AI Search Trends 2026, Semrush AI Overviews Study

Pattern 5: Local content depth is the new ranking moat

The era of templated location pages is over. "[Service] in [City]" with just the city name swapped across 20 pages no longer works. Google detects template content easily, and Local Pack rankings for those pages are limited at best.

What works instead is real local depth on every city or neighborhood page:

- City specific landmarks, neighborhoods, and local references
- Local case studies and before/after work tied to specific areas
- Local community involvement mentioned (sponsorships, local events, partnerships)
- Local regulations, permits, and considerations referenced where industry relevant
- 600+ words of locally unique content per page minimum

The difference is obvious when you see it side by side.

Templated example: "We provide carpet cleaning services in Dallas. Our team is experienced and reliable. We use professional equipment to deliver excellent results for our customers."

Locally deep example: "Dallas's mix of high humidity and red clay soil creates specific carpet cleaning challenges. In neighborhoods like Lakewood and Highland Park, we frequently encounter ground in clay residue from outdoor traffic, which standard cleaning doesn't fully remove. Our process is built for that."

One reads as a template anyone could write. The other reads as a business that actually knows Dallas. Google can tell the difference, and so can your customers.

Action. Audit your existing location pages. Identify templated language that could apply to any city. Layer in locally unique content (landmarks, neighborhoods, local challenges, local regulations) until each page is genuinely different from the others.

COMMON PATTERNS

5

Patterns repeating across industries

- ☒ GBP
- ☒ Specific pages
- ☒ Reviews
- ☒ Mobile
- ☐ AI visibility

SECTION PROGRESS

SELF AUDIT

11 The 5 point self audit (do this on your own business)

You can complete all 5 of these checks in 30 to 45 minutes. Each one has a clear benchmark, the tools you need, what failure looks like, and what success looks like. This is the audit framework we use on our own US clients before recommending any work.

Run it on your own business honestly. Then score yourself at the end.

Check 1: Google Business Profile completeness

Benchmark: 95%+ field completion.

What to check:

- All primary and secondary categories selected
- All services listed with descriptions
- All attributes populated (accessibility, payment methods, amenities)
- Business description customer focused, not keyword stuffed
- Business hours accurate, with special hours updated
- Phone, website, and address consistent across all sources
- Photos: minimum 25 (logo, cover, interior, exterior, team, work samples)
- Q&A section: top 10 customer questions populated with your own answers

Tools to use:

- GMB Everywhere (free browser extension for field by field audit)
- PlePer (free GBP audit tool)
- BrightLocal Local Search Grid (for ranking visibility)

Failure looks like: 30 to 50% empty fields, a generic copy paste description, no Q&A activity, fewer than 10 photos.

Success looks like: 95%+ completion, customer focused content, active Q&A with your own answers, regular photo uploads, weekly posts.

Check 2: Service or practice area page coverage

Benchmark: Your top 5 revenue services or practice areas each have their own dedicated page.

What to check:

- Identify your top 5 revenue generating services or practice areas
- Confirm each one has a dedicated page (not bundled into a generic "services" overview)
- Each page minimum 800 words of specific content

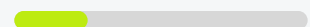
SELF AUDIT

5

Checks to complete this quarter

- ☒ GBP complete
- ☐ Service pages
- ☐ Reviews
- ☐ Mobile speed
- ☐ Schema

SECTION PROGRESS



SELF AUDIT

11 The 5 point self audit (do this on your own business)

- Each page has a clear H1, an FAQ section with 3 to 5 questions, a clear CTA, and proper schema markup
- Internal linking structure is logical (homepage links to service pages, service pages link to related service pages)

Tools to use:

- Screaming Frog (free for up to 500 URLs, great for technical internal linking audits)
- Schema.org validator (for confirming structured data is correct)

Failure looks like: A single "services" page covering everything, no FAQ sections, no schema markup, weak or missing CTAs.

Success looks like: A dedicated page per top revenue service, FAQ and schema implemented on each, multiple CTAs per page, strategic internal linking.

Check 3: City page depth

Benchmark: Minimum 600 words of locally unique content per city page.

What to check:

- Each major service area has a unique page (not the same template with just the city name swapped)
- Local landmarks, neighborhoods, regulations, and considerations referenced
- Local case studies or testimonials mentioned where industry compliance allows
- Local schema markup (areaServed, geo) implemented
- Local internal linking (city pages linking to nearby city pages where relevant)

Tools to use:

- Copyscape (catches internal template duplication you may not realize is there)
- Manual review of your top 5 city pages, reading them side by side to see how different they actually are

they actually are

Failure looks like: Templated pages with only the city name swapped, generic content, no local references, no local schema.

Success looks like: Each city page unique with 600+ words, local references throughout, landmarks and neighborhoods mentioned, local case studies included where allowed.

SELF AUDIT

5

Checks to complete this quarter

- ☒ GBP complete
- ☒ Service pages
- ☐ Reviews
- ☐ Mobile speed
- ☐ Schema

SECTION PROGRESS



SELF AUDIT

11 The 5 point self audit (do this on your own business)

Check 4: Review velocity and response rate

Benchmarks:

- Monthly review velocity: 4 to 6 new reviews minimum
- Response rate: 90%+ across all reviews
- Average response time: 24 hours maximum
- Personalized responses (no templates)

What to check:

- Count new reviews in the last 30 days
- Calculate response rate over the last 90 days (positive and negative reviews both)
- Calculate average response time across your last 20 reviews
- Check for response personalization (do your replies use the customer's name and

mention a specific detail from their review?)

Tools to use:

- BrightLocal review monitoring (for tracking across multiple platforms)
- Google Business Profile mobile app (for instant review alerts so you can respond fast)

Failure looks like: Under 3 reviews per month, response rate under 70%, response time 3+ days, generic template responses.

Success looks like: 4 to 6 reviews per month consistently, 90%+ response rate, same day or next day responses, personalized replies.

Check 5: AI Overview readiness

Benchmark: Top 5 service pages structured for AI citation.

What to check:

- FAQPage schema implemented on top service pages
- LocalBusiness schema on homepage and location pages
- Service schema for individual services
- Question format H2s used throughout ("What is," "How does," "When should")
- Direct answer paragraphs at the top of each section (40 to 60 words)
- Clear, scannable content structure (short paragraphs, lists where they actually help)

SELF AUDIT

5

Checks to complete this quarter

☒ GBP complete

☒ Service pages

☒ Reviews

☐ Mobile speed

☐ Schema

SECTION PROGRESS



SELF AUDIT

11 The 5 point self audit (do this on your own business)

Tools to use:

- Google Rich Results Test (free, fastest way to validate schema is working)
- Schema.org validator (for deeper structured data debugging)
- PAA scraper tools (for researching the actual questions your customers ask Google)

Failure looks like: No schema markup, long intro heavy pages, narrative style H2s, no FAQ sections, content that reads as one continuous wall of text.

Success looks like: Schema markup across top pages, question format H2s, direct answer paragraphs leading each section, FAQ sections built from real PAA style questions.

How to score yourself

Scoring system:

- Each check fully passing the benchmark = 1 point
- Each check partially complete = 0.5 points
- Each check fully missing = 0 points

Maximum possible score: 5 points.

What your total score means:

- 4.5 to 5: Strong position. Optimize the details and stay consistent.
- 3 to 4: Foundational gaps in 1 to 2 areas. Immediate action recommended on the weakest check.
- 1.5 to 2.5: Significant rebuild needed across multiple areas. Don't try to fix everything at once.
- 0 to 1: Foundational overhaul required. Treat this as a 6 to 12 month project, not a 30 day fix.

What to do next. Score yourself honestly. The point of the audit is to be useful, not to feel good. Identify your lowest scoring check first, because that's almost always a foundation gap that's holding everything else back. Fix that one before moving to the others.

Re audit yourself after 60 to 90 days of focused work to see what moved.

If you'd rather have an outside team run this audit instead of doing it yourself, you can get help with local SEO for any of our 5 niches. Honest scoring takes more discipline than most owners give themselves credit for.

SELF AUDIT

5

Checks to complete this quarter

- ☒ GBP complete
- ☒ Service pages
- ☒ Reviews
- ☒ Mobile speed
- ☐ Schema

SECTION PROGRESS

SURPRISES

12 What surprised us in this research

We started this research with a few assumptions about what's working in local SEO. By the time we finished reviewing 19 industry studies and cross checking them against 25+ active US client accounts, some of those assumptions didn't hold up. Honest disclosure matters more than looking right, so here's what changed our minds.

Things we expected that didn't hold up

Assumption 1: Review volume is the primary ranking factor.

We expected lifetime review count to be the dominant signal. The reality is different. BrightLocal's 2026 data, combined with our own client work, shows recency and velocity matter more than total volume. 500 reviews from 2 years ago are now meaningfully less powerful than 20 fresh reviews from this month.

74% of consumers only care about reviews written in the last 3 months. The "we have 800 reviews" pitch is a lot weaker than it used to be.

Assumption 2: The GBP service area setting helps Local Pack visibility.

We expected the service area setting on GBP to help businesses rank in cities they service but don't have a physical address in. Whitespark's controlled 2024 test confirmed it has zero ranking impact. None. The setting tells customers where you serve, not Google where to rank you.

We've redirected the time we used to spend optimizing service area settings into actual ranking factors.

Assumption 3: A keyword in the business name boosts rankings.

We expected names like "Johnson's Carpet Cleaning Dallas" to outperform plain brand names. The reality is more cautious. Google detects manipulated business names and penalizes them. Only legitimate registered DBAs work. The keyword in name shortcut isn't a strategy anymore. It's a risk.

SURPRISES

3

Findings that changed priorities



No click demand

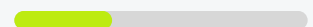


Fresh review value



Specific intent

SECTION PROGRESS



SURPRISES

12 What surprised us in this research

We now tell clients to stick with their actual brand names and put SEO effort into the GBP fields that can't be gamed.

Sources: BrightLocal Local Consumer Review Survey 2026, Whitespark Service Areas Impact Test 2024, Whitespark 7 Local Search Ranking Factors

Things that changed how we work with clients

Four specific changes to our own playbook came out of this research. We're naming them publicly because if you're hiring any SEO agency right now, these are the standards worth checking they actually follow.

Change 1: GBP post cadence.

Our previous approach: monthly posts were acceptable. Our new approach: weekly posts minimum across all clients. Why: engagement signals rose sharply in Whitespark's 2026 weighting, and the businesses posting weekly are seeing more stable Local Pack rankings than the ones posting monthly.

Change 2: Schema markup priority.

Our previous approach: schema markup was a nice to have task we'd address after content optimization. Our new approach: schema is a must have, implemented before content optimization, not after. Why: AI Overview citation patterns and Google's own Search Central documentation now treat structured data as a baseline expectation, not an advanced tactic.

Change 3: Route specific pages for moving companies.

Our previous approach: city specific pages were sufficient for moving company clients. Our new approach: origin to destination route pages take priority over city only pages. Why: our own client data shows route pages drive significantly more qualified inquiries than we initially expected, especially in markets where national brokers dominate the generic city queries.

Change 4: Same day review response as the new standard.

SURPRISES

3

Findings that changed priorities



No click demand



Fresh review value



Specific intent

SECTION PROGRESS



SURPRISES

12 What surprised us in this research

Our previous approach: 48 hour review response was acceptable for most clients.
 Our new approach: same day or 24 hour maximum response across all clients.
 Why: BrightLocal 2026 shows 19% of consumers now expect same day response, up from 6% in 2025. That's a 3x jump in 12 months, and we expect the expectation to keep rising.

Sources: Whitespark 2026 Local Search Ranking Factors, BrightLocal Local Consumer Review Survey 2026, Semrush AI Overviews Study

Open questions we are still tracking

We don't have full answers to these yet. We're flagging them publicly so the next version of this report (quarterly updates) can address them with more data.

Question 1: How will AI Overview citation patterns evolve industry by industry through 2026? Currently, our dental and restoration clients are seeing faster AIO citation pickup. Moving and carpet cleaning are slower. We're tracking monthly AIO citation share across our client portfolio to see how this gap evolves.

Question 2: How much does the Google Verified badge impact different niches? The unified rollout completed in late 2025. We've already seen measurable impact in dental and legal. The impact in restoration, moving, and carpet cleaning is still developing. We're tracking client GBP performance metrics from before and after the badge transition.

Question 3: How much will the review response speed expectation keep rising? BrightLocal's data shows 19% of consumers expect same day response now, up from 6% in 2025. The trajectory is steep. We're tracking client response time benchmarks and customer feedback patterns to see if the expectation hits 30% or higher by year end.

Question 4: Where do voice search and local intent intersect for our 5 industries? Voice queries are growing across all of local search, but reliable industry specific data is limited. We're tracking SparkToro and BrightLocal updates on voice search behavior to see how voice specifically affects dental, legal, restoration, moving, and carpet cleaning differently.

SURPRISES

3

Findings that changed priorities



No click demand



Fresh review value



Specific intent

SECTION PROGRESS



FOCUS

13 Why Pexnet works with only 5 industries

Our 5 industry focus isn't accidental. It's deliberate strategy. Here's the reasoning, briefly.

Depth over breadth. Every industry has its own customer behavior, regulatory considerations, and search patterns. Dental patient acquisition logic looks nothing like moving company customer acquisition. Generalist agencies apply the same templates across industries and hope for the best. Niche specialists actually know the patterns. We chose to be the latter.

A 25 person team built around 5 verticals. Our writers, technical SEOs, and account managers actually understand the industries they work in. Each industry has documented playbooks we maintain and update.

New client onboarding runs 2 to 3 weeks faster than agencies starting from scratch on a niche they've never worked in before, because we're not learning your industry on your dime.

AI first SEO from day one. Every Pexnet campaign in 2026 has AI search optimization built in, not bolted on. Schema, FAQ format, and direct answer paragraphs are defaults across all client work. The GEO, AEO, and GSO terminology our team uses isn't a learning curve, it's standard practice.

Honest framing. We don't work with HVAC, plumbing, real estate, ecommerce, or SaaS businesses. We work with dental practices, law firms, restoration contractors, moving companies, and carpet cleaning businesses. Client fit comes first. Revenue comes second.

What this means for you: faster results because we know your industry already, fewer mistakes because we've seen the patterns before, and better strategy because we have benchmarks across multiple competitors in your exact niche.

To see who we are and how we think, visit our story and team.

FOCUS CREATES DEPTH

DENTAL

LAW

RESTORATION

MOVING

CARPET

FOCUS

5

Industries Pexnet serves deeply

Dental

Law

Restoration

Moving

Carpet

SECTION PROGRESS

PART 04

Closing Resources

19

Sources reviewed

Find answers sources and a clear next step.

Inside this part

- Owner questions
- Free local SEO check
- Research sources

OWNER QUESTIONS

14 6 questions service business owners ask us most

These 6 questions come up on almost every consultation call we run. Here are the straight answers, with no jargon and no sales pitch.

How long does local SEO take to show results?

GBP driven shifts typically show up in 60 to 90 days. Organic traffic growth takes 6 to 12 months. Ranking stabilization usually arrives at 12 to 18 months. The exact timeline depends on your foundation, your competition level, and how consistently the work gets done.

What drives faster results is a strong technical and GBP foundation, consistent monthly execution, and operating in a lower competition niche or market. What makes it slower is a weak foundation (technical issues, NAP inconsistencies), competing in major metros against

established players, and a start stop execution pattern where work gets paused every few months.

Real client examples we've seen: a Texas orthodontics practice went from 100 to 1,500 monthly visitors in 90 days. A Florida dental practice went from 10 to 30 monthly visitors to 4,500 in 12 months. These aren't isolated cases. They're the kind of timeline we see consistently when the foundation is solid and execution stays steady.

Should I focus on traditional SEO or AI search first?

Both, integrated together, not sequentially. Traditional SEO (technical, on page, content) is the foundation AI optimization runs on top of. AI optimization (schema, FAQ format, direct answer paragraphs) amplifies the traditional SEO outcomes. Doing schema alone without traditional foundation doesn't work, and doing traditional SEO without AI structure leaves citations on the table.

Semrush data backs this up. AI search users convert 4.4x better than organic search visitors. AI Overviews almost always cite pages that already have strong traditional SEO foundations. Brands appearing in AI summaries see compound visibility growth, because the AI mention reinforces the traditional ranking and vice versa.

The practical sequence we use with clients: months 1 to 2 build the foundation (technical, GBP). Months 3 to 4 layer in traditional SEO and AI optimization together (content + schema + FAQ format). Month 5 onward, optimize based on what the AI citations and traditional rankings actually show.

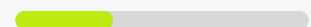
OWNER QUESTIONS

6

Questions addressed clearly

- ☒ Ranking
- ☐ Reviews
- ☐ Pages
- ☐ AI search
- ☐ GBP
- ☐ Timeline

SECTION PROGRESS



OWNER QUESTIONS

14 6 questions service business owners ask us most

Source: Semrush AI Search Optimization

Do I need a separate page for every service?

For your top 5 revenue services, yes. For low priority services, no. Each top service has different customer search intent, and dedicated pages capture treatment specific, practice area, or service type queries that drive direct conversions. Generic catch all pages consistently show 3x to 5x lower conversion rates in our client data.

For low priority services, a single "other services" or "additional services" page is fine. Mention each one on relevant primary service pages where it makes sense, but don't invest dedicated SEO effort into them.

Our rule of thumb: 80% of revenue typically comes from 5 to 8 services. Those 5 to 8 deserve their own pages. The rest fit comfortably as supporting content. Stretching SEO budget across 20 service pages dilutes the effort on the pages that actually matter.

How many Google reviews do I actually need?

A minimum of 20 reviews to clear the basic credibility bar, but monthly review velocity matters more than total count.

BrightLocal's 2026 data shows 47% of consumers won't use businesses with fewer than 20 reviews. The star rating threshold has moved to 4.5+ for serious consideration. 74% of consumers only care about reviews from the last 3 months. So 800 lifetime reviews with nothing recent matters less than 25 reviews with 4 to 6 fresh ones every month.

Practical targets: a new business should hit 20 reviews minimum in the first 3 months. An established business should sustain 4 to 6 new reviews per month. All businesses should aim for 90%+ response rate, same day response time, and a 4.5+ average star rating.

What doesn't work: incentivizing reviews (FTC violation since 2024), fake reviews (detection has improved, legal consequences are real), or batch collection campaigns where 50 reviews land in one week and then nothing for 6 months (Google detects the pattern and the trust signal weakens).

Source: BrightLocal Local Consumer Review Survey 2026

Can I rank in multiple cities with one website?

OWNER QUESTIONS

6

Questions addressed clearly

- ☒ Ranking
- ☒ Reviews
- ☐ Pages
- ☐ AI search
- ☐ GBP
- ☐ Timeline

SECTION PROGRESS



OWNER QUESTIONS

14 6 questions service business owners ask us most

Yes, but you need a unique page for each city. A dedicated page per major service area with minimum 600 words of locally unique content. Each page should reference local landmarks, neighborhoods, and regulations specific to that area. Local schema markup (areaServed, geo) should be implemented on each city page.

What doesn't work is templated pages with just the city name swapped, a single page targeting multiple cities at once, or a generic "service areas" list page without dedicated city pages behind it.

The practical approach for service area businesses: pick your top 5 service areas first and build dedicated city pages for each. Make sure each page has locally deep content (not template content). Internal link city pages to related nearby city pages.

Set the GBP service area accurately because even though it has zero ranking impact, it helps user clarity about where you actually work.

Source: Whitespark Service Areas Impact Test 2024

Is local SEO worth it if I'm already running Google Ads?

Yes. Ads and SEO complement each other. They aren't replacements for each other. Google Ads gives you short term visibility and immediate leads. SEO gives you long term compound visibility with a lower cost per lead over time. Local Services Ads (LSA) sit between them with a pay per lead model where you only pay for qualified leads.

The combination of ads, SEO, and GBP optimization dominates the Local Pack, organic results, and AI Overview spaces simultaneously. Clients running ads plus SEO together consistently outperform single channel competitors in our data. Ads only clients are dependent on ad spend and have no organic foundation to fall back on.

SEO only clients see slower initial results but build sustainable long term visibility.

Practical recommendation: SEO foundation is a must, no exceptions. Add ads and LSA when you need short term visibility or want to capture a specific opportunity quickly. Plan for the long term knowing SEO compounds over time, while ad spend either stays constant or rises as competition increases.

Source: Google Local Services Ads Official Page

OWNER QUESTIONS

6

Questions addressed clearly

- ☒ Ranking
- ☒ Reviews
- ☒ Pages
- ☐ AI search
- ☐ GBP
- ☐ Timeline

SECTION PROGRESS

NEXT STEP

15 Get a free local SEO check

If you want to see how your business measures against the audit framework in Section 11 but don't want to run it yourself, we'll run the check for you. No cost, no commitment.

What you'll get. A GBP completeness audit against the 95%+ benchmark. A review of your service or practice area page coverage. A city page depth analysis. A review velocity and response rate calculation. An AI Overview readiness assessment for your top 5 service pages.

Delivery. 3 business days from request. Plain English summary, not a 40 page PDF nobody reads. We identify your top 5 priority actions and estimate the likely impact of each one.

Who this is for. US based dental practices, law firms, restoration contractors, moving companies, and carpet cleaning businesses. The 5 niches we work in.

Who this is not for. Non US service businesses (we have international experience, but this report and audit framework are US focused). Industries outside our 5 niches (we'll refer you to specialists in your space). Businesses looking for guaranteed rankings (we share honest observations, not guarantees).

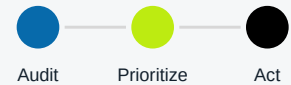
How to request. Visit our contact page, mention "free local SEO check" in your message, and include your website URL and GBP link.

If you fit, we'd love to take a look. If you don't, we'd rather tell you upfront than waste your time.

NEXT STEP

Free

Local SEO check for service businesses



A CLEAR FIRST STEP



SECTION PROGRESS



SOURCES

16 The 19 sources we used

We directly cited these 19 sources throughout the report. Each source is verified, either primary research or material published by a Google trusted publisher. Links are below so you can verify any number yourself.

Primary research sources (Tier 1)

1. SparkToro 2024 Zero Click Search Study. Used for: 58.5% of US searches end without a click. Link 2. Semrush AI Overviews Study: What 2025 SEO Data Tells Us. Used for: AI

Overviews appear in 15.69% of queries (November 2025). Link 3. Whitespark 2026 Local Search Ranking Factors Report. Used for: GBP is the #1

local ranking factor. Link 4. BrightLocal Local Consumer Review Survey 2026. Used for: 97% read reviews,

89% expect business responses. Link

Google's own primary sources

5. Google Search Central Local Business Structured Data. Used for: Official

LocalBusiness schema documentation. Link 6. Google Search Central Blog E E A T Update. Used for: The Experience pillar

SOURCES

19

Research sources reviewed



Primary research



Google sources



Industry validation

SECTION PROGRESS



SOURCES

16 The 19 sources we used

added to Google's quality framework. Link 7. Google Search Central Blog Quality Rater Guidelines Update. Used for: Latest guideline updates on page quality evaluation. Link 8. Think with Google Local Search Statistics. Used for: 46% of all Google searches have local intent. Link 9. Google Local Services Ads Official Page. Used for: Official LSA categories and Google Verified badge information. Link

Industry validation sources

10.Search Engine Land Google AI Overviews Surge and Pullback Data. Link 11.Pew Research Center AI Summary Click Behavior. Link 12.Whitespark Service Areas Impact Test 2024. Link 13.Whitespark 7 Local Search Ranking Factors. Link 14.BrightLocal Consumer Search Behavior Research. Link 15.Semrush How to Optimize for AI Search Results in 2026. Link 16.Semrush AI Search Trends for 2026. Link 17.Backlinko Local SEO Statistics. Link 18.Statista US Mobile Search Market Share Data. Link 19.HubSpot Marketing Statistics 2026. Link

These sources were reviewed in February 2026. Each one is publicly accessible. Methodology and scope details are covered in Section 3. This report is updated quarterly, and the latest version always lives at pexnet.com/blog/local-seo-growth-insights-us-service-businesses.

SOURCES

19

Research sources reviewed

Primary research

Google sources

Industry validation

SECTION PROGRESS

CLOSING

Closing note

If you've read this far, thank you. 15,000 words is a real commitment, and we wrote every section assuming a busy owner would actually use what's inside.

The patterns in this report will keep evolving through 2026 and beyond. We'll update this report every quarter as new research comes out, new client data accumulates, and new patterns emerge. If you downloaded this PDF, you'll get the updates automatically.

If you want to talk about how any of this applies to your specific business, our free local SEO check is the fastest way to get a concrete next step.

Good luck out there. The owners who act on what's in this report this quarter will be the ones outranking their competitors by next year.

The Pexnet Team

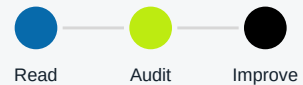
Read. Audit. Act.

The strongest local visibility gains begin with clear priorities.

CLOSING

2026

The quarter to act with clarity



SECTION PROGRESS

