SEO for a small business: the jobs worth doing first.

For a small business owner who wants to be found on Google without a retainer. The jobs in the order they pay, how to check each one is done, and what is worth paying somebody for.

General guidance. Google's own words are quoted from its documentation as it read in October 2026. Prices named here are Adam Roe's own as of October 2026.

FIRST, THE FOUR THAT COME BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE

- [ ] **Every page has a title that says what it is and where**
  Google asks for titles that are unique to the page, clear and concise. "Home" on its own tells nobody anything.
- [ ] **Each service has a page of its own**
  One page listing everything is hard for Google to match to any single search a customer types.
- [ ] **The Google Business Profile is complete and verified**
  Full address if customers visit, opening hours, the right category and the extra details. Google says complete, accurate details help.
- [ ] **The site works on a phone**
  Google indexes and ranks the mobile version. Try ringing, finding a price and booking on your own phone.

SEARCH CONSOLE, SET UP AND READ

- [ ] **The site is verified in Search Console**
  It is Google's free tool for site owners, and the only place a page quietly dropping out of Google shows up.
- [ ] **Page indexing shows your important pages as indexed**
  A page Google has not taken in cannot rank for anything, however good it is.
- [ ] **The Performance report has data in it**
  It shows what people searched before they found you, which is the best guide to what to write next.
- [ ] **Core Web Vitals has been looked at once the site has visitors**
  Google says relevance comes first, but a quick, easy page helps where there is plenty of good content competing.

REVIEWS, THE WAY GOOGLE ALLOWS

- [ ] **Customers are asked for a review, with a link or a QR code**
  Google is happy for businesses to ask. It is the part of local search nobody can buy.
- [ ] **Nothing is offered in return for a review**
  Google's Maps policy forbids incentives, and a review given for one can be removed.

- [ ] **Everyone is asked, not only the happy ones**
  Asking only the customers you expect to be pleased is against the same policy.
- [ ] **Every review gets a reply**
  Google's own advice for local ranking includes replying to reviews.

BEFORE YOU PAY ANYBODY

- [ ] **Nobody has guaranteed a ranking**
  Google says no one can guarantee a #1 ranking, and to be wary of anyone claiming a special relationship with it.
- [ ] **No links are being bought**
  Google's spam policies count buying links for ranking as link spam.
- [ ] **You know what the work is and how it will be measured**
  Google suggests asking what results to expect, in what timeframe, and how they will be measured.
- [ ] **You are judging changes over weeks, not days**
  Some changes show in hours and others take several months. Google suggests waiting a few weeks before judging.

IF YOU WANT SOMEBODY TO DO IT

- [ ] **Free website check, for a first look**
  Speed on a phone, the padlock, out of date software and what Google is told, then a fresh report every month.
- [ ] **SEO audit, quick check £400 or full audit £1,200**
  For when something is wrong and you cannot see why. Fixed price, with your ten biggest issues in order.
- [ ] **Local SEO setup, £1,200 once**
  The Business Profile done properly, your details made to agree everywhere, and pages for the places you serve.

Do the first section before anything else. Most small sites that are not found fall at one of those four.
adamroe.co.uk/blog/seo-small-business