Linkun Foundation

EDUCATE · EQUIP · ELEVATE

FREE TOOLKIT · EVERY SMALL BUSINESS

Digital Presence Toolkit

Get found when customers search on Google, maps, and AI assistants. Set up the free listings that matter, collect reviews, build a simple website you own, and measure what's working.

- Customers check you online before they call, visit, or buy, even when they heard about you from a friend.
- Start with free listings: Google Business Profile, Apple Business Connect, Bing Places, and Yelp. Keep your name, address, and phone identical everywhere.
- Reviews are your most persuasive marketing. Ask every happy customer, and reply to every review.
- Own your website and domain. Social media and marketplaces can change the rules or close your account.

Fill it in on screen (any PDF reader) or print it. Prefer a version that tailors itself to your business? Use the interactive toolkit at linkunfoundation.org/resources/toolkits/digital-presence.

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How to use the business-type notes: sections marked “For wholesalers”, “For storefronts” and so on apply only to that kind of business. Read the general guidance, then the notes that fit you.

SECTION 01

Why it matters

A strong digital presence does three jobs: it helps new customers **find** you, it helps them **trust** you, and it makes it **easy to buy** or book. Missing hours, an old phone number, or no reviews can send a ready customer to a competitor.

More people now ask AI assistants like ChatGPT, Gemini, and Google's AI answers for recommendations. Those tools draw on the same sources as search: your listings, your website, and your reviews. Accurate, consistent information helps you show up in both.

SECTION 02

Check where you stand

Search for your business the way a customer would

- [ ] Search your business name plus your city on Google. Does your Google Business Profile show up with correct hours, phone, and photos?
- [ ] Search what you sell plus your neighborhood (for example, "bakery near Arcadia"). Do you appear in the map results?
- [ ] Look yourself up on Apple Maps, Bing, and Yelp.
- [ ] Ask an AI assistant to recommend a business like yours in your area. Are you mentioned? Is the information right?
- [ ] Check that your name, address, and phone match exactly everywhere.
- [ ] Open your website on your phone. Can you find the phone number, hours, and a way to buy or book in under 10 seconds?
- [ ] Count your reviews and your average rating on Google and the sites that matter in your industry.

SECTION 03

Claim your free listings

Listing	Why it matters
Google Business Profile	Shows you in Google Search and Maps. The single most important free listing for local businesses.
Apple Business Connect	Controls how you appear in Apple Maps and Siri on iPhones.
Bing Places	Feeds Bing, Microsoft Copilot, and other services that use Bing's data.
Yelp	Trusted for restaurants, home services, and personal care. Claim it even if you don't advertise.
Industry directories	Sites your customers use for your trade (for example, wedding, home improvement, or health directories), plus your chamber of commerce.

Use the same business name, address, phone number, and website on every listing. Small differences ("St." versus "Street", an old suite number) make search engines less sure the listings are the same business. The Google Business Profile checklist walks through setup step by step.

FOR BUSINESSES THAT WORK AT CUSTOMERS' HOMES OR SITES

You can hide your home address and set a service area instead. List the cities and neighborhoods you serve, and add photos of finished jobs.

FOR ONLINE-ONLY SELLERS

Without a storefront, your website, social profiles, and marketplace shop pages carry the trust. Link them all to each other and use the same name and logo everywhere.

SECTION 04

Earn and manage reviews

- [ ] Ask every happy customer, in person and in a follow-up message, right after a good experience.
- [ ] Make it easy: send a direct link to your review page, or put a QR code at the counter or on receipts.
- [ ] Reply to every review within a few days, thanking good ones and responding calmly and helpfully to bad ones.
- [ ] Never pay for reviews, offer discounts for good ones, or post fake ones. It breaks platform rules and federal law.
- [ ] Share great reviews on your website and social media.

SECTION 05

Build a website you own

Your website is the one place online you fully control. It doesn't have to be fancy. It needs to answer the questions customers have and make it easy to act.

What every small business website needs

- [ ] Your own domain name (yourbusiness.com), registered in your name with your login.
- [ ] What you do and where, in plain words, at the top of the home page.
- [ ] Phone number, email, address or service area, and hours on every page.
- [ ] A clear button to call, book, order, or request a quote.
- [ ] Real photos of your work, your team, and your place.
- [ ] Prices or price ranges where you can, and answers to common questions.
- [ ] Reviews or testimonials from real customers.
- [ ] Fast loading and easy reading on a phone.
- [ ] A page for each main service or product, so search engines and AI assistants understand what you offer.

WRITE FOR SEARCH AND AI ANSWERS

Answer the questions customers ask in their own words, such as "How much does it cost to..." or "Do you deliver to...", in short, direct sentences near the top of the page. Search engines and AI assistants quote clear answers.

SECTION 06

Social media and email

Pick one or two channels where your customers already spend time, and post consistently instead of everywhere occasionally. Collect email addresses or phone numbers (with permission) so you can reach customers directly, without depending on an algorithm.

FOR STOREFRONTS AND FOOD BUSINESSES

Post what's new today: specials, new arrivals, behind-the-scenes. Keep holiday and special hours updated on your Google profile so customers don't arrive to a closed door.

FOR BUSINESSES THAT SELL TO OTHER BUSINESSES

A complete LinkedIn company page and personal profile, a capabilities page on your website, and case studies with results matter more than daily posting.

SECTION 07

Measure what's working

Monthly digital scorecard

Google profile views or searches From your profile's Performance tab

Calls and direction requests from your profile Number

Website visitors Number

New inquiries or orders from online Number

New reviews this month Number

Money spent on online marketing $

Sales from online leads $

= Cost per new inquiry

= Sales per marketing dollar

To see whether a campaign paid off, run it through the marketing ROI calculator.

SECTION 08

Use AI to build your presence

AI PROMPT Write my Google Business Profile

Write a Google Business Profile description (under 750 characters) for my {industry} business in {location}. Model: {model}. Customers: {buyer}. Where we sell: {channel}.
Ask me what makes us different, our main services or products, the areas we serve, and anything customers often ask. Use plain language, put the most important words first, and don't use promotional phrases like "best" or "#1." Then suggest 10 services or products to list and 5 questions and answers to add.

Replace the [brackets] with your details, then paste into ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Copilot or any AI assistant.

AI PROMPT Write my website home page

Write the home page text for my {industry} business website in {location}. Customers: {buyer}. Where we sell: {channel}. Ask me about our services or products, prices or price ranges, service area, hours, and what customers say about us. Include: a clear headline saying what we do and where, a short intro, a section per main service, 5 frequently asked questions with direct answers, and a strong call to action. Write so that both people and AI search tools can understand exactly what we offer.

Replace the [brackets] with your details, then paste into ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Copilot or any AI assistant.

AI PROMPT Reply to a review

Help me reply to this customer review for my {industry} business. Keep it short, warm, and professional. If it's negative, thank them, don't argue, take responsibility where it's fair, and invite them to contact me directly to make it right. Don't include any private customer details.
Review: [paste the review]

Replace the [brackets] with your details, then paste into ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Copilot or any AI assistant.

Frequently asked questions

What is the most important free listing for a local business?

Google Business Profile. It controls how you appear in Google Search and Google Maps, including your hours, phone number, photos, and reviews. Claim and complete it first, then Apple Business Connect, Bing Places, and Yelp.

How do I get my business recommended by AI assistants like ChatGPT?

AI assistants draw on public sources: business listings, your website, reviews, and directories. Keep your information accurate and consistent everywhere, earn reviews, and publish clear pages that answer customers' questions directly.

Do I need a website if I have social media?

Yes. Social media accounts can change their rules or be suspended, and you don't own your followers. A simple website on your own domain is the one place online you control, and it helps you show up in search.

Is it okay to offer a discount for a good review?

No. Paying or rewarding customers for positive reviews breaks platform rules and federal rules on fake and incentivized reviews. You can ask every customer for an honest review.

FREE 1:1 COACHING

Talk it through with a mentor

Bring this toolkit, your numbers, and your questions. Book a free session:
https://calendar.app.google/Y9th1oVrDYsY7tbk8

This toolkit is educational and is not legal, tax, accounting, or investment advice. Rules change and vary by state; confirm decisions with a qualified professional or a free advisor at your local Small Business Development Center. © Linkun Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.