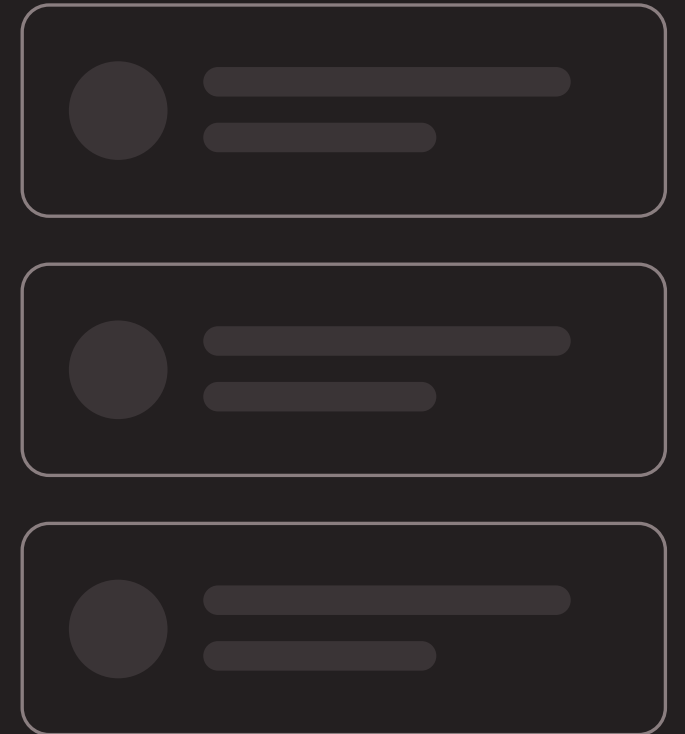




Marketing That Connects

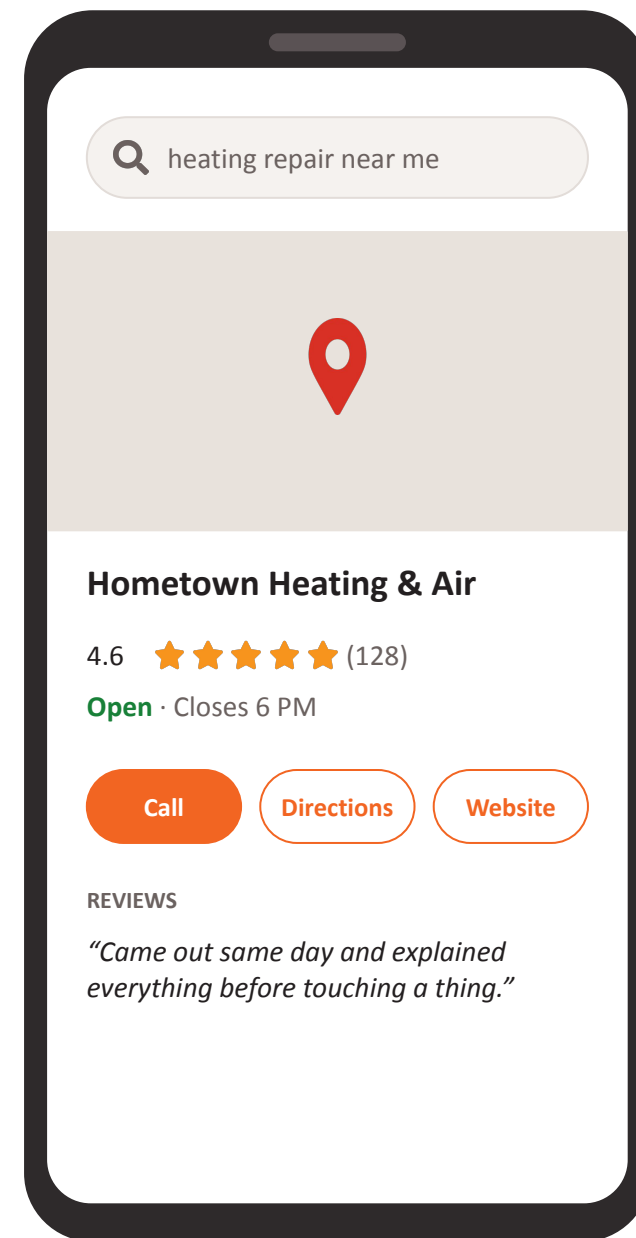
Reaching Today's Customer

What to focus on now, and what you can safely ignore.



Your next customer is checking you out right now.

You just don't know it yet.



84%



of consumers searched online for a local business
in the last three months

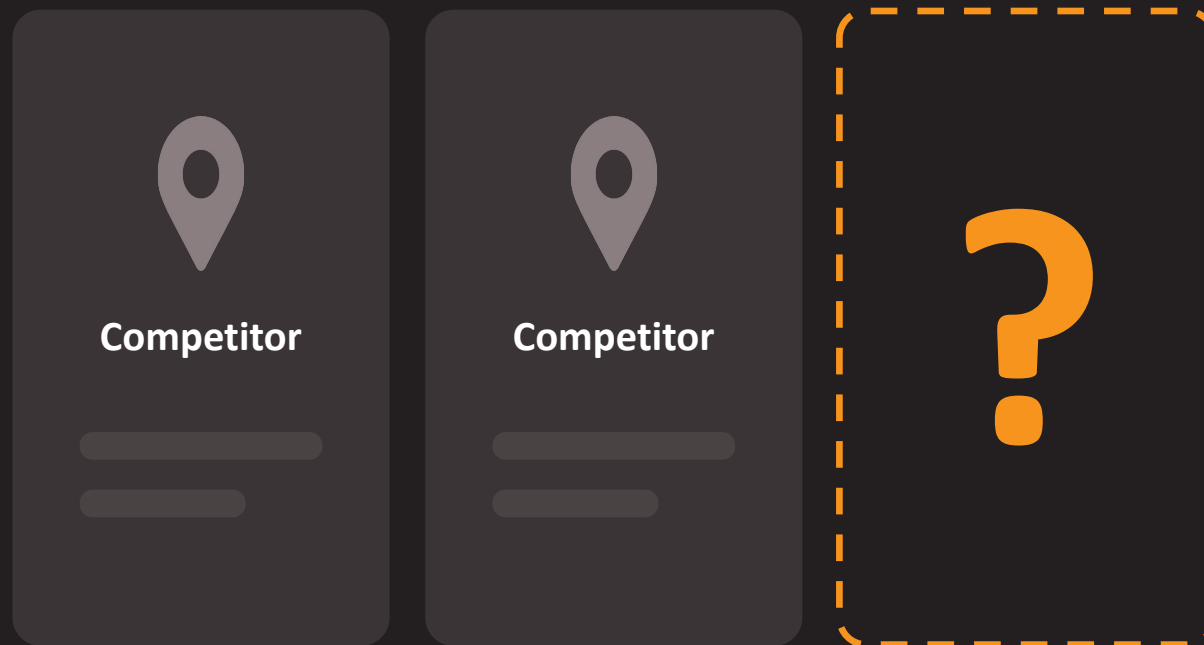
75%

decide which business to use in
under 30 minutes

28%

decide in under
five minutes

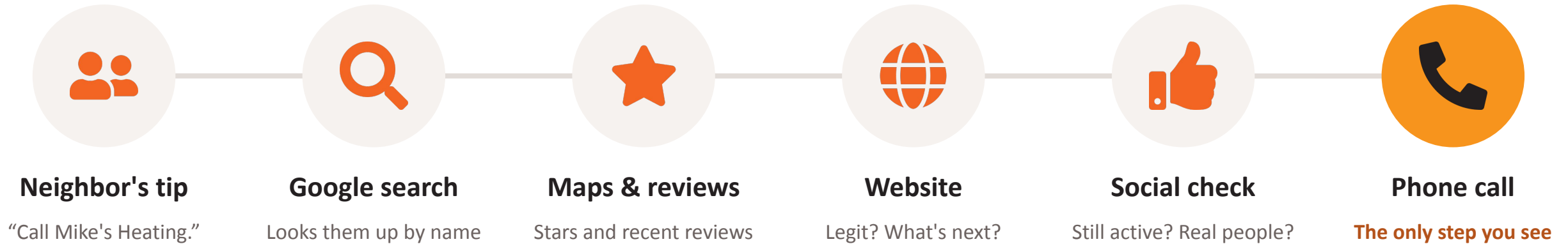
3



72% of customers look at three or fewer businesses before choosing.

Are you one of the three?

Even word-of-mouth ends in a search.



75%

of consumers used more than one channel in their most recent local business search.

Three jobs. One shortlist.



01

Found

Get on the shortlist



02

Chosen

Win the shortlist



03

Remembered

Skip the shortlist next time



Powered by working smarter — AI as the engine behind all three

01

Get Found.

You can't be chosen if you're not on the list.



Search is becoming a conversation.

THEN

 furnace repair

NOW

“Our furnace is banging and the house is 58 degrees. It's a 12-year-old Carrier. Should we repair or replace it, and who's good in Linden that can come today?”

Dana, typing into an AI assistant

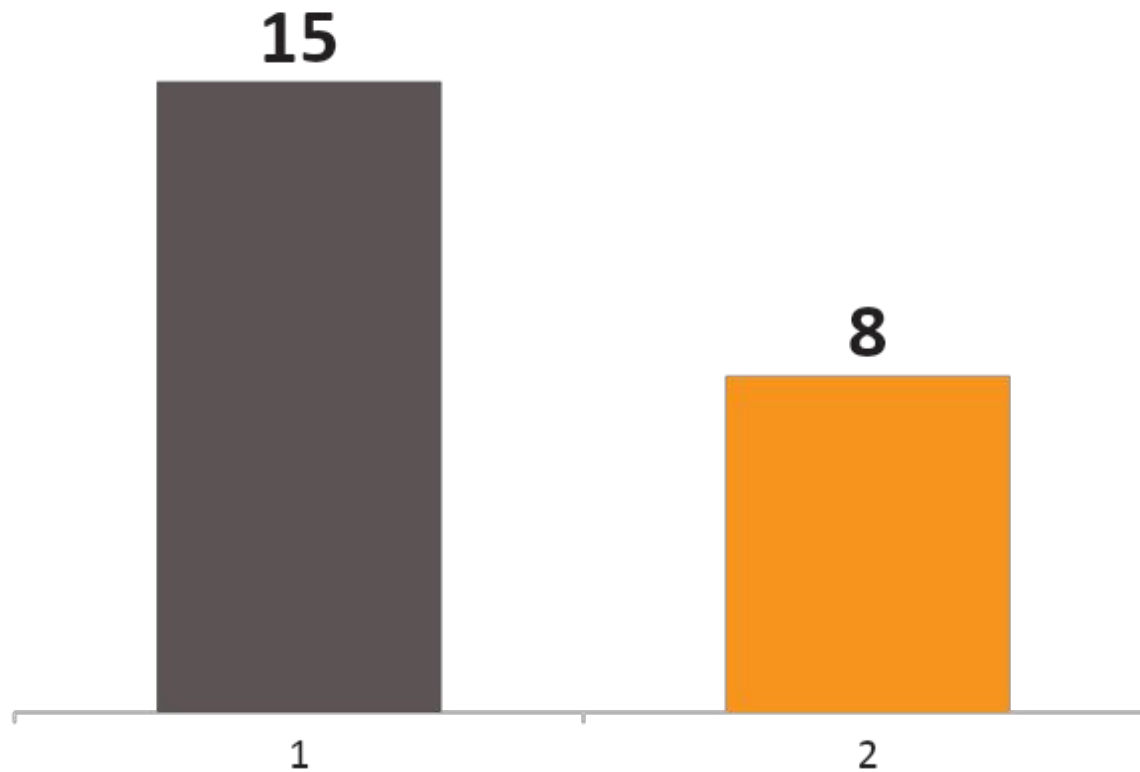
77%

of searches with 6+ words trigger an AI answer, vs. 23% of 1–3 word searches

45%

of consumers used AI tools for local recommendations last year, up from 6%

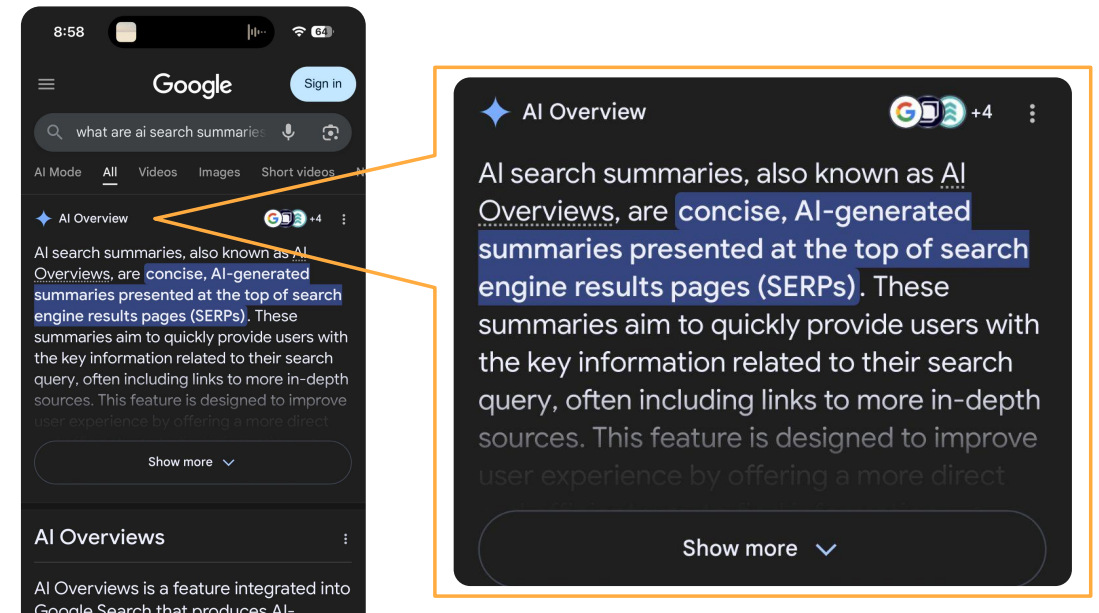
The click is disappearing.



Source: Pew Research Center, July 2025 (68,879 Google searches by 900 U.S. adults)

When Google shows an AI summary, people click a website about half as often.

They clicked the links inside the summary just 1% of the time.



AI makes the list. Google checks it.



AI suggests a few names



They check you on Google



Then they call

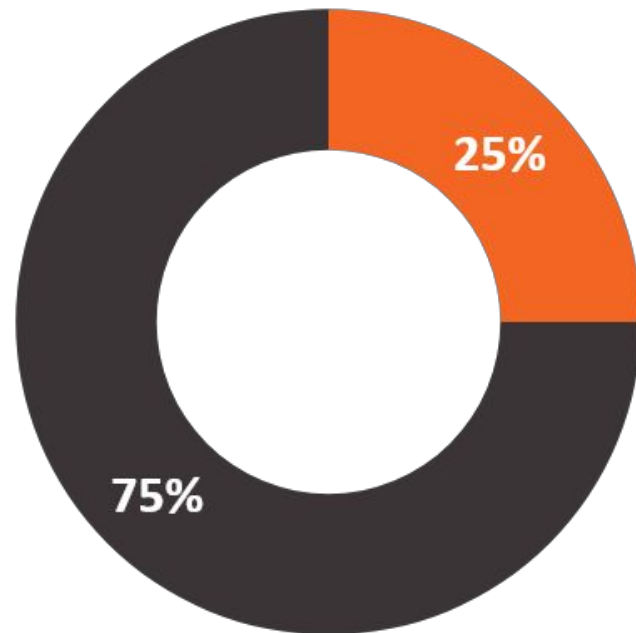
18%

of AI users felt ready to contact the business AI recommended. The rest kept researching.

43%

of people who start a local search with AI go check Google next.

AI trusts what other people say about you.



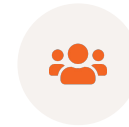
■ Your website ■ Everywhere else

Where the other 75% comes from



Reviews

Google, Yelp, Facebook, BBB, Angi



Community conversations

Reddit, Nextdoor, local Facebook groups



“Best of” lists & local news

Roundups, news stories, event pages



Directories

Chamber listings, industry directories

You can check this yourself, tonight.

Ask the question your customer would ask. See whether you get named.

TYPE THIS INTO CHATGPT, GEMINI, OR GOOGLE AI MODE

“Who’s the best HVAC company in Linden for a same-day furnace repair?”

- Were you named at all?
- Who was named instead?
- Which sites did it cite?
- Was what it said about you correct?

What a 126-million-prompt study found



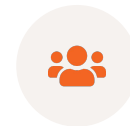
Getting mentioned isn’t the same as getting cited.

On Gemini, the overlap between brands mentioned and sites cited can be as low as 30%.



Every AI tool answers differently.

ChatGPT cites about 15 sources per answer. Gemini cites about 3. Check more than one.



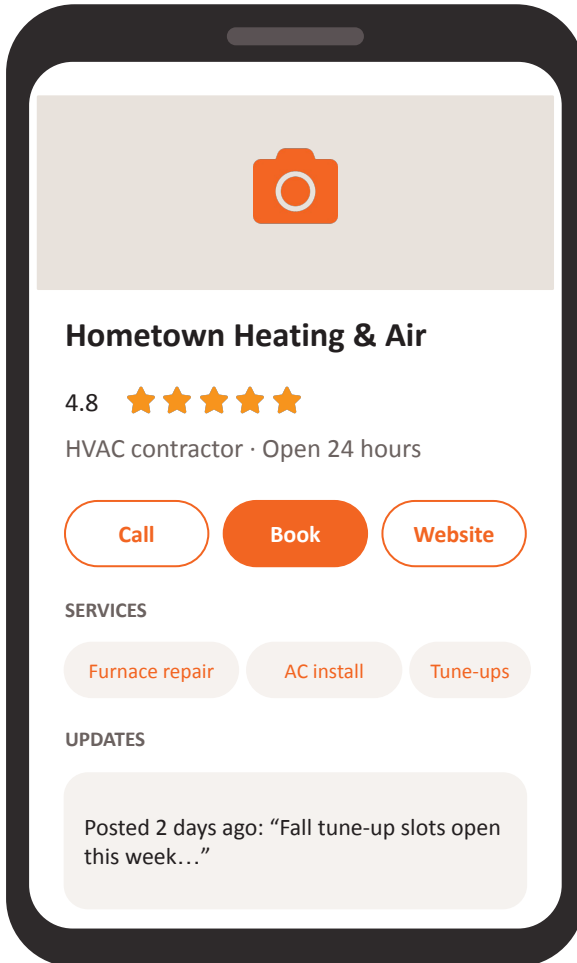
Other people’s sites shape your story.

Reviews, community threads, and local publishers decide how AI describes you.



Do this once a month, on two different tools. If you’re never named, that’s your gap.

For most customers, this is your homepage.



The 7-point profile check

- ✓ Primary category, exactly right
- ✓ Every service you want to be found for
- ✓ Accurate hours, holidays too
- ✓ Real, recent photos (no stock)
- ✓ A booking or contact link
- ✓ Answers to common questions
- ✓ A fresh post (or more) every week

2.7×

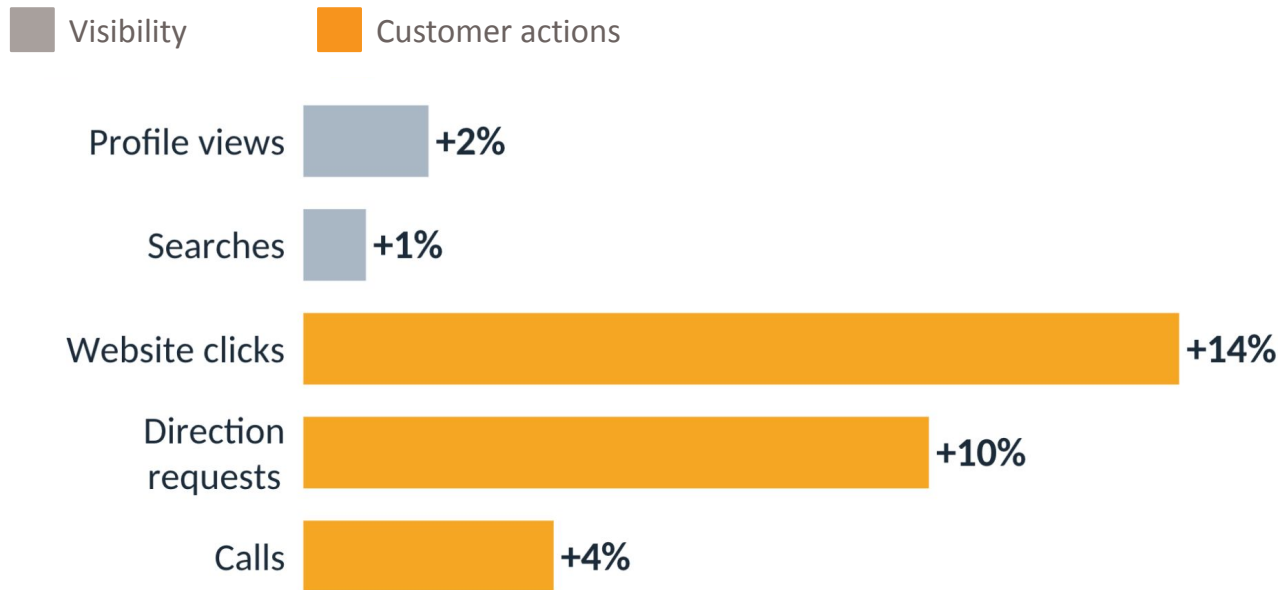
more likely to be seen as reputable
with a complete profile

35%

of small businesses don't even
have a Google Business Profile

Posting didn't make them much more visible. It made them more chosen.

An 80+ location behavioral health provider · 10-location sample · June → July 2026



+8%

more customer actions in one month

Calls + direction requests + website clicks.
Visibility moved just 1–2%.



Rule of thumb: post at least weekly, up to 3× a week when you have something real to share.

Phones out.

Look yourself up on Google Maps.

- ☐ Your star rating
- ☐ How many reviews you have
- ☐ The date of your newest review
- ☐ Did you reply to it?

Bonus: when was your last post?



60 seconds

How'd you do? The bar just moved.



4.5+

STAR RATING

31% will only use a business rated 4.5 or higher, up from 17% a year ago.



20+

REVIEWS

47% won't use a business with fewer than 20 reviews.



3 mo.

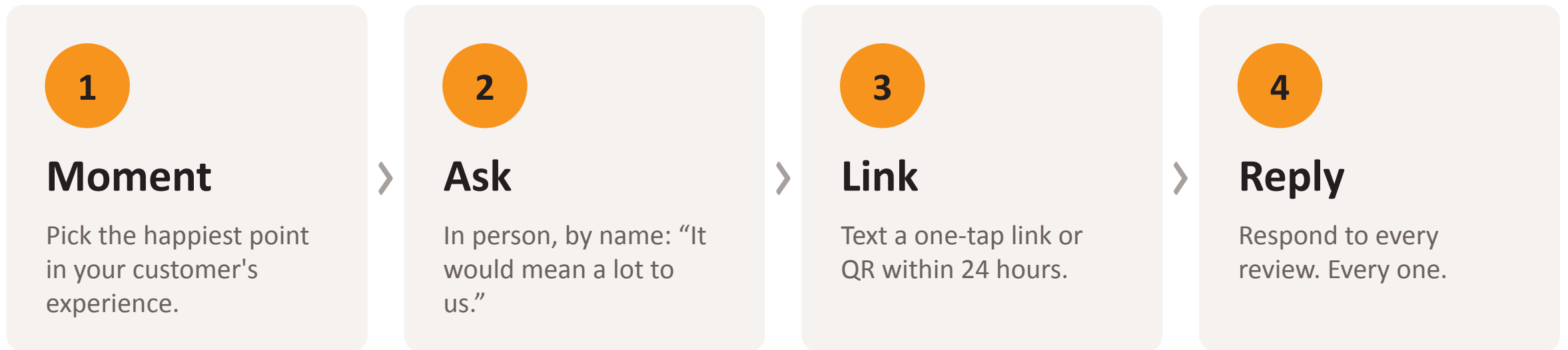
RECENCY

74% only care about reviews written in the last three months.

Don't chase a perfect 5.0. Only 10% of consumers require one.

Build a review engine, not a review campaign.

Reviews are marketing you don't have to write.



 **Repeat with every customer. Assign one owner.**

6%

of consumers say they wouldn't leave a review.
Most just need to be asked.

Every reply is written for the next customer.



Jordan P.

★☆☆☆☆ 2 days ago

Tech showed up two hours late and nobody called to let me know.

Response from the owner

Jordan, you're right: a two-hour wait with no call isn't okay, and I'm sorry. We've changed how we notify customers about delays. I'd like to make it right, so please call me directly at the office. — Mike

80%

are more likely to choose a business that responds to all its reviews

50%

are put off by generic, copy-paste replies

The 1-star playbook:

Thank

Own it

Take it offline

Fix it

And 19% now expect a same-day reply.



MONDAY MORNING

Pick your review moment. Set up the link. Reply to every review from the last 90 days.

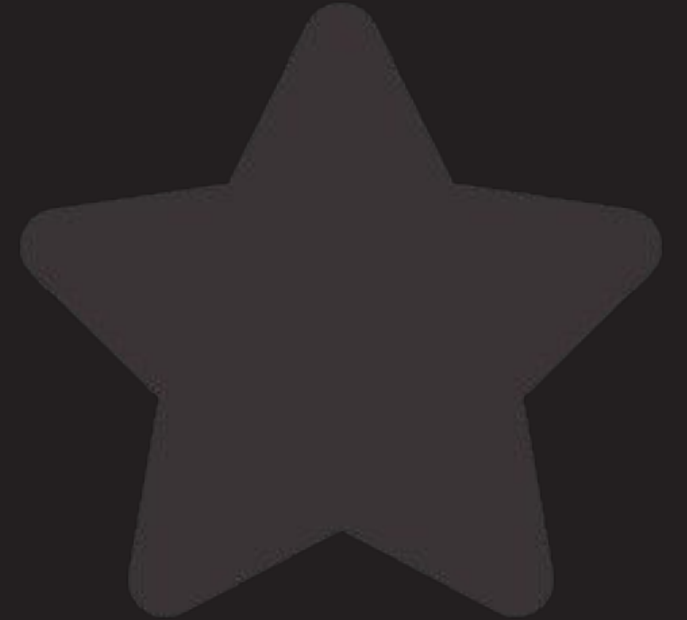
02

Get Chosen.

Making the list gets you considered. Trust gets you picked.



After reading positive reviews, 54% go to your website next.



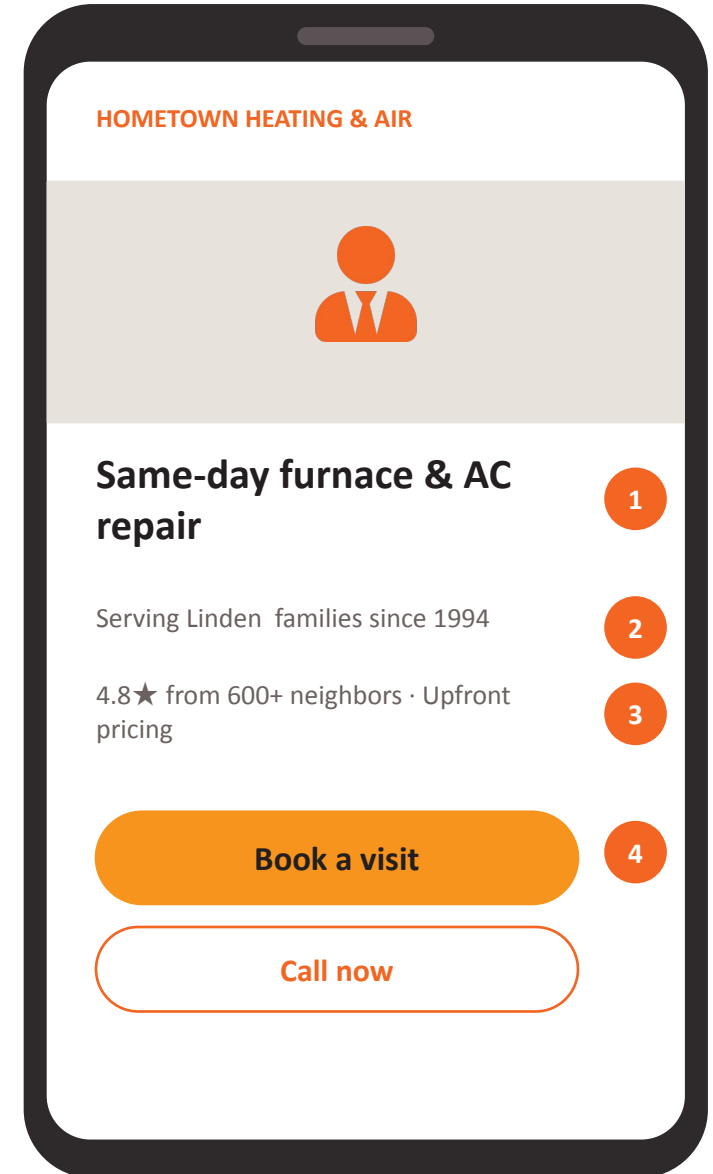
The 10-second test.

Can a stranger answer these in 10 seconds, on a phone?

- 1 What do you do?
- 2 Who do you help, and where?
- 3 Why you?
- 4 What should I do next?



73% of local searches start on a phone. Test on yours.



If you don't tell your story, someone else will.

Reviews are what customers say. Testimonials are the stories you choose to tell.



Written quote

One specific line that proves it.



Video testimonial

Two minutes. One phone.



Before & after

Show the change.



Customer story

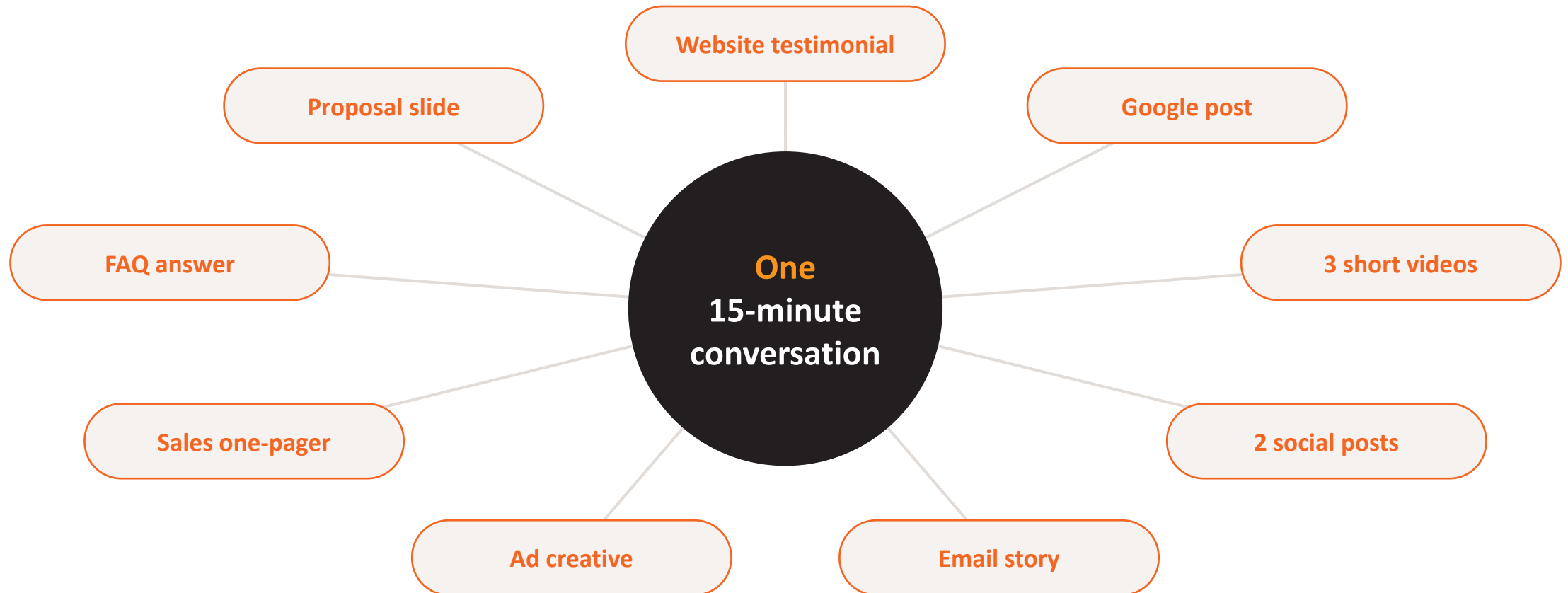
Problem → choice → result.

Ask three questions

- 1 What was going on before?
- 2 Why did you pick us?
- 3 What's different now?

Specific beats glowing.

Capture once. Use everywhere.



Don't create more content. Answer more questions.

Stop asking “What should we post?” Start asking “What do customers ask before they buy?”



Pain

“Why is my furnace banging?”

They need help now.



Budget

“How much does a new furnace cost?”

They need a range.



Doubt

“Is it worth replacing a 12-year-old furnace?”

They need trust before information.

Questions every business should answer:

What does it cost?

What should I expect?

How long does it take?

How do I choose?

Is this right for me?

Make your answers easy to quote.



Lead with the answer.

No warm-up paragraphs.



Use the customer's question as the heading.

In their words, not yours.



Build a real FAQ.

On your website and your Google profile.

BEFORE

At Hometown Heating & Air, we've proudly served families for over 30 years with an unwavering commitment to excellence, and we believe every home deserves...

AFTER

How long does a furnace replacement take?

Most installs take one day. Here's what can stretch it to two: ductwork changes, permits, and...

**You don't need a production.
You need a phone and a face.**

63%

of consumers would rather watch a short video to learn about a product.

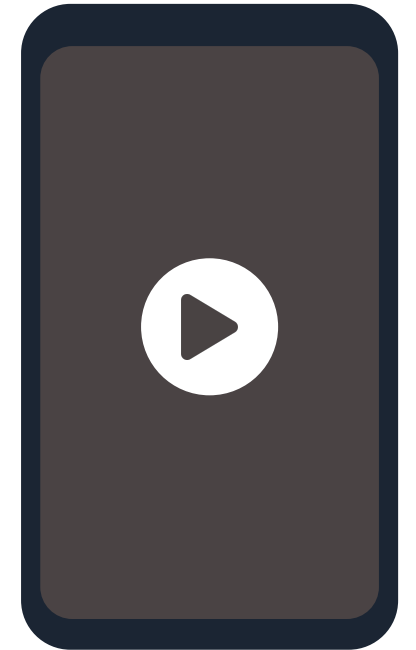
Only 12% would rather read an article.



Answer a FAQ



Meet the team



Behind the scenes



MONDAY MORNING

Run the 10-second test on your phone. Write down your top 10 customer questions.

03

Get Remembered.

The best customer is the one who never has to search again.



5–25x

Acquiring a new customer costs 5 to 25 times more than keeping one you already have.

Rent your reach. Own your list.



Rented

Followers · Platforms · Algorithms

They can change the rules tomorrow.



Owned

Email list · Customer list · Phone numbers

Yours to keep. No algorithm required.

Five simple plays



Seasonal reminder



"We miss you"
note



Referral ask



Review ask



One helpful tip a
month

Four emails a year beats zero.

Give social a job.

Pick one or two. Consistency beats volume.



Credibility



Education



Community



Recruiting



Customer stories

Your local advantage: you're actually here.



Chambers & business associations



Schools & youth sports



Nonprofit partners



Complementary businesses



Local media & events



MONDAY MORNING

Export your customer list. Send one genuinely helpful email this month.

04

Work Smarter.

Same expertise. Less of your Saturday.



AI doesn't replace expertise. It makes expertise easier to scale.



Research

Customer questions · Competitor check · Review analysis



Create

First drafts · Repurposing · FAQs · Video scripts · Review replies



Operate

SOPs · Meeting notes · Spreadsheets · Campaign plans

58%

of small businesses now use generative AI, up from 23% in 2023.

Try this tonight: let AI read your reviews.

YOUR PROMPT

Here are our last 50 customer reviews. Tell me:

1. What do customers consistently love?
2. What complaints come up more than once?
3. What exact words do customers use to describe us?
4. What makes us different, in their words?
5. What questions should our marketing answer?

SAMPLE ANSWER · FICTIONAL BUSINESS

They love:

On-time arrival, clean work, “explained everything”

Repeat complaint:

Scheduling callbacks take too long

Their words:

“Honest.” “No pressure.” “Explained everything.”

Your differentiator:

Clear explanations, not “quality service”

Answer next:

What does a tune-up include? Repair or replace?



Remove customer names and anything sensitive before you paste.

The generic trap.

If AI can write it without you, customers can find it without you.

GENERIC

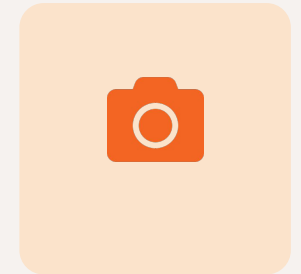
In today's fast-paced world, your comfort matters! Elevate your home with seamless heating solutions. Contact us today!



Stock photo

SPECIFIC

7:40 a.m. Tuesday: Dana's furnace quit overnight. Mike had heat back on by 9. Here's the \$12 part that failed, and how to spot it early.



Real job photo

✦✦✦ **AI drafts. You add the proof:** a real story, a real photo, a real price, a real opinion.

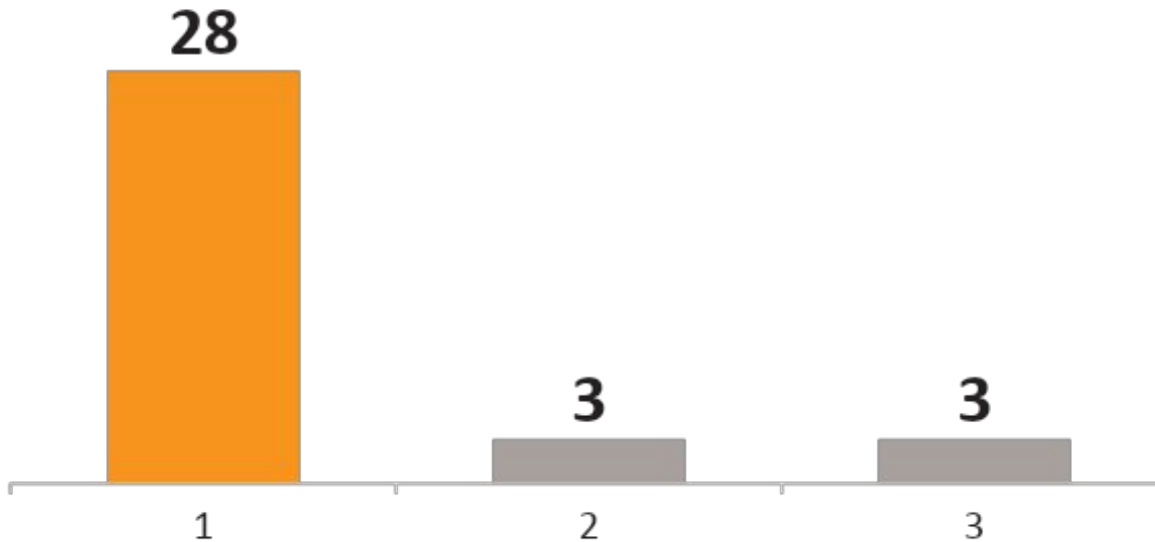


MONDAY MORNING

Run the review-analysis prompt. Pick one weekly task to hand to AI.

AI can get you published. It can't get you trusted.

2,000 AI-written articles, 20 brand-new sites, no human editing. Share still ranking in Google's top 100:



Sixteen months later: still below where it started.

Unsupervised AI content gets indexed. It doesn't get chosen.

8×

Pages holding Google's #1 spot are eight times more likely to be human-written.

42,000 blog posts analyzed

2×

Marketers with a real human editor are twice as likely to report strong results. Hand editing to AI and you do worse than average.

1,042 content marketers surveyed

AI is a force multiplier. It isn't a strategy.



What AI is great at

- ✓ Speed and first drafts
- ✓ Repurposing one thing into ten
- ✓ Summarizing and organizing
- ✓ Never getting bored



What still takes a person

- > Deciding what actually matters
- > Knowing your market and your customers
- > Editing, checking, and killing the bad draft
- > Sounding like you, not like everyone
- > Owning the result

45%

of AI answers in a 3,000-response news study had at least one significant problem

Stop trying to be everywhere. Fix things in order.

START HERE

1 Foundation

Google profile · Reviews ·
Website · Know where leads
come from

2 Trust

Testimonials · Answered
questions · Video

3 Connection

Email · Community · Social
with a job

4 Acceleration

Ads · Automation · AI
workflows

Your next 30 days.

1



Fix your Google profile

Complete it, then post every week.

2



Build your review engine

One moment, one ask, one link. Reply to everything.

IF YOU ONLY DO ONE

3



Capture one customer story

Then use it five ways.

4



Answer your top 10 questions

On your website and your Google profile.

5



Hand one task to AI

Start with your reviews.

How connected are you to today's customer?

Take the 2-minute scorecard. Get your grade.

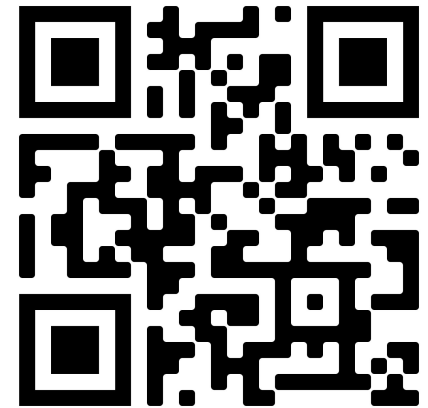
Found

Chosen

Remembered

Efficient

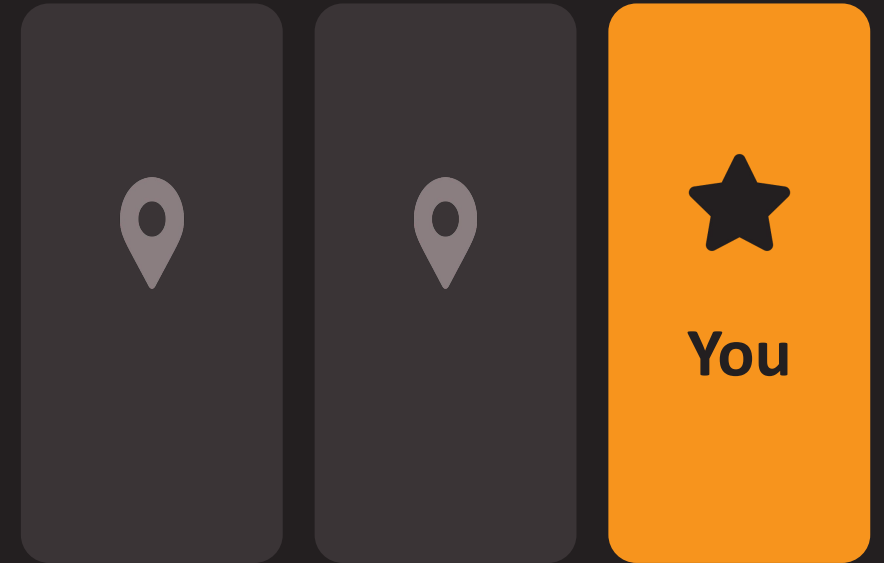
No sign ups. Just submit your answer & get your results.



Scan Here to Get Your Score

Right now, someone is
choosing between three
businesses.

Make it easy to choose you.



Sources

BrightLocal, Consumer Search Behavior 2026 (speed report, June 2026; 1,227 U.S. consumers)	brightlocal.com/research/consumer-search-behavior-speed
BrightLocal, Consumer Search Behavior 2026 (channels report, July 2026)	brightlocal.com/research/consumer-search-behavior-channels
BrightLocal, Local Consumer Review Survey 2026 (February 2026; 1,002 U.S. adults)	brightlocal.com/research/local-consumer-review-survey
BrightLocal, Local SEO Statistics 2026 (incl. Google Business Profile data)	brightlocal.com/resources/local-seo-statistics
BrightLocal, SMB Marketing 2025 (as referenced in LCRS 2026)	brightlocal.com/research/smb-marketing-2025
Pew Research Center, “Google users are less likely to click on links when an AI summary appears” (July 2025)	pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/07/22
Ahrefs, AI Overviews and clickthrough rate (2025 study; May 2026 update)	ahrefs.com/blog/ai-overviews-reduce-clicks-update
Seer Interactive, AIO Impact on Google CTR (2025–2026)	seerinteractive.com/insights/aio-impact-on-google-ctr-september-2025-update
NP Digital, AI Overview frequency by query length (March 2025)	Via Neil Patel, “You're Doing SEO Wrong”

Sources (continued)

NP Digital, AI visibility factors & content types survey (May 2026; 500 marketers and business owners)	NP Digital webinar, 2026
Neil Patel, “You're Doing SEO Wrong” (YouTube, July 1, 2026)	youtube.com/watch?v=H7m6myWuwII
Google, “Micro-Moments” framework (2015)	Think with Google
Boost Creative client data, Google Business Profile Performance, June–July 2026 (10-location sample)	Boost Creative
Sterling Sky, “Do Google Posts Impact Ranking?”	sterlingsky.ca/do-google-posts-impact-ranking
HigherVisibility, “How Often Should You Post on Google Business Profiles?” (July 2026)	highervisibility.com/seo/learn/how-often-post-google-business-profile
Townsquare Interactive, “How Often Should You Post on Your Google Business Profile?” (April 2026)	townsquareinteractive.com/blog/how-often-should-you-post-on-gbp
Nielsen Norman Group, “How Long Do Users Stay on Web Pages?” (Jakob Nielsen, 2011)	nngroup.com/articles/how-long-do-users-stay-on-web-pages
Wyzowl, State of Video Marketing 2026	wyzowl.com/video-marketing-statistics

Sources (continued)

Harvard Business Review, “The Value of Keeping the Right Customers” (Amy Gallo, 2014)	hbr.org/2014/10/the-value-of-keeping-the-right-customers
Litmus, State of Email 2025	litmus.com/blog/infographic-the-roi-of-email-marketing
U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Empowering Small Business (August 2025; 3,870 small businesses)	uschamber.com/technology/empowering-small-business-the-impact-of-technology-on-u-s-small-business
Gartner marketing predictions, via Marketing Dive (December 2023)	marketingdive.com/news/gartner-CMO-generative-AI-investments-2024-predictions/702805
Semrush, 2026 AI Visibility Index (126 million U.S. AI search prompts, Jan–Apr 2026)	ai-visibility-index.semrush.com
Semrush, AI Visibility features and free AI Visibility Checker	semrush.com/features/ai-visibility
EBU/BBC, “News Integrity in AI Assistants” (October 2025; 3,000+ responses, 18 countries)	ebu.ch/news/2025/10
SE Ranking / Search Engine Land, 16-month AI content experiment (March 2026; 2,000 articles, 20 domains)	searchengineland.com/ai-generated-content-google-search-experiment-472234
Semrush, “Does AI content rank well in search?” (April 2026; 42,000 blog posts)	semrush.com/blog/does-ai-content-rank-in-search-data-study

Sources (continued)

Orbit Media, Blogging Statistics 2026 (September 2026; 1,042 content marketers)

orbitmedia.com/blog/blogging-statistics