



The Local SEO Business

Put local businesses on the map their customers actually search, and bill monthly for it. Unsexy, measurable, and renewed for as long as the phone rings.

\$125-785

START LEAN

14-30 days

FIRST DOLLAR

75-85%

TYPICAL MARGIN

Who pays, and why now.

Nearly half of all Google searches have local intent, and the map pack, the three businesses pinned at the top, absorbs most of the clicks and nearly all of the calls. For a roofer, a dentist, or an injury lawyer, the difference between ranking third and eighth is not a vanity metric: it is hundreds of thousands of dollars a year. Owners feel this viscerally because they can see the competitor sitting in the spot they want, every single day, from their own phone.

Here is the insider truth the retainer is built on: Google Business Profile optimization is roughly 60% of local results, and it is the part most agencies skip because it feels too simple to bill for. Correct categories, complete services, weekly photos and posts, review velocity with owner responses, accurate hours: this unglamorous maintenance moves map rankings more than any backlink scheme. The remaining 40% is citation consistency, on-site signals, and links. You are selling diligence, not magic.

The competition is a barbell. On one end, national SEO firms charging \$3,000+ a month with offshore fulfillment and PDF reports nobody reads. On the other, the 'SEO is dead' noise and \$99 directory-submission spam. The middle, \$750-2,000 a month with geogrid screenshots, call tracking, and a human who explains things in plain English, is wide open in most metros and nearly empty in smaller markets. One good operator can own a town.

The honest constraint: rankings move on Google's clock, not yours, and the first 60-90 days are mostly invisible foundation work. Sell a six-month initial term or you will churn clients right before the results land and they will call the channel a scam. The flip side is durability: once a client owns the map pack and the calls are flowing, firing you means handing the spot back to a competitor. Good local SEO clients stay for years.

WHO BUYS	WHAT THEY PAY	WHAT THEY ACTUALLY WANT
Home services (plumbers, roofers, HVAC)	\$1,000-2,000/mo	The map pack in their service area and a phone that rings
Dental, medical, and legal practices	\$1,250-2,000/mo	New patient and case calls in a brutally competitive pack
Restaurants, gyms, and retail	\$750-1,000/mo	Foot traffic, direction requests, and a profile that sells
Multi-location operators	\$750-1,250 per location	One vendor, consistent NAP data, rollup reporting

OF LOCAL RESULTS IS THE PROFILE ITSELF

60%

Categories, services, photos, posts, review velocity, and owner responses drive the majority of map-pack movement. Most agencies sell the difficult 40% and skip the easy 60%. The operator who simply does the profile work, weekly, without fail, beats the one with the fancier backlink deck.

Every dollar, before you spend it.

This business is a laptop, a thin software stack, and discipline. The geogrid tracker is the one tool worth paying for on day one, because its before-and-after maps are both your report card and your best salesperson.

THE LEAN BUILD · START HERE	WHY IT EARNS ITS PLACE	COST
Laptop you already own	The entire agency, in a browser	\$0
Geogrid rank tracker (Local Falcon or similar)	Map-grid screenshots that sell, prove, and retain; non-negotiable	\$25-50/mo
Citation tooling or manual list	The top 40 directories matter; the other 400 mostly do not	\$0-30/mo
Reporting tool	Calls, directions, and rankings in one monthly page	\$0-30/mo
LLC + business license	Your liability wall. See the legal page	\$50-500
Professional liability (E&O) insurance	You manage a business's findability; cover the mistakes	\$30-60/mo
One-page site + domain	Three geogrid case studies, one button. Your site should rank, too	\$20-100
Business bank account + bookkeeping app	Separate money from day one; future-you says thanks	\$0-15/mo
Lean total		\$125-785 all-in

THE STANDARD BUILD · ADD AFTER FIRST REVENUE	WHAT IT UNLOCKS	COST
Full SEO suite (Ahrefs or Semrush starter)	Keyword data, audits, and competitor gaps for Door three work	\$99-130/mo
Call tracking (CallRail or similar)	Proves the retainer in ringing phones; clients renew on this	\$45-90/mo
Review management software	Automates the ask; review velocity is a ranking input	\$30-80/mo
Content writer budget	Service-area pages and posts without burning your hours	\$100-300/mo

THE RULE

Skip the \$2,000 SEO masterclass and the 47-tool stack. One tracker, one checklist, and ten real profiles optimized end-to-end teach more than any course. Buy tools when a paying client's work requires them, not when a YouTube ad does.

Clean from day one.

The legal risks in local SEO are not lawsuits so much as platform death: Google suspensions, review-scheme penalties, and promises you cannot keep. The contract protects you from clients; the guidelines protect your clients from you.

- Form your LLC:** File in your home state, get the EIN free at irs.gov, open the business bank account. THE LAUNCHPAD Module Three walks every step.
- Service agreement with a six-month initial term:** Deliverables listed, what is excluded (ads, web rebuilds) named, monthly reporting defined, 30-day out after the initial term. The term exists because results lag: protect the relationship through the quiet quarter.
- The no-guarantee clause:** Never guarantee rankings in writing, ever. Google's algorithm is not yours to promise. Sell process, transparency, and reporting. Any competitor guaranteeing #1 is your best closing argument, and occasionally a future client source.
- Access the right way:** Manager access to Google Business Profile, Analytics, and Search Console under the client's ownership. Never create or own a client's profile yourself: it is their asset, and holding it hostage is how this industry got its reputation.
- Google guidelines compliance:** No fake reviews, no keyword-stuffed business names, no virtual offices posing as locations, no review gating. Violations get profiles suspended, and a suspended profile means the business vanishes from maps for weeks. Your restraint is a client-safety feature.
- FTC review rules:** Buying, faking, or incentivizing reviews now carries explicit federal fines per fake review. When a client asks you to 'get creative,' decline in writing and show them the velocity system instead. It works better anyway.
- Confidentiality and no-poach:** You will see call volumes, revenue numbers, and customer data. A one-page mutual confidentiality clause makes serious clients trust you faster.

INSURANCE, SPECIFICALLY

Professional liability (E&O) at \$30-60 a month is the core policy: a botched profile edit or a migration mistake that tanks a client's visibility is a real, claimable error. General liability barely applies; add cyber coverage when you hold logins for dozens of client properties.

WATCH FOR

The suspension trap. Aggressive business-name edits, address changes, or review spikes can flag a Google Business Profile for suspension, and reinstatement takes weeks of appeals while the client's calls flatline. Change profiles incrementally, document everything, and never inherit a previous agency's gray-hat mess without auditing it first. You do not want to be holding the profile when their shortcuts detonate.

Requirements vary by state and city. Verify with your state, city clerk, and a licensed professional. Education, not legal advice.

Three doors. Real numbers.

Price by the month, scope by competitiveness, and anchor with the middle door. A roofer in a metro pays more than a florist in a small town because the prize is bigger and the fight is harder. Every engagement starts with a foundation, whether they buy it as Door one or inside the retainer.

DOOR ONE	DOOR TWO RECOMMEND	DOOR THREE
<p>The Foundation</p> <p>\$1,000-1,500 one-time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Full Google Business Profile overhaul ◆ Citation cleanup across the top 40 directories ◆ Review system setup with ask templates ◆ Baseline geogrid report and competitor map 	<p>The Climb</p> <p>\$1,000-1,250/mo</p> <p>most-booked</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Ongoing profile management: posts, photos, Q&A ◆ Review velocity engine with owner responses ◆ On-site fixes and service-page optimization ◆ Monthly geogrid + calls report ◆ Quarterly strategy call 	<p>The Dominator</p> <p>\$1,750-2,000/mo</p> <p>premium</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Everything in The Climb ◆ Service-area landing pages built monthly ◆ Link building and competitor tracking ◆ Call tracking with recorded-call reporting ◆ Multi-location or high-competition verticals

PRICING NOTES FOR THIS BUSINESS

- Floor: \$750 a month. Below that the work degrades into checkbox theater and the client churns anyway.
- Six-month initial commitment on every retainer: results lag 60-90 days and the contract must outlive the quiet quarter.
- If a client skips The Foundation, fold a \$500-750 setup fee into month one. The cleanup work is real either way.
- Price by competitiveness: personal injury law and roofing pay Door three prices because the map pack is worth six figures to them.
- Report calls and direction requests, not just rankings. Owners renew for ringing phones.

THE UPSSELL THAT PAYS THE RENT

The website fix. Sooner or later the site itself becomes the ceiling on rankings, and you are standing closest to the problem. Bill on-site rebuild projects at \$1,500-4,000, or white-label a web designer and keep 15-20%. Either way the retainer survives, the rankings climb, and the client buys it from the person who proved the problem with data.

Names, not strategies.

The portfolio paradox in SEO is sharp: everyone promises rankings, so only evidence converts.

The fix is to manufacture a geogrid before-and-after inside 90 days using your own lab profile and founding clients priced for proof. One climbing map outsells a thousand cold emails.

- 1 Your lab profile first**

Optimize one profile you can fully control: a family business, a friend's shop, even your own venture. Document the baseline geogrid, do the full Foundation work, and screenshot the climb. This is your demo reel, and it costs only hours.

- 2 Two founding clients at half rate**

Offer the Foundation plus 90 days of The Climb at 50% in exchange for a case study, a Google review, and permission to publish their geogrid maps. Discounted excellence buys a track record; free work buys contempt.

- 3 The invisible-business list**

Find ten businesses with 4.5+ stars and a wreck of a profile: three photos, wrong hours, no services listed, unanswered reviews. Great business, invisible on maps, is the easiest yes in this niche because the unfairness is the pitch.

- 4 Web designers and ads agencies**

Builders ship sites that never rank and ads people watch budgets bleed where organic should be. Offer white-label local SEO at a fixed rate. Three referral partners can quietly fill your book.

- 5 One owner room**

The contractor association, the chamber, the restaurant group. Bring a laptop, pull up the geogrid for anyone who asks, and watch faces change when they see where they actually rank. The live demo closes rooms.

THE EXACT ASK

"Hi [name], I help [niche] businesses in [city] show up on Google Maps. I ran a ranking map for [business] this week: you show up around #7 for '[service] near me' across most of your service area, while [competitor] holds the top spot, and the top three get nearly all the calls. The fixable gaps are mostly in your Google profile itself. I'm taking two founding clients this quarter at half my normal rate while I build local case studies. Can I send you the map and walk you through it in fifteen minutes?"

THE FOUNDING-CUSTOMER DEAL

Two founding clients at 50% off for the first 90 days, in exchange for a written case study, a Google review, and publication rights to their before-and-after geogrid maps. Day 91 they convert to full rate or roll off, and founding pricing retires publicly. The maps you earn are worth more than the discount costs.

Owned, earned, then paid.

You sell findability, so you must be findable: your own profile and site ranking for your niche is the audition. The engine is geogrid proof published relentlessly, partners who meet your buyer weekly, and the live-demo close. Cold ads are someone else's strategy.

CHANNEL, RANKED	WHY IT WORKS HERE	THE FIRST MOVE
Your own Google Business Profile	An SEO operator who cannot rank themselves is a confessing amateur	Optimize it like a flagship client; rank for '[your niche] SEO [city]'
Geogrid before-and-after content	The climbing map is this trade's half-washed driveway: instant proof	Post one anonymized map climb per month on LinkedIn and your site
Referral partners (web, ads, photographers)	They meet owners with invisible businesses every week	Three two-way referral deals with white-label or 10% thank-you terms
The live demo	Showing an owner their own ranking map beats any deck ever written	Run the geogrid live in every meeting and every owner room
Case studies and reviews	In a promise-saturated niche, documented evidence is the entire brand	One numbers-included case study per quarter; review asked at every report

FIVE CONTENT PIECES THAT WIN THIS NICHE

- Why your competitor outranks you on Google Maps, explained with one picture
- We took a plumber from invisible to the map pack in 90 days: the full log
- What local SEO actually costs in 2026, and the red flags in cheap packages
- The five things killing your Google Business Profile right now
- Reviews and rankings: what actually moves the map pack (and what is a myth)

THE REVIEW MACHINE

Ask at the monthly report, the moment the geogrid and the call count are on screen: 'Calls are up 40% since the baseline. Would you put that in a Google review? I'll text you the link right now.' Your own review wall is a ranking asset and a sales asset at once, and every review that mentions 'more calls' is a case study in one sentence.

One unit, one month, no fog.

Two honest snapshots: what one average retainer month actually nets, and what a steady solo book of eight looks like. These use the middle door at \$1,200 and real tool costs. No 'rank anything overnight' math, because there is none.

ONE UNIT: ONE CLIENT MONTH AT \$1,200	AMOUNT	A WORKING MONTH: SOLO, 8 CLIENTS (STEADY STATE)	AMOUNT
Revenue	\$1,200	Revenue (mixed retainers)	\$9,800
Software share (tracker, citations, reporting)	-\$55	Software stack (tracker, calls, suite)	-\$350
Payment processing (2.9%)	-\$35	Content writer (service pages, posts)	-\$600
Insurance + overhead share	-\$40	Insurance, phone, internet share	-\$170
Gross profit (8-10 hrs of systematized work)	\$1,070	Marketing (rooms, site, cards)	-\$150
Tax reserve (27%)	-\$289	Pre-tax profit	\$8,530
Yours, per client month	\$781	Tax reserve (27%)	-\$2,303
		Owner take-home	\$6,227

BREAK-EVEN

1 client

A single founding retainer covers the entire lean startup cost in its first month. The real moat is patience: the operator willing to do ninety days of invisible foundation work inherits clients from every agency that sold the dream and skipped the diligence.

Illustrative figures at typical market rates; your market, prices, and costs will differ. Run YOUR numbers in the One-Page P&L from THE LAUNCHPAD, Module Six. Remember the 25-30% tax reserve on every dollar of profit.

Pre-decided, so motivation is never consulted.

WEEK ONE: FOUNDATIONS

- LLC filed, EIN issued, business bank account open
- E&O insurance bound; certificate saved
- Geogrid tracker subscribed; your own profile claimed and optimized
- Lab profile chosen; baseline geogrid screenshotted
- Contract finalized: six-month term, no-guarantee clause

WEEK TWO: DOORS OPEN

- Lab profile Foundation work done; changes logged
- Invisible-business list of 10 built with baseline maps
- Founding offer pitched to 5 warm contacts
- First geogrid maps sent with the ask script
- Pricing doors finalized with the \$750 floor written down

WEEK THREE: MOMENTUM

- First founding client signed; manager access granted
- Foundation sprint executed: profile, citations, review system
- Second founding client closed or pipeline at 10 warm
- Three referral partnerships pitched (web, ads, photo)
- One owner room attended; live demo run twice

WEEK FOUR: THE SYSTEM

- First monthly report delivered: geogrid + calls
- Review and referral asked at the report
- Lab profile climb published as case study one
- Founding offer publicly retired or final spot announced
- Month-one P&L done; pick one growth lever for month two

DAY 30 VERDICT

Green light: 2 paying clients on six-month terms, lab-profile proof published, and 5+ warm conversations. Yellow: meetings but no signings: you are selling rankings instead of showing maps, so run the geogrid live in every conversation and re-run week two. Red: zero clients despite 25+ real asks: your proof is invisible. Spend two weeks making the lab profile climb undeniable, then return with the picture instead of the pitch.

How this business fails, and how it grows.

THE FIVE KILLERS

- ✗ **Guaranteeing rankings**
You do not control Google; promising position one is either naive or dishonest, and both end the same way. Sell process, evidence, and reporting. The no-guarantee clause is your credibility, not your weakness.

- ✗ **Month-to-month retainers**
Results land in month three; month-to-month clients leave in month two and call the channel a scam. The six-month initial term is not aggressive, it is the only honest way to sell work with a lag.

- ✗ **Vanity reporting**
A ranking report without call data is homework nobody asked for. Owners renew for ringing phones: report calls, direction requests, and review velocity, with the geogrid as the picture on top.

- ✗ **Gray-hat shortcuts**
Keyword-stuffed names, fake reviews, and spam citations work until the suspension, and the suspension lands on your client. The FTC now fines fake reviews explicitly. Boring compliance is a competitive feature.

- ✗ **Ignoring competitiveness when pricing**
A \$750 retainer cannot win a metro personal-injury map pack, and quoting it anyway guarantees a churned client and a damaged reputation. Scope the fight before you price the ticket.

THREE SCALE PATHS

- 1 **The niche dominator**
Own one industry across many cities: local SEO for roofers, for dentists, for med spas. One playbook, one citation stack, one content library, and referrals that travel through the industry's own networks.

- 2 **The services ladder**
Map-pack clients already trust you with their growth. Websites, review management, and Google Ads management bolt onto the same relationship: lifetime value doubles with zero new logos.

- 3 **The pod model**
A VA runs citations, posting, and reporting from your checklists; a writer produces pages; you keep strategy, audits, and client calls. Twenty accounts, three people, and margins agencies cannot touch.

YOUR FIRST HIRE

A part-time VA at client six or seven, running the weekly profile work, citation upkeep, and report assembly from your documented checklists. The work is repetitive by design, which makes it delegable by design. If your checklist cannot keep a stranger from breaking a profile, fix the checklist before you fix the headcount.

THE STAIRCASE CONTINUES

The playbook is the map. The machine is waiting.

Everything this playbook describes, Epic Advisory Group can build with you: the brand, the cinematic website, the entity, the engine. Describe your idea to the Launch Engine and see your business real in about sixty seconds, free.

- The Launch Engine: your idea, built free, in about a minute
- THE ASCENT: Founder Edition: the eight-module course
- Launch-in-a-Box: entity, brand, site, and first campaign, one flat price
- Growth, capital readiness, and the path to the public markets

"There is no right age. There is only the decision."



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