



FROM HIDDEN TO HIGHLIGHTED:

How We Helped Asian American Small Businesses Get Found Online



Asian Small Businesses Anchor NYC's Economy

Asian American small businesses are vital to New York's economy and cultural life. In 2017 they accounted for almost one quarter of all firms—[more than 47,000 enterprises across the five boroughs—and had grown 14 percent since 2012.](#) Collectively, Asian-owned employer businesses generated nearly \$121 billion in economic activity across the metro area in 2017, a 35 percent jump in just five years, with [\\$57.7 billion and more than 283,000 jobs](#) created inside the city alone. These businesses—such as restaurants, salons, professional services, and neighborhood grocers—anchor commercial corridors and neighborhoods, preserve and promote diverse Asian cultures, generate steady jobs, and keep local dollars circulating.

Challenges to Growth

Despite their contributions, many Asian owners face persistent barriers to growth: limited English proficiency, digital-access

gaps, and difficulty navigating complex city rules and fast-changing regulations. The COVID-19 pandemic also exposed a key weakness—the lack of an online presence was hurting Asian businesses.

Asian immigrant small business owners shared that it was no longer possible to sustain their businesses by relying solely on customers from their own ethnic communities. Consumer behavior had shifted—over 70% of people were searching for businesses online before visiting them. More customers were relying on delivery and takeout orders, making it crucial for businesses to have an online presence.

But for many immigrant entrepreneurs, digital tools like the Google Business Profile (GBP) remained inaccessible due to language barriers, fear of making mistakes, and unfamiliarity with online marketing norms. Even more troubling, some business owners, particularly older adults, had fallen victim to scams. Bad actors posed as marketing firms or community members supporting small businesses, were charging high fees for free services, or hijacked

Many small business owners we supported faced one or more of the following issues:

- to mainstream customers difficult.

- ## How AAF Helped Small Businesses

[illegible]

The help included:

Support with profile setup:

Some Asian American small businesses are not listed on Google Maps, so we helped them set up their GBP by verifying ownership and entering key details. This made it easier for potential customers to find these businesses online.

Ownership recovery:

Many small businesses have Google profiles, but lack access, often because employees, family members, or well-intentioned customers may have set up the profile. Over time login details were lost or ownership was not transferred. We helped recover profiles and resolve verification or ownership disputes and restored control to rightful business owners.

Profile optimization:

Many business owners with access to their GBP needed help to effectively manage or update their information. We helped them update critical details such as business names, operating hours, categories, and service descriptions. Additionally, we enhanced profiles by adding high-quality photos, current menus, and logos to accurately reflect

the business's identity and attract more customers.

Encouraging client reviews:

Reviews can make or break a business. We helped businesses request genuine customer reviews and respond to feedback, create QR codes linking to their profile, and display them on-site—all of which improve consumer trust, boost engagement, and build a stronger presence on Google.

Bilingual language support:

We offered bilingual assistance, including in Korean and Chinese, to help businesses update and recover their Google Business Profiles, ensuring clear communication for business owners with language barriers.

Together, these services helped small business owners regain control of their listings, improve online visibility, respond to and encourage reviews, and engage new customers. With our in-person, in-language support, each personalized intervention restored not just access but peace of mind for small business owners. This targeted approach also enabled more targeted tracking of GBP metrics and program impact.



Google Maps listing of one of AAF's clients, Northern King Dumpling.

Putting Asian-Owned Small Businesses on the Digital Map

- Through our TA, we supported over 120 Asian American small businesses.
- Our analysis focuses on the 83 businesses that allowed access to their GBPs.
- We helped 62 businesses, mostly in the food & beverage and beauty sectors, recover ownership and optimize content.
- We created business profiles from scratch for 21 businesses.
- This analysis compares GBP metrics 30 days before and after AAF's intervention.



Recovered Google Business Profiles: Increase in Search, Views, and Calls

30 days after we helped small businesses recover and optimize their GBPs, they saw on average:

- A 130% increase in mobile search activity and 79% increase in desktop searches,
- Significant rise in Google Maps views across platforms, with desktop map visibility increasing by 47% and

mobile by nearly 29%,

- Over 50% increase in customer calls and 60% increase in direction requests,
- Over 200% increase in new mobile views and direction requests within the first 30 days for previously inactive profiles.

Many of these businesses had pre-existing GBPs that they had lost access to or never properly claimed—often created by others without formal ownership transfer—so AAF assisted by recovering accounts and resolving verification issues to return control to rightful business owners.

For those already in control of their profiles, support focused on optimizing business details, photos, and service descriptions to

Impact of GBP Updates and Recovery

130%

increase in mobile search activity

60%

increase in direction requests

200%

increase in new mobile views and direction requests for previously inactive profiles



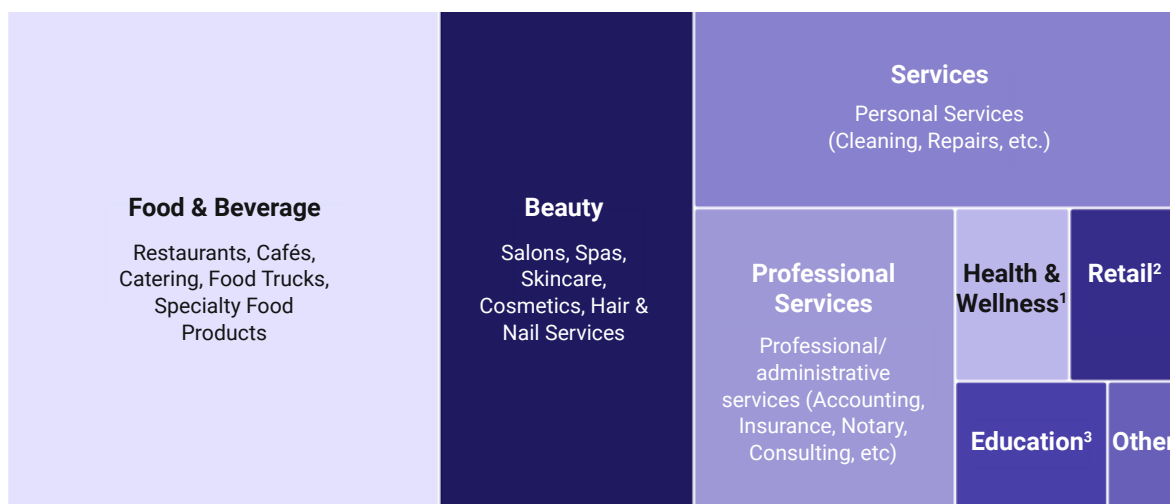
ensure an accurate and compelling online presence.

These small businesses experienced substantial gains especially in mobile search visibility and calls and direction requests. More potential customers were looking up and finding Asian-owned small businesses, inquiring about their

services, and physically patronizing the establishments.

This TA initiative demonstrated that restoring or establishing digital presence is not just a technical fix—it's a strategic pathway to visibility, trust, and growth in the local marketplace.

Which Businesses Benefitted from Recovered and Improved GBPs?

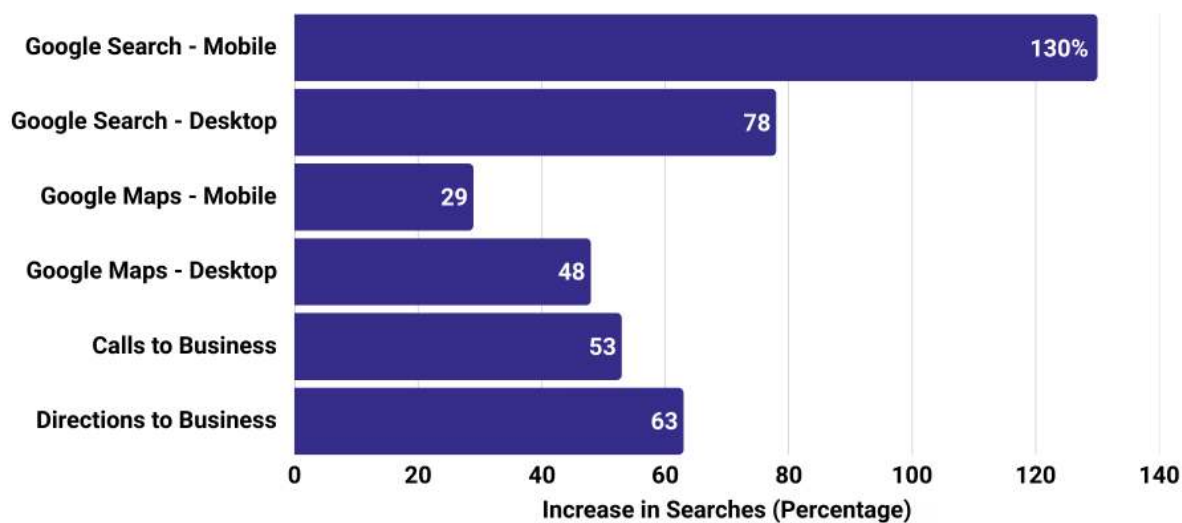


¹ Gyms, Personal Training, Alternative Medicine, Mental Health Services.

² Physical & Online Stores selling products like clothing, electronics, home goods, etc.

³ Tutoring, Online Courses, Training Centers, Coaching Service.

Recovered GBPs: Increase in Customer Engagement



New Google Business Profiles: Increase in Customer Engagement

30 days after we helped businesses create new GBPs, they saw on average:

- 173 new views on mobile Google Search, 98 on desktop Google Search, 171 on mobile Google Maps, and 15 on desktop Google Maps,
- 33 requests for directions and 2 phone calls.

Some Asian American small businesses were entirely missing from Google Maps and Search, limiting their ability to be discovered by potential customers. Through this initiative, we helped 21 such businesses create their Google Business Profiles from the ground up—verifying ownership, inputting accurate details like operating hours and categories,

and ensuring each listing reflected the identity of the business. This foundational setup enabled these previously invisible businesses to appear in local search results for the first time.

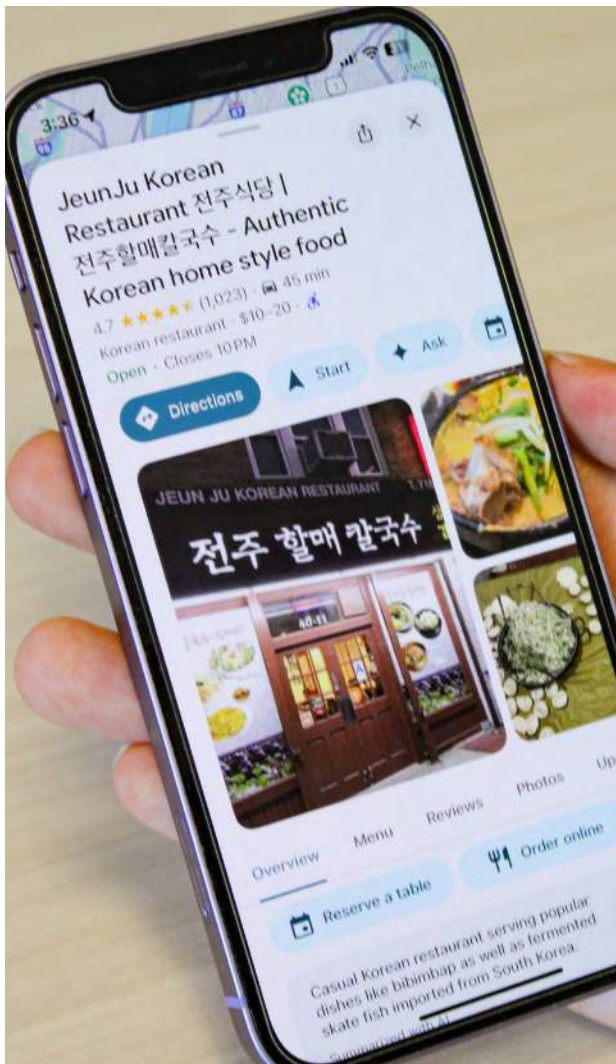
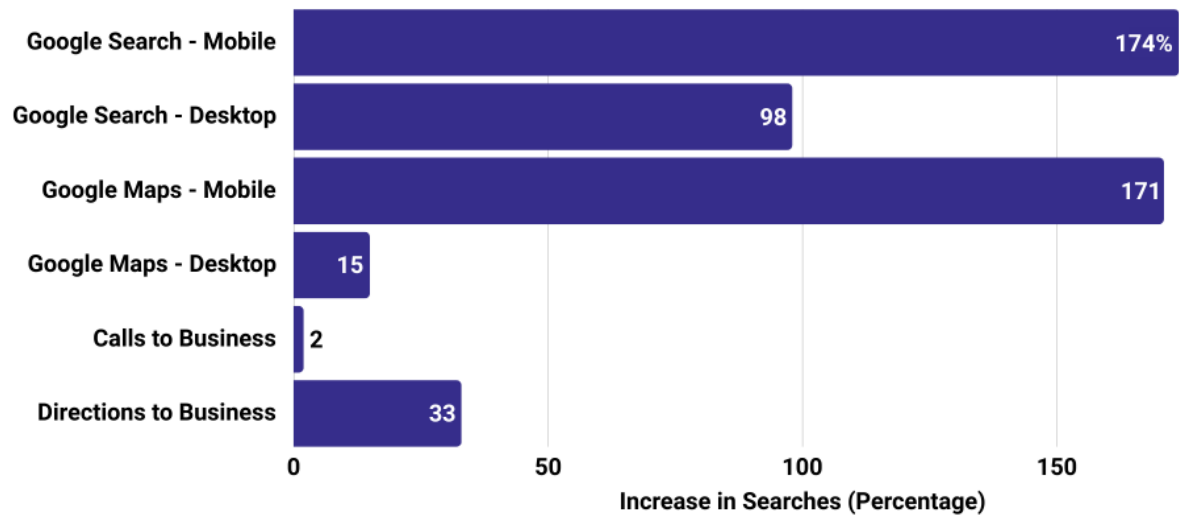
These businesses saw notable increases in search exposure, reflecting improved visibility and discoverability across both mobile and desktop platforms. The particularly high growth on mobile highlights the importance of having a well-optimized profile available on smartphone platforms, where most real-time, location-based searches occur. Furthermore, the significant increase in direction requests suggests growing interest in visiting the businesses in person, reinforcing the value of a business being visible and accessible on Google Maps. While the number of calls was modest, it still represents new customer inquiries that were likely not happening before the setup.

Which Businesses Benefitted from New GBPs?



⁴ Professional/administrative services (Accounting, Insurance, Notary, Consulting, etc).

New GBPs: Increase in Customer Engagement



Want More Customers?

Let's make your business shine on Google with our **FREE** program.

Attract new customers from Google:

- We create marketing keywords for your business profile to be searched more by the Google users.
- We add attractive photos and updates about your products/dishes, special offers and events.

Improve your Google ratings!

- Provide solutions for getting more reviews on your profile.
- We check your business reviews and address bad reviews.
- We make your business look great on Google with fast, correct responses to customers.

Get help with challenges like:

- Use Google Business Profile for digital marketing.
- Trouble logging in to your Google profile.

Contact the Asian American Federation TODAY!

Call/Txt: 646-854-5835
Email: smallbiz@asianfederation.org
Apply to Scan Below



Google Maps listing for Jeonju Restaurant; AAF ad for our digital marketing program; food from Jeonju.



Beyond the Numbers: Small Business Owners Speak Out

In working personally with over 120 small businesses, AAF heard from many owners their challenges, experiences, and successes as we assisted them with their Google Business Profiles and helped

put them on the digital map. Behind the numbers are stories of immigrants who work hard to support their families, provide valuable services to their communities, and honor their cultural traditions.

We spoke to a few business owners for whom our technical assistance made a real difference in their livelihoods.

“After getting support from AAF, I saw a real change in my business.”

“I had tried using a website and social media before, but I didn’t have much experience with digital marketing. The most impactful support I received from AAF was optimizing my Google Business Profile. They helped me with the review setup, uploading photos, and even integrating with Uber Eats.

Now, I manage the Google profile myself. I respond to reviews, check the analytics, and update things when needed. Many new customers—especially younger and non-Korean—say they found us on Google. Our online rating improved from 4.1 to 4.7 in just one year, and we have many more reviews.

Delivery sales doubled or even tripled, and dine-in sales also went up a lot. People often mention finding us on Google Maps and say they love the quality and authenticity of our food. Many return visits come through automatic Google reservations.

These days, even during lunch hours, people find us through Google and come back with family. Seeing more people appreciate Korean food makes me proud and motivates me to keep improving.”

— **Sophia Choi, Owner of Jeunju Restaurant**



“It’s not one-size-fits-all marketing.”

“We’ve been running Northern King Dumpling since 2017, mainly serving older Korean and Chinese-Korean locals. After the pandemic, foot traffic dropped significantly, and I realized I needed digital tools to reach new customers — but I didn’t know where to start. Language barriers, limited experience, and high costs made it hard to trust outside help.

AAF helped me set up our Google Business Profile, upload photos, and manage reviews. About 3–4 months after making those updates, we started seeing more diverse customers — especially non-Korean and younger people who found us through Google reviews or photos of our open kitchen. Phone calls from English-speaking customers also increased.

I highly recommend this kind of support for small, family-run restaurants that need tailored help and not one-size-fits-all marketing.”

— *Jinglan Quan, Owner of Northern King Dumpling and Guk Su Jip*



Online Visibility as Economic Justice

Recovering or setting up a Google Business Profile is more than just a technical fix, it is a digital equity intervention. By reclaiming online ownership and visibility, AAF empowers small business owners to control how they show up online and connect with their customers, a vital step toward economic inclusion and visibility in the modern marketplace.

The 30-day before-and-after data clearly shows that even short-term but culturally-responsive technical assistance can produce significant improvements in online visibility and customer

engagement. Businesses once invisible or misrepresented online were able to re-establish a credible digital footprint.

As digital discovery plays a growing role in how consumers find and choose businesses, helping immigrant small business owners navigate and maintain their online presence must be a core part of any small business resiliency strategy. This isn’t optional—it’s essential infrastructure.

Investing in ongoing support for digital visibility is a concrete, scalable way to advance economic justice, strengthen local commercial corridors, and ensure that Asian American and immigrant business owners are fully included in the digital economy.



About This Brief

This brief was authored by Yeon Joo Kang with Taewon Kim providing technical assistance to the small businesses featured. Special thanks to Ahyoung Kim, Meera Venugopal, and Annie Yang for review and edits and Jenny Shin for the design.

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Photos on page 1, 7 (left), 8 (bottom), and 9 are by Jenny Shin; photos on page 4 and 7 (right) are by Janice Chung. Photo on page 8 (top) is by Annie Yang.

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