

A TALK BY GARY CLAVEN / JUNE 2026

The Overlooked Growth Lever.

Why Google Business Profile beats SEO. Especially now.

Gary Claven / Fractional CMO / 20+ clients across paid media and content.

Pull out your phone.

Search a local trade you'd actually use.

1

Proximity
beats
everything

TOP RESULT

★★★★★ 4.5 (105)

[CALL](#) / [DIRECTIONS](#) / [WEBSITE](#)

2

RESULT

★★★★★ 4.9 (147)

[CALL](#) / [DIRECTIONS](#) / [WEBSITE](#)

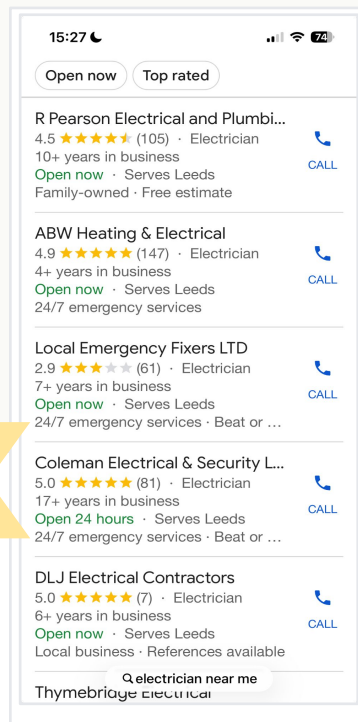
3

Relevance
comes from
category and
keywords
"emergency"

RESULT

★★★☆☆ 2.9 (61)

[CALL](#) / [DIRECTIONS](#) / [WEBSITE](#)



Google tracks what people actually do after they see the map pack. If R Pearson gets more clicks, calls, and direction requests than ABW, Google keeps promoting R Pearson because users are voting with their behaviour. This is why being in the top 3 becomes self-reinforcing.

What most local businesses do wrong.

01

Want more leads

Phone isn't ringing. Start Googling 'how to get customers.'

02

Land on SEO blogs

Get told: content, backlinks, domain authority, schema markup.

03

Spend 6 months on content

Write 12 blog posts. Pay an SEO agency. Buy keyword tools.

04

Still no leads

Phone still isn't ringing. Money gone. Momentum lost.

Google's search bar just died.

The map pack is what's replacing it.

oh and AI overviews (different presentation)

Three reasons the map pack wins.

1

Top of the page

Map pack sits above organic results. Always. On mobile, it takes the entire first screen.

2

Higher intent traffic

People searching local services are ready to call, book, or visit. The map pack captures them at peak intent.

3

AI now feeds from it

When Google's AI answers a local question, it pulls from Business Profiles. Strong profile, strong AI visibility.

Three weeks ago, the rules changed.

May 19, 2026 / Google announced its biggest search overhaul in 25 years.

2.5B

monthly users now reached by Google's AI Overviews.

1B+

users on AI Mode. Queries doubling every quarter.

25%

predicted drop in traditional Google search traffic by 2026.

Your Business Profile is the data source AI uses to recommend local businesses.

GBP vs SEO.

SEO

The traditional path.

- 6 to 12 months to see results
- Ongoing content and link investment
- Traffic is shrinking thanks to AI
- Hard to win against big sites

GBP

The foundation. Start here.

- 2 to 6 weeks to see movement
- Mostly free. No agency required.
- Feeds the new AI-first Google
- Local businesses can actually win

How Google ranks the map pack.

PROXIMITY

How close you are to the searcher.

You can't change this.

RELEVANCE

How well your profile matches the search query.

Biggest lever: primary category.

PROMINENCE

How active and trusted your profile looks.

Reviews, photos, posts, engagement.

Foundations. Do once. Get right.

1 **Verify the profile**

Claim ownership properly. Confirm via postcard or phone.

2 **Complete every field**

Empty fields hurt rankings. Fill description, services, attributes, FAQ.

3 **Pick the right primary category**

Single biggest lever. Research what ranking competitors use.

4 **Accurate hours and service areas**

Wrong hours = wasted calls. Wrong areas = wasted visibility.

5 **NAP consistency everywhere**

Name, address, phone identical across website, socials, directories.

Ongoing wins. Every week. Consistently.

1 Request reviews. Respond to all.

Aim for above 4 stars. AI engines filter below that threshold.

2 Post a weekly update

Job photo, offer, news. Most competitors don't bother.

3 Upload real photos

From actual jobs. Not stock images. Geo-tagged if possible.

4 Seed your own Q&A

Add the questions customers always ask. Answer them yourself.

5 Check Insights monthly

See what searches surface you. Spot trends. Adjust categories.

GBP gets you visible. Then what?

In 2026, the layer above GBP isn't SEO anymore. It's making sure AI engines find, trust, and recommend you.

LAYER 3

AI visibility

Brand mentions, reviews on third-party sites, presence in forums and local communities (i.e Hexham Matters).

LAYER 2

Conversion speed

Fast response to calls and forms. Reviews above 4 stars. Easy booking path.

LAYER 1

Business Profile foundation

Without this, none of the rest matters.

MONDAY MORNING



Do these three things.

Free. Under an hour. Most of your competitors won't bother.

01

**Claim or verify your
Google Business
Profile**

02

**Check your primary
category. Is it really
the right one?**

03

**Text 5 happy
customers and ask for
a review**

Three things to take home.

- The map pack beats organic for local. Period.
- AI made your Business Profile more important, not less.
- Start with GBP. Layer everything else on top.

Want a free GBP audit?

Grab me after the talk. Or find me on LinkedIn.

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