



FREE CHECKLIST · FROM V5.1 CHAPTER 22

GBP Optimization Checklist

The weekly cadence Google rewards. From V5.1 Chapter 22 — owner-runnable in 15 minutes a week. Or use it to score whether the agency you're paying **\$500–\$3,000/mo** is actually running it.

LocalServiceBusinessSEO
The 23-chapter V5.1 Playbook

Free Audit
localservicebusinessseo.com

How to use this checklist

GBP + review velocity = signals AI can't fake.

In April 2026 Google updated local ranking to treat GBP *activity* as a direct ranking signal — 30+ days without an update is now a confirmed visibility drop. Interaction signals (photo views, review reads, direction requests, GBP-to-site visits) feed back into Map Pack position. That means the agencies running "set-and-forget" GBP management are leaving the strongest 2026 ranking signal — weekly, dated, owner-attributable activity — on the table.

Most local businesses pay **\$500–\$3,000/mo** for an agency to operate this weekly. The checklist below lets you do it in 15 minutes — or score whether your agency is actually running it. Every item is something an AI competitor can't manufacture for free: a real photo of a real job, an owner reply to a real review, a Post that names a real customer scenario. V5.1 Chapter 22 (GBP Cadence) is the load-bearing chapter of the playbook for exactly this reason — the cadence is the moat.

Scoring rubric

Score	What it means	Action
6 of 6 	Cadence is alive. Compounding weekly.	Hold it. This is the moat — keep running it.
4–5 of 6 	Most cadence items running. 1–2 dormant.	Identify the dormant items below and start them this week.
≤3 of 6 	GBP is going dormant. Map Pack rank decaying.	Run the cadence now. Either start the cadence yourself, or score

Before you start: open your GBP in one tab, your own website in a second, and your most recent agency report in a third. That's everything you need.

Weekly Posts — 1 to 2 per week, minimum

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

The cadence

Monday/Tuesday: 1 Update Post. Thursday/Friday: 1 Offer or Event Post (optional but compounds).

Time + signal

Time: 5 minutes per Post

2026 signal: Post recency — Google checks the date of your most recent Post; >14 days without a Post triggers an "inactive profile" flag in 2026 GBP processing.

How to run it

Update Post format: 100–150 words. Lead with one photo from an actual job (no stock). End with one CTA button ("Call now," "Get a quote," or "Visit website" — rotate weekly). Offer Post format: a real seasonal offer or event with a 7–14-day expiration. Offers are the only Post type where dated decay is a feature, not a bug.

How agencies typically run it

Once-a-month "schedule the whole month" batch run. Same photo across three Posts. No real-world specificity. Most of these get suppressed by Google's spam-Post filter, which the agency's dashboard never tells you.

DIY tool to track

BrightLocal's GBP audit shows last-Post date. Free tier covers this check.

Services & Attributes — every Sunday, 5 minutes

Playbook reference: V5.1 Ch 23 — AI Answer Readiness

The cadence

Open GBP → confirm every service is listed with a description and every relevant attribute is set (emergency, financing, licensed, etc.); add/refresh one website FAQ answer.

Time + signal

Time: 5 minutes per week

2026 signal: Services/attributes completeness + on-site FAQ depth — the structured inputs Ask Maps and AI Overviews synthesize answers from.

How to run it

Complete your services list and attributes, then publish/refresh one customer FAQ answer on your website (service area, emergency response time, pricing ballpark, after-hours, financing). Google retired the peer Q&A box (2025-11-03); Ask Maps now answers from these inputs, and it's often wrong when they're thin.

How agencies typically run it

They don't run this. Services, attributes, and on-site FAQ are the most-skipped Ask Maps inputs in 2026 agency contracts — and the ones with the highest AI-overlay risk.

DIY tool to track

None. Owner-only. Set a recurring 5-min calendar block.

Review Request System — fire on every job, not by hand

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

The cadence

Trigger every completed job: SMS/email within 2 hours. Reply to every review within 24 hours, owner-led.

Time + signal

Time: 30 minutes to set up. Zero per week after.

2026 signal: Review velocity + reply velocity. Google's 2026 interaction signals weight reply-velocity within 24 hours, not just review count.

How to run it

Automate the trigger. Apps that handle this (NiceJob, Podium, Birdeye, or a free Zapier-on-CRM) cost \$30–\$80/mo — an order of magnitude less than the \$500–\$3,000/mo you'd pay an agency to do worse. Reply specifically: templates rank weakly; replies that mention the job ("Glad we got your water heater swapped on a Sunday") rank well. Hold a floor: plumbing/HVAC 4+ new reviews/month, roofing 2+. Below the floor your review velocity reads as "dormant business."

How agencies typically run it

Quarterly "ask your customers for reviews" email to the owner, with no automation. The agency owns the dashboard but not the trigger.

DIY tool to track

GBP shows review count + 30-day velocity. Local Falcon and BrightLocal chart velocity over time.

Photo + Video Cadence — geo-tag every upload

Playbook reference: V5.1 Ch 22 — GBP Activity Cadence + Ch 5 (Semantic Optimization)

The cadence

One geo-tagged photo per completed service call. One short owner-narrated video per month.

Time + signal

Time: 30 seconds per upload, ~2 minutes per week

2026 signal: Photo-upload recency + geo-tag accuracy. Google reads EXIF GPS data and uses it to confirm the business is operating in the claimed service area.

How to run it

Phone camera auto-tags GPS if Location Services is on — verify EXIF GPS is present before upload (free tool: `exiftool -G -GPS:All photo.jpg` from terminal, or any phone EXIF viewer). One short video per month, 15–60 seconds, vertical, owner-narrated, real job — the same surface as Reels/Shorts cut-downs (V5.1 Ch 22 cross-references this — the GBP video doubles as social).

How agencies typically run it

Stock photos. Office headshots. Photos with EXIF stripped by their upload tool (which kills the geo-tag signal).

DIY tool to track

GBP "Photos" tab sorted by date. Whitespark's GBP audit flags photo recency.

Service Area + Service List Edits — monthly, not weekly

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

The cadence

First of each month: confirm service area cities/ZIPs, service list, hours, holiday hours.

Time + signal

Time: 10 minutes once a month

2026 signal: Service-area-match. Google compares your declared service area against where your calls + reviews actually come from. Drift = a downweighting signal.

How to run it

Open GBP → Service Area → confirm cities/ZIPs match where you're actually working. Add cities you've worked in last month, drop cities you haven't. Open GBP → Services → confirm each service has a description (not just a name), and that your three highest-margin services are listed first. Update Hours and Holiday Hours for the upcoming month — conflicting holiday hours create a "data inconsistency" flag.

How agencies typically run it

Set during onboarding. Never re-touched. The agency reports on rankings, not on whether the service area still matches reality.

DIY tool to track

None needed — GBP itself surfaces the last-edited date in the dashboard.

Tracking — what to actually look at

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

The cadence

GBP Insights + call-tracking on every page + review velocity chart. Check monthly, not weekly.

Time + signal

Time: 10 minutes per month

2026 signal: Closed-loop call attribution. The conversion event for Map Pack is a phone call, not an impression — and Google's algorithm reads the call-button click.

How to run it

GBP Insights → Calls + Direction requests, trended over 90 days, not month-by-month (local seasonality drowns single-month numbers). Call-tracking number on every page (CallRail, CTM — \$30–\$80/mo) splits GBP-driven calls from website-driven calls from ad-driven calls. The agencies you're paying \$500–\$3,000/mo for almost never run this — because if you knew the call source, you'd know what their work was actually worth.

How agencies typically run it

Slick PDF report. Rankings and impressions. Calls and form-fills buried or missing.

DIY tool to track

CallRail (~\$50/mo) + GBP Insights (free) = a \$50/mo replacement for the reporting layer of a \$500–\$3,000/mo agency engagement.

What to do next

Step 1 — Run the free audit

Go to localservicebusinessseo.com and run the free audit. It scores your live GBP against this exact checklist — Posts cadence, services & attributes, review velocity, photo recency, service-area accuracy, and call-tracking — and tells you which items are currently dormant. ~3 minutes. No login.

Step 2 — Score yourself (or your agency) against the six items

For each of the six cadence items above, score ■ (we run this), ■■ (partial), or ■ (not running it). If you're running the GBP yourself and you're below ■■ on three or more, you have a 15-minute-a-week shape to adopt. If your agency is below ■■ on three or more — and you're paying them \$500–\$3,000/mo — the agency is the bottleneck.

Step 3 — If you want the full system, here it is

The V5.1 Playbook (\$197 one-time) is the 23-chapter system this checklist comes from. Chapter 22 is the weekly cadence (this PDF). Chapters 9 (Review Authority), 23 (AI Answer Readiness), and 19 (Reporting) are the layers underneath. Run it yourself, hand the cadence to a single VA, or use the AI Workforce module to run the cadence for you — typically replaces a \$500–\$3,000/mo agency engagement at roughly the agency's monthly cost.

Run your free audit at localservicebusinessseo.com

Six cadence categories. ~3 minutes. No login. The audit scores your live GBP against the same six items this checklist covers.

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