Tool 03: Reputation and business-facts check

This tool combines the name-search check, the trust-source match, review pace and the AI check.

Purpose

See what a homeowner, and an AI tool, find when they check you. Leak 2 (Not trusted) and part of leak 1. Chapters 5, 7 and 15.

Inputs

- A phone, logged out of your Google account (or a private browser tab).
- Your license number, exact business name and main phone number.
- Your Google Business Profile, BBB page and state license record open in tabs.
- 30 minutes.

Steps

A. Name search

1. Search your exact business name.
2. Write down every result on page one, in order: your site, Yelp, Facebook, BBB, MapQuest, Angi, others.
3. Note whether your own site is first.
4. Note any complaint, old address, old phone number or a business with a similar name.
5. Note whether Google shows an AI Overview, and what it says.

B. Trust-source match

6. Make a four-column table: your website, Google Business Profile, BBB, state license record.
7. For each, write: business name, phone, license number, service area, years in business.

	Website	Google Business Profile	BBB	State license record
Business name				
Phone				
License number				
Service area				
Years in business				

8. Circle anything that doesn't match. A tracking number or legal name listed on your brand sheet (chapter 4) isn't a mismatch; check that it rings you and that you control it.

C. Review pace

9. Count your new Google reviews in the last 30 days.
10. Note the date of your newest review.
11. Note how many reviews have an owner reply.

D. The AI check

12. Before you ask, write a setup line so the next check matches: date, tool and version or mode (app or website, search on or off if you can see it), new conversation, signed in or out, the city you asked about and where you were. Where you can, use a chat that doesn't draw on your history (signed out, or the tool's temporary or incognito mode). Your own account may already know your business. These modes reduce personalization; they don't guarantee identical answers. Save each full answer and its links.
13. Ask ChatGPT this, word for word: "Which [trade] companies in [city, state] should a homeowner call? Name the companies and the sources."
14. Ask a second tool the same question (Claude, Perplexity, Gemini or Google AI Mode). Ask each tool twice and date every answer (chapter 15).
15. For each answer, record the four fields below, then who else is named and which sources it links.
16. Then ask about you by name, using the study's own branded prompt: "A friend recommended [Business] in [City, ST]. What can you tell me about them? Are they legit and good to hire?" Note any doubt, wrong fact or "I couldn't find".
17. Before you ask any source for a correction, write a correction record: the answer's claim, the linked page, what that page says, and the verified fact. The linked page may not contain the error.

The four fields (they can overlap). The study's "named" counted a name or a link to the business's site, so don't compare its counts directly with these fields.

- **Mentioned:** the answer names your business, or a name you can document as yours (a former name, say). If you can't tell whether it means you, write "unclear".
- **Own site cited:** a source link that opens your official page. Your domain written as text isn't a citation; check where any redirect lands.
- **Recommended:** the answer suggests contacting or hiring you. Being a "top pick" is stronger presentation; note it separately.
- **Facts right:** check each claim on its own: correct, incorrect, partly wrong, unverified, or none made. Keep these claim marks apart from your judgment of the whole answer.

Edge cases

- A former name, or your site linked without your name: record exactly what appeared.
- A franchise: note whether it linked the corporate site or your local page.
- A business with the same or a similar name: record it, and don't count it as you.
- Ratings, review counts and review summaries are facts to check.
- "I couldn't find" isn't proof of an identity error; check your setup first.
- Leaving you out isn't a wrong fact.

An example (fictional). Juniper Wrench Plumbing, formerly Alder Plumbing, doesn't offer overnight dispatch. An answer says: "Also try Juniper Wrench Plumbing, formerly Alder Plumbing. It offers 24-hour emergency dispatch," and cites its page. Mentioned: yes. Own site cited: yes, if the link opens the official page. Recommended: yes, as an alternative. Facts right: partly wrong. The citation doesn't show where the wrong claim came from.

How to read the result

- Every circled mismatch in step 8 is a fix. Homeowners and AI tools check the same sources, and a conflict gives both a reason to doubt.
- If your site isn't first for your own name, chapter 7 explains what page one is made of and what you can change.
- Review pace: compare yourself with your own trade, not with a generic number. The study medians in Appendix B are context, **not targets**. They describe businesses in the sample. Nobody has shown that hitting them produces a result.
- AI check: being named once means little; being missing once means little. Look for a pattern across two tools and two runs, and for which sources the tools link. Those are the sources to make accurate.
- An answer that can't find or verify you by name: check your setup line, the wording and the location before you call it an identity problem.
- An accurate complaint repeated in answers: fix the service issue, not the answer.
- An unsupported judgment ("not the most responsive"): keep a note of the wording; don't invent a correction.
- A request that was refused, went unanswered or can't be traced isn't "fixed": record it as unresolved. A Google recrawl doesn't mean other AI tools have refreshed.

Limits

- One AI answer is a snapshot. In our November check (chapter 15), the AI tools named very different sets of businesses for the same question on the same day.
- Logged-out results still vary by location and device.
- Review pace correlates with being named by AI in our data. That does not show reviews cause it. Businesses with more reviews also tend to be bigger.
- This tool can't see reviews on platforms you don't check.
- No one can promise you a place in an AI answer. This check tells you what to make accurate, not what you'll get.

Next action

- Mismatches: fix the facts at the source, starting with the state license record and Google Business Profile (chapter 5).
- Page one owned by directories: chapter 7.
- Old name, old address or old phone still showing, or an AI answer that mixes you up with another company: chapter 7, "If you've renamed or moved".
- Review pace below your trade isn't an automatic trigger. First compare completed jobs, requests sent and your own history (chapter 5). If requests aren't going out, ask within

Google's rules and the FTC rule, with no incentives and no asking only the happy customers (chapter 5).

- Repeat the AI check twice a year (tool 09).
- Profile suspended: follow Google's "Fix suspended or disabled profiles" page. Sign in to the Google account linked to the profile, open Google's appeals tool, select the decision and submit one appeal: Google says appeals can be submitted only once. Attach what proves the business is real, such as a business registration, license, tax certificate or utility bill, with the name and address matching the profile. Don't create a new profile for the same business; Google says not to (chapter 12).

From *The Next Name on the List* by Youssef Hodaigui. Free to use in your own business; please don't resell.