

INVISIBLE **to** **PROMINENT**

*How to get found on Google, recommended by
ChatGPT and chosen by buyers, wherever they look*

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Statistics and platform features are as reported by the sources cited at the end of each chapter, as of September 2026. Platforms change often; updates are kept on the book's companion page at ebizindia.com/books.

The people and businesses in the examples are invented. Any resemblance to real people or businesses is coincidental.

This book offers general information, not legal, tax or financial advice.

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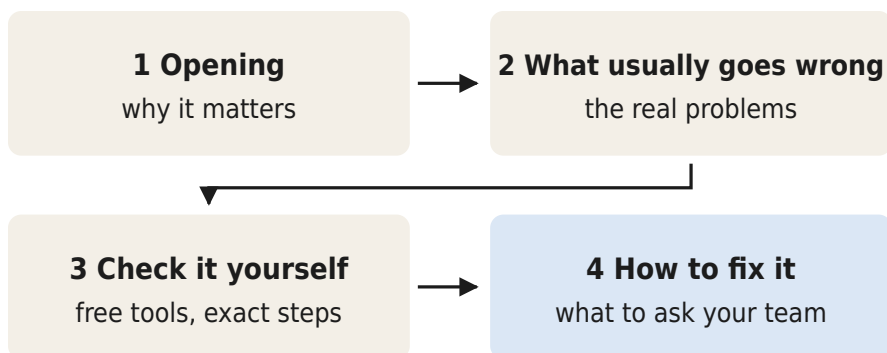
Before You Start

I have been in IT since 1986 and have run my own companies all along, EbizIndia in Kolkata since 2007. These days I spend much of my time looking at business websites, and at how those businesses show up on Google and in AI assistants.

I keep meeting the same thing: a good business, with sound products and loyal customers, that strangers never find.

I wrote this book for the owner or managing director of such a business: anything from a dozen people to a few hundred, living on enquiries, with a web team or an agency, and nobody whose job it is to make sure the whole picture adds up. Its aim is plain. You should finish it with more enquiries from the right kind of buyer, and with a way of telling whether that is happening. It is not a book about advertising, which rents attention by the month; it is about the visibility you build and keep.

This book is short on purpose. You are busy, and the platforms change so fast that a thick book would be out of date before you reached the end. So I have kept the theory thin and the steps concrete. Everything here is something you can check or do yourself, or hand to your team.



then a quick check of yes or no statements, and one task for the week

How every chapter works. *The same four parts, in the same order, so you always know where you are.*

The quick checks add up to 50 points. Tick only what is true today; what you plan to do earns nothing yet.

You will meet the Visibility Ladder in Chapter 1, and Chapter 11 shows you how to total your ticks and which rung your score puts you on, from Invisible to Prominent. Retake them every quarter and you will have an honest record of progress.

At the back are the working tools. The Self-Check Toolkit takes you through the checks I run myself, with free tools and exact steps. A Brief for Your Web Team turns the website chapters into a list your developers can work through, with a way to see that each item is done.

All the Quick Checks puts the fifty statements in one place, and the Glossary explains the jargon. You do not need me, or any agency, to use any of it.

Several chapters ask you to keep a sheet: the business facts sheet, the question bank, the enquiry log, the monthly dashboard and the quarterly check sheet. Ready-made versions of each, along with updates to anything in this book that the platforms have since changed, are on the companion page at ebizindia.com/books.

The facts in this book were checked in September 2026, and the sources for statistics and platform facts are in the notes after each chapter. Google, OpenAI, Meta and LinkedIn change features and rules often, and some details will have moved on by the time you read this. The questions buyers ask about your business change far more slowly.

The people named in the examples are illustrative. They are composites of common situations, not real clients. I have written “he” for the buyer throughout, to keep the sentences short; a good many of the buyers, and of the owners, I meet are women.

One piece of advice before you begin. Do not try to do everything at once. Read a chapter, do its task that week, and move on to the next.

The Silent Shortlist

Your next customer will settle on three or four names before he rings anybody, and you will never hear if yours was left out. I want you to see how that list gets made, and where your business stands on it today.

Your next customer has probably started choosing a supplier already. He has asked ChatGPT, read the summary Google puts above its results, opened a few websites and put a question to a WhatsApp group. By the time he picks up the phone, he has three names on a sheet.

I call that sheet the silent shortlist. You never see it, no rejection letter arrives, and when the phone does not ring you put it down to a slow month.

Rakesh, a purchase head near Pune, needed a new air filter supplier by Friday. A Kolkata maker with thirty years of good work behind it never came up in any of his searches, so nobody from Pune rang, and its owner never learned there was an order to lose.

Rakesh is typical. 6sense, a software company, surveys about four thousand business buyers every year. In its 2025 report, buyers made first contact about 61 per cent of the way through their buying process, 94 per cent had ranked their shortlist by then, and the early favourite won 77 per cent of the time.¹

A typical business purchase, from first thought to order



By the time the phone rings:

94% of buyers have already ranked their shortlist

77% of the time, the early favourite wins the order

The silent shortlist. *Most of the choosing happens in the shaded part, where you cannot see it. Figures from 6sense, 2025.*

Those buyers work mostly for larger companies. My own belief is that small Indian buyers behave the same way, only faster. When your phone rings, much of the decision has already been made.

The places he checks are few and familiar: Google, the AI assistants, LinkedIn and Instagram, reviews and marketplace ratings, and the WhatsApp groups of his trade. ChatGPT alone had 900 million weekly users by February 2026.² Google's AI Mode now answers in Hindi, Bengali, Tamil and several other Indian languages.³

When I started out, a buyer had a trade directory on the shelf and a trade fair once a year. Today he carries all of these in his pocket.

A good Google ranking is also worth less than it was, because fewer people click. Pew Research Center tracked the searches of 900 American adults in 2025. When Google showed an AI summary, people clicked a result 8 per cent of the time, against 15 per cent when it did not.⁴

More and more, the buyer reads an answer, and the names in that answer go onto his list.

Three questions, one hub, five rungs

Whatever the channel, the buyer asks three questions about every business he comes across, usually without putting them into words.

Do they exist, and are they who I think they are? A real company with an address, a history and people behind it, using the same name everywhere.

Do they do exactly what I need? The specific product, industry and place, in words he recognises. “We provide solutions” tells him nothing.

Are they a safe choice? Clients, reviews, certifications, years in business, a founder he can see.

Google and the AI assistants ask the same three in their own fashion. Where the answers are unclear or contradict each other, they leave you out and name somebody they feel surer about. Every fix in this book answers one of the three.

I think of your website as the hub and every platform as a spoke: Google, the AI assistants, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, directories, marketplaces and review sites. The spokes belong to other companies, which change their rules when they please.



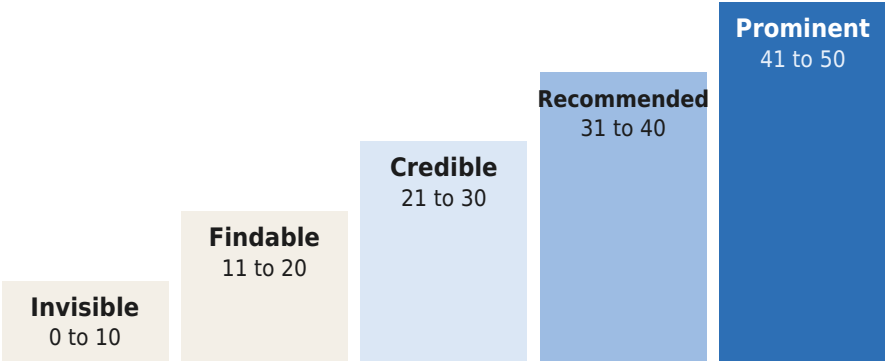
The hub and the spokes. *Every spoke belongs to someone else. The hub is the one place you own, and where the enquiry happens.*

The website is the one place you own. Buyers come there to check you, and the machines read your facts there in full. A trader may take most of his orders through IndiaMART, and I have no quarrel with that, but his website still proves he is real and gives Google and the assistants something to quote.

On each channel your business stands on one rung of what I call the Visibility Ladder. You climb it in order, and you will usually stand on different rungs on different channels.

The Visibility Ladder

score out of 50 from the quick checks; climbed one rung at a time



Five rungs, climbed in order. The score bands come from the quick checks at the end of each chapter, totalled in Chapter 11.

Rung	What it looks like	Total score (out of 50)
Invisible	You do not appear even for your own name, or what appears is wrong.	0 to 10
Findable	You appear only when someone already knows your name.	11 to 20
Credible	When found, you look like a safe choice: correct facts, proof, recent activity.	21 to 30
Recommended	Google, AI assistants and people put you forward when nobody asked for you by name.	31 to 40
Prominent	For your main category and region, you are among the first names, again and again.	41 to 50

Each chapter ends with a quick check, one point per tick, fifty points across the book. Your total places the business as a whole on the ladder. Chapter 11 shows how to add it up and turn it into a 90-day plan.

What usually goes wrong

- **Living on word of mouth.** Referrals built the business, so the website became a brochure for people already referred. The people who refer you now check you online first, and so does the buyer they send.
- **A website built for another decade.** Designed for a desktop and awkward on a phone. A busy buyer closes it and tries the next name.
- **Facts that drift apart.** Three spellings of the company name, the old office on Google Maps, 50 staff on LinkedIn and 200 on the website. People shrug at this. Machines grow less sure you are one real business.
- **Proof kept in the drawer.** Thirty years of good work, and not one case study, client name or review on the site.
- **Every platform a separate job.** A LinkedIn agency here, an SEO vendor there, a nephew looking after Instagram, and nobody making sure it all tells one story.
- **Waiting for enquiries to fall.** Enquiries lag behind visibility. By the time the phone goes quiet, your competitors may have been on the list for months.

Check it yourself

- 1 Write down five questions a new buyer would ask, in his words, not yours: “best manufacturer of x in eastern India”, “who can supply y to a pharma plant”.
- 2 In a private (incognito) window, put each question to ChatGPT at chatgpt.com, Gemini at gemini.google.com and Google, including its AI Mode tab. Searching your own company name proves nothing; new buyers search for what you do.

- ③ Ask each question three times, because AI answers change from one run to the next. Note every business named and how often. Those names are your buyers' shortlist.
- ④ Now ask each assistant about your own business by name. Write down every wrong fact it gives.
- ⑤ Using the descriptions in the ladder table (the score column comes later), mark your rung on Google, on the AI assistants and on your two busiest spokes. Where you are unsure, take the lower rung. Owners are generous markers of their own homework (I include myself).

How to fix it

- ✓ Make the hub Credible first: a website that works on a phone, says on its first screen whom you serve and what you do, and shows proof. Chapters 4 and 5.
- ✓ Settle your basic facts once, and make every listing match them. Chapter 3.
- ✓ Give each main product or service its own page, written in the buyer's words and answering the questions buyers ask. Chapter 6.
- ✓ Pick your spokes. Google and the AI assistants belong on nearly every list, plus two or three places where your buyers actually choose. Elsewhere, a correct profile that links to your website is enough. A last post from 2021 makes buyers wonder whether you have shut the dukaan.
- ✓ Put one named person in charge of how you appear everywhere, and rescore the quick checks every quarter. In a business of fifty or more that is usually a marketing manager or executive who reports to you; in a smaller one it is often you, with someone in the office to keep the sheets.

- ✓ Climb one rung at a time, on two channels at once. For a small team, one rung a quarter on two channels is solid progress.

Quick check: Chapter 1

Tick what is true today. One point each.

- ☐ When I ask ChatGPT for suppliers of what we do in our region, we are named.
- ☐ When I ask Google the same question, we appear in the AI summary or the top results.
- ☐ What AI assistants say about us is accurate: what we do, where we are and how long we have been in business.
- ☐ One named person in our business is responsible for how we appear on Google, AI assistants, LinkedIn and our listings.

Your score: _____ out of 4

DO THIS WEEK

Ring three recent customers who came to you without a referral, and three buyers who chose someone else. Ask each where they first heard the names on their list. Write the answers down; they tell you which spokes your buyers really use.

NOTES

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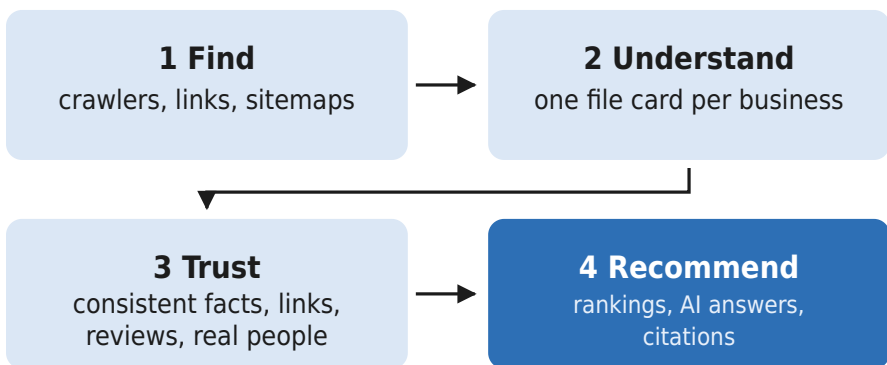
How Google and AI Decide

Google, ChatGPT and the social feeds look nothing alike, yet each must find you, understand you and trust you before it puts you in front of a buyer. Once you know which of those steps is failing, you can stop guessing.

When I started in IT in 1986, the gatekeepers were people. A directory publisher decided whose listing went in bold, and a fair organiser decided who got the stall by the entrance. You could meet them, and with some patience win them over.

Much of that deciding is now done by Google, the AI assistants and the social feeds. You cannot take any of them out for lunch. They are built by different companies, but they follow much the same logic.

Four steps every machine takes



a failure at any step stops everything after it

Find, understand, trust, recommend. Owners worry about the last step. The trouble usually sits at the first two.

- 1 **Find.** Google's crawlers discover pages by following links and reading sitemaps, the files that list a site's pages.¹ A page nothing links to is hard to reach. AI assistants have crawlers too, such as OAI-SearchBot for ChatGPT search. OpenAI says sites that block it will not be shown in ChatGPT's search answers, apart from plain links.²
- 2 **Understand.** The machine stores what it reads and tries to recognise your company, founder, products and town. I imagine a file card it keeps on your business, with your exact name, what you do, where, since when and who runs it. Use three names on three listings and it may keep three thin cards instead of one thick one.
- 3 **Trust.** Four kinds of signal do most of the work: your facts agree everywhere; other sites link to you and mention you; customers review you (Google says more reviews and positive ratings can help local ranking);³ and real people with real experience stand behind the work.
- 4 **Recommend.** Google ranks pages and, for many questions, writes an AI Overview or an AI Mode answer with links. Google says a page only needs to be indexed and eligible to show in normal search with a snippet; the AI features need no special optimisation.⁴ Assistants answer from training, or search the web live and cite what they read.

A failure at any step stops everything after it. Most invisible businesses I come across are stuck at step one or two, while their owners worry about step four and ask me why a competitor ranks higher.

Social platforms skip the first step. They know about you only once you create a profile and start posting, and Chapter 10 deals with them.

What usually goes wrong

- **Jumping to step four.** Money goes on ads and boosted posts while Google has not yet indexed half the website.
- **Pages nobody can reach.** Product pages reachable only through a search box, or linked from nowhere at all.
- **Facts inside pictures.** Services listed only in a banner image, a scanned brochure or a sliding carousel. Crawlers read text, and a picture of text gives them very little.
- **AI crawlers blocked by accident.** A developer's setting or the hosting firewall shuts out the AI search crawlers, though nobody ever decided to. Chapter 5 shows how to check.
- **Three names, three file cards.** A different name on the website, on Google Maps and on IndiaMART splits you into several weaker businesses. Chapter 3 puts this right.
- **Buying E-E-A-T.** Google's quality raters judge pages for Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness and Trust, yet Google says E-E-A-T itself is not a specific ranking factor.⁵ Anyone selling you an E-E-A-T score or plugin is selling air.
- **Festival greetings for everybody.** Posts nobody in your market responds to teach a feed nothing about who should see you.

Check it yourself

- 1 In Google, type `site:` followed by your domain, for example `site:yourcompany.in`. Compare the rough count of pages with the number your site really has, and look for each main product or service page.
- 2 Search your exact business name. See whether a panel with your address, phone and hours appears beside or above the results, and whether every detail in it is right.

- 3 Open Google Search Console (search.google.com/search-console), which is free. Paste the address of a missing page into the URL Inspection box at the top, and it will tell you whether Google has the page and, if not, why.
- 4 Type `yourcompany.in/robots.txt` into a browser. If you see “Disallow: /” under OAI-SearchBot, Claude-SearchBot or “User-agent: *”, ask your web team why.
- 5 Ask ChatGPT: “Search the web and tell me what [business name] in [city] does, and who runs it.” Open every source it cites and note each wrong fact. Keep the list for Chapter 3.

How to fix it

- ✓ Mend the first weak link before anything else. If pages are missing from Google, that job comes before ads, posts or new content.
- ✓ Link every main product and service page from your menu, two clicks or fewer from the home page, and have your web team submit a sitemap in Search Console.
- ✓ Put your main facts in plain text on the page: what you make, for whom, and where.
- ✓ Decide deliberately which crawlers you allow. For most businesses I would let in the search crawlers of Google, Bing, OpenAI and Anthropic. Chapter 5 and “A Brief for Your Web Team” at the back give the details.
- ✓ Give the machines one file card: the same name and facts on every listing (Chapter 3).
- ✓ Show the real experience behind the business: named people, their years in the trade, work you have done and what clients say (Chapter 4). For local searches, reviews carry a lot of weight (Chapter 8).

Quick check: Chapter 2

Tick what is true today. One point each.

- ☐ When I search Google for “site:” followed by our web address, all our main service or product pages appear.
- ☐ When I search Google for our exact business name, a panel with our correct address, phone number and details appears.
- ☐ Every main service or product page on our website can be reached from the menu in two clicks or fewer.

Your score: _____ out of 3

DO THIS WEEK

Find out who holds the login to your Google Search Console. If nobody knows, or it sits in a former developer's personal account, get it set up under a company email address and add yourself as an owner.

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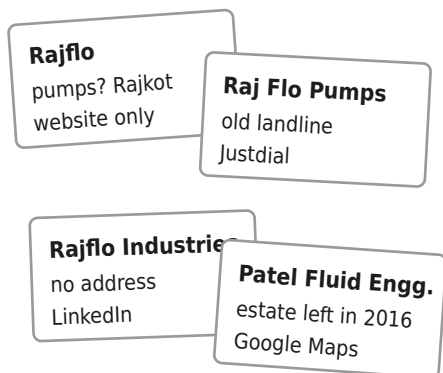
One Name, One Story, Everywhere

Google and the AI assistants will not put you forward until they are sure the scattered bits of information about you describe one real business. Settle your facts once, write them down, and make every listing say the same thing.

Hitesh makes submersible pumps in Rajkot under the brand Rajflo, though the company is Patel Fluid Engineering and dates from 1992. Google Maps shows two pins, one at the estate he left in 2016, and Justdial lists “Raj Flo Pumps” with a dead landline. His own LinkedIn profile says “Rajflo Industries”, a name the company has never used.

When he asks ChatGPT about Rajflo, it suggests two better-known brands from Coimbatore. Every fragment is a real piece of his business, yet to a buyer in Nashik it looks like three or four companies, some of them possibly closed.

What the machine sees today



four thin cards, none trusted

What you want it to keep

Rajflo	
Legal name	Patel Fluid Engineering Pvt Ltd
Makes	submersible, monoblock pumps
Since	1992
Where	Rajkot, Gujarat
Runs it	Hitesh Patel
Profiles	Maps, LinkedIn, IndiaMART

one thick card, repeated everywhere

Three names, four file cards. Each fragment is a real piece of the business. Together they look like several businesses, some possibly closed.

Google describes its knowledge panels, the information boxes about a company, as generated automatically from various sources across the web.¹ Nobody at Google types in your details. A system pieces them together.

When the pieces agree, it grows confident. When they disagree, it may split you into two weaker businesses, merge you with a namesake, prefer your old address because more sites repeat it, or name a competitor it feels surer about.

What usually goes wrong

- **Three names and no bridge.** The legal name sits on the GST certificate, the brand is on the signboard, and nothing on the website ties the two together.
- **Keywords stuffed into the name.** “Rajflo Best Submersible Pump Manufacturer Rajkot” breaks Google’s rules for Business Profiles, which want your real-world name, and can get the profile suspended.²

- **Everybody writes his own description.** The agency, the IndiaMART executive and the founder each describe the business in their own way.
- **Listings you never made.** Former staff, dealers and data companies create listings in your name. Directories copy from each other, so old data keeps coming back.
- **“Over 25 years” on one page, “30 years of trust” on another.** Buyers read that as a contradiction. A founding year never goes stale.
- **Gmail on the listings, logins lost.** A profile registered to the personal email of someone who has left is a profile you cannot fix.
- **One website for the whole family group.** The parent’s logo, a sister concern’s address in the footer and a third firm’s GSTIN on the contact page. Nobody can tell which company makes what.
- **A rebrand with no trail.** New name, new domain, and not a line anywhere saying what the business used to be called.

Check it yourself

- 1 List every phone number, address, name and spelling the business has used in the last fifteen years, with old email addresses and website domains. Landlines and former staff mobiles count.
- 2 Search each item on Google and Bing inside quotation marks, for example “0281 2xxxxxx”. Then search Google Maps for your name and look for duplicate pins.
- 3 Use the search box inside IndiaMART, TradeIndia and Justdial. Try every variation of the name, and your old numbers.

- 4 Ask ChatGPT, Gemini and Perplexity: “What do you know about [name], [city]? Who founded it, when, and where is it?” Where an answer cites a source, open it. That source is where the wrong fact lives.
- 5 Record each listing in one sheet: the link, what is wrong, who holds the login, and what needs doing.

How to fix it

Start with a business facts sheet, one document holding the official version of every fact. Anyone who creates or updates a listing, your agency included, copies from it and from nowhere else. One person owns it and dates every change.

Fact	Standard version (example)	Rule
Public name	Rajflo	Exactly this everywhere, with no keywords added
Legal name	Patel Fluid Engineering Pvt Ltd	As on GST and MCA records
Former names	Patel Fluid Engg. Works (1992 to 2009)	For a “formerly” line on the About page
Year founded	1992	One year, never “over 25 years”
Address	Full, with PIN code	Written the same way each time; each plant or branch separately
Phone and WhatsApp	One main number, one WhatsApp number	Numbers the business controls, never a salesman’s own phone
Email and website	Addresses on the company domain	No Gmail or Yahoo on listings
Descriptions	One line (under 25 words) and 50 words	Copied word for word everywhere

Fact	Standard version (example)	Rule
Categories and area served	Submersible and monoblock pumps; Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh	The same on every platform
Official profiles	Links, and the company email that holds each login	The list of places that count as “us”

- ✓ Choose one public name, the one customers know you by. Tie it to the legal name in one sentence on the About page, in the footer and on invoices: “Rajflo is the brand of Patel Fluid Engineering Pvt Ltd, Rajkot, founded in 1992.” Small variations such as “Pvt Ltd” and “Private Limited” do no harm. Different words do.
- ✓ Write the one-line description with the product, the buyer and the place: “Rajflo makes submersible and monoblock pumps for farms, housing societies and small factories, from Rajkot, Gujarat.” An assistant that finds the same sentence on four sites has every reason to repeat it.
- ✓ Fix in order of weight. Your website and Google Business Profile come first, then the profiles you can log into, then listings you can claim. Report duplicate pins on Maps with “Suggest an edit”. Last, write to directory owners and associations; chamber and export council lists carry weight, are often years out of date, and one email usually fixes them.
- ✓ Claim your free listings on Apple Business, which replaced Apple Business Connect in 2026 and works in India,³ and on Bing Places, which can import your Google profile.
- ✓ Forward old landlines to the new number for a year or two. Some listings will never be corrected, and a forwarded call beats a dead one.

- ✓ Move every public email to the company domain, and point any spare domains at the main website. After a rebrand, keep “Formerly known as” on the About page, and ask your web team to redirect every old page permanently to its new one, for at least a year as Google advises.⁴
 - ✓ For a family group, give each company its own section or website with its own legal name, address and description, and its own facts sheet.
 - ✓ Repeat the old-data searches every three months.
-

A word on Wikipedia and Wikidata

Owners often ask me whether they need a Wikipedia page. For most small and mid-sized firms my answer is no, and the decision is not yours anyway.

Wikipedia expects significant coverage in several reliable, independent sources, and asks owners and staff not to edit articles about their own firm.⁵ An agency that sells you a page is selling something likely to be deleted.

Wikidata, the structured database behind Wikipedia, is read by search engines and AI systems and sets a lower bar. An item makes sense once independent public sources describe you, such as a company registry or trade press coverage, and it should hold referenced facts only. Chapter 5 covers the structured data that links your website to your official profiles.

Quick check: Chapter 3

Tick what is true today. One point each.

- ☐ We have a written business facts sheet, and anyone creating a listing copies from it.
- ☐ Our website states our legal name, our brand name and our founding year, and they match our GST record.
- ☐ Our Google Business Profile and our listings on IndiaMART, Justdial or our main directory show our current name, address and phone number.
- ☐ In the last six months we have searched our old phone numbers, addresses and names, and fixed the old listings we found.

Your score: _____ out of 4

DO THIS WEEK

Give one hour to building your facts sheet from the table above. Then search every phone number your business has ever used, in quotation marks, and count the listings that still show an old one. You can usually make the first few fixes the same afternoon, over a cup of chai.

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What Your Website Must Do

Every platform you use is a spoke, and your website is the hub they all point to, the one place online that you fully own. I set out what it must tell a stranger, how it should ask for the enquiry, and how to judge whether it needs a repair or a rebuild.

Some of the best-looking websites I review bring in almost nothing. A typical one opens with a slow video and the words “Engineering Excellence Since 1994” over a sunset, and never says what the company makes. The only way in is an eleven-field form that asks for a fax number. (In 2026.)

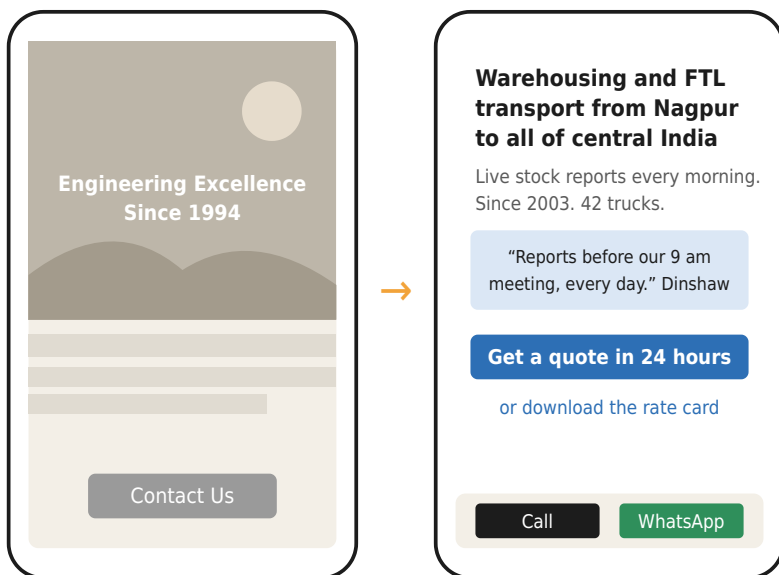
For a business that lives on enquiries, a website has one job as I see it: to turn the right stranger into a conversation. It must answer the three questions from Chapter 1, and then the one every buyer ends with, which is how to get started.

You are writing for three readers now: the buyer on his phone, Google, and the AI assistant that may read your pages before it recommends anyone. Happily, all three reward a site that says plainly what you do and backs it up. Chapter 5 deals with the machinery. Here I care about what the site says and how it asks.

What usually goes wrong

- **A first screen that says nothing.** A slogan and a stock photograph, with no word on what you do, for whom or where. A stranger on a phone gives you a few seconds before he goes back to the search results.

- **Every service crammed onto one page.** A paragraph apiece means the buyer has to hunt, and Google and the AI assistants have almost nothing to work with.
- **Proof nobody believes.** “Trusted by leading companies”, with none of them named. Buyers skip that line; they have read it on a hundred sites.
- **One grey “Contact Us” button for everyone.** A buyer who is still comparing is not ready for a call. The site offers him nothing smaller, so he reads carefully and leaves.
- **Long forms and slow replies.** Every extra field is one more reason to give up. An audit of 2,241 US firms, reported in the Harvard Business Review, found they took 42 hours on average to answer an online enquiry, and 23 per cent never replied at all.¹
- **Consent boxes ticked in advance.** Signing up enquirers for marketing by default annoys buyers and sits badly with India’s data protection law.
- **The agency holds the keys.** The domain, the hosting or Search Console is in a supplier’s name, and you find out on the day you part ways.
- **A rebuild without redirects.** The new site goes live on a Saturday, the old pages that Google ranked for years now say “Page not found”, and enquiries can drop sharply within weeks.
- **Launch it and leave it.** Old prices, discontinued products and the name of a manager who left two years ago make buyers and AI assistants less sure of you.



says nothing in five seconds

what, for whom, where, proof, next step

The first screen on a phone. A stranger gives you a few seconds. The screen on the right answers his three questions and offers more than one way in.

Check it yourself

- 1 **The five-second test.** Show your home page on a phone to three people who do not know your business. After five seconds, take the phone away and ask what you do and for whom. If they cannot say, your buyers cannot either.
- 2 **Count your service pages.** List the services or product lines that earn you money, then count how many have a page of their own. Every gap is a missing page.
- 3 **Tap everything on a phone.** Your phone number should open the dialler, and your WhatsApp button should open a chat with you. Try both on three or four pages.
- 4 **The 4 pm test.** Send an enquiry through your own form at 4 pm on a weekday, and note how long it takes for anyone to reply,

and how.

- 5 Read your form as a stranger would.** Count the fields, look for one line saying what you will do with the details, and check that any marketing box starts unticked.
- 6 Do a keys audit.** List your domain registrar, hosting, website admin, Google Search Console, Google Analytics and Google Business Profile. Against each, write whose name it is in, who holds the login and when it renews.

How to fix it

Rewrite the first screen. I use a plain pattern for the headline: what you do, for whom, where, and the one thing that makes you a safe choice. “Your Logistics Partner” tells a buyer nothing. “Warehousing and FTL transport from Nagpur to all of central India, with live stock reports every morning” is longer, and far quicker to understand.

Give every page a job. Most businesses need only a handful of page types.

Page	Its job
Home	Confirm the visitor is in the right place; one line of proof; a route to each service; a clear next step
Service or product	One page per offering: what it is, who it suits, specifications, lead times, what drives price, proof and buyers’ questions (Chapter 6)
Industry or location	Show you understand his sector or city, with clients from it
Proof	Case studies with numbers, named clients where allowed, reviews, certificates, photographs of real work
About	Founder and team with photographs, registered name, address and history

Page	Its job
Answer pages	Guides, comparisons and costs for buyers not yet ready to talk (Chapter 6)
Contact	Phone, WhatsApp, a short form, address and map, hours, and who will reply

Put proof beside every button. Visitors rarely go looking for a testimonials page, so place one line of proof where the decision is made: a named review, a client, a number or a certificate. If clients will not be named, describe them. “A listed pharma company with four plants in Gujarat” is still believable.

Offer more than one next step. Someone just looking is glad of a spec sheet or a price guide. Someone comparing wants a quote in 24 hours or a free sample, and someone nearly ready wants a site visit or a short call.

Just looking

spec sheet, price guide

Comparing

a quote in 24 hours, a free sample

Nearly ready

a site visit, a short call

early in the decision

ready to buy

Three buyers, three next steps. *Keep one main button for the step most of your buyers take, and something smaller for the rest.*

Keep one main button for the step most of your buyers take. On phones, add a slim bar with Call and WhatsApp that stays in place as the visitor scrolls.

- ✓ Make contact one tap away. Ask your developer to mark every phone number as a “tel:” link with +91, and to add WhatsApp click-to-chat links (wa.me/ followed by your full number,

without the plus sign) with a pre-filled message. A different message on each page tells you which page the enquiry came from.

- ✓ Keep the form short. Name, phone or email, and what they need. Next to the button, say in one sentence that you will use the details only to reply, and ask for marketing consent separately, with an unticked box.
- ✓ Reply within the hour. Put every enquiry, from the form, WhatsApp, the phone or IndiaMART, into one list or CRM, each with an owner and a next step.
- ✓ Keep any chatbot on a short leash. An AI chatbot that invents a price or a delivery date is speaking for your company. Confine it to your published information and make it easy to reach a person.
- ✓ Hold your own keys. Domain, hosting, website admin, Search Console, Analytics and Business Profile belong in the company's name, with the agency added as a user. An agency that does good work has no reason to object.

On speed of reply, the same research found that firms which tried to contact a lead within an hour were nearly seven times as likely to qualify it as firms that waited longer.¹ The study is American and old, yet I would be surprised if an Indian buyer writing to three suppliers did not warm to whoever answers first.

On consent, India's Digital Personal Data Protection Act asks for consent that is "free, specific, informed, unconditional and unambiguous". Under the 2025 Rules its main duties fall due around May 2027, a timetable the government has talked of shortening, and penalties go up to ₹250 crore.² Take legal advice on your own case, but there is no reason to wait.

Fix, redesign or rebuild?

When an owner says “we need a new website”, he may mean one of three jobs. A fix keeps the site and improves the words, forms and speed. A redesign keeps the platform and the page addresses and changes the look and the menu. A rebuild moves to a new platform, usually with new addresses, and carries the most risk.

Fix

low risk, most of the gain

words, forms, speed
same site, same addresses

Redesign

medium risk

new look and menu
same platform, same addresses

Rebuild

highest risk, earn it first

new platform, new addresses
needs redirects for every page

fix before you redesign, and redesign before you rebuild

Three jobs that all get called “a new website”. *Most of the enquiry gains in this book come from the first box.*

My rule of thumb is to fix before you redesign, and redesign before you rebuild. Most of the enquiry gains in this book come from content and conversion work that your present site can carry. “It looks old” and “our competitor has a new one” are, on their own, reasons for a redesign at most.

A rebuild earns its cost when the site does not work on a phone, nobody in-house can edit a page, the platform is no longer updated or keeps getting hacked, or you cannot get at your own code and domain.

If you do rebuild, treat it as a house move and leave a forwarding address for every page. Map each old address to its new one, use permanent (301) redirects, and keep them, as Google advises, “for as long as possible, generally at least 1 year”.³

Change one thing at a time where you can, so that if traffic falls you know which change did it. “A Brief for Your Web Team” at the back lists what to ask for, from enquiry routes to site moves.

Quick check: Chapter 4

Tick what is true today. One point each.

- ☐ On a phone, the first screen of our home page says what we do, for whom and where.
- ☐ Each of our main services or product lines has its own detailed page.
- ☐ Next to our main enquiry buttons there is proof: a named client, a review, a number or a certificate.
- ☐ On a phone, tapping our number starts a call and tapping WhatsApp opens a chat with us.
- ☐ Enquiries from the website get a reply within an hour during working hours.
- ☐ Our domain, hosting, website admin and Search Console are in the company's name, and we hold the logins.

Your score: _____ out of 6

DO THIS WEEK

Do the five-second test with three people who do not know your business, and write down their exact words about what you do. If their answers do not match what you would say, rewrite the first screen of your home page before you touch anything else.

NOTES

1. Oldroyd, J., McElheran, K. and Elkington, D., “The Short Life of Online Sales Leads”, *Harvard Business Review*, March 2011, audit of 2,241 US firms.
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3. Google Search Central, *Site moves with URL changes*, last updated 20 August 2026. developers.google.com/search/docs/crawling-indexing/site-move-with-url-changes

Fast and Readable by Machines

Your website has to load quickly on an ordinary phone, stay safe, and let Google and the AI assistants in to read it. When any of these fails you drop off shortlists without hearing a thing, so I show you how to check each one and what to ask your web team.

Karthik exports knitwear from Tiruppur, and on his office computer his website looks fine. A sourcing agent in Leicester opens it on her phone, stares at a white screen, then taps the wrong button as a slider shoves the page down. She goes back to the search results, where plenty of other Tiruppur names are waiting.

Technical trouble on a website makes no noise. Nobody writes to say the page was slow, or that a setting at your hosting company has been turning away ChatGPT's crawler for a year. You have to go and look, and the looking is easier than most owners expect.

What usually goes wrong

- **A home page built to impress, and tested on the office computer.** Video backgrounds, sliders, huge photographs and forty plugins make a phone work hard before the visitor reads a word, and office broadband hides all of it.
- **Less on the phone than on the desktop.** Google indexes the mobile version of your site, so a specification table hidden on phones does not count, and nor does text parked behind a “load more” button.

- **Old plugins, no backups, plain HTTP.** Out-of-date plugins are the usual way small sites get hacked. From Chrome 154, due in October 2026, Chrome will ask the visitor's permission before opening a public site without HTTPS.¹
- **A robots.txt left over from development.** Two lines, "User-agent: *" and "Disallow: /", ask every crawler to stay away.
- **A "block AI bots" setting nobody thought through.** Lists copied off the internet often shut out the crawlers that let ChatGPT and Perplexity recommend you.
- **Text that only JavaScript builds.** Googlebot copes. Tests published in 2024 found that the crawlers of OpenAI, Anthropic and Perplexity did not run JavaScript,⁶ and I would not bet that all of them do now.
- **Search Console in the developer's name.** Google sends its warnings there, and nobody in the business reads them.

Check it yourself

Google measures how real visitors experience a page with three numbers it calls Core Web Vitals. A page passes when at least three

visits in four reach “good”, counted separately for phones and computers.²



Core Web Vitals. Three measures of how a page feels to a real visitor. A page passes when three visits in four land in the “good” zone.

Measure	What the visitor feels	Good	Needs improvement	Poor
LCP (Largest Contentful Paint)	How long until the main image or heading appears	2.5 seconds or less	2.5 to 4 seconds	Over 4 seconds
INP (Interaction to Next Paint)	How quickly the page responds to a tap	200 ms or less	200 to 500 ms	Over 500 ms
CLS (Cumulative Layout Shift)	How much the page jumps about while loading	0.1 or less	0.1 to 0.25	Over 0.25

INP replaced First Input Delay in March 2024, so ignore any article still talking about FID. Google uses these measures in ranking, but relevance comes first. I treat speed as a tie-breaker for Google and a deal-breaker for a buyer on a phone.

- 1 **Use a real phone.** On a mid-range Android with Wi-Fi off, load your three most important pages. Count the seconds until you

can read the main heading, and watch whether anything jumps.

- 2 **Run PageSpeed Insights.** Go to pagespeed.web.dev, enter a page address and choose mobile. The top half shows what real Chrome users experienced over the past 28 days, which is what Google uses. The score out of 100 below it comes from one simulated visit and is only for finding causes, so nobody should spend weeks chasing it.
- 3 **Open Google Search Console,** set up in the company's name. Its Core Web Vitals report sorts your pages into Good, Needs improvement and Poor, and its Page indexing report shows which pages Google has left out, and why.
- 4 **Type your address with http:// in front.** It should take you to the https:// version, with a padlock and no warning.
- 5 **Read your robots.txt.** Type your domain followed by `/robots.txt`. Look for "Disallow: /" under "User-agent: *", or under any crawler named in the table below.
- 6 **Do the view-source test.** Open an important page on a computer, right-click and choose "View page source". Press Ctrl+F and search for a sentence from the main text. If it is missing, JavaScript builds the text after the page arrives, and some crawlers will never see it.
- 7 **Ask in writing.** Put one question to whoever runs your hosting or CDN: "Is any bot-blocking, AI-blocking or firewall rule switched on, and what exactly does it block?"
- 8 **Check your labels.** Paste your home page address into validator.schema.org, and compare the name, address and phone in the markup with your Google Business Profile, character by character.

How to fix it

Slow small-business sites are usually slow for the same few reasons, and none of the fixes needs a new website.

- ✓ Shrink the images. Resize each picture to the size at which it is shown, and save it as WebP or AVIF, which all modern browsers support.
- ✓ Load the top image first. Lazy loading suits pictures further down the page, never the main image at the top.
- ✓ Swap the slider or video for one strong photograph of your best product, or your people at work.
- ✓ Remove every plugin and script nobody can explain. Each one slows the page's response to a tap.
- ✓ Host near your buyers, and add caching. If most buyers are in India, host in India; a server response time (TTFB) under 0.8 seconds is good. An exporter should add a content delivery network (CDN), which serves each page from a city near the visitor.

Then keep the site sound. Update the software and plugins every week, and delete any plugin whose maker has stopped updating it. Never install pirated copies of paid plugins (the saving is tiny and the risk is not), and turn on two-step login for every administrator.

Back up every day, keeping copies outside the hosting account so that a hacked or closed account does not take them too. A backup nobody has restored is only a hope, so ask for a test restore twice a year.

Let the machines read your pages. If the view-source test failed, ask your developer about server-side rendering or pre-rendering. Give the phone version the same content as the desktop, submit your sitemap in Search Console, and redirect any moved page permanently (a 301).

Give every important page its own title: the offer, then for whom or where, then the brand. “Stainless Steel Dairy Pumps, 1 to 20 HP | Shree Pumps, Anand” does far more for you than “Home”.

Structured data, briefly. A machine reading “Established 1994 by R. K. Mehta” has to guess that 1994 is a founding date. Structured data removes the guess. It is a short block of code, invisible to visitors, that labels each fact using the schema.org vocabulary, usually in a format called JSON-LD. A trimmed example:

```
<script type="application/ld+json">
{
  "@context": "https://schema.org",
  "@type": "Organization",
  "@id": "https://www.example.in/#org",
  "name": "Shree Pumps",
  "foundingDate": "1994",
  "sameAs": ["https://www.linkedin.com/company/example"]
}
</script>
```

The @id is a permanent name tag that your other pages can point to, and sameAs lists your official profiles elsewhere, telling machines they all belong to one business.

Describe the company fully once, on the home page, using the facts sheet from Chapter 3. Other pages then point back to that @id, so every machine keeps one file card on you instead of five.

Two rules keep you out of trouble. The markup must match what visitors can see on the page, and Google will not show review stars for testimonials a business publishes about itself. FAQ rich results stopped appearing in Google Search from 7 May 2026, though the questions still help buyers.³

Be wary of anyone selling markup as the secret to AI answers. Google says there is “no special schema.org structured data that you need to add” to appear in AI Overviews or AI Mode.³ Markup

still earns rich results for products and helps Google tell you apart from similar names, but it cannot make a thin page worth quoting.

As for llms.txt, a proposed summary file for AI tools, Google says it “will neither harm nor help” your visibility in Google Search.³ Let your website system make one if it costs nothing. I would not pay for one.

Which AI crawlers to let in

Each AI company runs several crawlers. Search crawlers find pages to cite in answers, user fetchers open a page when someone’s question needs it, and training crawlers collect text for future models. The table follows the companies’ own descriptions as of September 2026.⁴

Let in: search crawlers and user fetchers

Googlebot, Bingbot, OAI-SearchBot, ChatGPT-User,
Claude-SearchBot, Claude-User, PerplexityBot,
Perplexity-User, Applebot

Decide, and write it down: training crawlers

GPTBot, ClaudeBot, Google-Extended, Applebot-Extended
most businesses should let them in too



the gate: robots.txt, your CDN, your firewall

Your website

Who gets through the gate. *Blocking a search crawler takes you out of that assistant’s answers. Blocking a training crawler is a real choice, but make it on purpose.*

Name in robots.txt	What it does	If you block it
Googlebot	Crawls for Google Search, including AI Overviews and AI Mode	You leave Google Search altogether
Google-Extended	Not a crawler: a control over use of your content to train Gemini models and ground Gemini app answers	No effect on Google Search, so it does not keep you out of AI Overviews
Bingbot (Microsoft)	Crawls for Bing; Microsoft has no separate AI crawler	You leave Bing Search
OAISearchBot (OpenAI)	Finds pages for ChatGPT's search answers	Not shown in ChatGPT search answers, except perhaps as a plain link
GPTBot (OpenAI)	Collects content that may train OpenAI's models	Not used for training; search unaffected
ChatGPT-User (OpenAI)	Visits a page when a user's request needs it	OpenAI says robots.txt rules "may not apply"
ClaudeBot, Claude-SearchBot, Claude-User (Anthropic)	Training; search; fetching pages for users	Out of training; possibly less visible in search; pages not fetched for users
PerplexityBot, Perplexity-User	Search (not training); fetching pages for users	Out of Perplexity search; the user fetcher "generally ignores" robots.txt
Applebot, Applebot-Extended	Search for Siri, Spotlight and Safari; a control over training Apple's models	Out of Apple search; blocking only Extended keeps you in search

If you want to be recommended, allow the search crawlers and the user fetchers. Training crawlers are a real choice. For most businesses I would let them in, because future models learn about you partly from what they can read today. Whichever way you go, write the decision down.

In robots.txt, a line such as “User-agent: GPTBot” followed by “Disallow: /” keeps that crawler out of the whole site, and a group headed “User-agent: *” covers every crawler not named elsewhere. Reputable crawlers obey the file, though it is a request rather than a lock.

Check your CDN as well. Since 1 July 2025 Cloudflare has asked every new domain at sign-up whether to allow AI crawlers, with blocking as the default. In July 2026 it split AI traffic into Search, Agent and Training, and from 15 September 2026 new domains block Training and Agent bots on pages with ads by default.⁵

Cloudflare also said that customers who had chosen to block Training, including through its older “Block AI bots” setting, would block Googlebot, Applebot and Bingbot too, unless they opted out, because these crawl for both search and training.⁵

An owner who ticked that box in 2025 may now be turning away Google itself. If your site sits behind Cloudflare, have the settings reviewed this month.

Quick check: Chapter 5

Tick what is true today. One point each.

- ☐ Our home page and main service page pass Core Web Vitals on mobile in PageSpeed Insights, or Search Console shows none of our pages as Poor.
- ☐ Typing our address with `http://` takes visitors to the `https://` version, with a padlock and no warning.
- ☐ Our website software and plugins were updated in the last month, and we have a backup from the last week kept outside our hosting account.
- ☐ Search Console, held in the company's name, shows all our important pages as indexed.
- ☐ When we view the source of our main service page, its main text is there.
- ☐ We have checked `robots.txt` and our hosting or CDN settings this year, and they allow Googlebot, Bingbot and the search crawlers of OpenAI, Anthropic and Perplexity.

Your score: _____ out of 6

DO THIS WEEK

Do the machine access check. Open your `robots.txt` and note any crawler names and “Disallow” lines, run the view-source test on your three most important pages, and send your hosting or CDN provider the one written question above. Forward whatever you find to your web team with a date for the fixes.

NOTES

1. Google, “HTTPS by default”, Chrome Security Team, 28 October 2025. blog.google/security
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3. Google Search Central, accessed September 2026: *AI features and your website*, last updated 10 December 2025; *Optimizing your website for generative AI features on Google Search*, last updated 10 July 2026; *Review snippet structured data*, last updated 8 September 2026; *Latest documentation updates*, FAQ rich results entry of 8 May 2026. developers.google.com/search
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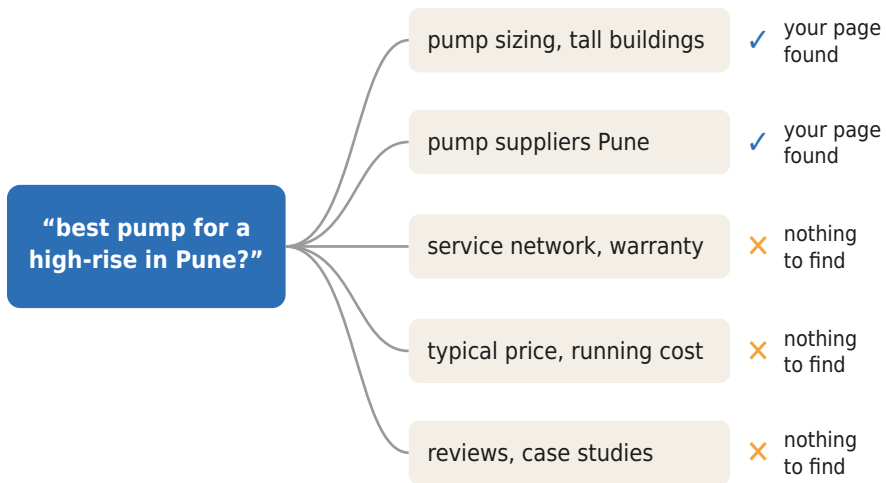
Pages That Answer

Buyers, Google and the AI assistants all arrive at your website carrying questions, and they favour the business that answers them plainly, near the top of the page. I show you how to find the questions your buyers really ask, and how to write pages that a stranger and a machine can both use.

Dr Kavitha's dental clinic in Anna Nagar, Chennai, has a handsome website with fourteen treatments in a grid of icons. Her receptionist spends half the day on WhatsApp answering "Root canal how much?" and "Sunday open aa?" The website answers neither, so when someone nearby asks an AI assistant about aligners, the answer comes from other clinics' pages.

Almost every question a buyer asks your front desk is one he has already asked Google, or will ask ChatGPT tonight. I have come to believe that a company's expertise does not exist online until it is written on a page, in words a stranger and a machine can both follow.

AI search makes this more pressing. Google says AI Mode breaks a question into subtopics and issues "a multitude of queries simultaneously" on the user's behalf.¹



Query fan-out. One question becomes several hidden searches. A site with one page per topic has more chances to be found than a site that says only “we supply pumps”.

A business whose site says only “we supply pumps” matches one of those searches. One with clear pages on choosing a pump for a high-rise, its service network, typical prices and warranty matches most of them.

What usually goes wrong

- **Guessing the questions in a meeting room.** Owners list the questions they wish buyers asked. The real ones are sitting in the sales team’s phones.
- **Tidying up the buyer’s words.** “Root canal how much?” becomes “Understanding endodontic treatment costs”, and the link to what people actually type or say is lost.
- **Answering only the buying stage.** A buyer moves from the problem to the options, then to choosing a supplier, buying and after-sale. A product list and a contact form cover one of those stages, while the early questions are where AI assistants first meet your name.

- **Burying the answer.** History and values come first, and what the company does turns up somewhere in the fourth paragraph.
- **Sentences any competitor could have written.** “High-quality solutions for diverse applications” carries no fact a buyer can check or a machine can repeat.
- **Answers locked away.** Specifications in a PDF catalogue or an image, and answers hidden in tabs. Buyers on phones skip them, and machines may not read them.
- **Silence on price.** It is the question buyers most want answered. Say nothing and a competitor, or a forum, will answer for you.
- **Two hundred copies of one page.** “Best supplier in Vapi”, “in Baddi”, “in Sikkim”, with only the place changed, is the kind of thing Google’s spam rules are written for.
- **Publish and forget.** Old lead times and discontinued models do harm because buyers and AI assistants both take them at face value.

Check it yourself

- 1 **Read your own enquiries.** Scroll back through the last fifty WhatsApp and email enquiries, and copy the first question from each, word for word, in the language it came in.
- 2 **Ask the front line.** For two weeks, have everyone who talks to buyers (sales, reception, service, dispatch) add every question they hear to a shared sheet. Ask about lost quotes too; the reason usually exposes a question you never answered.
- 3 **Look outside.** Type the start of a buyer’s question into Google with words like “how”, “which”, “cost” or “near me”, and note the suggestions and the People Also Ask box. Read your competitors’ poor reviews as well. Every complaint there is a question the next buyer will put to you.

- 4 **Open Search Console.** In the Performance report, filter for queries containing “how”, “what”, “which” or “cost”. A question shown often and clicked rarely usually means a page touches it without answering it. Appearances in AI Overviews and AI Mode are counted here too, under the “Web” search type.
- 5 **Test your best service page.** Read only its first two sentences. Do they say what it is, who it is for and where you supply? Then underline every sentence your nearest competitor could also have written.
- 6 **Ask an assistant.** Put a real buyer’s question to ChatGPT or Perplexity and see whose pages it names. If yours never appear, work out which of your pages should have answered.

Record each question in the language it was asked. According to IMAI and Kantar, 98 per cent of Indian internet users, about 870 million people, used the internet in Indian languages in 2024.² “Root canal ka kharcha kitna hai?” is a real question, and spoken questions run longer and chattier than typed ones. Let what you collect decide which languages your pages need.

How to fix it

Build a question bank. Put every question in one sheet, with its stage, how often it comes up, where you heard it and the page that answers it. For a typical small business I would expect thirty to a hundred distinct questions.

Score each from one to three for how often it is asked, how close it sits to a decision and how badly your site answers it, then start with the highest totals. Give extra weight to any question behind a lost quote. That one has already cost you money.

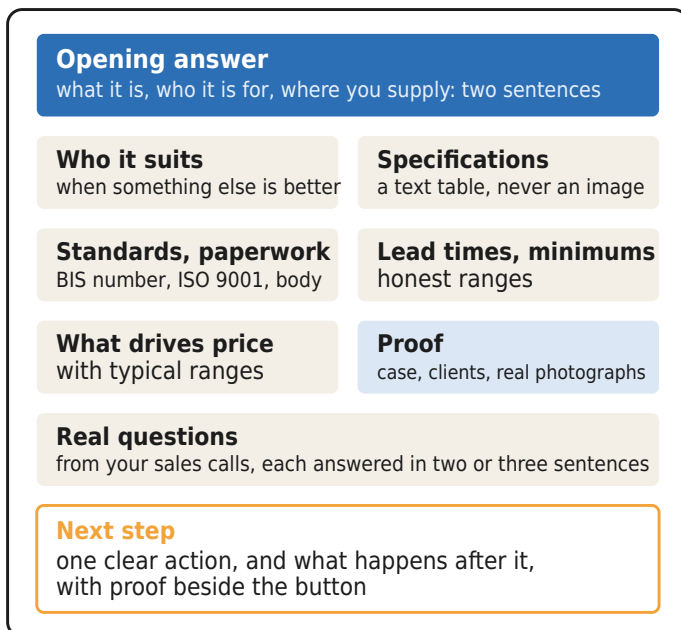
Put the answer first. For every section, ask what question the reader brings and answer it in the first sentence or two: “Yes, we

supply to Nepal and Bhutan, by road from Siliguri, usually within ten days.” Then give the detail.

Write headings as questions or plain answers, never “Our Commitment”. Let each paragraph name its subject, so it still makes sense if it is the only one someone reads.

AI assistants reward this habit. Microsoft’s Bing team wrote that assistants “don’t read a page top to bottom like a person would”; they break it into pieces and pick the ones that answer the question.³ A page that answers many specific questions gets many chances to be picked.

Give each service page the sections buyers look for. The order can vary. What cannot is that every section answers something a buyer actually asks.



A service page that answers. *Every block answers something a buyer actually asks, and the answer comes before the detail.*

Section	What to write
Opening answer	What it is, who it is for and where you supply, in two sentences
Who it suits	The buyers it fits, and when something else is better
Specifications	Ranges and options in a text table, never an image
Standards and paperwork	The exact standard, such as a BIS number or ISO 9001 with the certifying body, and the documents you supply
Lead times and minimums	Honest ranges for standard and custom orders
What drives price	The factors that move the cost, with typical ranges if you can
Proof	A short case, named clients where allowed, photographs of real installations
Real questions	From your sales calls, each answered in two or three sentences
Next step	One clear action, and what happens after it

Swap adjectives for facts. Replace “fast delivery” with the number of days, “wide range” with the actual range and “competitive prices” with what the price depends on. My rule of thumb: if a sentence would be just as true of your competitor, cut it or fix it.

Write a few answer pages. A comparison or “how to choose” page sets the options side by side, and becomes more believable when it admits that the option you do not sell is sometimes the better one. A cost page explains what drives the price and gives typical ranges with a worked example. You need not publish a price list.

Then add a page of real FAQs: the twenty questions your team hears every week, each answered in two or three sentences, answer first. Leave out “Why should I choose you?”; I have never met a buyer who typed it.

Show who wrote it. Google’s guidance on helpful content asks who created a page, how and why, and says of its quality signals that “trust is most important”.⁴ Put a named author on guides and answer pages, with a short profile and photograph, and say who reviewed the technical pages.

Use photographs of your own work, not stock pictures of smiling people in hairnets. Add the details only someone who has done the job would know, such as the mistake buyers commonly make.

Use AI writing tools with care. Letting ChatGPT organise your material is fine. Google’s spam policy on scaled content abuse targets pages “generated for the primary purpose of manipulating search rankings and not helping users”, “no matter how it’s created”.⁵ You supply the facts and judgement, and someone who knows the subject checks every number before it goes live.

Keep pages true. List your twenty most important pages and give each an owner, who reads it every six months and confirms or corrects every fact. Update a page when something real changes. Never change only the date to make it look fresh; Google’s own checklist warns against exactly that.⁴

Quick check: Chapter 6

Tick what is true today. One point each.

- ☐ We have a written list of at least 30 questions our buyers ask, in their own words, showing which page answers each.
- ☐ Each main service or product page opens with one or two sentences saying what it is, who it is for and where we supply.
- ☐ Our service pages give specifics as text: ranges, standards, lead times and what drives price.
- ☐ We have at least one page answering a cost question and one helping buyers compare options.
- ☐ Our main pages name a real author or reviewer, and someone has checked every fact on them in the last six months.

Your score: _____ out of 5

DO THIS WEEK

Scroll back through your last fifty WhatsApp and email enquiries and copy the first question from each into a sheet, in the buyer's exact words. Beside each, write the page on your website that answers it. The blanks in that column are your first writing list.

NOTES

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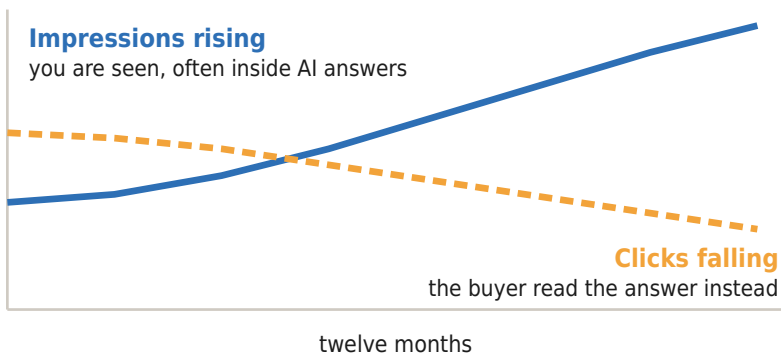
Google Today

Google still sends most of your buyers, but it now answers many of their questions itself, before anyone clicks. I want you to know what it rewards today, how its AI answers pick their sources, and what to watch when the clicks thin out.

Owners often show me an agency report saying the website is still on page one, and ask why enquiries have drifted down all year anyway. Usually the agency is not lying to them. Google has changed underneath the report, and the report is still measuring the old things.

For some searches Google now writes its own summary at the top of the page, built from other people's websites. It calls these AI Overviews. There is also AI Mode, a separate tab where the buyer holds a conversation and asks follow-up questions. Rankings still count, only they are no longer the whole story.

what a Search Console chart often shows now



Seen more, clicked less. An illustrative pattern, not real data. A page-one ranking under an AI summary can bring very few visits, so judge Google by impressions and enquiries, not by position alone.

What usually goes wrong

- **Judging Google by rankings alone.** A page-one position sitting under an AI summary may bring very few visits. Judge Google by enquiries and impressions as well.
- **One page trying to cover everything.** AI Mode splits a long question into several searches of its own, which Google calls query fan-out (Chapter 6). A single “Products” page is a candidate for none of them; a thorough page on each product and buyer question is a candidate for several.
- **Paying for “AI Overview optimisation”.** As Chapter 2 explained, Google sets no additional requirements for AI Overviews or AI Mode. It is the same work as ordinary search.
- **Panicking after a core update.** A few times a year Google makes a broad change to its ranking systems and rankings swing for a couple of weeks. You can slip only because better pages have appeared, and rushed deletions usually make it worse.
- **Being described only by yourself.** Google’s guidelines for its human quality raters tell them to check what independent sources say about a business, and to believe those sources where they disagree with the business.⁴
- **Buying link packages.** The WhatsApp offer of “500 high-quality backlinks for ₹4,999” breaks Google’s spam policies. At best the links are ignored. At worst they bring a penalty that takes months to undo.
- **Leaving Search Console to the agency.** If the agency goes, sixteen months of data about your buyers can go with it.
- **Ignoring Bing.** Bing had about 1.2 per cent of searches in India in August 2026.¹ Its index still reaches further than its own page: Microsoft Copilot draws on it, Yahoo’s results come from it and DuckDuckGo’s links largely do.

Check it yourself

- 1 **Get into Search Console.** Go to search.google.com/search-console. If you cannot log in, ask your web team today to add you under Settings, Users and permissions, as an owner in your own name.
- 2 **Read what buyers typed.** Open Performance, then Search results. Set the date range to the last twelve months and click the Queries tab. If impressions are rising while clicks fall, you are being seen, often inside AI answers.
- 3 **Look at the AI report.** Since August 2026 Search Console has a generative AI performance report for sites with enough impressions in AI features. It shows how often your pages appeared in AI Overviews and AI Mode. As of September 2026 it shows impressions only, with no clicks and no questions.²
- 4 **Ask Google yourself.** Type your five most important buyer questions into Google and then into AI Mode. Write down whether you appear in the results, in the AI answer, or nowhere.
- 5 **Run the rater's search.** Type your company name in quotation marks followed by your domain with a minus sign, for example "Your Company Name" -site:yourcompany.in. Count the independent pages that mention you. Do the same for your strongest competitor.
- 6 **Check Bing.** Go to bing.com/webmasters and see whether your site is verified. Its AI Performance report shows how often Copilot and Bing's AI summaries cite your pages, and the phrases behind those citations. That is more than Google tells you, and it costs nothing.

How to fix it

- ✓ Own your data. Put Search Console and Bing Webmaster Tools in the company's name. Once a month, spend twenty minutes on three questions: which queries grew, which pages gained or lost impressions, and whether any important service page is missing altogether.
- ✓ Give every fan-out search something to find. One thorough page per product, service, application and common buyer question, with plain statements of fact: what you make, for whom, where, since when. Chapter 6 shows how to write them.
- ✓ Measure what pays. Enquiries from Google search, impressions, searches for your business name and the answer to "How did you hear about us?". Chapter 11 sets this up.
- ✓ Stay calm through core updates. Look at the quality of the whole site without sentiment. Rewrite weak pages before you think of deleting them, and give changes weeks or months to show.
- ✓ Leave the new AI opt-out switched off. Since 31 August 2026 Search Console has a setting that keeps a site out of AI Overviews, AI Mode and AI features in Discover.² For a business that wants to be found, I can think of very few reasons to use it.
- ✓ Use real photographs. Buyers photograph a part with Google Lens to find its maker. Name image files in words (solar-pump-5hp.jpg) and give each a short plain description, its alt text.

The larger job is getting other people to talk about you. In the trade-fair days a buyer asked the man at the next stall, or a seth in the market who would vouch for you. Online, the vouching comes from other websites, and a link or a mention from a respected source still carries weight with Google.

It carries even more with AI assistants. Muck Rack analysed over 25 million links cited by ChatGPT, Claude and Gemini up to May 2026: journalism made up 27 per cent of the sources, paid or advertorial content 0.3 per cent.³

Muck Rack sells software to PR teams, so I read that as a direction and no more. None of this needs a PR agency: one person who owns it, and a few hours a month.



Who vouches for you. *Independent mentions are hard to fake, which is why Google and the assistants weigh them. Each one is a few hours' work, not a PR budget.*

- ✓ Complete your entry in every association, chamber and certification register: full name, description, website link, sectors served.
- ✓ Offer trade journals quick, useful comment on new rules, prices and technical problems. Editors remember who replies within the hour.
- ✓ Ask two good clients, or the maker of equipment you use, to publish a short case study naming you.
- ✓ Speak at association meetings and industry webinars, and check that the event page spells your company's name correctly.
- ✓ Pitch real stories to local and business papers, Indian-language ones included.

- ✓ Keep a media page on your site with a fact sheet, the founder's biography, photographs and a contact.
- ✓ Sponsor the chamber's event if you like. Any paid link should carry a "sponsored" or "nofollow" tag, which your web team can add.

Architects, doctors, lawyers and chartered accountants should check their council's rules on publicity before pitching a story. The access and tracking items for your web team are in the brief at the back.

Quick check: Chapter 7

Tick what is true today. One point each.

- ☐ Our site is verified in Search Console and Bing Webmaster Tools, with owner access in the company's name.
- ☐ Someone in the business looks at the Search Console Performance report at least once a month.
- ☐ In the last three months we have checked whether we appear in AI Overviews or AI Mode for our five main buyer questions.
- ☐ At least five independent organisations mention us by name on their websites, and nobody working for us buys links.

Your score: _____ out of 4

DO THIS WEEK

Download the last twelve months of queries from Search Console and mark the twenty a real buyer would type. Put the top five into Google and AI Mode and note where you appear.

NOTES

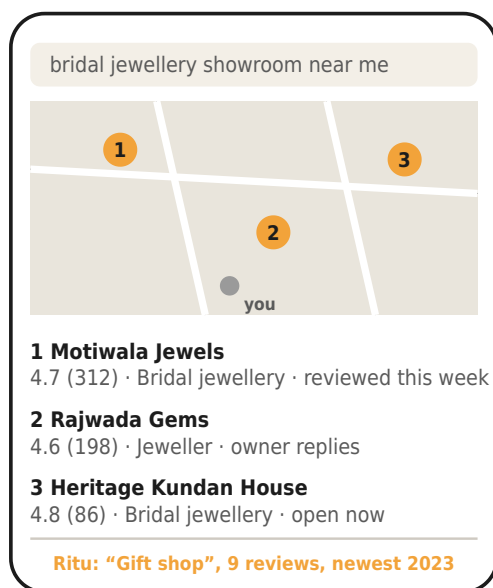
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Local Search and Reviews

When someone nearby searches for what you sell, Google shows a map and three businesses before any website, and AI assistants now read the same listings and reviews. I want your profile complete, your reviews steady and your replies the kind a stranger would trust.

A couple from Delhi, in Jaipur to shop for their daughter's wedding, search "bridal jewellery showroom near me" from their hotel room. Ritu's family has been in the trade on MI Road for three generations, and her showroom is not among the three on the map.

Her profile was set up years ago by a salesman who has since left. It says "Gift shop", and nobody can log in to change it.



The local pack. Three names before any website. Category, review count and recency decide who gets a place, not who has been on MI Road longest.

Her problem has nothing to do with gold. Google fills that map on three things: relevance, distance and prominence. Prominence rests partly on how many websites link to you and how many reviews you have. Google also says there is no way to request or pay for a better local ranking,⁵ which I would pin above every owner's desk.

What usually goes wrong

- **Nobody in the company owns the profile.** An employee or an agency set it up, and when they leave, the profile leaves with them.
- **A vague category.** Google says your categories affect local ranking, and advises the fewest, most specific ones. "Medical clinic" for a dermatologist is a weak choice.

- **The shortcuts that get profiles suspended.** Keywords in the business name, an address with no staffed office behind it, a second profile for the same business. A virtual office does not qualify unless it is staffed in business hours and carries your signboard.
- **Old facts.** An old landline, or “open” on Diwali when the shutter is down. AI assistants now build local answers from listings and reviews, so a wrong detail gets repeated with complete confidence. Google launched Ask Maps, a conversational feature in Maps, in the US and India in March 2026.¹
- **Reviews in bursts, then silence.** Buyers look at dates. In a 2026 BrightLocal survey of US consumers, 74 per cent said they only consider reviews from the last three months.² When the newest review is from 2023, people wonder whether you are still open.
- **Breaking the review rules.** Google forbids offering anything for a review, asking only the happy customers (review gating), reviews from staff, and review kiosks or tablets at your counter. It blocked or removed over 292 million policy-violating reviews in 2025.³ Offenders can lose new reviews and get a warning shown to buyers.
- **Replying in anger.** Arguing in public, or worse, mentioning the customer’s room, account or treatment. A clinic or CA firm should never confirm in a reply that the reviewer is a patient or client.
- **Forgetting the other maps.** Justdial, Apple Maps, Bing Places and your trade’s own directories often carry details from years ago, and assistants read them too.

Check it yourself

- 1 **See what the buyer sees.** On your phone, search Google Maps for three phrases a nearby customer would use. For each of the

three businesses shown, note its primary category, number of reviews, date of its newest review and whether the owner replies. Then look at your own.

- 2 **Find out who owns your profile.** Sign in at business.google.com and open Business Profile settings, then People and access. If you cannot see it, search Maps for your name and use “Own this business?”.
- 3 **Go through the fields.** Name exactly as on your signboard, most specific category, special hours for holidays, a phone someone answers, the WhatsApp link, a website link to the matching page, every service listed, attributes such as parking and UPI, and at least ten real photographs.
- 4 **Ask the assistants.** Put “What do customers say about [your business]?” and “Is [your business] reliable?” to ChatGPT, Gemini and Google’s AI Mode. Note anything wrong and any sources shown.
- 5 **Check the other listings.** Look yourself up on Justdial, Apple Maps, Bing Places, IndiaMART, and Practo or Zomato if they apply. Keep a sheet of every directory, its login and the date someone last checked it.

How to fix it

- ✓ Make the company the owner. The primary owner should be a company Google account that outlives any employee. Add staff and agencies as managers.
- ✓ Verify properly. Where Google offers video verification, film one continuous take from the road to your door and inside: signboard, products or equipment, and a staff-only area. Put up a proper sign first. Reviews of verification take up to five business days.

- ✓ Fill every field and post something real once a month, such as a new collection or a health camp. Posts older than six months are archived.
- ✓ Service-area businesses such as pest control or AC repair should hide the address and list up to 20 areas, within about two hours' drive of base.
- ✓ More than one branch? Give each staffed branch its own profile, phone and photographs, linked to its own page on your website with the address, map, hours and people.
- ✓ Keep a suspension folder ready. GST certificate, Udyam registration, shop and establishment licence, a recent utility bill in the business name. If Google suspends you, appeal with these and never open a new profile.

For reviews, the method is dull and it works. Ask every customer, at the moment they are pleased, personally, with a direct link. Copy the link or QR code from your profile, put the QR on the counter or invoice, and send the link on WhatsApp once the job is done.

Reviews in bursts



an agency campaign, then nothing;
the newest review is from 2023

Reviews as a habit



a few every month, each asked for
personally, nothing offered in return

Twelve months of reviews, two ways. *Buyers and Google both look at the dates. Steady beats sudden.*

A few reviews every month look natural, because they are. Ask customers to say what you actually did for them. “Helped us put a bridal set together within our budget” gives an assistant a specific reason to name you. You must never write that review yourself.

Reply to every review. For good ones, thank the person by name and pick up one thing they said, in fresh words each time. For a bad one, wait until you are calm but reply within a day or two:

“Thank you for raising this, and I am sorry the bill was a surprise. That should not happen here. I would like to look into it myself. Please call me on [number] or message us on WhatsApp.”

You are writing for the next hundred readers, and the angry customer is only one of them. Report only reviews that break Google’s policies, such as spam, conflicts of interest or abuse, through the Reviews Management Tool. A rejected report gets one appeal, and disagreeing with a review is never a reason.

India’s rules point the same way. The BIS standard IS 19000:2022 covers how platforms handle reviews, and the CCPA’s 2022 guidelines on misleading advertisements carry penalties of up to ₹10 lakh for a first violation and ₹50 lakh for later ones.⁴ Doctors and chartered accountants should also check current NMC or ICAI guidance before asking for reviews.

If a complaint goes public, get the facts within hours, acknowledge it in the same place, and take the detail to a phone call. One person speaks for the business. Do not threaten or delete, and once it is resolved, and the customer agrees, say so publicly and fix whatever caused it.

Quick check: Chapter 8

Tick what is true today. One point each.

- ☐ Our Google Business Profile is verified, and its primary owner is a company account that stays when staff or agencies change.
- ☐ Our profile has the most specific primary category, correct hours including holidays, and at least ten real photographs.
- ☐ We have received new Google reviews in each of the last three months, and we never offer anything in return.
- ☐ Every review from the last three months, good or bad, has a reply from us.
- ☐ Our details are identical on Justdial, Apple Maps, Bing Places and the directories that count in our trade.

Your score: _____ out of 5

DO THIS WEEK

Turn your profile's review link into a QR code and write a three-line WhatsApp message in your own words asking for a short, honest review. Send it to the last twenty customers you served, whether or not you think they were delighted, and reply to every review still waiting for one.

NOTES

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Getting Named by ChatGPT and Other AI Assistants

When a buyer asks an AI assistant for a supplier, the names come from what it learned in training and what it finds when it searches at that moment. This is the method I use to test where you stand, get onto the pages assistants read, correct their mistakes and get ready for agents.

“Why does ChatGPT recommend my competitor and not me?” Owners ask me this more than anything else now, usually with some heat, and usually about a firm they rate below their own. The answer is rarely that the machine is random, and it is never that somebody paid for the place.

An assistant knows about you in two ways, and they run on very different clocks. Once you see both, the list stops looking like a lottery.

How assistants build an answer



Training memory

a blended impression of everything written about you, up to a cut-off date; no sources shown; favours names that turn up often

changes only when a new model is trained

slow clock: a year or more



Live search

rewrites the question into several searches, reads the results and cites them; sources shown; a new business can be named today

changes as soon as the web changes

fast clock: weeks

most answers to “who should I contact?” use both

Two clocks. *Training memory is slow and shows no sources. Live search is fast and cites what it reads. Fixes reach the fast clock first.*

Training memory. Each model is trained on text collected up to a cut-off date and learns nothing after it. What it keeps is a blended impression of everything written about you, with no sources, and it favours names that turn up often. Your new product line may not reach any model’s memory for a year or more.

Live search. For a question needing current facts, such as “best brassware exporters in Moradabad”, most assistants search the web. OpenAI says ChatGPT rewrites the question into one or more targeted searches, reads the results and cites them. If your pages are found and trusted, you can be named even by a model that has never heard of you.

The buyer never sees those hidden searches, and each is a chance to be found or missed. A rival with a weaker website gets named

because a directory, a member list and a trade article about him turn up in three of them.

Each assistant searches a different index, and if you are missing from the one it uses, you are missing from its live answers. This is what the companies have published, as of September 2026.

Assistant	Where live information comes from	Shows sources?
ChatGPT	Its own search crawler, OAI-SearchBot, plus third-party search providers that OpenAI does not fully name	Yes when it searches; none from memory
Google AI Overviews and AI Mode	Google’s own index, many searches at once	Yes, supporting links
Gemini app	Google’s search index	Sometimes
Perplexity	Its own index	Yes, numbered, on every answer
Claude	Web search reported to use Brave, and its own crawler, Claude-SearchBot	Yes when it searches
Microsoft Copilot	Bing	Yes, linked citations

What usually goes wrong

- **Judging from one screenshot.** In a SparkToro and Gumshoe study published in January 2026, there was less than a 1 in 100 chance that two runs of the same prompt gave the same list of brands. The strongest brands in a narrow category still appeared in 55 to 77 per cent of answers.¹
- **Blocking the crawlers by accident.** A site that blocks OAI-SearchBot will not appear in ChatGPT’s search answers, and

Cloudflare's defaults and security plug-ins can block it without anyone deciding to (Chapter 5).

- **A confused identity.** One name with the Registrar of Companies, another on the website, a third on IndiaMART, an old address on three directories. When an assistant cannot be sure which firm is you, it names one it is sure about. Chapter 3 covers the fix.
- **Only your own words about you.** An assistant wants to see that someone else has already vouched for a name. A good website states your case, but it cannot be the only witness.
- **Buying “AI SEO” as magic.** Two hundred machine-written pages count as scaled content abuse under Google's spam policies, and hidden text meant for AI is treated as manipulation. No special AI file or markup is needed (Chapter 5).
- **Believing a place in the answer is for sale.** ChatGPT began showing labelled ads in India in August 2026, and OpenAI says they do not influence the answer.⁵

The prompt test

This is the check I would run every month. It needs a spreadsheet and half a day, and someone in your office can do it.

- 1 Write 20 to 30 buyer questions, in your buyers' own words from real enquiries. Mix category questions (“best HR software for mid-sized firms in India”), comparisons (“[leading rival] alternatives”) and questions about you (“Is [your company] reliable?”).
- 2 Choose the assistants: ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity and Google's AI Mode at least, plus Copilot or Claude if your buyers use them.

- 3 Run each question three times in a private or logged-out window, so that saved memory does not colour the answer. Note the city, because location changes results.
- 4 Record six columns: date, assistant, question, whether you were named and where, what it said and whether it was accurate, and the sources cited.
- 5 Work out one figure each month: the percentage of runs in which you were named, by assistant and overall. Note which rivals and which sources come up most.
- 6 Ask “What is [your company]?” in each assistant. If it mixes you up with a namesake, fix that before anything else.

Assistant	Question	Named?	Accurate?	Sources
ChatGPT	best HR software, India	Yes, 4th	Yes	g2.com, a list
ChatGPT	best HR software, India	No	n/a	two lists
Perplexity	best HR software, India	Yes, 2nd	Old address	our site, JD
AI Mode	[rival] alternatives	No	n/a	rival, a forum

This month: named in 2 of 4 runs, 50%

most-cited page that leaves us out: the list article

The prompt-test sheet. *One figure a month, the share of runs that name you, and a sources column that becomes your to-do list.*

Two free reports help: Bing’s AI Performance report and Search Console’s AI report (Chapter 7). Paid tools run hundreds of prompts for you. None of them sees what real buyers type, so treat their numbers as a sample.

Getting into the sources assistants read

Start with your own site, because it is the one source you fully control.

- ✓ Open the doors. Let in the search crawlers: OAI-SearchBot, PerplexityBot, Claude-SearchBot, Bingbot and Googlebot. Blocking training crawlers such as GPTBot is a separate choice, and Chapter 5 shows how to check both.
- ✓ Use the facts sheet from Chapter 3 (registered name, trading name, what you do, year founded, address, areas served, certifications, founders) and make your About page, profiles and listings say exactly that.
- ✓ Put facts in text. Capacity, minimum order, price ranges, lead times and standards met, on the page and not inside images or PDF brochures.
- ✓ Give each hidden search a page: one per product, service, industry and location, plus honest pages on cost and comparisons. Chapter 6 shows how.

Then open the sources column of your sheet. It is your to-do list, sorted by type.

- **“Best of” lists.** In an Ahrefs study of ChatGPT’s answers to 750 “best X” prompts, list articles made up 43.8 per cent of the page types cited, most of them updated within the year.² Write to the editor with plain facts. A list of your own must be fair to rivals and say it is yours.
- **Directories and marketplaces.** For local questions, a Yext study of 6.8 million citations found brand websites supplied 44 per cent and listings such as directories and maps 42 per cent.³ Yext sells listings management, so allow for that. Fill every field on IndiaMART, Justdial, Practo, G2, Clutch or whichever your buyers use.

- **Reviews.** Assistants read the words as well as the stars, as Chapter 8 explains.
- **Trade press and associations.** Hard to fake, so they carry weight. Chapter 7 lists where a smaller firm can earn them.
- **Reddit, Quora and YouTube.** Take part under your own name, declare who you work for and leave the pitch out (Chapter 10).
- **Indian languages.** A buyer in Kolhapur may ask in Marathi. Fix how your name is spelt in each script, and check the facts match your English pages.

When an assistant gets you wrong

Sooner or later one will give an old address, a product you dropped, or a namesake's history. Arguing in the chat changes that one conversation and nothing else.

If the answer shows citations, they tell you where the mistake came from: a stale directory, an old article, a marketplace profile nobody has touched. Correct the listing, ask the publisher to update the page, and state the right fact plainly on your own site.

With no citation, the error probably sits in training memory. The fix is the same, only slower: make the correct fact consistent across enough pages that live search overrides it and the next model learns it. Use the thumbs-down button too, though on its own it rarely fixes much.

If Wikipedia has you wrong, suggest the correction on the article's talk page and declare your interest. As a rough guide, crawler and page fixes can show within weeks, lists and reviews take months, and memory waits for the next model. Judge progress quarter by quarter.



How long fixes take to show. *Judge progress quarter by quarter, not answer by answer.*

Counting what AI sends you

Being named counts for more than the clicks. Many buyers act on a recommendation by searching your name or phoning you, and across 76,000 websites Ahrefs found Google sent about 190 times as much traffic as ChatGPT.⁴

- ✓ ChatGPT adds `utm_source=chatgpt.com` to its links, so those visits arrive labelled.
- ✓ Google Analytics now has a default channel called AI Assistant, under Reports, Acquisition, Traffic acquisition.
- ✓ Visits from AI Overviews and AI Mode are counted as ordinary organic search, and many app visits land in “Direct”.
- ✓ Add “ChatGPT or another AI assistant” to the “How did you hear about us?” options on your form, and ask on every call. Chapter 11 brings it together.

When the buyer sends an agent

An agent does more than answer. Told to “find five suppliers of hospital bed linen, compare prices for 500 sets and send enquiries to the best three”, it opens websites, clicks and fills in forms, stopping only for a decision or a payment.

It will not ring you to ask what your scanned catalogue says. What it needs from your site helps human buyers just as much:

- ✓ Prices, or honest ranges and a typical order price, in text. Otherwise the agent writes “no pricing found” and moves on.
- ✓ Specifications, minimum order, lead times, delivery areas and terms as page text, with the PDF as an extra.
- ✓ An enquiry form that works without an account, tested every month on a phone and a laptop.
- ✓ Security settings that let recognised agents through. Cloudflare now identifies “signed agents”, and blanket bot-blocking shuts out the buyer’s agent along with the scrapers.
- ✓ Product and offer structured data that matches the page (Chapter 5), and a Google Merchant Center feed if you sell products online.
- ✓ Written replies with facts. “Please call us” may never reach the person who sent the agent.

Never hide instructions for agents in your pages. The AI companies treat that as an attack on their users and train agents to resist it.

Real now, usable from India	Mostly US, or only announced
Browser agents that research, compare and fill forms: ChatGPT agent, including in the Atlas browser, on paid plans; Perplexity’s free Comet browser; Claude in Chrome on paid plans since August 2026	Checkout inside ChatGPT, AI Mode, Gemini and Copilot
AI Mode booking restaurant tables through Swiggy, Zomato and EazyDiner, since April 2026	Google phoning shops about stock and price
Free product listings through Google Merchant Center	Agent payments on UPI beyond the October 2025 pilot; NPCI says AI may recommend a payment but must not approve it

Put your effort into the left column now. Check the right column once a year.

Quick check: Chapter 9

Tick what is true today. One point each.

- ☐ We run at least 20 buyer questions through at least three AI assistants every month and record the results.
- ☐ Our web team has confirmed that our site does not block the search crawlers used by ChatGPT, Perplexity, Claude and Bing.
- ☐ Asked “What is [our company]?”, ChatGPT and Gemini describe us correctly and do not confuse us with anyone else.
- ☐ We are named in at least one list article, comparison page or directory that assistants cite for our category.
- ☐ We know how many visits and enquiries came from AI assistants last month.
- ☐ Our main pages show prices or price ranges and lead times in text, and our enquiry form works without an account.

Your score: _____ out of 6

DO THIS WEEK

Ask Perplexity three questions a new buyer would ask about your category and write down every website it cites. Tick the ones that mention you. Take the most-cited page that does not, and send its editor a short, factual note asking to be considered.

NOTES

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Social, Video, WhatsApp and Marketplaces

These are the places where buyers often meet you first, or come to check you before they ring. I want you to pick the two or three that suit your buyers, get a few things right on each, and make sure every one of them leads back to a website that can finish the job.

Most owners I meet are on half a dozen platforms and doing well on none of them.

The Instagram profile was set up years ago by someone who has since left, the last LinkedIn post is a Diwali greeting, and the number on the Facebook page rings a phone nobody answers. Buyers use exactly these places to check whether you are real.

What usually goes wrong

- **Being everywhere, badly.** Two profiles done well beat six left half finished.
- **Profiles that say nothing.** “Director” as a LinkedIn headline, “Turning dreams into reality” as an Instagram bio. Neither tells a stranger what you do, for whom or where.
- **Facts that wander.** An old address on IndiaMART, a different phone number on Facebook, your company name spelt three ways by your own staff on LinkedIn. Chapter 3 explains why people and machines both mark you down for it.
- **Announcements where answers belong.** “Proud to have participated in...” teaches a buyer nothing. One post that

answers his question does more than five festival greetings.

- **Spokes that lead nowhere.** No link, or a link to a bare home page, and messages left unread over the weekend.

Which spokes suit you

Start from your buyers. Ask your last ten customers where they first came across you and where they looked you up before calling.

Do your buyers choose there?

Yes: do it properly

a complete profile in the buyer's words
posts that answer real questions
a reply within the hour
a link to a page built for that visitor

two or three spokes, no more

No: keep it minimal

claim your name
complete the profile to match your site
link to your website
and leave it there

correct and quiet beats half done

One question per platform. *Two profiles done well beat six left half finished.*

Spoke	Suits most	Keep it minimal if
LinkedIn	Anyone selling to businesses; professional firms; software	You sell only to households
Instagram and Facebook	Clinics, restaurants, interiors, D2C brands, coaching, local services	You make industrial goods or run a CA or legal practice
YouTube	Anything that needs showing, installing or explaining	Rarely; a few useful videos help almost every business
WhatsApp	Every business in India	Never
Marketplaces	Manufacturers and traders (IndiaMART, TradeIndia), consumer brands (Amazon, Flipkart, Meesho), government suppliers (GeM)	Your buyers never use them

Spoke	Suits most	Keep it minimal if
Communities	Anyone whose buyers ask each other for names	Never; one helpful answer costs little

Where you keep a spoke minimal, claim your name, complete the profile to match your website, and leave it there.

LinkedIn

If you sell to other businesses, this is where buyers check you and your founder. LinkedIn said Indian membership had passed 160 million by September 2025.¹ Three things matter most.

- ✓ The founder's profile, written for buyers. A recent photograph, and a headline that says what you do and for whom: "Control valves for chemical and pharma plants | Founder, HV Flow Controls, Vadodara". Add a short About section and keep the public profile switched on so Google can show it.
- ✓ A complete company page. Same name, description, website and address as your site. Ask every employee to link their current job to the page, so the logo shows and the firm looks its real size.
- ✓ One useful post a week. Answer one buyer question from your list (Chapter 6) inside the post itself, and leave a few comments of substance on buyers' posts. LinkedIn has said its feed now pushes down engagement bait, pods and automated comments,¹ so keep well away from all three. And never pitch in the first message.

On your website, the About page should carry the same founder photograph and biography, each product you post about needs its own page, and both LinkedIn addresses belong in the same As links of your structured data (Chapter 5).



Rahul Mehta

Director
HV Flow Controls

says nothing to a stranger



Rahul Mehta

Control valves for chemical and pharma plants |
Founder, HV Flow Controls, Vadodara

what, for whom, who, where

Two headlines. *The one on the right is the one a buyer, and Google, can use.*

Instagram and Facebook

For consumer businesses the Instagram profile often does the job a website does for a manufacturer: it is where the buyer checks you out, on her phone, in a few seconds.

- ✓ A bio in three lines: what you do, where, and one piece of proof. “Home interiors for Pune apartments. 140 homes since 2014. Free site visit.” Point the link at a useful page, and connect your WhatsApp Business number so the button appears.
- ✓ Your own real work. Before and after, behind the scenes, a Reel answering “what does a modular kitchen cost?”, with words on screen for people watching without sound. Instagram says it shows reposted clips carrying another app’s watermark less. Write captions in the words a buyer would search, since public posts from professional accounts can now appear in Google.²
- ✓ Consent and disclosure. Post a customer’s face or home only with written permission; the DPDP Act makes consent central. If

you pay or gift an influencer, ASCI requires a clear “Ad” or “Collaboration” label, placed where people will see it.

Facebook still counts for local businesses. Complete the page, keep recommendations switched on, and answer questions helpfully in local groups. Meta Business Suite, which is free, puts messages from both platforms in one inbox.

Your site should give these profiles a page made for social visitors (services, price ranges, proof, a short form) to use as the profile link, and a project page each Reel can point to.

YouTube and video

A shot of the machine running on a real job answers “do they do what I need?” faster than any page of text.

Video also feeds the machines. A 2026 study by Otterly.AI, a vendor, found YouTube among the sources AI assistants cite most, with 94 per cent of those citations going to long-form videos. Views and subscriber counts made almost no difference.³

- ✓ Make videos that answer questions. Product demos, factory tours, installation and fault-finding guides, in the language your customers use. Your best presenter may well be the service engineer who has explained it two hundred times.
- ✓ Give the machines words. A title in the buyer’s words, a description that opens with the answer and links to your page, chapters with timestamps, and captions you have corrected. Automatic captions in Hindi or Tamil get product names and numbers wrong.
- ✓ Keep a pace you can hold. Two videos a month is realistic. Make one long video that answers a question fully, then cut two Shorts from it.

Embed each video on your website, on the page it supports, with a written summary or transcript underneath. Give your most important videos pages of their own with VideoObject markup (Chapter 5).

WhatsApp

The free WhatsApp Business app is all most small firms need. The paid Business Platform is for firms sending messages in volume, and its per-message pricing changes often.

- ✓ Set up the app properly. A profile matching your website word for word, a catalogue with real photographs, quick replies for the five questions you hear daily, and labels such as “New enquiry”, “Quote sent” and “Payment due”.
- ✓ Make it easy to start a chat. A wa.me/91 link with your number and a pre-filled message, on your website, in your email signature and as a QR code on your visiting card.
- ✓ Message only people who agreed. WhatsApp’s own policy says you may contact someone only after they gave you their number and agreed to hear from you, and you must stop when asked.⁴ Never add customers to a group without asking. I would rather see one useful message a month than four offers a week.

The website’s part is a click-to-chat button on every page, on the same number, with someone behind it who replies within the hour.

Marketplaces and communities

Marketplaces lend you the buyer’s trust in the platform: a hotel purchase manager who has never heard of you will still enquire through IndiaMART. If a government office or public hospital could

ever buy what you make, register on GeM, the government's own procurement portal.

- ✓ A listing that answers before it is asked. A title with the specification a buyer types ("300 ml toughened whisky glass, lead-free, carton of 48"), real photographs, minimum order, lead time, a price or range, and your certifications. Then reply fast, because the same enquiry has gone to fifteen others.
- ✓ A way home for the repeat order. The platform owns the buyer's details and can change its fees whenever it likes. Print your website and WhatsApp number on the invoice and the carton, within the platform's rules, so the second order can come to you directly.
- ✓ Help in groups; do not sell in them. In trade associations, industry WhatsApp groups, Quora and Reddit, answer the question asked, say openly that the business is yours, and never post a price list in a group you did not create. What people say in these threads can also reach buyers through AI answers (Chapter 9).

Back at the hub, keep product pages that match your listings in fuller detail, proof no marketplace can show (clients, your plant, your people), and answer pages you can link to when someone asks in a group.

Paid ads, in a few lines

Ads rent attention, and the moment you stop paying, it stops. They earn their keep for a launch, a new branch or a season. Judge every channel by one number, the cost of a real enquiry, and send each

ad to a page written for it, with calls, forms and WhatsApp taps counted (Chapter 11).

Ads have reached AI answers too. Google can now show some ads inside AI Overviews in India, and OpenAI announced ChatGPT ads for its Free and Go users in India in August 2026.⁵ Treat both as experiments.

Claim only what you can prove. The ASCI Code expects every claim to be backed up, so “No. 1” and “guaranteed results” stay out unless you have the evidence.

Check it yourself

- ❶ In a private browser window, search your company name and open every profile that appears. Note any name, phone, address or description that differs from your website.
- ❷ Read your LinkedIn headline, Instagram bio and YouTube description as a stranger would, then tap every link on them. Does each say what you do, for whom and where, and land somewhere useful?
- ❸ From a friend's phone, send your business a WhatsApp message and an Instagram message on a Saturday evening. Time the replies.

Quick check: Chapter 10

Tick what is true today. One point each.

- ☐ The founder's LinkedIn headline says what we do and for whom, and our company page shows the same facts as our website.
- ☐ Every profile and listing we keep uses the same name, phone and description as our website, and links to a useful page on it.
- ☐ Our WhatsApp Business profile and catalogue are complete, and a click-to-chat button sits on every page of our website.
- ☐ In the last three months, on the spoke our buyers use most, we have posted at least twice a month something that answers a buyer's question.

Your score: _____ out of 4

DO THIS WEEK

Give one hour to your WhatsApp Business app. Fill in every field of the profile so it matches your website, add your five best sellers to the catalogue with real photographs, write quick replies for the five questions you hear most, and put a wa.me link with a pre-filled message on your website and your visiting card.

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Measure, Then Your 90-Day Plan

Most owners get either no numbers or far too many of the wrong ones. I give you the dozen figures worth reading each month, show you how to add up your 50 points, and lay out the next 90 days in an order that works.

Ask an owner how many enquiries his website brought in last month and you will usually get a guess. The agency report runs to twenty pages of rankings and charts, and nobody can say how much business started online. You need far fewer numbers than that, gathered the same way every month, and the habit of reading them.

What usually goes wrong

- **Counting visits instead of enquiries.** Traffic is easy to raise and easy to report. It pays no salaries.
- **Trusting a single tool.** Google Analytics misses phone calls, most WhatsApp enquiries and much of what AI answers do for you.
- **Doing everything at once, in the wrong order.** Forty tasks started and four finished, with Reels sending buyers to a website that cannot turn them into enquiries.
- **Handing over the keys.** A domain, Business Profile or Search Console account registered to an agency or to an employee's personal email is hard to get back.

The few numbers worth a monthly look

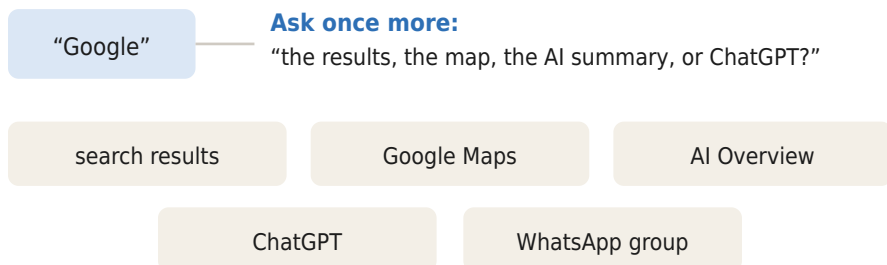
Start with an enquiry log, because every other figure is only a clue. A shared spreadsheet will do, with columns for date, name, route (form, call, WhatsApp, email, walk-in, marketplace), how they heard, whether they fit, and the outcome.

Ask each enquirer how they heard about you, and write the answer in their own words before you sort it into a category. Then ask once more.

A buyer who says “Google” may mean the search results, the map, the AI summary at the top or a separate assistant. This one question picks up what no software can: the colleague’s tip, the WhatsApp group, the ChatGPT answer read before he typed your name.

“How did you hear about us?”

the one question that finds what no tool can see



Ask, then ask again. Write the buyer’s own words in the log before you sort them into a category.

Copy the page below into a spreadsheet and fill it in during the first week of each month.

Measure	Where to find it	This month	Same month last year
New enquiries, and how many were a good fit	Enquiry log		
Enquiries by how they heard: search, Maps, AI, referral, social, marketplace	Enquiry log		
Orders won from enquiries	Enquiry log or CRM		
Google clicks, impressions and non-branded clicks	Search Console		
Calls, website clicks and direction requests	Google Business Profile		
Website enquiries: forms, WhatsApp taps, phone taps	Google Analytics		
Visits from AI assistants	Google Analytics		
Pages cited in Copilot and Bing AI answers	Bing Webmaster Tools		
AI check: share of runs that name us; errors found	Your own check	%	%
Reviews: new this month, rating, share replied to	Google and your trade's platforms		
Main pages pass Core Web Vitals on mobile	PageSpeed Insights	Yes / no	

I compare with the same month last year because Diwali, the March year end and the monsoon move many businesses more than any marketing does. Drop the rows that do not apply, and if a

partner reports to you, ask them to fill in this page. Small numbers jump about, so make decisions quarterly.

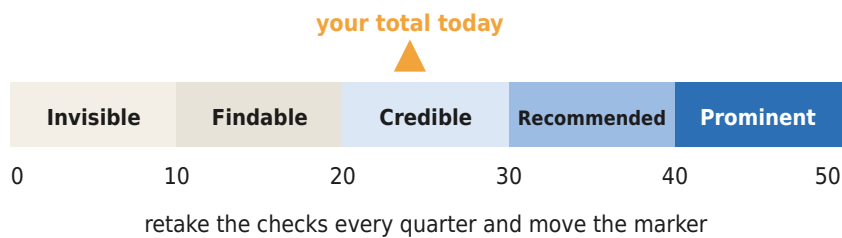
Set the target in enquiries, not visits. Take last year's monthly average of good-fit enquiries as your starting point, decide what a good year would look like, and judge the plan against that figure each quarter. Twelve enquiries from buyers you want are worth more than a hundred from people who will never order, and the log is the only place that difference shows.

Check it yourself

- 1 **Search Console** (search.google.com/search-console). Verify your site with the company as owner. The Performance report gives clicks and impressions, and a filter separates branded from non-branded queries. Appearances in AI Overviews and AI Mode are counted in these totals; the separate AI report (Chapter 7) shows only impressions.¹
- 2 **Google Analytics**. Ask your web team to record form submissions, WhatsApp taps and phone taps, then star each under Admin and Events. Since May 2026 there has been an “AI Assistant” channel for visits from ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot and others; Google's own AI Overviews and AI Mode count as ordinary search.²
- 3 **Bing Webmaster Tools** (bing.com/webmasters). Its AI Performance report, in preview, shows how often your pages are cited in Copilot and Bing's AI summaries.³
- 4 **Your own AI check**. Run the prompt test from Chapter 9 each month. Because answers vary so much from run to run, record the share of runs that name you, and keep the prompts fixed for a year.

Adding up your 50 points

Go back through the quick checks in Chapters 1 to 11 and total your ticks. There are 50 in all, including the three at the end of this chapter. Planned or half done earns nothing yet. A few items cover spokes you may have chosen to skip, and you can reach the top band without them.



Where your score lands. *The band tells you what to fix first; the chapter scores tell you where.*

Score and band	What it usually means	Fix first
0 to 10 Invisible	Buyers who do not know your name cannot find you, and those who do find conflicting facts	One set of facts everywhere, your Business Profile, a site that works on a phone (Chapters 3, 4, 8)
11 to 20 Findable	You appear when people search your name, but not for what you do	Pages that answer buyers' questions, a site machines can read, Search Console (Chapters 5, 6, 7)
21 to 30 Credible	You look safe once found, but others are named first	Proof on the site, reviews, being mentioned elsewhere (Chapters 4, 7, 8)

Score and band	What it usually means	Fix first
31 to 40 Recommended	Google, AI assistants and people put you forward for some questions	More questions answered, AI visibility, a steady routine on your best spoke (Chapters 6, 9, 10)
41 to 50 Prominent	Yours is the first name for your core questions	Keep facts current, keep reviews coming, measure monthly, look for new questions (Chapters 3, 8, 11)

Look at the chapter scores too. A business on 24 that scored one out of six in Chapter 4 knows where its next quarter should go.

Your 90-day plan

The order is deliberate. Every spoke sends people and machines to your hub, and the hub rests on one consistent set of facts. Build a spoke first and you send buyers to a site that cannot convert them.

DAYS 1 TO 30

Foundations

Chapters 3, 5 to 8, 11

facts sheet; Business Profile and top listings
Search Console, Analytics, Bing Webmaster
enquiry log; crawler check
thirty buyer questions

DAYS 31 TO 60

The hub

Chapters 4, 5, 6

one page per main service
proof, a real About page
fast mobile pages, structured data
WhatsApp button; short form; reply rule

DAYS 61 TO 90

The spokes

Chapters 8 to 11

AI baseline with fixed prompts
a steady reviews drive
two or three spokes
retake every quick check; plan the next 90

facts first, then the hub, then the spokes

Ninety days, in the order that works.

Days	What to finish	Chapters
1 to 30: foundations	A facts sheet. Business Profile claimed and complete, and your top ten listings corrected. Search Console, Google Analytics and Bing Webmaster Tools set up in the company's name. The enquiry log started. Crawler access checked. A list of thirty real buyer questions.	3, 5 to 8, 11
31 to 60: the hub	One thorough page for each main service, written from the question list. Proof and a real About page. Fast mobile pages and structured data. WhatsApp on every page, a short form and a rule for how fast you reply.	4, 5, 6

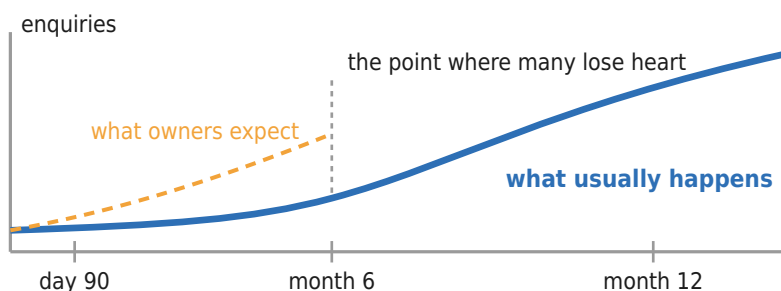
Days	What to finish	Chapters
61 to 90: the spokes	Your AI baseline, using the fixed prompt list. A steady reviews drive. Two or three spokes that suit your buyers. Then retake every quick check and plan the next 90 days.	8, 9, 10, 11

You supply the facts, the proof and the answers, which takes two or three hours a week.

Someone in the office keeps the log and the dashboard, asks for reviews and chases everybody, you included; without that person I would expect the plan to stall by week three. An outside partner, if you need one, does the specialist work on the hub.

Keep every account in the company's name (domain, Business Profile, Search Console, Analytics, social pages, and the WhatsApp number on a company SIM) and give partners access you can take away. Google says plainly that nobody can guarantee a top ranking,⁴ and I would treat promises of guaranteed AI mentions the same way.

By day 90 your facts should match everywhere and the hub should be sound, though enquiries may not have moved yet. In my view the gains build between the sixth and twelfth months, which is when many owners lose heart. If a week slips, let it slip.



Enquiries lag behind visibility. The facts and the hub are sound by day 90; the gains build in the second half of the year.

Quick check: Chapter 11

Tick what is true today. One point each.

- ☐ Every new enquiry, by any route, is logged with the buyer's own answer to "how did you hear about us?"
- ☐ Our domain, Search Console, Google Analytics and Business Profile are owned by the company, and Analytics counts form, WhatsApp and phone enquiries.
- ☐ I read a one-page dashboard every month, including a fixed AI check, and we review it against our targets each quarter.

Your score: _____ out of 3

DO THIS WEEK

Block ninety minutes. Add up your quick checks and find your band. Then put the tasks for days 1 to 30 into your diary, each with one person's name against it, and tell that person the enquiry log starts on Monday.

A last word

When I started out, a business got found through the Yellow Pages, a trade directory, a stall at a fair and the goodwill of people who had dealt with it. The tools have changed more times than I can count since then.

What makes a business worth recommending has hardly changed at all. The ones buyers and machines put forward today are rarely the biggest spenders. More often they say plainly what they do, can show proof of it, and keep going long after others have lost interest.

You already have the hardest part, a real business with customers who are glad they found you. This book has been about making sure the next ones can. Start with day one and put a name against

it. A year from now, when a buyer somewhere asks whom to call, I hope yours is the first name he hears.

Thank you for reading, and for your time.

Arun

NOTES

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3. Microsoft Bing Webmaster Blog, “Introducing AI Performance in Bing Webmaster Tools Public Preview”, 10 February 2026. blogs.bing.com/webmaster
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All the Quick Checks

Here are all 50 statements from the chapter quick checks in one place, so you can score your business in a single sitting and again every quarter. Tick what is true today, not what is planned. Each tick is one point.

Chapter 1. The Silent Shortlist

- ☐ When I ask ChatGPT for suppliers of what we do in our region, we are named.
- ☐ When I ask Google the same question, we appear in the AI summary or the top results.
- ☐ What AI assistants say about us is accurate: what we do, where we are and how long we have been in business.
- ☐ One named person in our business is responsible for how we appear on Google, AI assistants, LinkedIn and our listings.

Chapter 1: _____ out of 4

Chapter 2. How Google and AI Decide

- ☐ When I search Google for “site:” followed by our web address, all our main service or product pages appear.
- ☐ When I search Google for our exact business name, a panel with our correct address, phone number and details appears.
- ☐ Every main service or product page on our website can be reached from the menu in two clicks or fewer.

Chapter 2: _____ out of 3

Chapter 3. One Name, One Story, Everywhere

- ☐ We have a written business facts sheet, and anyone creating a listing copies from it.
- ☐ Our website states our legal name, our brand name and our founding year, and they match our GST record.
- ☐ Our Google Business Profile and our listings on IndiaMART, Justdial or our main directory show our current name, address and phone number.
- ☐ In the last six months we have searched our old phone numbers, addresses and names, and fixed the old listings we found.

Chapter 3: _____ out of 4

Chapter 4. What Your Website Must Do

- ☐ On a phone, the first screen of our home page says what we do, for whom and where.
- ☐ Each of our main services or product lines has its own detailed page.
- ☐ Next to our main enquiry buttons there is proof: a named client, a review, a number or a certificate.
- ☐ On a phone, tapping our number starts a call and tapping WhatsApp opens a chat with us.
- ☐ Enquiries from the website get a reply within an hour during working hours.
- ☐ Our domain, hosting, website admin and Search Console are in the company's name, and we hold the logins.

Chapter 4: _____ out of 6

Chapter 5. Fast and Readable by Machines

- ☐ Our home page and main service page pass Core Web Vitals on mobile in PageSpeed Insights, or Search Console shows none of our pages as Poor.
- ☐ Typing our address with http:// takes visitors to the https:// version, with a padlock and no warning.
- ☐ Our website software and plugins were updated in the last month, and we have a backup from the last week kept outside our hosting account.
- ☐ Search Console, held in the company's name, shows all our important pages as indexed.
- ☐ When we view the source of our main service page, its main text is there.
- ☐ We have checked robots.txt and our hosting or CDN settings this year, and they allow Googlebot, Bingbot and the search crawlers of OpenAI, Anthropic and Perplexity.

Chapter 5: _____ out of 6

Chapter 6. Pages That Answer

- ☐ We have a written list of at least 30 questions our buyers ask, in their own words, showing which page answers each.
- ☐ Each main service or product page opens with one or two sentences saying what it is, who it is for and where we supply.
- ☐ Our service pages give specifics as text: ranges, standards, lead times and what drives price.
- ☐ We have at least one page answering a cost question and one helping buyers compare options.
- ☐ Our main pages name a real author or reviewer, and someone has checked every fact on them in the last six months.

Chapter 6: _____ out of 5

Chapter 7. Google Today

- ☐ Our site is verified in Search Console and Bing Webmaster Tools, with owner access in the company's name.
- ☐ Someone in the business looks at the Search Console Performance report at least once a month.
- ☐ In the last three months we have checked whether we appear in AI Overviews or AI Mode for our five main buyer questions.
- ☐ At least five independent organisations mention us by name on their websites, and nobody working for us buys links.

Chapter 7: _____ out of 4

Chapter 8. Local Search and Reviews

- ☐ Our Google Business Profile is verified, and its primary owner is a company account that stays when staff or agencies change.
- ☐ Our profile has the most specific primary category, correct hours including holidays, and at least ten real photographs.
- ☐ We have received new Google reviews in each of the last three months, and we never offer anything in return.
- ☐ Every review from the last three months, good or bad, has a reply from us.
- ☐ Our details are identical on Justdial, Apple Maps, Bing Places and the directories that count in our trade.

Chapter 8: _____ out of 5

Chapter 9. Getting Named by ChatGPT and Other AI Assistants

- ☐ We run at least 20 buyer questions through at least three AI assistants every month and record the results.
- ☐ Our web team has confirmed that our site does not block the search crawlers used by ChatGPT, Perplexity, Claude and Bing.
- ☐ Asked “What is [our company]?”, ChatGPT and Gemini describe us correctly and do not confuse us with anyone else.
- ☐ We are named in at least one list article, comparison page or directory that assistants cite for our category.
- ☐ We know how many visits and enquiries came from AI assistants last month.
- ☐ Our main pages show prices or price ranges and lead times in text, and our enquiry form works without an account.

Chapter 9: _____ out of 6

Chapter 10. Social, Video, WhatsApp and Marketplaces

- ☐ The founder’s LinkedIn headline says what we do and for whom, and our company page shows the same facts as our website.
- ☐ Every profile and listing we keep uses the same name, phone and description as our website, and links to a useful page on it.
- ☐ Our WhatsApp Business profile and catalogue are complete, and a click-to-chat button sits on every page of our website.
- ☐ In the last three months, on the spoke our buyers use most, we have posted at least twice a month something that answers a buyer’s question.

Chapter 10: _____ out of 4

Chapter 11. Measure, Then Your 90-Day Plan

- ☐ Every new enquiry, by any route, is logged with the buyer's own answer to "how did you hear about us?"
- ☐ Our domain, Search Console, Google Analytics and Business Profile are owned by the company, and Analytics counts form, WhatsApp and phone enquiries.
- ☐ I read a one-page dashboard every month, including a fixed AI check, and we review it against our targets each quarter.

Chapter 11: _____ out of 3

Your total: _____ out of 50

0 to 10 **Invisible.** Buyers who do not know your name will not find you.

11 to 20 **Findable.** You appear when people search for your name, rarely for what you do.

21 to 30 **Credible.** You appear, and what buyers see makes you look safe.

31 to 40 **Recommended.** Google, AI assistants and people put you forward unasked.

41 to 50 **Prominent.** You are the first name that comes up.

Chapter 11 sets out what to work on first at each level.

The Self-Check Toolkit

When I look at how visible a business is, I do not start with expensive software. I start with these fifteen checks, the ones I run myself. Every tool is free, most checks take under half an hour, and none needs technical skill, only patience and honesty about what you see.

Keep a dated sheet of results and repeat the checks each quarter, typing exactly the same prompts and searches so the comparison is fair. Menus are described as they were in September 2026. When a check fails, the “If not” line says what to do, and many requests are written out in “A Brief for Your Web Team”.

Checks 1 to 3	AI assistants
Checks 4 to 7	your website under the bonnet
Checks 8 to 10	Google and Bing
Checks 11 and 12	local search, and your facts across the web
Checks 13 to 15	enquiries and measurement

fifteen checks, all with free tools, most under half an hour

1. AI assistants

Fill the blanks in this prompt set with your buyers’ own words from the question list in Chapter 6, and keep it fixed for at least a year.

Type	Prompt to type
Local	Who are the best [your product or service] providers in [your city]?
National	Recommend five [your product] manufacturers in India for [your buyer’s industry].
Need	I run a [type of business] in [city] and need [your product or service] for [specific job]. Whom should I contact?
Comparison	What are the alternatives to [your leading competitor] for [your product] in [city]?
About you	What is [your company name], [city]? Is it a reliable [category]?

Check 1. When a buyer asks an AI assistant, does it name you?

Tool: ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity, Copilot, Claude, Google AI Mode · Time: 60 to 90 minutes · See Chapter 9

- 1 Open a private or incognito window, so your own history stays out of the answer.
- 2 Go to chatgpt.com, gemini.google.com, perplexity.ai, copilot.microsoft.com and the AI Mode tab on google.com. Claude, at claude.ai, needs a sign-in; use its incognito chat.
- 3 Type the first four prompts into each, in a fresh chat every time, three runs each, because answers vary.
- 4 For every run, note the date, assistant, prompt, whether you were named, your place in the list and the competitors named.
- 5 Work out your share: runs naming you divided by total runs, as a percentage.

Good looks like: named in some runs on every assistant, in most for your own city and speciality, and rising each quarter.

If not: look at Checks 3 and 4 first; missing sources and blocked crawlers are the commonest causes.

Check 2. What do the assistants say about you, and is it right?

Tool: the same assistants and your facts sheet · Time: 30 minutes · See Chapters 3 and 9

- 1 Keep your business facts sheet from Chapter 3 beside you.
- 2 In a private window, ask each assistant the “About you” prompt, then: *What does [your company name] offer, when was it founded and who runs it?*
- 3 Mark each fact as correct, wrong, out of date or missing. Watch for a mix-up with a similar name in another city.
- 4 Where sources are shown, click through and note which page each wrong fact came from.

Good looks like: every assistant describes you correctly and confuses you with nobody.

If not: use the feedback button, then correct the page the error came from, often an old directory listing or your own About page. With no source shown, the error probably sits in training memory, and the right fact repeated everywhere corrects it over time.

Check 3. Which websites do the assistants cite for your category?

Tool: Perplexity, ChatGPT, Google AI Mode, Copilot · Time: 30 minutes · See Chapter 9

- 1 Run your three strongest category prompts in Perplexity, which lists numbered sources with every answer. Copy each source address into your sheet.

- 2 Run the same prompts in ChatGPT (the Sources button under the answer), AI Mode and Copilot.
- 3 Label each source: “best of” list, directory or marketplace, review platform, trade publication, forum, video, competitor or your own site.
- 4 Tick each one that mentions you, and sort the list with the most often cited at the top.

Good looks like: you appear on most of the pages cited again and again, and your own site is among them.

If not: the unticked sources at the top are your to-do list. Start with the most cited page that leaves you out.

2. Your website under the bonnet

No knowledge of code is needed. Where a check ends in a question for your web team, ask it in writing and keep the reply.

Check 4. Are AI crawlers allowed in, and is anything blocking them?

Tool: a browser, Search Console, an email · Time: 20 minutes, plus the reply · See Chapters 5 and 9

- 1 Type `yourdomain.com/robots.txt` into your browser. An error page usually means there is no file, which blocks nobody.
- 2 Each group of rules begins “User-agent:” and a crawler’s name, or “*” for all others. “Disallow: /” under a group closes the whole site to it.
- 3 Look for each name in the crawler table in Chapter 5 and note which are blocked. Search Console’s robots.txt report, under Settings, shows the file Google last read.
- 4 Ask your web team or host in writing: *Is any bot-blocking, AI-blocking or firewall rule switched on, at the host, the CDN or in a*

security plugin? What exactly does each block? Please send screenshots.

- 5 On Cloudflare, add: *Please review our AI crawler settings since the July and September 2026 changes, and confirm Googlebot, Bingbot, Applebot and the search crawlers of OpenAI, Anthropic and Perplexity are not blocked.*

Good looks like: no site-wide block, search crawlers allowed, training crawlers allowed or blocked by a written decision, and a dated answer on the firewall.

If not: “Nothing special, sir” is not an answer, so ask for the screenshots. Beware “block all AI bots” lists copied from the internet, which often include search crawlers.

Check 5. Is your main text in the page source?

Tool: a computer browser, ChatGPT, Perplexity · Time: 15 minutes · See Chapter 5

- 1 On a computer, open your most important service page and copy one distinctive sentence from its main text.
- 2 Right-click an empty part of the page and choose “View page source”.
- 3 Press Ctrl+F (Cmd+F on a Mac) and paste the sentence. Repeat for the home page and two other main pages.
- 4 Then ask ChatGPT and Perplexity: *Please read [full page address] and summarise it in five bullet points.*

Good looks like: the sentence is in the source of every page tested, and both assistants summarise the page accurately.

If not: JavaScript is building the text after the page loads. Google usually copies; several AI crawlers may not. Ask your web team about server-side rendering or pre-rendering.

Check 6. Does your site pass Core Web Vitals on mobile?

Tool: PageSpeed Insights, a mid-range phone · Time: 20 minutes · See Chapter 5

- 1 Go to pagespeed.web.dev, paste your home page address, click Analyze and select the Mobile tab.
- 2 Read the top half, which is field data from real Chrome users over 28 days. Note Passed or Failed, and the figures for LCP, INP and CLS. If “This URL” has no data, switch to “Origin”.
- 3 Ignore the score out of 100 in the lab test below. Repeat for your main service page and contact page.
- 4 On an ordinary Android phone with Wi-Fi off, load the same pages. Count the seconds until each main heading is readable.

Good looks like: Passed, with LCP 2.5 seconds or less, INP 200 milliseconds or less and CLS 0.1 or less, and headings readable within about three seconds on the phone.

If not: send the report links to your web team and ask for a plan covering images, sliders, plugins, hosting and caching.

Check 7. Does your structured data tell one consistent story?

Tool: Schema Markup Validator, Rich Results Test · Time: 20 minutes · See Chapter 5

- 1 Go to validator.schema.org, choose Fetch URL, paste your home page address and click Run test.
- 2 Look for exactly one Organization, or a LocalBusiness subtype if customers visit you. Two or three descriptions of the company, often from different plugins, is a fault.
- 3 Compare name, address, phone, logo and founding date with your facts sheet, character by character. Check that sameAs lists your current profiles and nothing abandoned.
- 4 Test the same page, and one product or service page, at search.google.com/test/rich-results.

Good looks like: one Organization matching your facts sheet exactly, current profiles in sameAs, and no errors in either tool.

If not: send screenshots and the facts sheet to your web team. Ask for one organisation description with a single @id, and no review stars built from your own testimonials.

3. Google and Bing

You need Search Console access in the company's own name. If you do not have it, asking for owner access is the first action on your sheet.

Check 8. What does Search Console say about searches and indexing?

Tool: Google Search Console · Time: 45 minutes, then 20 minutes monthly · See Chapters 5, 7 and 11

- 1 At search.google.com/search-console, click Performance, then Search results. Set the last 12 months and tick Total clicks and Total impressions.
- 2 On the Queries tab, mark the twenty queries a real buyer would type, as against your company name. On the Pages tab, look for a missing service page.
- 3 Open Indexing, then Pages, and note each reason under “Why pages aren’t indexed”.
- 4 Paste your five most important page addresses into the inspection bar at the top. It says whether each is on Google.
- 5 Under Indexing, Sitemaps, check a sitemap shows a status of Success.

Good looks like: buyer queries, not only your name, bring impressions and clicks, and every important page is indexed.

If not: if only your name brings visits, Chapter 6 shows how to build pages that answer buyers. Send unindexed pages to your web team for

the cause and fix of each.

Check 9. Are Google's AI answers using your pages?

Tool: Search Console generative AI report, AI Mode · Time: 30 minutes · See Chapter 7

- 1 In Search Console, look for the generative AI performance report beside the Performance reports. Since August 2026 it has been open to all sites with enough impressions in Google's AI features.
- 2 If it appears, note impressions for the last three months, by page. As of September 2026 it shows impressions in AI Overviews and AI Mode only: no clicks, and not the questions asked.
- 3 If it does not appear, your site probably has too few AI impressions. That is a result too.
- 4 Type your top five buyer queries into Google and AI Mode, and note whether you are named, cited or absent.
- 5 Confirm that the setting excluding your site from Google's AI features, offered to every site since 31 August 2026, is switched off.

Good looks like: AI impressions on important pages, rising over time, and citations for some buyer queries.

If not: Google says no special markup or files are needed, so do not buy an "AI Overview package". Get the pages indexed (Check 8), then improve them (Chapters 6 and 7).

Check 10. Is your site in Bing, and is Copilot citing it?

Tool: Bing Webmaster Tools · Time: 30 minutes the first time · See Chapters 7 and 9

- 1 Go to bing.com/webmasters and sign in with a company account.
- 2 If your site is not there, add it; the quickest route is to import it from Google Search Console.

- 3 Once data has built up, note clicks and impressions in Search Performance.
- 4 Open the AI Performance report and note total citations, the pages cited and the grounding queries, the phrases the AI used to find your content.

Good looks like: the site verified, the sitemap read, and pages cited in Copilot and Bing's AI answers.

If not: ask your web team to verify the site this week and switch on IndexNow if your system or CDN offers it. Verified but never cited? Go back to Check 3.

4. Local search and your facts across the web

Do these on your phone where you can, because that is where the buyer looks.

Check 11. Do old phone numbers, addresses and names still follow you around?

Tool: Google, Bing, Google Maps, your directories · Time: 45 minutes · See Chapters 3 and 8

- 1 List every phone number, address and business name you have used, including old landlines and pre-rebrand names.
- 2 Search each one on Google and Bing in quotation marks, with your city.
- 3 In Google Maps, search your name for duplicate pins or a pin at an old address. Check Apple Maps and Bing Maps too.
- 4 Check your listings on IndiaMART, Justdial, TradeIndia or the directories that count in your trade against the facts sheet, and note who holds each login.

Good looks like: name, address and phone identical on every listing you control, and old details nowhere you can change.

If not: correct your own listings first, then ask other sites to update.
Report duplicate Maps pins through suggest an edit.

Check 12. How do your Business Profile and reviews compare with the top three near you?

Tool: business.google.com, Google Maps on a phone · Time: 45 minutes · See Chapter 8

- 1 Sign in to the account that manages your profile. Under People and access, the primary owner should be a company account, not an employee or agency.
- 2 In Edit profile, check each field against your facts sheet: name as on your signboard, categories, address or service area, hours, holiday hours, phone, website and services.
- 3 Search Google Maps for *[your service] near me* and one other buyer phrase. Pick the three businesses most often at the top and compare their primary category with yours.
- 4 For them and for you, note total reviews, average rating, date of the newest review and owner replies among the last ten. Count your own new reviews per month.

Good looks like: a company-owned profile in the most specific category, correct hours, new reviews every month with a reply to each, and a count and rating within reach of the top three.

If not: fix category and hours the same day. Send every customer a review link on WhatsApp once the job is done, offering nothing in return.

5. Enquiries and measurement

These last checks show whether visibility is turning into enquiries. They rely on the enquiry log from Chapter 11; if you do not keep one, start it first.

Check 13. The 4 pm test: does an enquiry arrive, and how fast is the reply?

Tool: your website, your phone, a friend · Time: 20 minutes, then watch the clock · See Chapter 4

- 1 On your phone, tap the number and the WhatsApp button on the home, service and contact pages. Each should open first time, on your business account.
- 2 On a weekday at about 4 pm, ask a friend to send a real-sounding enquiry through your form, from an email and number your team will not recognise. Do not warn the team.
- 3 Ask them to note when they sent it, and when and how the first reply came. On another day, have them try WhatsApp and a phone call.
- 4 Ask whether the reply answered the question, came from a named person and suggested a next step.

Good looks like: every tap works, and a helpful reply from a named person arrives within an hour of working time on every route.

If not: find where it stuck. A spam folder, an inbox nobody reads, a WhatsApp phone in a drawer? Fix the route, name who answers, and test again next month.

Check 14. How many visits and enquiries come from AI assistants?

Tool: Google Analytics 4 · Time: 20 minutes · See Chapters 9 and 11

- 1 At analytics.google.com, open Reports, Acquisition, Traffic acquisition, and set the last three months.

- 2 Find the AI Assistant row, the default channel Google added in May 2026 for visits referred by assistants such as ChatGPT, Gemini and Copilot. Note its sessions and key events.
- 3 Switch the first column to Session source / medium and search for chatgpt, perplexity, claude, gemini and copilot. Perplexity in particular may still sit under Referral.
- 4 Check that form submissions, WhatsApp taps and phone taps are marked as key events.

Good looks like: the three enquiry events counted and AI Assistant visits visible. A handful a month is normal for a small business.

If not: ask your web team for the three key events. Google's AI Overviews and AI Mode count as organic search, and app visits often land in Direct, so judge AI visibility mainly by Check 1.

Check 15. Where did last quarter's enquiries say they heard of you?

Tool: your enquiry log · Time: 30 minutes · See Chapter 11

- 1 Open the enquiry log for the last three months and count the blanks in the "how they heard" column.
- 2 Sort the answers into Google search, Google Maps, AI assistant, referral, social media, marketplace, event and other.
- 3 Count each, and within each the good-fit enquiries and the orders won.
- 4 Check that your website form offers "ChatGPT or another AI assistant" as an option.

Good looks like: almost no blanks, and a clear picture of which sources bring good-fit enquiries and orders.

If not: half a column of blanks means nobody is asking. Make the question standard for whoever answers the phone, WhatsApp and the inbox, and look at the log weekly.

Quarterly check sheet

Copy this page or build it in a spreadsheet, and fill it in early each quarter. Add your total score out of 50 and its band, as Chapter 11 explains.

Check	Date	Result	Action	Owner
1. AI naming: share of runs naming us		----- %		
3. Most cited sources that leave us out				
4. Crawlers allowed; firewall answer on file		Yes / No		
6. Core Web Vitals on mobile		Pass / Fail		
8. Search Console: buyer-query clicks, pages not indexed				
12. Reviews: new this quarter, rating, replied				
13. 4 pm test: time to first reply				
14 and 15. AI visits; enquiries by how they heard				

Put one person's name in the Owner column for every action, never a department. An action owned by "the team" tends to be sitting in the sheet again next quarter; one owned by Suresh from accounts usually is not.

A Brief for Your Web Team

Very few owners I meet build their own websites, and I see no reason why they should. What an owner needs is a way to ask for the right things, and to know without taking anyone's word for it when they are done. Hand these pages to whoever looks after your site, whether a colleague, a freelancer or an agency.

Each row says what to do in terms your web team will recognise, and how to check it, often on your own phone. Take a section at a time and record it on the sign-off sheet at the end.

A good team will find much of it done already, and will not mind being checked. *You may photocopy or retype these pages for the people who build and maintain your website.*

1. Ownership and access (Chapters 3, 4 and 8)

Before anyone changes anything, make sure the company holds every key.

#	What to do	How to check it is done
1.1	Register every domain, old ones included, in the company's legal name, with auto-renewal, transfer lock and two-step login.	The owner logs in to the registrar and sees the company as registrant, with auto-renew and lock on.
1.2	Put hosting in the company's name and billing, or get a written right to move the site at any time.	The latest hosting invoice is addressed to the company, and the owner can log in.
1.3	Verify the site in Google Search Console as a Domain property with a company account as Owner, and in Bing Webmaster Tools.	Search Console, Settings, Users and permissions shows the company as Owner. Bing shows the site verified.

#	What to do	How to check it is done
1.4	Make a company account Administrator of Google Analytics 4. Agencies get Editor access.	GA4, Admin, Account access management shows the company as Administrator.
1.5	Make a company account primary owner of the Google Business Profile. Keep every login in a password manager two people can open.	People and access shows the company as Primary owner. Two named people can open the password manager.

2. Speed and mobile (Chapter 5)

Google indexes the phone version of your site, so test on a phone.

#	What to do	How to check it is done
2.1	Pass Core Web Vitals on mobile for the home and main service pages: LCP 2.5 seconds or less, INP 200 ms or less, CLS 0.1 or less.	PageSpeed Insights (pagespeed.web.dev), mobile, top half says “Passed”. Search Console lists no pages as Poor.
2.2	Resize images to the size shown, save as WebP or AVIF, and set width and height. Lazy-load only images further down.	A large image saved from the page ends in .webp or .avif. The top image has no loading="lazy".
2.3	Remove sliders and autoplaying video from the mobile first screen; use one strong photograph.	On a phone, the first screen is a still image, a clear headline and a next step.
2.4	List every plugin, widget, pop-up and tracking script. Remove any nobody can explain, and load the rest after the main content.	A written list shows each item, its purpose and who asked for it.
2.5	Test the three most important pages on a mid-range Android phone, Wi-Fi off.	The main heading is readable within a few seconds and nothing jumps. Do this one yourself.

3. Crawling and indexing (Chapter 5)

A page Google cannot reach, or has been told to ignore, does not exist in search.

#	What to do	How to check it is done
3.1	No “Disallow: /” under “User-agent: *” in robots.txt. Block only areas such as admin or cart, and list the sitemap.	Open yourdomain/robots.txt. Search Console’s robots.txt report shows no errors.
3.2	Submit an XML sitemap of live pages in Search Console and Bing Webmaster Tools. Switch on IndexNow if offered.	Search Console, Sitemaps shows “Success”; Bing shows it processed.
3.3	Serve every page over HTTPS. Choose one address version and 301-redirect the others to it in one hop.	Type http and https, with and without www: all four end on the same https address, with a padlock.
3.4	Remove any accidental “noindex”, including the “discourage search engines” setting. Give every page a self-referencing canonical tag.	Page indexing: “Excluded by noindex” lists only pages you meant to hide.
3.5	Put the main text of every important page in the HTML the server sends, using server-side rendering or pre-rendering if needed.	View page source, Ctrl+F, search for a sentence of the main text. It is there.

4. AI crawler access (Chapters 5 and 9)

An assistant cannot recommend a site it may not read. Names are as of September 2026.

#	What to do	How to check it is done
4.1	Unless the owner decides otherwise, allow Googlebot, Bingbot, OAI-SearchBot, ChatGPT-User, Claude-SearchBot, Claude-User, PerplexityBot, Perplexity-User and Applebot.	robots.txt has no “Disallow: /” under these names or “User-agent: *”.
4.2	Ask the owner to decide separately about GPTBot, ClaudeBot, Google-Extended and Applebot-Extended. (In Chapter 5 I suggest most businesses let them in.)	A signed, dated one-line decision is on file, and robots.txt agrees.
4.3	Never block Googlebot or Bingbot to stay out of AI answers; that takes you out of search. Blocking Google-Extended does not affect Google Search or AI Overviews.	URL Inspection’s live test fetches your home page successfully.
4.4	On Cloudflare, review AI Crawl Control and the Search, Agent and Training categories added in July 2026. If Training is blocked, confirm Googlebot, Bingbot and Applebot are not.	A screenshot of the settings, dated after 15 September 2026, is on file.
4.5	Ask your host, CDN and security plugin supplier in writing what bot, AI or firewall rules are on. Leave llms.txt till last, and never pay extra for it.	The reply is filed, every block is deliberate, and ChatGPT can summarise a recent page.

5. Structured data (Chapter 5)

Markup must repeat the facts sheet from Chapter 3, and describe only what visitors can see.

#	What to do	How to check it is done
5.1	On the home page, describe the business once in JSON-LD as an Organization (or LocalBusiness subtype), with a stable @id, legal name, logo, address, phone and founding date. Only one plugin writes it.	validator.schema.org shows exactly one organisation, whose name, address and phone match the Business Profile.
5.2	Add sameAs links to the official profiles in your facts sheet.	Each sameAs link opens the right profile.
5.3	Add Service markup to service pages and Product markup to product pages, with price in rupees where published.	Product pages pass Google's Rich Results Test; service pages validate.
5.4	Remove star ratings built from your own testimonials. Google stopped showing FAQ rich results from 7 May 2026, so do not pay to add FAQ markup.	No Review or AggregateRating on home, About or service pages; no invoice for FAQ markup.

6. Pages and content (Chapters 4, 6 and 9)

Your team builds these pages, but the facts must come from you and your salespeople.

#	What to do	How to check it is done
6.1	Give each main service its own page, opening with what it is, who it is for and where you supply, under one H1.	A page for each service in your brochure. A stranger reading the first paragraph could repeat what you offer.

#	What to do	How to check it is done
6.2	Put specifications, lead times, minimum orders and price ranges on the page as text and tables. PDFs are only an extra.	The specification text can be selected on a phone and appears in View page source.
6.3	Add proof: case studies with numbers, named clients, certificates naming the issuing body, and a line of proof beside each enquiry button.	Every service page has proof within sight of its button.
6.4	Give every page a unique title (offer, for whom or where, then brand) and a specific meta description.	The team sends a list of titles. No two match, and none says “Home”.
6.5	Build an About page with real team photographs, legal name, founding year and address, and a contact page with phone, WhatsApp, company email, address with PIN code and hours.	Every fact matches the facts sheet and Business Profile. No Gmail address anywhere.

7. Enquiry routes (Chapter 4)

A broken form can cost you business for months before anyone notices.

#	What to do	How to check it is done
7.1	Make every number click-to-call with +91. Add WhatsApp buttons as wa.me links (no plus sign, spaces or leading zero) with a pre-filled message that differs by page.	On a phone, each number opens the dialler, and each WhatsApp button opens your business chat naming the page.
7.2	Keep the form to name, contact and need, plus an optional “How did you hear about us?” that includes “ChatGPT or another AI assistant”.	You can complete it on a phone in under a minute, with no failing puzzle.

#	What to do	How to check it is done
7.3	Deliver each enquiry to two people on company email and the CRM, and show a thank-you page saying what happens next.	A monthly test lands on the thank-you page and reaches both inboxes within minutes.
7.4	Publish a DPDP Act privacy notice: what you collect, why, for how long, and whom to ask for deletion. The Rules were notified in November 2025 and phase in over eighteen months; take legal advice.	The notice is linked from every form and the footer, and your adviser has read it.

8. Tracking (Chapters 9 and 11)

These settings feed the monthly dashboard in Chapter 11.

#	What to do	How to check it is done
8.1	Install Google Analytics 4 once on every page, remove old tracking codes, and set data retention to 14 months.	Realtime shows your phone visit, counted once. Admin, Data retention says 14 months.
8.2	Mark three key events: form submitted, WhatsApp tapped, phone tapped.	Do each on your phone and watch it appear in Realtime.
8.3	Link Search Console to GA4. Add UTM tags to the website link in the Google Business Profile, so its visits show separately.	Admin, Product links shows Search Console active. The profile's visits appear under their own campaign.
8.4	Report AI visits monthly: the AI Assistant channel, AI sources under Referral, and Bing's AI Performance citations.	All three are on last month's dashboard. Google's own AI answers count as organic.

9. Site moves and redesigns (Chapter 4)

Every old address needs a forwarding address. Hold the launch until items 9.1 to 9.3 are signed.

#	What to do	How to check it is done
9.1	Before design starts, list every old address with its visits and enquiries, and map each to its closest new page, never to the home page in bulk.	A spreadsheet where every row has a new address or a written reason for retiring it.
9.2	Carry over or improve the content, titles and structured data of every page that ranked or brought enquiries.	Five top old pages beside their new versions: nothing useful cut.
9.3	At launch, switch on 301 redirects, one hop each, and remove every staging “noindex” and robots.txt block.	The fifty busiest old addresses land on the right pages. Items 3.1 and 3.4 pass.
9.4	For two weeks, one named person checks Search Console daily and tests every enquiry route. Keep redirects at least a year.	A daily log, with enquiries compared against the weeks before launch.

10. Maintenance (Chapters 5 and 6)

Agree in writing who does each item, how often, and at what yearly cost.

#	What to do	How to check it is done
10.1	Update the system, theme and plugins weekly, after a backup. Never install pirated plugins.	The dashboard shows no pending updates.
10.2	Turn on two-step login for every administrator, and delete leavers' accounts the day they go.	The team shows you the setting on each admin account.

#	What to do	How to check it is done
10.3	Back up daily to storage outside the hosting account that the company controls, and test a restore twice a year.	The owner can see yesterday's copy and a dated note of the last test restore.
10.4	Each quarter, and after any redesign, review robots.txt, CDN bot settings, structured data, indexing and user accounts.	A dated note in the maintenance log.

Sign-off sheet

The person who did the work signs; someone else checks it against the right-hand column and signs too.

Section	Done by	Date	Checked by
1. Ownership and access			
2. Speed and mobile			
3. Crawling and indexing			
4. AI crawler access			
5. Structured data			
6. Pages and content			
7. Enquiry routes			
8. Tracking			
9. Site moves and redesigns			
10. Maintenance			

Glossary

AEO

Answer engine optimisation, also called GEO: making your content easy for search engines and AI assistants to quote as an answer, as well as to rank as a link.

Agent

An AI system that carries out a task for a person, such as comparing suppliers, filling in a form or making a booking.

AI assistant

A chat tool such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, Perplexity or Microsoft Copilot that answers questions in plain language, often after searching the web.

AI crawler

Software run by an AI company to read web pages, either to train its models or to fetch pages while answering a question; OpenAI's GPTBot and OAI-SearchBot are examples.

AI Mode

A conversational mode in Google Search that gives an AI-written answer with links, and takes follow-up questions, instead of a page of results.

AI Overview

The AI-written summary Google shows above the usual results for many searches, with links to the sources it drew on.

Bing Webmaster Tools

Microsoft's free service for website owners, similar to Search Console, whose AI Performance report shows how often your pages are cited in Copilot and Bing's AI answers.

Canonical tag

A line of code telling search engines which web address is the main version of a page when the same content can be reached at several

addresses.

CDN

A content delivery network: a service that keeps copies of your pages in cities around the world and serves each visitor from the nearest one, so an exporter's site loads quickly abroad. Cloudflare is the common example, and its settings can also block crawlers.

Citation (local)

A mention of your business name, address and phone number on another website, such as a directory or an association's member list.

Core Web Vitals

Google's three measures of how a page feels to real visitors: loading (LCP, good within 2.5 seconds), responsiveness (INP, good at 200 milliseconds or less) and visual stability (CLS, good at 0.1 or less).

DPDP Act

India's Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, which governs how businesses collect and use personal data such as enquiry details; its Rules were notified in November 2023 and phase in over eighteen months.

E-E-A-T

Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness and Trust: the qualities Google's human quality raters look for in a page and its authors. Google says it is not a ranking factor in itself, so nobody can sell you an E-E-A-T score.

Entity

A distinct thing, such as a company, person, place or product, that search engines and AI systems recognise and attach facts to.

GA4

Google Analytics 4, Google's free tool for measuring what visitors do on your website, including which channels bring enquiries.

Google Business Profile

Your free business listing on Google Search and Maps, with address, hours, photographs, reviews and contact buttons.

Grounding

When an AI assistant looks up current sources, such as web pages, and bases its answer on them instead of relying only on what it learned in training.

Hub and spokes

This book's model of online visibility: your website is the hub you own, where enquiries happen, and Google, AI assistants, social platforms, directories and reviews are spokes that send people to it.

Impression

One appearance of your page in search results, whether or not anyone clicked, as counted by Search Console.

Index

The database of pages a search engine has crawled and stored; a page that is not in the index cannot appear in results.

IndexNow

A free way for your website to tell Bing and some other search engines the moment a page is added or changed, instead of waiting to be crawled. Many website systems and CDNs offer it as a switch.

Key event

In GA4, an action you have marked as important, such as submitting a form or tapping a WhatsApp button, formerly called a conversion.

Knowledge panel

The box Google shows beside or above its results when someone searches for a business by name, with address, phone, hours and reviews, assembled automatically from sources across the web.

llms.txt

A proposed text file listing a website's main pages for AI tools; it is not an agreed standard, and Google says no such file is needed to appear in its AI features.

Local pack

The small group of businesses, usually three, shown with a map in Google results for local searches such as “dentist near me”.

NAP

Name, address and phone number, which should be identical everywhere your business is listed.

Query fan-out

What Google's AI Mode does with a question: it breaks it into several smaller searches, runs them at once and builds one answer from the results, so a site with one page per topic has more chances to be found.

Redirect (301)

A permanent redirect that sends visitors and search engines from an old web address to a new one, used whenever a page moves.

Rich result

A search result with extras drawn from structured data, such as a product's price and stock, star ratings or an event date, shown in place of the plain blue link.

robots.txt

A text file at the root of your website telling crawlers which parts they may visit, where one careless line can block Google or AI crawlers entirely.

sameAs

A property in structured data that lists your official profiles elsewhere, such as LinkedIn or Wikidata, so machines can connect them to your business.

Search Console

Google's free service showing how your website performs in Google Search: clicks, impressions, queries, indexing and technical problems.

Silent shortlist

This book's term for the short list of names a buyer draws up before contacting any supplier, explained in Chapter 1.

Structured data

Extra code on a page, usually in the JSON-LD format using the schema.org vocabulary, that states facts such as your business name, address or a product's price in a form machines can read reliably.

TTFB

Time to first byte: how long a visitor's phone waits before your server begins to send the page. Under 0.8 seconds is good; slow hosting or hosting far from your buyers pushes it up.

UTM tag

A short addition to a web address (for example `utm_source=chatgpt.com`) that tells Google Analytics where a visit came from, so that visits from a particular link or listing can be counted separately.

Visibility Ladder

This book's five-rung measure of visibility (Invisible, Findable, Credible, Recommended and Prominent), introduced in Chapter 1 and scored in Chapter 11.

Zero-click search

A search that ends without the user clicking any result, because the answer was shown on the results page itself.

About the Author

Arun Agrawal works on one question: when a buyer asks Google or an AI assistant for a supplier, does your business get named?

He reviews how businesses appear across Google, AI Overviews and AI Mode, ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity, Claude and Copilot, and what their websites need so that these systems can find, understand and trust them.

He has worked in information technology since 1986 and has run his own companies throughout. He is the founder and CEO of EbizIndia Consulting Pvt Ltd, a software development and digital marketing company established in 2007, which serves clients in India, the United Kingdom and the United States and keeps 90 per cent of its clients year after year. EbizIndia is a TiE Charter Member company.

He holds a Master of Engineering (M.E.) from Jadavpur University, where he was awarded the Gold Medal. He has spoken at events hosted by NASSCOM, TiE, the ICAI and MCCI, and writes about search and AI visibility at seotop10.com and arunagrawal.com.

When you want a hand

Everything in this book can be done by your own team, and the toolkit and web team brief at the back are there so that you can.

If you would like an outside view first, EbizIndia prepares an AI Search Visibility Blueprint: a detailed report on where your business stands with Google and the AI assistants, why it is being left out, and what to fix first.

WhatsApp your website address to 98310 27107.

Your next customer has already made a shortlist.

Is your name on it?

He asked ChatGPT, read the summary Google put above its results, opened a few websites and checked a WhatsApp group. By the time he picks up the phone, three names are on his sheet. No rejection letter arrives if yours is not one of them.

This book is for the owner of a good business that strangers never find. In eleven short chapters it shows you how Google and the AI assistants decide whom to recommend, and what to do about it:

- Why three spellings of your company name cost you enquiries, and the one sheet that fixes it
- What your website must say in its first five seconds on a phone
- How to check, in an afternoon, whether ChatGPT and Perplexity can even read your pages
- The questions buyers really ask, and how to write pages that answer them
- Reviews, LinkedIn, WhatsApp and marketplaces, without spreading yourself thin
- A 50-point self-check, a 90-day plan, and a brief you can hand straight to your web team

Every check uses free tools and exact steps. You do not need an agency to use any of it.

Arun Agrawal

has worked in IT since 1986 and has run his own companies throughout. He is the founder and CEO of EbizIndia Consulting Pvt Ltd, a TiE Charter Member company serving clients in India, the UK and the USA, and has spoken at events hosted by NASSCOM, TiE, the ICAI and MCCI.