

# LEO Kerry

## Digital Marketing Programme

### Week 2 - SEO & Getting Found Online

#### Session Summary

Delivered by The Marketing Crowd on behalf of Local Enterprise Office Kerry

## Introduction

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This is Week 2 of a 6-week Digital Marketing Programme delivered on behalf of Local Enterprise Office Kerry. The session focused entirely on search — how to get your business found online, both through traditional Google search and through the rapidly growing world of AI-powered search. Three major topics were covered: getting found locally through a Google Business Profile, getting your website found in organic search results, and understanding Google's AI Mode and what it means for the future of search.

## Google Business Profiles: Getting Found Locally

When someone searches locally — using their town, county, or the phrase "near me" — Google typically shows a map at the top of the results with three Google Business Profiles. These are among the most valuable free positions available in Google search. Appearing in the top three is the goal, but even appearing further down in a second set of three profiles is worthwhile.

A Google Business Profile is completely separate from a website. It is a free listing that allows customers to see your location on a map, browse photos and videos, read reviews, get directions, and click through to your website. Most businesses should have one, yet a poll during the session revealed that around 75% of participants either didn't have a profile or didn't know whether they had one.

### Creating a Profile

To create or access a profile, go to [google.com/business](https://google.com/business) and sign in with the Gmail account you want associated with it. If a profile already exists for your business, Google will show it when you type your business name during setup. If not, you can create one by entering your business name, choosing a primary category, indicating whether customers can visit your location, selecting your service area, and adding contact details.

One important tip: if you have a landline number, use it during setup rather than a mobile. Google recognises geographic landline codes and uses them to verify location — and it will allow you to verify instantly via an automated phone call. If you use a mobile number only, Google will send a verification postcard to your address, which can take 10 to 14 days. Once verified, you can update the phone number on the profile if needed.

### Getting into the Top 3

Google selects which profiles to show in the top three based on three factors:

1. **Relevance** — Does your profile make it clear what your business offers and where it operates? Categories, description, and services all feed into this.
2. **Profile quality** — Is the profile comprehensively filled in, regularly updated, and rich with images and video?
3. **Reviews** — The volume and quality of reviews act as a tiebreaker when multiple relevant, well-filled profiles are competing.

### Optimising for Relevance

Categories are one of the biggest levers for relevance. Your primary category carries the most weight — changing it can significantly impact your visibility. To see what category your top competitors are using, do a search for your product or service and look at the category label that appears under each profile in the results.

When adding categories, try different keywords. The exact term you want may not exist, but searching from a different angle — for example, trying "flower" instead of "florist" — will reveal relevant alternatives like "flower delivery" or "dried flowers."

The profile description is another opportunity for relevance. Google reads the words in your description and uses them to understand what searches your business should appear for. If Google's category list doesn't include the exact terms for your business, the description is where you can compensate. ChatGPT can be used to draft an SEO-friendly description — simply describe your business and services and ask it to write one, noting that it should include the key search terms people would use to find you.

Beyond categories and description, ensure the following are fully completed: contact details, opening hours (including bank holidays), service areas, and any products or services sections available on your profile.

### Photos and Videos

Google favours profiles with plenty of visual content. For businesses with physical products — restaurants, florists, boutiques — this is straightforward. For service businesses such as therapists, coaches, or consultants, it requires more thought. Options include photos of your office or workspace, images from events or talks, and short videos sharing tips or advice. Whatever you post to Instagram or Facebook can also work well on your profile.

### Getting Reviews

It is completely normal to ask customers for reviews — very few people leave them without being prompted. The key is to make it as easy as possible. Rather than asking people to find your profile themselves (which many won't manage), use the direct review link. In the Google Business dashboard, there is an "Ask for Reviews" button that generates a unique link for your business. When someone clicks this link, it takes them directly to the review box with no searching required.

How you frame the request matters. A generic "could you leave us a review?" gets far less response than a message that explains why it genuinely matters — for example, explaining that as a small Irish business competing against larger operators, customer reviews make a

real difference to visibility. Making people feel the impact of their action significantly increases the likelihood they'll follow through.

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## SEO: Getting Your Web Pages Found in Organic Search

The second major topic covered how Google decides which web pages to rank on page 1 — and what you can do to influence that.

### How Google Works

Google sends automated bots (often called "spiders") to websites on a regular basis — typically weekly for small business sites. The bot catalogues around 200 factors, both on the site and off it. It then packages this data and sends it back to Google's servers. When someone performs a search, Google runs its algorithm across all that stored data in a fraction of a second and decides which pages to show.

There are three core things Google is looking for when ranking web pages:

1. **Relevance** — Does the page match what the searcher is looking for?
2. **Trust (Domain Authority)** — How much does Google trust the website the page lives on?
3. **Page speed** — Does the page load quickly enough to provide a good user experience?

Critically, Google is ranking individual **web pages**, not websites or businesses. This is a key mindset shift: a page about one specific topic will always outperform a general page that covers many topics at once.

### Checking Page Speed

A free tool called GTmetrix ([gtmetrix.com](https://gtmetrix.com)) allows you to test how quickly any page loads. You can create a free account and change the test server from Seattle to London for more accurate results relevant to Irish users. The key metric is LCP (Largest Contentful Paint) — Google's benchmark is 1.2 seconds. A score of 2.6 seconds is not ideal but not critical; anything above 4 seconds should be addressed. If your pages are slow, go back to your web designer and ask them to speed things up. For anyone in the process of commissioning a new website, check page speed before making the final payment.

### Domain Authority and Backlinks

Domain authority is a measure of how much Google trusts your website, scored from 0 to 100. Large trusted sites score very highly (Google, Facebook: 100; RTE.ie: around 90; major Irish newspapers: 85–90; Local Enterprise Offices: around 50). For a typical small Irish business, a domain authority between 5 and 15 is normal. Getting above 20 is strong.

What matters is not your raw score, but how it compares to the sites currently appearing on page 1 for the searches you want to win. Use the free Neil Patel Backlink tool (search "Neil Patel backlink") to check your own domain authority and that of your competitors. The tool also shows which sites are linking back to any given website — a useful way to identify potential backlink opportunities.

Backlinks are the main driver of domain authority. A backlink is a link from another website pointing to yours. Google interprets links from trusted, reputable sites as votes of confidence. Getting listed in quality local directories, earning coverage in local news publications, appearing in industry directories, and being featured in tourism or accommodation recommendation pages are all effective ways to build backlinks. ChatGPT can help

brainstorm specific backlink opportunities: describe your business and ask it to act as an SEO expert and suggest backlink strategies.

### **Making Pages Relevant**

The most important thing you can do is have a dedicated page for each topic you want to be found for. A single "services" page covering everything is invisible to Google for specific searches. If you want to be found when people search for "teeth whitening Killarney" or "trauma counsellor Kerry," you need a page that is specifically and exclusively about that topic.

To identify which pages you should have, go to ChatGPT and ask it to act as an SEO expert and list the 30 most common search terms for your type of business in your location. Then ask which pages your website should have based on those search terms. You don't have to create every page at once — prioritise the two or three that represent your main revenue sources and build from there.

For each page, three fields carry the most SEO weight:

- **Meta title (SEO title)** — This appears in the browser tab and in Google search results. Put your primary search term at the start, and use the full 60-character allowance to include secondary relevant terms. ChatGPT can generate five options for you to choose from.
- **Meta description** — This also appears in search results and is your opportunity to persuade the searcher to click on your result rather than a competitor's. It should be no more than 155 characters and focus on the benefits people are looking for.
- **Headline and body text** — The headline on the page should contain your primary search term. Body text should be written for humans first, but should naturally include the main term a couple of times. ChatGPT can draft both.

A practical caution: always use incognito mode when checking your own rankings. Because Google personalises results based on your browsing history, searching on a regular browser window can make your site appear higher than it actually does for everyone else.

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## **Google AI Mode: The Future of Search**

The final section of the session covered what is arguably the biggest change in search in 20 years: the rise of AI-powered search engines and the transformation of Google itself.

### **Traditional Google vs AI Search**

Traditional Google gives you a list of links and leaves you to do the work of browsing through them to find the information you need. AI search engines like Perplexity ([perplexity.ai](https://perplexity.ai)) and ChatGPT Search work differently: they read and synthesise content from across the web and give you a direct, conversational answer, with links to sources if you want to explore further. You can also follow up with additional questions in the same conversation — something impossible with a standard Google search.

As AI search engines grew in popularity, Google's share of the search market began to decline for the first time in two decades. Google's response was first AI Overviews (the AI-generated summary boxes that now appear at the top of many search results), and more recently, **AI Mode** — a full AI search engine embedded within Google itself.

The consensus among SEO experts is that within 12 to 18 months, AI Mode will become the default Google experience. The traditional Google most of us are used to will increasingly be seen as the legacy option.

## Getting Found in AI Mode

The good news is that everything covered in the SEO section above also applies to AI Mode. Having dedicated, well-optimised pages for each product or service remains essential — if a page doesn't exist, the AI has no way of knowing you offer something.

In addition, AI search places significant weight on **reputation signals**. To understand what criteria the AI is using when recommending businesses in your category, go to Google AI Mode, search for what you offer (e.g., "recommend digital marketing trainers in Ireland" or "best life coaches in Kerry"), and then ask the AI: "What criteria did you use when choosing these?" Make note of the criteria it gives you. Then review the page on your website that the AI is linking to, and ensure that all the attributes it values are clearly and specifically mentioned on that page.

The most important reputation signal is **reviews**. Google reviews, TripAdvisor, [Booking.com](https://www.booking.com), and industry-specific review platforms all contribute to how the AI assesses your credibility. Beyond reviews, being mentioned in articles, listed in reputable industry directories, or featured in publications all help the AI build a picture of you as a trusted, established business.

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## Key Takeaways

Search is no longer just about Google as we've known it. It is evolving fast, and the businesses that understand how both traditional and AI search work will have a significant advantage.

- A Google Business Profile is free, powerful, and essential for any business serving customers locally. If you don't have one, make it your immediate priority.
- Google ranks web pages, not businesses. Having a dedicated, relevant page for each thing you want to be found for is the single most impactful thing you can do for your SEO.
- Domain authority and page speed matter, but relevance comes first — without a relevant page, the other two factors are irrelevant.
- AI Mode is not a minor feature update. It represents a fundamental change in how people will search. The steps that help you appear in traditional search results will also help you appear in AI Mode, along with a strong focus on reviews and online reputation.
- ChatGPT is a powerful ally throughout this process — for generating category ideas, writing descriptions, identifying search terms, drafting meta titles, and brainstorming backlink strategies.

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## Action Points

1. **Create your Google Business Profile** at [google.com/business](https://google.com/business) if you don't already have one. Use a landline number if you have one to speed up verification.
2. **Review your existing profile** — check that all sections are filled in, your primary category is correct, opening hours are accurate, and bank holiday hours are updated.
3. **Add additional categories** to your profile by searching relevant keywords from multiple angles, not just the obvious one.
4. **Draft or rewrite your profile description** using ChatGPT — ask it to act as an SEO expert and write a description that includes the key terms customers would search for.
5. **Set up your review link** by clicking "Ask for Reviews" in your Google Business dashboard. Save the link and start sharing it with existing customers using a message that explains why reviews genuinely matter to you.
6. **Test your page speed** at [gtmetrix.com](https://gtmetrix.com) — change the server to London and check that your LCP score is below 2.5 seconds. If not, flag it with your web designer.
7. **Check your domain authority** using the Neil Patel Backlink tool and compare it against the sites currently appearing on page 1 for your most important search terms.
8. **Audit your website pages** — identify any "all services" pages and plan to break them into individual topic pages, one per product or service.
9. **Use ChatGPT to identify your target search terms** — ask it to list the 30 most common search terms for your type of business, then ask which pages your website should have.
10. **Update your meta titles and descriptions** using the prompts and process shown in the session — use ChatGPT to generate options, then update them in your website's page editor.
11. **Go to Google AI Mode** and search for what you offer. Check whether you appear. Then ask the AI what criteria it used to make its recommendations, and update your relevant web page to reflect those criteria.
12. **Focus on building reviews consistently** — even two or three strong reviews can be enough to compete in less saturated categories like solicitors, therapists, and specialist service businesses.

*This was created with the help of one of our AI colleagues 😊*