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ENTITY AUTHORITY

Your Google Business Profile Is an AI Signal Now

By Scott Tischler · October 11, 2026 · 8 min read

Yes — your Google Business Profile is now one of the quieter inputs AI engines lean on when they decide who to name, especially for anything local or "near me." It is not the whole story, and I would not call it a ranking lever you can crank. But a complete, consistent, well-reviewed profile feeds the same structured facts that models reach for when they build an answer about a business, and a thin or neglected one leaves a gap other sources fill for you — sometimes wrongly.

I get asked about this a lot, usually in the form of "we stopped caring about our Google listing years ago, does it matter again?" My read: it never stopped mattering, but the reason changed. It used to matter because it won you the map pack. Now it also matters because it is one of the cleanest, most trusted descriptions of your business that exists in a machine-readable form — and AI systems are hungry for exactly that.

Why a profile built for maps ended up feeding answer engines

A Google Business Profile is a structured record: name, category, address, hours, phone, service area, attributes, photos, reviews, and the Q&A people leave. That structure is the point. When a large language model or an AI answer layer assembles a response about "the best physical therapist in Tempe" or "is this bakery open on Sundays," it is not reading your homepage prose and vibing. It is trying to resolve an *entity* — a specific real-world thing — and then state facts about it with enough confidence to put them in front of a user.

Structured, corroborated facts are the easiest thing for a model to trust, because they show up the same way across many sources. Your profile category, your stated hours, your location — when those match what is on your site, your social profiles, and third-party directories, the model sees agreement. Agreement reads as confidence. And confidence is often the difference between being named and being skipped, because these systems are built to avoid stating things they are unsure about.

There is also the simple matter of where the data lives. Google's AI answers draw on Google's own understanding of the local world, and that understanding is substantially shaped by Business Profiles and the Maps ecosystem. Even for engines that are not Google, your profile and the reviews attached to it tend to get syndicated, scraped, and summarized across the web, which means the facts you put there have a way of showing up far from where you entered them. You are not just filling out a listing. You are seeding a description.

What the profile actually signals to a model

I find it useful to stop thinking about the profile as a marketing asset and start thinking about it as a set of answers to questions a model is going to get asked anyway. Here is roughly what each part is doing.

- **Category and attributes.** This is how you tell the machine what you *are*. If your primary category is wrong or vague, you are inviting the model to file you under the wrong concept — and if it files you wrong, you simply will not surface for the queries that should be yours. Picking the most specific accurate category is one of the highest-leverage things on the whole profile.
- **Name, address, phone, hours.** The boring fields are the ones a model will happily repeat verbatim. If they are inconsistent across the web, the model has to pick a version, and it may not pick yours. Consistency here is not glamorous, but it is foundational.
- **Reviews and the language in them.** Reviews do two jobs. They are a trust signal in volume and rating, and they are a source of *vocabulary* — the actual words customers use to describe what you do well. When AI summarizes "what people say about this place," it is often paraphrasing review language. The phrases your customers repeat become the phrases the model repeats.
- **Photos, posts, and Q&A.** These are freshness and completeness signals. A profile that is actively maintained looks like a live business. A ghost profile looks like one a model should be cautious about recommending.

None of these are secret ranking factors I am claiming to have reverse-engineered. They are just the facts that exist about you in the most structured place available, and structured facts are what answer engines reach for first.

The consistency problem nobody wants to deal with

Here is where most businesses lose, and it is unglamorous: the profile says one thing, the website footer says another, an old directory says a third, and a Facebook page from 2019 says a fourth. A human visitor shrugs and figures it out. A model does not shrug. It sees conflicting claims about the same entity and has to either pick one or hedge — and hedging often means leaving you out of a confident recommendation entirely.

I have watched businesses spend money on content and ads while a wrong phone number and two different "official" addresses quietly undermined every bit of it. The fix is not exciting. It is an afternoon of auditing every place your core facts appear and making them identical — same business name spelling, same address format, same hours, same category language. This is the entity-hygiene work that makes everything downstream actually land. If you do nothing else with this article, do that.

Reviews are becoming the description, not just the rating

The shift I would flag hardest is in reviews. For years the game was volume and star rating because that is what the map pack rewarded. That still matters. But the newer, under-appreciated value is semantic: AI answers increasingly summarize sentiment and specifics. "People praise the turnaround time and the communication" is the kind of line a model will generate, and it is generating it from your reviews.

That means the *content* of your reviews is now part of your positioning. If you want to be known for a specific strength, the most durable way to teach a model that is to have real customers say it, in their own words, repeatedly, in a place the model trusts. You cannot and should not script reviews. But you can ask happy customers to mention *what* they valued, not just that they were happy — and you can make sure the thing you want to be known for is actually the thing you are great at, so the language shows up honestly. My read: this is slow, compounding, and far more defensible than any on-page trick.

What I would do this month

If I were handed a neglected profile and told to make it pull its weight for AI visibility, here is the order I would work in. First, fix the category — pick the single most specific accurate primary category, then add relevant secondaries. Second, make name, address, phone, hours, and service area identical everywhere they appear online. Third, fill every field the profile offers; completeness is itself a signal and an empty field is a gap someone else gets to fill. Fourth, get the review flywheel turning with real asks to real customers, and respond to reviews so the profile reads as actively tended. Fifth, keep it alive with periodic posts and fresh photos.

Notice none of that is a growth hack. It is maintenance. The businesses that win the AI-answer era in local and service categories are, boringly, the ones whose facts are clean, complete, consistent, and corroborated by real customer voices. Your Business Profile is the cheapest, most structured place to get all four right. Treat it like infrastructure, not like a listing you set and forgot.

Where the profile stops helping

Let me draw the boundary honestly, because an inflated claim helps no one. A Business Profile is strong for local and service-oriented queries — the "near me," the "best X in this city," the "is this place any good" questions where physical location and reputation drive the answer. It carries far less weight once a query goes national, abstract, or deep. If someone asks an AI engine to compare three enterprise software vendors, your Maps listing is not what decides whether you make the shortlist. For those questions, the heavy lifting is done by your own authoritative content, earned media, and the broader web's corroboration of what you know and do.

So do not over-index on the profile and neglect everything else. Think of it as the entity anchor for the local and reputational layer of your presence. It establishes *who and where you are* cleanly, which is a prerequisite for the model trusting anything else it finds about you. But the deeper authority — being recognized as the business or person who genuinely knows a subject — is built elsewhere, in the content and the citations. The profile gets you unambiguously identified. The rest gets you recommended for the hard questions.

One honest caveat to close on: I cannot promise that tidying your profile will make a given engine name you tomorrow. These systems are opaque and they change. What I can say is that every improvement here reduces the model's uncertainty about you, and reducing uncertainty is the whole game. You are not buying a ranking. You are making yourself easier to trust — and easy-to-trust is what gets recommended.

Key takeaways

- Your Google Business Profile is a structured, machine-readable record — exactly the kind of corroborated fact set AI engines reach for when resolving a business entity.
- Category is the highest-leverage field: pick the single most specific accurate primary category, or risk being filed under the wrong concept and vanishing from the queries that should be yours.
- Consistency wins. When your name, address, phone, hours and service area match across the web, models read agreement as confidence — and confidence is what gets you named instead of skipped.
- Reviews are shifting from a rating signal to a description source. AI summarizes what customers say, so the words your customers repeat become the words the model repeats about you.
- A neglected profile is a gap other (sometimes wrong) sources fill for you; completeness and active maintenance signal a live, trustworthy business.

- This is infrastructure, not a growth hack — clean, complete, consistent, corroborated facts compound and are far more defensible than any on-page trick.

Frequently asked questions

Does my Google Business Profile affect AI engines other than Google?

Indirectly, yes. The facts and reviews on your profile get syndicated, scraped and summarized across the web, so the structured description you enter there tends to show up far from Google itself. It is one of the cleanest machine-readable records of your business that exists, which is why its influence reaches beyond Maps and Google's own AI answers. My read, not a guarantee: tidying it helps your overall entity consistency, which every engine benefits from.

What's the single most important field to get right?

The primary category. It tells the model what you fundamentally are. If it's wrong or too vague, you get filed under the wrong concept and simply won't surface for the queries that should be yours — no amount of other optimization fixes a miscategorized entity. Pick the most specific category that is genuinely accurate, then add relevant secondary categories.

Will fixing my profile make AI start recommending me?

It reduces the model's uncertainty about you, which is the real lever — but I can't promise a specific engine will name you on a specific day; these systems are opaque and they change. What a clean, complete, consistent, well-reviewed profile does is make you easier to trust and harder to confuse with someone else. Easy-to-trust is what tends to get recommended.

About the author. Scott Tischler is the Founder & Chairman of AIrecommend.ai and a practitioner-authority on AI search and Answer Engine Optimization. With 20+ years in marketing technology — including American Express, MetLife, and UBS — and executive and professional study at Wharton, Harvard, and Oxford, he helps businesses become the ones AI recommends.

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