

Is Google Business Profile Still Important in 2026

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Introduction

If you own a local business — a shop, a clinic, a salon, a restaurant, anything where people search for you nearby — I need to know one thing.

When was the last time you actually touched your Google Business Profile?

If your answer is "I set it up two years ago and forgot about it," this article is for you. Because in 2026, that one free listing on Google might be doing more for your business than your website. Today I'm going to talk about why it matters so much right now, the biggest mistakes owners make, and a simple checklist you can follow every single month to get real results — more calls, more customers walking through your door.

Let's get into it.

What is Google Business Profile?

Google Business Profile, or GBP, is that free listing you see on Google when you search for a business. It shows up on the right side of Google search, and it's what you see when you open Google Maps. Name, address, phone number, hours, photos, reviews — all of that comes from this one profile.

It used to be called Google My Business, and before that, Google Places. Same tool, new name, but here's the thing — it's become way more powerful than it used to be.

Why It's More Important Than Ever in 2026

So why am I telling you this matters more now than before? A few big reasons.

- **Reason 1 — People don't even click your website anymore.**

Think about how you search these days. You type "plumber near me" or "best coffee shop nearby," and Google just shows you the answer right

there — the map, the top three businesses, their phone numbers, their hours. You call or get directions without ever visiting a website.

This is huge. Most local searches now end with someone taking action — calling, getting directions, or messaging — directly from that Google listing, without ever clicking through to the business site.

- **Reason 2 — Google's AI is now answering questions using your profile.**

You've probably noticed Google now gives you an AI-written answer at the top of search results, before the actual list of websites. This is called an AI Overview. And guess where a lot of that local information comes from? Your Google Business Profile. If your profile is empty or outdated, Google simply can't use it to answer questions about you — so it skips you and shows a competitor instead.

- **Reason 3 — A complete profile massively outperforms an empty one.**

Here's a number that should make you stop and check your listing right now: businesses that fill out their profile completely get about **70%** more visits, and they show up nearly **18** times more often in search results, compared to those with missing information. That is not a small difference. That's the difference between being found and being invisible.

- **Reason 4 — Photos alone can bring in more customers.**

If your profile has good, recent photos, listings get up to 42% more requests for directions and calls. People want to see what your place actually looks like before they show up.

So, to sum up this section — your Google Business Profile isn't just a listing anymore. It's basically your storefront on the internet. Your website still matters, don't get me wrong — it builds trust and tells your full story. But your Google profile is often the very first thing a potential customer sees, and for many businesses, it now matters just as much as the website itself.

The Biggest Mistakes Business Owners Make

Now let's talk about where owners go wrong. I see these mistakes over and over.

- **Mistake 1 — Your business info doesn't match everywhere.**

This is the biggest one. Your business name, address, and phone number need to be exactly the same on your website, your Google profile, and any other place you're listed online — directories, Facebook, everywhere. If

your address is written slightly differently in different places, Google gets confused about which one is correct, and it can seriously hurt your ranking. There are real stories of business owners who moved offices, updated Google, but forgot to update other places — and their rankings dropped overnight because Google no longer trusted the listing.

- **Mistake 2 — Leaving parts of the profile empty.**

A lot of owners fill in just the name and phone number and call it done. But like I mentioned, a fully completed profile gets massively more visibility. Every empty field is a missed opportunity — and honestly, it makes your business look less trustworthy too.

- **Mistake 3 — Picking the wrong category, or a category that's too broad.**

When you set up your profile, Google asks you to choose a “category” — like “Italian Restaurant” or “Family Dentist.” This is one of the strongest ranking factors there is. If you pick something too general, like just “Restaurant” instead of “Italian Restaurant,” you’re missing out on people searching for exactly what you offer.

- **Mistake 4 — Outdated hours.**

Simple but costly. If your hours are wrong on Google, customers show up to a locked door. That’s not just a lost sale — that often turns into a bad review too.

- **Mistake 5 — Treating it as “set it and forget it.”**

This is probably the biggest mindset mistake. Owners think that once the profile is set up, the job is done. But Google actually rewards activity — profiles that post updates, get new reviews, and add fresh photos regularly are seen as more trustworthy and “alive.” A profile that hasn’t been touched in a year quietly loses visibility over time.

How to Get Maximum Benefit — Your Monthly Checklist

Okay, so now that you know why it matters and where people go wrong, let’s talk about exactly what to do. I’ve broken this into simple habits.

- **Every week, do these two things:**

- Post something small on your profile — an offer, a photo, an update. It only takes a couple of minutes.
- Reply to any new reviews, good or bad. A simple, polite reply builds trust with anyone reading it later.

- **Once a month, do these:**

- Double-check your name, address, phone number, and hours are all correct.
- Upload a few fresh photos — new products, your team, your space.
- Make sure your category and services still match what you actually offer.
- Look at your profile's insights — how many people called you, asked for directions, or visited your website from the listing.

- **Every few months:**

- Update your business description.
- Clean out old, outdated photos.
- Check your profile hasn't been edited by someone else without your knowledge — this happens more than you'd think.

- **And before any holiday or schedule change:**

Update your special hours at least two weeks ahead. Don't wait until the day before — customers plan ahead, and Google needs time to show the update properly. If you follow just these simple steps consistently, you're already doing better than probably 80% of businesses in your area who set it up once and never touched it again.

Quick Recap + Call to Action

Alright, let's wrap this up.

Google Business Profile in 2026 is not optional anymore — especially if you're a local business. It affects whether people find you, trust you, and choose you over the guy down the street. The businesses that treat it like a living, active part of their marketing — not a one-time listing — are the ones winning right now.
