

CLIMB TO THE TOP

**AI SEARCH OPTIMIZATION
FOR TREE SERVICE OWNERS**



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MARKETING

PRERELEASE

Austin Lee & Ben Team

Climb to the Top: AI Search Optimization for Tree Service Owners

Climb to the Top: AI Search Optimization for Tree Service Owners

Your Guide to Mastering AI Search in a Shifting Competitive Landscape

Austin Lee & Ben Team

Orb Tree Service Marketing

Prerelease

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Prerelease

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This book is dedicated to all the hard-working tree-care professionals trying to outclimb algorithms and outgrow the competition.



Authors' Note

This book was written during a period of rapid change in how people find information online.

The goal here isn't to chase every new tool or trend, but to help you understand the principles that stay constant as technology evolves.

We've done our best to keep explanations simple, accurate, practical, and timely. But with that said, some examples or screenshots may already look different by the time you read this.

That's OK.

The larger ideas about clarity, credibility, and relevance will continue to matter long after the specifics have changed.

If you take away one thing from this book, we hope it's this: Adapting to AI doesn't mean abandoning what makes your business human. It means communicating that humanity clearly enough for both people and machines to recognize it.

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Introduction: A New Kind of Spotlight

In 1941, a short black-and-white advertisement was aired before a baseball game on a New York TV station. It featured nothing more than a ticking clock, a crude graphic, and a simple, one-line voiceover:

“America runs on Bulova time.”

That ad was the world’s first television commercial. It wasn’t flashy (it only cost \$9 to run), and it didn’t go “viral.”

But it marked a turning point in how businesses reached people. Suddenly, success wasn’t just about word of mouth or a listing in the Yellow Pages. It was about understanding a new medium and leveraging the visibility it offered.

We’re at another turning point today. Not in television — but in how people search the web.

Instead of scrolling through a list of search results, consumers are asking ChatGPT, Google’s AI Overviews, and other AI-powered tools to recommend products and services.

For a lot of business owners, this shift feels sudden and unsettling. It can seem like the rules changed overnight, and no one gave you a playbook. What used to work no longer does. It’s easy to feel invisible, frustrated, or left behind.

This book exists to help you adapt to that shift.

You don’t need to be a tech expert to show up in AI results, but you *do* need to understand what AI systems look for. Just like early TV advertisers had to learn how to speak to a camera instead of a crowd, local businesses now need to learn how to speak to machines so that those machines can speak to customers.

This isn’t about gaming the system. It’s about building relevance and trust to earn visibility. And the chapters ahead will show you how to do exactly that.

Let’s begin.

Part One: AI-Powered Search and the Shifting Landscape for Tree Services

Most homeowners who need tree care actively search for a service provider.

Sure, you might land the occasional job by knocking on a door and pointing out a leaning pine or a dying ash tree full of borers, but those are exceptions.

The typical tree care client already knows they need help. They want a hazardous tree removed, a large limb pruned back, or more clearance over a roofline. So, they open their phone or laptop and start searching for someone who can handle the job.

In a way, that makes your life easier. You don't have to persuade them that they need your service. You have a different challenge: making sure they find and choose you, instead of a competitor.

That's where things get tricky. Because dozens of other tree service companies are trying to do the exact same thing, and they're showing up in the same search results you are.

The good news? If you're willing to roll up your sleeves and do the work, there are clear ways to stand out.

The bad news? The strategies that worked yesterday won't work tomorrow.

Search has changed — and so has the path your customers take to find you.

Don't worry — we're here to help.

We'll start in Part One by explaining what's changing, the ways AI is shaping the future of search, and what it means for tree service companies like yours.

Chapter 1: The New Era of Search

It's 2:13 in the morning.

Mrs. Smith wakes up to the loudest, most frightening sound she's ever heard. Frazzled, she runs to the window and sees a massive oak branch sitting on her garage roof. Rain is pouring. Her husband's out of town. She has no idea who to call.

In many ways, Mrs. Smith is your ideal customer. She's highly motivated and desperately needs the very services you offer.

But how will she find you?

The Way Homeowners Find You Has Changed Forever

Twenty years ago, Mrs. Smith might have flipped open the Yellow Pages, scanned the newspaper, or called a neighbor for a recommendation. If you invested in a decent ad or listing, you'd be visible and likely earn your share of calls.

Ten years ago, she'd have Googled "emergency tree removal near me" or searched Facebook, Angi, or HomeAdvisor. This was the era of traditional SEO. If you were playing the game right, you'd show up at the top of the results and get leads.

But things are rapidly changing.

Now, Mrs. Smith — who may not be all that tech-savvy — can open the AI tool on her phone and ask: "Who's the best 24-hour tree removal company near me?"

Seconds later, ChatGPT, Google's AI Overview, Perplexity, or another AI tool will deliver the answer.

But unlike the Yellow Pages or old-school Google, which presented dozens of options, AI tools only offer two or three names. And if your company isn't on that short list — if the AI doesn't recommend your company — you won't get the opportunity to help Mrs. Smith.

That's the new reality of search in the AI Era. And that's exactly what we'll help you navigate in the chapters ahead.

The Transition from Rankings to Recommendations

For years, online visibility was all about ranking well on Google. If you played the SEO game — stuffing keywords into your site, accumulating backlinks, and maybe implementing some clever website tweaks — you could show up on the first page and earn traffic.

AI has changed all that. AI search doesn't offer a long list of links. It just provides answers. And it provides only a few.

Instead of listing 10 contractors per page, it only offers two or three — the ones it trusts most. This makes the game much harder.

In the Yellow Pages or early Google era, you had a 1-in-10 chance of getting that call. Now, 7 of those businesses may not even appear from the homeowner's point of view.

The flip side of this is that those companies who show up in the top three results have a much better chance of winning customers.

The question becomes: How do you get AI to trust you?

A Brief History of Search

Search behavior has evolved dramatically in the past 50 years, passing through several different "eras" along the way. Each shift made things easier for consumers, and more competitive for service providers.

- **Phone Book Era:** Homeowners had to flip through pages and call around.
- **Keyword Era:** Homeowners had to scroll search results and compare multiple options.
- **Smart Search Era:** Homeowners received reviews and map graphics automatically.
- **AI Search Era:** Homeowners are served a few recommendations from the AI itself.

You might not like the constant change. But customers do. Each new era has made life easier for them, requiring fewer steps and generating faster results. That's why AI optimization isn't just a marketing trend.

It's the new reality of how people hire tree services.

Google vs AI Search: Understanding the Difference

Before learning to leverage AI and begin positioning yourself to thrive in this new frontier, it's important to understand the difference between the way Google and AI work.

As a starting point, think of Google as a gigantic card catalog at your local library.

Let's say you wanted to learn to identify a pine tree. You'd run over to the card catalogue and start flipping through all the cards until you found books you thought would be helpful.

Some would prove useful, while others wouldn't help at all. But you just had to put in the legwork and dig around until you found the information you sought.

That's essentially how Google and traditional SEO worked. If you wanted people to find your "book," you had to make the title (keywords) stand out, earn lots of citations from other books (backlinks), and hope you ended up closer to the front of the card catalog (search rankings).

AI search makes the quest for knowledge much easier.

But AI isn't the card catalog; it's the librarian who has already read every single book. When you ask her how to identify a pine tree, she doesn't point you to a number of books that may or may not be helpful. She just gives you the answer.

So, when someone asks AI for a tree company offering emergency removals, it doesn't provide pages of links. It's not a card catalog. It is the librarian and offers only a few answers.

Performing Well in AI Search: Why It Matters for Tree Care Companies

In the old world, just having a digital presence — a card in the catalog — was enough. And this was especially true if your book was also near the front of the shelf (at the top of Google’s first page).

If your site showed up here, you could expect calls.

But it’s no longer about being in the catalog or shelf positioning — at least, not entirely. Now, it’s about impressing the librarian. And she only shares answers that she’s confident in — answers she “trusts.”

This begs the question: How do you earn that trust?

There are several ways to earn her trust, and we’ll be sharing the details in the following chapters. But we can begin by sharing some good news: She isn’t just biased toward the oldest or biggest book in the library.

Instead, she tends to trust businesses that:

- Are mentioned frequently across the web.
- Have clear, well-written content that’s easy to understand.
- Demonstrate professionalism and show authority signals.

You Can Win in the AI-Search Era

You don’t need to be a tech wizard to win in this new AI-driven world. In fact, the same qualities that already make you successful — providing great service, satisfying your customers, and building a trustworthy reputation — are exactly the things AI looks for.

Think of AI like the most trusted neighbor in town. When someone asks it, “Who’s the best tree service around here?” it points to the companies that people already talk about, recommend, and trust.

This book will show you exactly how to become that company.

We'll explain:

- How to lay a foundation with local SEO
- How to build authority with reviews and mentions
- How to create content AI wants to cite
- How to structure your website with schema and trust signals
- How to track your visibility and stay ahead of changes

And we'll do it all using plain language, real-world examples, and a minimum of jargon.

Because when Mrs. Smith's tree comes down in the middle of the night, she's not going to scroll. She's going to ask one question.

And your business better be the answer.

Chapter 2: The Technical Side of AI, Simplified

Notwithstanding our pledge to keep jargon to a minimum, there are some technical details that you'll likely find genuinely helpful. That's what we'll be covering in this chapter. We'll take a peek under the hood and explain things like tokens, vectors, and context windows — but don't worry, we'll keep this all as simple as possible.

And if this information starts to feel too heavy, you can simply skip ahead to the next chapter where we'll return to practical, step-by-step strategies for your business.

But if you've ever wondered why AI doesn't always give the same answer twice, or why stuffing your website with keywords doesn't work anymore, this chapter will give you the insight you need.

ChatGPT, Perplexity, Google AI, and More: Behind the Scenes

No matter the AI tool a homeowner chooses to use, the interface is pretty similar and remarkably simple. A homeowner enters a question and receives a response a few seconds later.

But beneath the surface, these AI search engines are working overtime to figure out who they trust before giving a recommendation.

Note that AI doesn't actually "trust" anything. It just calculates probabilities based on training data, behavior patterns, and confidence scores. But to keep things simple, we'll keep using the word.

Let's use another metaphor to examine the issue of trust from an AI tool's point of view.

Imagine a detective investigating a case. The detective doesn't just listen to one witness. He talks to everybody who may have relevant information about the case, including neighbors, family, coworkers, and the guy at the coffee shop. Then, based on all those perspectives, the detective decides what really happened.

AI works the same way. It doesn't trust a single source. Instead, it investigates multiple "witnesses" across the internet to gather more information. Some of these informational sources include:

- **Your Website:** Does your website clearly explain your services? Is it written in a way that sounds human and helpful? Does it include FAQ sections, pricing ranges, and before-and-after examples?
- **Your Google Business Profile (GBP):** Do you have an active Google Business Profile? Does it include photos, your services, and customer reviews? Is your contact information included? Are your business hours up to date?
- **Directories and Listings:** Is your business listed on sites like Yelp, Angi, BBB, HomeAdvisor, ISA, or TCIA? Does your company's name, address, and branding show up consistently across the web?
- **Reviews:** Aside from your GBP, does your company have reviews on Yelp, Facebook, or other review platforms? Do the reviews indicate that you're reliable and responsive? Is your pricing competitive?
- **Community Mentions:** Does your business appear in local news stories, Chamber of Commerce directories, or third-party blog posts? Have you been featured in "Best Tree Services in [City]" roundup articles?
- **Social Signals:** Is your business mentioned in posts, podcasts, or community forums like Reddit? Do people appear to have a positive impression of your business? Do users recommend your services?

The reason AI tools look at all of this information is quite simple: They're looking at your business holistically. Rather than considering only a single source when deciding whether to recommend your business, they're searching for patterns.

Understanding the Way AI Thinks: Seven Key Concepts

To understand how AI search differs from traditional SEO, it helps to understand how AI "thinks." (Like "trust," the word "think" is technically incorrect, but we'll use it for

simplicity.) It's also important to understand that a single AI search query ("What's the best tree company in [city]") is much more complex than a traditional Google search.

But the following seven concepts serve as a good starting point for demystifying what's happening under the AI hood. For each concept, we'll explain why it's important and provide both a real-world example and an analogy to provide further clarification.

1. Tokenization: Breaking Things Down

AI tools don't read or comprehend sentences the same way humans do. Instead, they chop everything into tiny pieces called tokens.

- **Example:** "Tree removal cost" might get split into "tree," "remov," "al," and "cost."
- **Analogy:** It's like splitting a log into smaller pieces that'll fit into a stove.
- **Why You Need to Understand This:** If your website says "arboreal mitigation and clearance operations," AI may not realize that means "tree trimming." But if you use common, conversational phrases like "tree pruning" or "storm damage cleanup," AI is far more likely to recognize and categorize your service accurately.

2. Vectorization: Turning Words into Numbers

Once the words are chopped up into tokens, AI converts those tokens into numbers. This allows it to compare their meanings.

- **Example:** "Tree trimming" and "pruning trees" mean slightly different things, but AI turns them into closely related numbers, because they mean similar things.
- **Analogy:** Imagine plotting every word in the world on a giant map, with similar words residing near each other. For example, the word "pizza" would be very close to the word "taco" because they're related.
- **Why You Need to Understand This:** AI compares your content's meaning, not just the words. If your site says, "crown thinning" and a homeowner searches for "tree limb removal," AI might connect the dots, but only if your language is clear and closely aligned with common terms.

3. Hidden Dimensions: The Secret Recipe

This is probably the most challenging piece of the puzzle for business owners trying to understand how AI thinks. AI doesn't just think in two directions like left/right or up/down. Instead, it thinks in hundreds or even thousands of directions at once.

But because these directions don't correlate with actual directions, they're called hidden dimensions.

- **Example:** A customer searching “affordable tree service near me” might also get results for “cheap stump removal” or “budget pruning.” This isn't because the words are identical, but because AI recognizes that all of them live in the same semantic space related to cost-conscious tree work. In a traditional search engine, those results might not show up. But AI knows they feel the same — thanks to hidden dimensions.
- **Analogy:** Imagine shining a flashlight at a 3D sculpture. The shadow on the wall is just a flat, distorted shape. You can tell the object has depth, but you can't see it directly. That's what it's like for us trying to understand AI's internal math. We see hints of the underlying complexity (the outputs) but we can't fully grasp everything.
- **Why You Need to Understand This:** AI detects trustworthiness, helpfulness, and local relevance in subtle ways we can't easily see. This includes things like how your site is structured, how informative your reviews are, and how consistently your brand shows up across the web.

4. Prompts: How You Ask the Question Matters

Prompts are just the questions or instructions you give AI. But the way you phrase that prompt changes the answer you get. Generally speaking, the more detailed your prompt, the deeper AI will dive into the question to provide a better answer.

- **Example:** If you enter a prompt like “best tree service near me,” the AI tool may just provide you with a few local companies. But if you enter a prompt like “Who is the best-reviewed tree service for emergency storm cleanup in Detroit?” the AI tool will search in much greater detail.
- **Analogy:** Think of AI as a GPS. You may want to grab a pizza at a good local spot, but if you type “restaurant,” it may send you to a terrible burger joint across

town. On the other hand, if you type “pizza place within 5 miles with 5 stars,” you get a much better result.

- **Why You Need to Understand This:** The exact way a customer phrases their AI query affects who gets recommended. If they say, “Who’s the best emergency tree removal service for big oak trees?” but your site doesn’t mention “emergency,” “oak,” or “large removals,” you might not be recommended.

5. RAG: Researching Your Prompt Before Answering

If you ask AI a simple question, it may already “know” the answer. But if you ask it a more complicated or nuanced question, it may need to go online to look up the answer. This process is called retrieval-augmented generation (RAG).

- **Example:** If someone enters a prompt like, “What’s the average cost to remove an oak tree in Dallas?” the AI tool will likely check a few tree service websites and summarize the information it finds to provide a good answer to the question.
- **Analogy:** It’s like a student researching a question for a test. The more detailed and complicated the question is, the more research is required.
- **Why You Need to Understand This:** When AI doesn’t “know” something, it searches the internet in real time. If your site has no useful content, or hasn’t been updated in years, you might get skipped during that retrieval phase.

6. Query Fan-Out: When AI Looks in Every Direction at Once

Part of the reason that more people are turning to AI-powered search tools is that they provide richer, more detailed answers to the questions people have.

Let’s say a homeowner asks, “Who’s the best tree service near me?”

He or she could simply type that into Google and receive several links. But that would still require the homeowner to click on each link, review the content, and then make a decision.

But AI isn’t limited to this kind of linear approach. Instead of running a single search, AI fans that question out into dozens or even hundreds of related micro-queries. And it does so to paint a more complete picture of the question.

The process of asking these related questions that AI uses is called the query fan-out — potentially the most important technical takeaway of this chapter.

For example, AI won't just search for "Who's the best tree service near me." It will also search phrases like:

- "Best tree service near me"
- "Top-rated tree removal in [city]"
- "Affordable emergency tree cleanup"
- "Tree trimming companies homeowners recommend"
- "Who has the most reviews for tree service in [city]?"
- "Tree company mentioned in local news or BBB?"
- "24/7 emergency tree removal trusted by customers?"

AI then gathers the answers to all those micro-queries and looks for patterns. It tries to determine which brands keep showing up in the results for multiple variations of the same basic question. The more the AI encounters repeated mentions across a variety of different but related queries the more likely it will feel confident that it has determined the correct answer.

In AI's eyes, repetition equals a positive reputation.

- **Example:** A homeowner in need of stump grinding searches for "stump grinding near me" in Google and receives dozens of potential links. But another homeowner asks an AI tool the same question, and receives three vetted responses, which the AI determined by conducting dozens of searches for similar keyword phrases (Using Google or Bing), while looking for the companies that showed up time and time again.
- **Analogy:** Imagine asking 10 neighbors who you should call to get a tree off your house. If you hear the same two company names from eight of your neighbors, you'll probably feel confident that you can trust those businesses. AI does the exact same thing; it just does so at lightning speed and on the scale of the entire internet.
- **Why You Need to Understand This:** AI doesn't just ask one question; it asks dozens. If your business shows up in multiple angles of a search, you rise to the top.

7. Context Windows: Why AI Search Results Can Differ

Most conventional search engines provide fairly “stable” results. If two people search for the same keyword phrase, the results will usually be quite similar. But that’s not the case when you use AI tools to search for information.

AI uses something called a context window to assemble the information it needs to answer a question. You can think of a context window as the tool’s short-term memory. Because of this, results from a given search can shift depending on:

- The way the question is worded (the prompt).
- The number of sources or previous information = already present in the context window at that moment.
- Software and model updates and recent changes (even small ones) in the AI tool’s reasoning methods.
- The information retrieved from Google or Bing through RAG (which changes along with site rankings).

The context window will shift or bias the queries used in the query fan out process and RAG retrieval. This means even a slight change in wording or information from previous conversations the user had with the AI may produce different results.

- **Example:** A homeowner asks ChatGPT: “Who’s the best emergency tree service in Atlanta?” The AI may consider reviews data, recent news, your business listing, and a few high-ranking tree care websites. But if one week later, your Google Business Profile has new 5-star reviews and a local news outlet runs a piece on your company helping after a storm, those new inputs may now fit inside the context window, pushing out older or less relevant data — and changing the result.
- **Analogy:** Imagine a carpenter’s workbench. You can spread out your tools, blueprints, and materials, but once the surface is full, you have to start putting things away to make room for new items. AI’s context window works the same way. It can only “hold” so much information at once. If the question is complex, or the AI has already seen a lot of other recent queries, what it has room to consider may shift.
- **Why You Need to Understand This:** AI’s memory is limited in any one moment. If your business isn’t top-of-mind, or if you’ve recently had negative press,

inconsistent reviews, or outdated info, you might be pushed out of the result simply because your most relevant signals didn't fit.

What This All Means for Your Tree Service Business

You don't need to memorize every technical detail from this chapter — but you do need to understand what they mean for your visibility in AI-driven search.

Here's the takeaway:

AI isn't scanning your business the way Google used to. It's interpreting, cross-referencing, and recommending. And to win in this new landscape, you need to show up clearly, consistently, and often — across every channel AI checks.

Let's break down how each concept affects your marketing and visibility:

- **Tokenization:** If your site uses industry jargon no one searches for, AI may not understand what you do. Use plain, conversational language like “tree removal” and “storm cleanup” — not “vegetation mitigation” or “arboricultural intervention.”
- **Vectorization:** AI doesn't just match words — it matches meanings. Your phrasing should align with how homeowners talk. If someone searches for “affordable tree service,” and your site says, “cost-effective crown reduction,” you may be left out.
- **Hidden Dimensions:** AI picks up subtle signals that humans may overlook, including how thorough your content is, how positive your reviews sound, and how consistently your business is mentioned across the web. All of these things feed into your “reputation vector.”
- **Prompts:** The more specific a homeowner's AI query, the more specific your online presence needs to be. If someone searches for “emergency oak tree removal in Marietta,” and your site doesn't mention “emergency” or “oak,” you won't get recommended.
- **RAG (Retrieval-Augmented Generation):** If your site doesn't have helpful, up-to-date content, AI might skip you entirely when it goes searching for answers. Make sure your service pages, FAQs, and blog posts are built to inform, not just rank.

- **Query Fan-Out:** AI doesn't run a single search. It runs dozens — and it notices which businesses show up again and again. That's why it pays to be present across Google, directories, social media, reviews, and news mentions. Repetition equals trust in the context of AI search.
- **Context Windows:** AI holds previous info in memory when interpreting a new question and building an answer. This means it has trouble perfectly reproducing the exact same answer consistently.

Chapter 3: AI Search from the Customer's Perspective

Now that you understand that we've entered a new era of search and some of the technical details of the way AI tools answer questions, we think it would be helpful to walk through the entire process from the customer's point of view.

Remember Mrs. Smith? She's still staring at a giant oak branch sitting on her garage.

She's understandably upset, and her heart's racing. She doesn't have time to compare 20 different websites, scroll through Google results, or leave voicemails with companies that might not even answer until morning. She needs help right now.

And AI gives her the help she needs. It provides a shortcut that gives her recommendations she can use immediately. So, she picks up her phone and simply asks ChatGPT or Google's AI overview for help. We'll walk through each scenario below to ensure you understand her journey and the things you need to do to show up in the results she receives.

Mrs. Smith's Journey with ChatGPT

To start, let's follow Mrs. Smith's journey if she uses ChatGPT.

Step 1: Asking AI

Mrs. Smith opens ChatGPT on her phone and types:

"Who is the best 24/7 emergency tree removal service near me in [city]?"

"Who is the best 24/7 emergency tree removal service near me in Royal Oak MI

Here are several good 24/7 / emergency tree removal services in or very near Royal Oak, MI, along with what makes them stand out. I can pull up recent reviews if you want help picking the best one.

✓ Top Options Near Royal Oak

Company	What They Offer / Pros	Contact Info
Troy Tree Service Pros	Offers 24/7 <i>emergency tree removal</i> in Royal Oak. They respond to storm damage, fallen trees, dangerous trees. troytreeservicep...	(248) 385-3930 troytreeservicep...
Otto Tree Service	Dependable, round-the-clock emergency tree care in Royal Oak. They handle hazardous or storm-damaged trees. Otto Tree Service	— phone number on their site; "Request a Free Estimate" option online. Otto Tree Service
Arbor Tree Care	Available 24/7 for emergency tree removal and related services. Rated high locally. treeserviceroyal...	(248) 565-3669 treeserviceroyal...
Monster Tree Service of Troy	Certified arborists; they advertise emergency services, including storm damage removal. Serves Royal Oak area. Monster Tree Se...	(248) 826-2375 Monster Tree Se...
Viking Tree And Stump	Local company with strong ratings; offers <i>emergency response</i> and works in Royal Oak. Viking Tree And ...	(248) 906-5388 Viking Tree And ...

⚠ What to Check / Ask Before Hiring

- Confirm they truly do 24/7 emergency service, not just "regular business hours + some emergencies".
- Make sure they have proper licensure & insurance—liability in tree removal emergency work is important.
- Ask about their response time (how quickly can they be there), & what their cost structure is for emergencies (often higher).
- Read recent reviews (last year) for jobs that involved emergency removal, especially for things like storm damage.
- Check if they clean up debris, handle hazardous situations (like near power lines), or require any permits locally.

If you like, I can pull up 2-3 user reviews and compare which one tends to be highest rated in emergency response, then recommend "the best" based on that. Do you want me to do that?

       Sources



An Example of a City-Specific Search

Step 2: The AI's Shortlist

ChatGPT reviews Bing's site index data, reviews, and local business directories to provide Mrs. Smith with a direct answer:

"Here are three highly rated emergency tree services in [city]:

Green Leaf Tree Service (4.9 stars, known for fast storm response)

Oak Brothers Tree Care (family-owned, 20+ years in business, 24/7 service listed)

SafeCut Tree Removal (recognized by BBB and Angi for emergency work)"

Mrs. Smith doesn't have to scroll or review countless links. ChatGPT just provides her with a few names and a bit of context to help her make a decision.

Step 3: Does the Homeowner Click the Link?

Some homeowners will stop right here and simply contact one of the service providers ChatGPT recommends. Everyone's journey, tolerance for research, and technical proficiency vary a little bit.

But let's say that Mrs. Smith wants to dig a little deeper before making her decision. So, she taps on the link for Green Leaf Tree Service. ChatGPT takes her straight to their website, where she sees:

- An "Emergency Tree Removal" service page
- Green Leaf Tree Service's hours
- "Open 24/7" clearly displayed at the top of the website

That's exactly the kind of reassurance she wants, so she hits the "call now" button.

Tree Service Takeaways

This journey reveals a number of new challenges — an entirely new reality, really — for tree care service providers:

- ChatGPT would be unlikely to recommend companies that don't list "24/7 emergency service" clearly on their website and Google Business Profile for Mrs. Smith's search.
- Companies who don't have reviews mentioning their storm response or emergency job services look less trustworthy to the AI.
- Without photos on your website and Google Business Profile demonstrating your emergency tree-removal services, you'll miss the chance to stand out when a desperate customer clicks through.

The Key Lesson: In an emergency, homeowners don't have time to scroll. AI — specifically ChatGPT, in this case — has become a "first responder" for search queries. If you're not one of the two or three names it recommends, potential customers won't even consider you.

Mrs. Smith's Journey with Google AI Overviews

ChatGPT may be a household name at this point, but it's not the only AI game in town. So, let's consider what would happen if Mrs. Smith doesn't want to (or doesn't know how to) use ChatGPT. Instead, she simply enters her question into Google and then waits for Google's AI overview to respond.

Step 1: Asking Google

Instead of opening ChatGPT on her phone, Mrs. Smith simply pulls up Google and types:

"Who is the best 24/7 emergency tree removal service near me in [city]?"

Step 2: Google's AI Overview

As always, Google offers a list of links to answer Mrs. Smith's query, but they're pushed pretty far down the page. She can check these out herself, but they are pushed pretty far down the page.

Meanwhile, Google displays an AI Overview box at the very top of the screen, which is essentially a summary designed to answer her question quickly. It will include something like:

“Emergency tree removal services in Imaginaryville are available 24/7. Homeowners report paying between \$800–\$2,000 depending on tree size and complexity. Highly rated providers include:

Green Leaf Tree Service (fast response, 4.9 stars)

Oak Brothers Tree Care (20+ years in business, BBB accredited)

SafeCut Tree Removal (specializes in emergency storm cleanup)”

As with ChatGPT, Google’s AI Overview box provides the names of several local businesses. And it displays them above the map pack and organic listings. In fact, the results are even displayed above the paid ads.

◆ AI Overview

For immediate emergency tree removal in Royal Oak, MI, [contact a 24-hour emergency tree service](#) such as [Arbor Tree Care](#) or [Metro Detroit Tree & Firewood](#). Other services with emergency options include [Chop Chop Tree](#), [SavATree](#), and [Monster Tree Service](#). It's essential to call the service provider directly to confirm their availability and response time for urgent situations. ⓘ



Contact Information

- **Arbor Tree Care:** Offers 24/7 emergency tree removal services. ⓘ
- **Metro Detroit Tree & Firewood:** Provides 24-hour emergency tree services in Royal Oak. ⓘ
- **Chop Chop Tree:** Provides emergency tree removal and is committed to prompt, high-quality responses. ⓘ
- **SavATree:** Offers emergency tree services for storm damage in the Royal Oak area. ⓘ
- **Monster Tree Service:** Provides quick response for storm-damaged or dangerous trees requiring immediate attention. ⓘ

Next Steps

1. **Call a service provider:** Contact one of the 24-hour emergency services listed above to explain your situation. ⓘ
2. **Describe the urgency:** Let them know the tree is hazardous or causing immediate damage to your property. ⓘ
3. **Confirm availability:** Verify they have crews available to respond to emergency situations immediately. ⓘ

Dive deeper in AI Mode

Tree Service in Royal Oak MI | Metro Detroit Tree & Firewood

Tree Service in Royal Oak MI, Emergency Tree Service, and More. Why is Metro Detroit Tree...

🌳 Metro Detroit Tree & Firewood ⓘ



Tree Removal, Trimming and Tree Services in Royal Oak, MI | Arbor ...

The Most Popular Tree Services in Royal Oak, MI Today The Arbor Tree Care arborists are...

🌳 treeserviceroyaloak.com ⓘ



Emergency Tree Services Royal Oak, MI - Arbor Tree Care

Looking for emergency tree services in the Royal Oak area? Call Arbor Tree Care now for...

🌳 Tree Removal, Trimming and Tree Services ... ⓘ



Show all

Step 3: Clicking the Links

Unlike ChatGPT, Google’s AI Overviews don’t always include contact info. Instead, they include a series of links to the businesses’ Google Business Profiles or Websites. So, Mrs. Smith clicks on Oak Brothers Tree Care — one of the businesses listed in the AI Overview.

Once at the company’s GBP, she sees:

- **Hours:** The GBP clearly displays an “Open 24 hours” message.
- **Photos:** The profile includes photographs of crews working with chainsaws at night, as well as before and after photos of trees on houses.
- **Reviews:** She sees several customers reviews mentioning “storm cleanup,” “emergency response,” and “middle of the night.”

That’s all the proof she needs, so she clicks “Call” directly from the profile.

The image is a collage of screenshots related to Longtree Tree Service. On the left, there are three search results from Longtree Tree Service's website, each with a green location pin icon and a brief description of their services in Royal Oak, MI. Below these is a Yelp listing for Longtree Tree Service, which includes the company name, address (23800 Eight Mile Rd., Southfield, MI 48033), phone number (248) 727-7460, and a note that it was updated in November 2025. On the right, there is a larger screenshot of the company's Google Business Profile. This profile shows a 5.0 star rating from 220 Google reviews, the address 23800 Eight Mile W, Southfield, MI 48033, and the phone number (248) 290-9417. The profile also indicates that the business is open 24 hours. A 'Call' button is highlighted with a red box, and a 'Share' button is also visible. A review snippet is shown at the bottom, stating: "The one thing that sets this company above the rest. Their customer service!"

Tree Service Takeaways

For contractors, Google’s AI Overview box presents an opportunity as well as a risk.

Opportunity: If you’ve built your online presence right, Google’s AI can put your name front and center at the exact moment a homeowner is desperate for help.

Risk: If you haven’t built your online presence with AI-search-era principles in mind, if your website doesn’t say “24/7,” if your reviews don’t mention emergencies, or if your GBP isn’t updated, you won’t even be in the conversation.

The key lesson: Google’s AI Overview is the new “front door” of search. If you’re not showing up there when customers need you most, it doesn’t matter how many years you’ve been in business, someone else will get the call.

What Happens After an AI Search: Consumers Do Their Homework

AI may be the shortcut, but most homeowners don’t stop there — they only use AI as a starting point.

Once Mrs. Smith sees your name in ChatGPT or Google’s AI Overview, she wants to make sure you’re the real deal. She wants to do a little more homework before she picks up the phone.

Step 1: Mrs. Smith Sees Your Name in AI

After asking ChatGPT or Google for recommendations for an emergency tree service, she receives a few recommendations including:

“Green Leaf Tree Service – 24/7 emergency response, highly rated.”

That’s enough to get her attention. But she won’t just take AI’s word for it. She wants to learn more before making a decision.

Step 2: She Googles You

Mrs. Smith searches “Green Leaf Tree Service [city]” or clicks on the link provided to learn more about your business. Once on your Google Business Profile, she looks for the following information (and she’s only going to allocate about 10 seconds for this step):

- Do your hours actually say Open 24/7?
- Do your reviews mention emergency jobs and fast response times?
- Do you have recent photos of your crew performing storm cleanup instead of a stock photo?
- Is your phone number clearly listed and click-to-call ready?

If any of those things are missing, she’s unlikely to trust you, and she’ll backtrack to investigate other options AI provided.

Step 3: She Clicks Your Website

Some homeowners will find that a solid GBP provides enough credibility for them to choose a business. But others — especially those in high-stakes situations — will take an additional step: They’ll check out your website too. They want more proof that you can provide the help they need.

Let’s say Mrs. Smith is this type of homeowner. She wants to really dig in and verify that you’re the tree-service provider she wants to hire. So, she visits your website. Once there, she looks for a few key pieces of information — reassuring signals that’ll help convince her to choose your business:

- **Clear Emergency Services Language:** Mrs. Smith wants to see “24/7 Emergency Tree Removal” the moment the page loads. She’s not going to scour your website and service listings to find it, either.
- **A Call-Now Button:** Mrs. Smith doesn’t want to hunt for your contact info. She wants a clickable “Call Now” button, preferably located at the top of the page.

These two things are critical, but they aren’t enough by themselves to convert Mrs. Smith the prospect into Mrs. Smith the customer. To feel comfortable clicking on that call-now button, Mrs. Smith wants to see compelling visual features, such as:

- **Before & After Photos:** You need images of homes with branches or trees lying on them when you arrived, and then photos of the house after the trees and branches have been removed. This helps Mrs. Smith visualize you providing the same services for her.
- **Action Shots:** Action shots of your crew working at night under floodlights help further convince Mrs. Smith that you're the right contractor to call. They demonstrate to her that you're truly available around the clock.
- **Safety Photos:** Homeowners like Mrs. Smith often care deeply about safety, so display photos of your crew wearing proper PPE, including hard hats, harnesses, and reflective gear to reassure her you value safety too.
- **Customer-Focused Photos:** Help Mrs. Smith picture herself hiring you by including photos of you with happy clients. Photos of you shaking hands or walking a homeowner through the job make your company feel human.

These kinds of photos are certainly helpful — critical, really — for earning Mrs. Smith's trust. But this is the 21st century, and static images aren't always enough. That's why it's especially valuable to include videos on your website homepage.

A few of the best types of videos to feature on your site include:

- **A Short Introductory Video:** A brief video featuring you or a crew leader saying that you're available 24/7 and that you handle storm damage will help reassure her that you provide the services she needs.
- **A Job Walkthrough Video:** A video demonstrating how you carefully remove a tree from a roof helps further convince her you're the right company for the job and build trust in your skills.
- **A Testimonial Video:** Videos of you and your crew are definitely helpful for building trust, but nothing is as valuable in that regard as videos of other homeowners explaining how you saved their property during a storm.

In just a minute or two, these visuals confirm what AI and Google already said: You're experienced, professional, and available right now.

Step 4: Trust Established = Customer Earned

If you've set up your website and GBP in the manner described above, Mrs. Smith will see consistency everywhere she looks. AI says you're a good option, your Google

Business Profile shows you're available, and your website proves that you handle emergencies. These things all help to not only build trust but convince her that you're the contractor she needs.

So, she picks up the phone and makes the call.

The Referral Analogy

Think of an AI result (whether that comes from ChatGPT, Google's AI Overview, or any number of other AI tools) as a referral — it's not very different from the way a happy client may refer another customer to your business.

The Reality for Tree-Industry Businesses in the Era of AI Search

Hopefully you now understand that you need to set yourself up to succeed in the realm of AI-search as well as the follow-up homework stage, which primarily occurs on your GBP and website.

Put another way, AI gets you on the shortlist; your GBP and your website close the deal.

Meanwhile, the customer's journey from the AI answer to your Google Business Profile or website is essentially akin to a background check. They want to ensure that the AI provided sound information and that you look like the kind of company they want to do business with.

If your online presence contradicts AI's recommendation, you'll lose the job. But if your GBP and site make you look consistent, trustworthy, and ready, you'll win the job.

It really is that simple.

Why AI Journeys Are Different from Google Journeys

Not long ago, this same search would've looked very different.

Mrs. Smith would've typed "emergency tree service near me" into Google and then faced a long list of results. Some companies wouldn't answer the phone, and others may not even be in business anymore. Still others might not mention "emergency" anywhere on their site.

Ultimately, Mrs. Smith would have to click and compare a number of these links to find one that seemed like it would solve her problem. This process could take half an hour or more — time she doesn't have to spare when a heavy branch is threatening her garage roof.

But those days are long gone, and homeowners are increasingly moving to AI when they need to find a tree-service company.

Now, Mrs. Smith can get better answers, and she can get them more quickly and with less effort.

The Restaurant Menu Analogy

Searching for information on Google is like reading a restaurant menu. It requires you to do a lot of reading to learn about the options available, and you may not even understand everything you're seeing.

But AI search is like asking the waiter for a recommendation. You don't have to worry about reading the entire menu because the waiter already knows it well and can recommend a food you'll likely enjoy.

Instead of being a tedious exercise that requires the diner to put in a lot of work, it's a simpler, easier process, which is more likely to yield a helpful answer.

AI vs Conventional Search: The Big Difference

The bottom line is that most homeowners find AI search to be more useful than a traditional Google search. And that is why they're increasingly relying on AI-powered "answer engines" to find the information they need — and why you need to ensure your tree-care business is ready to compete in this new reality.

Google gave you many chances to be found, even if you weren't #1. AI doesn't. It cuts to the chase and picks a few trusted names. That's why optimization today isn't about being "on the menu" — it's about being the dish the waiter recommends.

Part Two: The Orb Tree Service Marketing Blueprint for Tree Service Companies

With AI taking over search, you might be wondering the same thing a thousand clickbait headlines have asked: Is SEO dead? If people are bypassing traditional search results from Google, Bing, and Yahoo, should you still invest in SEO?

Absolutely. SEO isn't dead — it's just different. It has evolved.

In fact, a lot of the same factors that help a site rank well via traditional searches are the same factors that determine the likelihood that you'll appear in ChatGPT or Google AI Overview results. They may be even more important now than they ever have been.

AI search engines don't just pull names out of thin air — they lean heavily on Google's local ecosystem, industry-specific directories, and community conversations about your brand. That means that the strategies and techniques you want to employ for AI Optimization (AIO) include the same ones you'd employ for traditional SEO. Specifically, you must do what you can to present yourself as a trusted local business.

Think of your online foundation like the roots of a tree.

If the roots are strong, meaning that you have a robust Google Business Profile, the information about your business is consistent across the internet, you have plenty of glowing reviews, and you appear in numerous industry-specific directories, the tree — your visibility in AI search — will thrive. Your branches will grow tall and allow you to access that life-sustaining sunlight above (your customers).

But if the roots are weak, the tree won't grow well, and it will never reach the canopy. Instead, you'll languish in the shade below while other trees soak up the sun.

Chapter 4: Making the Query Fan-Out Work for You

In Chapter 2, we explained that AI searches employ something called a query fan-out when researching a topic. This means that it searches not only for your exact phrase but also for a wide variety of related ones.

Let's walk through an example to ensure everything is crystal clear. Imagine a homeowner enters "best tree service near me" as a prompt into an AI tool.

Whether the homeowner uses ChatGPT, Perplexity, Google's built-in AI Overview, or any other modern AI tool, the result is the same. Rather than searching for those exact words, the tool breaks down the question into a number of smaller, similar searches (sub-queries) to provide the best possible answer. In other words, it takes the original query and "fans it out."

The tool may break the original query into sub-queries like these:

- "Tree removal companies with 5-star reviews near [city]"
- "Emergency tree removal 24/7 [city]"
- "Licensed and insured tree services in [city]"
- "Affordable tree crane removal near me"
- "Top-rated arborists by homeowners in [city]"
- "Tree services with ISA certifications near [city]"
- "Tree companies mentioned in local news or directories"

The AI tool will then analyze the results of these varied searches. In effect, each one of these sub-queries serves as a scout; the AI sends them out in various "directions" to gather several different lines of evidence.

The Pattern AI Is Looking For

Once the AI tool has performed all these searches (which takes mere seconds), it begins looking for patterns. Specifically, it checks to see which tree-care companies appear repeatedly across the searches. The AI starts counting and asking which tree companies show up again and again. The more references (often called citations) that a given tree company has, the more comfortable the AI tool is recommending them to the homeowner.

So, if the AI tool finds that Joe's Tree Care appears in two or three of these searches, but Jane's Tree Service shows up in 20, it's much more likely to recommend Jane's Tree Service. There's just more evidence indicating that Jane's Tree Service is the better answer for the query.

Leveraging the Query Fan-Out Process for Your Business

Now that you know how AI tools use the query fan-out process to dig up information and provide recommendations, it's time to start leveraging this knowledge and using it to your advantage.

The best way to do so is relatively simple: You need to appear in as many of those sub-queries as possible.

That means you want to:

- Have an active, fleshed-out Google Business Profiles
- Have a lot of strong local reviews
- Appear in directories like Yelp, Angi, and the BBB
- Be mentioned in "Best [Tree Care] Of [City]" lists
- Publish clear content about emergency removal, trimming, and any other services you provide on your website
- Create YouTube videos, blogs, and social media content about your services

If you do all of these things, AI tools will see your business appear over and over again in all of the sub-queries it conducts. This kind of repetition causes the tool to see your company as a trustworthy authority in the industry and geographic region in question.

And that means it'll be more likely to recommend you to people searching for tree-care companies.

The Coffee Shop Analogy

Imagine walking into a small-town coffee shop and asking some of the customers and staff who the best local tree company is.

A lady sitting in a booth says that Green Leaf Tree Service is the best. Then, a man standing at the counter with his family says Green Leaf and Oak Brothers are both great. The coffee shop manager sticks her head around the corner and mentions that she loves Green Leaf because they helped remove a damaged oak from her front yard last fall.

At this point, you'll probably feel pretty comfortable contacting Green Leaf Tree Service — they seem to have a good reputation and several of the locals recommend them.

AI tools work in essentially the same way — this is essentially what a query fan-out is. The only difference is that AI tools poll a lot more than three people. But the end result is the same: When an AI tool starts seeing a tree-care company pop up in one sub-query after another, it starts to feel comfortable recommending it.

The Band-Pass Filter: Cutting Out the Noise

There's one problem with the query fan-out technique: It produces a ton of data, and it's not all equally valuable. So, the AI tool needs a way to sort through all of this information, keep what is valuable, and discard the rest. It works like a filter; good info is allowed to trickle through the screen, while low-quality info is discarded.

In practice, AI filters typically remove things like:

- Outdated info
- Low credibility mentions
- Businesses that don't appear consistently across multiple sub-queries
- Sites with weak credibility signals, incomplete location info, or very few reviews

After filtering these kinds of citations out, the AI tool is left with a relative handful of options — companies that show up across a number of sub-queries and survive the filtering process. And these are the companies that it recommends.

The Fishing Net Analogy

Imagine AI's query fan-out process is like throwing a giant fishing net into the ocean of the internet.

Every fish it catches is a potential business that matches part of the question. The more places your business appears online the more likely you'll get caught in that net.

But before hauling the net back on the boat, the smaller, less appetizing fish tend to fall through the gaps. Meanwhile, the big, tasty-looking fish remain in the net and are brought aboard. These big, juicy fish are like businesses that the AI tool recommends to the people searching.

To provide an example, imagine that Green Leaf Tree Service appears in 27 different searches, while Oak Brothers Tree Services appears in 21, and Jason's Budget Tree Removal Company appears in only two sub-queries.

But while 26 of the 27 places Green Leaf Tree Service are mentioned are high-quality sites, like the BBB, Angi, a local newspaper, and the company's professionally maintained website, it may have only seen Jason's Budget Tree Removal Company mentioned on the owner's Facebook page and a comment posted by a now-inactive user on a 3-year-old Reddit thread.

This means the AI tool will feel confident that Green Leaf Tree Service is a helpful answer for the homeowner’s question, while Jason’s Budget Tree Removal Company is far less likely to be useful. So, the AI tool recommends the former while disregarding the latter.

The Query Fan Out: The Implications for AIO vs Traditional SEO

Conventional, old-school SEO techniques were very keyword focused. To ensure a website ranked well in search results, you had to include the right keywords — things like “tree service near me,” “tree removal [city],” or “stump grinding [city].”

If those phrases appeared frequently enough on your website and in the right areas for optimization, you could rank well (backlinks were and continue to be important, but they’re beside the point at the moment). But the rise of AI — and the development of the query fan-out process — have changed that to a degree.

Now, it’s not just about including keywords on your website to rank well in search engines; now, it’s about creating a robust digital footprint for those keywords across the entire web. You want your business name and the relevant details about it to show up in a variety of places online. You also need to rank for more variations of each keyword search, not just the specific phrases that drive the most traffic.

Bottom line: The game has changed. Instead of trying to rank at the number one spot for a keyword phrase, tree-care companies need to be present everywhere AI looks — GBP, your website, local directories, industry-specific directories, local news media, and review sites.

Old SEO	New AI Optimization (AIO)
Focused on a single or a few keywords	Focused on 50+ related questions and searches
Rankings determined by keyword density & backlinks	Rankings determined by brand mentions & trust signals in addition to keywords, entities, and links
You optimized your website	You optimize your entire digital presence
Search engines displayed about 10 options per page	AI usually recommends 2 to 3 companies it trusts

How to Optimize Your Business to Leverage the Query Fan-Out Process

Because of the shift from traditional search to AI search, it's important to adjust your marketing efforts to the new paradigm. Specifically, you have to make sure AI encounters your business name and important information during the fan-out process.

All of this means you'll want to:

- **Use plain language in your website content.** Avoid keyword-stuffing your content. Instead, you'll want to write like your customers talk. Instead of trying to work phrases like "emergency tree removal in [city]" use more natural-sounding phrases, such as "who do I call if a tree falls on my house?"
- **Optimize your Google Business Profile.** Your GBP has always been important, but the fan-out process makes it even more important. So, make sure your hours and services are correct, and that you have numerous reviews and high-quality photos.

- **Accumulate brand mentions beyond your website:** The fan-out query process rewards companies that have a robust digital footprint. So, try to have your business listed in industry-specific directories, local directories, local media outlets, and blog roundups. Appearing on Yelp, Angi, and similar places matters. You don't have to buy tons of leads or spend a fortune on advertising, but you do want to be in the "Best Tree Services Near Me" list.
- **Encourage reviews containing important keywords.** For maximum value, ensure your reviews include specific phrases that are related to your services, and the searches potential customers conduct. For example, you want reviews saying things like "fast emergency service" or "24-hour response" to rank well in those kinds of sub-queries.
- **Publish a variety of content types.** It's important that you publish a variety of different kinds of content. Ideally, you'll post things like FAQ sections, blog articles, before/after photos, and short videos. Each of these content types gives AI a new and different signal that your company is active, trusted, and real.

Chapter 5: Optimizing Your Google Business Profile in the Era of AI Search

Think of your website as your office — and your Google Business Profile (GBP) as your front door. It's often the very first thing homeowners see when they search for tree services nearby.

And just like you'd keep your front door clean, updated, and inviting, your GBP needs the same kind of care.

This is important because AI search tools are retrieving data from your GBP and the signals tied to it. If it's polished, detailed, and full of information that's consistent in the other places AI looks, your business looks trustworthy. If it's missing information, outdated, or neglected, your business won't look like a trustworthy or relevant option.

We'll explain some of the key things you need to address in your GBP to show up in AI search results below.

Categories: Tell Google Exactly What You Do

The primary category you select for your Google Business Profile is arguably the most important decision you'll make when setting up or optimizing your profile.

These categories act like labels on a filing cabinet. If a homeowner enters "tree removal near me" in an AI tool, it will begin looking for profiles in the "Tree Service." But unfortunately, many tree-care services fail to indicate a primary category or pick a vague category, such as "Home Services." Companies that do this are already at a disadvantage in AI search.

So, if you're a tree service company, simply select "Tree Service" as your primary GBP category.

You'll also have the chance to add secondary categories, such as "Arborist Service" or "Landscaper." Go ahead and select these and other relevant secondary categories if you

like but consider four secondary categories to be the maximum; selecting more than this can muddy the picture AI will create about the services you offer.

You can select secondary categories like “Landscaping” if they apply but be sure that your primary focus — tree service — is always your primary category.

Services: Display the Breadth of Your Work

Once you’ve selected the proper primary and secondary categories for your GBP, you can identify the services you provide. This section is basically like a restaurant’s menu, so you want to be thorough. A restaurant may have the best burgers in the state, but if they’re not on the menu, customers won’t ever order them.

Different tree-care companies offer slightly different slates of services, so you’ll need to set up your profile so that it accurately reflects the services you offer. However, most typical tree care companies will want to include the following four at a minimum:

- Tree Removal
- Tree Trimming/Pruning
- Stump Grinding
- Emergency Storm Cleanup

Then, you’ll want to include a short, clear description for each. For example:

- **Tree Removal:** Safe and efficient removal of hazardous or unwanted trees, by a licensed, insured team of arborists.
- **Tree Trimming/Pruning:** Professional tree trimming and pruning services to keep trees healthy, safe, and looking their best.
- **Stump Grinding:** Expert stump-grinding services that’ll eliminate remaining stumps and surface roots to prepare your property for new projects or plantings.
- **Emergency Storm Cleanup:** 24/7 response for storm-damaged trees blocking driveways, leaning on structures, or posing immediate hazards.

Bonus Tip: Add local references in your descriptions. Example: “Providing emergency storm cleanup in [City] and surrounding neighborhoods.” This adds relevance for AI and builds trust with homeowners.

Photos: Show, Don't Tell

For years, Google has been singing from the mountaintops, encouraging business owners to include more photographs and images in their profiles. And there's a good reason for this: Business profiles with more photos get more clicks and calls.

But not all photos are equal. To stand out, you need high-quality, relevant images that build trust. They don't have to be professionally shot photographs, but they have to be well-lit, in focus, and oriented correctly for the application.

Oh, and one other thing: Stock images won't cut it anymore. They may have provided value 10 or 15 years ago, but modern consumers are too savvy to believe that five professional models with chainsaws actually represent your crew. Instead, you need to upload real photos of your team, your work, and your equipment.

Some of the best kinds of photos to post include:

- **Before-and-After Photos:** Things like removals or pruning jobs make great before-and-after photos.
- **Action Photos:** Photos of your crew roping down a big limb or felling a pine demonstrate your professionalism.
- **Equipment Photos:** Photos with your branded crane, bucket truck, or chipper help illustrate your capabilities.
- **Post Work Cleanup Photos:** Sharing photos of clean properties demonstrate your thoroughness and care.

Understand that uploading photos to your GBP is an ongoing task. You can't just post five or six photos and consider the job finished; you need to periodically upload new photos to ensure your profile feels fresh and signals AI search tools that your business is active. As a rule of thumb, try to upload at least three new photos every month.

Just remember that quality is important, so start building in time to take high-quality photos on a regular basis.

The Recipe for AI Search Success: Relevance, Distance, and Prominence

Because tree work is obviously a location-based industry, showing up in AI search results is slightly different than it would be for nationwide or global businesses. You don't need to show up when someone generically asks an AI for a tree removal company; you want to show up when a homeowner asks an AI tool for the best tree removal company in [your city].

This means that you have to rank well locally, as opposed to organically. Fortunately, Google explains the specific criteria that factor into these kinds of rankings:

- **Relevance:** The better your GBP matches the homeowner's query, the more likely you'll rank well. This is largely determined by the categories and services you select for the profile.
- **Distance:** The closer you are to the searcher, the better you'll rank in the local search results. Now, you can't always control your company's location, but you can clearly communicate your service area in your descriptions, posts, captions, and similar places.
- **Prominence:** The better-known and trusted your business is, the higher you'll rank in local searches. So, include lots of photos, reviews, and posts, and update your profile regularly to project professionalism and authority.

There's one other thing that Google explicitly states will help improve your local search ranking: reviews and positive ratings. So, be sure that you're encouraging your customers to leave reviews — it's a critical component of maintaining a high-value GBP.

Chapter 6: The Importance of Consistency

To build a successful tree care company (or any business, really), you'll want to remove as many obstacles as you can in the customer's journey. You want potential customers to flow smoothly down your sales funnel. You don't want them to hesitate anywhere in the process.

Inconsistency Triggers Hesitation (for Humans and Bots)

As an example, consider what happens if Mrs. Smith, still in need of help getting the large oak branch off her roof, searches for an emergency tree removal company in her city.

Let's say she stumbles upon your business — Mike's Professional Tree Service Company.

But while doing her homework, she finds a local directory listing Mike's Pro Tree Co with a different logo. She then locates an Angi profile with a slightly different address than the one posted on your GBP. Then she finds a BBB entry, but it's listed under the Mike Pro Tree Services, LLC, and it has an old, no-longer-functional website URL.

These things are going to make her hesitate.

Are these all the same business? Is it the same business with a new owner? Is the business still open? These are all questions you don't want Mrs. Smith to consider, let alone ask. It's easier for her to simply move on to the next search result — likely a company whose name, address, and branding are consistent — rather than digging further into your company and verifying that you are, in fact, still in business.

But these kinds of inconsistencies are even more detrimental in the age of AI search. If you think Mrs. Smith was troubled by inconsistency, wait until you see how it affects an AI tool. These varied business details will cause the tool to find you untrustworthy, so even though you're everywhere, it doesn't connect the dots and may recommend your competitors instead.

The importance of name, address, and branding consistency is essentially a holdover from the days of conventional search. For years, search engines like Google have used

something called citations — places where your business’s name, address, and phone number appear on different sites — as a way to verify the legitimacy of your business.

Google and other search engines treated them like digital footprints. When all your footprints point the same direction, search engines see a clear trail. But when they scatter, your credibility disappears.

NAP Consistency and Tracking Numbers: An Important Exception

Informational consistency was seen as a critical component of SEO efforts during the era of traditional search. In fact, old-school SEO experts used to focus on three key aspects for which consistency was crucial: a business’ name, address, and phone number.

This was such a common refrain that it was often simply referred to as NAP consistency (name, address, and phone number). This remains important in the modern AI-search era we’re currently in. Generally speaking, you should maintain a primary phone number that you list on your GBP and in directory citations, like Angi or Yelp.

But what about call tracking numbers? Does that mean you shouldn’t use them to measure the impact of your ads and other marketing efforts? Won’t they create confusion among search engines and AI tools?

Nope.

Google and other AI-powered search tools now understand businesses employ multiple phone numbers for a variety of reasons. This means they won’t cause the kind of confusion they may have in previous decades.

So, while you’ll still want to keep track of the phone numbers you are using, you should feel free to layer in additional when necessary (such as tracking numbers to help you measure ad campaign ROI).

NAB Consistency: The New Paradigm

So, if phone number consistency is no longer quite as important as it used to be, does that mean your name and address don't have to be consistent, either?

Not quite – name and address consistency remain vital for ranking well in local search results (and to an extent, organic search results too). Your primary phone number should also remain consistent. But there's also another facet of your business operations that you'll want to look similar across all digital channels: your branding.

This includes things like your company logo, the photos you use, tag lines, and the descriptions of your business. You'll also want to use the same font and color scheme everywhere that you can (this obviously isn't possible in many places).

In a nutshell, try to adhere to the following recommendations:

1. Business Name

Use the same exact business name everywhere. Don't use "Todd's Tree Care" some places and "Todd's Tree Care and Landscaping, LLC" in other places.

Don't add or remove keywords haphazardly. Don't just add "landscaping" or "affordable" to your business name, nor should you abbreviate it ("Todd's Trees") sporadically.

Decide whether you're going to use suffixes or not. If you have LLC, Inc., or anything else at the end of your business name, either use it everywhere or avoid it completely.

If you're worried about legal ramifications of using anything other than your legal business name, file for a DBA or assumed name with your county or state. You should also consider taking things a step further and file for a trademark of your brand. Your name and brand are assets of your business; make the investment needed to protect them.

2. Business Address

Use the same exact business address everywhere. Be sure that it is consistent across your website, GBP, invoices, directories, and anywhere else it is published.

Try to format the address the same way everywhere. For example, don't use a five-digit zip code in some places and a nine-digit zip code in others.

Either use abbreviations all the time or skip them completely. Doing things like using "Rd." in some places and "Road" in others may confuse AI systems trying to reconcile your identity.

3. Brand Presentation

Use the same branding assets everywhere possible. This not only includes things like your tag line, but also your logo, photographs and service descriptions.

Always update or correct outdated logos. If one directory has an old logo and another has a new version, it can feel like two different businesses to both humans and algorithms.

Why NAB Consistency Matters for AI

AI tools don't just rely on your website to determine whether or not they should recommend you to a homeowner; they build a picture of your business from across the entire web. They are trained to cross-check information extensively to help identify discrepancies.

This means that if your branding is consistent, it strengthens the AI's confidence that you're a legitimate, established business. On the other hand, if your name, address, and brand identity are inconsistent, AI may treat them as belonging to separate businesses.

This kind of inconsistency could prevent you from showing up as one of the recommended tree companies.

The Branded Truck Analogy

Picture your crew enroute to their next job, driving your company's branded trucks. If they all have the same logo, business name, fonts, and other assets, they'll present a unified, professional, and polished image to potential customers. Even if they don't generate a call today, they'll help build brand awareness, which can lead to sales later on.

But if your truck branding isn't consistent — if one says, "Smith Tree Service" and another says "Smith's Professional Tree Care" — potential customers may assume these are different businesses. Throw in different branding or logos, and it's almost guaranteed that they won't understand that these are all your trucks.

This is almost exactly how NAB consistency works with AI search. If your branding assets don't match everywhere, the AI tool starts thinking that your business is actually several distinct entities.

A Plan of Attack: Tactical Steps for Ensuring NAB Consistency

Now that you understand the importance of NAB consistency, you need to know how to put these lessons into practice. Here are a few key steps for ensuring your name, address, and brand appear the same across the web, so AI tools will be more likely to recommend you to customers:

1. Standardize your brand.

The first thing you want to do is identify the name, address, and branding assets you want to use.

That means deciding exactly how your name will be written (including whether or not you want to include things like LLC or Inc.), as well as things like your primary brand

photos, fonts, and color scheme. Be sure to identify a primary website domain too, if you have been using more than one or you've changed URLs at some point.

Use the phone number that's listed on your Google Business Profile as your "master number." You can layer in tracking numbers as necessary, but default to your master number whenever you're in doubt or you don't have a reason to use a tracking number.

Ideally, you'll create a document (known as a style sheet or style guide) that contains all of this information. This will make it easier to keep your branding consistent when working with other team members or external agencies.

2. Update your website and all of the profiles you control.

Once you've identified the name, address, and branding that you want to use, start going through the profiles and accounts you control. Start with your website and then move to your Google Business Profile.

Once you've ensured that your website and GBP have the correct information, move on to your other social media profiles, including accounts on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X, or any other platforms you use professionally. Then, you can move to directories and listing services you already know you're listed on, such as Angi, BBB, Yelp, TCIA, or ISA, among others.

3. Audit your citations.

A lot of businesses stop at this point, thinking that they've changed all of the places their name, address, and branding assets are published online. But that can be a mistake — you never know which listing services added you without your knowledge or if the SEO agency you hired three years ago added you to a directory somewhere.

So, conduct a Google search for your business name and click on any links that show up. Be sure to search for not only your official company name but also any common variations, abbreviations, or older versions you've used in the past (even if your company name has changed, you may be using the same phone number, address, or website address).

Scan the pages that show up, checking to make sure your name, address, and branding assets (anything with your logo, tag line, or important photographs) are correct. Make a list of any pages that contain mismatched or outdated information, including the web address and the issue needing correction (a Google Sheet or Excel Spreadsheet will work well for this task).

Once you've reviewed the results for three pages or so, you can start going through the process of correcting the information. Many online directories will have an established protocol for changing incorrect or outdated info, which simplifies the process. But if nothing else, call the directory or send an email to learn how to change the information listed.

Chapter 7: Reviews: The Fuel of AEO

NAB consistency is important for AI-driven visibility, but it's not the only factor that'll determine whether a potential customer's AI tool decides to recommend your business. Reviews play an equally important — and in many cases, even greater — role in determining whether AI recommends your business.

Reviews are essentially the modern version of the old-school word-of-mouth recommendation. Whereas a neighbor may have leaned over the fence and said, "Call Joe's Tree Service, they did a great job for me" in previous decades, most people now rely on digital reviews rather than word-of-mouth testimonials.

But it isn't just people who consider reviews on Google, Yelp, Facebook, or other places; AI tools consider them too. In fact, they treat them as a significant trust signal.

Why Reviews Matter in the Age of AI

There are actually several reasons reviews are important in the modern AI-driven search era, which means there are several reasons you have to prioritize them. A few of the leading reasons reviews are important include:

- **They help foster trust and provide credibility.** Reviews serve as social proof, showing both homeowners and AI tools that other people in need of tree-care services have already trusted you and had a good experience. This reduces the perceived risks of calling you for homeowners, while also making AI feel better about recommending your company.
- **They increase your search visibility.** Google explicitly states that "more reviews and positive ratings can improve your business's local ranking," which is important for not only people searching on Google but also those using AI tools, which also consider Google rankings when deciding which businesses to recommend.
- **Consumers care about reviews.** Several respected marketing and search engine optimization authorities, ranging from Capitol One Shopping to Search Engine Journal, have found that more than 90% of consumers consider reviews before choosing a local business. And most won't consider a company with less than

4 stars. BrightLocal even reports that reviews are now one of the top three factors in consumer decision-making.

- **Reviews provide you with an actionable feedback loop.** Aside from helping you win clients directly, reviews also provide valuable insights about your customers' experience. Specifically, they help pinpoint the things customers like about your services, what they don't, and why they chose you in the first place. This kind of information can help you focus your ads, website, and messaging to improve your results further by emphasizing your strengths.
- **Online reviews last forever and have considerable reach.** Unlike a casual, verbal recommendation from a neighbor that only reaches a single person and lasts mere seconds, digital reviews live online forever and potentially reach thousands (if not millions) of potential customers.

All of these factors illustrate a fundamental lesson for marketing in the modern AI-search era: Reviews aren't just nice to have; they are crucial tools that can make or break your marketing campaigns.

How to Collect Reviews: The Basic Process

Many fledgling companies expect that reviews will start pouring in shortly after they set up shop and start providing high-quality work, but that's rarely the case. In most cases, you'll have to establish a consistent process to rack up the hundreds or thousands of 5-star reviews you need to ensure visibility in the AI search era.

The key is to ensure your process is quick, easy, and genuine:

1. Request reviews quickly.

The quicker you request a review, the more likely your customers will oblige (and the more likely they'll rave about your services). So, send out a review request via text or email the same day the job is completed.

2. Keep your request simple.

Your review request should thank the homeowner for their business and plainly ask them to provide a review. If possible, include direct links to the place your customers can leave a review, instead of expecting them to track down the proper location.

3. Prioritize review sites properly.

Always give homeowners several options, as different people prefer interacting with different platforms. Some will prefer Google, while others will prefer Angi or Facebook. However, try to gently nudge customers toward Google, as those reviews are most beneficial. With that said, AI scans all major platforms, so reviews on other platforms are still beneficial and help establish a broader digital footprint.

Platform(s)	Why It Matters	Priority
Google	Non-negotiable. Google reviews directly influence search rankings, ad performance, and visibility in both organic and AI-driven results.	Highest
Yelp	Harder to earn due to strict filters, but extremely influential. Top-rated businesses here can generate quite a few organic calls.	High
Facebook & BBB	Homeowners frequently check these when vetting local businesses; useful for credibility and social proof.	Moderate
Angi & Similar	Lower SEO impact, but still worthwhile if you advertise or maintain profiles on those platforms.	Lowest

4. Respond promptly and politely.

Your work isn't finished once the customer has left a review; you need to respond to each and every review you receive — including the positive and negative ones. Always thank every happy customer who provides you with a good review and respond to negative ones calmly and professionally. Potential customers care more about the way you handle criticism than the fact that it happened.

Your New Review Protocol: The Orb Tree Service Marketing Approach

Every tree-care company is unique and faces different challenges. However, we've established an effective protocol that most businesses will find easy to implement and remarkably effective.

Start by Asking for a Review In Person

A face-to-face review request is almost always more effective than sending a text or email after the fact. Doing so captures the customer's fresh emotions and leverages the principle of reciprocity — they're more likely to return the favor right then and there.

You could simply train your crew leader to say something like:

"Thank you so much for letting us take care of your trees! Before we wrap up, I'd love to hear your thoughts and make sure you're completely satisfied with our work. If you're happy with everything, we'd love if you could leave us a quick Google review — it helps other families know what to expect when they're looking for tree-care professionals. Here's a QR code to make it easy."

Don't assume it is easy for everyone to ask for a review; many members of your crew may find it uncomfortable. That's why you need to train your team and reinforce how important it is and how you want it to be done.

Automate Your Follow-Up Review Requests

Follow up the in-person review request with an automated process to help remind customers who forget or provide another gentle nudge to happy homeowners.

But rather than using an automated software (bot) to generate the follow-up, have a member of your office team trigger the automation from your CRM. This will help prevent you from accidentally spamming your customers.

An example review request sequence may look like the following:

- **Initial Request:** Ask for the review directly, in person, during the final walkthrough process. Have a QR code handy to make it easy for your customer. If that's not possible, text them a direct link to your GBP.
- **Follow-Up #1:** The day after the job, send your customers a follow-up email and text. Thank them for their business and gently reemphasize that you'd appreciate a review. Provide them with a direct link to your Google Business Profile (GBP).
- **Follow-Up #2:** Three days after the job, send another gentle reminder via text and email. Say something like "Just in case you didn't get a chance to leave a review yet, we'd greatly appreciate your feedback." Provide a link directly to your GBP, Facebook page, Angi Profile, or anywhere else you're collecting reviews.
- **Satisfaction Check:** Approximately 30 days after the job, have one of your office staff members call the customer directly to ensure they're still happy with the work and keep your brand top-of-mind. Subtly remind them to leave you a review if they haven't yet.

Keep in mind that these texts and emails needn't be complicated. Instead, they should simply be polite and genuine, while also featuring proper spelling and grammar.

Something like this would work perfectly:

Hi [Name], thank you for trusting us with your tree-care needs today!

We'd love if you could leave us a short review — it really helps other families find a professional, locally owned, and insured crew. You can use this link [link] to leave the review easily — it should take you less than 60 seconds.

*Thank you!
—[Your Company Name]*

Generating Reviews Is a Team-Wide Responsibility

The important thing is that your review collection process becomes a company-wide system that everyone participates in. But it can't be a "throwaway" task that you simply add to the end of everyone's to-do list; you have to get buy in from your team and ensure that they all recognize the crucial role reviews play in your business' success.

With that said, everyone will play a different part in the process:

- Sales staff and other brand ambassadors should start the customer's journey on the right foot and provide an initial mention of the importance of reviews.
- Climbers, ground techs, and other team members should conduct themselves in a way that encourages positive customer feedback.
- Foreman and crew leaders should be tasked with asking for reviews in-person, during the final walkthrough.
- Office managers and dispatchers should be responsible for sending follow-up messages and managing review links.
- Billing department staff should reiterate the review request when invoicing customers.
- As the business owner, you should champion the process and hold your team accountable.

The Carrot and the Stick: Making Reviews Part of Your Culture

It's easy to say that everyone needs to be involved in the review collection process, but actually getting company-wide buy in can be challenging. That's important for making the transition from a company who treats reviews like an afterthought to one who prioritizes them appropriately.

To achieve that and make the reviews pour in steadily, you need to treat them as part of your company culture. And the best way to achieve that is by offering incentives and demanding accountability — as the old adage explains, you need both a carrot and a stick.

By implementing a system that entails rewards and potential penalties, it'll help turn reviews from something on your wish list into a company-wide habit and ensure your team is aligned and rowing in the same direction.

Incentives (The Carrot)

Ideally, your employees and staff would help collect reviews because it simply helps the business. But that's rarely how things work in the real world. But that's relatively easy to fix: Simply start offering cash bonuses for tangible improvements in your reviews.

We recommend doing this in two different ways:

- Establish monthly review goals and provide the entire team with a bonus for meeting these goals. For example, you could set a target of 20 positive reviews or 10 five-star reviews per month. When you hit this goal, you give every team member a \$100 bonus. Even if bonuses cost \$1,000–\$2,000 a month, that's money well spent. Reviews are worth far more than ad clicks.
- Offer a bonus payment of \$50 to \$100 to any employee who's mentioned by name in a review. For example, "The whole team was great, especially John, who made sure branches didn't fall on my granddaughter's swing set." These kinds of reviews can be rare, but they are often the most valuable kind, as they seem personal and genuine.

By implementing these kinds of systems you'll:

- Foster a sense of camaraderie among your team members. Because everyone on your crew stands to benefit from the company-wide bonuses, you'll start seeing your staff support each other more and hold each other accountable for providing good service.
- Motivate your staff to offer excellent service. Aside from the team-wide bonuses, the individual bonuses will help to encourage your team members to offer the best possible service. If a foreman or ground tech knows they'll earn \$50 every time a customer praises them by name, they'll go above and beyond while getting the job done and be more likely to ask for a review afterward.
- Nurture customer-staff connections. When your staff knows that they may receive a bonus for being mentioned in a review, they'll do everything possible to stick out in the customer's mind. Meanwhile, your customers will be more likely to leave a review when they feel connected to a specific crew member.
- Boost your crew's morale. Financial compensation isn't the only reason crew members like seeing their names included in a review; it's also a public pat on the back. Seeing reviews with messages like "Mike and his crew were fantastic" creates pride and a sense of accomplishment.

Accountability (The Stick)

Rewarding excellence is certainly helpful for achieving your goals, but in isolation, it's rarely enough. In practice, you also need to set clear expectations and devise a way of measuring performance — typically by identifying key performance indicators (KPIs).

You may, for example, determine that 20 or 30% of the jobs your team completes should generate a Google review. Alternatively, if you receive a lot of reviews, but the average score is too low, you could set a KPI that relates to the quality of reviews received. For example, you may require that the average Google review score for each month needs to be a 4.7 or better.

As opposed to bonuses and other incentives, KPIs help to establish the fact that reviews aren't optional; they're critical.

Just be sure to set clear KPIs, as well as consequences for failing to meet them, such as performance reviews. If you have team members who fail to improve over time, you may

have to replace them with other team members, who understand the value of reviews. Doing 90% of your job still means you're not getting the job completely done.

Follow the Review Policies Enforced by Every Platform

Given the importance of reviews, it should come as no surprise that some businesses try to game the system. So, most review platforms — especially the big players, like Google, Yelp, and Angi — have implemented policies and rules to prevent this from happening.

This means you must follow these policies to the letter. Failing to do so can result in the loss of reviews or even expulsion from the platform, so these are nothing to take lightly. The specific rules enforced by each platform vary, but here are a few key takeaways:

Google Reviews

Google specifically prohibits businesses from:

- Offering incentives (money, discounts, free goods or services) in exchange for reviews.
- Selectively asking only happy customers to leave reviews (i.e. “review gating”).
- Asking customers to modify or remove negative reviews in exchange for something.
- Posting (or having others post) fake reviews — reviews must reflect real customer experiences.
- Asking employees, competitors, or others with a conflict of interest to post reviews.
- Requesting reviews only from certain groups (e.g. “only from 5-star customers”) or filtering who you ask.

Facebook Reviews

Facebook review policies are a little less stringent than some others, but they still outline several guidelines and prohibited practices:

- Reviews must reflect real customer experiences; they can't be fabricated
- Don't solicit reviews in a way that violates community policies (e.g. asking for a “5-star review” as a condition).

- Don't offer compensation or rewards in exchange for positive reviews.

Yelp Reviews

Yelp enforces a number of review solicitation policies, which you must follow to keep your account in good standing. In fact, the platform doesn't even permit you to ask for reviews, as you'll see in the first guideline:

- You can't ask customers to write reviews.
- Don't offer incentives (e.g. discounts, freebies) to encourage reviews.
- Don't "gate" your reviews (such as asking only happy customers to leave a review).

Angi Reviews

Angi also enforces a number of review policies, and the platform exercises quite a bit of control over the reviews customers provide. For example:

- Angi reserves the right to refuse or remove reviews (i.e. they have editorial control).
- Reviewers may be flagged for verification
- Reviews from family, employees, or competitors can be filtered out or disallowed.
- Angi allows you to ask for reviews, but any solicitation must still comply with broader rules (i.e. no incentives for positive reviews, no filtering).

FTC and Legal Constraints

It's also worth noting that there are laws and regulations enforced by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) governing review solicitation. For example, It is illegal in many jurisdictions to provide compensation conditioned on the review being positive. Additionally, the FTC now explicitly prohibits businesses from paying for fake reviews or offering incentives for favorable reviews.

Bottom line: Avoid offering cash, discounts, or gift cards in exchange for reviews, and only request reviews for platforms that allow you to do so. But if you rely on genuine goodwill, you'll usually be able to avoid trouble.

Best Practice Checklist for Collecting Reviews

There's certainly a lot of things to keep in mind when trying to earn the reviews every tree service company needs to survive, let alone thrive or scale. To help, we'll outline a few of the key things you need to do — a best-practices checklist — below.

- Emphasize the importance of reviews to your entire team.
- Implement a carrot-and-stick approach that includes rewards and KPIs to hold your team accountable.
- Train your crew to ask for reviews in person at the final walkthrough.
- Always provide a QR code or link to make it easy for happy customers to leave a review.
- Have your office staff send follow-up reminders one and three days following every job.
- Contact all customers 30 days later to thank them, ensure they're ongoing satisfaction, and remind them to provide a review if they haven't.
- Respond to every review — positive or negative — within 48 hours.
- Prioritize your reviews properly: Google first, then Yelp, then Facebook/BBB/Angi.
- Never gate or filter reviews; respond to negative reviews professionally.

Treat this checklist as part of your weekly operations — not just a marketing task.

Alternative Ways to Leverage Happy Customers

Not every customer will want to leave you a review — even if they're completely satisfied with your work. But there are still ways to leverage these satisfied customers, including:

- Ask for a video testimonial. Some customers (particularly those who aren't especially tech savvy) may not be interested in leaving a review but won't hesitate to leave a quick video testimonial. These needn't be professional-caliber videos; simply have your foreman record the customer's review with a smart phone or tablet.
- Ask if you can leave a yard sign on the property for a few weeks. This may not provide as much power as a digital review, but it provides considerable marketing value for everyone who drives by. If the customer is willing, ask them to smile and pose for a publicity photo beside the sign — you can use this kind of photo on your website or social media platforms.

- Ask the customer some questions that'll help you win other customers. Even customers who don't want to go on the record can still be extremely valuable, as they can provide insight into what made them choose you instead of a competitor. You can then use this information to improve your overall marketing efforts.

The Bottom Line

Remember that reviews aren't just helpful for building a positive reputation in your community; they're also helpful for reaching new customers. In the current era of AI-powered search, reviews are essentially visibility fuel. They help you win trust with homeowners, prove authority to AI engines, and create a repeatable system for growing your brand.

Handled the right way, reviews serve as a business growth engine. They power your credibility, your rankings, and ultimately, your bottom line.

Chapter 8: Generating Content AI Loves

Content generation has long been a critical (and often overlooked) aspect of digital marketing, which remains vital in the AI-search era.

If you consider reviews to be the fuel of AIO, content is the voice. It's how you communicate with both homeowners and AI. The way you write, structure, and publish content directly influences the trust AI tools will have in your brand and therefore the likelihood that they'll recommend you to homeowners searching for tree-care services.

We'll share some of the key principles to embrace when generating content below, but there's one important thing to understand in the current AI-powered search era: AI tools certainly read your website, but that's not all they're reading; they're also reviewing your entire digital footprint, including your blog articles, GBP posts, YouTube video descriptions, Facebook updates, and other online content.

All of these things feed into AI's overall impression of your business.

Your Website Service Pages

Your website is your digital home base. And for service-based companies, your service pages do the heavy lifting.

Each service page should be written in a conversational tone, including several common questions (along with answers), and follow a clear, helpful, and intuitive structure. Here is an example of the type of content you want on a typical service page:

Example: *Joe's Tree Care – Tree Removal Services*

A strong service page includes:

- Intro paragraphs that connect with the customer and describe your expertise.
- Informational sections that answer “why” and “how” — e.g., why removal is needed, safety steps, or benefits.

- An FAQ block, such as:
 - “How much does tree removal cost in [City]?”
 - “Do I need a permit for tree removal?”
 - “What happens if a tree falls on my house?”
- A checklist of what’s included:
 - Safe, professional tree removal
 - Cleanup of brush and logs
 - Optional stump grinding
 - Yard protection with mats

Blog Posts

In addition to your service pages, your website needs to have a blog roll (often called something like a “Learning Center”) where you can publish content that’s important but doesn’t fit well in your service pages.

Examples of good blogs titles and topics include:

- **Do You Need a Permit for Tree Removal in [City]?** These kinds of posts help establish you as a local authority and answer a common question homeowners have.
- **5 Signs Your Tree Might Fall After a Storm.** Posts like these help establish your general authority as a tree-care professional and tap into the safety concerns many homeowners have about trees.
- **How Much Does Stump Grinding Cost in [City]?** This kind of post covers a specific service, establishes pricing transparency, and strengthens your connection to a specific city in your service area.

Understand that these are simply examples, and there are thousands of potential variations for each.

For example, you could also cover how much tree removal, pruning, installation, and storm cleanup cost in a given city (and then repeat the process across all of the major cities in your service area). You can also take note of the questions customers and potential customers ask you — these make great blog topics.

Similarly, you could write informational articles covering everything from the water requirements of trees to the tree species native to your area to some of the leading pest or disease problems that affect local trees. The possibilities truly are endless.

But before you start cranking out one blog article after another, it's important to ensure that they're formatted in a way that humans and AI bots alike can use. Among other things, this means:

- Starting with a direct answer to the question (when applicable). People and AI tools both love short summaries. You can elaborate, cover exceptions, and generally go into more depth further down the article.
- Adding high-quality photos of your crew performing relevant work. Photos are essentially a requirement for blog posts in the modern world, but not all photos are created equally. So, rather than using stock photos or generic tree images, use actual photos of your team to build credibility and make your posts feel realer.
- Ending every post with a call to action (CTA). At the end of the day, your website (and blog posts) are intended to generate customers, so you have to ask for the reader's business and give them an easy way to contact you. So, include something like "Contact us today for hazardous tree removal in [city]" with a link to your contact page.

Case Studies

There's one more kind of content that is helpful for including in your website: Case studies. And if you build a portfolio consisting of several different case studies, they'll help build your credibility better than generic marketing claims never could.

Most importantly, case studies are helpful for converting homeowners into paying customers, and they're also helpful in your quest for AI visibility.

- **For Homeowners:** Case studies help people imagine your team solving their problem. If they see an example of you safely removing a massive oak near a house, while overcoming challenges and protecting the client's landscape, they trust you can handle the tree in their own yard.
- **For AI:** Case studies include the kinds of details (including tree size, tree species, equipment used, safety steps taken, and the location of the job) that AI engines recognize as authentic. This increases your odds of being recommended by an AI tool.

Just remember that case studies should be short, to the point, and — most importantly — specific. All you need is a good sentence or two and some high-quality images or video of the job.

Consider the following example: “We removed this 72-foot-tall red oak for a client in [city] by using a crane to safely lower the cut branches. We also used protective mats to protect their landscape and then ground the stump down the very same day.”

In just two sentences, this case study tells potential customers and AI tools several things:

- You handle big trees.
- You provide removal services in a specific city.
- You have the necessary equipment, including cranes and stump grinders.
- You care about the client's property and use mats to protect it.
- You're a full-service tree company who also offers stump grinding.
- You completed the job efficiently, in a single day.

Including these kinds of details transform your marketing from a mere promise to actual proof.

To capture the value case studies provide, you have to prepare properly. That means taking photos or collecting videos during jobs that will make good case studies.

Your service pages or blog roll is likely the best place to publish your case studies, but you can also post them to your GBP or social media pages, if you like.

Google Business Profile (GBP) Posts

While you shouldn't think of your GBP as a social media platform, it does have some similarities with things like Instagram, Facebook, and X, as you can publish short posts on it. Many tree-care companies fail to take advantage of this capability, but that's a mistake — GBP posts are indexed by Google, and they can show up in AI snapshots.

This means you'll want to include at least one or two high-quality posts per week (quality trumps quantity in this realm).

A few good examples of GBP posts include:

- “Storm season is here! Did you know most homeowner policies cover fallen tree removal? Here's what you need to know...” You'd follow this with a brief bullet list and a photograph of your team removing a fallen tree.
- “Check out this before-and-after of a 70-foot oak removal in [Neighborhood].” Include photos or a video (preferably a time-lapse video) of the job in question.
- “Save money this winter! We're offering pruning and removal discounts throughout the month of January. Contact us now to get on the schedule” You could attach a custom graphic outlining the terms of the sale or a high-quality photo of your team working in the winter for this kind of post.

Above all, keep your GBP posts short, always include high-quality visual assets, and keep them focused on locally relevant issues or services.

Social Media

Social media content serves as another important pillar in your overall digital footprint, and it contributes additional “social proof” that AI will consider when deciding whether or not to recommend you to homeowners. But that doesn't mean you need to go “viral” or rack up millions of followers. You just need to consistently post high-quality content.

Different social media platforms require slightly different posting strategies and impose slightly different restrictions, so you'll need to tailor the exact content you post to each platform. However, you can typically build posts for each of the different platforms around a single basic idea.

Effective posts for tree-care companies include things like:

- **Before-and-After Posts:** Pair a few photos (or a video) of a big removal with a caption like: "This leaning maple in [City] was safely removed in just a few hours — notice the mats protecting the customer's driveway."
- **Common Question Posts:** "A lot of our customers ask about having their trees topped, but we generally discourage that, as it harms the tree and results in a lot of waterspouts, which will need to be pruned." Include an image of a tree that's been properly reduced alongside one that's been topped.
- **Equipment Spotlight Posts:** "Check out our new grapple saw truck, which allows us to safely remove large tree sections quickly — even when access is an issue." Attach this to a video of your new tool in action.

These kinds of posts will garner some attention from potential customers, but more importantly, they'll capture the attention of AI tools, especially when they generate engagement (likes, shares, comments, etc.).

If you don't yet have a social media presence and aren't sure where to start, Facebook and Instagram are the best places to appear and focus on in 2025.

YouTube Videos

While many tree-care companies fail to take advantage of it, YouTube is a marketing goldmine. Not only do many people prefer watching videos to reading articles, but it'll also help improve your search rankings, as YouTube is a Google property.

And don't forget that videos aren't limited to the YouTube platform; they show up in search results. Plus, AI tools will use the included video descriptions, transcripts, and other information as context for your services, which will ultimately help increase the chances that your business will be recommended to potential customers.

Consider the following video and description example:

- **Title:** “How Much Does Tree Removal Cost in [City]?”
- **Description:** *Tree removal in [City] can cost between \$1,200 and \$3,500 depending on the size, access, and complexity. In this video, we walk you through the biggest factors that impact cost. Need a free estimate? Call [Company Name] today.*

But before you click the “publish” button, be sure to add captions or use the auto generated captions. AI tools can read and consider this information, when trying to decide whether to recommend your company.

Using Reviews as Content

Customer reviews can actually serve as social media content (though some platforms work better in this regard than others). Best of all, these kinds of posts are exceedingly easy to publish. Simply copy some of the text from the review, take a screenshot, or use the built in share function, and then add some local context to flesh out the post.

For example, you could publish a post like this:

“Mrs. Smith said: ‘They came out the same day after a storm and had our driveway cleared within hours. Couldn’t be happier!’ Thanks for trusting us with your home, Mrs. Smith!”

This not only provides the kind of value a review always does, but it gets the review in front of another audience. It also serves as fresh content, which doesn’t take long to create. Just be sure to follow the posting rules and regulations for the platform you’ll be publishing the post on.

Content Is Like a Salesperson: But Is Yours a Good One or a Bad One?

Every piece of content you put online is like a salesperson working for you all day, every day. But there’s a difference between a good salesperson and a bad one — even some of the ones who work hard don’t achieve very good results.

An unsuccessful salesperson will arrive at a client's home in an unmarked truck, say very little, and lack the kinds of photos useful for demonstrating your company's professionalism. He or she won't answer the client's questions clearly and won't build the kind of trust needed to win the client.

By contrast, a successful salesperson will pull up in a branded truck, have a binder or iPad full of before-and-after photos, answer questions confidently, and leave the homeowner feeling educated and appreciated.

This perfectly illustrates the difference between well-written, properly structured content and haphazard, low-quality content.

But even more importantly, AI tools basically work like a microphone. Whatever your salesperson (content) says, AI amplifies it. If your content is vague, AI has nothing to amplify and you won't get mentioned. But if your content is specific, trustworthy, and proof-backed, AI will echo those details in its recommendations:

Tactical Checklist: Publishing Effective Content

To review, keep the following things in mind when trying to create content that not only works for human readers, but also AI-powered search tools:

- Your service pages are some of the most important things to focus on for your website, and they should feature conversational writing, answer common questions, and include bullet lists.
- Your blog posts are helpful for addressing questions you can't fit into your service pages, as well as for covering common topics like current pest or disease issues in your area.
- Don't forget to add one to two high-quality posts to your GBP every week; keep them short and sweet and include a photo.
- Consistently post high-quality content on your social media profiles, including before/after comparisons, safety tips, and equipment spotlights.
- Don't neglect YouTube; upload educational videos regularly and be sure to optimize the descriptions and turn on the captions.
- Repurpose your reviews by turning them into social media posts.

The Bottom Line

Good content isn't only important for your website — it's important to have high-quality content across your entire digital footprint. This will not only help attract actual customers, but it will also help increase the chances that AI tools will recommend you to people seeking tree care services.

Just be sure to structure your content appropriately, use high-quality images, and back everything up with real world case samples so that AI tools will start viewing you as the go-to tree care experts in your local area.

Chapter 9: Website Schema: Labels That Help AI Understand You

We've tried to keep this book as simple as possible.

But there are a few aspects of AIO/GEO/AEO optimization that require some technical discussion. That's the case for website schema — the subject of this chapter. Don't worry — you don't need to learn code or become an SEO expert to understand it, and we will continue to try our best to simplify it.

Ultimately, the goal for this chapter is to simply understand what schema is, why it matters, and why it's worth having a professional help you set it up.

What Is Website Schema?

Think of schema like a label maker for your website. Just like you label your tools, PPE, and equipment so that your crew knows what's what, schema effectively labels your online content in a way that helps Google and AI know what's what.

For example, if you have a page about "Tree Removal in [City]," schema can label the page as a service page, show that you're a local business, and highlight your reviews or FAQ answers. This provides additional clarity that helps AI trust your site and, in some cases, earn the "endorsement" of an AI tool.

In fact, a recent test demonstrated that the only page to appear in a Google AI Overview was a page that had good schema, despite having similar content to several other pages.

Why Schema Matters for Tree Companies

Earlier, we'd touched on the importance of making things easier for potential customers. We'd mentioned that you don't want potential customers to hesitate, and we emphasized the importance of removing as many obstacles or barriers that may prevent them from becoming actual, paying customers.

Schema essentially does this for AI, by making it easier for the bots to understand the content on your website. It prevents AI tools from having to guess at what part of your blog articles or service pages contain, say, frequently asked questions. Schema just tells the AI tools (and, for the record, Google and other search engines): “Hey, this is an FAQ,” or “Hey, check out our review stars.”

In short, schema markup provides three key benefits for tree-care companies trying to thrive in the era of AI-powered search, including:

- **Additional Clarity:** Schema provides labels for your services, reviews, FAQs, and location so AI can understand and recommend you more confidently.
- **Enhanced Visibility:** Schema can help your site show up more often in AI results and rich Google listings (like stars or FAQs under your name).
- **Trust Signals:** Because schema structures the data from your website, it provides additional credibility and helps verify the facts you’re publishing.

It’s also worth noting that these benefits work in tandem. In other words, by providing AI tools and search engines with additional clarity and stronger trust signals, your visibility will increase. All of this results in a stronger likelihood that your business will be discovered and recommended during the query fan out process.

Keep It Simple: What to Label

In an effort to keep the content of this book digestible and avoid any technical details that aren’t necessary, we’re not going to explain exactly how schema markup works. Frankly, that doesn’t matter as far as the average tree-business owner is concerned.

All you need to know is the basic concept of what schema is (a method of structuring data that makes it easier for AI tools and search engines to understand) and the types of information that’ll benefit most from schema markup.

Simply put, you don’t need to know the “how,” just the “what” and “where.” Schema is especially useful for:

- Your business info (name, address, hours, and phone number).
- Your services (tree removal, trimming, stump grinding, and emergency removals).

- Your FAQs (common customer questions with answers).
- Your reviews and ratings (the stars you see in search results).
- Your About Us Page (who you, your employees, and leadership team are)

There are other types of schema markup, but these are the only ones most tree-care service providers need to worry about.

Work With a Professional

As you've probably noticed, the majority of steps we've recommended you take in the new, AI-powered search era are things you can do yourself. But schema is a different matter. Schema is a powerful tool, but it's also quite technical and requires a skillset that is beyond the average tree-care professional.

Instead, we strongly recommend that you rely on your web-design firm or SEO partner to carry it out for you. They can make sure that your schema markup is set up correctly, properly tested, and updated regularly as your site grows.

The Bottom Line

By itself, website schema won't magically rocket you to the top of Google or have you appearing in AI search queries overnight. But it will help. It will make your site much easier for AI to understand and therefore include in search result responses.

It's one of those behind-the-scenes optimizations that can quietly separate you from competitors who overlook it. So, keep it on your radar and make sure your marketing partner or web pro sets it up for you.

Chapter 10: Building Your Authority

We've laid out a number of things that are important for thriving in the world of AI-powered search. We've touched on NAB consistency, the important role your GBP plays in your search visibility, and we've even addressed technical techniques like markup schema.

But there's one final thing you'll need to establish when trying to show up in Google's AI overviews and answer engine responses: your authority.

Simply put, you need to position your company as an authority in the tree-services space. We'll explain why that's so important and what you need to do to establish yourself as an authority below.

A Transition: From Backlinks to Conversations

For years, backlinks were seen as one of the two key pillars of SEO success (with keywords being the other).

But while backlinks and keywords both still matter, they aren't the only important factor for AI-powered search. After all, the game isn't about getting potential customers to find your website via Google; it's now about getting AI to recommend your company directly to potential customers by appearing everywhere that Google looks. And that means you don't just need keywords or backlinks — you also need to be the topic of conversation. You need to be seen as an authority in the tree-care space.

Put another way, instead of just worrying about who's linking to your site, you need to focus on who's talking about you, where they're talking about you, and how often your name shows up in credible places.

In fact, a 2024 leaked Google API document suggests that Google has been tracking entities and interactions in addition to backlinks and keywords.

Entities are individually identifiable concepts that search engines and AI can recognize as being distinct. This includes things like your brand name and company identity. And the

interactions between your entity and other entities are important factors AI and search engines consider when assessing your brand authority.

Translation? It's not just about having lots of keywords in your web copy or amassing thousands of backlinks. Success in the AI era is about being known, mentioned, and trusted in your community and your industry.

Why Brand Authority Matters

The reason brand authority is so important to AI is essentially the same reason it's important to humans.

As an example, consider two different tree companies working in the same town: Charlie's Tree Service and Bob's Tree Service. They both offer the same services, serve the same geographic area, and charge similar rates.

The only difference between them relates to their name recognition and authority.

Charlie's Tree Service drives around in branded trucks. They have a professionally designed website and active social media presence. They sponsor one of the local little league teams. They run regular ads in the town newspaper, and they frequently earn awards from the Chamber of Commerce.

Bob's Tree Service, on the other hand, drives around in generic, unmarked trucks. Their website is hard to navigate, if you can find it at all. Their social media profiles feature only three posts, and they were all published more than a year ago. They don't sponsor any local teams nor run ads in local media, and they aren't ever mentioned by the local Chamber of Commerce.

In fact, you probably haven't even heard of Bob's Tree Service, until one of the crew members knocks on your door or sticks a flyer on your mailbox.

Who are you going to feel more comfortable calling? Charlie's Tree Service seems 100% legitimate, and they clearly have their ducks in a row. Simply put, you feel confident trusting them with your trees, home, and safety.

But you'll almost certainly feel skeptical about Bob's Tree Service. You don't know if they're really professional (it certainly doesn't look like it), nor do you feel confident they're even going to be around in a month or year from now.

It's an easy answer, right?

AI treats authority the same way. The more your brand gets mentioned in trustworthy places, the more confident AI becomes in recommending you to customers looking for tree-care services.

Simply put, if everyone in town knows your name, AI will too. And it will act accordingly when recommending your services.

Actionable Ways to Build Authority

Now that you understand the importance of building your authority, we can share some of the best ways for accomplishing this goal. Don't worry — you don't need to hire a PR agency or start appearing every day on the morning news circuit (though this can certainly help if you can afford to do so as your business continues to grow

In fact, most of these steps require neither a significant investment nor professional guidance; you can achieve most with nothing more than a little hustle.

1. Pitch Story Ideas to Local Media Outlets

Reporters and editors are always looking for ideas for locally relevant, seasonal content — something you, as a tree-care professional, can certainly provide. There are literally countless ideas you could pitch, but the following ideas should help get your creative juices flowing:

- **Storm-Readiness:** Articles like “5 Ways to Protect Your Home from Falling Trees” are always popular with reporters, editors, and readers alike.
- **Local Tree Pest or Disease Issues:** Active or approaching tree threats like emerald ash borer, oak wilt, or hypoxylon canker make great topics for local media outlets.

- **Tree Species Recommendations:** Homeowners frequently want information about the best species to plant in the area, as well as species that excel in one way or another (such as rapid growth or drought tolerance).

Action Step: Draft a one-page pitch with your name, company, and three potential article ideas to local media outlets. Explain that you can write the article yourself or serve as an expert resource for the reporter to interview.

2. Apply for Awards & Recognitions

Awards essentially serve as stamps of approval from third parties. And while the value of any given award varies based on the entity recognizing you and the category to which the award relates, they're almost always helpful for building your authority -- even if they're presented by small or obscure groups.

Different groups and types of awards are available in different areas, but a few ideas to get you started including:

- **Local Awards:** This includes things like "Best Tree Care Company of [City]" or "Awards of Excellence."
- **Industry Awards:** These kinds of awards are distributed by industry organizations, like the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) and Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA). You can also apply for these awards at your regional ISA chapter.
- **Consumer Group Awards:** Many towns, cities, and regions are home to consumer-focused groups, who recognize businesses that implement customer-friendly practices, such as affordable pricing and lengthy service guarantees.

Action Step: Research the local awards available to you and identify three that you could realistically apply for this year. Be sure to put the deadlines on your calendar, so you don't miss submission dates. Note that you may need someone else in your community to nominate you in some cases, so don't be afraid to ask friends, neighbors, colleagues, or even happy customers for help.

3. Industry Accreditation

Credentials and accreditations are extremely helpful for earning the trust of potential customers (not to mention AI search tools), and they will significantly increase your authority. In fact, some homeowners won't even consider hiring you unless you have such a credential.

There are a number of credentials that are applicable to tree-care specifically, but the following three are generally the best to start with:

- **TCIA Accreditation:** Often considered the gold standard for tree care accreditation, this is a trust signal all tree-care companies should obtain.
- **ISA-Certified Arborists (ISA-CA):** Having ISA-certified arborists on your staff help demonstrate your company's expertise and generate greater trust.
- **Certified Treecare Safety Professional (CTSP):** This accreditation helps demonstrate a commitment to safety, and it can help you stand out in a crowded field.

Action Step: Start taking the steps to earn any of these accreditations that you don't yet have (some of them can take several months to earn). And be sure that you're displaying any credentials you already have on your website and GBP.

4. Sponsor Events, Charities, and Organizations in the Community You Serve

Supporting your local community not only feels good, but it also helps your brand name appear in more places online — places that AI will notice during the query fan out process. It also raises your local profile, which provides additional benefits. A few good examples of ways you can help support your local community (while expanding your digital footprint) include:

Sponsoring a youth sports team: Sponsoring a local sports team is not only a rewarding way to connect with the local community that'll cause your company name to appear in a variety of different places, but it also means your company name will be seen all over town throughout the season.

Scheduling a tree-planting event with a local school or environmental group: Tree-planting events offer an obvious connection to your business, and they also help position you as an

environmentally conscious tree company — something that many homeowners will find appealing. Plus, it only requires a modest investment.

Donating stump grinding services for a city park project: Grinding down some stumps at a local city park is another way to help the community in a manner that's relevant to your business. Just be sure that your work is covered by local press or mentioned on the city's website (or social media profiles).

Pro Tip: Extract even more value from these types of sponsorship opportunities by posting about them on your website and social channels (when permitted and appropriate). Treat them like mini case studies: "Last weekend we partnered with [school] to plant 25 new maples in the courtyard. These trees will not only thrive in this area but also produce gorgeous fall colors to welcome the returning students every year! Thanks to [school] for letting us help bring this project to fruition!"

For even more value, ask the organization to do the same on their website or social media accounts, while mentioning your company and — ideally — linking back to your website.

Action Step: Choose one community event, charity, or organization to sponsor or partner with this year, and set the wheels into motion.

Answering Questions on Reddit, Quora, and Other AI-Cited Sources

One overlooked way to build authority is by interacting on the platforms and websites homeowners use to ask questions.

Answering tree-related questions not only helps generate some good karma and raise your brand awareness (and potentially even attract paying customers), but it also creates additional places that your company's name appears online. Once again, AI does crawl these kinds of sites and factor the information it finds into its assessment of your brand.

Reddit and Quora are both popular platforms for this kind of outreach, and they attract millions of visitors each day. But you can also find niche forums if you look around.

There are several reasons this strategy is so helpful, including:

- **AI loves forums and message boards.** AI tools like Google AI Overviews and ChatGPT often cite Reddit and Quora threads because they're full of natural conversations containing questions and answers.
- **It provides long-tail keyword value.** Some long-tailed key phrases are too specific to cover on your website ("How many maple trees can I fit in this space in my backyard?"), but by answering these kinds of questions on Reddit or other platforms, you'll increase your authority in the eyes of AI.
- **It boosts your local credibility.** If you mention your region in your answers ("In Michigan, most cities require a permit for tree removal...") or respond to city-specific questions, you help create additional signals that position you as an expert in your local community.

Action Steps:

- **Pick a platform.** Create at least one account on a suitable platform. Reddit and Quora have the broadest reach and are most likely to be scanned by AI, but local forums (such as Nextdoor) will generate more location-specific value.
- **Set a simple routine.** Spend 15 minutes once a week answering one or two questions about tree care, storm damage, or landscaping. Prioritize questions that haven't been answered, rather than those that have dozens of responses.
- **Be helpful, not salesy.** Focus on answering the question directly. For example, if you're responding to a question about the cost of tree removal, say something like "It really depends on size, access, and safety factors. For a mid-sized tree in [City], you're usually looking at \$1,500 to \$2,500. Larger removals requiring cranes or other heavy equipment can be more expensive."
- **Include subtle mentions of your authority.** While you don't want to appear like you're boasting about your credentials or experience, you can mention these kinds of things when they're relevant. You may, for example, say something like, "As an ISA-certified arborist, I always recommend..."
- **Incorporate light branding (optional).** It's often helpful to answer the question fully and as helpfully as possible and then end with a soft brand mention. Something like, "Hope that helps! I run a tree service in [City], so I see this all the time" can be valuable.

The Castle Moat Analogy

Your business is the castle. Competitors are always trying to storm the gates. SEO tactics like backlinks are like building a single fence; it might hold for a while, but it's not going to be enough over the long run.

But building your brand's authority through media mentions, accreditations, awards, community visibility works more like a moat. It'll keep your castle protected from competitors for longer, and if you make it wide and deep enough, it will hold up through battle after battle.

Quick Checklist for Authority Building

Because building your authority is so important, you'll want to get started as soon as possible. So, remember to make time to do the following within the next 12 months:

- Pitch two to three seasonal story ideas to local media outlets.
- Apply for at least one local award.
- Start doing everything needed to earn TCIA accreditation if you don't have it.
- Start doing everything needed to become ISA-certified and consider helping your employees do the same.
- Add credentials and logos to your website and GBP.
- Sponsor a community event and post a recap online.

The Bottom Line

AI trusts businesses that people trust. If your company is already known and well-respected, AI will see you as a safe bet. So, by building brand authority through media mentions, accreditations, awards, and community involvement you make your business harder for AI — and therefore potential customers — to ignore.

Old-school techniques like accumulating a lot of backlinks and incorporating keywords in your website content are still part of the game, but brand mentions are often even more powerful for local search results in the current AI-driven era. The more your name shows up in the right places, the more likely AI is to repeat it when homeowners go looking for help.

Chapter 11: You Can Do This

I know what a lot of you are thinking right now: “I hate this. I’m not good with technology. I didn’t get into this business to sit behind a computer. I got into this business to cut trees, trim trees, and help people with the problems in their yards.”

Our only response to this is: **Tough shit.** Times change.

If your goal in business is growth — whether that be for its own sake or for the future of your family, your employees, and your community — you can’t afford to hide behind excuses.

Evolve or Fall Behind

Business is no different from biology.

There’s a theory in evolutionary biology called the Red Queen Hypothesis. It essentially states that species must constantly adapt, evolve, and proliferate in order to survive while pitted against ever-evolving opposing species. All organisms must keep evolving just to survive, because everything around them is evolving too.

Your business is the same. You’re constantly facing:

- Private equity firms trying to muscle you out of the market
- Hungry upstarts trying to undercut you with lower pricing.
- Former employees who’ve spread their wings and become competitors.

If you want your business to survive, you simply have to be willing to adjust to changing conditions.

No More Excuses

You can't let your weaknesses, excuses, or discomfort with technology hold you back. The truth is none of this is beyond you. We've laid out the playbook for you in step-by-step fashion. You have the blueprint for success.

It's up to you to take the next step.

And remember that you will learn more from trying — and failing a few times — than you will from sitting around and worrying about whether it's worth putting in the effort.

Progress Over Perfection

Winston Churchill is credited with saying something that you'll want to keep in mind: "Perfection is the enemy of progress." That couldn't be truer for business owners facing new challenges.

You don't have to follow every tip in this book to the letter. You don't have to achieve perfection. You just have to be a little bit better than the other guy.

That's the zero-sum game you're playing.

Play the Ball Where It Lies

At the end of the day, you can't fixate on how things used to be. You have to play the ball where it lies.

Homeowners don't care about your excuses. AI doesn't care that you're uncomfortable with technology. The only thing that matters is that your business shows up when someone asks, "*Who's the best tree service near me?*"

This book has given you the roadmap. Now it's your job to take action. You have to:

- Get reviews.
- Publish content.
- Build authority.
- Show up places your competitors don't.

Because if you want success, if you want more leads, more appointments, more jobs, and more growth, you've got no choice but to evolve.

You can do this.

And you'll thank yourself five years from now that you started today.

Glossary of Common Marketing, SEO, and AIO/GEO/AEO Terms

- **AEO (Answer Engine Optimization):** A subset of SEO aimed at helping your content appear as the answer to voice and AI queries, such as in featured snippets or AI summaries.
- **AI Snippet:** A section of AI-generated search results that summarizes key facts and may cite source websites.
- **AIO (AI Optimization):** The practice of structuring and writing content so that AI systems (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini, Search Generative Experience) can accurately interpret, quote, and recommend your brand.
- **Backlink:** A link from one website to another. High-quality backlinks from reputable sites improve authority and rankings.
- **Citation:** A mention of a business's NAP information on another site, such as Yelp or Angi.
- **Content Optimization:** The process of refining text, media, and structure to maximize search visibility and engagement for both human readers and AI systems.
- **Content Silos:** A website structure that organizes related pages under clear topical hierarchies to strengthen authority and internal linking.
- **Conversion Funnel:** The user journey from awareness to action — often mapped as stages like “Visit → Engage → Convert.”
- **CTR (Click-Through Rate):** The percentage of users who click a link compared to the number who see it.
- **CVR (Conversion Rate):** The percentage of visitors who complete a desired action, such as calling, booking, or filling out a form.
- **Domain Authority (DA):** A proprietary metric (originally from Moz) estimating how likely a website is to rank based on backlink strength and domain quality.
- **E-E-A-T:** Google's quality framework for assessing content: Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness.
- **Embedding:** The mathematical representation of text or entities used by AI to compare meanings.
- **Entity Linking:** Associating a brand, person, or topic with recognized entities in structured databases like Wikidata or Google's Knowledge Graph.

- **Entity:** A uniquely identifiable concept (person, place, organization, service, etc.) recognized by search engines as distinct.
- **Featured Snippet:** A highlighted summary of an answer appearing at the top of Google’s search results — often a target for AEO.
- **GBP (Google Business Profile):** Google’s free business listing platform that powers local map and “near me” search visibility.
- **Generative Engine:** Any AI system that synthesizes information to create an original response rather than list search results.
- **GEO (Generative Engine Optimization):** Optimization that helps generative AI models (like SGE, ChatGPT, or Perplexity) select, synthesize, and display your brand’s content in AI-generated results.
- **Geo-Tagging:** Adding location metadata to images or posts to reinforce local search relevance.
- **Impressions:** The number of times a page or ad is shown to users.
- **Indexing:** The process by which a search engine stores and categorizes pages so they can appear in results.
- **Keywords:** Words or phrases that describe the main topics of a webpage and match user search queries. They help search engines understand page content and intent.
- **LLM (Large Language Model):** The underlying AI model (like GPT-5 or Gemini) that generates human-like text responses.
- **Local Pack:** The three-map-based results shown for local intent searches like “tree trimming near me.”
- **Local SEO:** Optimization focused on helping a business appear in local search results and Google Maps for region-specific keywords like “tree service near me.”
- **Long-Tail Keyword:** A specific, lower-volume keyword phrase (e.g., “ISA certified arborist in Alpharetta”).
- **Metadata:** Information embedded in a webpage’s code (such as title tags and meta descriptions) that helps search engines understand its content.
- **NAP Consistency:** Keeping a business’s Name, Address, and Phone number identical across all listings and platforms.
- **Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG):** An AI method combining data retrieval with content generation — similar to how generative search engines answer queries.

- **Review Schema:** Structured data markup that displays star ratings and customer feedback in search results.
- **Review Velocity:** The rate at which new reviews are added to your profiles — important for ongoing credibility.
- **Schema Markup:** A standardized vocabulary (Schema.org) used to add structured data to web pages for better search visibility.
- **Search Generative Experience (SGE):** Google’s AI-powered feature that summarizes search results into conversational responses.
- **Search Volume:** The average number of times a keyword is searched per month, used to gauge audience demand and prioritize targets.
- **Semantic Keywords:** Related words or phrases that help search engines understand the broader context of a page’s topic, improving relevance and depth of coverage.
- **SEO (Search Engine Optimization):** The process of improving a website to increase visibility in organic search results on Google and other search engines.
- **SERP (Search Engine Results Page):** The page that displays search results after a query is entered into a search engine.
- **Service Area Pages (SAPs):** Web pages targeting specific cities or neighborhoods for localized SEO visibility.
- **Structured Data:** Code that labels page content for search engines, helping them interpret details such as services, reviews, and locations.
- **Tokens:** The smallest units of text that AI language models process — roughly equivalent to individual words or word fragments. Token limits affect how much content an AI can “read” at once.
- **User Experience (UX):** How users interact with a website — including navigation, readability, and speed — which directly impacts rankings and conversions.
- **Vector Database:** A data structure used by AI systems to find semantic (meaning-based) matches between queries and content.
- **Zero-Click Search:** A search result where the user gets the answer directly from Google or AI — no website click needed.

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Climb to the Top: AI Search Optimization for Tree Service Owners is an online-ready blueprint designed to help tree-care business owners thrive in the new AI-driven world.

In creating this guide, authors Austin Lee and Ben Team leverage a combined 35 years of digital marketing experience to develop and present a concrete plan of action.

From developing an AI-friendly digital presence to generating the kind of content AI tools love, this book explains it all.



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