

Google Business Profile: A Practical Checklist

For hospitality, tourism & shipping businesses connected to West Africa and the diaspora.

For businesses connected to West Africa and the diaspora, Google Business Profile is often the first thing a potential guest, traveler, or shipping client sees — sometimes before they ever reach your website. A profile that's incomplete, inconsistent, or inactive can quietly cost you inquiries you never even know you missed.

A note before you start: Google Business Profile availability and verification methods can vary by country. If something below doesn't match what you see in your dashboard, that's likely a regional difference, not something you're doing wrong.

The Essentials — Get These Right First

■ Claim and verify your profile.

Video verification — a short walkthrough showing your signage, interior, and a live management action — is now the standard method for new listings in most regions. Worth being ready for before you start.

■ Keep your business information identical everywhere.

Your name, address or service area, and phone/WhatsApp number should match exactly across Google, your website, and any other place customers find you. Small inconsistencies make it harder for both customers and Google to trust the listing.

■ Fill out every section.

Hours, service area, categories, and a clear description of what you actually do. An incomplete profile gives Google less to work with when deciding who to show it to.

Build Credibility and Trust

■ Encourage specific reviews — the right way.

A review that mentions the actual stay, tour, or shipment is more useful than a generic one. One caution: Google's current policy prohibits asking customers to name specific staff members in reviews, and prohibits soliciting reviews on a quota basis. Keep requests focused on the experience, not employee mentions.

■ Respond to reviews, including the difficult ones.

An unanswered negative review reads worse than one with a calm, direct response.

■ Add real photos.

The property, the team, the tours you run, the operation itself — not stock images. Profiles with real photos consistently get more attention than empty ones.

Stay Active and Visible

- **Post when you have something worth saying.**

New availability, a completed shipment corridor update, a seasonal tour, a renovated room — Google favors profiles that show ongoing activity. Consistency matters more than frequency; a realistic, sustainable cadence beats a burst of posts followed by months of silence.

- **Give each post a clear next step.**

A call button, a WhatsApp link, or a "learn more" — something concrete for someone to do next.

- **List what you offer, where relevant.**

Room types or packages for hospitality, tour packages for tourism, service offerings for shipping and logistics. Not every business will use this the same way — use what fits.

Two Changes Worth Knowing About

- **Q&A is gone — AI-generated answers replaced it.**

Google retired the old Q&A section and replaced it with AI-generated answers, pulled automatically from your profile, your reviews, and your website. In practice, that means the best way to "answer" common questions is making sure your website and profile description already state your hours, policies, service area, and pricing clearly — that's what the AI now draws from.

- **Messaging is back, differently.**

Google's older native chat feature was discontinued in 2024. It's since been replaced by the option to connect a WhatsApp number directly to your profile as a contact method. For businesses that already run customer conversations through WhatsApp, this is worth turning on — it meets customers exactly where they're already reaching out.

Worth Checking Occasionally

- **Check your profile's insights.**

Not obsessively — just enough to get a rough sense of how people are finding and engaging with it.

What Actually Matters

An optimized profile doesn't guarantee more inquiries — but an inconsistent or abandoned one reliably makes you harder to find, harder to trust, and easier to overlook. The businesses that keep their profile current and respond consistently tend to make a better first impression than the ones who don't.

If Google Business Profile turns out not to be where your actual bottleneck is, a Customer Inquiry & Follow-Up Assessment is a better next step than guessing.