Open any local search result and the first thing your eye lands on is not text. It is a photo. Business profile thumbnails, image carousels, and short videos shape which company a customer trusts before they read a single word. For service businesses, visuals are part persuasion and part proof.

This article covers how photos and video influence local results, what to shoot, and how to avoid the mistakes that make good images useless.

## Why Visuals Matter for Local Search

Google does not publish a formula that says "photos add X points." What we can say is that complete, active profiles tend to perform better, and people clearly respond to imagery. A profile with real, recent photos looks alive. One with a single blurry logo looks abandoned.

There are two separate benefits to keep apart:

- **Direct ranking influence:** Likely small and indirect. Photos help Google understand your business and signal that the listing is maintained.
- **Behavior influence:** Large. Searchers click, call, and request directions more often when a listing looks credible. Those actions are strong engagement signals.

Think of photos as a trust multiplier. They will not rescue a poorly optimized listing, but they make every other effort convert better.

## Where Your Images Show Up

Visuals appear in several places, and each rewards a slightly different approach.

Location What works best Why it matters Business profile Real team, jobs, storefront, vehicles First impression in the map results Website service pages Original project photos with context Builds relevance and trust Image search Descriptive filenames and alt text Extra path to discovery Reviews Customer photos (encourage them) Adds social proof you do not control Social and video platforms Short clips of real work Reinforces brand and drives branded search

## What Types of Photos to Shoot

Stock images are the biggest missed opportunity in local marketing. Visitors can spot them instantly, and they say nothing specific about your business. Shoot your own.

### Exterior and Location

Show the building, signage, parking, and entrance. This helps customers find you and confirms you are a real place. Service-area businesses can show the shop, trucks, and equipment instead.

### Team and People

Faces build trust faster than anything else. Photograph owners and crew in uniform, on the job, and smiling at the counter. Customers are choosing a person to let into their home, so let them see who that is.

### Work in Progress and Finished Projects

Before and after shots are gold for contractors, landscapers, cleaners, and painters. Capture the same angle before and after when you can. Add a short caption that names the neighborhood or town and the type of work.

### Products, Menu, or Services

If you sell something, show it. If you provide a service, show the tools, process, and result.

## Technical Basics That Get Overlooked

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Good photography means little if the file is a mess.

1. **Resize before uploading.** Huge files slow your website. Aim for a few hundred kilobytes per image on web pages.
2. **Use descriptive filenames.** "kitchen-remodel-after.jpg" says more than "IMG_4821.jpg".
3. **Write real alt text.** Describe what is in the picture in a short plain sentence for accessibility and context.
4. **Skip heavy filters.** Natural light and honest color build more trust than edited drama.
5. **Keep it current.** Add new photos monthly rather than uploading fifty at once and going quiet.

A note on location data: older advice said geotagging photos boosts rankings. Most platforms strip that metadata on upload, so do not spend time on it. Spend it on captions, filenames, and page context instead.

## Video: Short, Simple, Useful

You do not need a production crew. A steady phone clip works.

### Ideas That Work for Service Businesses

- A 30-second walk-around of a finished job
- A quick tip, such as how to tell if a water heater is failing
- A crew introduction
- Time-lapse of a big project
- Answers to the three questions customers always ask

Keep clips short, shoot horizontally for websites and vertically for social, and add captions since many people watch on mute. Embed relevant videos on matching service pages so visitors stay longer and get answers without calling first.

## Avoid These Common Mistakes

- Uploading photos that do not match the business, which can trigger removal
- Using the same five images for years
- Posting images with other companies' logos or watermarks
- Letting customers' uploaded photos sit unanswered when they show a problem
- Forgetting that a photo needs context on the page around it

## Building a Simple Monthly Habit

Consistency beats volume. Here is a realistic rhythm for a busy owner.

Frequency Task Every job Snap 3 to 5 photos on your phone before leaving Weekly Upload the best one or two to your profile Monthly Add one short video or project gallery to your website Quarterly Review old images and remove outdated or poor ones

Assign this to a crew lead or office manager so it does not depend on the owner's memory. Over a year, that rhythm produces a library hundreds of images deep without any special effort.

## Getting Professional Help

If your visuals are the weak link, it can be worth getting outside input on shot lists, page layouts, and how to present galleries so they help search rather than just decorate. Outside input on shot lists and gallery layouts from *stambaughdesigns.co local seo in bellingham* can save months of trial and error. Even a single half-day photo session can supply a year of quality content.

The main point is simple. Real photos of real work, kept fresh and described clearly, make your business *bellingham seo company* look trustworthy in the moment that matters most: the second a customer decides who to call.

## About the Author

Priya Raman is a visual content strategist who helps trades and service companies turn everyday job photos into marketing that earns calls. She began her career as a photojournalist in the Midwest before moving into small business marketing. Priya lives in Portland and loves teaching crews how to take better pictures with the phones already in ***bellingham seo company*** their pockets.