

**RIOT**

STUDIO · COLCHESTER

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# The Small Business Growth Catalogue

A field guide for Essex founders, trades and creators — written by a Colchester studio, no fluff, no upsell.

BY RIOT STUDIO · COLCHESTER



WELCOME

# Read this once. Come back to it forever.

This isn't a brochure. It's a working document. Every section is stuff we actually do for clients at RIOT — the websites, the SEO, the marketing plumbing — pulled apart so you can steal the useful bits.

You can DIY every chapter in here. If you'd rather hand any of it to us, the back page tells you how. Either way, our promise is the same: no jargon, no AI slop, no generic 'top 10' listicle rubbish. Just what works.

## How to use this catalogue

Skim the contents. Jump to the chapter that fixes your loudest problem this month. Each chapter ends with a **Do this today** checklist you can action in under an hour.

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## CHAPTER 01

# The Small Business Website Playbook

What every page needs, why, and how to know it's working.

## The 5 pages every site needs (and one it doesn't)

Most small business sites drown in navigation. You don't need a mega-menu. You need five pages that pull their weight:

- **Home** — one clear promise, one primary action, proof underneath.
- **Services / Products** — what you sell, priced or price-ranged, no mystery.
- **About** — the humans, the story, the reason to trust you.
- **Case studies or Reviews** — evidence, not adjectives.
- **Contact** — phone, email, form, hours, map. Don't hide any of them.

Skip: the blog. Unless you'll publish twice a month, an empty blog screams 'abandoned'. Fold thinking into your services pages instead.

## The homepage anatomy that converts

- **Hero** — a headline that names *who you help* and *what you do*. Not a slogan.
- **Trust strip** — logos, review count, years in business, awards.
- **Three-up services** — top three offers, priced.
- **Proof** — one long testimonial or a mini case study.
- **Process** — three steps from enquiry to result.
- **FAQ** — six real questions you get asked. Doubles as SEO gold.
- **CTA** — a booking link, not just a contact form.

## The 4 numbers that matter

- **Time to First Byte** under 600ms.
- **Largest Contentful Paint** under 2.5s (mobile).
- **Bounce rate** under 55% on your home page.
- **Conversion rate** (form / call / booking) above 2%.

### Do this today

Open your homepage on your phone. Time how long it takes to load. Read the hero out loud. If it doesn't answer *who you help* and *what you do* in one sentence, rewrite it before dinner.

## CHAPTER 02

# Local SEO Field Guide

Getting found by people who live 10 miles from your front door.

## The three-layer stack

Local SEO is three overlapping systems. Miss one and the others under-perform:

- **Google Business Profile** — the map pack. Fastest wins live here.
- **Your website** — service pages, location pages, schema, reviews.
- **Citations** — your business name, address, phone (NAP) on other sites.

## Service-area pages that don't look spammy

Don't publish 40 near-identical pages for every village. Publish 5-10 real ones. Each should include:

- A genuine reason you serve that area (nearest job, local landmark, travel time).
- One case study or review from a customer in that town.
- Unique H1 and meta description — no 'in [town]' variables.
- Directions or a map embed.
- Internal link to your parent service page.

## Citations: the boring win

Get your business listed — with identical name, address and phone — on: Google, Bing Places, Apple Maps, Yell, Yelp, Thomson Local, Trustpilot, Facebook, and any two industry-specific directories (Checkatrade, Houzz, TripAdvisor, etc). That's it. You do not need 200 citations. You need 12 accurate ones.

## Review velocity beats review count

20 reviews in the last 90 days outranks 200 reviews from 2019. Ask every happy customer, the same day the job ends. A one-tap Google review link in a text message beats a QR code on an invoice.

### Do this today

Google 'your service + your town' from an incognito window on your phone. Write down the top three map results. Those are your real competitors — not the national brands you thought.

## CHAPTER 03

# The £0 Marketing Starter Kit

25 free things any Essex business can do this week.

## Free wins, in order of ROI

- Add your top 3 services to your Google Business Profile.
- Post one before/after photo on GBP every week.
- Ask your last 5 happy customers for a Google review.
- Reply to every review — 5-star and 1-star — within 24 hours.
- Put your phone number in your website's top-right corner.
- Add a WhatsApp button to your mobile site.
- Set your email signature to link to your best case study.
- Turn every FAQ you get on the phone into a website FAQ entry.
- Film one 20-second phone video: 'here's what we do'.
- Post that same video on Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn and Facebook.
- Join two active local Facebook groups. Answer, don't sell.
- Introduce yourself to five neighbouring businesses. Swap referrals.
- Add opening hours, bank holiday hours, and phone to every social bio.
- Send a one-line email to your last 20 customers: 'still open, still hiring'.
- Add schema markup to your homepage (LocalBusiness).
- Compress every image on your site (TinyPNG, free).
- Fix the one broken link Google Search Console is warning you about.
- Submit your sitemap to Google Search Console. Actually.
- Add your business to Apple Maps — most competitors haven't.
- Claim your Bing Places listing.
- Write a two-line 'meet the team' for your About page.
- Add a 'why choose us' block: 3 reasons, 30 words each.
- Print your review link on every invoice and receipt.
- Set up a Google Alert for your business name.
- Bookmark this catalogue and read one chapter a week.

### Rule of thumb

Do **five** of these this week. Don't try to do all 25 — you won't, and you'll feel worse about marketing than you did before.

## CHAPTER 04

# Google Business Profile Deep-Dive

The most under-used free tool in local marketing.

## Every field, in priority order

- **Categories** — one primary, up to nine secondary. Primary is the biggest ranking signal you control.
- **Services** — list every service with its own short description. Free keyword real estate.
- **Photos** — upload weekly. Interior, exterior, team, and product/job photos.
- **Hours** — plus special hours for bank holidays. Missing these tanks trust.
- **Products** — even service businesses can list packages here.
- **Q&A** — pre-seed with your top 10 FAQs. If you don't, competitors will.
- **Posts** — weekly updates. Offers, events, product news. 300 chars max.
- **Booking link** — connect to Calendly, Setmore, or your own /book page.
- **Attributes** — women-owned, wheelchair-accessible, LGBTQ+ friendly, etc.
- **Messaging** — turn it on, respond within an hour, or turn it off.

## Review response templates

**5-star:** Thanks [name] — really appreciate you taking the time. So glad the [specific service] worked out. See you next time.

**3-star:** Thanks for the honest feedback [name]. Sounds like we missed the mark on [specific issue]. I'd love to make it right — can you email me at [address] and I'll sort this personally.

**1-star (real):** [Name], I'm sorry we let you down. That's not the experience we want anyone to have. I'll call you today — my number is [phone] if you'd prefer to reach me first.

**1-star (fake/wrong business):** Hi [name], we don't have a record of you as a customer — could you check you've reviewed the right business? Happy to help sort it out if there's been a mix-up.

### Do this today

Open your GBP dashboard. Count how many services you've listed. If it's fewer than 8, add more. Every service is a keyword you can rank for.

## CHAPTER 05

# Conversion Cheatsheet

Small changes that add up to more enquiries — no rebuild needed.

## Hero section

- Headline names the customer, not you. 'For Essex homeowners' beats 'Established 1998'.
- Sub-headline explains the outcome, not the process.
- One primary CTA. Not three. Not two. One.
- Trust signal within the first scroll (reviews, logos, years, badge).

## Forms

- Ask for the minimum. Every extra field cuts conversion ~7%.
- Label above the field, never inside. Placeholders disappear when typing.
- One column. Never two.
- Submit button says the outcome: 'Get my quote', not 'Submit'.
- Show what happens next after submission. Don't just say 'thanks'.

## Trust

- Real photos of real people beat stock every time.
- Show star rating and count near every CTA.
- Named testimonials with role and location. 'Sarah, Colchester' beats 'S.J.'
- Money-back or guarantee copy sits near the buy button.
- Show your address and landline if you have them.

## Speed

- Every 1s of load time cuts conversion by ~7%.
- Compress hero image. It's probably 4x bigger than it needs to be.
- Lazy-load anything below the fold.
- Kill any script you can't name the purpose of.
- Cache. Then cache again.

## Mobile

- Tap targets minimum 44x44px.
- Phone number in the header, tap-to-call.
- Sticky CTA bar on scroll.

- Body text minimum 16px. Anyone reading on their phone will thank you.

### Do this today

Screen-record yourself using your own site on your phone. Try to do the thing a customer would do. Every awkward tap, every wait, every pinch-zoom is a fix waiting to happen.

## CHAPTER 06

# AI Without The Slop

Where AI genuinely helps a small business, and where it embarrasses you.

## Use AI for

- First-draft emails you'll edit before sending.
- Summarising long documents, meetings, transcripts.
- Turning bullet-point notes into structured proposals.
- Generating alt text, meta descriptions, image captions.
- Brainstorming — angles, headlines, campaign ideas.
- Explaining error messages, code snippets, technical docs.

## Do not use AI for

- Publishing anything without a human edit. Ever.
- Blog posts you paste and forget. Google will find them and downrank the whole site.
- Customer support replies where tone matters.
- Legal, medical, or financial advice.
- Anything you don't understand well enough to check.

## Three prompts worth saving

**1. The rewriter:** 'Rewrite this in the voice of [your business]. Short sentences. No adjectives. No jargon. British English.'

**2. The critic:** 'You are a sceptical customer reading this for the first time. What questions would you still have? What sounds like fluff?'

**3. The summariser:** 'Summarise this into 5 bullets a busy owner could act on today. Ignore anything theoretical.'

### Rule of thumb

If you'd be embarrassed for a customer to know AI wrote it — a human should rewrite it. If you wouldn't — ship it and move on.

## CHAPTER 07

# Launch Checklist

The 40 checks we run before pushing any new RIOT site live.

## Content

- Every page has a unique H1.
- Every page has a unique meta title (under 60 chars) and description (under 160 chars).
- No lorem ipsum, no [placeholder], no {{variables}} left in copy.
- Every image has descriptive alt text.
- Every CTA links somewhere real.
- Contact details match across site, GBP, and footer.

## Technical

- HTTPS enabled, HTTP redirects to HTTPS.
- WWW / non-WWW canonical decided and enforced.
- Sitemap.xml exists and is submitted to Google Search Console.
- Robots.txt allows crawling of everything you want indexed.
- 404 page is branded, useful, and links back to key pages.
- 500 page exists and doesn't leak stack traces.
- Favicon set (including apple-touch-icon).
- Open Graph and Twitter Card tags on every page.

## Performance

- Lighthouse Performance score above 85 on mobile.
- Largest Contentful Paint under 2.5s.
- Cumulative Layout Shift under 0.1.
- No console errors on any page.
- Images served in modern formats (WebP or AVIF).

## Analytics & tracking

- GA4 installed and firing on every page.
- Conversion events tracked (form submit, call click, booking).

- Cookie consent banner present if required.
- Google Search Console verified.
- Bing Webmaster Tools verified.

## Legal & trust

- Privacy policy live.
- Terms & conditions live if selling.
- Cookie policy live if using tracking.
- Company registration / VAT number in footer if applicable.
- Contact email, phone, and business address on the contact page.

### Do this today

Open your site. Score yourself out of 40. Anything under 30 is a project for the next fortnight. Anything under 20 is the reason your marketing isn't working.

## CHAPTER 08

# Work With RIOT

If you'd rather have someone else do the work.

## What we do

- **Websites** — fast, honest, priced upfront. From £950.
- **Local SEO** — GBP, on-page, citations, reviews. From £350/mo.
- **Branding** — logos, guidelines, everything you need to look grown-up.
- **Copywriting** — words that sound like you, sell what you sell.
- **Email & marketing** — campaigns we write, send, and report on.
- **Print & merch** — because the internet isn't the only channel.

## How we work

- Fixed-price quotes. Nothing sneaky.
- One point of contact. Not an account team.
- No 12-month contracts. Cancel any time on retainers.
- You own everything we build. No lock-in, no hostage domains.
- Colchester-based. Happy to meet in person over coffee.

### Get a fast, honest quote

Email [hello@riotcolchester.com](mailto:hello@riotcolchester.com) or visit [riotcolchester.com](https://riotcolchester.com) and hit 'Start a project'. We reply within one working day, and the first call is always free — even if you just want a second opinion on someone else's proposal.

## Thanks for reading.

This catalogue took real time to write and we've given it away because we'd rather help 1,000 people than gate-keep this stuff behind a signup form. If it helped, tell one other business owner about it. That's the deal.

— Ashley, RIOT Studio