

Competitive Landscape Case Study

GBP Management in Fresno Who Is Operating, How They Are Adapting, and Where the Gap Sits

22,000+ Fresno businesses	35% have any managed GBP	60%+ of local searches trigger AI Overviews	\$373/mo avg SMB platform spend (Thryv ARPU, 2025)	71% use Google to read reviews
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Sources: Census NAICS / BrightLocal 2026 / ALM Corp Mar 2026 / Thryv Q4 2025 / BrightLocal 2026

THE STRUCTURAL SHIFT IN LOCAL SEARCH

Between mid-2024 and mid-2026, Google reorganized how local search results are displayed. AI Overviews — AI-generated answer boxes that synthesize information from multiple sources and display it above the traditional local pack — now appear in more than 60% of local business searches in the United States. A search for "plumber near me" or "auto repair Fresno" increasingly returns a single generated paragraph naming one or two businesses, ahead of the traditional three-pack map listing.

The consequences are measurable. Ahrefs research from February 2026 found that pages appearing in queries that show AI Overviews experience a 58% reduction in organic click-through rate. Seer Interactive's 2026 analysis of 5.47 million queries confirmed the same direction. Organic visibility is not dying — it is being filtered. Businesses that feed Google's AI system with accurate, current, specific data get cited. Businesses that do not get passed over entirely, regardless of their traditional ranking.

The data source that feeds AI Overviews for local businesses is primarily the Google Business Profile. A GBP with complete service listings, recent posts, responsive review management, and accurate hours is structurally more likely to be cited than one that has not been touched since 2022. Google itself stated in February 2026 that it auto-populates services on GBP listings from machine learning — but also that accurate, owner-verified content takes priority over inferred content.

The businesses that invested in managed GBP profiles before AI Overviews scaled are now appearing in generated answers. The businesses that did not are invisible — even when they rank first in organic results.

THE FRESNO CONTEXT

Fresno is a city of 545,970 residents and a county of just over 1.03 million, with a business landscape of approximately 22,000 registered businesses. Fifty-one percent of city residents are Hispanic or Latino. Significant Hmong, Punjabi, Vietnamese, Armenian, and Farsi-speaking communities make the local search environment inherently multilingual — a dimension no national platform addresses with any specificity.

The local economy is anchored in agriculture (\$7.7 billion annual production), construction (a \$2.5 billion forecast for 2026 alone), and a dense service sector covering auto repair, HVAC, landscaping, healthcare, and food. These are not tech-forward industries. A majority of their operators do not have dedicated marketing staff. The Blackstone Avenue corridor alone contains more than a dozen independent service businesses within 3.8 miles, most with GBP profiles that have not been actively managed.

Fresno State's transition to the PAC-12 Conference on July 1, 2026 marks a civic identity shift. Regional visibility and tourism spending are expected to increase. The businesses positioned to capture that attention are the ones with visible, current, well-managed digital profiles.

THE MODEL

Navigator's Log R&D;, operating in partnership with Steve Richardson, provides hands-on Google Business Profile management for Fresno-area small businesses. The service covers profile maintenance, original content posting, review response, citation consistency, service list management, and monthly performance reporting. Three pricing tiers are structured for the Fresno market: Tier 1 at \$75/month (maintenance), Tier 2 at \$125/month (active management), and Tier 3 at \$175/month (full-service with Spanish-language content).

The operational structure is deliberately lean. Steve Richardson conducts field prospecting — direct contact with business owners on established bicycle routes and through the informal trades economy. Christopher Blake Head handles all digital execution. Neither role is interchangeable with software. Steve's access to the Blackstone Avenue corridor, the Craigslist trades community, and the referral networks inside Fresno's service industries cannot be automated. Christopher's ability to write GBP content that names local landmarks, references the Kings River, or correctly addresses Armenian-language searchers cannot be replicated by a platform with 200,000 global clients.

At the target scale of 15–20 clients, this is not a startup chasing growth. It is a sustainable local practice built on a service that the market currently undervalues and that AI is rapidly making more valuable.

THE TIMING ARGUMENT

The window for this model is specific. In 2024, most Fresno SMBs did not know what a GBP profile was. In 2026, they are beginning to notice that some competitors are appearing in AI-generated answers and they are not. They do not yet know why. The businesses that get a managed profile now will have accumulated review velocity, post history, and citation consistency before competitors recognize the urgency. The first mover advantage in local AI visibility is being established right now, and it accumulates over time — Google's AI systems reward consistent signal history, not one-time fixes.

National platforms will eventually address this gap with cheaper, faster automated tools. That is already happening. But automation optimizes for volume and cost, not for the kind of specific, verifiable, locally-grounded content that earns a citation in an AI Overview for a Fresno mechanic. The case for a locally-managed service is not permanent — but the window is open now and will narrow over the next 18–36 months.

Six players operate in or adjacent to the Fresno GBP management space. Each is responding to the AI Overviews shift from a different position with a different set of tools. None occupy the same position as NLR.

Thryv		National SaaS Platform · NASDAQ: THRY
BUSINESS MODEL	All-in-one SMB platform: CRM, scheduling, payments, email, GBP management. Transitioned from legacy yellow pages/directory business to software. 200,000+ businesses globally. Serves the plumber, salon owner, contractor, accountant.	
PRICING / SCALE	\$373/month average revenue per unit (Q4 2025). Full-year 2025 SaaS revenue grew 34% YoY. Marketing Services (legacy directory) declined 11.7% in Q4 2025 as legacy book revenue continues to wind down.	
AI ADAPTATION	Acquired Hatch, an AI-powered lead management platform. Partnership with OpenAI. Launched "Thryv Platform" positioning as "AI-enabled Market, Sell, Grow" tool. AI features target lead capture, automated follow-up, and CRM — not content creation.	
FRESNO GAP	Thryv manages GBP as one feature among dozens. A Fresno auto shop using Thryv gets templated posts and automated check-ins — not content that references the specific neighborhoods, language communities, or competitive dynamics of the Blackstone corridor. Platform-scale AI optimizes for breadth, not depth.	

WHAT THRYV TEACHES

Thryv's ARPU of \$373/month confirms that SMBs in the service trades — exactly the Fresno client base NLR is targeting — will pay substantially more than NLR's current pricing when they perceive clear value. Thryv gets to that ARPU through bundling: a business owner who uses Thryv for scheduling, invoicing, and email marketing also gets GBP management as part of the stack. The lesson is not that NLR should charge \$373 for GBP management alone — it is that a client who trusts their digital partner with multiple operational functions will naturally spend more over time.

Thryv's AI pivot also reveals the platform's constraint. Their AI investment targets workflow automation and lead routing. It does not target local content quality. A Fresno auto repair shop using Thryv gets AI-generated follow-up emails and automated appointment reminders. It does not get a GBP post that correctly identifies the shop's BAR registration number, addresses Spanish-language search queries, or describes the owner by name in a way that matches the reviews customers are actually leaving. That specificity is not a platform feature — it is human local knowledge.

Yelp National Review & Advertising Platform · NYSE: YELP	
BUSINESS MODEL	Paid advertising placement on Yelp's consumer review platform. Businesses pay for enhanced visibility, call tracking, and lead generation — not managed profile maintenance. Yelp generates the consumer review content; businesses pay to appear more prominently within it.
PRICING / SCALE	2025 net revenue: \$1.46 billion (+4% YoY, a record). Services advertising (home services, contractors) grew 8% to \$948 million. Restaurants/Retail advertising declined 6%. AI-adjusted EBITDA guided lower for 2026 as AI investment increases.
AI ADAPTATION	Acquiring Hatch (AI lead management). Partnership with OpenAI. Piloting AI-generated business descriptions and AI-powered request matching. The strategic direction is using AI to automate the connection between homeowner intent and contractor response — reducing the friction that has driven SMBs to competitors.
FRESNO GAP	Yelp sells advertising, not management. A Fresno business that buys Yelp ads gets more prominent placement in Yelp search results. It does not get a human reviewing its profile completeness, responding to every review, posting seasonal content, or building the GBP data that feeds Google's AI Overviews. Yelp and GBP serve different functions in local search — they are not substitutes.

WHAT YELP TEACHES

Yelp's continued growth in the services category — up 8% in 2025 — indicates that Fresno contractors, trades, and home service businesses are still spending on digital visibility. The fact that they are spending on Yelp advertising (not GBP management) suggests they are solving a visibility problem with the most familiar tool available, not necessarily the most effective one for their search environment.

Yelp's OpenAI partnership is worth watching for a different reason. As AI platforms begin generating local business recommendations from multiple data sources — including Yelp review data — the businesses with the most consistent, positive review history across all platforms will be cited more frequently. A business with well-managed GBP and a healthy Yelp presence is more visible in AI-generated answers than one with only one or neither. This is not a reason to advise clients to buy Yelp ads — it is a reason to advise them to be found everywhere the AI is looking.

Angi (formerly Angie's List)		National Lead Generation Marketplace · NASDAQ: ANGI
BUSINESS MODEL	Lead marketplace model: consumers post job requests, contractors pay per lead or per connection. The platform matches supply and demand at scale. Revenue depends on Service Request volume and lead conversion rates.	
PRICING / SCALE	Revenue declining 10–16% per year for several consecutive years. Q3 2025 revenue: \$265.6 million (–10.5% YoY). January 2026: 350 employees laid off (12.5% of workforce) citing AI-driven efficiency improvements. Annual savings target: \$70–80 million.	
AI ADAPTATION	Replacing staff with AI to reduce operating costs. Implementing "homeowner choice" model to reduce liability from poor contractor matches. Using AI to predict match quality and automate lead qualification. The AI investment is defensive — reducing the cost of a declining business rather than building a new one.	
FRESNO GAP	Angi's model is fundamentally transactional. A Fresno plumber who buys Angi leads is paying for introductions, not for a managed presence. When those leads stop converting — because the business has no GBP presence, no reviews, and no digital credibility — Angi has no answer. The platform generates the call; it does not build the reputation that makes the call answer.	

WHAT ANGI TEACHES

The Angi decline is the clearest evidence in the competitive landscape that transactional lead generation is structurally weakening against relationship-based local reputation management. Homeowners are increasingly skeptical of lead aggregators — a dynamic documented in the scams document in this package. The businesses winning in Fresno's service market in 2026 are the ones with accumulated review credibility, consistent GBP visibility, and professional responses to feedback. None of that comes from Angi.

The layoffs are a signal, not just a statistic. Angi replaced 12.5% of its workforce with AI to cut costs in a declining business. That is a very different use of AI than Thryv using AI to improve a growing product. For NLR, the Angi story is a selling point: the lead marketplace model is contracting, and the businesses that have been relying on it are looking for alternatives.

What operates locally in Fresno's digital marketing space is different in character from the national platforms. These are small agencies — typically 1-10 employees — offering broad marketing services rather than specialized GBP management. Their pricing and positioning differ from NLR's not in kind but in scope and access.

Inpower Marketing		<i>Local Fresno Full-Service Agency · Founded 2010 · 1–10 employees</i>
BUSINESS MODEL	Web development, SEO, social media marketing, branding, and digital advertising for Fresno small businesses. A full-service offering with a stated focus on creative solutions and small business clients. Not a GBP management specialist.	
PRICING / SCALE	Estimated \$500–2,000+/month. No published pricing. Website has not published new content since 2017, which itself signals reduced content marketing activity. No online review presence on major platforms.	
AI ADAPTATION	No documented AI adaptation strategy. The agency's limited public digital footprint makes it difficult to assess their service evolution. A marketing firm whose own digital presence has not been actively maintained in several years presents a positioning contrast for any conversation with a mutual prospect.	
FRESNO GAP	Inpower operates at a higher price point for a broader scope of service. They are not focused on GBP management specifically, and their pricing removes them from consideration for the Fresno trades businesses NLR targets. A \$1,200/month web and social retainer is not the same decision as a \$125/month GBP management service.	

Fresno Freelance and Independent Operators		<i>Individual freelancers / Fiverr / Upwork</i>
BUSINESS MODEL	One-off or monthly task-based work: profile setup, review responses, post creation. No ongoing account management, no strategic continuity, no local context. Often engaged through Fiverr or Upwork at rates that reflect volume, not quality.	
PRICING / SCALE	\$50–200 for one-time setup. \$100–300/month for ongoing posting. No performance accountability. High client turnover. Work is often templated across industries and markets with no local adaptation.	
AI ADAPTATION	AI tools (ChatGPT, Jasper) have pushed freelance content costs toward zero, simultaneously degrading quality. A freelancer generating AI posts for a Fresno auto shop produces the same output as one generating AI posts for a shop in Phoenix. Google's AI content detection is increasingly penalizing generic AI-generated GBP content that lacks specificity and verifiability.	
FRESNO GAP	Freelancers compete on price, not on outcomes. The Fresno business owner who has tried a Fiverr GBP service and seen no results is a warmer prospect than one who has never tried anything. The dissatisfied freelance customer is the most accessible entry point in the prospect database.	

BrightLocal		SaaS Tool Platform · B2B · \$29–79/month self-serve
BUSINESS MODEL	DIY platform for agencies and in-house marketers: GBP audit, citation management, rank tracking, review monitoring, and reporting tools. Not a managed service — the business owner or their internal staff operates the platform.	
PRICING / SCALE	\$29–79/month for self-serve tiers. Agency pricing is higher. Used internally by NLR for reporting and monitoring rather than as a competing service.	
AI ADAPTATION	Adding AI-powered insights to reporting dashboards. AI-suggested review response templates. Expanding citation data coverage. BrightLocal is a tool company — their AI adaptation is about making the tool smarter, not about providing managed execution.	
FRESNO GAP	BrightLocal requires expertise to operate effectively. A Fresno plumber with a BrightLocal subscription still has to write the posts, respond to the reviews, manage the citations, and interpret the reports. The tool layer is not the service layer — NLR uses BrightLocal as infrastructure, not as competition.	

WHAT THE MARKET IS ACTUALLY BUYING

Every competitor in this landscape is selling something adjacent to what NLR offers — but not the same thing. Thryv sells operational software with GBP as a feature. Yelp sells advertising placement. Angi sells leads. Inpower sells full-service marketing at a price point that excludes most Fresno trades businesses. Freelancers sell low-cost task execution with no accountability. BrightLocal sells a tool.

What NLR sells is managed local presence — the systematic, ongoing work of making a specific Fresno business visible, credible, and responsive in the AI-mediated local search environment. That is not a crowded space. The combination of Fresno-scale pricing (\$75–175/month), hands-on field relationships, multilingual content capability, and deep category knowledge across the service economy does not describe any other current market participant.

The competitors in this market are adapting to AI by automating at scale. The opportunity NLR occupies is the one that automation creates: the gap between what a platform can do for 200,000 clients and what a human practitioner can do for 20 clients who live in the same city.

THE POSITIONING TABLE

COMPETITOR	PRICE RANGE	GBP FOCUS	LOCAL KNOWLEDGE	AI STRATEGY	EXECUTION LAYER
Thryv	\$199–449/mo	One of many features	None — global platform	Deep — AI workflow tools	Automated templates
Yelp	\$300–1,000+	No — ads only	None — national platform	Growing — OpenAI partnership	No execution layer
Angi	Lead-based	No — leads only	None — national platform	Defensive — cost reduction	No execution layer
Inpower Marketing	\$500–2,000+	Partial — broad scope	Fresno-based but broad	Unknown	Human but broad scope
Freelance/Fiverr	\$100–300/mo	Yes — but no context	None — no local roots	AI-generated content	Low-quality templated
NLR + Steve R.	\$75–175/mo	Yes — core service	Maximum — Fresno-specific	GBP is the AI feed	Human + local knowledge

NOTES ON ADJACENT RISK

Two developments warrant monitoring. First, Thryv's AI roadmap is explicitly targeting the service trades — exactly NLR's client base. If Thryv develops a Fresno-market-aware content engine that can approximate local specificity, the differentiation argument narrows. That is unlikely in the 18-month window this operation is targeting, but it is the most credible long-term competitive threat.

Second, Google's continued development of AI-powered GBP auto-management (which already auto-populates services and suggests edits) could eventually reduce the value of human management for profile maintenance tasks. The counter-argument is that auto-generated content is also what every competitor's AI produces — the differentiation moves to verified specificity, review strategy, and client communication, all of which remain human functions.

WHERE THIS GOES OVER 18–36 MONTHS

The competitive environment for local GBP management in a mid-size market like Fresno will tighten over the next 18–36 months. AI tools will get better at generating plausible local content. National platforms will push further down-market in price. Google will continue automating more of the profile management layer. These trends are real and directional.

What they do not change is the relational layer. The Fresno contractor who signs with NLR does so because Steve walked in, understood their situation, and offered a clear, affordable service that produced visible results. That relationship is not a Thryv account. It is not a Yelp campaign. It is a recurring trust transaction between a local operator and a local business, mediated by genuine results in the search environment the business owner actually cares about.

At 15–20 clients in the Fresno market, NLR is not trying to build the next Thryv. It is building a practice that earns \$1,750–3,500 per month in recurring revenue from clients who renew because their phones ring more. That outcome does not require AI acquisition strategy, venture funding, or national scale. It requires the Blackstone Avenue bicycle route and thirty minutes per client per week of competent, locally-informed work.

Every competitor in this landscape is responding to the same AI shift. Thryv is buying AI companies. Yelp is partnering with OpenAI. Angi is replacing humans with AI to cut costs. NLR's response is different: managed GBP profiles ARE the AI strategy — because GBP data is what the AI is reading.

THE DEFENSIBLE WINDOW

The claim this case study makes is bounded in time and scale. It is not that NLR is immune to competition or that local GBP management is a permanent moat. It is that in Fresno in mid-2026, with 65% of local businesses unmanaged, AI Overviews actively selecting from the managed 35%, and no national competitor operating at \$75–175/month with local execution and multilingual capability — the window is open. The businesses that build a review foundation, post history, and AI citation record in this window will be harder to displace in 2027 and 2028, regardless of what national platforms do.

That is the operating premise. Everything in this package is built around it.

SOURCES

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