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Google's AI Is Now Phoning Local Shops for Quotes. *What Owners Should Publish First.*

When Google can't find your prices or openings online, it may call your business for the customer and turn your answer into a side-by-side comparison. Here's what I saw when I tested it, and what to have ready.

By Jessica Hough · First published September 2026 · Updated October 2026

Recently, I searched Google for a muffler replacement on my 2018 Ford EcoSport. About four minutes later, I had quotes from three local shops in my inbox. I never dialed a number.

Google made the calls for me. Five shops got a call from an automated voice asking about price and openings. Three gave a quote. One wouldn't give a number. One didn't pick up. A month later, I tried it again with a different kind of job and got a very different result.

If you own a service business, that unfamiliar number on your caller ID may not be spam. It may be Google, calling on behalf of a real customer. And the call itself isn't the story. Why Google decided to call you is.

What is Google's AI calling feature?

Customers tap **Have AI check pricing** in Google Search, or **Check for me** in AI Mode, and describe the job. Google calls several nearby providers and emails the customer what each one said. Google says quotes usually arrive within about 30 minutes. Mine took four.

Google first rolled it out in July 2025 and expanded it to more services, like home repair, at its I/O conference in May 2026. It's available in English to signed-in U.S. adults for services like auto repair, hair salons, pet groomers, electricians, driving schools and exterior cleaning, and Google says more are coming.

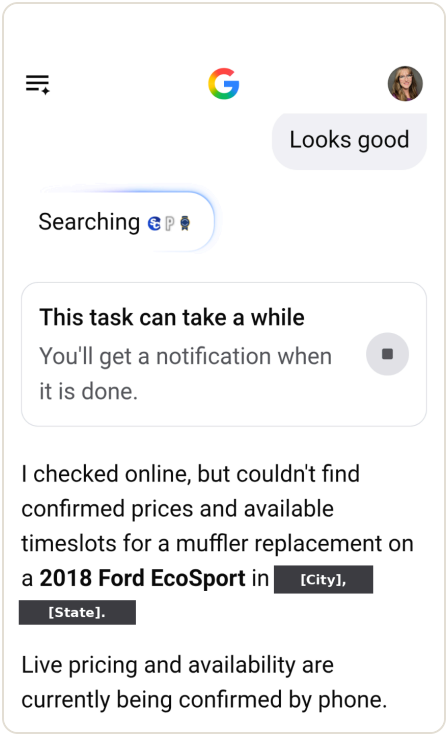
As a customer, I'll admit it's appealing. Calling around for quotes is an errand most people dread, and I got mine without picking up the phone once. Plenty of consumers are going to feel the same way. That's exactly why owners should expect more of these calls, not fewer.

Sources: Google Search Help: Check pricing with AI · Google Search Help: AI Mode local availability and pricing · Google: Search announcements from I/O 2026 · TechCrunch: Google rolls out AI-powered business calling (July 16, 2025)

What happens when a customer asks Google to check prices?

My exact search was "replace muffler on a 2018 Ford EcoSport." That's it. I didn't ask for prices, and I didn't name a single shop. AI Mode asked a few clarifying questions, like when I wanted to bring the car in, and then offered to check with local shops. I said yes, and Google chose which five to call on its own. Its help page says only that it calls "multiple service providers near you." Every shop it picked was fairly close to me and rated above four stars.

The screen below is the one every owner should see. Google searched online first, couldn't find confirmed prices or open time slots, and only then picked up the phone.



Google explaining why it called. Location hidden for privacy.

About four minutes later, I had an email. Google had turned the three phone answers into a comparison table, with a label on each shop.



Recommendations for Muffler Replacement

Shop	Price	Best for
[redacted] *(Phone Confirmed)*	$80 - $350	Most budget-friendly estimate
[redacted] *(Phone Confirmed)*	~$650	Next-day Monday availability
[redacted] *(Phone Confirmed)*	Free inspection	No-appointment walk-ins

Google's comparison table. Shop names hidden for privacy.

Three things about that table bothered me.

Google picked each shop's selling point. The results page keeps two things separate: what each shop actually said on the call, and a "Best for" column Google fills in itself. I never asked about walk-ins. I never mentioned Monday. I never said price would decide it. All I told it was that I needed the muffler replaced in the next week or two.

Google took the facts it collected, decided which ones were worth comparing, and ranked the shops against criteria I never gave it. One came out as "most budget-friendly estimate," another as "next-day Monday availability" and the third as "no-appointment walk-ins." Whatever your front desk says in 90 seconds becomes your tagline in that table, and nobody runs it past you first.

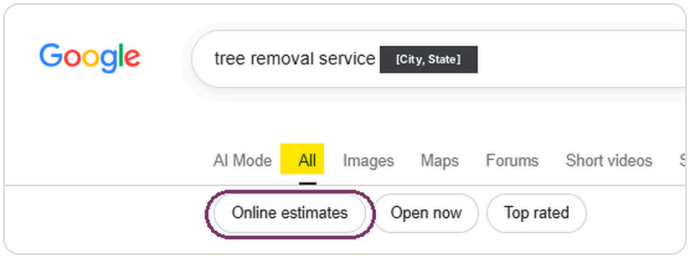
No number meant no spot in the summary. The shop that wouldn't give a price over the phone got dropped from the email summary entirely. It was still in the full results if I clicked through, but most people only read the summary.

A vague quote still came out on top. Google listed the shop that quoted $80 to $350 first and labeled it the "most budget-friendly estimate." That isn't a quote. It's a shrug. Meanwhile, the shop that gave me an actual figure, about $650, got credit only for its Monday opening.

These results come from my first test, in September 2026: one vehicle, one area, one day. Your results may look different.

What happened when I tested it again in October?

In October, I tried a completely different job: removing a 25- to 30-foot tree near my house. This time, I didn't open AI Mode initially. I wanted to see if it would be offered to me after I did the first search. I ran a regular search, and right above the results was a button I hadn't seen before: **Online estimates**. I tapped it, and Google showed me only companies that offer estimates online, along with a ballpark cost range for my region.

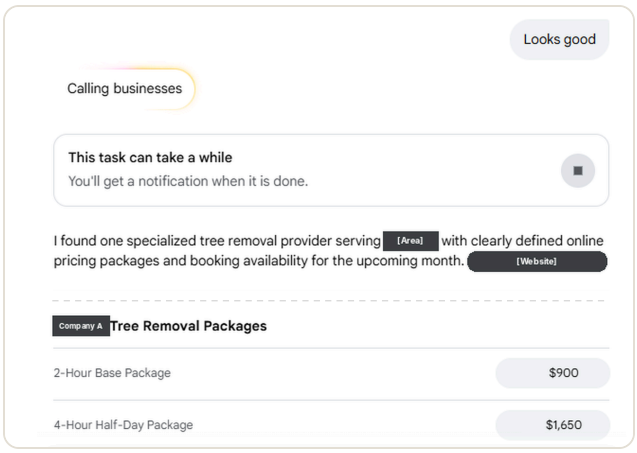


The Online estimates button above a regular search. Location hidden for privacy.

When I added the tree's size and that it stood close to the house, Google narrowed the range to $400 to $900. The sources it linked were cost-calculator websites, not local tree companies. Before any business got a call, I already had a price in my head.

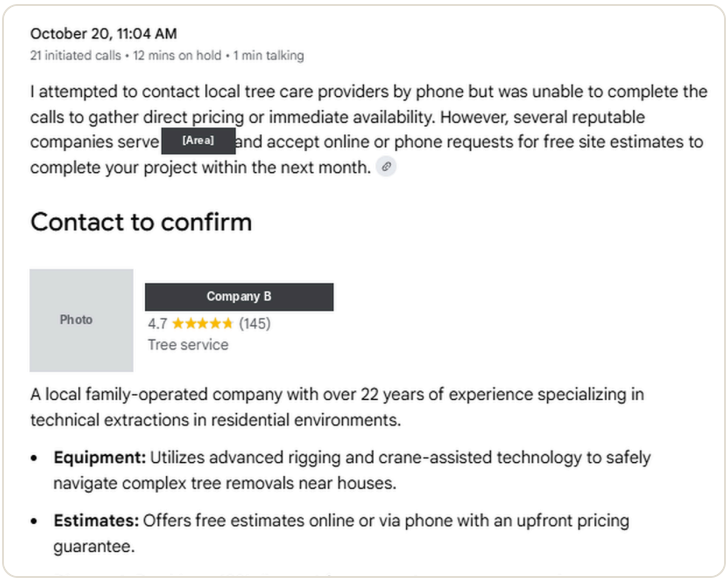
Then Google offered to **Check for me**. It asked two questions: when I wanted the work done and whether I wanted the stump ground. Then it told me exactly how it decides: "If availability or pricing aren't online, I'll call a few top places."

What happened next surprised me. While Google was still dialing, it recommended one company right away, because its package prices were on its website. That company never had to pick up the phone. Its website had already answered.



Google recommending a company with online prices while calls were still in progress. Company details hidden for privacy.

The calls themselves went nowhere. About half an hour later, Google's summary read: "21 initiated calls · 12 mins on hold · 1 min talking." No phone quotes, and the email I asked for never came. Instead, I got a "Contact to confirm" list of companies whose websites say they offer free estimates online or by phone.



Google's call summary and fallback list. Company and location details hidden for privacy.

I asked Google point-blank why it picked those companies. It gave three reasons: equipment for tight spaces near homes, cleanup included in the price and online estimate request forms. Its answer also named a few companies that weren't on the list it showed me, so I'd take that explanation with a grain of salt.

The big takeaway: Results vary a lot by industry. The auto shops in my first test answered and quoted. The tree companies didn't, and I honestly don't know why. My guess is that most of them give estimates in person or through online forms, not over the phone. Outside data points the same way. Invoca, a call-tracking company, studied Google's AI pricing calls in the feature's first months, from July through November 2025. It found that about a quarter went unanswered, and answer rates ranged from 79% for auto repair and tire shops to 65% for veterinary offices. But both tests point to the same lesson: What you publish online does the work before the phone ever rings.

Sources: Invoca: Google's AI pricing calls study (Dec. 10, 2025) · Search Engine Journal: Google My Business adds Online Estimates and three other attributes (June 2020)

When does Google call your business?

Here's the rule behind both results: Google calls when it can't find the answer online. Google says so itself: It calls when a business hasn't posted things like a price range or its next available appointment.

See the opening? If your prices and availability are published where Google can read them, Google has less reason to call. If they aren't, Google calls, and whoever picks up becomes your marketing department for the next 90 seconds.

Most service business owners I work with don't want to publish prices, and I get it. Every job is different, and once a customer sees a number, it's hard to walk back. But you don't need an exact price. A starting price ("Brake jobs from $149"), a range ("Most installs run $400-$700"), a service minimum or a diagnostic fee gives Google something to work with. And it's still your call what the final quote is. *(Prices shown are examples only.)*

What Google asks on the call	Where to publish it
Price for a specific job	"Starting at" prices in your Google Business Profile services list and on each service page
Earliest available appointment	A booking link on your Business Profile, plus typical lead time ("usually booking two to three days out") on your site
Whether you serve the customer's area	Your Business Profile service area, plus the cities or ZIP codes on your service pages
How to book	Your Business Profile booking button, website and phone, all saying the same thing

Your Business Profile services list and your own service pages are the first two places to start.

What happens when Google calls your business?

Google hasn't published a script or a sample recording, but it does describe the calls:

- They come from Google, not the customer, and they're automated and recorded.
- They're short and stick to what the customer asked. Google may pass along the customer's name.
- Google limits repeat calls and avoids calling late at night or early in the morning.

So expect an unfamiliar number, a short call and two or three questions about price and timing for a real job. That's a lead, not a nuisance.

This is not the Google scam call. Google doesn't cold-call to sell ads, threaten your listing or ask for payment. If a caller does, hang up. Google's guidance on fraudulent calls explains what to watch for.

How do you get your quote into the comparison?

When you share the requested details on the call, Google sends the customer your quote by email or text. That's the whole game. Answer clearly and you're in the comparison. Fumble it and you're a blank line.

Prepare a simple answer sheet for whoever answers your phone

- Price ranges for your top three to five services
- Your next available appointment window
- The cities or ZIP codes you serve
- How customers book (phone, online link, text)

Whoever answers your phone is now writing your listing in that comparison email. Tape the sheet up next to it.

Sources: Google Business Profile Help: Automated calls on behalf of customers

Can you opt out of Google's automated calls?

Yes. You can tell Google to stop calling your business during a call. Or you can turn it off in your verified Business Profile:

1. Go to your Business Profile.
2. Select **More** → **Business Profile settings** → **Advanced settings**.
3. Under **Google automated calls and text messages**, turn off the features you don't want.

Think hard before you switch it off. If the customer's email includes quotes from your competitors and not from you, you've lost that lead without ever knowing it existed. If the calls get annoying, the better fix is the one above: Publish a starting price or range and your next opening.

Why this is really about visibility

The phone call is the last step. The first step is whether Google picks you to call at all. Google says only that it calls businesses "near you," but in both of my tests, every business it chose was nearby and rated above four stars. The same signals that decide who shows up in local search, like distance, relevance and reviews, likely decide who gets the call. If you're not on that list, you don't get a chance to quote, and you'll never know the job existed.

And the cheapest fix is often the clearest one: Publish what you do, what it costs and when you can do it. It's an afternoon of writing, not a six-month reputation campaign.

Unanswered edits to your profile can now go live on their own

Anyone can suggest an edit to your Business Profile, like different hours. In late September, Google clarified: "Once notified, you have 4 days to accept or reject the suggestion." If you don't respond, Google may publish the edit when other information online seems to support it, and some edits can go live without review at all. If Google's AI is reading your profile to answer customers, wrong details can slip in while you're busy. Check those notifications at least once a week.

Sources: Search Engine Roundtable: Google Business Profiles gives you four days to reject user edits (Sept. 23, 2026)

If I owned a service business, here's what I'd do this week

1. Add a starting price or price range for your top three services to your Google Business Profile and your website.
2. Add your typical booking lead time to your website ("usually booking two to three days out").
3. If you only quote in person, say so, and put your estimate request form where it's easy to find. If your Business Profile offers an "Online estimates" option and you truly offer them, turn it on.
4. Tape an answer sheet next to the phone.
5. Leave Google's automated calls turned on.

That way, when Google checks on a customer's behalf, your quote lands in their inbox instead of your competitor's.

Frequently asked questions

Why is Google calling my business?
Google may be calling on behalf of a customer who asked it to check your pricing or availability, or to book an appointment. It can also call to confirm Business Profile details like your hours.

Which businesses does Google's AI call?
Google lists services such as auto repair, hair salons, pet groomers, wellness centers, driving schools, electricians, tree cutting and exterior cleaning, and says it is expanding to more services.

How does Google choose which businesses to call?
Google says it calls multiple service providers near the customer. The customer doesn't pick the businesses, and Google hasn't published any other selection criteria.

What is the "Online estimates" button in Google Search?
It's a filter that appears above the results for some service searches. When I tapped it, Google showed only companies that offer estimates online. Google hasn't published how businesses qualify, but Business Profiles in some categories include an "Online estimates" option.

Is the Google call a real person?
No. It's an automated call Google makes on the customer's behalf. Google says the calls are recorded for quality assurance and kept brief and focused on the customer's question. Google hasn't published a script or sample recording.

Is Google's AI calling feature available in every state?
No. Google lists Indiana, Louisiana, Minnesota, Montana and Nebraska as states where these automated calls are not currently available.

How I made this: I ran both tests and gathered the sources, drafted with Claude and edited it in my own voice. The content brief behind this article is available as a separate one-page PDF.

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