BRIX & MORTAR

Your Competitors Are Showing Up in ChatGPT. Are You?

A practical AI search visibility guide for trade businesses.

A practical checklist to help your business show up when it matters.

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START HERE

Three Things to Do Today

Before you spend a dime trying to get your business into AI search results, find out where you stand.

1. Search for your business

Open ChatGPT or Perplexity. Ask: "Who are the best [your trade] contractors in San Jose?" Then ask: "What do you know about [your business name]?" Save the answers.

2. Check your Google Business Profile

Search for your company on Google. Check your phone number, services, hours, photos, and service area. Fix anything that's wrong or missing.

3. Look at your website like a customer

Can someone figure out what you do and where you work within five seconds? If you're a remodeling contractor in Willow Glen, that should be obvious. Not buried under three paragraphs about your passion for craftsmanship.

> Do these three things first. Everything else builds on them.

01 / THE PROBLEM

Why Your Competitors Show Up

Someone in Willow Glen asks ChatGPT to recommend a contractor for a kitchen remodel. It comes back with five companies. Yours isn't one of them.

You've been in business for 20 years. You've got good reviews, a solid reputation, and hundreds of completed projects around San Jose. Meanwhile, some contractor who's been around for 18 months makes the list.

> What the fuck?

Welcome to AI search. People are asking ChatGPT, Perplexity, and Google's AI search features the same questions they used to type into Google: Who's a good contractor? Who installs HVAC systems? Who handles high end remodels?

These tools are giving them names. The question is whether your business is one of them.

The good news? Most of what helps isn't new. It's the same basic work that made businesses visible on Google in the first place. There's a little more to it now.

How AI Search Works

You don't need to understand how artificial intelligence is built to understand this part.

ChatGPT, Perplexity, and Google's AI search features use information from websites, business listings, articles, reviews, and other public sources.

They don't all work the same way. Some search the web when you ask a question. Others also rely on information learned during training. But they need something to work with.

Your website tells them what services you offer. Your business listings help establish where you work. Reviews and mentions on other websites provide additional information about your company.

> If the internet barely knows you exist, these tools have less information to support recommending you.

And if your website says you're 'committed to delivering exceptional solutions,' congratulations. You've told them practically nothing.

- Who you are
- What you do
- Where you work
- Why someone should trust you

Regular SEO Still Matters

Despite what the internet marketing crowd keeps telling everyone, SEO didn't suddenly become useless because ChatGPT showed up.

Answer the damn question

Someone searches: 'How much does a panel upgrade cost in San Jose?' Give them a realistic price range near the top, if you can support it. Then explain what affects the cost and whether permits are involved.

Cover the work you do

An HVAC company needs more than one air conditioning repair page. Talk about maintenance, replacement costs, warning signs, and the questions customers ask before calling.

Make your pages easy to read

Use clear headings, short paragraphs, and links between related pages. People should find an answer without digging through your entire website.

Give search engines some structure

Schema markup is code that identifies details about your business and services. It isn't magic, but it helps describe what's on your website.

> Stop stuffing 'San Jose contractor' into every heading. That nonsense should have died years ago.

04 / LOCAL DETAIL

Get Specific About Where You Work

You know the area. You know the houses, neighborhoods, weather, building requirements, and problems people run into. Use that knowledge.

- A contractor in Willow Glen might explain why older homes near downtown often need electrical upgrades.
- An HVAC company in San Jose might discuss cooling problems during heat waves or how wildfire smoke affects indoor air quality.
- A remodeler in Campbell might explain what homeowners should expect when renovating a 1960s ranch house.

Compare that with: 'Providing exceptional home improvement solutions throughout the greater Bay Area.' What does that even mean?

Write about the work you know and the places you actually serve.

> Don't create 25 nearly identical city pages with the town name swapped out.

If you work in Willow Glen, Campbell, Los Gatos, or Saratoga, give people something useful about the work you do there.

Your Google Business Profile Matters

If you haven't claimed and completed your Google Business Profile, start there. It's free.

- Business name, phone number, and hours
- Services and service areas
- Real photos of your work
- Website address

If you serve customers at their properties rather than at your business address, set up your profile accordingly.

Check the other listings

- Bing Places and Apple Business Connect
- Yelp, Facebook, and Nextdoor
- Trade associations and local business directories
- Manufacturer and supplier directories, where applicable

Your business name, phone number, and address, where publicly applicable, should be consistent.

> If Google has one phone number, Yelp another, and your website an office you left three years ago, clean it up.

You don't need every directory on the internet. Start with the ones people use.

Reviews Still Carry Weight

You can tell everyone you're the best contractor in San Jose. That's easy. It's a little more convincing when customers say it.

Ask customers for honest Google reviews after completed jobs. Don't hand them a script or tell them what to write.

Compare these reviews

"Great service. Highly recommend."

> "They replaced our furnace in Willow Glen and finished in one day."

The second review tells a potential customer considerably more. If customers naturally mention the work and neighborhood, even better.

Respond to reviews, including the occasional bad one. People notice how businesses handle problems.

One technical note: don't add review markup to testimonials on your own website expecting Google to display five stars. Google generally doesn't show those stars for a business publishing reviews about itself.

Your Website Can't Do All the Talking

Here's something businesses tend to overlook. What other websites say about you matters.

If your website says you're an experienced contractor, that's one thing. If a local publication features your work, a manufacturer lists you as an authorized installer, and a trade association quotes you, there's independent information supporting your reputation.

You don't need a national publicity campaign. Look for opportunities that make sense.

- Local publications covering completed projects or community work
- Trade associations and industry newsletters
- Supplier and manufacturer websites
- Local podcasts and interviews

For a South Bay contractor, a genuine mention from a relevant local source can be more useful than appearing on some random website nobody has heard of.

> Buying garbage links or paying for a meaningless press release? Save your money.

Write for People, Not Robots

If you're writing about kitchen remodeling in San Jose, tell people what they want to know.

- How much does it cost?
- How long does it take?
- Do they need permits?
- What causes delays?
- Can they stay in the house during the work?

> Put the answer near the top. Explain the details below.

Use real numbers when you have them. Show completed projects. Explain what makes one job more expensive than another.

A remodeler might explain why moving plumbing or removing a load bearing wall changes the price of a kitchen renovation. That's useful.

"You deserve the kitchen of your dreams" isn't much of an answer.

You don't need a 2,500 word article every time someone asks a simple question. Sometimes three good paragraphs will do.

Give People a Reason to Trust You

A clear website, accurate listings, legitimate reviews, documented work, and credible mentions give customers and AI tools more information about your business.

Make these details easy to find

- Business name and contact information
- Services and areas served
- Contractor license and relevant certifications
- Years in business
- Photos and descriptions of completed projects

If you've remodeled 40 kitchens in Willow Glen, show some of them. Explain what the customer needed, what you did, and how the project turned out.

Real work is more convincing than a stock photo of a contractor holding a clipboard.

> Don't invent credentials or inflate numbers.

And don't hide all your useful information inside a PDF brochure nobody can find. Put important details directly on your website.

How Do You Know If It's Working?

There's no single dashboard that tells you exactly how often every AI tool recommends your business. You can still watch a few things.

Check AI answers every month

Repeat the two questions from the beginning. Record whether your business appears, how it's described, and which sources are mentioned. One result isn't a trend.

Look at Google Analytics

Check for visits from ChatGPT, Perplexity, and other AI tools. Some traffic won't be identified correctly.

Watch Google Search Console

Look at question searches and the pages receiving impressions and clicks. Google includes AI Overview activity in regular search reporting, not a separate report.

Monitor your business name

Set up Google Alerts to catch some new mentions across the web.

> Someone promising a guaranteed ChatGPT recommendation in 30 days can't deliver that guarantee.

Where I'd Spend My Time

If I owned a contracting business in San Jose, I wouldn't start by hiring an 'AI optimization expert' or publishing 50 articles written by ChatGPT.

I'd start with the basics.

- Get the business listings right.
- Fix the website.
- Explain the services.
- Show the work.
- Collect legitimate reviews.
- Build a reputation that exists beyond your homepage.

Then see what the AI tools are saying about you.

There's no secret trick here. The goal is to become a business these tools can find, understand, and support with credible information.

> Which, when you think about it, is pretty much what good marketing was supposed to do all along.

PRINTABLE CHECKLIST

AI Search Visibility Checklist

Start with the first section. Work your way down.

GET THESE RIGHT FIRST

- [ ] Claim and verify your Google Business Profile
- [ ] Complete services, hours, photos, and service areas
- [ ] Collect legitimate reviews and respond
- [ ] Check Google, Bing, Apple Maps, Yelp, and trade listings
- [ ] Keep business contact details consistent
- [ ] Create a clear page for each main service
- [ ] Make sure website claims are accurate

WORTH THE EXTRA EFFORT

- [ ] Publish realistic price ranges or cost guides
- [ ] Answer common questions on service pages
- [ ] Show licenses, certifications, and years in business
- [ ] Use real job photos instead of stock images
- [ ] Publish project stories with permission
- [ ] Earn mentions from relevant local sources
- [ ] Review and update outdated information

KEEP THE WEBSITE IN ORDER

- [ ] Include useful About and Contact pages
- [ ] Make sure the website works on phones
- [ ] Use HTTPS
- [ ] Add appropriate business and service schema
- [ ] Make important pages accessible to search engines
- [ ] Keep page loading times reasonable
- [ ] Publish a clear privacy policy

BRIX & MORTAR

Need a Hand Sorting Through It?

I help established trade contractors show up in AI search, run better Google Ads, and build websites that bring in better projects.

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