SWELL COUNTRY

PRACTICE GROWTH GUIDE FOR CLINICS

The Google Business Profile tune-up

Many new patients **meet your clinic on Google** before they ever see your website. Once you understand what that profile is really doing, the work of getting calls from it changes completely.

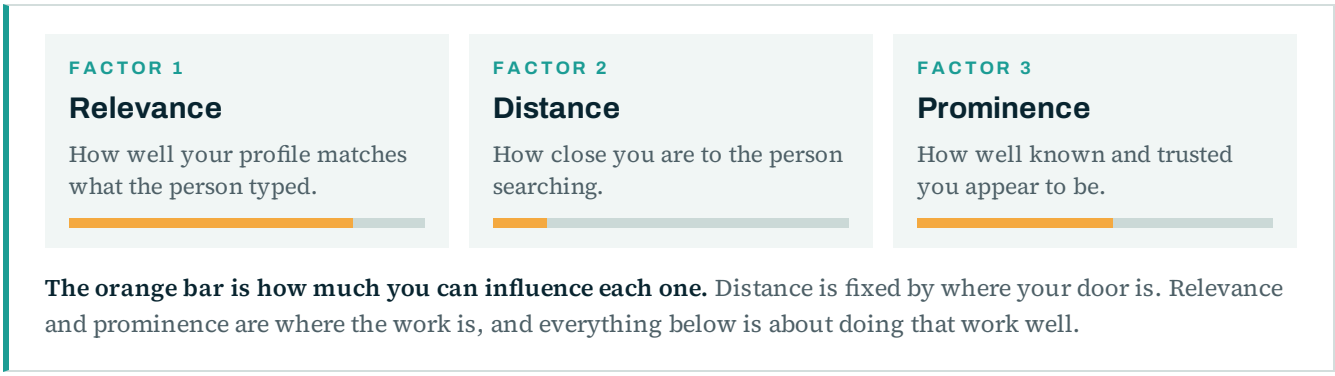
FREE RESOURCE

25 minutes with your profile open

What you are actually optimizing

Most clinics treat their Google Business Profile like a directory listing, filled out once and forgotten. It behaves more like a storefront that Google rearranges every time someone searches, depending on who is asking and where they are standing.

Google says local results are based mainly on three factors: relevance, distance, and prominence. You cannot pay to rank higher in local results. You can influence two of the three, and you can be honest about the third.



So you are not trying to game a ranking. You are optimizing three separate things:

1. **Relevance.** Telling Google precisely what you are, what you treat, and where you work: category, services, description, address.
2. **Prominence.** Proof that real people trust you: reviews, replies, photos, and consistent listings across the web.
3. **Conversion.** Turning a view into a call, a direction request, or a booked first visit.

> **Almost every clinic polishes the website and ignores the profile. For many local searches the profile is the first impression, and sometimes the only one.**

PART 1 Get the foundation right

Google can only match you to the right searches if the basics are accurate and consistent. These fields are small, and mistakes in them are expensive.

Business name

Use your real, public name exactly as it appears on your signage and website. Google's guidelines do not allow keywords, area names, or promotional text in the name. "Harbor Counseling" is fine. "Harbor Counseling | Anxiety Therapist Irvine | Same Week" invites edits or suspension, and a suspended profile earns nothing.

Primary category

Your primary category is one of the strongest levers on the whole profile. Choose the most specific option that completes the sentence “this business is a…”, not “this business has a…”. Examples of the kind of category to look for: Psychotherapist, Psychologist, Mental health clinic, Chiropractor, Physical therapist, Dentist.

- Search the dropdown for the narrowest accurate option, not the broadest.
- After the primary, you can add up to 9 more. Add two or three that describe real, separate services you provide.
- Do not use categories purely as keywords, and do not borrow a neighbor’s categories if they do not describe you.
- Category names change over time, so confirm the options in your own dashboard.

Address and service area

- Use the street address where patients actually come to you. A PO box is not accepted, and an address that is not a staffed location can get a profile suspended.
- If you see clients from a home office, you can usually hide the address and set a service area instead. Read Google’s current eligibility rules first.
- Telehealth alone may not qualify for a profile. Check the guidelines before you create one.
- If you set a service area, list only places you genuinely serve.

Hours and phone

Hours must match reality, including holidays. Whether you are open can influence results for “open now” searches, and a profile that says open when nobody answers costs you patients and earns you angry reviews.

- Use one real line that a human answers, and keep it identical on your website and every directory.
- If you use a call-tracking number, make your real number the additional number so it still appears consistently around the web.

Website and booking links

Point the website link at the page that matches the search, usually a location or service page rather than the home page. If your category supports an appointment link, add it. Some categories can add more links, such as online booking.

PART 2 Earn the click

When your profile appears, a searcher takes in a handful of things in a few seconds: your photos, name, star rating and review count, category, hours, and the buttons to call or get directions. That is the entire audition.

Your photos

Photos are the first thing people judge, and they answer nervous questions before anyone has to ask them.

- **Exterior.** The building from the street, the parking, and the door patients actually use. Finding the entrance is a real barrier for first visits.
- **Interior.** Waiting area, a treatment or therapy room, natural light, nothing cluttered.
- **People.** Current, warm, well lit photos of the clinicians. A friendly face lowers the barrier more than a logo does.
- Use high resolution, landscape photos with no heavy filters or text laid over them. Google generally favors clear, unedited images.
- Never include a patient, a chart, or a screen showing patient information. Skip generic stock photos too.
- Add a few new photos every month. A profile with pictures from this year looks alive.

A phone camera in daylight, plus someone patient enough to take fifty shots, will beat a dated studio photo almost every time.

Your description

Google allows 750 characters, but only about the first 250 are visible before a reader taps “More.” Treat those 250 characters as the entire description and use the rest as a bonus.

[Who you serve] + [what you treat or provide] + [where, and what makes it easy to start]

> *“Anxiety and trauma therapy for adults and teens in Irvine, in person or by telehealth. Evening appointments available, and most major insurance plans accepted.”*

> *“Family chiropractic care in Costa Mesa for back pain, sports injuries, and pregnancy related discomfort. Same week appointments, and first time patients are welcome.”*

> *“A pediatric dental office in Tustin where nervous kids are treated gently and parents get straight answers. Open Saturdays.”*

Leave out links, prices, promotions, and anything that reads like gibberish or keyword stuffing. Google’s guidelines prohibit them, and a rejected description helps no one. Write to one person, not to a category.

PROFILE FIELDS

FIELD	LIMIT	SAFE TARGET
Business description	750	700
Visible before “More”	about 250	make it complete
Categories, primary plus extras	**10**	**3 to 4**

Verify these in your own dashboard first

Google changes its interface, policies, and category lists often. Confirm field limits and category names in your own profile before you write, and draft to the safe target.

Services and attributes

List every service you actually provide as its own item, with one plain sentence about it. Searchers read these, and they give Google more to match. Then switch on the attributes that are true, such as accessibility features and online care, where your category offers them. Only claim what you can back up.

PART 3 Build trust that Google can see

Google says review count and ratings can contribute to prominence. They are also the last thing a patient reads before deciding to call, so they work twice.

Reviews, the safe way

- Save your profile's review link and make it easy to share: on your email signature, a thank you note, a follow up message.
- Ask at natural moments, and ask steadily. A trickle all year beats a burst once a year.
- Never pay, discount, or reward anyone for a review. Never ask only the happy people. Staff may not write reviews for their own clinic.
- You cannot delete a review. You can reply to every one, and you can report reviews that break Google's policy, such as spam or harassment.

Health care has extra rules

Never confirm or deny that someone is a patient in a public reply, even to thank them. Therapists should also know that many ethics codes discourage soliciting testimonials from current clients, so check your board's rules before you ask anyone. Medical practices should treat every reply as covered by privacy law.

Replying without revealing anything

> *"Thank you for taking the time to share this. We take every comment seriously and would welcome a conversation. Please call our office at [number] so we can listen properly."*

> *"Thank you for the kind words. They mean a great deal to our whole team."*

Reply to the good reviews and the hard ones. Keep every reply short, calm, and free of details about care.

Citations and consistency

Google says prominence draws on signals across the web, including directories and articles. Keep your name, address, and phone number identical on your website, Psychology Today, Healthgrades, Yelp, Apple Maps, Bing, and your insurers' provider directories. Mismatches read as carelessness, and they split your reputation across duplicate records.

Google Posts

Posts are optional and are not a ranking lever, but a recent post shows the clinic is active. Use them for holiday hours, a new clinician, or a new service. Keep email addresses, phone numbers, and unrelated links out of the post text, because current policy discourages them.

PART 4 Remove friction from first contact

- **Call your own number.** From your phone, at lunchtime. Is it answered? Does the voicemail sound like a clinic you would trust?
- **Test every link.** Website, booking, and directions, all from a phone, today. Then confirm the page behind the website link repeats the promise your profile made.
- **Respond fast.** Most people contact several clinics at once, and the first to answer often gets the patient. Return missed calls the same day, and offer two appointment times in the reply.
- **Give a real next step.** "Contact us" is weaker than "Call or book online, and we will tell you honestly whether we are the right fit."
- **Watch for edits you did not make.** Anyone can suggest changes to your hours or phone number. Check the dashboard weekly for suggestions, and search your name and address for duplicate listings.

PART 5 Keep it alive

A profile set up once and never touched is the norm, which is exactly why maintenance is an edge.

Monthly, 15 minutes

Open the profile's performance data and look at three numbers: how many people found you, how many called or asked for directions, and how many clicked through to your website. Those three tell you which stage is leaking. Reply to new reviews and add two or three fresh photos.

Quarterly, 45 minutes

Confirm hours, holiday hours, and services. Refresh the first 250 characters of the description. Re-check your categories. Look for duplicates and suggested edits.

Annually

New team photos. Read the whole profile out loud. Ask whether it still describes the practice you actually want.

Reading your three numbers

- Few views: your categories, location settings, or prominence are the problem.
- Many views, few calls: your photos, rating, hours, or phone are the problem.
- Many calls, few bookings: your front desk, availability, or intake process is the problem.

Two honest caveats

This is advertising, and your regulator treats it that way. Your profile, replies, and photos are public professional communication. Licensing boards have advertising rules, and health privacy law can apply to anything you say in a review reply. Do not claim specialties you cannot substantiate, do not imply outcomes, and do not use patient material of any kind.

Google is one channel, not a practice. Nobody can promise you the top of the map, because results depend partly on where the searcher is standing. Profiles can also be edited, flagged, or suspended by a platform you do not control. Treat a strong profile as low hanging fruit, then build what you own: your website, your referral relationships, and the follow up that turns a first call into a returning patient.

WORK THROUGH THIS WITH YOUR PROFILE OPEN

The 25-minute checklist

FOUNDATION

- [ ] Business name matches signage exactly, with no keywords or area names
- [ ] Most specific primary category chosen
- [ ] Two or three extra categories, all of them true
- [ ] Address is a real staffed location, or the service area is set correctly
- [ ] Hours and holiday hours are accurate
- [ ] Primary phone is a real line that gets answered

CLICK-THROUGH

- [ ] Photos from this year: exterior, interior, and team
- [ ] Team photo is warm, well lit, and face forward
- [ ] First 250 characters say who you serve and where
- [ ] Description has no links, prices, or promotions
- [ ] Every service listed with a plain language line
- [ ] True attributes switched on

TRUST

- [ ] Review link saved and ready to share
- [ ] Every review has a reply, and none reveal patient status
- [ ] Review process is policy safe: no incentives, no gating
- [ ] Name, address, and phone match on other directories
- [ ] Duplicate listings searched for

CONVERSION

- [ ] Website link opens the right page on a phone
- [ ] Booking link tested end to end
- [ ] Same day callback habit in place
- [ ] Voicemail offers a clear next step
- [ ] Monthly performance check on the calendar

WORKSHEET

Draft your first 250 characters

The part of your description that almost everyone reads. Work through these four, then write the fifth.

1. Who, specifically, do you most want to see?

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2. What are they dealing with in the week before they search?

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3. In their words, what would they type into Google?

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4. What makes it easy to start: hours, telehealth, insurance, location?

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5. Now write it as two sentences, under 250 characters, to that one person.

Your profile is one front door. We build the rest.

Swell Country builds growth systems for clinics: local search, reviews, retention, and follow up that turn first calls into booked, returning patients. If this checklist was useful, the free audit goes considerably deeper.

GET YOUR FREE GROWTH AUDIT

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