

FREE GUIDE

Is Your Business Ready to Be Found?

A Founder's Guide to Google and AI Search

30 plain-language tips for founders and family business owners who run their own websites. Help Google, Bing, and AI tools find you, understand you, and send the right people your way.

- A 2-minute website quiz
- Quick wins you can finish in an afternoon
- How to show up when people ask AI tools
- A page for the leader behind the website
- A printable checklist to keep you on track

30
TIPS

Welcome

If you run your own business, there is a good chance you run your own website too. You fit it in between customers, payroll, hiring, and everything else that lands on your desk. That is true whether you are a first-time founder, growing a startup, or carrying on a business your family built.

As a growing small business ourselves, we worked through all of this on our own site. Here is what we learned, so you can skip the trial and error.

The good news is that most of what helps people find you does not take a big budget or a technical background. Some tips take five minutes. A few take an afternoon. All of them help real people find you, whether they are typing into Google or asking ChatGPT, Copilot, or Perplexity for a recommendation.

The 2-minute website quiz

Check each one that is true for your site today.

- ☐ Every page has its own title, and your business name is in it.
- ☐ Your site loads in about 3 seconds or less on a phone.
- ☐ When someone shares your link, a clear picture shows up in the preview.
- ☐ Your images have short descriptions (alt text) behind them.
- ☐ Your pages link to each other, not just through the menu.
- ☐ Your founding year, owner names, and key details match everywhere online.
- ☐ You have told Google Search Console and Bing Webmaster Tools about your site.
- ☐ You have asked an AI tool about your business and liked the answer.

7-8 checks: You are in good shape. Skim for ideas you have not tried yet.

4-6 checks: A few quick wins are waiting for you.

0-3 checks: Good news: you have the most to gain. Start with Part 1 and take it one tip at a time.

Before you touch anything: back up

Make a full backup of your site first (most hosts and website builders offer one-click backups). Then change one thing at a time and check your site after each change. If something looks off, you will know exactly what caused it, and undoing it is easy.

Make a clear first impression

These are the small things search engines read first, and they are often the fastest to fix.

1 Give every page its own title

The page title is the blue link people click in search results. Make each one say what that page is about, and end it with your business name, like **Furnace Repair in Kalispell | Swan River Family Heating & Air**. Aim for roughly 50–60 characters so it does not get cut off.

2 Write descriptions that invite a click

The meta description is the short blurb under the title in search results. Keep it under about 155 characters, speak to the reader, and tell them what they will find. Think "movie trailer," not "legal disclaimer." Google sometimes writes its own, but a good one gives it something useful to start from.

3 One clear headline per page

Each page should have one main heading (an H1) that fits its page title. It does not have to be word-for-word, but it should tell the same story. Page builders make it easy to end up with no H1, two of them, or an empty heading with nothing in it. A friendly greeting like "Thanks for stopping by" is fine, but put it under a clear headline such as "Contact Our Team."

4 Use the words your customers use

If people search for "startup coaching" and your page says "venture leadership enablement," you will be hard to find. The same goes for "furnace repair" versus "thermal comfort solutions." Put the plain, everyday phrase in your title and headline. Small wording changes can open the door to whole new customers.

5 Set up your link-preview picture

When someone pastes your link into a text, email, or LinkedIn post, a picture should appear. That is your social share image (the technical name is og:image). A clean 1200 × 630 pixel graphic with your logo and a short tagline works well. Set one for every page you would want shared.

6 Freshen up your favicon

The small icon in the browser tab is part of your brand. Make sure it is crisp, simple, and readable even at a very small size.

7 Fix the little broken links

Old buttons pointing to outdated addresses, links missing the "https://" at the front, contact buttons going to a page that no longer exists. Set aside 20 minutes and click every button and link on your site once.

Lighten the load

Big, heavy images are one of the most common reasons a site feels slow, especially on phones.

2.1 MB → 164 KB

A real example: one phone header image went from 2.1 megabytes to 164 kilobytes and looked identical side by side. A worksheet image shrank from 20 megabytes to 113 kilobytes. Same pictures, much faster pages.

8 Shrink your images before you upload

Photos straight from a phone or design tool are often huge. Save photos as JPEG or WebP, and aim for under about 200 KB each. Free tools like Squoosh or TinyPNG make this a drag-and-drop job.

9 Size images for where they live

A team photo shown at 300 pixels wide does not need to be 3,000 pixels wide. Match the image to its spot on the page.

10 Describe your images (alt text)

Alt text is a short description behind each image. It helps people using screen readers, and it tells Google and AI tools what the picture shows. Keep it natural: "Technician servicing a furnace in a Kalispell home," not a pile of keywords. Purely decorative images can skip it.

Watch for this Some page builders ignore the alt text you set in the media library and use their own field inside the image block instead. After you add alt text, check that it actually shows on the live page.

11 Test your speed for free

Enter your address in Google's PageSpeed Insights. Look at the **mobile** score first, since that is how most visitors arrive. It will point to the specific images and files slowing you down.

12 Tidy up your plugins and themes

Unused plugins and leftover themes slow things down and can create security holes. Delete what you do not use. Update the rest **one at a time**, checking the site after each, so if something breaks you know which update did it.

13 Look at your site on a real phone

Scroll every page with your thumb. Are the gaps between sections even? Does anything spill off the side? Is your phone number or main button easy to reach? Mobile visitors decide quickly, so make it easy for them.

Help visitors (and search engines) find their way

Search engines discover your pages by following links. So do people.

14 Link your pages to each other

If your home page lists your services, make each one a link to its page. Add a sentence like "Meet the family behind the business" that links to your About page. These in-text links tell Google which pages matter and how they fit together.

15 Make links easy to spot

A link should look like a link. Pick one clear, high-contrast style for links on dark backgrounds and another for light backgrounds, then use them everywhere.

16 Keep your web addresses clear

An address like `/furnace-repair/` beats `/?page_id=55` or a mysterious abbreviation. If you rename a page, set up a **301 redirect** from the old address to the new one so nobody hits a dead end and search engines know where the page went.

17 Redirect retired pages and old PDFs

Replaced an old services page or last year's brochure? Google may still show the old one for weeks, and AI tools may keep quoting it. When a newer version exists, point the old address to it with a 301 redirect.

18 Introduce yourself to Google and Bing

Set up free accounts with **Google Search Console** and **Bing Webmaster Tools**, and submit your sitemap. A time-saver: Bing lets you import your site straight from Google Search Console in a few clicks. Bing matters more than many owners expect, because it feeds results in places like DuckDuckGo, Yahoo, and Microsoft Copilot.

19 Ask for a fresh look after big changes

Finished an update? Use "Request indexing" in Search Console and "Submit URLs" in Bing for the pages you changed. If pages you deleted on purpose show up as 404 errors, that is normal. Google drops them over time, and they do not need "Validate Fix." If a replacement page exists, the fix is a redirect (Tip 17).

A word about shortcuts

Hidden text, invisible links, or keywords tucked where visitors cannot see them might sound clever, but search engines treat them as tricks and can push your site down. If it is worth saying to Google, it is worth showing to people.

Show up when people ask AI

More people now ask AI tools for recommendations. Here is how to give them a clear, accurate picture of your business.

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Try it yourself first

Ask a few AI tools the questions your customers would ask, like "Who is a reliable family-owned HVAC company in Kalispell?" or "Where can I find startup coaching for first-time founders?" Then ask about your business by name. Note what they get right, what they get wrong, and where they seem to be finding it.

Common surprise An AI tool quoting details from a page that had been deleted months earlier. Tips 17 and 21 help with this.

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Make your facts match everywhere

This is the biggest one. If your site says founded in 1987 and LinkedIn says 1992, AI tools get confused and may repeat the wrong one. Make your founding year, owner and leadership names, service area, key numbers, and certifications identical on your site, LinkedIn, directories, and every PDF you share. In a family business that has changed hands, check that the current owners are listed, not only the founders.

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Let the AI crawlers in

Your robots.txt file (at yoursite.com/robots.txt) tells bots where they can go. Make sure it is not blocking the ones you want, such as:

GPTBot · OAI-SearchBot · ChatGPT-User	OpenAI / ChatGPT
ClaudeBot · Claude-SearchBot · Claude-User	Anthropic / Claude
PerplexityBot	Perplexity
Bingbot	Bing and Microsoft Copilot
Googlebot	Google Search, including AI Overviews

Some of these collect training data (GPTBot, ClaudeBot), while others fetch pages for search results or when someone asks a question (OAI-SearchBot, ChatGPT-User, Claude-SearchBot, Claude-User). You can allow some and not others.

Note Google-Extended only controls whether your content is used to train Google's Gemini models. It does not affect Google Search or AI Overviews, which use Googlebot.

Also check your host's security settings. Some block "unknown bots" by default, quietly shutting out AI tools.

Give AI tools something clear to say

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Add a behind-the-scenes "business card"

Structured data (also called schema) is a small block of code that tells search engines and AI tools who you are: name, services, where you serve, phone, and links to your official profiles. Schema is the approved exception to the no-hidden-content rule, because it describes what is already on your page. Test it free with Google's Rich Results Test or the Schema Markup Validator. Only include what is true and current.

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Write sentences an AI would want to quote

AI tools work best with clear, specific statements: "We are a family-owned HVAC company serving homes and small businesses in Kalispell and the Flathead Valley since 1987." Vague lines like "We empower excellence" give them nothing to work with. Say who you help, how, and where, in plain words.

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Answer the questions buyers actually ask

Do you serve my area? How do I get a quote? Do you work weekends? Who will I actually be working with? A simple FAQ with honest, direct answers helps visitors decide, and gives AI tools clear answers to draw on. Write it for people first; that is where the value is.

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Show your proof in words

Logos and badges are great, but AI tools cannot read a picture of a logo. Where you have permission, share results and testimonials in text, with the person's name and title.

Spread the word

Search engines and AI tools also look at what the rest of the internet says about you.

27 Claim your listings

Check Google Business Profile, Bing Places, LinkedIn, and the directories in your industry. Correct anything outdated.

Good to know Google Business Profile is meant for businesses that have a location customers visit or that travel to customers, like that HVAC company in Kalispell. A fully virtual business may not qualify, so read Google's guidelines before you spend an afternoon on it.

28 Fix the wrong info you find

Search your business name and skim the first two pages. Old social media handles, a wrong address, a former owner still listed as the contact. Many sites have a "claim this business" or "suggest an edit" form. Some are not worth the effort, and that is okay. Focus on the ones your customers actually use.

29 Share something useful, regularly

A blog or resources page gives people (and search engines) fresh reasons to visit. Write for one audience at a time, answer a real question, and link to the matching service page. Have older posts sitting unused? Refresh and republish them.

30 Check in every few months

Search visibility is not a one-time chore. It is more like servicing a vehicle. Put a reminder on your calendar to retake this guide's quiz each quarter, and notice the progress you have made.

Our favorite way to make it stick

At WayPoint Coaching Inc., this is the same process we use to help leaders create lasting change. It works for websites too.

Awareness
Take the quiz

Strong Intention
Pick your top 3

Align Thoughts & Actions
Put time on the calendar

Take Action
Fix one thing

Repeat
Then the next

Real Change
Get found

The same patterns, one level up

If you worked through this guide, you may have noticed something. The reasons a website falls behind are rarely technical. Every update waits on one person. Nobody is quite sure who owns it. There is never time to step back and look at the whole thing. And because it is important but never urgent, it slides to next month.

Those same patterns often slow the business itself. In a startup, the founder becomes the bottleneck as the team grows. In a family business, roles blur, hard conversations get put off, and the question of who leads next stays open. None of that is a website problem. It is leadership work, and it is work you can grow into.

A quick self-check

- ☐ Does every decision still run through you?

- ☐ Are roles clear, especially between family members?

- ☐ Is there a plan for the next generation, or the next stage of growth?

- ☐ When did you last step back to work on the business instead of in it?

- ☐ Who do you talk to when a decision is hard?

If a few of these landed, that is what we help with. Website tune-ups are a weekend project. Growing as the leader your business needs is the bigger opportunity.

See how we work with founders and family businesses:

waypointcoachinginc.com/entrepreneurs/

Book a free 20-minute consultation

Your website tune-up checklist

Work top to bottom, one item at a time. Back up first.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

- ☐ Each page has a unique title with my business name
- ☐ Each page has an inviting description under about 155 characters
- ☐ One clear main headline (H1) per page that fits its title
- ☐ Titles and headlines use the words my customers search for
- ☐ Link-preview image set on every page I would share
- ☐ Crisp, simple favicon
- ☐ Clicked every button and link once

SPEED & IMAGES

- ☐ Images compressed (about 200 KB or less)
- ☐ Images sized for where they appear
- ☐ Meaningful images have alt text, checked on the live page
- ☐ Ran PageSpeed Insights (mobile first)
- ☐ Deleted unused plugins and themes
- ☐ Scrolled every page on a real phone

CONNECT THE DOTS

- ☐ Pages link to each other within the text
- ☐ Links look like links
- ☐ Renamed pages and old PDFs redirect to their replacements
- ☐ Google Search Console set up, sitemap submitted

- ☐ Bing Webmaster Tools set up (imported from Google)
- ☐ Requested indexing after big changes (no fix needed for pages deleted on purpose)

AI SEARCH

- ☐ Asked 3 AI tools about my business and my services
- ☐ My key facts match on my site, LinkedIn, directories, and PDFs
- ☐ robots.txt and host settings allow the crawlers I want
- ☐ Structured data added and tested
- ☐ Clear "who, how, where" sentences on key pages
- ☐ FAQ answers the questions buyers actually ask
- ☐ Results and testimonials shown in text, with permission

BEYOND THE SITE

- ☐ Claimed and updated my listings
- ☐ Fixed wrong info on the sites my customers actually use
- ☐ Sharing something useful regularly
- ☐ Quarterly check-in on my calendar

THE LEADER BEHIND IT

- ☐ Answered the Part 6 self-check honestly
- ☐ Blocked time to work on the business, not just in it

BOOKMARK THESE

Free tools we use

PageSpeed Insights

pagespeed.web.dev

Speed, and what is slowing you down

Google Search Console

search.google.com/search-console

How Google sees your site

Bing Webmaster Tools

bing.com/webmasters

How Bing sees you (Bing also feeds Copilot, DuckDuckGo, and Yahoo)

Rich Results Test

search.google.com/test/rich-results

Checks your structured data

Squoosh

squoosh.app

Shrink images in your browser

Your own robots.txt

yoursite.com/robots.txt

See which bots are allowed in



One step at a time

Every website has room to grow, ours included. We did this work on our own site, with help from AI assistants including Claude, ChatGPT, and Grok Bot (AI Teammate). Small, steady fixes add up. Pick three tips, put an hour on your calendar this week, and start there.

WayPoint Coaching Inc. is an SBA-certified Woman-Owned Small Business (WOSB). We help leaders, teams, and organizations create real change. Our coaches have backgrounds in business leadership, military service, law enforcement, and organizational development, and we work with founders and family business owners on the leadership side of growth.

Growing a business, or bringing the next generation in? [Book a free 20-minute consultation](#) at waypointcoachinginc.com.

Learn more about coaching for entrepreneurs: waypointcoachinginc.com/entrepreneurs/

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