

HVAC & HOME SERVICES

The contractor AI couldn't see.

A four-location Arizona HVAC company was winning on Google Maps and missing from every AI answer in its market. Eight weeks and a \$5,000 engagement later, it was one of the names the machine gave.



3.1 → 26.8%

AI visibility



5 → 22

of 40 questions



\$35K

attributed revenue



7×

return

THE STORY

When the AC dies, nobody searches anymore.

Ironwood Air & Heat runs four branches across Phoenix, with 38 technicians and \$14 million a year in revenue. If you searched Google Maps for an AC repair in the East Valley, you found them. If you asked ChatGPT the same thing, you didn't. Nobody at the company knew, because nothing they looked at every day could have told them.



ON THE MAP

One of the strongest independents in the valley

Across a grid of 225 points covering the metro, Ironwood sat in the top three on 41% of them, ahead of every other independent and behind only one regional chain. 612 reviews, 4.4 stars. Every dashboard they owned said the business was healthy.

IN THE ANSWER

Named in 5 of 40 questions people actually ask

We asked five AI assistants forty real questions (“my AC just died, who do I call in Chandler tonight?” and the like), twice, on separate days. Ironwood came up in five, always sixth or seventh, never with a reason attached. Its AI visibility score was 3.1%.

The owner, on the first call: “We’re number two on the map. How can we not exist?”

≈ **2,100**

conversations a month, happening without them

Roughly 8,100 people a month in Phoenix now ask an AI assistant, not a search box, who to call about their air conditioning. At 3.1% visibility, Ironwood was in about 250 of those conversations. The regional chain leading the market was in about 2,340.

WHICH GATES WERE FAILING THE DETAILED PART

Access shut, presence missing.

There wasn't one problem. There were three, stacked on top of each other, and two of them were invisible to every tool Ironwood's previous agency was using. Here is what we found, with the evidence.

GATE 1 · ACCESS: THE EMPTY PAGE

AI programs were being handed a blank page for all 61 pages of the site

The site had been rebuilt in 2024 in a modern framework that assembles each page inside the visitor's browser. People saw a fast, polished site. The programs AI companies use to read the web don't run that assembly step. They take what the server sends first and leave. What the server sent first was an empty container.

```
$ curl -A "...GPTBot..." ironwoodair.com/services/emergency-ac-repair
→ 2,140 bytes · 0 service names · 0 prices · 0 city names · 0 phone numbers
```

GATE 1 · ACCESS: THE WRONG LOCK

A copied setting was blocking the AI that answers, not just the one that learns

Someone had pasted a “keep AI from training on my content” snippet into the site's robots.txt. Reasonable idea, except that OpenAI runs two separate programs: one that trains the model, and one that fetches pages to cite in live answers. The snippet blocked both. Ironwood had been locked out of ChatGPT's answers for fourteen months without knowing it.

```
Verified fetches, week 0: OAI-SearchBot 0 · GPTBot 0 · ClaudeBot 0 · PerplexityBot 4 (turned away)
```

GATE 3 · PRESENCE: NOBODY VOUCHING FOR THEM

Listed on 2 of the 11 sites the assistants actually read

AI assistants don't recommend a company because of its own website. They summarise what other trusted sites say about it. Eleven sites carried the Phoenix HVAC answers. Ironwood had a complete listing on two. It was getting 4 new reviews a month against the leader's 31, and three different, conflicting descriptions of the business were live around the web.

```
Directory coverage 2 / 11 · Sites mentioning the brand 9 · Consistent description 41% · “Best HVAC in...” articles 0
```

WHAT THE MACHINE WAS SAYING AT THE TIME

ChatGPT · web search on · 12 May 2026

Question 07 / 40

“My AC just died and it's 108 degrees. Who should I call in Chandler, AZ tonight?”

For same-day emergency AC repair in Chandler, these are commonly recommended:

1. **Sunridge Mechanical**, 24/7 dispatch, widely reviewed across the East Valley
2. **Copperline Air**, long-established Phoenix-area provider with emergency service
3. **Vista Comfort Systems**, frequently cited for fast residential response times

Ironwood Air & Heat: not named. Not named the second time either.

WHAT WE DID

Open the gate, get talked about, give it something to quote.

One Foundation engagement, eight weeks, in that order, because rewriting a website nobody can read is a waste of money. Each step only started once the one before it was verified working.



Open the gate



Get talked about



Something to quote



1 Open the gate

We fixed the copied setting, corrected the security rules that were turning AI programs away, and changed how the site is served so pages arrive already written. Ten days. The first thing that moved was the number of AI visits in the server logs: from four a week to over three hundred.

2 Get talked about

One clear 60-word description of the business, used identically everywhere. Listings on nine of the eleven sites the assistants read. A review request to every completed job, no exceptions. Reviews went from 4 a month to 22. And four placements in the “best HVAC in Phoenix” articles the assistants were already quoting.

3 Give it something to quote

We rewrote the eight pages that matter most so each answers a real question in its first two lines, and replaced “call for a quote” with facts a machine can repeat: a flat \$89 diagnostic fee, a 90-minute emergency window, price ranges by system type. Nine real location pages instead of 34 near-copies.

GATE 4 · MEASUREMENT: WHEN EACH THING MOVED

W1	Gate open. AI visits 4 → 340 a week	3.1%
W2	Pages arrive written. 3 → 61 readable	4.4%
W3	First ChatGPT appearance	9.1%
W5	First “best of” placements land	15.2%
W6	Named on all five assistants	21.4%
W8	22 of 40 questions. Usually #2 to #4	26.8%

Nothing visible happened for ten days while the gate was being opened. That flat stretch is normal, and it's where most people give up.

WHAT WE DELIBERATELY LEFT ALONE

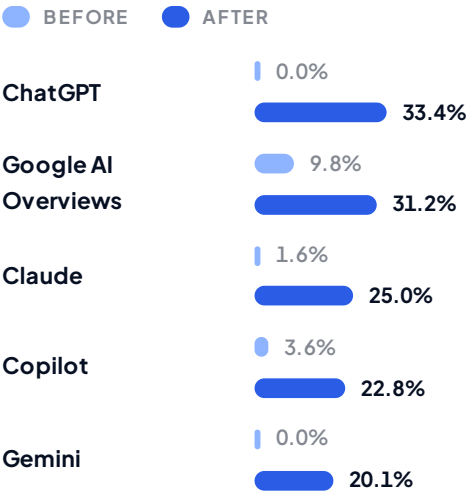
No links were bought. No keywords were stuffed into the Google listing name, which works and gets listings suspended. Reviews were asked of every customer, not just the happy ones. And we didn't sell any of the “AI SEO” tricks that don't hold up when you test them: structured data as a magic lever, llms.txt files, keyword density. We measure; we don't guess.

Cause, effect, and money.

Measured 12 May against 7 July 2026, same forty questions, same five assistants. The table runs top to bottom the way the work ran: what we changed, what it moved, what it earned.

WHAT WE MEASURED	BEFORE	AFTER	CHANGE
WHAT WE CHANGED			
AI programs fetching the site, per week	4	1,120	gate open
Pages readable without a browser	3 / 61	61 / 61	+58
Listings on the 11 sites assistants read	2 / 11	9 / 11	+7
New Google reviews per month	4	22	+450%
“Best HVAC in...” article placements	0	4	+4
WHAT IT MOVED			
AI visibility score	3.1%	26.8%	+23.7 pp
Questions where Ironwood is named	5 / 40	22 / 40	+17
Typical position when named	#6–7	#2–4	+3 places
Assistants naming it	1 of 5	5 of 5	+4
Named <i>with a reason</i>	0	14	recommended, not listed
Top-three share of the Maps grid	41%	49%	+8 pp
WHAT IT EARNED			
Website visits from assistants, per month	34	410	+1,106%
Tracked calls from assistants, per month	not tracked	34	new channel
Booked jobs traced to assistants	not tracked	13 / month	26 in total

ASSISTANT BY ASSISTANT



Before, one assistant carried everything. After, all five do, so a single model update can't wipe out the channel overnight.

HOW TO READ THIS PAGE

The first block is the only part we fully control, and it moved first. The second block is the effect, and the line that matters most is “named with a reason”: an AI listing you is one thing; an AI explaining *why* is what makes the phone ring. The third block is the floor, not the total: roughly six in ten visitors who arrive from an assistant can't be traced back to it, so the true figure is higher.

WHAT IT WAS WORTH

The number that ended the debate.

\$34,840

Revenue from 26 booked jobs that could be traced back to an AI assistant, at Ironwood's \$1,340 average job. The untraceable share is on top of this.

7×

Return on a \$5,000 Foundation engagement over eight weeks. The work paid for itself in week five, on the fourth booked job.

34

calls a month from people who found them through an AI

\$192

cost per booked job, against \$312 on their paid search

+24%

more people searching for Ironwood by name

AND WHAT THE MACHINE SAYS NOW

ChatGPT · web search on · 7 July 2026

Question 07 / 40, same words

"My AC just died and it's 108 degrees. Who should I call in Chandler, AZ tonight?"

For tonight in Chandler, a few options with genuine after-hours dispatch:

1. **Sunridge Mechanical**, 24/7 dispatch across the East Valley
2. **Ironwood Air & Heat**, which publishes a 90-minute emergency response window for Chandler and a flat \$89 diagnostic fee, which makes the after-hours cost predictable before anyone comes out
3. **Copperline Air**, long-established Phoenix-area provider

THE HONEST PART

We can't trace every customer: about six in ten people who arrive from an AI assistant show up in the analytics as if they'd typed the address in by hand, so 26 jobs is a floor. AI answers also shift when the models themselves are updated, which is why we re-run the same questions every 30 days instead of declaring victory once.

Now ask it about your business.

Ten of the questions your buyers ask, across the AI assistants your customers actually use. Where you stand. Who gets named instead of you. The three fixes that move it fastest.

Get your free audit →