Grow That Local

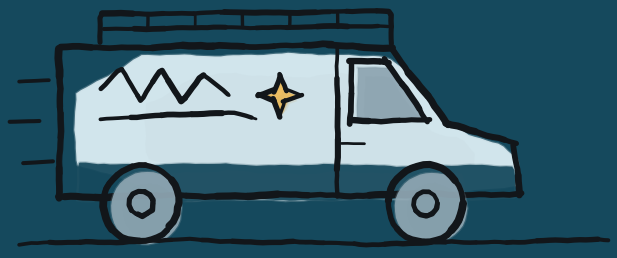
a free guide

The state of local trade marketing 2026

We looked at 40,065 Google Maps results for 46 local trades in 10 Southeast cities. Here's what it takes to reach the map's top 3, trade by trade.

For owners, trade groups and local press.

- 15 short sections in 5 parts
- 45 things you can do in the next 24 hours
- An example in every section
- Sources for every figure



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Before you start

When a customer searches "plumber" or "house cleaning" on their phone, Google shows a map with three businesses at the top. Those three get seen first. So we asked a plain question: what do the businesses in those three spots have that the rest don't?

In November 2026 we ran one Google Maps search for each of 46 local trades and services in each of 10 cities: Nashville, Tulsa, Louisville, Huntsville, Lexington, Birmingham, Memphis, Little Rock, Montgomery and Jackson, Mississippi. That's 460 searches and 40,065 map results, up to 100 per search. Then we counted reviews, stars and websites by map position.

The headline findings:

- The typical top-3 listing has 116 Google reviews. The typical listing in places 21 to 100 has 21.
- Plumbers and HVAC companies have the highest bar. Their top 3 have a median of about 1,200 reviews each.
- In 27 of the 46 trades, a business with under 50 reviews held a top-3 spot in the typical city.
- 94% of top-3 listings show 4.5 stars or more. So do most of the businesses below them.
- About one listing in five (19%) has no website. In the top 3, it's about one in 20 (5%).
- Only 4 of the 1,380 top-3 spots went to a listing with zero reviews.
- The most-reviewed business in a search held a top-3 spot in only 68 of the 460 searches. Reviews matter, and so do other things.

Part 1 covers reviews, with a table of all 46 trades. Part 2 covers stars, websites and empty profiles. Part 3 ranks the trades from hardest to easiest to break into. Part 4 turns the numbers into a 24-hour plan for a small owner. Part 5 explains how we collected the data and where it falls short.

Two rules we kept while writing it:

- Every figure about the 46 trades comes from our own count, cited as "GTL analysis of Google Maps results, 10 Southeast cities, November 2026." Google's own rules are cited from Google's pages. When we give our opinion, we say "GTL estimate" and tell you why we think it.
- Every example is made up to show how to use the numbers. None of them are real businesses.

Reporters, trade groups and bloggers are welcome to quote any figure here. Please credit "GTL analysis of Google Maps results, 10 Southeast cities, November 2026" and link to this page.



Part 1

Reviews and the map's top 3

1 The top 3 have more than five times the reviews of the pack

The idea. Across all 46 trades, the median top-3 listing had 116 Google reviews. Each step down the map, the count drops:

Map position	Median reviews
Top 3	116
Places 4 to 10	60
Places 11 to 20	41
Places 21 to 100	21

Source: GTL analysis of Google Maps results, 10 Southeast cities, November 2026. A median is the middle value: half the listings have more, half have fewer. We use it because a few businesses with more than 5,000 reviews would make an average look far higher than what most owners face.

Google says review count and score are part of how it ranks local results (Google Business Profile Help, support.google.com). Our count fits that. The top 3 have about twice the reviews of places 4 to 10, and more than five times the reviews of everyone from place 21 down.

Example (sample numbers). A made-up window cleaner has 19 reviews. In this table, that sits right around the median for places 21 to 100. To look like a typical top-3 listing in their trade, they'd need about 78. The table in section 2 shows that number for every trade.

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] Search your business name on your phone. Write down your review count.
- [ ] Find which row of the table above your count matches. That's roughly where reviews alone would place you.
- [ ] Find your trade in section 2 and write down its top-3 median next to your count.

2 Every trade, one table

The idea. The bar is very different from one trade to the next. Here are all 46, sorted from the most reviews in the top 3 to the fewest.

How to read it. "Top 3 (median)" is the middle review count of the three businesses at the top of the map, across all 10 cities. "Fewest in the top 3" is the lowest review count that still made the top 3 in a typical city: we took the lowest top-3 count in each city, then the middle of those 10 numbers. It's the best single answer to "how many reviews do I need to get in?" The last two columns show the businesses below them. Figures are rounded to whole reviews.

Trade	Top 3 (median)	Fewest in the top 3 (typical city)	Places 4 to 10 (median)	Places 21 to 100 (median)
Plumber	1,217	332	543	26
HVAC	1,204	687	768	22
Garage door	825	416	91	31
Carpet cleaning	687	307	115	23
Hair stylist	479	211	167	46
Appliance repair	374	160	106	29
Electrician	333	87	62	10
Massage therapist	287	154	104	21
House cleaning	284	187	98	13
Roofer	263	156	136	45
Barber	228	105	162	46
Realtor	210	84	81	26
Insurance agent	206	139	85	20
Auto detailing	205	70	81	29
Mortgage broker	173	94	93	14
Med spa	172	85	150	64
Flooring installer	150	46	61	14
Painter	146	75	69	8
Handyman	138	47	41	4
Pressure washing	137	56	68	16
Tree service	134	66	64	12
Lash and brow	123	44	90	45
Bathroom remodeler	118	22	51	17
Dog grooming	116	42	92	99
Landscaping and lawn care	110	40	55	14
Roof cleaning	109	36	82	36
Fence	91	22	44	24

Trade	Top 3 (median)	Fewest in the top 3 (typical city)	Places 4 to 10 (median)	Places 21 to 100 (median)
Gutters	90	50	41	39
Chimney sweep	87	28	45	14
Martial arts	83	39	42	13
Window cleaning	78	27	54	19
Personal trainer	76	37	33	29
Party rentals	75	34	50	28
Family photographer	70	48	43	18
Caterer	65	32	51	52
Wedding photographer	65	33	44	23
Pool service	61	32	46	34
Tutor	45	28	16	4
Kitchen remodeler	42	20	45	15
Tile installer	40	17	41	17
Music lessons	33	18	19	15
Piano lessons	28	16	17	9
Event planner	25	13	29	16
Deck builder	25	6	21	13
Pet sitter	19	7	39	40
Interior designer	17	8	7	3

Source: GTL analysis of Google Maps results, 10 Southeast cities, November 2026. Each trade was one search per city, up to 100 results each. The landscaping search was "landscaper lawn care."

Example (sample numbers). A made-up painter has 31 reviews. The painter row says 75 reviews got a business into the top 3 in a typical city. So their first target is 75, not the 146 median. Once they pass 75, they aim for 146.

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] Find your trade's row. Write down "Fewest in the top 3." That's your first target.
- [ ] Write down "Top 3 (median)." That's your second target.
- [ ] Subtract your review count from the first target. That's how many reviews you need to start competing for a top-3 spot.

3 The gap is widest in plumbing and HVAC

The idea. In some trades, the top 3 are a different league from everyone else. In others, the whole map is close.

- **HVAC:** a top-3 median of 1,204 reviews against 22 for places 21 to 100. That's about 55 times as many.
- **Plumber:** 1,217 against 26, about 47 times.
- **Handyman:** 138 against 4, about 35 times.
- **Electrician:** 333 against 10, about 33 times.

Across all 46 trades, the middle gap was about 6 times. In 16 trades the top 3 had 10 times the reviews of places 21 to 100 or more (GTL analysis of Google Maps results, 10 Southeast cities, November 2026).

In four trades the gap almost disappears or flips: pet sitter, dog grooming, caterer and event planner. GTL estimate: those searches pull in nearby kinds of business. A "pet sitter" search also returned boarding kennels, groomers and vets, and an "event planner" search returned venues. Those businesses often have plenty of reviews but aren't direct rivals, which pushes up the count lower on the map.

Example (sample numbers). A made-up electrician with 12 reviews sees a top 3 with around 330 each and gives up. Then they check the "Fewest in the top 3" column: 87. That's still a climb, but it's a target they can plan for, not a wall.

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] Divide your trade's top-3 median by its places 21 to 100 median. A big number means the top 3 are pulling away. Start now.
- [ ] Search your trade in your town. Look at listings 4 to 10. Are they in your trade, or a nearby one?
- [ ] Note the two or three businesses in your trade that sit just above you. They're your real competition this year.

4 The most reviews don't always win

The idea. Reviews are one part of the ranking, not all of it. Google says local results come down to relevance (does the profile match the search), distance (how far the business is from the searcher) and prominence (how well known it is, including reviews) (Google Business Profile Help, support.google.com).

Our count shows how much the first two matter. In 458 of the 460 searches, at least one business below the top 3 had more reviews than one of the three above it. The single most-reviewed business in a search held a top-3 spot in only 68 of the 460 searches, about 15% (GTL analysis of Google Maps results, 10 Southeast cities, November 2026).

So a smaller business close to the customer, with a profile that clearly matches the search, can sit above a bigger name across town.

Example (sample numbers). A made-up roofer with 90 reviews finds a competitor with 600 reviews ranked below them on their side of town. The competitor's base is 25 minutes away. The roofer stops worrying about the 600 and focuses on the two companies near them with 120 and 150 reviews.

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] Search your main service from a customer's street, not your shop. Write down who's in the top 3 and how many reviews each has.
- [ ] Check that your primary category on Google matches what customers search for.
- [ ] Check that your service area lists the towns you really serve.

5 Your city moves the bar

The idea. The same trade can need very different numbers in different cities. Here's the "Fewest in the top 3" number for six home-service trades, from the lowest city to the highest:

Trade	Lowest city	Highest city
Plumber	80 (Tulsa)	2,568 (Louisville)
HVAC	201 (Jackson)	1,729 (Lexington)
Roofer	48 (Louisville)	573 (Tulsa)
House cleaning	12 (Jackson)	386 (Louisville)
Landscaping and lawn care	18 (Jackson)	117 (Lexington)
Painter	11 (Jackson)	152 (Huntsville)

Source: GTL analysis of Google Maps results, 10 Southeast cities, November 2026. Across all trades, Jackson, Mississippi had the lowest median top-3 count (54 reviews) and Nashville the highest (168).

There's no pattern where one city is hard for everyone. By this measure, Tulsa was the easiest city in our count for plumbers and the hardest for roofers. The only way to know your bar is to search your own town.

Example (sample numbers). A made-up house cleaner with 25 reviews sees "187" in section 2 and feels far behind. In their own town, the third listing has 34 reviews. Nine more good reviews could put them in the running.

Do it in 24 hours

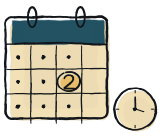
- [ ] Search your trade in your town. Write down the review counts of the top 3.
- [ ] Circle the lowest of the three. That's your real first target, and it beats any average in this report.
- [ ] Do the same search for your second-biggest town.

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Part 2

Stars, websites and empty profiles

6 Almost everyone in the top 3 has 4.5 stars or more

The idea. Stars rarely decide who makes the top 3, because almost everyone has good ones. Of the 1,380 top-3 spots in our count:

- 94% showed 4.5 stars or more.
- 80% showed 4.8 or more.
- 35% showed a perfect 5.0.
- The median was 4.9.

Only 75 of the 1,380 (5%) were under 4.5. In 15 of the 46 trades, none of the 30 top-3 spots were under 4.5. The trades where it happened most were fence (8 of 30), party rentals (7 of 30) and pool service (6 of 30). Source: GTL analysis of Google Maps results, 10 Southeast cities, November 2026.

Most businesses lower on the map look the same. Across every listing with at least one review, the median was also 4.9, and 85% had 4.5 or more. GTL estimate: high stars are the entry ticket, not the edge. They keep you in the running, and review count and freshness do more to set you apart.

Example (sample numbers). A made-up fence company has 4.3 stars from 40 reviews, after two angry one-star reviews from a delayed job. A competitor has 4.8 from 35. The fence company's next 20 five-star reviews would lift them to about 4.5.

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] Write down your star average to one decimal place.
- [ ] If it's under 4.5, reply politely to every negative review you haven't answered yet.
- [ ] Ask every customer from the last 90 days for a review. More reviews from real customers is the only fair way to lift an average.

7 One in five listings has no website. In the top 3, it's one in 20.

The idea. Of the 40,065 results, 7,759 (19%) had no website linked on their Google profile. In the top 3, only 72 of 1,380 (5%) had none. The share falls at every step up the map: 22% in places 21 to 100, 14% in places 11 to 20, 10% in places 4 to 10, and 5% in the top 3 (GTL analysis of Google Maps results, 10 Southeast cities, November 2026).

The trades most likely to have no website:

Trade	No website, all results	No website, top 3
Barber	42%	6 of 30
Handyman	41%	2 of 30
Auto detailing	34%	2 of 30
Electrician	32%	2 of 30
Appliance repair	32%	3 of 30
Painter	32%	2 of 30
Tree service	27%	0 of 30
Chimney sweep	26%	3 of 30
House cleaning	25%	0 of 30
Plumber	25%	0 of 30

Source: GTL analysis of Google Maps results, 10 Southeast cities, November 2026. Roofers were least likely to skip one (7%). In 17 of the 46 trades, all 30 top-3 spots had a website.

A website isn't proven to cause a higher spot. GTL estimate: it's a sign of a business that keeps its profile complete, and Google says complete, accurate information helps you show up (Google Business Profile Help, support.google.com).

Example (sample numbers). A made-up handyman runs everything through their phone and has no site. Four in ten handymen in our count are the same. A simple one-page site with their services, towns and phone number, linked from their profile, puts them with the businesses above them on the map.

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] Open your Google profile and check whether a website is linked.
- [ ] If you have a site, tap the link on your phone. Make sure it opens and the first screen says what you do and where.
- [ ] If you don't, write five lines for a one-page site: what you do, the towns you serve, one proof, your phone number and a call button.

8 Zero reviews almost never makes the top 3

The idea. Of the 40,065 results, 3,154 (8%) had no reviews at all, and 31% had fewer than 10. In the top 3, only 4 of 1,380 spots went to a listing with zero reviews, and 58 (4%) to one with fewer than 10 (GTL analysis of Google Maps results, 10 Southeast cities, November 2026).

The trades with the most empty profiles: tutors (25% with zero reviews), interior designers (20%), handymen (19%), mortgage brokers (14%), house cleaning (14%) and pressure washing (14%). Hair stylists had none at zero.

That's good news for anyone who starts asking. In those trades, a few real reviews put you ahead of a big share of the map.

Example (sample numbers). A made-up pressure-washing company has been open two years with zero reviews. It has 140 past customers in its phone. It texts its review link to the 40 from the last three months, and 9 leave reviews in a week. It now has more reviews than about one in three businesses in its trade on the map.

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] Count your past customers from the last 90 days.
- [ ] Copy your review link from your Google profile (look for "Ask for reviews").
- [ ] Text it to every one of them, with a short thank-you and their first name.

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Part 3

Easiest and hardest to break into

9 The hardest trades to break into

The idea. Using the "Fewest in the top 3" number from section 2, these trades have the highest bar to reach the top 3 in a typical city:

1. HVAC: 687 reviews
2. Garage door: 416
3. Plumber: 332
4. Carpet cleaning: 307
5. Hair stylist: 211
6. House cleaning: 187
7. Appliance repair: 160
8. Roofer: 156

In four of them (HVAC, plumber, carpet cleaning and hair stylist), not one of the 30 top-3 spots went to a business with fewer than 50 reviews. Source: GTL analysis of Google Maps results, 10 Southeast cities, November 2026.

GTL estimate: these are trades with frequent, repeat or urgent jobs. A busy HVAC or plumbing company finishes many jobs a week, so the leaders keep adding reviews faster than a newcomer can catch up from scratch. A new business in these trades does best by winning one part of town first, where distance works in its favor (section 4).

Example (sample numbers). A made-up HVAC company has 140 reviews. The citywide top 3 have over 1,000 each. Searching from the neighborhoods near their shop, they find the top 3 there have 210, 380 and 900. They set a target of 210 and ask after every service call.

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] If your trade is on this list, search from the three neighborhoods closest to your base. Write down the top-3 counts in each.
- [ ] Pick the neighborhood with the lowest third-place count. Make it your first target.
- [ ] Set up a review request for every finished job, starting today.

10 The easiest trades to break into

The idea. At the other end, these trades had the lowest bar in a typical city:

1. Deck builder: 6 reviews
2. Pet sitter: 7
3. Interior designer: 8
4. Event planner: 13
5. Piano lessons: 16
6. Tile installer: 17
7. Music lessons: 18
8. Kitchen remodeler: 20

In 27 of the 46 trades, the "Fewest in the top 3" number was under 50. Across all trades, 398 of the 1,380 top-3 spots (29%) were held by a business with fewer than 50 reviews. Interior designers held 29 of their 30 top-3 spots with under 50, and event planners and deck builders 23 of 30. Source: GTL analysis of Google Maps results, 10 Southeast cities, November 2026.

GTL estimate: these are mostly trades with fewer, bigger jobs, like decks, kitchens and design projects, or small solo businesses. Each customer is worth more, and fewer customers think to leave a review. A business that asks every time can reach the top 3 within a season.

Example (sample numbers). A made-up tile installer does about four jobs a month and has 9 reviews. The tile row says 17 got a business into the top 3 in a typical city. Asking every customer from the past year, they get 8 more in a month and reach 17.

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] If your trade is on this list, count how many reviews you need to reach its number.
- [ ] List every customer from the past 12 months. Bigger jobs are remembered longer, so older customers still review.
- [ ] Send each of them your review link with a short, personal note.



Part 4

What this means for a small owner

11 If you have fewer than 10 reviews

The idea. You're in a big group: 31% of all the listings we counted had fewer than 10 reviews. Only 4% of the top 3 did (GTL analysis of Google Maps results, 10 Southeast cities, November 2026). Getting from under 10 to the "Fewest in the top 3" number for your trade is the single biggest move in this report for most owners.

Ask everyone, the same way. Google doesn't allow offering money, discounts or free work in exchange for a review (Google Maps prohibited and restricted content policy, support.google.com). Our free guide How to Get Your First 50 Google Reviews, linked at the end of this report, has a 30-day plan, the words to use and the rules to follow.

Example (sample numbers). A made-up gutter company has 6 reviews. The gutters row says 50. They ask every customer from the last six months in week one and then ask after every job. They plan to add about 3 reviews a week, which reaches 50 in about 15 weeks.

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] Write down your trade's "Fewest in the top 3" number and your own count.
- [ ] Copy your review link and save it in your phone's text shortcuts.
- [ ] Text it to every customer from the last 90 days.
- [ ] Decide when you'll ask from now on: the moment a job is done and the customer is happy.

12 If you have no website

The idea. Only 5% of top-3 spots had no website, against 19% of all listings (GTL analysis of Google Maps results, 10 Southeast cities, November 2026). You don't need a big site. One page that says what you do, where, and how to call is enough to start, linked from your Google profile.

Example (sample numbers). A made-up barber has 180 reviews and no site, like 4 in 10 barbers in our count. They make one page with their services, prices, hours, a booking link and photos of real cuts, and link it from their profile the same day.

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] Write the five lines: what you do, the towns or neighborhoods you serve, one proof (years in business or a review), your phone number and one button.
- [ ] Take three photos of real work today.
- [ ] Put the page live and add the link to your Google profile.

13 If you're stuck in places 4 to 10

The idea. Businesses in places 4 to 10 had a median of 60 reviews, about half the top 3's 116 (GTL analysis of Google Maps results, 10 Southeast cities, November 2026). You're close. The gap is often a few dozen reviews, plus the things Google lists besides reviews: a profile that matches the search, and the right service area (Google Business Profile Help, support.google.com).

Example (sample numbers). A made-up landscaper sits fifth with 48 reviews. The top 3 in their town have 52, 70 and 110. Their primary category is "Landscape designer," but customers search "lawn care." They change it, fill in every service, and ask for 10 more reviews this month.

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] Write down the top-3 review counts in your town and how far you are from the third.
- [ ] Compare your primary category with the one shown under each top-3 name on Google Maps.
- [ ] Fill in every empty field on your profile: services, hours, service area, description and photos.
- [ ] Set a reminder to search again in 30 days, from the same spot.

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Part 5

How we did it

14 What we collected

The idea. These are the facts behind every number in this report.

- **When:** November 10 and 11, 2026.
- **Where:** 10 cities in the US Southeast: Nashville, Tulsa, Louisville, Huntsville, Lexington, Birmingham, Memphis, Little Rock, Montgomery and Jackson, Mississippi.
- **What:** one Google Maps search for each of 46 local trades and services in each city, using the plain trade name (for example "plumber," "house cleaning," "HVAC"). That's 460 searches.
- **How many:** up to 100 results per search, 40,065 results in all. Some businesses showed up in more than one search, so there were 32,291 different listings. 149 searches returned fewer than 100 results.
- **What we counted:** map position, star average, review count, and whether a website was linked on the profile. We grouped positions into the top 3, places 4 to 10, 11 to 20 and 21 to 100.
- **How we report it:** medians, not averages, and shares rounded to whole percentages. We never name a business.

We collected these results to build lists of local businesses, then counted them for this report.

Example (sample numbers). To see what "one search from each city" means, picture a made-up search for "painter" run once for Huntsville. Google returns 100 painters, ordered for that one search. We record each one's position, stars, review count and website, and move to the next trade.

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] Run your own version: search your trade from your shop, then from a customer's street across town.
- [ ] Write down the top-3 review counts both times. Notice how they change.

15 The limits, and how to quote this report

The idea. This is a careful count, not a scientific survey. Keep these limits in mind:

- **One search, one spot.** Each trade was searched once per city. Google orders the map by distance from the searcher, the words they use and what Google knows about them (Google Business Profile Help, support.google.com). A customer on another street, typing other words, will see a different order.
- **Southeast only.** Ten mid-size and large cities in one region. Other regions, small towns and big coastal metros may look different.

- **Not a random sample.** We collected these results to build lead lists, so they reflect what the map shows for one plain search, not every business in each trade.
- **Mixed results.** Some searches return nearby kinds of business, such as kennels in a pet-sitter search. We counted what the map showed.
- **A snapshot.** Review counts and positions change daily. These are the numbers from two days in November 2026.

To quote a figure, please credit "GTL analysis of Google Maps results, 10 Southeast cities, November 2026" and link to this page. Every free guide and tool we make is at growthatlocal.com/free.

Example (sample numbers). A made-up local reporter writing about small contractors quotes: "In a typical Southeast city, a plumber needed 332 Google reviews to reach the map's top 3, according to a GTL analysis of Google Maps results in 10 Southeast cities, November 2026."

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] If you quote this report, use the credit line above and link to this page.
- [ ] If you're an owner, check your own town's numbers against your trade's row. Your town's numbers beat ours.



Your first 24 hours, in one list

If you only do four things this week, do these:

- [ ] Find your trade in the table and write down its "Fewest in the top 3" number (section 2).
- [ ] Search your trade in your own town from a customer's street and write down the top-3 counts (sections 4 and 5).
- [ ] Text your review link to every customer from the last 90 days (sections 8 and 11).
- [ ] Check that your profile links a working website, or write the five lines for one (sections 7 and 12).

Next, read How to Get Your First 50 Google Reviews. It turns the review targets in this report into a 30-day plan.



If you'd rather hand it off

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Best fit for this guide: Monthly report card. Free sample: your first report card, this month. The monthly report card is free.

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Social media posts — **$200 a month · 7-day full refund**
Fresh posts every week, made from your real job photos. Free sample: two weeks of posts, ready to go.

Email newsletter — **$50 a month · 7-day full refund**
Stay top of mind, so past customers call you first. Free sample: your first newsletter, written.

SEO — **$400 a month · 7-day full refund**
Climb Google for the searches that bring in jobs. Free sample: a ranking check and 10 fixes.

Win-back texts — **$100 a month · 7-day full refund**
Bring past customers back for their next job. Free sample: your first 25 customers texted.

Neighborhood postcard — **$400 a month · 7-day full refund**
Your ad in mailboxes across nice neighborhoods. Free sample: your ad, designed and shown on the card.

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Sources

Every statistic above, with where it comes from:

1. GTL analysis of Google Maps results, 10 Southeast cities, November 2026. Our own count of 40,065 Google Maps results from 460 searches (46 trades, 10 cities), collected November 10 and 11, 2026. Method and limits in sections 14 and 15. (sections 1 to 13)

Rules and guidance cited (not statistics), each checked on Google's own page on 2026-11-12:

- Google Business Profile Help, "Tips to improve your local ranking on Google" (relevance, distance, prominence; reviews; complete information): support.google.com (sections 1, 4, 7, 13, 15)
- Google Maps user-contributed content policy, "Prohibited and restricted content" (bans incentives for reviews): support.google.com (section 11)

GTL estimates

These are our own judgment, not measured facts:

1. Searches for pet sitters, dog groomers, caterers and event planners pull in nearby kinds of business, which raises review counts lower on the map (section 3). Reasoning: in those searches, many lower results were listed under other categories, such as boarding kennels, groomers, vets and event venues.
2. High stars are the entry ticket, not the edge (section 6). Reasoning: the top 3 and the listings below them share the same 4.9 median, so stars can't explain most of the difference between them.
3. A website is a sign of a complete profile more than a proven cause of a higher spot (section 7). Reasoning: our count shows the two go together but can't show which causes which, and Google says complete information helps.
4. The hardest trades are frequent, repeat or urgent work, where leaders add reviews faster than newcomers (section 9). Reasoning: busy HVAC and plumbing companies finish many jobs a week, and their top-3 counts are the highest in the table.
5. The easiest trades are fewer, bigger jobs or solo businesses where fewer customers leave reviews, so asking every time can reach the top 3 within a season (section 10). Reasoning: their top-3 counts are the lowest in the table, and most of their top-3 spots were held with under 50 reviews.

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