

The first five minutes after someone contacts you

Getting found takes months. Whether it turns into a job is decided in the next five minutes.

Somebody has just decided they need what you do. They found you, which took a profile, some reviews and maybe a website. All of that effort is now resting on what happens in the next five minutes.

There's a line in the leaks guide that does more work than the rest of the page: *speed of response is free, and it moves more work than any ad*. This is that line, written out properly.

It matters because of how people actually hire a trade. They don't research. They contact two or three and go with whoever makes it easy first. Not the cheapest and not the best, because they can't judge either yet. By the time the third one calls back they already have a plan, and changing it feels like work.

Which means the gap between you and the other two isn't skill. It's minutes.

PART ONE — THE CALL ITSELF

01 Be first, not best

Most people treat an inquiry as something to get to when there's a moment. There usually isn't one, and that's the whole problem.

An inquiry has a short shelf life. The person who sent it is, at that exact moment, actively solving a problem. An hour later they're doing something else and you're an interruption. A day later somebody else is booked.

What you're competing on here isn't craftsmanship. Nobody can judge your craftsmanship from a missed call. They're working out whether you'll turn up at all, and answering quickly is the first evidence of that they will ever see.

WHAT TO DO THIS WEEK

- Decide what your response promise actually is, and make it true. *Same day* that you keep beats *within the hour* that you don't.
- Answer if you possibly can, even if it's only to say you're on a job and you'll call at four. Ten seconds now beats a perfect callback nobody waited for.

- If you can't answer while you're working, use fixed callback windows and keep them, as in leak four.
- Check the routes you aren't watching. The contact form, the message request folder, the email address you stopped opening. An inquiry you never saw still counts as one you lost.

You will lose work to worse tradesmen who answered first.

02 Three questions, sixty seconds

There are two ways to get this wrong. Interrogate them like it's a finance application, or ask nothing at all and agree to drive across the county for something that was never worth the gas.

Three questions sort almost any inquiry. **What is it. Where is it. When do they need it.**

That's usually enough to know whether it's a job for you, roughly what it's worth, and whether it fits the week you've got. Everything else, the access and the materials and exactly which shade of grey, can wait until you're standing in front of it.

WHAT TO DO THIS WEEK

- Ask those three first. In that order.
- Add a fourth if your trade genuinely needs one, but only one. Every extra question on a first call makes it feel like a form.
- Write them down during the call, not after it.
- Ask how they found you while you've got them. That's leak one, and this call is the only moment it's free to collect.

You're not trying to price the job in sixty seconds. You're trying to find out whether it's a job.

03 Never hang up without a next step

Most calls end with *"I'll get back to you."* That's where inquiries go to die, and the worst part is that both people hang up believing something happened.

Something did happen. They now have to wait, and waiting is precisely when somebody calls the next number down the list.

A next step is a specific thing with a time on it. *"I'll come and look Thursday morning"* is a next step. *"I'll put a price together and send it tonight"* is a next step. *"I'll be in touch"* is a way of ending a conversation.

WHAT TO DO THIS WEEK

- Say what happens next, out loud, before you hang up.

- Offer dates rather than asking when suits. Two options is a decision. An open question is homework, and homework gets put off.
- Anything you can honestly price on the phone, price on the phone. On small work speed is worth more than precision.
- Anything you can't, say so plainly. *"I won't guess at that, I'd want to see it"* reads as competence rather than evasion.

People decide whether you're organized long before they see a price. Usually inside the first ninety seconds.

PART TWO — THE HOUR AFTER

04 The message you send within the hour

Then you hang up, and all they have left is the memory of a phone call with somebody whose name they didn't write down.

The person they're deciding with, a partner or a landlord or whoever holds the budget, wasn't on that call. Right now you exist to them as *some guy I spoke to*. A text fixes that in under a minute.

WHAT TO DO THIS WEEK

- Send a text after any first call. Your name, your business, what you agreed, and when.
- Put your name in it, so they have a contact worth saving instead of an unknown number worth ignoring.
- If you said Thursday, the message says Thursday. That message is the thing they forward to whoever else is deciding.
- One photo of similar work, if your trade has photos worth sending. One. Not a portfolio.

Half the time that message gets read by somebody who never spoke to you.

05 The follow-up nobody sends

Silence gets read as a no. It hardly ever is one.

Silence is usually a busy week. People mean to reply and don't. Most trades take it as rejection and never mention it again, which is the same leak as the one about quotes, one step earlier in the process and even cheaper to fix.

WHAT TO DO THIS WEEK

- Keep a list of the ones that went quiet. A note on your phone will do.
- One message after three days. A sentence, not a pitch: *"Still happy to take a look at that if it's useful."*

- One more after two weeks, then let it go. Two is persistence. Five is a nuisance, and people talk.
- When somebody does say no, ask what they went with. About half will tell you, and it's the cheapest market research you will ever be handed.

The inquiry already sitting in your phone is paid for. The next one isn't.

WHERE TO START

One habit. Decide your response promise, say it out loud to yourself, and keep it for two weeks. Same day, before six, within the hour, whatever is genuinely true when you're halfway up a roof. A promise you keep is worth more than a faster one you don't.

One list. The inquiries that went quiet. Send the three-day message to every one still warm. That work is already paid for; you just stopped short of it.

Getting them to call in the first place is the 60 seconds before someone calls. What to say when the number lands badly is the one about being too expensive.

Answer first. Ask three things. Say what happens next.

The inquiries you never saw are the ones I can find. Send me your website and I'll test whether your contact form actually delivers, whether your phone number is tappable, and where a message from it ends up. Free, within two business days.

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