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The Small Business Backlink & Citation Checklist

A practical UK guide to building easy, repeatable business citations without wasting hours on low-value directories.

The goal is not to complete 100 directories. The goal is to build a clean, consistent set of legitimate business citations and then move on to higher-value SEO work.

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1. What these backlinks are for

Business directories, map platforms and local listing sites can give a small business an easy source of backlinks and citations. The SEO value is not just the link itself. These listings also reinforce the business name, location, phone number, website and category across the web.

For local businesses, that consistency can help search engines connect the website, business profiles and other mentions of the company. These links should be treated as a foundation, not as your entire link-building strategy.

2. Keep business details consistent

Before creating any listings, decide on the exact business information you are going to use. Keep it as consistent as possible across every directory.

- **Business name:** Use the real trading name. Avoid adding keywords such as “Best Plumber Plymouth” unless they are genuinely part of the business name.
- **Website URL:** Use the same preferred version of the website URL each time.
- **Address or service area:** Use the same address format where the business publicly displays an address. For service-area businesses, follow each platform’s rules.
- **Phone number:** Use the primary business number.
- **Email address:** Use a business email where possible.
- **Primary category:** Choose the closest genuine category rather than forcing unrelated categories.
- **Opening hours:** Keep them accurate and update them if they change.
- **Social profiles:** Link the genuine profiles the business actually uses, especially Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

Important: search for the business first. If a listing already exists, claim it instead of creating a duplicate.

3. The 10-minute rule

Do not treat every directory like a second website. For most directories, give yourself a maximum of around 10 minutes.

If you can add the key business information, website link, category, short description, logo and relevant social links within that time, complete the listing and move on. Do not spend half an hour uploading galleries, writing unique essays, adding every service or completing optional fields that are unlikely to matter.

4. Which profiles are worth fully completing?

A small number of platforms are important enough to deserve more attention. These are the listings people genuinely use and the platforms that can directly influence local visibility.

- **Google Business Profile:** Fully complete and actively maintain it. Add services, photos, opening hours, reviews, posts where useful, and keep all information accurate.
- **Bing Places:** Complete the core profile properly and keep it aligned with Google.
- **Apple Business Connect:** Worth setting up carefully because it controls how the business appears across Apple Maps and related Apple services.
- **Major industry-specific platforms:** If customers in the industry genuinely use the platform, complete the profile properly. Examples include trade, beauty, restaurant, healthcare or property platforms relevant to the business.

5. Directory checklist

Platform	Priority	Effort	Notes
Google Business Profile	High	Fully complete	Core local business profile
Bing Places	High	Fully complete	Microsoft/Bing Maps presence
Apple Business Connect	High	Fully complete	Apple Maps and Apple ecosystem
Yell	High	10-minute profile	Strong UK business citation
FreeIndex	High	10-minute profile	Established UK business directory
Yelp	High	10-minute profile	Well-known consumer directory
The Business Listing	Medium	10-minute profile	Useful UK citation
Cylex UK	Medium	10-minute profile	Useful UK citation
Foursquare	Medium	10-minute profile	Location-data ecosystem
Bizify	Medium	10-minute profile	Useful UK citation
Scoot	Medium	10-minute profile	UK directory; can feed other listings
Touch Local	Medium	Usually via Scoot	Useful additional citation
Hotfrog UK	Medium	10-minute profile	Business directory with website field
Brownbook	Medium	10-minute profile	Easy general business citation
UK Small Business Directory	Medium	10-minute profile	UK-focused SME directory
Approved Business	Medium	10-minute profile	More relevant for B2B/service firms
BusinessMagnet	Medium	10-minute profile	Useful for B2B businesses
Nextdoor Business	Medium	10-minute profile	Good for local consumer businesses
LinkedIn Company Page	Medium	Complete basics	Legitimate branded company profile
Facebook Business Page	Medium	Complete basics	Useful business/entity profile
Trustpilot	Situational	Only if collecting reviews	Do not create solely for a backlink
192.com	Low	Skip if paid	Not worth paying solely for SEO

Thomson Local	Low	Skip if backlink is paid-only	Only worth it if there is another business reason
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Tip: Search for the official business-listing or claim-business page for each platform rather than using third-party submission services.

6. Social links: add them when easy

If a directory provides fields for social profiles, add the real profiles the business uses. Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn are usually the most useful. TikTok, YouTube or X only need to be added if the business genuinely maintains them.

Do not create unused social accounts just to fill directory fields. The aim is to make the business information look complete and trustworthy, not to manufacture signals.

7. The 'don't pay, don't add a card' rule

For this type of foundational citation building, you generally should not need to pay.

Default rule: if a directory asks for card details, a paid trial, a recurring subscription or payment just to unlock the backlink, skip it.

There are exceptions where a platform is commercially valuable in its own right, such as an industry marketplace that generates leads. But do not pay simply because a directory promises a 'dofollow backlink', higher authority or better SEO.

Also be careful with £1 verification charges or 'free trials'. Read the terms before entering payment details. If the listing is only being created for citation/backlink purposes, there are usually plenty of free alternatives.

8. What information should a basic directory profile contain?

- Correct business name
- Website link
- Primary business category
- Address or service area where appropriate
- Business phone number
- Business email
- Short business description
- Logo
- Main social links
- Opening hours if relevant

If those fields are complete and accurate, the profile is usually good enough. Everything after that is optional unless the platform is one of your major profiles.

9. A sensible target

For most small local businesses, aim for roughly 15–30 solid, legitimate citations rather than hundreds of low-quality directory submissions.

Once the main listings are built and consistent, move your SEO time into activities with greater upside: improving the website, service and location pages, Google Business Profile optimisation, reviews, local partnerships, supplier links, memberships, sponsorships, PR, case studies and genuine editorial links.

10. Client workflow for agencies

If you are doing this for clients, collect the business information once and use it as the master record for every submission.

1. Confirm the exact NAP details: name, address/service area and phone.
2. Confirm the preferred website URL, email, opening hours and main category.
3. Collect the logo, short description and social profile links.
4. Search each directory before creating a new listing.
5. Claim existing listings where possible.
6. Create missing listings using client-controlled contact details where practical.
7. Ask the client to forward any verification code or email required by the platform.
8. Record the profile URL, login email, status and verification date in a spreadsheet.
9. Recheck the main listings periodically, but do not waste time constantly editing minor directories.

11. Simple tracking sheet

Track each listing with the following columns:

Directory | Profile URL | Login email | Status | Verification required? | Date submitted | Notes

12. Final rule of thumb

Complete the major profiles properly. Give ordinary directories around 10 minutes. Keep the business details consistent. Do not pay for weak directory links. Then move on to better SEO opportunities.

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