SMITCO ANALYTICS

Small Business Guide Series

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR UK SMALL BUSINESSES

Get Found in AI Search

How to make sure your business shows up when customers ask ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity, Copilot and Google's AI for a recommendation.

- **8 practical steps**
- **Worked examples and checklists**
- **Review request and reply examples**
- **30-day action plan and progress tracker**

No technical knowledge needed. Written for owners and managers.

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Before you start

This guide exists because a growing number of your potential customers never see a list of search results. They ask an AI tool a question, get a short answer with a handful of business names, and pick one.

If your business isn't in that answer, you don't get considered. It doesn't matter how good your work is.

The good news is that the things that get a business recommended are mostly within your control, and most of them don't cost anything. They're about being clear, being consistent and showing that real customers rate you. This guide walks you through each one in order.

How to use this guide

- Work through the steps in order. Each one builds on the last.
- Print the checklists and trackers, or fill them in on screen.
- Set aside two or three focused sessions of around two hours. You don't need to do it all in one go.
- Do Step 1 before you change anything, so you have a baseline to measure against.

What you'll need

- Access to your website (or the person who manages it)
- Your Google Business Profile login, if you have one (see Step 3)
- Free accounts on two or three AI tools, such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity or Microsoft Copilot
- A list of your recent customers, for the reviews step
- A notebook or spreadsheet for tracking

A quick word on expectations

Nobody can guarantee that an AI tool will recommend a particular business. These tools change how they work regularly, and their answers vary from one person to the next. What you can do is give them every reason to be confident about you. That's what this guide is for.

What's inside

Eight steps, then a plan to pull it all together.

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THE BASICS

How AI search decides who to recommend

You don’t need to understand the technology. You just need to know what these tools look for.

When someone asks an AI tool for a recommendation, it draws on information it has gathered from across the web: your website, your Google Business Profile, review sites, directories, social profiles, local news and anywhere else your business is mentioned. It then tries to work out which businesses are a good match and which ones it can trust.

What it’s looking for	What that means in practice	Covered in
Clarity	Can it tell exactly what you do, who for and where?	Step 2
Consistency	Do your name, address, phone and hours match everywhere?	Steps 3 and 4
Useful answers	Have you written down answers to the questions people ask?	Step 5
Proof	Are there recent, genuine reviews saying you’re good?	Step 6
Reputation	Do other trusted sources mention you?	Step 7

Think of it like a new employee asked to recommend a local supplier. They’d look you up, check you’re real, see what others say, and only recommend you if the picture hangs together. AI tools work in much the same way.

The key idea

If the information about your business is clear, consistent and backed up by others, AI tools have a much easier time recommending you. If it’s vague, patchy or contradictory, they tend to recommend someone else.

STEP 1

Find out where you stand

Before you change anything, find out what AI tools currently say about you and your competitors.

Write your questions

Write down ten questions a real customer might ask when looking for what you sell. Use the prompts below and fill in the blanks for your business. Mix general questions with specific ones.

Question starter	Example
Who is the best [service] in [town]?	Who is the best wedding photographer in Leicester?
Can you recommend a [business type] near [area]?	Can you recommend a mobile mechanic near Solihull?
I need [specific job]. Who should I contact in [area]?	I need a boiler replaced. Who should I contact in Coventry?
What are the most reliable [business type] in [county]?	What are the most reliable cleaning firms in Warwickshire?
Which [business type] in [town] specialises in [niche]?	Which accountant in Leeds specialises in construction firms?
Is [your business name] any good?	Is Green Leaf Landscaping any good?
What does [your business name] do?	What does Harper & Co Bookkeeping do?
[Your business] vs [competitor]: which is better?	Brook Dental vs Parkside Dental: which is better?

Tip

Include at least two questions using your business name. These show you whether the AI tool knows who you are and describes you accurately, which is just as important as being recommended.

Run the test

1. Open two or three AI tools. ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity and Microsoft Copilot are good choices. Also try a normal Google search, as many now show an AI Overview at the top.
2. Ask each of your ten questions in each tool. Use a private or logged-out browser window where possible, so your own history doesn't skew the results.
3. Record the results in the table below. Be honest.
4. Save screenshots. You'll want to compare them later.

Baseline results

Question	Tool	Were you mentioned?	Was it accurate?	Who else was named?

Your baseline score: mentioned in _____ out of _____ answers. Date: _____