



FREE FIELD GUIDE · FOR OWNERS PAYING AN AGENCY

5 SEO Mistakes Your Agency Is Making

What you're paying **\$500–\$3,000/mo** for — and what you're not getting.

LocalServiceBusinessSEO
The 23-chapter V5.1 Playbook

Free Audit
localservicebusinessseo.com

How to use this guide

If you pay **\$500–\$3,000/mo** to a managed local-SEO agency and you can't tell whether they're still doing the work — this is the field test. Each of the five mistakes below comes with a verify-it-yourself check you can run in under five minutes, on your own site and Google Business Profile, without your agency's permission.

Each mistake also maps to the chapter of the V5.1 Playbook that covers it — so if you decide to bring this in-house, you know exactly where to start.

Scoring rubric

Score	What it means	Action
5 of 5 ■	Great agency. They're doing the work.	Keep them.
3–4 of 5 ■	Mixed signal. Some categories are dormant.	Push for the missing items in your next monthly call.
≤2 of 5 ■	You're paying for monitoring, not SEO.	Run the free audit and consider bringing it in-house.

Before you start: open Google Maps to your business listing, open your own website in a second tab, and pull up your most recent monthly agency report. That's everything you need.

MISTAKE #1

Set-and-Forget Google Business Profile

Playbook reference: V5.1 Ch 22 — GBP Activity Cadence

Verify in under 5 minutes

Search your business on Google Maps → Posts tab → look at the date of the most recent Post. If it's older than 14 days, you have this mistake.

What agencies typically do

Builds the GBP once during onboarding — categories, photos, hours — then never posts again. The profile looks "done" in their dashboard. From Google's side, the profile is going dormant.

What should be happening instead

A weekly GBP Post (Update, Offer, or Event). One new geo-tagged photo per service call. Services and attributes kept complete. Hours and holiday hours kept current. Google's local algorithm now treats profile-freshness as a ranking signal, and 2026 interaction signals (review-reply velocity, photo-upload recency, Post recency) carry more weight than they did in 2024.

What this is costing you

Quiet Map Pack ranking decay over 60–90 days. You don't notice it because Google never tells you a competitor moved up — they just take your calls.

MISTAKE #2

Generic Service-Page Copy That Doesn't Pass the "Who, What, Where" Test

Playbook reference: V5.1 Ch 5 (Semantic Optimization) + Ch 21 (Content Layering)

Verify in under 5 minutes

Open one of your service pages. Without looking at the URL or the logo, can you tell what city the business is in? What the specific service is? Whether the person writing it has ever done the job?

What agencies typically do

Spins up a 300-word service page that lists features — "Our Plumbing Services include drain cleaning, water heater repair, pipe replacement" — with no city, no job photos, no first-person experience, no real-world scenarios. Same skeleton across 10 agency clients.

What should be happening instead

Each service has a dedicated page (not buried under a "Services" parent). The page names the city naturally, contains real job photos from real job sites, includes citation-worthy paragraphs (40–60 words written so AI Overviews and Map Pack snippets can lift them cleanly), and tells at least one specific customer scenario.

What this is costing you

Your service pages rank for the service name but not for service-plus-city — the queries that actually convert. AI Overviews, which now sit above the organic results for ~30% of local-intent searches, can't extract your content because there's no extractable claim.

MISTAKE #3

Asking for Reviews Manually (or Worse, Not at All)

Playbook reference: V5.1 Ch 9 — Proof Layer (Review Authority + Velocity)

Verify in under 5 minutes

Open your GBP. Look at your last 5 reviews. Were they within the last 60 days? Were they spaced out (a system) or clumped together (a one-off "review push")?

What agencies typically do

Sends a quarterly "ask your customers for reviews" email to you and leaves the rest to you. Then reports on review count — not on review velocity. Some agencies don't ask at all.

What should be happening instead

A system. Every completed job triggers a review request (text or email, ideally within 2 hours of completion). Owner-led replies to every review within 24 hours — Google's 2026 interaction signals now weight reply-velocity as part of the local ranking calculation, not just review count. A review-velocity floor (e.g., 4+ new reviews per month for plumbing/HVAC, 2+ for roofing) maintained as a steady drip, not a spike.

What this is costing you

Dormant review velocity is one of the strongest negative signals in Map Pack ranking. An agency that hasn't built you a review system is leaving the single most-visible competitive signal on the table.

MISTAKE #4

Missing or Broken Schema (and Schema That Contradicts Your GBP)

Playbook reference: V5.1 Ch 7 — Schema Markup + AI Citation Method

Verify in under 5 minutes

Paste your homepage URL into search.google.com/test/rich-results. Look for LocalBusiness schema. Open your GBP. Compare the name, address, and phone — they should be identical, character for character.

What agencies typically do

Either no schema at all, or a copy-paste LocalBusiness block lifted from a template that has the wrong name format ("Smith Plumbing LLC" in schema, "Smith's Plumbing" on GBP), wrong phone formatting, or stale hours. Sometimes schema gets stale because the agency updated GBP but never the site.

What should be happening instead

LocalBusiness schema on the homepage with exact NAP match to GBP. Service schema on every service page (with priceRange, areaServed, provider fields). FAQPage schema on any page with Q&A content. Zero errors in the Rich Results Test. Schema reviewed quarterly against GBP for drift.

What this is costing you

AI search systems (Google AI Overviews, Bing Chat, Perplexity, ChatGPT search) use schema as their first-pass extraction layer. If your schema contradicts your GBP, you signal "untrusted entity" and get excluded from AI citations — an increasing share of local discovery in 2026.

MISTAKE #5

Reporting That Doesn't Tell You About Calls

Playbook reference: V5.1 Ch 19 — The 90-Day Local SEO Launch Calendar (Reporting layer)

Verify in under 5 minutes

Open the last monthly report your agency sent. Search the PDF for the word "calls" or "leads." Now search for "ranking," "impressions," or "traffic." Count the ratio.

What agencies typically do

Sends a slick PDF full of ranking screenshots, impressions charts, and "5,400 visitors this month" stats. Almost never calls out: how many phone calls did the GBP listing generate? How many form fills? Which keywords drove the calls? Which neighborhoods?

What should be happening instead

A call-tracking number on every page (CallRail, CallTrackingMetrics, or equivalent — \$30–\$80/mo, tiny compared to the \$500–\$3,000/mo agency fee). Reports lead with calls and form fills, ranking signals as supporting evidence. Calls attributed by source (GBP listing call, website call, ad call) and by service. Cost-per-lead trend over 90 days.

What this is costing you

If the agency can't show you a call count tied to their SEO work, you have no way to know if you're paying for SEO or just paying. You're not buying rankings — you're buying calls. Reports that hide calls are reports designed to hide whether the work is working.

What to do next

Step 1 — Run the free audit

Go to **localservicebusinessseo.com** and run the free audit. It checks all five categories above — GBP cadence, service-page extractability, review velocity, schema integrity, and call-tracking — against your live site and Google Business Profile. No login required. Takes about three minutes.

Step 2 — Score your agency

Pull up your last 90 days of agency invoices. For each of the five mistakes above, score ■ (they're doing it), ■■ (partial), or ■ (not doing it). Apply the rubric on page 2.

Step 3 — If you're moving, here's the alternative

The V5.1 Playbook (\$197 one-time) is the same 23-chapter system we'd use to build your local-SEO presence ourselves. You can run it as the owner, or hand the GBP cadence and review system to a single VA. That setup typically replaces a \$500–\$3,000/mo agency engagement at roughly the cost of one month of agency fees. The AI Workforce module can run the cadence for you if you'd rather not hire.

Run your free audit at **localservicebusinessseo.com**

Five categories. ~3 minutes. No login. The audit checks the exact same five things this guide covers — on your real site.

Or read the framework first — the 23-chapter V5.1 Playbook lives at **localservicebusinessseo.com/playbook**.