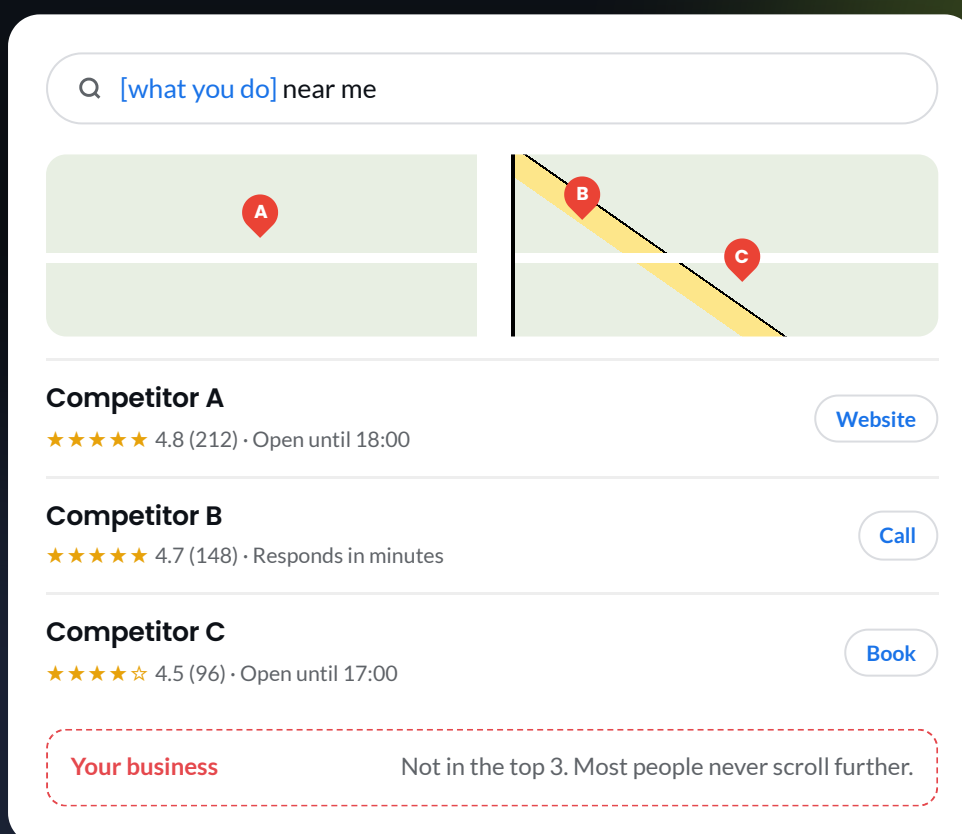


Your competitor isn't better than you. They're just easier to find.

The Local Competitor Playbook: a 10-minute check to see exactly where competitors are beating you online, and seven moves to win those customers back.



The problem

Where customers leak

The check

Score vs. 3 rivals

The fix

7 moves to win

Tuesday, 18:40.

Someone who just moved into your area needs exactly what you sell. They're on the couch, phone in hand. They type "[what you do] near me".

Google shows a map and three businesses. They glance at the stars, scroll a few photos, check whether there's a price, and tap **Call** or **Website**. The whole decision takes less than a minute.

You're ten minutes away. Your work is better. Your prices are fair. **They never saw you.** And next time they need you, they go straight back to your competitor.

**You're not losing customers to better businesses.
You're losing them to better listings.**

Customers you never meet don't complain, don't leave a bad review and don't show up in your books. That's what makes this leak so expensive: it's invisible.

How Google picks the three businesses it shows

Google says local results are based mainly on three things. You can't move your business, but you control most of the other two.

Relevance

How well your profile and website match what they typed. Missing categories, services and details mean you don't match.

Distance

How far you are from them. Fixed. Which is exactly why the other two decide who wins in your area.

Prominence

How well known you look online: review count and rating, and what Google finds about you on the web, including your website.

Source: Google Business Profile Help, "Tips to improve your local ranking on Google".

A few lost customers a month quietly costs you **R50,000+ a year.**

Most owners think of a missed customer as one missed sale. It isn't. A customer who finds a business they trust comes back, and tells people. One lost first sale is years of lost business.

An example business

New customers choosing a competitor **3 a month**

Average first sale or job **R1,500**

Months a year **12**

Repeat business and referrals **Not counted**

Lost in year one* **R54,000+**

*Counting only first sales: $3 \times R1,500 \times 12$. Add the repeat work and referrals those customers would have brought and the real number is several times higher.

Now run your own numbers

New customers lost a month _____

× Your average first sale _____

× 12 months _____

= Lost first sales a year _____

Your yearly leak **R** _____

Not sure how many you lose? Do the competitor check on page 5. If they outscore you, you're losing some. The only question is how many.

It compounds

Every customer who goes to a competitor can leave them a review. More reviews push them higher, so they get even more of the next searches.

It hides

You'll feel it as "a quiet month" or "the economy". Rarely as "Google sent 40 people to the business on the corner".

It's fixable

Unlike rent or stock costs, visibility is something you can improve in weeks. The rest of this guide shows you how.

Five places your competitors are quietly beating you.

None of these are about how good you are at what you do. They're about what a stranger sees in the 30 seconds before they decide.

1

A half-finished Google Business Profile

Your profile is your shop window on Google Maps. A vague category, missing services, old hours or a handful of blurry photos tell Google you're less relevant, and tell customers you're less professional.

WARNING SIGN

Your listing has one category, no services listed, or hours you changed months ago.

2

Fewer, older reviews

A business with 180 reviews and one from yesterday looks busy and trusted. One with 23 reviews and the newest from last winter looks like a risk, even if the work is better.

WARNING SIGN

You can't remember the last time you asked a customer for a review.

3

No website, or one that hides the basics

Customers want four answers: what you do, roughly what it costs, where you work, and how to reach you. If they have to message you to find out, many go to the business that tells them upfront.

WARNING SIGN

Your "website" is a Facebook page, or your site has no prices, services or service area.

4

You're only reachable when you're free

They're searching at 21:30, or you're busy with a customer. Whoever lets them book, ask or request a quote instantly gets the job. A missed call is usually a lost customer.

WARNING SIGN

The only way to reach you is to phone during office hours.

5

Your best work is invisible

Your finished jobs, happy customers and real team live on your phone. Competitors put fresh, real photos and examples on Google and their website, exactly where new customers decide.

WARNING SIGN

Your newest Google photo is older than your newest employee.

See your business the way a new customer sees it.

Grab your phone and a pen. Do this from your business, or the area you serve, because Google ranks by distance. Fill in the scorecard on the next page as you go.

1 Go incognito

Open a private or incognito tab in your phone's browser so Google doesn't show you results based on your own history. You want what a stranger sees.

2 Search like a customer

Try three searches: [what you do] near me [what you do] [your town] and your most profitable service, like emergency plumber [area] or teeth whitening [area]. Note where you appear, if at all.

3 Write down the top three

The three businesses in the map results are your real competitors online, even if you've never thought of them that way. Put their names at the top of the scorecard.

4 Open each Google profile

Check the star rating, number of reviews, date of the newest review, whether the owner replies, how many photos there are and whether there's a Book, Call or Quote button.

5 Tap through to their website

On your phone, can you find what they do, a price or starting price, where they work and a way to contact them within two taps? Does it load fast? Then do the same test on your own website, honestly.

6 Score everyone, including you

Tick each row on the scorecard that's true. One point per tick. Add up the columns.



Didn't show up in any of the three searches? Then skip the maths. For new customers searching nearby, your business effectively doesn't exist yet, and every move in this guide applies to you.

You vs. the three businesses Google prefers.

One point if this is true	You	Comp. 1	Comp. 2	Comp. 3
Shows in the top 3 map results For at least one of your three searches	☐	☐	☐	☐
Google profile is complete Right categories, services, current hours, website link	☐	☐	☐	☐
Rated 4.5★ or higher, 50+ reviews	☐	☐	☐	☐
Newest review is under 2 weeks old	☐	☐	☐	☐
Owner replies to reviews	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fresh photos on Google Added in the last 30 days	☐	☐	☐	☐
Has its own website Not only Facebook or Instagram	☐	☐	☐	☐
Prices or starting prices on the website	☐	☐	☐	☐
Can book, WhatsApp or get a quote in 2 taps Works at 21:30 on a Tuesday	☐	☐	☐	☐
Website is fast and easy on a phone	☐	☐	☐	☐
Total out of 10	_____	_____	_____	_____

0 – 4 POINTS**Invisible**

New customers nearby mostly can't find you. You're running on referrals and regulars, and competitors take the rest.

5 – 7 POINTS**Vulnerable**

You show up sometimes, but any competitor scoring higher is taking customers who would have chosen you.

8 – 10 POINTS**Competitive**

Strong base. Now the gap is in the details: reviews, service pages and how fast you respond.

Seven moves to outrank and outsell them.

01 Finish your Google Business Profile

This is the single biggest lever for showing up in the map results.

- A primary category that matches what people search ("Plumber", "Dentist", "Café"), plus extra categories you genuinely offer.
- List every service, your service areas, and a website, booking or quote link.
- Real hours, including public holidays. Ten or more real photos.

☐ THIS WEEK

Log in at business.google.com and fill every empty field. Then post one photo update.

Do it yourself · 1 hour

02 Build a review habit

Steady, recent reviews beat a burst every two years. Treat it as a habit, not a campaign.

- Ask at the moment a customer says thank you.
- WhatsApp or email your direct review link after every sale or job. Put a QR code at the counter or on your invoice.
- Reply to every review within 48 hours, mentioning the service naturally.

☐ THIS WEEK

Copy your review link from your Google profile, save it as a WhatsApp quick reply and send it to this week's customers.

Do it yourself · 15 min

03 Show your prices upfront

"Contact us for a quote" feels safe, but many people don't ask. They go to the business that already answered.

- Use "from" prices or price ranges for work that varies.
- Explain what changes the price, or offer clear packages.

☐ THIS WEEK

Add your services with starting prices to your Google profile and pin them on your social pages.

Do it yourself · 30 min

04 Be reachable at 21:30

The business that answers first usually wins. Make it possible to book, ask or request a quote without you holding the phone.

- Online booking, a short quote form, or a WhatsApp button with a pre-filled message.
- Put it on Google, your social pages and your website, so it's never more than one tap away.

☐ THIS WEEK

Set up a WhatsApp Business greeting and away message so after-hours enquiries get an instant reply.

Do it yourself · 20 min

05 Own a website, don't rent a social page

Facebook and Instagram show your work, but they rank poorly when someone searches "[service] in [area]", and you don't control them. A website is what Google reads to decide you're relevant, and it's the "Website" button on your profile.

- First screen answers: what you do, prices, where you work, how to reach you.
- Link your Google profile to it, and your website back to Google.

☐ THIS STEP

Needs a proper, fast, mobile-first site. This is where most businesses get stuck, and where competitors pull ahead.

Best done with a pro

06 Win the search for your area

"Electrician Centurion" or "physio Durbanville" are searches from people ready to buy. Give Google a page that matches them.

- A page per key service, naming your town and the areas you serve.
- Same name, address and number everywhere: Google, website, Facebook, directories.
- Basic on-page SEO: page titles, headings and descriptions that say what and where.

☐ THIS STEP

Needs service pages and SEO set up on your website, done once and done right.

Best done with a pro

07 Show the work, every week

Proof wins the final decision. Real photos beat stock photos every time.

- Finished jobs, before-and-afters, your premises and your team.
- Use the same photos on Google, your website and your social pages.

☐ THIS WEEK

Photograph five recent jobs, products or happy customers (with permission) and upload two to Google.

Do it yourself • ongoing



Notice the pattern? Moves 1 to 4 and 7 you can start tonight. Moves 5 and 6 need a proper website, and they're what holds the rest together: your profile, reviews and enquiries all point back to it.

Why most businesses stall at move 5

No time

You're running the business all day. A website becomes the job that's always "next month", while competitors keep collecting reviews and rankings.

DIY looks DIY

A rushed template site with stock photos and no prices can hurt more than help. Customers judge your work by your website.

Built, but never found

A site without service pages, local SEO and a linked Google profile is a brochure nobody opens. Setup is what makes it rank.

A website built to get found and get chosen.

GDS (Growth Den Socials) is a South African web design studio. We build websites, SEO and online stores for small and growing businesses that answer the questions customers ask, and are set up from day one to rank in your area.

- ✓ Your services and prices, front and centre
- ✓ Google Business Profile setup and linking
- ✓ Online booking (Structure package)
- ✓ Service and area pages for local SEO
- ✓ Hours, service areas and directions
- ✓ WhatsApp button, contact and quote forms
- ✓ Google review prompt for happy customers
- ✓ Built on Wix, so you can update it yourself

Foundation

from **R4,500**

Enough for most small businesses: five pages, services and prices, map, WhatsApp, contact form and basic SEO.

Structure

from **R9,500**

Online booking, a blog, advanced SEO and room for several branches. For businesses ready to grow.

Online store

from **R22,000**

Catalogue, payment gateways and email marketing, for businesses that sell products online.

Fixed, published prices in rand. Google Business Profile setup from R800, SEO audits from R1,500, care plans from R350 a month.

Why businesses work with GDS

No surprise quotes

Our prices are published on our website, in rand. You know what it costs before we talk.

Yours to update

Built on Wix, so you can change a price or your hours yourself in minutes, without waiting on anyone.

Looked after after launch

We make the changes after launch and can keep your site and Google profile up to date for you.

Be the business they **find** first.

Tonight, someone near you will search for what you do. Your scorecard shows whether they'll find you or your competitor. Let's make sure it's you.

1**Answer a few questions**

Our free project finder takes about two minutes. No call needed.

2**Get your package and price**

See exactly what your business needs and what it costs, in rand.

3**We build, you get found**

We design, build and launch your site, then look after it.

[Find my solution →](#)[See our services and prices](#)**On your phone?**

Scan to open the 2-minute project finder.



P.S. Send us your scorecard when you get in touch and we'll tell you, honestly, which of the seven moves would make the biggest difference for your business first, even if you decide to do it yourself.