



The Small-Business SEO + GEO Playbook

What to write, what to fix, and what AI search engines are actually looking for.

VERSION
v2026.05.1

CURRENT AS OF
2026-05

PUBLISHED
2026-05-03

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How to use this playbook

Search has changed. Your customers still type into Google, but they also paste questions into ChatGPT, Perplexity, and the AI Overviews that now sit above the regular Google results. Your website is being read by both old-style crawlers and new-style language models, and both are scoring you against signals you may not be aware of.

This playbook is the **content half** of that scoring rubric.

What you'll find here

Each chapter covers one area of the rubric where the *fix* is editorial, not technical:

- **Content quality** – the depth, originality, and freshness of what you've written
- **Entity clarity** – whether AI can confidently identify *who you are*
- **Citability** – whether AI can pull a clean answer out of your page
- **Topical authority** – whether you look like a go-to source on the topics you care about
- **Trust signals** – whether your work looks like the work of a real, credible person
- **Backlink profile** – whether the rest of the web vouches for you
- **On-page craft** – the judgment calls behind your titles, metas, and headings

Each chapter follows the same shape:

1. **What's broken** – a worked example from a (fictional but realistic) small business website.
2. **Why it matters** – what the search engines are actually optimizing for, and why this signal matters to them.
3. **How to detect** – what to look at on your own site so you know whether you have this problem.
4. **The fix, in steps** – concrete edits, ordered.
5. **What "good" looks like** – a finished example you can model.

At the end there is a **90-day plan** that takes the highest-impact items from every chapter and sequences them into a single calendar.

What's NOT here

There's a parallel set of issues – robots.txt files, schema markup, JSON-LD blocks, page speed, server-rendered HTML – where a developer or a CMS plugin can fix the problem in an hour. Those are *technical SEO* and *technical GEO*, and they belong in their own document. This playbook is for everything *except* those – the parts only a human can do, and only by writing.

If you've already run a Free SEO Report Card scan and are looking at low scores in **Citability**, **TopicalAuthority**, **ContentQuality**, **TrustSignals**, **BacklinkProfile**, or parts of **EntityClarity** and **OnPageSeo** — the chapter for each of those module names is a direct map to what to do next.

Who this is for

Single-owner businesses and small marketing teams. Not enterprise SEO departments — they have their own playbooks, and they need different ones. If your team is one to five people and you want your website to show up when a future customer asks an AI engine "who's the best [X] in [Y]," you're the audience.

A note on the AI part

Generative-engine optimization (GEO) is genuinely new. The signals AI search engines look for are inferred from what they cite, not from a published rubric. The recommendations in this playbook are based on observed behavior across the major engines as of the date on the cover. They will change. The chapters with the highest churn risk are flagged at the top of each one with a "current as of" line.

If you're reading a copy that's more than a year old, check the cover for an update.

— Troy *One More Turn Ventures, LLC* · Lansing, MI

Content quality

Current as of May 2026. This chapter has low churn risk – the underlying signals (depth, originality, freshness) have been search-engine-relevant for two decades and aren't changing soon.

Almost every other chapter in this book assumes you have decent content to begin with. If your homepage is two paragraphs of marketing-ese and your "blog" has three posts from 2023, no amount of clever schema markup will save you. This is the foundation.

What's broken

Here's a real shape we see constantly. *Spring Hollow Landscaping* is a fictional Lansing-area landscaper with a five-page site:

- **Home** – a slideshow, a one-paragraph welcome, a "Get a quote" form
- **Services** – a bulleted list: lawn care, mulching, hardscape, snow removal
- **About** – three paragraphs about the owner's "passion for outdoor spaces"
- **Gallery** – twenty photos, no captions
- **Contact** – phone number, address, form

Total word count across the entire site: about 700 words. The latest update on any page: 11 months ago. The "About" page is mostly stock phrases – "family owned," "quality you can trust," "we treat your yard like our own."

Both Google and ChatGPT will struggle to do anything useful with this site. Google has no signal that you're an authority on landscaping; ChatGPT has nothing to extract when someone asks it about Lansing landscapers.

Why it matters

Search engines (classical and AI) are trying to answer a very specific question for every URL they index: **"if a user asks me about the topic this page is about, is this page a useful answer?"**

A useful answer needs to be:

- **Deep enough** to actually inform the reader. Two paragraphs about "lawn care" is not informative – a 1,200-word guide that covers timing, equipment, common mistakes, and what to do about grubs is.
- **Original enough** to carry information that *isn't already on every other site*. If your About page is the same fourteen stock phrases as your three local competitors, you offer nothing distinguishable to cite.
- **Fresh enough** that the engine trusts it's still accurate. Pages that haven't been touched in two years signal *abandoned*, regardless of their original quality.

These three signals – depth, originality, freshness – are what content-quality scoring actually

measures.

How to detect this on your own site

Pick your three most important pages: usually the homepage, your top service/product page, and your highest-traffic blog post (if you have one).

For each, answer honestly:

1. **Word count.** Anything under 400 words on a "real" page (not a contact form, not a thank-you page) is suspect. Service pages should generally be 600–1,500 words. Pillar/cornerstone pages should be 1,500–3,000.
2. **Originality test.** Pick three sentences from the page. Google them in quotes. If they appear word-for-word on competitor sites or stock-content sites, you have an originality problem.
3. **Last-updated date.** When was this page last meaningfully edited? "Edited the footer" doesn't count — when did the *content* last change? If the answer is "more than 12 months ago," that page is going stale.

If any of those three checks fail on any of your priority pages, this chapter applies to you.

The fix, in 5 steps

1. Pick the smallest set of pages that matter most

You probably can't rewrite your whole site this quarter. Don't try. Pick five pages: the homepage, three service/product pages that drive revenue, and one piece of content (blog, guide, FAQ) you want to rank.

2. Write a "what does the reader actually need to know" outline

Before you touch the existing copy, write a fresh outline. For each page, list:

- The five questions a customer asks before they buy
- The three things the page must explain to be useful
- The one thing only *you* know that nobody else on the internet has written down

That last item — the thing only you know — is where originality lives. It might be local market knowledge ("most Lansing lawns get crabgrass in late June, two weeks earlier than the official planting calendars say"). It might be operational ("our crew works in pairs because solo techs miss 30% of the edge work"). It might be price transparency ("our average residential project is \$4,500"). Whatever it is, write it down.

3. Rewrite, don't edit

Copy the page's existing content into a "v0" file and put it aside. Write the new version from your outline, not from the existing copy. Editing in-place is how you end up with the same vague page slightly reorganized. Starting from a fresh outline is how you end up with a page that says something.

4. Add specifics

Replace every vague phrase with a specific one:

- "We've been in business for years" → "Founded 2008, in our 18th year as of 2026"
- "Quality you can trust" → "Certified arborists on every crew. We carry \$2M general liability."
- "Affordable" → "Average residential project: \$4,500. We publish ranges for our top five services on our pricing page."

If you can't replace a vague phrase with a specific one, the phrase is filler — delete it.

5. Set a refresh cadence

For each priority page, write the next refresh date in your calendar:

- **Homepage:** review every 6 months
- **Service/product pages:** review every 12 months
- **Blog/guide content:** review every 18 months, retire if no longer accurate

A "review" doesn't have to be a full rewrite — even a header that says "Last updated May 2026" with a small accuracy check goes a long way.

What "good" looks like

Same fictional Spring Hollow Landscaping, after a content rewrite of the homepage:

Spring Hollow Landscaping serves Lansing and Ingham County, Michigan. Founded in 2008. Family owned. Average residential project: \$4,500. We carry \$2 million in general liability and every crew lead is a certified arborist.

Most popular service: seasonal cleanup — \$350 starting, includes leaf removal, bed edging, and a winter prep checklist for your lawn.

What makes us different: we work in pairs. Solo crews miss roughly a third of the edge work — corners, around outbuildings, fence lines. Two-person teams cost a little more per hour and produce dramatically better results.

Service area: Lansing, East Lansing, Okemos, Haslett, Mason, Holt. We don't drive past Williamston in either direction — keeping the radius tight is how we keep arrival windows under 30 minutes.

Page updated May 2026.

This is roughly 150 words. It's specific, original, dated, and unambiguous. It would be far more useful to both Google and ChatGPT than the 30-word "passionate about outdoor spaces" version, because every sentence carries information no other landscaper in Lansing has on their site.

You don't need to be Hemingway. You need to be **specific, honest, and fresh.**

The rest of this playbook builds on top of that.

Entity clarity

Current as of May 2026. Medium churn risk – the underlying concept (entities) is stable, but the specific signals AI engines use are evolving.

When ChatGPT decides whether to cite *you* as the answer to "who's the best fence company in Lansing," it's solving a smaller, more concrete problem first: **does this URL belong to a real, identifiable business, and is that business actually a fence company in Lansing?**

That smaller problem is *entity clarity*. AI search engines do this work even when they don't say so out loud – and so does Google, in its Knowledge Graph. The sites that win are the ones that make this disambiguation easy. The sites that lose are the ones that leave the engine guessing.

What's broken

A common shape: **DGM Solutions** has a one-page site at dgmsolutions.com. The header says "DGM" with no further explanation. The body talks generically about "innovative solutions for modern businesses." The contact page lists a P.O. box and a Gmail address. There's no About page. Their LinkedIn (which exists) has a slightly different name – "DGM Solutions LLC" – and lists Chicago, while the website's footer says Indianapolis.

When ChatGPT crawls this site, here's what it sees:

- Probably a business
- Probably named "DGM Solutions" but maybe "DGM" or "DGM Solutions LLC"
- Probably in Chicago, but the website says Indianapolis
- Industry: unclear ("solutions for modern businesses" matches every B2B company on earth)
- Real address: unknown
- Independently verifiable identity: no

The engine will not confidently cite this page when answering any question, because it can't confidently say *what the page is about*. From its perspective, you don't have an identity – just a vibe.

Why it matters

AI search engines need to give answers. Answers require attribution. Attribution requires entities. The engine wants to be able to say "according to DGM Solutions, a B2B IT consultancy in Indianapolis..." and trust that this attribution is correct.

If your entity information is unclear, inconsistent, or missing, the engine has two options: skip you (most common), or attribute carefully ("according to a website that appears to be DGM Solutions...") which is uncomfortable and rare.

Classical SEO has the same problem in slightly different clothes. Google's Knowledge Graph wants to associate a name, a website, an address, a phone number, and a category. When all five line up across your site, your social profiles, and external sources, you become a *known entity*. Known entities outrank unknown ones for the same content quality.

How to detect this on your own site

This one is easy to audit. Pull up your homepage and check:

1. **Name consistency.** Is your business name spelled exactly the same in your header, footer, About page, and on every social profile and directory listing? Don't laugh — "Spring Hollow Landscaping," "Spring Hollow Lawn & Landscape," and "Spring Hollow LLC" are three different entities to a search engine.
2. **NAP consistency.** Name / Address / Phone — are these identical across your site, your Google Business Profile, your LinkedIn, your Facebook page, your Yelp? Variations in formatting are usually fine ("Suite 200" vs. "Ste 200"); variations in actual content are not ("123 Main St" vs. "456 Oak Ave").
3. **About page.** Open it. If it's missing, that's the problem. If it's present but talks only in vague terms ("we're passionate about..."), that's also the problem.
4. **Third-party verification.** Search for your business on Google. Do you have a Google Business Profile? A LinkedIn company page? Is your name on your local Chamber of Commerce site? On state business registry? These are the *external* sources AI engines use to corroborate what your own site claims.

If any of those four checks come up short, this chapter applies.

The fix, in 5 steps

1. Pick the canonical version of your name

Decide, once and for all, what your business name is. Write it down. Examples of good canonical names: "Spring Hollow Landscaping", "Free SEO Report Card", "DGM Solutions, LLC". Use that exact spelling everywhere — no variations, no abbreviations, no informal versions.

If you have a legal name and a brand name (e.g., "One More Turn Ventures, LLC" doing business as "Free SEO Report Card"), pick one as your *primary* and use the other only where legally required. Mention both in your structured data (more on that in the technical-SEO companion doc, but for now: name = primary brand, legalName = legal entity name).

2. Make your address and phone unambiguous

Pick a single canonical formatting for your address and phone, and use that exact format on:

- Your website footer
- Your About page
- Your Contact page
- Your Google Business Profile
- Every social profile

- Every directory listing

This sounds tedious. It is. Block out a Saturday morning and just do it.

3. Write a real About page

Most About pages fail because they're written for *nobody in particular*. Write yours for two specific readers: a future customer trying to decide whether you're trustworthy, and an AI engine trying to figure out who you are. Both want the same things:

- **Founded:** date, place
- **Owner / leadership:** name, role, brief background
- **What you do:** one specific sentence
- **Where you serve:** city, region, ZIP
- **Why you exist:** one paragraph
- **How to reach you:** every channel

Keep it human. Do not write "We are passionate about delivering best-in-class solutions for our valued clients." You're talking to actual humans.

4. Claim and consolidate your external profiles

Make sure these exist, are claimed by you, and have your canonical name + NAP:

- Google Business Profile
- LinkedIn company page
- Facebook page (even if you don't use it actively)
- Industry-specific directory (e.g., HomeAdvisor for trades, Clutch for B2B services)
- Local Chamber of Commerce
- State business registry / SoS lookup (this one's automatic but check the public listing matches)

This is the corroboration network. The engine sees your name on five external sources, all matching the name on your own site, and confidence shoots up.

5. Link to those profiles from your site

In your structured data (or just in your footer with a `rel="me"` attribute), point at your social and directory profiles. This is the explicit "yes, this is me" handshake — your site claiming the external profiles, and the external profiles linking back to your site. The technical-SEO doc covers the JSON-LD `sameAs` array; for this playbook, the editorial side is just *making sure you have those profiles to link to in the first place*.

What "good" looks like

The About page of a small accounting firm that gets entity clarity right:

Hawthorne Tax & Bookkeeping is a 2-person tax practice in Lansing, Michigan, serving small businesses and self-employed clients in Ingham, Eaton, and Clinton counties.

Founded by Jenna Hawthorne, CPA, in 2014. **Office:** 1827 W Saginaw Hwy, Suite 4, Lansing MI 48917 **Phone:** (517) 555-0142 **Hours:** Mon–Thu 9–5, Fri by appointment

Jenna spent six years at a regional firm before going independent. She works on roughly 110 returns a year – small enough to know every client by name. The practice doesn't take new clients between January 15 and April 15.

Find us on: [LinkedIn](#) · [Google](#) · [Yelp](#)

This page tells an AI engine, with extreme clarity, *who* the business is, *where* it operates, *what* it does, and *how to verify all of that*. Notice what's not here: no "passionate about helping businesses grow," no stock photo of a diverse team, no marketing prose. Specific facts are easier to cite than feelings.

That's the entire game in this chapter.

Citability

Current as of May 2026. Medium-high churn risk – the shapes AI engines extract are evolving as the engines mature. Check for updates every 6 months.

When a customer asks ChatGPT "what's the best fence company in Lansing," the AI is not running a search and reading your homepage. It's looking through the content it has indexed for *quotable shapes* – fragments of text it can pull out and use to construct an answer. Most small business sites give it nothing to work with.

Citability is the chapter for fixing that.

What's broken

Same fictional landscaper from Chapter 1 – *Spring Hollow Landscaping*. Their home page after the content rewrite is fine: it has facts, dates, a service area, a price range. But it's still all *prose*. There's no shape an AI engine can lift out cleanly.

When the engine tries to answer "what does Spring Hollow Landscaping charge for seasonal cleanup?", it has to read three paragraphs, infer the answer, and hope its inference is right. That's expensive and fragile. The engine prefers content that *already looks like an answer*.

Why it matters

AI search engines are extractive. They pull the smallest fragment that answers a question and surround it with attribution. If your content is one long flowing essay, the engine can either summarize you (slow, expensive, error-prone) or skip you and quote a competitor whose content is shaped like answers.

The shapes engines preferentially extract:

- **FAQ blocks.** Question + answer pairs. The cleanest possible extraction.
- **Bulleted or numbered lists.** Each item is self-contained.
- **Definition statements.** "X is Y." or "X means Y."
- **Specific numbers and dates.** "Founded in 2008." "Average project: \$4,500." "Service area: 30 minutes from downtown."
- **Tables.** Especially comparison tables with clear column headers.
- **Direct quotes from named experts.** Including yourself, attributed by your name and title.

If your page has none of these shapes, you have low citability – even if the prose is good.

How to detect this on your own site

For each of your priority pages (the same five you picked in Chapter 1):

1. **Count the FAQ blocks.** Zero? You have a citability problem.
2. **Count the lists.** Are there bulleted or numbered lists with self-contained items? Or is the whole page paragraphs?
3. **Search for specific numbers.** Year founded, prices or price ranges, service area distances, team size. If your page has fewer than 5 specific numerical facts, it's vague.
4. **Look for definitions.** Do you actually define the services you offer? "Lawn aeration" – what is that, and why would someone need it?
5. **Look for named-expert content.** "According to [your name], who has been a certified arborist since 2011..." – anything like that?

Most small business sites fail every check.

The fix, in 6 steps

1. Add an FAQ block to your homepage

This is the single highest-leverage move in this chapter. Pick 6–10 questions buyers actually ask you (you'll know what they are – they're the questions you answer on every sales call). Write them as questions, with short, direct answers. Don't be cute.

2. Convert prose into lists where it makes sense

If a paragraph contains "we offer A, B, C, D, and E" – turn it into a bulleted list. If a paragraph describes a process with several steps – turn it into a numbered list. Each list item should be self-contained: a reader (or an AI) should be able to extract a single item without losing meaning.

3. Define your terms

For each service or product, write a one-sentence definition: "Lawn aeration is the process of pulling small plugs of soil out of the lawn to relieve compaction and improve water absorption." That single sentence is enormously citable.

4. Add specifics

We did this in Chapter 1, but it bears repeating because every specific fact you add is a potential citation. Year, price, distance, team size, certifications, materials, brands you use, what you don't do – all of it.

5. Quote yourself, by name

If you're the founder/owner, attribute yourself in your content. "We don't take new fence jobs in July or August," says owner Mike Spring. "The heat is hard on the wood and on the crew." That's far more citable than the same sentence as plain prose, because the engine can attribute it cleanly.

6. Write at least one comparison table

Where applicable, turn comparison content into actual tables. "Cedar vs. vinyl vs. chain link" — make it a 3-column table with rows for cost, lifespan, maintenance, appearance. Tables are gold.

What "good" looks like

The Spring Hollow homepage, after Chapter 1 (content) and Chapter 3 (citability):

Spring Hollow Landscaping serves Lansing and Ingham County, Michigan. Founded 2008. Family owned. Average residential project: \$4,500.

Do you charge for estimates? No. Estimates are free for any project under \$25,000.

Are you licensed and insured? Yes — \$2 million general liability, all crew leads are certified arborists.

What's your service area? Lansing, East Lansing, Okemos, Haslett, Mason, Holt. We don't drive past Williamston in either direction.

When can you start? Most spring cleanup work books out 2–3 weeks in advance. Snow removal contracts close September 30.

What's the most common spring problem in Lansing lawns? Crabgrass. Most Lansing lawns get crabgrass in late June, two weeks earlier than the official planting calendars say. Pre-emergent in early April handles it.

Owner Mike Spring: "We don't take new fence jobs in July or August. The heat is hard on the wood and on the crew, and the work suffers."

Page updated May 2026.

Compare this to a 30-word "passionate about outdoor spaces" homepage. The first version has nothing to extract. The second has dozens of citable fragments — every list item, every FAQ answer, every table cell, the founder's quote, the price ranges, the dates.

When ChatGPT answers "best landscaper in Lansing for spring cleanup," the second version is the one it cites. That's the entire goal.

Topical authority

Current as of May 2026. Low churn risk – the principles of topical authority have been stable for years and aren't changing soon.

If your business were a person, what would they be *known for*? Not generically ("we do landscaping") – what specific topic could a friend introduce you with at a dinner party?

That specificity – what's called *topical authority* – is what search engines, both classical and AI, are trying to figure out about your website. The more clearly you stand for one or two specific topics, the more likely you are to be the answer when somebody searches inside that topic.

What's broken

A common shape: a small business has a homepage, a services page, and a blog with thirty posts. The posts are *all over the place* – a few about the core service, but also "10 things to do in Lansing this weekend," "our team's favorite recipes," "happy holidays from our family to yours."

The site has decent traffic – those off-topic posts even bring in some visitors – but the topical signal is muddy. The search engine can't tell whether you're a landscaping company that occasionally writes about food or a hyperlocal blog that occasionally lands deals. That ambiguity is fatal for ranking.

Why it matters

Search engines build something like a topic map of your site: how many pages talk about what, how do those pages link to each other, and how does the whole shape rank against competitors *for that topic*.

If your topic map is one focused cluster – landscape design, lawn care, hardscape, regional plant guides, seasonal maintenance, all interlinked – you look like a topic authority on *landscaping in your region*. The search engine knows what to do with you: when somebody asks about Lansing landscaping, you're a strong candidate.

If your topic map is a scatter of unrelated subjects, the search engine has nothing coherent to rank you for. Every individual page has to fight on its own merits, and most of them will lose to sites that focus.

AI search engines extend this further. They look not just at on-topic content, but at the *interconnectedness* of that content. A site with 20 well-linked pages on regional landscaping looks more authoritative than a site with 20 isolated pages on the same subject.

How to detect this on your own site

1. **Make a list of every page on your site.** If you have a CMS, get the URL list. If you don't, browse the sitemap.

2. **Tag each page with its primary topic.** One tag per page. Be honest. If a page is about landscaping, it's "landscaping." If it's about Halloween costumes for your dog, it's "off-topic."
3. **Calculate your topic ratio.** What percentage of your pages are about your *core business topic*? If the answer is below 70%, you have a focus problem.
4. **Check internal linking.** From your homepage, how many clicks does it take to reach your most important content page? If the answer is more than 2, your content is buried.
5. **Look for topic gaps.** If you're a landscaping company in Lansing, you should have content on: lawn care, mulching, common Lansing plant problems, when to plant in our climate zone, how to prep for snow, hardscape options, fence types, etc. If you're missing the obvious ones, those are gaps.

The fix, in 5 steps

1. Pick your one or two core topics

You're not "a small business in Lansing." You're "a landscaping company in Lansing" or "a Lansing accountant specializing in self-employed clients" or "a Lansing-area fence builder." Be that specific. Write it down. This is the topic you're going to be known for.

If you have two genuinely distinct service lines (e.g., commercial cleaning *and* residential window washing), you might end up with two cores. That's fine. Most small businesses don't have two cores — they have one core they understand and one or two side things they wish they'd dropped.

2. Audit, decide, prune

Look at your existing content with one ruthless question: *does this support my core topic?* For each page:

- **Yes** — keep, plan to update.
- **Adjacent** — keep if it ties back. "10 things to do in Lansing this weekend" doesn't tie. "10 best parks in Lansing for a family picnic — and what landscaping concepts went into each" does.
- **Off-topic** — archive. Don't delete unless it's genuinely embarrassing; just remove from your menu, mark `noindex` if you have technical help, and stop linking to it from your main content. Over a year these pages drift out of the index naturally.

3. Build out the canonical topic cluster

For your core topic, plan a cluster of 8–15 pages that *together* describe the topic comprehensively from your business's perspective. Examples for "Lansing landscaping":

- A pillar page: "Landscaping in Lansing: a homeowner's complete guide" (long, comprehensive)
- Service pages: lawn care, mulching, hardscape, fencing, snow removal
- Topic pages: Lansing climate zones for plants, when crabgrass appears in our region, prep checklists by season
- Project pages: 4–6 case studies of work you've done, with photos and the decisions behind them

- About + contact + service area

That's 16 pages. They all link to each other where it's natural. The pillar page links to every other page; every other page links back to the pillar. This is a *topic cluster*.

4. Write the gap content

Compare your existing content to the cluster plan. What's missing? Write those pages — one or two a month is a sustainable cadence for a single-owner business. Don't try to write all of them at once; you'll burn out, and the writing will get worse with every post.

5. Rewire your internal links

Once your cluster exists, go back to the older pages and add links to the newer ones where it makes sense. From a service page about mulching, link to the pillar guide and to the seasonal-prep page. From the pillar guide, link to every service. The interlinking is what creates the topic-map shape that search engines pick up on.

What "good" looks like

Spring Hollow Landscaping, one year into the topical-authority effort:

- 22 pages of content, all about residential landscaping in mid-Michigan
- Pillar guide at [/lansing-landscaping-guide](#) (3,400 words, refreshed every spring)
- 6 service pages, each linking to the pillar and to 2–3 related services
- 8 topic pages on Lansing-specific issues (climate, soil, common pests, plant timing)
- 6 project case studies, each with the design decisions and the cost
- An About page and a Contact page

Every internal link is on-topic. No more "things to do in Lansing this weekend" filler. The site is *unambiguous* — it's a landscaping company, in Lansing, with deep content on residential outdoor spaces. When ChatGPT or Google AI Overviews are looking for a Lansing landscaping authority to cite, this site is *the answer* in a way the original 5-page brochure never could be.

That's topical authority. It takes time to build, but the curve is steep — once you have a coherent cluster, you start showing up for queries you never specifically targeted, because the engines have decided you're an authority on the entire topic.

Trust signals

Current as of May 2026. Low churn risk – trust signals are an old idea with stable mechanics. AI engines have made them more important, not less.

The fastest way to be ignored by a search engine is to look anonymous, undated, and uncredentialed. The fastest way to be cited is to look like a real person at a real business who knows what they're talking about and is willing to put their name on it.

This chapter is about the difference between those two postures.

What's broken

A blog post on a landscaping company's website titled "10 spring lawn care tips":

Spring is the perfect time to give your lawn the attention it deserves! Here are 10 tips to get started.

The article has no author. No date. No specific source for the advice. No photos that prove it's actually about *this* business. It's filler – and worse, it's filler that's word-for-word similar to a hundred other "10 spring lawn care tips" articles on competitors' sites.

When ChatGPT is asked "when should I aerate my lawn in Michigan," it has no reason to cite this article over any of the others. There's no signal that this advice is more trustworthy than the next article in the same shape.

Why it matters

The newer AI search engines have all converged on a similar principle: **prefer content that has someone's name attached to it, written by an identifiable expert, dated, and traceable to original sources.** Google calls this E-E-A-T (Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, Trustworthiness). The exact framing changes; the underlying signals are remarkably stable.

The signals you can show:

- **Authorship.** A real person's name on the content, with a brief bio.
- **Credentials.** Why this person knows what they're talking about. Years of experience, certifications, prior employers, education.
- **Dates.** When the piece was written. When it was last reviewed.
- **Sources.** Links out to where you got facts. Studies, manuals, manufacturer specs.
- **Photos / evidence.** First-party photos that prove you actually do the work. Not stock photos.
- **Contact path.** A real way to reach the author or the business if a reader has questions.

A page that has all of these is dramatically more citable than a page that has none. The engines aren't fact-checking your content; they're looking at *how it presents itself*. A piece that looks credentialed and

accountable wins ties.

How to detect this on your own site

For your blog posts, guides, and any "advice" content:

1. **Author byline?** Is there a name on the post?
2. **Author bio?** Does that name link to a real bio with credentials?
3. **Date visible?** Both the original publish date and any "last updated" date?
4. **Outbound links to sources?** When the post says "studies show X," does it link to a study?
5. **First-party photos?** Are the images yours, or stock?
6. **Contact pathway?** From the post, can a curious reader reach you?

For your site overall:

1. **Author page** — do you have a /team or /about/[your-name] page with a real bio?
2. **Privacy + Terms pages** — present and linked from the footer? (These are baseline trust signals; their absence is suspicious.)
3. **HTTPS** — the entire site, not just checkout? (Almost universal now but check.)

The fix, in 6 steps

1. Put your name on your content

Every blog post, guide, FAQ, or advice page should have a visible author byline. Even if you're a one-person business and the answer is always "[your name]," the byline matters. It says *somebody is willing to be wrong on the internet about this*, which is the entire foundation of credibility.

2. Write a real author bio

3–5 sentences. Specific. Where you've worked, what you're certified in, what you specifically know about. Not "passionate about helping people grow." More like:

Mike Spring is the owner of Spring Hollow Landscaping. He's a certified arborist (ISA Cert #MI-7842, since 2011) and has been doing residential landscape work in mid-Michigan for 17 years. Before starting Spring Hollow he worked as a crew lead at Greenfield Landscape Co. Reach him at mike@springhollow.example.

Link to that bio from every post you write.

3. Show the date

Both the original publish date and the most recent meaningful review date. If a post is from 2022 and you reviewed it in 2026 and the advice still holds, say so: "Published March 2022. Reviewed and confirmed accurate May 2026."

4. Link out to sources

When you say "studies show," link to the study. When you say "the manufacturer recommends," link to the manufacturer's spec sheet. Outbound links are not bad for SEO (this is a persistent myth) — they're a trust signal. Sites that cite their work look more credible than sites that don't.

5. Use first-party photos

Stock photos are obvious — humans recognize them, and AI engines increasingly do too. Even mediocre photos of your actual work are more powerful than gorgeous stock photos. Phone camera + good lighting + a few captions is enough.

If you absolutely have to use stock for some reason, mix it with first-party. The signal isn't "no stock ever" — it's "this is real work by real people."

6. Make a clean contact path from every page

Footer with phone, address, email. A "Contact" link in the main nav. On blog posts, a small "Questions? Email [author name]" line at the bottom. The signal is: a real person stands behind this content, and you can reach them.

What "good" looks like

A blog post intro on a landscaping site, after a trust-signals pass:

By [Mike Spring](#), owner & ISA Certified Arborist (Cert #MI-7842). Published March 12, 2024 · Reviewed and updated May 1, 2026.

Most "lawn care 101" articles will tell you to aerate in early spring. In mid-Michigan, that's actually wrong — and following the advice can do more harm than good. Here's what the research and 17 years of doing this work in Lansing-area lawns actually shows.

The standard recommendation comes from [University of Minnesota Extension](#) and [Michigan State University Extension](#), but read carefully — both sources specify aerating in fall for cool-season grasses, which is what 90% of mid-Michigan lawns are. Spring aeration is appropriate for warm-season grasses, which we don't have up here.

[continues with first-party photos of equipment, soil cores, etc.]

Have questions about your specific lawn? Send a photo to mike@springhollow.example — I usually respond within a day.

Every signal is present: author with credentials, dates, outbound links to authoritative sources (Michigan State Extension is gold for this topic), first-party expertise, contact path. ChatGPT or Perplexity, asked about Michigan lawn aeration, has every reason to cite this post over the anonymous "10 spring lawn care tips" version. Same topic; vastly different trust profile.

You don't need a research budget or a degree program to do this. You need to put your actual name on your actual work and tell readers what you actually know. That's it.

Backlink profile

Current as of May 2026. Low churn risk on the underlying mechanics; high churn risk on specific tactics — what works in 2026 may not work in 2028.

Backlinks — links from other websites to yours — are one of the oldest signals in classical SEO and still one of the strongest. AI search engines use a similar signal, sometimes more directly: when ranking which sites to cite, they preference sites that are themselves cited by other reputable sites.

This chapter is the most patience-dependent in the playbook. Everything else can be done in a quarter. Backlinks take a year of effort before the curve starts to bend.

What's broken

A new business website with strong content (great Chapter 1, great Chapter 3, great Chapter 5) but **zero backlinks** — nobody else on the internet has linked to it yet. The only sites that mention it are the business's own social profiles.

When a search engine evaluates this site, the content looks great but the *external validation* is missing. Google has no signal that anyone besides the business itself thinks this site is useful. AI engines have nothing to corroborate the site's quality.

This is normal for a new business. It is also the slowest signal to fix, which is why it has to be started early and worked on continuously.

Why it matters

A backlink is, conceptually, a vote: another website is saying "this URL is worth visiting." Search engines have decades of evidence that aggregated backlinks correlate with usefulness, and they weight that signal heavily.

AI engines extend the principle: they prefer to cite sources that *other reputable sources* cite. A business that gets linked to from local newspapers, industry publications, professional associations, partner companies, and community organizations looks corroborated in a way that a business with zero external links doesn't.

The engines also (rightly) discount obvious manipulation: paid links, link-farm exchanges, comment-spam links. Quality matters more than quantity. Five links from credible sources are worth more than 500 from junk directories.

How to detect this on your own site

You can't easily count your own backlinks without a tool, but you can get a directional read:

1. **Free check:** search Google for `link:yourdomain.com` and `"yourdomain.com"` (with quotes). The first is

increasingly unreliable; the second shows pages that mention your URL as text. Both are imperfect but free.

2. **Paid tools:** Ahrefs, Semrush, or Moz will give you a real backlink list. Free trials work for an audit. Most give you a "domain authority" or similar score (0–100) so you can see your trajectory over time.
3. **Honest gut check:** how many *external* websites have linked to yours in the past year? If the answer is "I don't know" or "zero," you're at the start of the chapter.

The fix, in 7 strategies

There's no single "5-step fix" here — backlinks are earned, one at a time, through a portfolio of approaches. Pick 2–3 of these to focus on for the next year. Don't try all seven.

1. Be cited by a journalist

Local newspapers and industry publications need expert sources. **HARO** (Help a Reporter Out) and its successors connect journalists with experts willing to be quoted. Sign up, watch the daily emails, and respond — by name, with your business affiliation — to questions in your area.

When a piece runs that quotes you, you typically get a backlink. Even when you don't, you get a citation that AI engines also notice.

This is high-effort, medium-yield. Plan to respond to a query a week. Most won't lead anywhere; some will lead to one of your most valuable links.

2. Get listed in industry-specific directories

Not generic web directories (those are spam at this point) — *industry-specific* ones. For trades: HomeAdvisor, Angi, Houzz. For B2B services: Clutch, G2. For local: Google Business Profile, Bing Places, Yelp, your Chamber of Commerce. For specific specialties: certifying bodies (e.g., ISA for arborists, AICPA for CPAs).

These backlinks are more useful than they look. The directories themselves have authority; the consistency of your NAP across them ties back into Chapter 2 (entity clarity).

3. Sponsor or contribute to local nonprofits and events

A local 5K, a school fundraiser, a chamber-of-commerce event, a community garden, a food bank. If you sponsor something or volunteer significantly, you typically get a thank-you on the organization's site, often with a link.

This works because these organizations have local authority and a clean topical association with your geography. It's also good for your community, which matters for its own reasons.

4. Write a piece that's worth linking to

The cheapest way to get a backlink is to write something other people *want* to link to when they're writing about your topic. This typically means:

- An original survey or data piece ("we surveyed 100 Lansing homeowners about their landscaping budget

– here's what we found")

- A thorough how-to guide that's the most complete on the internet for its specific topic
- A genuinely useful tool or calculator
- A specific take with named opinions, not safe vanilla content

This is the best long-term strategy because it scales: a great piece keeps earning links for years. It's also the hardest to do well, which is why most businesses don't bother.

5. Partner with adjacent (non-competing) businesses

If you're a landscaper, you might partner with a fence builder, a pool company, a deck builder, a landscape architect. Each of you serves the same buyer at different points. A "trusted partners" page on each other's site, or a co-authored guide, generates clean topical backlinks and referral traffic.

This works best when the partnership is real – actual work referrals back and forth – not a transparent "you link to me, I link to you" exchange. The latter is detectable and discounted.

6. Speak, podcast, and write guest posts

If you can get on a podcast in your industry – even a small local one – you typically get a backlink in the show notes. If you can write a guest post for a trade publication or partner blog, same. If you can speak at a conference (even a virtual one), the conference site usually links to speakers.

These are also content for *your* site, since you can cross-post or summarize on your own blog.

7. Make sure existing mentions are linked

This is sneaky-good. Find places where your business is *mentioned by name* but not linked. Use the "yourdomain.com" Google search trick from earlier, or just search for your business name on news sites and trade pubs. When you find an unlinked mention, email the author or editor with "thanks for the mention – would you mind linking to our site so readers can find us?"

This converts often, costs almost nothing, and surfaces in your tracking immediately.

What "good" looks like over time

There's no single "after" snapshot – this chapter is a multi-year curve. A reasonable trajectory for a small business doing 2–3 of the strategies above:

- **Year 1:** 5–15 backlinks, mostly from directories and a couple of community/sponsorship mentions. Domain authority creeps from 0 to maybe 10/100.
- **Year 2:** 20–40 backlinks, including a couple of journalist citations and one or two genuine partner links. DA in the 15–25 range. You start to see organic traffic from non-branded queries.
- **Year 3:** 50–100 backlinks. A piece of yours has been linked to by other people writing about your topic. DA approaching 30. You're now meaningfully discoverable.

Compared to other chapters, this is glacial. The compensation: backlinks are *durable*. A great link

earned in year 1 is still working for you in year 5. Once the curve bends, it stays bent.

What to NOT do

- **Don't buy links.** Even from "respectable" agencies. Detection is good; the penalty is brutal; the recovery is slow.
- **Don't run link exchanges.** "I'll link to you if you link to me" arrangements are obvious and discounted by every modern search engine.
- **Don't post comments with your URL on unrelated blogs.** This was a tactic 15 years ago. It does nothing now except mark you as a spammer.
- **Don't use private blog networks (PBNs).** These are paid networks of fake sites that all link to your real site. Search engines have been hunting these since 2014; getting caught is a near-permanent ranking penalty.

The general rule: any link you'd be embarrassed to point at in a meeting is a link you shouldn't have built.

Backlinks are slow and they're work. They're also one of the very few moats a small business can build on the open web. The site with thirty real, earned links from real, relevant sources will outrank the site with three thousand bought ones – every time.

On-page craft

Current as of May 2026. Low churn risk – these patterns have been stable for 15+ years and rest on how humans read, not on platform whims.

Most "on-page SEO" guides will tell you to write a title tag, write a meta description, and use H1/H2/H3 headings. Fine. The technical companion doc covers the *presence* of those elements.

This chapter covers the *quality* of what you put inside them – the difference between a title tag that gets clicked and one that doesn't, between an H2 that helps the reader skim and one that's wasted space, between alt text that serves accessibility and SEO and alt text that's just `image1.jpg`.

What's broken

Three example title tags, all on landscaping company homepages:

1. Home | Spring Hollow
2. Spring Hollow Landscaping - Best Landscaping in Lansing | Lawn Care, Mulching, Hardscape, Snow Removal, and More - Free Estimates - Locally Owned
3. Lansing Landscaper · Lawns, Hardscape, Snow · Spring Hollow

The first is invisible – Google might rewrite it; AI engines have nothing to chew on. The second is keyword-stuffed, will get truncated in the search results, and reads like spam. The third is **right** – it's specific, scannable, and informative even at a glance. It's also exactly the shape both Google and AI engines extract cleanly.

Most small business sites have title tags that look like #1 or #2. The fix is editorial taste, not engineering.

Why it matters

Title tags, meta descriptions, and headings are the parts of your content that get extracted *most often* – by Google for the search results listing, by AI engines for citation context, by social media platforms for previews when somebody shares your page.

A page can have wonderful body copy but a terrible title, and most readers will never see the body copy because they didn't click the title. Conversely, a page with a strong title and reasonable body copy will outperform a page with great body copy and a weak title.

Headings have a similar effect inside the page itself: they let readers (and AI) skim the structure of your argument. A page with strong, descriptive headings can be *understood* even by someone who only reads the headings.

How to detect this on your own site

For each priority page (the same five from earlier chapters):

1. **Title tag length.** Should be roughly 50–60 characters. Too short = no information. Too long = truncated in search results. Open the page, view source, find the `<title>` tag.
2. **Title tag specificity.** Does it include *what the page is about* and *who it's from*? "Home" fails. "Best Landscaping" fails (every site claims to be the best). "Lansing Landscaper · Spring Hollow" passes.
3. **Meta description.** 140–160 characters. Should make the reader want to click — it's marketing copy, not summary copy. "Welcome to our website" fails. "We don't take new fence jobs in July or August. Here's why, and what we recommend instead." passes.
4. **H1.** One per page. Should match the user's reading expectation set by the title. If the title promises "Lansing Landscaper" and the H1 says "Welcome to Spring Hollow," that's a tonal mismatch.
5. **H2/H3 hierarchy.** Are headings *descriptive* or just labels? "Services" is a label. "What we do — and what we don't" is descriptive. The first tells you nothing without reading on; the second tells you the page's structure.
6. **Image alt text.** For every image on the page, is the alt text actually describing the image? Or is it `IMG_4823.jpg`, or worse, missing entirely?

The fix, in 5 steps

1. Rewrite your title tags using the standard formula

There's a formula that works for almost every business page:

| `[Specific topic] · [Differentiator] · [Brand]`

Examples:

- `Lansing Landscaper · Lawn, Hardscape, Snow · Spring Hollow`
- `Free SEO + AI Search Report Card · No Email Gate · Free SEO Report Card`
- `Lansing CPA for Self-Employed · Hawthorne Tax & Bookkeeping`
- `Cedar Privacy Fences in Mid-Michigan · Stone & Sons Fencing`

Not every page is the homepage. For service pages: `[Service] in [Location] · [Brand]`. For blog posts: `[Specific claim or question] · [Brand]`. The principle is always: lead with what's specific, end with who you are.

2. Treat your meta description like an ad

You have ~155 characters. Don't waste them summarizing the page — entice the click. Specifics win:

- Bad: "We are a landscaping company in Lansing offering a variety of services including lawn care, mulching, and hardscape work. Contact us today!"
- Good: "Family-owned Lansing landscaper, est. 2008. Spring cleanup from \$350. Most projects \$4,500 average. Free estimates within 30 min of downtown."

The good version has prices, dates, and a service-area constraint — three concrete details that matter

to a buyer skimming search results.

3. Make your headings descriptive

Bad headings are often just labels: "Services," "About Us," "Our Process," "Contact." These don't help a skimmer.

Good headings make a small claim or pose a question:

- "What we do – and what we don't"
- "Why we work in pairs"
- "Our pricing, in plain English"
- "How to know if we're a fit"
- "When to plant in mid-Michigan"

A reader who only reads your headings should still understand the structure of your argument. A skimmer who reads your H2s should know whether to keep reading.

4. Write real alt text

For every meaningful image, write 8–15 words of alt text describing what's in the image and why it's there.

- Bad: IMG_4823.jpg or image of work
- Decent: Newly mulched flower bed
- Good: Newly mulched flower bed at a residential job in East Lansing – hardwood mulch, edged with steel

Alt text is for two audiences: screen-reader users (mandatory accessibility) and search-engine crawlers (which use it to understand image content). Both benefit from specificity.

For decorative images that don't add information – a banner, a divider – use `alt=""`. Empty alt is correct for decoration, not for actual content images.

5. Pass the "first paragraph" test

The first paragraph of every page should pass a brutal test: **if a reader read only this paragraph, would they understand what the page is about, who it's from, and what to do next?**

If yes, the page is set up well.

If the first paragraph is "Welcome to our website! We are passionate about..." – rewrite it. Lead with what the page is. Be specific. Save the welcome for the human-touch line at the very end.

What "good" looks like

A service page on a landscaping site, on-page craft applied:

- **Title tag:** Lansing Lawn Aeration · When and Why · Spring Hollow
- **Meta description:** Most Lansing lawns should be aerated in fall, not spring. Why the standard advice is wrong for our region. ISA-certified arborist · serving Lansing since 2008.
- **H1:** Lawn aeration in Lansing – when to do it, and when not to
- **H2:** Why the standard "aerate in spring" advice is wrong for Michigan
- **H2:** What aeration actually does (in 3 sentences)
- **H2:** When we recommend aerating your lawn (and when we don't)
- **H2:** What it costs · how to schedule
- **First paragraph:** *"This page is about lawn aeration, specifically for cool-season lawns in mid-Michigan – which describes 90% of residential lawns from Jackson to Saginaw. Aeration is one of the cheapest, highest-impact things you can do for a struggling lawn, but the standard 'aerate in spring' advice from national gardening sites is wrong for our region. Here's what works."*
- **Image alt text:** Soil core samples from a residential aeration job in East Lansing – six 3-inch plugs showing healthy moisture and minimal thatch buildup.

Every individual element does its job. The title tells the searcher what's here and who's saying it. The meta description sells the click with specifics. The H1 picks up where the title left off. The H2s are scannable claims. The first paragraph would inform a reader who skipped the rest. The alt text is descriptive.

This is "on-page craft" – small editorial decisions, made carefully and consistently, across every page. None of them are technical; all of them are content judgment. They compound.

Your 90-day plan

Reading the chapters is the easy part. Most small business owners stop here. The ones who actually move their search-and-AI rankings do this differently — they pick a small number of changes, sequence them, and ship them on a calendar.

Here is that calendar. Spend roughly 4 hours per week, and at the end of 90 days you will have moved every score on a Free SEO Report Card scan in the right direction.

This plan assumes you're starting from a baseline of "decent technical setup, but content + entity + citability + trust signals all weak." If your situation is different, reorder — but keep the cadence.

Week 1 — Inventory and decide

Time: 4 hours. No content writing yet.

- List every page on your site. Tag each with its primary topic and your gut score (good / okay / weak).
- Pick the **5 priority pages** you'll work on for the rest of this plan. Default: homepage, two top service pages, About, one cornerstone blog post or service guide.
- Pick your **canonical name + NAP**. Write it down. (Chapter 2.)
- Run a Free SEO Report Card scan of your homepage. Save the report — you'll re-run it at day 90 to see the delta.

Week 2 — Entity clarity (Chapter 2)

Time: 4 hours.

- Audit name, address, phone consistency across your site, Google Business Profile, LinkedIn, Facebook, Yelp, industry directories. Fix any inconsistencies.
- Rewrite your About page using the entity-clarity template: founded date, owner, what you do, where you serve, why you exist, how to reach you. Keep it human and specific.
- Claim any external profiles you don't already own (Google Business, LinkedIn, Yelp, industry directories). Make sure all show your canonical name + NAP.

Weeks 3–4 — Content quality on priority pages (Chapter 1)

Time: 8 hours over 2 weeks.

- For each of your 5 priority pages, write a fresh outline (5 questions, 3 things to explain, 1 thing only you know).
- Rewrite each page from the outline — don't edit in place.

- Replace every vague phrase with a specific one. Add prices where you can. Add dates. Add service areas.
- Add a "Page updated [month year]" line to each.

This is the slowest two weeks. The writing matters. Don't speed-run it.

Weeks 5–6 – Citability (Chapter 3)

Time: 8 hours over 2 weeks.

- Add an FAQ block (6–10 questions) to your homepage and your top service page.
- Convert prose into bulleted/numbered lists where the content fits.
- Define your terms – every service or product gets a one-sentence definition.
- Add at least one comparison table somewhere on your site (services, materials, plans, anything).
- Quote yourself by name in at least 3 places.

By the end of week 6, your priority pages should have multiple "extractable shapes" per page. Re-run a Free SEO Report Card scan – your Citability score should have moved noticeably.

Week 7 – Trust signals (Chapter 5)

Time: 4 hours.

- Add author bylines to every blog post and guide. Write your bio (3–5 specific sentences with credentials). Link bylines to that bio page.
- Add visible publish dates and "last reviewed" dates to all advice/blog content.
- Audit your blog posts: replace obvious stock photos with first-party photos where possible. Add real alt text to every image (Chapter 7).
- Make sure outbound links to sources exist on any post that says "studies show," "research shows," or "according to."

Week 8 – On-page craft (Chapter 7)

Time: 4 hours.

- Rewrite the title tag and meta description on each priority page using the formulas from Chapter 7.
- Audit headings – convert label headings ("Services") to descriptive ones ("What we do – and what we don't").
- Pass every priority page through the "first paragraph" test. Rewrite any that fail.
- Spot-check alt text across the site.

Weeks 9–10 – Topical authority planning (Chapter 4)

Time: 4 hours over 2 weeks. Mostly planning, not writing yet.

- List every page on your site. Calculate your topic ratio. Decide what's off-topic to archive.
- Plan your topic cluster: 8–15 pages (some you have, some you'll write). Pillar page, services, topic pages, project case studies, About + Contact.
- Identify the 3 highest-priority gap pages – the ones missing from your cluster that would matter most.
- Outline those 3 gap pages.

Weeks 11–12 – Topical authority writing (Chapter 4)

Time: 8 hours over 2 weeks.

- Write the 3 gap pages. Use the playbook structure: outline first, specific facts, FAQ where appropriate, dates and credentials.
- Add internal links: each new page links to the pillar; the pillar links to each new page; related service pages link to each other where natural.
- Mark off-topic pages as `noindex` (or just remove from menu). Don't delete unless they're embarrassing.

Week 13 – Backlink groundwork (Chapter 6)

Time: 4 hours.

You will *not* see backlink results in 90 days – that's a 12-month curve. But you can lay foundations:

- Sign up for HARO or its successor. Bookmark the daily email.
- Submit your business to your local Chamber of Commerce site, your industry's directory, and any partner sites.
- Identify 3 adjacent (non-competing) businesses to potentially partner with. Send each an introductory email.
- Identify 1 piece of content you could write that would be link-worthy (a survey, a comprehensive guide, a comparison piece). Outline it; that's next quarter's work.

Day 90 – Re-scan and review

Re-run the Free SEO Report Card scan you saved on day 1. Compare. Most metrics should have moved. Citability and Entity Clarity should have moved a lot. Backlink Profile will be roughly unchanged – that's expected.

Save the new report. Plan the next 90 days from whichever scores remain weakest.

What this is NOT

This is not 90 days to "rank #1 for [your industry]." It's 90 days to *fix the foundation* – the editorial work that everything else builds on. Once the foundation is right, ongoing work is mostly

maintenance: refresh content every 6–12 months, keep adding to your topic cluster, keep earning backlinks one at a time.

The compounding effect is real. The first 90 days fixes the worst gaps. The next 90 keeps the curve bending. By month 12, you're competing on an entirely different basis than the businesses who never did this work.

Print this calendar. Tape it somewhere you'll see it. Cross off each week as you finish.

– Troy

The Small-Business SEO + GEO Playbook – Changelog

v2026.05.1 – 2026-05-03

Initial public release.

- 8 content chapters (Intro, Content Quality, Entity Clarity, Citability, Topical Authority, Trust Signals, Backlink Profile, On-Page Craft)
- 90-day implementation plan
- Cover page with version + "current as of" date
- Distribution: open download via /resources on freeseoreportcard.net