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Being found on Google: Business Profile, Search Console and the basics

SEO & Marketing

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Having a website is not the same as being found. They are different things, and the second does not happen by itself - you have to **tell Google it exists** and give it reasons to show it. None of this costs money, and nearly all of it takes an afternoon.

First: does Google know it exists?

Before changing anything, run this test. Type this into Google, exactly like this, with your domain:

```
site:yourdomain.ao
```

What you see	What it means
Several of your pages	Google already knows you. The work now is appearing *better*, not appearing.
Only the home page	It found the door and did not go in. It is missing a sitemap - see below.
Nothing	Google does not know the site exists. It is the commonest case on new sites, and it is fixed in minutes.

The step that pays most, and almost nobody takes

For a business with an address or a service area, a **Google Business Profile** pays more than anything else - it is what puts the business on the map and in that block of three results that appears before everything else. It is free.

1. Search for your business on Google. If an automatically created listing already appears, **claim it** rather than creating another.

2. Fill in **everything**: exact name, category, address, phone, hours and the website address. The **category** is one of the heaviest fields - pick the most specific one that exists, not the most general.

3. Complete whatever verification Google asks for. It is the slowest part and there is no shortcut.

4. Add **real photographs** - of the shop, the team, what you sell. Listings with photographs get considerably more contacts than listings without.

5. **Reply to reviews**, including the bad ones. A calm reply to a complaint convinces more than ten compliments.

Keep it alive.
An updated listing appears better than a dormant one. One post a month - a new product, seasonal hours - is plenty.

Telling Google the site exists

The tool is called **Search Console**, it is Google's and it is free. It is where you see which searches bring people to the site - and what is stopping others from arriving.

1. Go to *search.google.com/search-console* and add your domain.

2. **Prove the domain is yours.** The simplest route is a TXT record in DNS - see **proving the domain is yours**. Done once, it serves everything Google asks of you from then on.

3. **Submit the sitemap.** On WordPress with an SEO plugin, the address is usually `/sitemap_index.xml` or `/sitemap.xml`.

4. Come back **a week later**. The data takes time to appear, and returning the next day only gives the impression it did not work.

This is where you discover what is broken.
Search Console tells you, by name, which pages Google tried to read and could not - server errors, redirect loops, pages blocked by mistake. It is information that exists nowhere else, and it is free.

Knowing whether anyone visits

Worth saying plainly: **most of the sites we host have no way at all of measuring visits**. That means spending money on a site without knowing whether it does anything.

There are two ways, and they are not rivals:

Where	What it gives
cPanel statistics	Already there, nothing to install and no cookies. They show visits, pages and where people come from - see **monitoring performance in cPanel**
Google Analytics	Considerably more detail, but it is third-party code tracking your visitors - and that brings obligations: **the cookie notice and consent**

The basics, worth more than tricks

1. **A different title on every page**, saying what the page is and where the business is. «Home» on every page is the commonest fault we see.
2. **Write the name of the city** you serve. People search with the name of the place.
3. **The site has to open quickly on a phone**, which is where nearly everyone searches - see **the site is slow**.
4. **A padlock on the site.** A «not secure» warning drives visitors away and weighs on the result - see **what is an SSL certificate**.
5. If it is WordPress, an SEO plugin handles titles and the sitemap - see **the best SEO plugins**.

! **Be wary of anyone promising first place.**
Position in the natural results cannot be bought, and nobody can guarantee it - not even us. What works is boring and slow: a complete listing, a fast site, pages that answer real questions, and time. Anyone guaranteeing you first place in a fortnight is selling you something else.

NEED A HAND?

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