

Google Business Profile questions, answered

The exact Google Business Profile questions Lake Country contractors actually ask, answered with a verdict first, then why it happens, a self-check, and the honest fix, including which part is free to do yourself and which part is ongoing work.

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Why did my Google Business Profile calls drop suddenly?

Short answer: Check three things in order: whether the listing is still verified and not suspended, whether a competitor or a directory started outranking you in the map pack, and whether your hours, phone number, or service area changed (even by accident) in the last two weeks. Most sudden drops trace to one of those three, not to some invisible algorithm shift.

Why it happens

- **The listing itself got flagged or edited.** Google Business Profile lets anyone suggest an edit to a listing, and some of those edits post automatically. A wrong phone number, a changed category, or hours marked as permanently closed can all slip through without an email telling you it happened.
- **Someone outranked you in the map pack.** The 3-pack that shows above the organic results is ranked by Google on proximity, relevance, and prominence, in that order. A competitor who added photos, collected new reviews, or fixed their category can bump you out of the pack even though your business didn't change at all.
- **Your call tracking broke, not your calls.** If you use a call-tracking number on your profile and that number got disconnected, reassigned, or the forwarding lapsed, the calls may still be coming in through your regular line while the number you're watching shows nothing.

Ten-minute self-check

1. Search your business name on your phone with location services on, and confirm the listing still shows as verified (no gray 'suspended' or 'unclaimed' banner).
2. Open Google Business Profile Manager and check the 'Business Profile updates' section for edits you didn't make.
3. Confirm your primary category, hours, and phone number are exactly what they should be. A wrong category alone can knock you out of the map pack for your main service.
4. Search your main service plus your city from an incognito browser window and see who's in the 3-pack now that wasn't a month ago.
5. If you use a tracking number, call it yourself from a different phone and confirm it rings through.
6. Check your review count and rating against the same search. A jump in a competitor's reviews in the last 30 days often explains the swap.

The fix

If it's a bad edit or a wrong category, you can fix that yourself in Business Profile Manager for free in about five minutes. If a competitor genuinely outranked you on relevance and prominence, that's an ongoing job, not a one-time fix: fresh photos, accurate categories, and a steady trickle of reviews.

That's exactly what the Run plan (\$97/mo) keeps current for you, and Grow (\$297/mo) adds the review requests that keep the gap from reopening.

Also asked

- **Can someone else edit my Google Business Profile without my permission?** Yes. Google allows suggested edits from any signed-in user, and some categories of edits (hours, attributes) can post without your approval. Check the update history in Business Profile Manager regularly.
- **Does Google tell me if my listing gets suspended?** Sometimes, by email to the account owner, but the notice can land in spam or go to an old email address. The fastest check is searching your own business name and looking for a suspended or unclaimed banner.
- **How fast can a Google Business Profile problem be fixed?** A wrong category or hours error is fixed the moment you correct it, though it can take Google a few hours to a couple of days to reflect the change publicly. A suspension can take longer to appeal and resolve.

Why does my competitor show up on Google and I don't?

Short answer: It's almost always some combination of a more complete Google Business Profile, more recent reviews, and a website that actually says what you do in plain words. Google ranks local results on proximity, relevance, and prominence, and a competitor who's ahead on two of those three will usually beat you even if your work is better.

Why it happens

- **Their profile is simply more filled out.** Primary category, service list, service area, business description, Q&A, and photo count all feed relevance. A profile with 40 photos and every field filled in reads as more relevant to Google than one with a logo and a phone number.
- **They have more, or more recent, reviews.** Review count and review recency both factor into prominence. A business with 60 reviews from the last year will usually outrank one with 20 reviews from three years ago, even if the older business has been around longer.
- **Their website matches what people actually search.** If your homepage says 'quality service since 1998' and never says the word 'roofing' or your city, Google has less text to match against a search for 'roofer near me.' A competitor whose site plainly states the trade and the towns they serve gives Google an easier match.

Ten-minute self-check

1. Search your main service plus your city and note exactly who's in the map pack and in position 1 to 3 organically.
2. Open that competitor's Google Business Profile and count their reviews, photos, and whether every field (services, description, hours) is filled in.
3. Open their website on your phone and time how long it takes to find their phone number and what they actually do.
4. Check your own profile against the same list: category, services, description, photo count.
5. Search 'site:yourwebsite.com [your trade] [your city]' in Google to see whether your own site even contains those words together.

The fix

Filling out a Google Business Profile completely is free and you can do it yourself in an afternoon. Catching up on reviews and keeping the profile current every month is the part that actually takes ongoing time, which is what the Run plan (\$97/mo) covers. If your website itself doesn't say your trade and your service towns in plain language, that's a site problem, and it's included in the free build during the 14-day trial before either plan starts billing.

Also asked

- **Does paying for Google Ads make my competitor rank higher organically?** No. Google Ads and the organic map pack are separate systems. A paid ad above the map pack doesn't affect organic ranking either way.
- **Do I need to be the oldest business to rank first?** No. Recency and completeness of your Google Business Profile matter more than years in business for local ranking.
- **Can I fix this myself for free?** Yes, the profile fields cost nothing to fill out. What takes ongoing effort is the review flow and keeping photos and posts current, which is where most owners run out of time.

How do I get my business on Google Maps?

Short answer: Create and verify a free Google Business Profile at business.google.com. Verification for most service-area businesses (contractors who go to the customer instead of a storefront) happens by phone or video call now instead of a postcard, and it usually takes under a week from claim to live on Maps.

Why it happens

- **You have to claim the listing, not just exist.** Google sometimes auto-creates a placeholder listing from public data (a permit filing, an old directory). If nobody has claimed it, it can sit unverified and invisible in search even though the business is technically 'in' Google's system.
- **Verification proves you're real.** Google requires proof you actually run the business, by phone, video, or in some cases a postcard to a physical address, so a competitor can't claim your listing or fake theirs.
- **Service-area setup is different from a storefront.** If you work out of a home garage or a shop customers never visit, you set the listing as a service-area business and hide your street address, while still listing the towns you serve. Getting this wrong (showing a home address) can get a listing suspended.

Ten-minute self-check

1. Search your exact business name in Google Maps to see if a listing already exists unclaimed.
2. Go to business.google.com and search your business name and address.
3. If found, click 'Claim this business.' If not found, click 'Add your business.'
4. Choose service-area business if customers don't come to your location, and list every town you actually serve.
5. Pick the verification method Google offers (usually phone or video for service-area businesses) and complete it the same day if you can.

The fix

This part is free and you can do it yourself in under an hour, verification wait aside. Where it gets time-consuming is everything after verification: the photos, the service list, the description, and keeping it accurate as your service area or hours change. That upkeep is what the Run plan (\$97/mo) handles once your free trial build is live.

Also asked

- **Do I need a physical storefront to be on Google Maps?** No. Set the profile up as a service-area business, hide the address, and list the towns you actually work in.
- **How long does Google Business Profile verification take?** Phone or video verification is usually same day to a few days. Postcard verification, when offered, can take one to two weeks.
- **Is there a fee to be listed on Google Maps?** No, creating and verifying a Google Business Profile is free.

Why is my Google Business Profile suspended?

Short answer: The most common causes are a keyword stuffed into the business name (like 'Smith Roofing, Best Roofer in Delafield'), a residential address showing on a service-area business, using a virtual office or UPS box as the address, or too many edits in a short window that Google's spam system reads as manipulation. Fix the underlying issue before you appeal, or the appeal gets denied again.

Why it happens

- **The name doesn't match your real, registered business name.** Adding a city, a service, or a slogan into the business name field is against Google's guidelines and is the single most common suspension trigger for small contractors.
- **The address looks fake or hidden.** A residential address left visible on a service-area listing, a PO box, or a shared coworking address can all trigger an automated review.
- **Duplicate or rapid changes look like spam.** Two listings for the same business, or several major edits (name, category, address) within a short window, can trip Google's automated spam detection even when every edit was legitimate.

Ten-minute self-check

1. Log into Business Profile Manager and check for a red or yellow banner explaining the suspension reason.
2. Search your exact business name in Maps and see if a second, older duplicate listing exists.
3. Confirm the business name field matches your actual legal or DBA name exactly, no extra keywords.
4. Confirm no residential address is visible if you're a service-area business.
5. Review the edit history for the last 30 days for anything that looks like a bulk change.

The fix

Fixing the underlying issue (the name, the address, a duplicate) is free and something you can do yourself, but the appeal process itself can take Google anywhere from a few days to several weeks, and a second denied appeal is harder to reverse. If you want someone watching the profile so this doesn't happen again quietly in the background, that ongoing monitoring is part of the Run plan (\$97/mo).

Also asked

- **How long does a Google Business Profile suspension take to resolve?** It varies widely, from a few days to several weeks, depending on the reason and whether the first appeal is approved.
- **Will I lose my reviews if my profile gets suspended and reinstated?** Reviews are usually preserved through reinstatement, since the listing itself isn't deleted, just hidden while under review.

- **Can I create a new listing instead of appealing?** That risks a permanent suspension for duplicate listings. Fixing and appealing the original is the safer path.

Can I have two Google Business Profiles for one company?

Short answer: Only if they're genuinely separate, distinct locations or legally separate business entities. One company with two listings pointing at the same address or the same service area is a duplicate in Google's eyes and risks getting one or both suspended, even if you created them for different trades.

Why it happens

- **You run two different trades under one roof.** A lot of small operators do plumbing and HVAC, or roofing and gutters, and want a listing for each. Google generally allows this only if the business is genuinely licensed and staffed to operate as two distinct entities, not just two service categories tacked onto one crew.
- **You expanded into a second town.** A true second location, with its own address or at minimum its own dedicated phone line and service radius, can have its own listing. A second listing at the exact same address as the first almost always gets flagged.
- **Someone else created a duplicate by mistake.** Google sometimes auto-generates a second listing from a directory or permit record even when you never asked for one. That's not something you did, but it still needs to be found and merged or removed.

Ten-minute self-check

1. Search your exact business name in Google Maps and see how many results come back.
2. If more than one appears, open each and compare the address, phone number, and category.
3. For a true duplicate (same address, same phone), request removal of the older or less complete one through Google's duplicate reporting tool.
4. For a real second location, make sure it has its own distinct phone number and, ideally, its own service area that doesn't fully overlap the first.

The fix

Reporting and merging a duplicate is free through Google's own tools, though it can take Google days to weeks to process. If you're weighing whether a second trade or a second town genuinely justifies a second listing, that's a judgment call worth thirty minutes on a call rather than guessing and risking a suspension. Ongoing profile management for either setup is part of Run (\$97/mo).

Also asked

- **What happens if Google finds a duplicate listing?** Google may merge them automatically, or suspend one or both until you resolve it. It's safer to report and merge the duplicate yourself than to

wait.

- **Can I have one listing that covers two trades?** Yes, using a primary category and additional categories on a single profile is the standard approach for one crew doing more than one trade.
- **Do franchise or multi-location businesses need something different?** Yes, Google offers a bulk location management tool for businesses with ten or more locations, which is a different setup than a single owner-operator adding a second listing.

Does posting on Google Business Profile actually help?

Short answer: It helps a little on its own and helps more as a signal that the profile is actively managed, which is something Google's ranking system rewards indirectly through recency and engagement. Posts alone won't outrank a competitor with more reviews and a better filled-out profile, but skipping them entirely leaves an easy, free signal on the table.

Why it happens

- **Posts expire and stale profiles read as abandoned.** A standard Google Business Profile post disappears from view after seven days. A profile with no recent activity of any kind (no new photos, no posts, no review responses) can read to Google's system as less active than a competitor's.
- **Posts give you a second surface in search.** A recent post can show up directly in your knowledge panel, which is real space a competitor without one doesn't get, even if it doesn't move your map pack ranking on its own.
- **Most contractors quit after the first month.** Posting takes two minutes but is easy to forget between jobs. The businesses that keep it up for six months, tied to actual completed jobs or seasonal offers, are rare enough that it still stands out.

Ten-minute self-check

1. Open your Google Business Profile and check the date of your last post.
2. Check your last photo upload date the same way.
3. Search your business name and see if a post is currently showing in your knowledge panel.
4. Look at your top three competitors' profiles for the same thing, and note who's active and who isn't.

The fix

Posting itself is free and takes a couple of minutes per post. The part that actually gets skipped is doing it consistently every week for months, which is exactly the kind of small recurring task the Run plan (\$97/mo) covers as part of keeping your profile accurate and active.

Also asked

- **How often should I post on Google Business Profile?** Weekly is a reasonable target for a small contractor. Even monthly, tied to real job photos, is better than nothing.
- **Do Google Business Profile posts expire?** Standard update posts disappear from the default view after seven days. Event and offer posts can be set to run longer.
- **Can posting alone fix a low ranking?** No. Posting is a minor, free signal. Reviews, completeness of the profile, and your website's relevance carry far more weight.

Why did my Google ranking drop after I changed my website?

Short answer: A ranking drop right after a redesign is almost always technical, not content: broken redirects from old URLs, a slower page, missing title tags, or pages that got accidentally set to noindex. Google has to re-crawl and re-evaluate the new site, so a temporary dip of a few weeks is normal, but a drop that lasts longer usually points to one of those four causes.

Why it happens

- **Old URLs went nowhere instead of redirecting.** If your old site had pages at different addresses and the new one doesn't 301 redirect them to the closest match, Google sees a wall of dead links, and any ranking value those old pages had disappears instead of transferring.
- **The new site is slower or less mobile-friendly.** Google measures real-world load speed as part of ranking. A flashier new design with heavier images or unoptimized code can load slower than the plain old site it replaced, and that shows up in rankings within weeks.
- **A launch setting got left on by accident.** Nearly every website platform has a 'discourage search engines' or noindex setting used during development. If it doesn't get switched off at launch, the new site can be actively telling Google not to show it.

Ten-minute self-check

1. Search 'site:yourwebsite.com' in Google and count how many pages actually show up.
2. Pick three old page URLs (from a memory, an old bookmark, or Wayback Machine) and check whether they redirect or return a dead page.
3. View page source on your homepage and search for the word 'noindex.' If it's there, that page is telling Google to skip it.
4. Run your homepage through Google PageSpeed Insights and compare the mobile score to what you'd expect.
5. Check Google Search Console's Coverage report for a spike in 'excluded' or 'error' pages dated around the launch.

The fix

Checking for noindex tags and dead redirects is something you can do yourself for free with the steps above. Fixing them, and rebuilding proper redirects from an old site's full URL list, takes real technical work, which is included in the build itself during the free 14-day trial, and Run (\$97/mo) keeps Search Console and site health monitored afterward so this doesn't happen silently again.

Also asked

- **How long does a ranking dip after a redesign usually last?** A small, temporary dip of a few weeks while Google re-crawls the new site is normal. A drop that persists past six to eight weeks usually means something technical is wrong.
- **Do I need to redirect every old page?** Every page that had traffic or backlinks, yes. A blanket redirect of everything to the homepage is better than nothing but loses more ranking value than matching each old page to its closest new equivalent.
- **Can a redesign ever improve my ranking instead of hurting it?** Yes, a faster, more relevant site with proper technical setup can outrank the old one within a couple of months, which is the actual goal of doing it right.

Do I need a separate Google profile for each service area?

Short answer: No. One Google Business Profile can list up to twenty service-area towns from a single listing, and that's the correct setup for almost every one-crew contractor. A second listing per town is a duplicate risk, not a ranking advantage.

Why it happens

- **It looks like a shortcut to rank in more towns.** The logic seems sound: a profile named for each town should rank in each town. In practice Google treats this as an attempt to manipulate local search and it's a leading cause of suspensions for small service businesses.
- **Google already has a tool for this.** The service-area field on a single profile exists specifically so a plumber or roofer can tell Google 'I work in these fifteen towns' without needing a separate listing for each one.
- **Real second locations are a different situation.** A business with a genuine second shop, staffed and reachable on its own line, is a legitimate second listing. That's different from one crew and one phone number trying to appear in multiple towns.

Ten-minute self-check

1. Open Business Profile Manager and check how many towns are currently listed under your service area.
2. Confirm the list matches where you actually, regularly do work, not an aspirational wish list.
3. If you have more than one listing under the same name and phone number, treat that as a duplicate to merge, not a strategy.

The fix

Setting or updating the service-area list is free and takes a few minutes in Business Profile Manager. If you're trying to actually rank better in a specific town beyond just being listed there, that comes down to city-specific content on your website and local reviews, which is a Grow plan (\$297/mo) piece, not a profile trick.

Also asked

- **How many service areas can one Google Business Profile list?** Up to twenty.
- **Will listing more towns automatically get me more calls from those towns?** Not by itself. Being listed is the minimum requirement, not a ranking advantage on its own.
- **Is it against the rules to list a town I rarely work in?** It's against Google's guidelines to list a service area you don't genuinely, regularly serve, and it can trigger a review.

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