Understanding How Service Areas Influence Google Business Profile Visibility



NEW ORLEANS, LA, UNITED STATES, September 10, 2026 / EINPresswire.com/ -- Service areas listed within a Google Business Profile can help communicate where a company provides services, but the relationship between those areas and local search visibility is often misunderstood. For service-based companies operating across multiple cities, understanding that distinction can play an important role in developing an accurate local search strategy.

Google Business Profiles allow certain companies to identify geographic areas served without displaying a traditional storefront address. Common examples include plumbers, electricians, roofing contractors, HVAC companies, mobile repair services, cleaning companies and other businesses that travel to customer locations.

Google classifies these companies as service-area businesses. Hybrid businesses, meanwhile, serve customers at a physical location while also traveling to customer locations.

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>
> *Brett Thomas*

According to Google Business Profile guidelines, service areas can be identified using cities, postal codes or other geographic areas. A profile can contain as many as 20 service areas, and Google recommends keeping the overall territory within approximately two hours of driving time from the location where the business is based.

The important distinction involves what those selections actually accomplish.

Adding a city as a service area does not automatically establish strong local search visibility within that city. Service areas primarily communicate the geographic territory in which a company operates. Google separately evaluates local search results using factors that include relevance, distance and prominence.

“Service areas are often treated like a list of cities where a company wants to rank, but that is not really their purpose,” said Brett Thomas, owner of Rhino Web Studios in New Orleans, Louisiana. “Adding Baton Rouge, Metairie, Slidell or another community to a profile does not suddenly make the business local to every search taking place in those communities. The actual location of the business and the overall local relevance associated with that business still matter.”

Distance remains particularly important in local search. Google states that distance considers how far a potential search result is from the location term used in a search. When a location is not included in the search, available information about the searcher's location can be used to estimate distance.

That creates an important consideration for companies covering large territories.

A contractor based in one community may legitimately provide services 30, 40 or even 60 miles away. Listing those communities within the service area can accurately tell prospective customers that service is available there. However, the designation does not necessarily place the contractor on equal geographic footing with competing companies physically based closer to a searcher.

Website content can therefore become an important supporting component of a broader local search strategy.

Individual service pages can explain specific services performed by a company. Location-oriented content can provide meaningful information about communities regularly served. Project descriptions, photographs, business information, reviews and locally relevant website material can also provide additional context regarding the relationship between a company, its services and its geographic market.

Accuracy remains central to the process.

Google requires Business Profile information to represent a business as it operates in the real world. Service-area companies that do not serve customers at a business address generally should remove that address from public display and specify the areas served instead. Businesses that both receive customers at a staffed location and travel to customers can qualify as hybrid businesses and may display an address along with service areas.

Creating additional profiles solely for geographic reach can create problems. Google generally permits additional profiles for separate legitimate locations when each location has separate staff and otherwise satisfies Business Profile requirements. Virtual offices and addresses where a company does not actually operate generally do not qualify.

“Local visibility is much bigger than typing another city into a service-area field,” Thomas said. “A Business Profile, the company website, services, categories, reviews, location signals and overall online presence all contribute information. Service areas should describe reality rather than become a collection of every city that looks attractive from a marketing standpoint.”

Business categories also deserve attention. Google uses profile categories to understand the nature of a company, while the services section allows businesses in eligible categories to identify individual services offered. Accurate categories and detailed service information can help establish relevance when local consumers search for particular types of work.

Reviews and business information can provide additional signals. Complete hours, current contact information, accurate categories, photographs and updated profile details can help Google understand the business while giving potential customers information needed to evaluate a company.

For companies operating throughout Greater New Orleans, the distinction can become particularly noticeable. Communities including New Orleans, Metairie, Kenner, Slidell, Mandeville, Covington and surrounding areas can represent one commercial market from an operational standpoint while still representing distinctly different geographic locations within Google's local search environment.

A company may legitimately serve the entire region without appearing equally across the entire region for every Google Maps or local search query.

Service areas therefore function most effectively as an accurate representation of operational territory rather than a mechanism for expanding rankings.

Understanding that difference can help businesses establish more realistic expectations for Google Business Profile performance while keeping geographic information consistent with actual business operations.

About Rhino Web Studios

Rhino Web Studios is a New Orleans-area web development and digital marketing company providing website development, search engine optimization, content development and related digital services for businesses in Louisiana and other markets.

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