

Fix Your AI Search

Foundations

The DIY Guide for Professional Services

What to fix, why it matters, and exactly how to do it in the right order - so your business shows up when people ask ChatGPT, Claude, Perplexity, or Google AI who to trust.

5

fixable foundations

~12 hrs

total DIY time

30 days

to see first results

WHAT'S INSIDE

01	Allow AI Crawlers Into Your Site	~30 mins
02	Fix Your Schema Foundations	~2-3 hrs
03	Optimise Your Google Business Profile	~2-3 hrs
04	Optimise Your 8 Priority Pages	~4-6 hrs
05	Build Your Content Foundation	~3-4 hrs
+	Bonus: Wikidata + Third-Party Trust	~1-2 hrs

Why this guide exists

Search has fundamentally changed. In 2026, when someone asks "who is the best physio in Rotorua", "top tax accountant for small business", or "best family lawyer in Auckland", the answer increasingly comes from ChatGPT, Perplexity, Google AI Mode, or Copilot - not a Google results page. The AI reads the web, weighs your business up against your competitors, and makes a recommendation. Often without the buyer ever clicking through to your site.

The good news: most professional services businesses are invisible to AI search for a small number of fixable reasons - not because your work is bad. This guide walks you through what to fix, why each fix matters, and how to do it yourself in roughly 12 hours.

93%

of AI search sessions end without a website click - the decision happens inside the AI

86%

of sources cited by Google AI Overviews include structured data (schema)

85%

of websites are accidentally blocking AI crawlers in their robots.txt right now

The 5 fixable reasons most service businesses are invisible

1	robots.txt blocking AI crawlers	~85% of sites block ChatGPT, Claude or Perplexity by default
2	Missing or wrong schema	LocalBusiness, Service, Person, Review and FAQ are how AI extracts facts about you
3	Incomplete or stale Google Business Profile	GBP is the #1 data source for AI when recommending local providers
4	Weak third-party trust signals	Reviews, directory citations and LinkedIn verify that you are real and trusted

5	No content foundation	No pillar guides, no FAQ page, no team bios - nothing for AI to cite
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How to use this guide

Each module follows the same structure: a plain-English explanation of what the fix is and why it matters, followed by step-by-step instructions with time estimates. Work through the modules in order - they build on each other.

AUDIENCE Service business owners, marketing leads, or their developer/VA.

TIME REQUIRED Approximately 12 hours across 1-2 weeks. Module 1 takes 30 minutes.

WHAT YOU NEED Admin access to your website, your Google Business Profile, and Google Search Console.

RESULTS TIMELINE Technical fixes index in 30-60 days. Ranking and AI visibility improvements visible at 60-90 days.

A NOTE ON EXAMPLES This guide rotates examples across tourism, trades, health, legal, accounting and B2B consulting. If you are a national B2B firm rather than a local service, skim Module 3 lightly and lean harder on Module 4 and the Bonus module.

01 Allow AI Crawlers Into Your Site

What this is

Your robots.txt file tells bots which parts of your website they are allowed to read. It lives at yourdomain.com/robots.txt. Most sites were set up years ago with generic rules that accidentally block the AI crawlers that now power ChatGPT, Claude, Perplexity, and Copilot. If these bots cannot read your site, you are invisible to the AI - no matter how good your content, reviews, or reputation are.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Around 85% of websites are still blocking at least one major AI crawler. Fixing this is the single highest-leverage 30 minutes you can spend. It unlocks every other fix in this guide.

How to do it

- 1 Find your robots.txt file. Go to yourdomain.com/robots.txt in a browser. If nothing loads, you do not have one - that is fine, we will create one.
- 2 Identify your CMS. WordPress (Yoast/RankMath plugins edit robots.txt), Squarespace (Settings > Crawlers), Webflow (Project Settings > SEO), Wix (SEO Tools), Shopify (theme edit or app). Search "edit robots.txt [your CMS]" if unsure.
- 3 Add or update with the rules below. Goal: explicitly allow the AI search bots, block training-only bots if you prefer.

```
User-agent: OAI-SearchBot      # ChatGPT Search (NOT training)
Allow: /

User-agent: ChatGPT-User      # User-triggered fetching
Allow: /

User-agent: PerplexityBot
Allow: /

User-agent: ClaudeBot
Allow: /

User-agent: Google-Extended    # Google AI Overviews / AI Mode
Allow: /

User-agent: Bingbot           # Copilot
Allow: /

User-agent: GPTBot            # Training only - block if you prefer
Disallow: /                   # does not affect ChatGPT Search
```

4 Save and verify. Visit yourdomain.com/robots.txt again and confirm changes are live.

DONE WHEN...

- ✓ You have visited yourdomain.com/robots.txt and confirmed the file exists
- ✓ OAI-SearchBot, ChatGPT-User, PerplexityBot, ClaudeBot, Google-Extended and Bingbot are all explicitly allowed
- ✓ No wildcard Disallow: / rule is blocking AI crawlers

02 Fix Your Schema

Foundations

What this is

Schema is structured data you add to your website that tells Google and AI systems exactly what your business is, who your team are, what services you offer, and what customers say. Think of it as a machine-readable business card. Without it, AI has to guess from your page copy. With it, AI can extract clean, confident facts and cite you.

WHY THIS MATTERS

86% of sources cited by Google AI Overviews include structured data. LocalBusiness schema alone can improve local search visibility by 20-30%. For professional services, Person schema on team bios is the single strongest E-E-A-T signal you can send.

The 5 schema types you need

Schema type	What it does
Organization / LocalBusiness	Your core business entity. Use the most specific LocalBusiness subtype that fits: TouristAttraction, TravelAgency, LegalService, AccountingService, MedicalBusiness, HealthAndBeautyBusiness, HomeAndConstructionBusiness, or plain ProfessionalService.
Service (one per offering)	One Service entry per core thing you sell. A tour operator lists each tour. A law firm lists each practice area. An accountant lists each service line.
Person (per team member)	Name, job title, qualifications, years of experience, LinkedIn link. Huge trust signal,

	especially for legal, medical, financial and consulting services.
FAQPage	On homepage, key service pages, and dedicated FAQ page. AI pulls these directly into answers.
Review + AggregateRating	Expose aggregate rating and review count as schema so AI can see them. Usually auto-generated by review widgets but worth checking.

How to add it

- 1 Easy route: use a schema plugin. WordPress (Yoast, RankMath, Schema Pro), Squarespace/Webflow (script embed), Shopify (JSON-LD for SEO). Fill in business name, address, phone, hours - the plugin generates JSON-LD automatically.
- 2 Developer route: ask your dev to add JSON-LD blocks to your site template. One Organization/LocalBusiness block site-wide (footer or head), one Service block per service page, one Person block per team bio page, FAQPage blocks on pages with FAQs.
- 3 Example LocalBusiness JSON-LD for a tourism operator. Adapt the @type to your industry.

```
<script type="application/ld+json">
{
  "@context": "https://schema.org",
  "@type": "TouristAttraction",
  "name": "Your Business Name",
  "url": "https://yourdomain.com",
  "telephone": "+64 7 123 4567",
  "address": {
    "@type": "PostalAddress",
    "streetAddress": "147 Fairy Springs Rd",
    "addressLocality": "Rotorua",
    "addressRegion": "Bay of Plenty",
    "postalCode": "3015",
    "addressCountry": "NZ"
  },
  "openingHours": "Mo-Su 08:00-17:00",
  "priceRange": "$$",
  "sameAs": [
    "https://www.facebook.com/yourbusiness",
    "https://www.tripadvisor.com/yourbusiness",
    "https://www.linkedin.com/company/yourbusiness"
  ]
}
</script>
```

- 4 Verify with Google's Rich Results Test (search.google.com/test/rich-results). Fix any errors. Green ticks mean AI can read your schema.

DONE WHEN...

- ✓ LocalBusiness or Organization schema is live on your homepage with correct NAP
- ✓ Service schema is on each of your main service pages
- ✓ Person schema is on each team bio page with credentials and LinkedIn
- ✓ FAQPage schema is on your FAQ page and key service pages (3-5 Qs minimum each)
- ✓ Rich Results Test shows all schema types as valid

03 Optimise Your Google

Business Profile

What this is

For any business people choose locally - tour operators, trades, health practitioners, accountants, lawyers, studios, clinics - your Google Business Profile (GBP) is now the single most important asset in AI search. When someone asks ChatGPT "best physio in Auckland" or Perplexity "top family lawyer in Wellington", the AI pulls directly from GBP data: your services, hours, photos, reviews, and posts. Your website is the second check, not the first.

WHY THIS MATTERS

GBP is a primary data source for Google AI Overviews, ChatGPT, and Perplexity when recommending local providers. Profiles not posted to in 30+ days see dramatic drops in impressions. Businesses generating 5+ reviews per month rank significantly higher in AI-powered local search.

How to do it

Step 1 - Claim and verify

Go to business.google.com. If your profile exists but is unclaimed, claim it and verify (postcard, phone, or video). If it does not exist, create it. Free, 10-15 minutes plus verification time.

Step 2 - Complete every field

- **Business name:** Exactly as it appears everywhere else (no keyword stuffing - Google will penalise)
- **Category:** Primary is your most important setting. Pick the narrowest match (e.g. "Family Lawyer" not "Lawyer"). Add 2-3 secondary.
- **Address:** Exact address. If you serve clients at their location, set a service area instead.
- **Phone + website:** Must match exactly what is on your website and other directories.
- **Hours:** Regular and special/holiday hours kept current.
- **Description:** 750 chars. Write it like a human. Include what you do, who you serve, and where.

- **Services:** Add every service as a separate entry with description and price. AI reads this to match queries.
- **Attributes:** Accessibility, payment options, "women-owned", "family-friendly". Fill what applies.

Step 3 - Photos (min 20, added regularly)

Google's Vision AI reads the content of your photos. Include: exterior shots, interior/workspace, team in action, before/after or outcomes, real customers (with permission), behind-the-scenes. Tag files with descriptive names before upload ("rotorua-canopy-tour-zipline-family.jpg" not "IMG_1234.jpg"). Add new photos at least twice a month.

Step 4 - Post weekly

GBP Posts are short updates. Post at least once a week. Mix: offers, events, new services, team intros, FAQ answers. Freshness is a direct ranking signal for AI systems deciding who to recommend.

Step 5 - Seed and answer Q&A

The Q&A section is a goldmine most businesses ignore. Seed it yourself: post 5-10 of the most common questions you get (from your own account or a loyal customer) and answer them. Under 100 words, direct, factual. These appear verbatim in AI recommendations.

Step 6 - Review velocity system

Target: 5+ new Google reviews per month. What works: SMS or email a review link within 24 hours of the service; QR code on receipts/invoices; a "how did we go?" card handed over at the end of a job. Respond to every review (good and bad) within 48 hours - AI systems read response rate and tone as a trust signal.

We run this for you on autopilot

This is the single biggest lever for a local business - and it is also the most repetitive. We have an AI system that handles weekly GBP posts, photo scheduling, Q&A seeding, and review-request sequencing in the background. We can either walk you through it and give you access to run it yourself, or manage it for you end-to-end. Just ask.

Local citations (NAP consistency across the web)

AI does not just read your GBP - it cross-references your business details across multiple directories to verify you are real. Any inconsistency (different phone numbers, spelling

variations of your address) weakens the signal. The goal is identical Name, Address, Phone (NAP) everywhere you appear.

Get listed on the right directories for your industry

- **Everyone:** Google Business Profile, Bing Places, Apple Business Connect, Facebook Business, LinkedIn Company, Yelp
- **Tourism / experiences:** TripAdvisor, Viator, GetYourGuide, Booking.com Experiences, Klook
- **Legal:** NZ Law Society directory, LawFuel, local bar directories
- **Accounting / financial:** NZICA/CAANZ, Xero Advisor Directory, MYOB Advisor Directory
- **Health / wellness:** Healthpoint (NZ), Physiotherapy NZ, industry association directories
- **Trades / home services:** No Cowboys, Builderscrack, Master Builders, Houzz
- **B2B / consulting:** Clutch, GoodFirms, DesignRush, LinkedIn, industry association listings

DONE WHEN...

- ✓ GBP is claimed, verified, and every field completed
- ✓ Minimum 20 photos uploaded with descriptive filenames
- ✓ At least 5 services added with descriptions and prices
- ✓ 5-10 Q&A seeded and answered on GBP
- ✓ Weekly posting cadence set up (calendar reminder or tool)
- ✓ Review request system live (SMS/email template + link)
- ✓ NAP is identical on at least 5-10 industry-relevant directories

04 Optimise Your 8 Priority Pages

What this is

On-page optimisation means updating the actual content of your highest-value pages so both Google and AI systems can read, understand, and cite them. For a professional services site, your 8 priority pages are rarely your blog - they are your front-line credibility pages: homepage, services, team, and proof.

WHY THIS MATTERS

AI parses structure before prose. Content with clear headings and answer-first paragraphs is 3x more likely to be cited by ChatGPT. 44% of LLM citations come from the first 30% of a page. Lead with the answer. Put context and storytelling after.

Your 8 priority pages

- **1. Homepage.** The anchor. Who you are, who you serve, where, and why choose you - all in the first screen.
- **2-4. Top 3 service pages.** Highest-traffic services from Google Search Console (sort by Impressions).
- **5. Location page(s).** If you serve a specific city/region, a dedicated page per area ("Family lawyer serving Auckland", "Physio in Rotorua").
- **6. Team / About page.** Named practitioners with credentials. Your E-E-A-T engine.
- **7. Case studies / testimonials.** Specific, named, quantified proof. Not generic five-star reviews.
- **8. FAQ page.** Covered in detail in Module 5.

The 5 fixes to apply to each page

1. Meta title. Format: [Primary keyword or service] - [Brand] | [Location or specialisation]. Under 60 characters. Lead with keyword, not brand. e.g. "Family Law Specialists - Smith & Co | Auckland"

2. Meta description. 140-160 chars. Answer the core buyer question directly. Soft CTA. e.g. "Auckland family lawyers helping parents navigate separation with clarity and care. Free 20-min intro call - book online."

3. H1 heading. One H1 per page. Mirrors or closely matches the meta title keyword. Strongest single signal to AI about what the page is.

4. Opening paragraph - answer-first. Lead with what you do, who it is for, and the outcome. Answer the core question in the first 1-2 sentences. Do not start with company history.

5. FAQ section (3-5 per page). Real questions clients actually ask. Each answer: 40-100 words, direct, factual. Feeds FAQPage schema and is the #1 way service pages get cited by AI.

Special treatment: the Team / Bio page

What E-E-A-T actually means

E-E-A-T stands for Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness. It is Google's framework for evaluating whether the person or business behind a piece of content is actually qualified to give that advice - and AI systems now use the same signals when deciding who to recommend. In plain terms: Experience = "have you done this yourself", Expertise = "are you formally qualified", Authoritativeness = "are you recognised in your field", Trustworthiness = "can we verify who you are". For professional services, the Team page is where all four are demonstrated at once - which is why it matters so much.

For each team member, include:

- Full name and role
- Professional qualifications and year earned (e.g. "LLB, University of Auckland, 2012")
- Years of experience and notable outcomes or clients (where possible)
- Professional memberships (NZ Law Society, CAANZ, etc.)
- Link to their LinkedIn profile (matches the Person schema sameAs)
- A real, non-AI headshot
- Person schema JSON-LD in the page head

DONE WHEN...

- ✓ Top 8 priority pages identified and listed
- ✓ Meta titles updated - keyword-led, under 60 characters
- ✓ H1s updated on all 8 pages - one H1 per page
- ✓ Opening paragraphs rewritten in answer-first format
- ✓ FAQ section (3-5 Qs + answers) added to each page
- ✓ Team page has named bios with credentials, LinkedIn links, and Person schema

05 Build Your Content

Foundation

What this is

Before you write a single new article or guide, you need to know what your clients are actually searching for. Keyword research tells you which topics, questions, and phrases your audience uses - so every piece of content you create is aimed at something real. A topic cluster map then organises those keywords into a structure that signals topical authority to both Google and AI systems.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Topical authority is compound interest. A firm that covers all angles of a topic (e.g. "property law in NZ") appears in more AI retrieval rounds per query. 44% of AI citations come from content published in the last 12 months - freshness is a direct citation signal.

How to do it

- 1 Keyword research - 100+ keywords. Start with 3-5 core topics relevant to your service. Use Google Keyword Planner (free), Ubersuggest, or Keywords Everywhere. Mix: head terms (high volume, competitive), long-tail terms (lower volume, higher intent), and question-based keywords ("how much does X cost", "best Y for Z", "X vs Y").
- 2 Topic cluster mapping. Group keywords into 3-5 "pillar" topics - each a broad subject your business has real authority on. Under each pillar, identify 6-10 "cluster" sub-topics. The pillar covers the broad topic; cluster articles go deep on sub-topics and link back.
- 3 Export to a content plan. For each cluster capture: target keyword, content type (pillar / cluster / FAQ / case study), the page it applies to or the new page title, estimated search volume, and priority. Rolling roadmap.
- 4 Create or optimise your FAQ page. A dedicated page (not just FAQs inside service pages) that answers 15-25 of the most common questions clients ask before buying. Clear H2 or H3 question headings, concise answers. One of the most cited page types by AI systems.

Example pillar/cluster maps

Tour operator. Pillar: "Things to do in Rotorua". Clusters: best family activities, wet weather options, half-day vs full-day tours, what to pack, best time of year, adventure vs cultural experiences, tours for disabled visitors.

Accounting firm. Pillar: "Small business tax in NZ". Clusters: GST basics, provisional tax explained, common tax mistakes, choosing a structure, claimable expenses, home office deductions, R&D tax credits, year-end checklist.

Physiotherapy clinic. Pillar: "Lower back pain". Clusters: common causes, when to see a physio vs GP, exercises at home, ACC vs private treatment, recovery timelines, workplace ergonomics, running and back pain.

B2B consultancy. Pillar: "EOS implementation for NZ SMEs". Clusters: EOS vs OKRs, first 90 days running EOS, choosing an implementer, common EOS mistakes, EOS for agencies, measuring EOS ROI.

How do you actually deliver it?

A content plan without execution is just a spreadsheet. Two routes:

DIY approach	Professional system (for scale)
Use Claude (claude.ai) or ChatGPT to draft pillar and cluster articles from your plan. Give it your brand voice, target keyword, and a clear brief. Review and edit before publishing. Works well for your first 10-20 pieces.	AirOps is the workflow platform behind the world's best-performing AI search content programmes. Not a writing tool - a system that encodes your brand voice, service data, and SEO strategy into reusable workflows. Team Empathy is a founding agency partner.

DONE WHEN...

- ✓ 100+ keywords researched and organised into a Google Sheet
- ✓ 3-5 pillar topics identified with 6-10 cluster topics each
- ✓ Content plan exported as a prioritised Google Sheet with content types
- ✓ FAQ page created or optimised with 15-25 questions and direct answers

+ Bonus: Wikidata Entity

+ Third-Party Authority

Why this is a bonus, not a core module

Wikidata and third-party platform presence are the trust layer on top of everything else. Without these, your brand is technically "unresolvable" to AI - even if everything else is in place, the AI cannot fully verify you are who you say you are. Brands with a Wikidata entry plus presence on 4 third-party platforms have a 2.8x higher AI citation likelihood.

Part 1 - Set up your Wikidata entity

- 1 Go to wikidata.org and create a free account.
- 2 Click "Create a new item". Add your business name as the label, and a short description (e.g. "New Zealand family law firm based in Auckland").
- 3 Add these statements: P31 (instance of) - match the most specific type for your business (Q4830453 for business, Q327333 for tour operator, Q2145149 for law firm, etc.); P452 (industry); P856 (official website); P159 (headquarters location); P571 (inception year).
- 4 Save. You will get a Q-number (e.g. Q12345678). Keep this.
- 5 Add Organization schema to your homepage with the Wikidata URL in the sameAs field (see Module 2). This connects your website to your entity.

Wikipedia (only when you are ready)

Wikipedia requires 3+ independent, reliable press mentions to establish notability. Do not attempt a Wikipedia article until you have that coverage - a rejected article makes future submission harder. Wikidata is the data layer and is what matters most right now.

Part 2 - Third-party platform authority

AI verifies brands by cross-referencing across multiple independent platforms. The more places you appear consistently, the more the AI trusts you are real. For professional services specifically, LinkedIn is the most-cited domain for professional queries across Google AI Overviews, ChatGPT, Copilot, and Perplexity.

The 5-platform trust stack

1. LinkedIn Company Page. Complete company page with logo, description, services, employees tagged. Post weekly.

2. Founder/principals on LinkedIn. Named team members with credentials and regular posting. Higher citation weight than company pages for professional service queries.

3. One major industry directory. The best one for your industry (see Module 3 list). Complete profile with NAP matching.

4. One review-heavy platform. Google Business Profile for local, Clutch/G2 for B2B, TripAdvisor for tourism, Healthpoint for health. Target 20+ reviews with 4.5+ average.

5. Reddit and/or Quora presence. AI scans these for verification. Answer 2-3 industry questions per week authentically. Do not spam your own brand - build expertise signals over time.

DONE WHEN...

- ✓ Wikidata entity created with Q-number assigned
- ✓ Organization schema on homepage links to Wikidata, LinkedIn, and major directories via sameAs
- ✓ LinkedIn Company Page is complete and posting at least weekly
- ✓ At least 2 principals have LinkedIn profiles with credentials and regular posting
- ✓ You appear with matching NAP on 5+ platforms relevant to your industry

What's next after this: build your content engine

Fixing your foundations is the right first move. But here is the truth: optimising 8 pages and building a content plan will only take you so far. The businesses that compound their AI search visibility do not do it by writing more content manually. They do it with a system.

75%

citation rate on AI-workflow produced pages

3 days

average time from publish to first AI citation

7x

increase in AI citations in 6 months

48%

of AI citations come from off-site sources

The problem with manual content

Google's AI citation research shows pages not updated quarterly are 3x more likely to lose citations. Your content does not just need to be written once - it needs to be monitored, refreshed, and expanded continuously. That is impossible to do with humans alone. You need a workflow system that humans oversee.

The system that makes this sustainable: AirOps

AirOps is the workflow platform behind the world's best-performing AI search content programmes. It is not a writing tool - it is a system. It encodes your brand voice, service data, and SEO strategy into reusable workflows that produce consistent, structured, AI-citable content at scale. Team Empathy is one of AirOps's founding agency partners. We will help you get set up, get preferential pricing, and teach you how to run the platform - whether you want to do it yourself, with our guidance, or have us do it for you.

Three ways to work with us

DIY - free resources

Use this guide, our templates, and the tools we recommend to implement everything yourself. We make all our resources freely available so you can get started without any investment beyond your time.

Done with you – AEO Accelerator	Join the AEO Accelerator for expert-led coaching across every discipline. Nico (our content engineer) teaches you how to build and run AI workflows. Ben guides your overall strategy and prioritisation. You get AirOps training, a private community, and hands-on support.
Done for you – Transformation	Full service. We set up your AirOps portal and hand you the workflows we have spent hundreds of hours building and optimising – our complete IP, calibrated to your brand. We run the first production cycle with you, train your team, and leave you with a live, compounding content engine.

Start with a free 45-minute working session

Before investing in any programme, we will sit down with you and map your Total Search Market (TSM) – a bespoke analysis that shows exactly how much organic and AI search demand exists in your category, what share your business currently captures, and what moving to 10–15% share would be worth in annual revenue. No slides, no pitch deck – just your data, your market, your numbers.

Book your free Working Session

calendly.com/teamempathy

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The businesses that build their AI search foundations now will own their category. The ones that wait will spend the next 12 months trying to catch up.