



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO

# Turning Inbound Phone Calls **into Booked Service Appointments**



## Introduction

If you're in the service industry, you know your phone is the lifeblood of your business when it comes to getting new customers. Despite this, very few small businesses devote the necessary resources to making sure they take advantage of every opportunity an inbound phone call represents.

At Service Direct, we've generated millions of phone calls for tens of thousands of service businesses across the US and Canada. Through a combination of **machine learning** and quality assurance team members that are constantly listening to and scoring calls across dozens of data points, we have a massive treasure trove of inbound phone call data.

As such, we have unique insights into how service businesses can turn inbound phone calls into new customers.

**This guide is designed to do a few things:**

- Help you better understand the value of an inbound phone call
- Share data on the phone habits of service businesses and how they affect new customer acquisition
- Explain what callers are thinking and feeling when they call your business, and how that impacts what you need to do when speaking to them
- Give insights into the critical components that determine success when it comes to turning inbound calls into appointments
- Share practical tips on how to handle various aspects of a phone call
- Reveal the critical step to close deals that your competitors aren't doing

**Ultimately, this guide is designed to help you improve the way you handle inbound phone calls. By doing so, you will be able to generate more revenue without having to spend more money on advertising.**

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## The Value of an Inbound Phone Call

Before we begin, it's important to understand why your business should care about the valuable information in this guide. The reality is this: each time your phone rings, there is a value you can place on that phone call.

What do we mean by that? It has both short and long term implications, as well as a hard numerical value and a soft value that can add to or detract from your business's reputation.

### Short Term

The hard potential value of each incoming call can be calculated by dividing an average month's worth of revenue by an average month's worth of incoming calls for a service need.

For example, if a company's average monthly revenue is \$100K, and the average monthly number of incoming phone calls with potential job opportunities is 250, each phone call is worth roughly \$400.

Monthly Revenue	/	Number of Calls	=	Revenue per call
\$100,000		250		\$400

How might you change your phone handling if you could see those \$400 floating out the window each time an opportunity wasn't handled properly?

The fact of the matter is if you commit to improving your business's phone habits, you will undoubtedly be able to realize more value and revenue from all of your marketing efforts and more cost-effectively grow your business.

### Long Term

The value of acquiring a new customer shouldn't just be based on their first purchase. By demonstrating integrity and exceptional service, you can gain a customer for life, not just for today.

Here's a calculation for Customer Lifetime Value in which the customer spends \$750 per visit, typically visits once per year, and continues to be a customer for 15 years:

Average Ticket	x	Number of visits per year	x	Number of Years a Customer	=	Customer Lifetime Value
\$750		1		15		\$11,250

On the softer side, the value of this customer could be even greater. They may recommend you to their friends, post positive reviews publicly, trust you with bigger projects, and significantly increase their value to your business beyond the hard Customer Lifetime Value figure above.



## The Important Role of a Call Taker

As the face (or, more accurately, voice) of your company, facilitating the needs of customers that call in is the bare minimum of what a call taker can do.

They are the first point of contact and can make the difference between a caller staying a caller or becoming a customer. They are tasked with generating trust, booking appointments, handling problems when they arise, and keeping the operation running smoothly.

Investing the time and resources in their initial training as well as continuing education is just as important for these members of your team as it is for your service and sales people out in the field.

To prove to you how much more revenue a company can generate from the same phone calls by implementing the strategies we'll cover later in this guide, let's look at some numbers. These are numbers that can be hard to pinpoint in your business if it's outside of your normal routine, but they can unlock precious data you can measure, act on, and improve.



## Phone Metrics that Can Transform Your Business

How would you be able to run your business effectively if you could only *guess* at how often an appointment resulted in a sale? That's probably a statistic you look at regularly. If one of your technicians were to go to 20 prospective customers' locations to quote for services, and he only came away with 2 jobs, you would make a change. You would insist that technician get additional training that would result in him converting more leads.

This same attention to detail and outcomes should be devoted to the performance of what happens on the phone. You can look at and measure a number of metrics, but for the purposes of this guide, we'll look at just two that make a huge difference to your revenue overall: **Call Answer Rate** and **Booked Appointment Rate**.

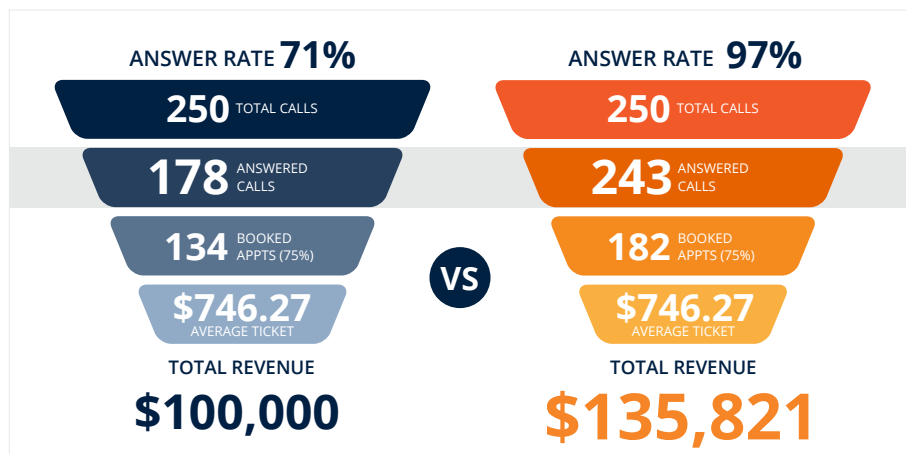
## CALL ANSWER RATE

It probably seems obvious that answering calls impacts how well you turn calls into customers. But do you know how well you are actually doing at answering calls?

We ask every single one of our new clients what percentage of phone calls they answer. On average, they believed they were answering about 97% of incoming phone calls. But when analyzing calls across our clients, we found **the actual answer rate was just 71%**.

In other words, businesses are answering almost 26% fewer calls than they think they are. Imagine if a pizza place's doors randomly locked 25% of the time a potential customer tried to come in. That's essentially what happens day after day with service businesses, and the effects on their ability to realize more value from their advertising and actually grow their businesses is profound.

To see this in action, let's take another look at our previous example. We'll say that the \$100K revenue from 250 calls was from answering 71% of calls and booking appointments at a rate of 75%. Then we'll just move one needle, increasing the rate of answered calls to 97%.



That's just one month! Over the the course of a year, maintaining that answer rate would result in an additional \$429,852 in revenue. That's a huge jump!

Just how important is answering the phone? Beyond the numbers above, for many potential customers, it's the single most important factor when choosing who to hire. In a recent survey, 64% of homeowners said that answering their initial phone call was important when choosing a contractor, and **35% said it was the most important thing**.

## BOOKED APPOINTMENT RATE

This metric measures the rate at which you turn answered phone calls from potential customers into booked appointments.

Within our network, we see a very wide discrepancy in booked appointment rates between clients offering the same services and receiving the same types of phone calls from potential customers.

Put another way, we could send the same 10 calls to one company and they would only book 3 appointments from those calls, while another company might book 8.



# 97%

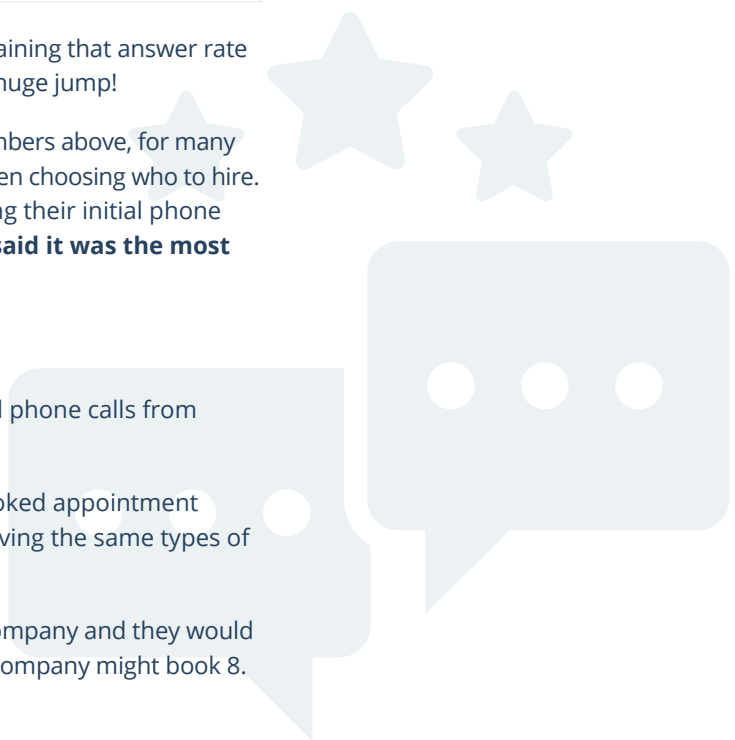
How Many Phone Calls Leaders **Think They're Answering**

# 71%

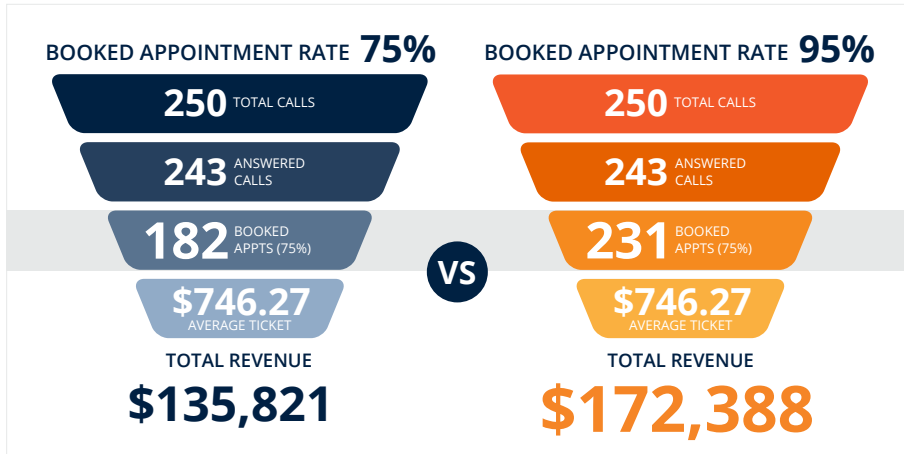
How Many Phone Calls Businesses **are Actually Answering**

# 26%

More than 1/4 of calls they think are getting answered **AREN'T**



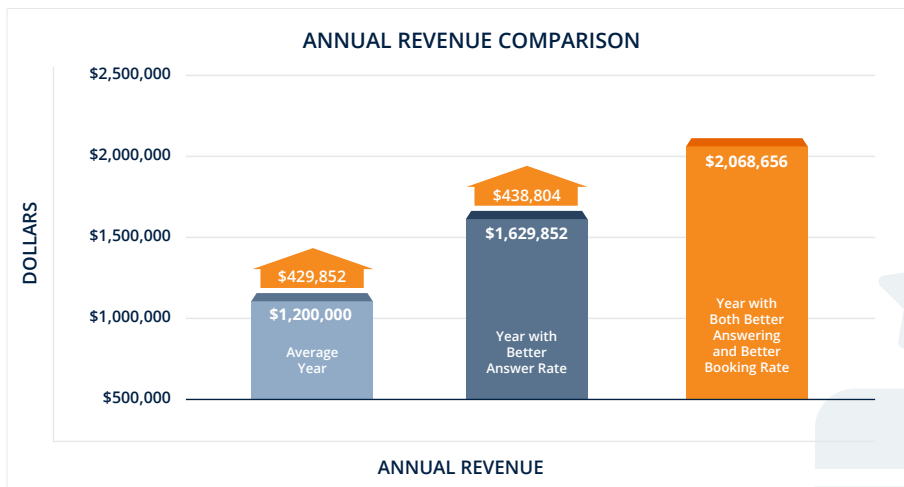
The same exercise we did before can show the financial implications of improving a booked appointment rate. We'll hold onto our new and improved call answer rate of 97%. Let's only move the booked appointment rate up by 20% from the 75% we had before up to 95%.



Improving your **Call Answer Rate** and **Booked Appointment Rate** have a **Huge Impact on Revenue**

Again that's just one month, over the course of a year, maintaining that booked appointment rate would result in an additional \$438,804 in revenue. That's another huge jump!

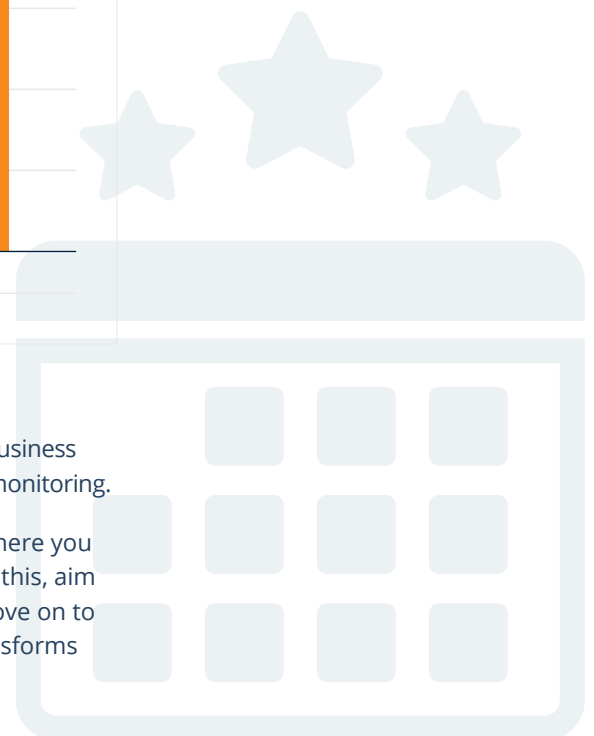
If we started this guide with the promise that you could double your annual revenue without spending one more dollar on advertising, it would have been easy to dismiss as impossible clickbait. That's not what this guide is about, but that's what's possible. The chart below shows the annual revenue described in our two exercises about call answer rates and booked appointment rates.



**Do we have your attention now?**

Call Answer and Booked Appointment Rates are observable metrics any business owner can monitor using call tracking phone numbers and recorded call monitoring.

Set incremental steps that are measurable and achievable. Establish where you are now and what your benchmarks to success will be. Once you know this, aim for a small improvement in one area at first, celebrate that win, and move on to the next small improvement. Stick with it, keep it fun, watch how it transforms your business!





## Changing Your Approach to Calls

### Good customer service is not always a feel-good conversation.

The primary stumbling block that gets in the way of booking appointments is, ironically, the CSR's greatest asset, the reason they were hired, and what makes them best in class at serving the customers.

It's because they're so darn nice!

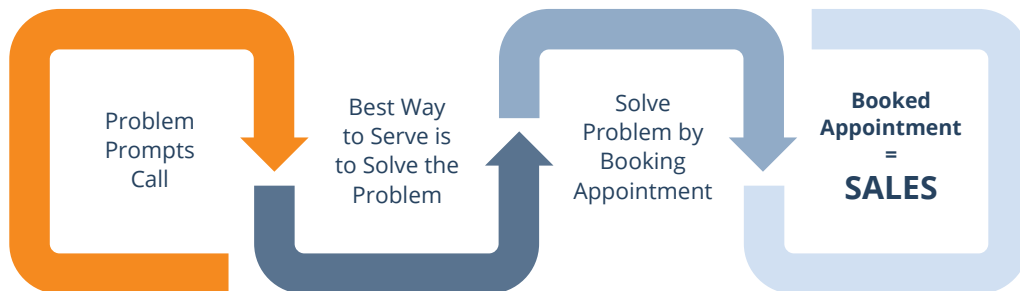
Through Service Direct's programs, tens of thousands of calls every month are recorded and reviewed. Take a listen to some common scenarios we hear every day in which potential opportunities are allowed to slip out the door.

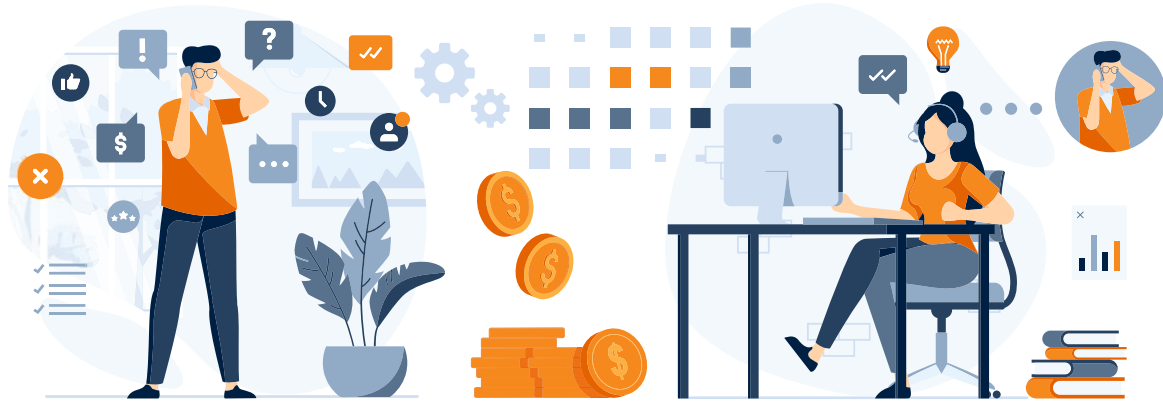
<p><b>THE WRONG NUMBER</b></p> <p>Well, it might not be Bob's, but if you do plumbing, why not try to discover if they have a current plumbing need that you could help with?</p> <p><b>BAD</b>   <b>GOOD</b></p>	<p><b>THE CANCELLATION</b></p> <p>Always try to reschedule. Find out the reason for the cancellation and try to save the appointment.</p> <p><b>BAD</b>   <b>GOOD</b></p>	<p><b>THE CALL BACK</b></p> <p>Offer to follow up, offer an incentive to book now, and/or dig to discover the cause of their hesitation. More on overcoming objections later.</p> <p><b>BAD</b>   <b>GOOD</b></p>
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### Good customer service means solving the problem of the caller with a booked appointment.

Many non-sales call takers shrink and shiver when approached about "sales." However, from a different perspective, it's easy to connect the dots between customer service and sales.

Think about it this way: by allowing a consumer who called about a problem to get off the phone without booking an appointment, you're actually doing them a disservice, because they are no closer to solving their problem than they were before they called.





## Knowing Your Caller

Just because they called you doesn't mean they trust you – at least not yet. Many callers naturally enter this kind of exchange with a level of doubt and distrust. In the back of their head they're wondering:

**Can this company really solve my problem at a fair price?**

It's all about building up trust and convincing them you're the right company to solve their problem. To do so, you'll first need to understand their expectations:



## What Callers Prefer and Expect

### KNOWLEDGE

Call takers who speak with potential customers should know a lot about the business. We recommend sufficient subject matter training for all new hires, including ride-along days where they can see the work that happens in the field.

KNOWLEDGE

### EMPATHY

Many callers need help with a problem. Call takers should listen and express empathy for the caller's situation. Even simply saying, "I'm sorry to hear that, but you've called the right place," lets them know they've reached a sympathetic ear.

EMPATHY

### GOOD ORGANIZATION

No matter who the caller is, your call taker is the expert in the conversation. It's their responsibility to not only provide helpful information, but ask for, arrange, and manage details about the caller's needs to provide the best possible information and suggestions to get it resolved.

GOOD ORGANIZATION





### PROMPTNESS

Callers don't like to wait. Whether their issue is urgent or not, they've made the call, so they are ready to deal with it. A call taker may not be able to get a technician to a door in 30 minutes, but they can answer the phone within 3 rings and not keep people waiting on hold for too long.

PROMPTNESS











## What Callers Prefer and Expect (Continued)

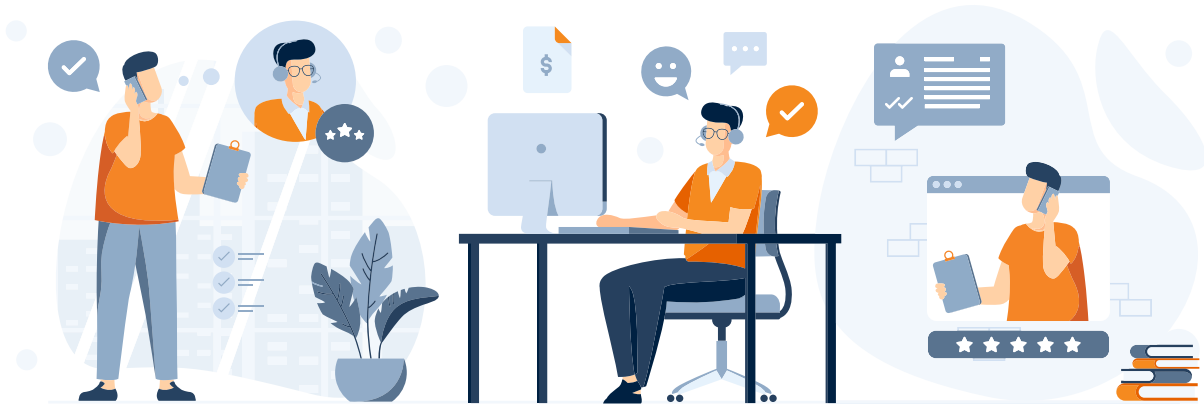
<p><b>FOLLOW-THROUGH</b></p> <p>Follow-through means doing what you say you are going to do. If a call taker needs to return a call with an answer to a question they should do so... promptly!</p> <p> FOLLOW-THROUGH</p>	<p><b>SOLUTIONS</b></p> <p>A solution is the reason the caller has picked up the phone in the first place. If their need is one your company can solve, the call taker should overcome any objections and book an appointment.</p> <p> SOLUTIONS</p>
<p><b>ENERGY</b></p> <p>Energy from a call taker assures the caller that the company they've reached is capable and eager to have them as a customer.</p> <p> ENERGY</p>	<p><b>HONESTY</b></p> <p>Honesty in all areas of life should be a baseline standard, but just in case it needs saying, call takers should never lie to a caller in order to book an appointment.</p> <p> HONESTY</p>



## What Callers Dislike

Just like there are some traits callers expect, there are some that will hurt your chances of being the choice of a choosy caller. Callers don't like:

<p><b>UNPREPAREDNESS</b></p> <p>A call taker who is not ready to begin the call when they pick up the phone.</p> <p> UNPREPAREDNESS</p>	<p><b>INTERRUPTION</b></p> <p>Not letting the caller finish their thoughts.</p> <p> INTERRUPTION</p>	<p><b>LACK OF INFORMATION</b></p> <p>Not knowing basic information about the trade or the business.</p> <p> LACK OF INFORMATION</p>
<p><b>AGGRESSIVENESS</b></p> <p>Being unnecessarily argumentative.</p> <p> AGGRESSIVENESS</p>	<p><b>PRESUMPTUOUSNESS</b></p> <p>Don't assume that you know needs or expectations before they are expressed.</p> <p> PRESUMPTUOUSNESS</p>	<p><b>NOT LISTENING</b></p> <p>If a call taker is inattentive, the caller will assume the whole business is too.</p> <p> NOT LISTENING</p>
<p><b>GABBERS</b></p> <p>When building rapport goes too far and begins to waste the time of the caller.</p> <p> GABBERS</p>	<p><b>LACK OF RESPECT</b></p> <p>A caller you disrespect is probably not going to become a customer.</p> <p> LACK OF RESPECT</p>	<p><b>POOR FOLLOW-THROUGH</b></p> <p>Failing to follow up when promised will leave callers hanging and leave money on the table.</p>



## How to Put Your Best Foot Forward

Now that you understand the trust deficit you have to overcoming on each call and the importance of improving your call answering statistics, let's dive into the crucial moments that ultimately determine whether or not you're able to convince the caller you're the right choice to solve their problem.



### Perfect Your Greeting

You never get a second chance to make a first impression. This is never more true than in your phone answering game. This is your opportunity to break down barriers of distrust right off the bat.

Put yourself in the shoes of a potential customer, remembering that they are doubting and distrustful that you can help solve their problem.

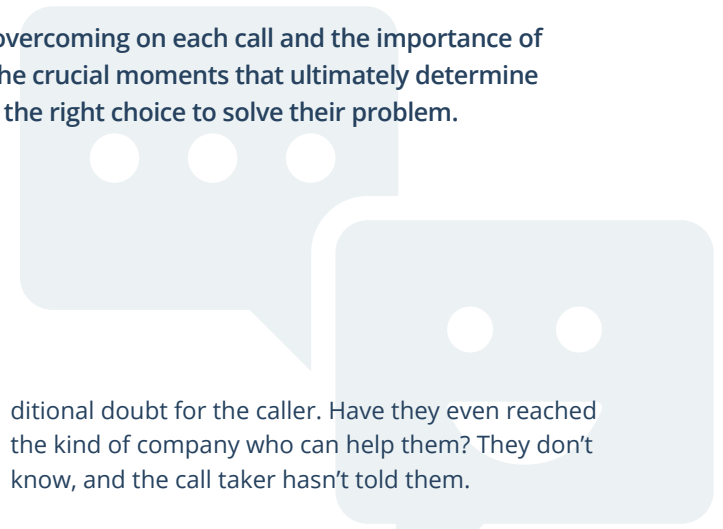
Now, if someone answered the phone with just:

**Call Taker:**  
"Hello" or "This is Mike"

**GREETING BAD**

How would you react? We can answer that because we hear it all the time. This type of greeting leaves callers confused and immediately questioning whether the person they called can help with their problem.

For starters, those greetings are unprofessional and unfriendly. But they're also confusing. The caller is already doubting you, and in the first couple seconds of the call, you've created a mountain of ad-



ditional doubt for the caller. Have they even reached the kind of company who can help them? They don't know, and the call taker hasn't told them.

Can you overcome it? Sometimes. But in most cases, you're already fighting a losing battle.

Now contrast those greetings with the following:

**Call Taker:**  
"Hi, this is Joe with Joe's Plumbing, how can I make you smile today?"

**GREETING GOOD**

Imagine being that caller, and hearing that greeting. Your guard will immediately go down. Oftentimes, the caller will actually laugh and smile.



Speaking of smiling, let's think about how to make a knock-out first impression in real life. You can picture it in your mind: a person with good posture, a neat appearance, a nice smile, confidence in their tone of voice and eye contact. These qualities absolutely translate through the telephone. We recommend training that includes personal presentation like an in-person sales rep would receive.

Simply by changing how you answer the phone, you've immediately changed the dynamic of the call. Your first impression plays a big part in overcoming that trust deficit we discussed earlier.



## Build a Rapport

During a call, you should always be trying to build a personal connection with a caller through building a friendly familiarity. You are obviously engaged in a sales conversation, but that doesn't mean you have to be completely stale and impersonal.

People buy from people, not companies. We've already talked about how important it is to build trust. Rapport comes immediately after the greeting and is the next step in removing doubt and building trust.

So what does that mean when it comes to building rapport quickly over the phone? The call taker must take every opportunity to humanize themselves with the person on the other end of the phone.

### There are 3 components to building a rapport:

- **Introduce.** As a call taker, be sure to provide your name as part of your greeting. The next imperative is to get the caller's name and USE it as often as possible in the conversation.
- **Empathize.** The caller is dealing with a problem, so let them know you empathize with their situation and want to help. As mentioned above, something as simple as, "I'm sorry to hear that, but you've called the right place," lets the caller know they've reached a sympathetic ear. This is the most overlooked part of a phone call. Just 36% of the calls we review utilize this tactic.
- **Relate.** Do everything you can to relate on a personal level. The call taker should carefully listen to the caller and pick out anything said that they can honestly and briefly put themselves into.

#### Call Taker:

- "I (or my \_\_\_ ) used to live in that neighborhood"
- "I remember when that happened at my house"
- "We just helped a customer with a similar situation"

BUILDING RAPPORT

There's a fine line to keeping the focus on the caller, while also making the call taker and the company relatable as a real person who can really help. The caller may have already talked to other businesses, or may be planning to call more after the current call because of this doubt in their mind. It's often this step of building rapport that stops a potential customer in their tracks and convinces them they've called the right place.





## Qualify the Caller

As a call taker, you have several tasks to complete already. But before the call goes on too long you must determine whether the caller is someone who your business can actually help. The faster you can determine this, the better. A 10-minute phone call with a caller whose needs you cannot meet doesn't help you or the caller.

Answer the following questions early in the call to keep it short and sweet:

### QUESTION 1: DO YOU OFFER THE SERVICE NEEDED?

Your company is both special and specialized. The unfortunate reality is that you won't be able to help every person who calls your business. Callers may have reached you in error, may need a service that you don't offer, or may have specialized equipment that requires a company with a different skill set.

Hopefully you've offered to help in your greeting and the caller gives the broad strokes of their problem right at the top of the call. If it isn't clear, this is the time to ask a clarifying question.

**Call Taker:**

"How can I help you today?"

**Caller:**

"I need flooring."

**Call Taker:**

"Are you looking for materials alone, or are you looking for materials and installation?"

 QUALIFY SERVICE NEEDED

On the other hand, some callers will launch into all of the intricate details of their situation and how the last company they called messed it all up, and how their husband would normally take care of it, but can't right now, etc. This is not the time for all that. The moment they take a breath and you can get a word in edge-wise, break in and say:

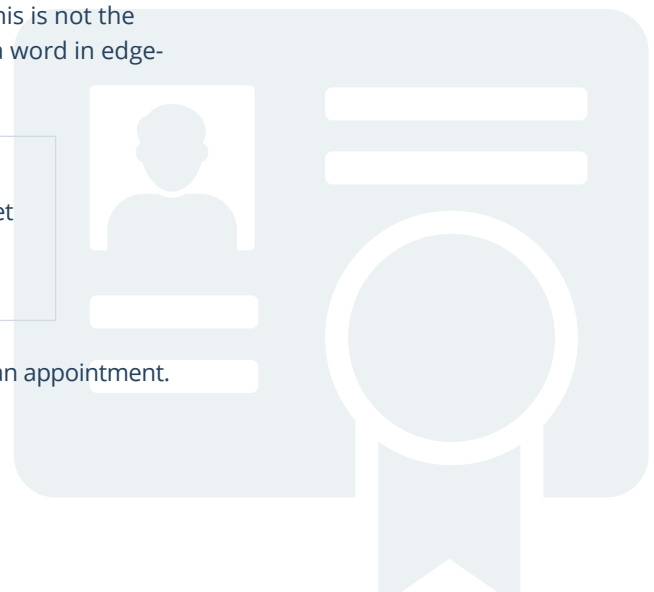
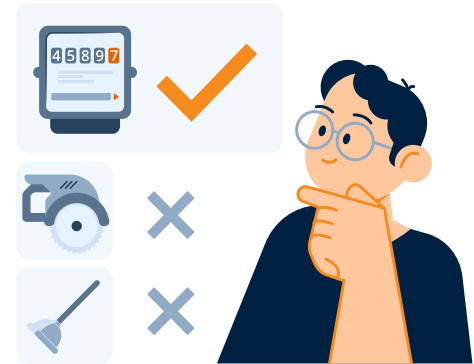
**Call Taker:**

"I'm sorry to hear that, (Name). I'll come back and get those details in a minute, but I have a couple more questions to make sure we can help you with that."

If your business can help resolve their issue, great! time to schedule an appointment.



You won't be able to help every person who calls your business. **Identifying those callers early saves time - yours AND theirs.**



You might think that if you don't provide the right services, that's the end of the conversation. However, as a business owner, you have the opportunity to develop a network of companies in similar, if not competing, areas. You can still provide value to the caller by recommending a trustworthy vendor, knowing that, if or when the roles are reversed, they'll send a potential customer your way.

It's a win-win-win situation. The caller gets a shortcut to a quality company who can help them, and both companies get more customers in the long run than they would have without the referrals. Provide your call takers with a reference sheet of companies to refer callers to with the company name, phone number, and a description of the services they provide.



## QUESTION 2: IS THE CALLER THE DECISION MAKER?

We hear calls all the time from people with varied degrees of separation from the person who will be making the buying decision. They include partners/children of homeowners, caretakers, neighbors, friends, but most commonly, they are tenants.

Your company, or even state laws, can dictate who you can accept a work order from. Wherever that line lies, it must be crystal clear to your call takers. Discovering what your caller's role is must be explicitly asked so there is no confusion. Simple and direct is the way to go:

**Call Taker:**  
“(Name), do you own the home?”

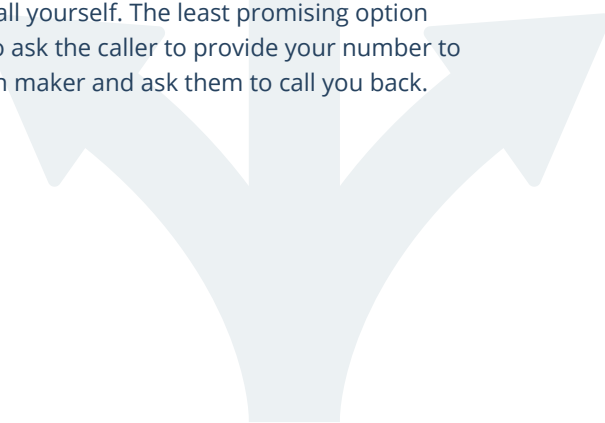
QUALIFY DECISION MAKER

What can you do if they are not the decision maker? The first thing you can do is not allow them to vent, complain, and distract from your main priority – booking more appointments for your business. We've heard of one company whose policy was to disconnect the line the moment they heard the word “renter.” While this saves time and headaches, it doesn't serve the caller, and can result in calls back when the caller doesn't understand that it was intentional.

There are a few ways to salvage these kinds of calls. Service Direct refunds a call from tenants, but there is a trick that can save this kind of lead and preserve the call's “refundability” if it doesn't pan out. Pretend it's 1995 and do a three way phone call with the tenant and property owner. Ask the caller to put you on hold, dial their landlord, and then merge the calls.

**Call Taker:**  
“While I can't book an appointment with you since you don't own the property, why don't we try this. Can you put me on hold, dial your landlord, and then connect us on a three way call?”

If your call is not subject to the technicalities of pay per call rules, you have a couple more options. You can ask for the number of the decision maker to make the call yourself. The least promising option would be to ask the caller to provide your number to the decision maker and ask them to call you back.






**QUESTION 3: ARE THEY INSIDE YOUR SERVICE AREA?**

If your company provides service at your customer’s location, it makes sense to set a limit to how far you’ll go. Some have hard and fast geographical lines they will not cross, and others have travel fees for farther distances. It is critical that each call taker knows the service area very well.

Collecting an entire street address is time consuming and cumbersome, and many callers feel like it’s intrusive. We don’t recommend doing this until you’re setting the appointment. For now, the caller’s zip code gives you all the info you need.

**Call Taker:**  
“(Name) can you tell me your zip code to make sure we serve your area?”


QUALIFY SERVICE AREA

Easy, fast, and only as much information as you need for this purpose.



**Listen and Gather Info**

Qualifying each caller to be sure they can become a customer takes time and requires the call taker to be in control of the conversation. It will save time in the long run and keep call takers focused on booking appointments and keep them from getting worn out by callers who it turns out the company can’t even help.

After a caller is qualified, allow them to talk. This is when they can tell you all about the problem they are experiencing and why they are calling a professional to solve it.

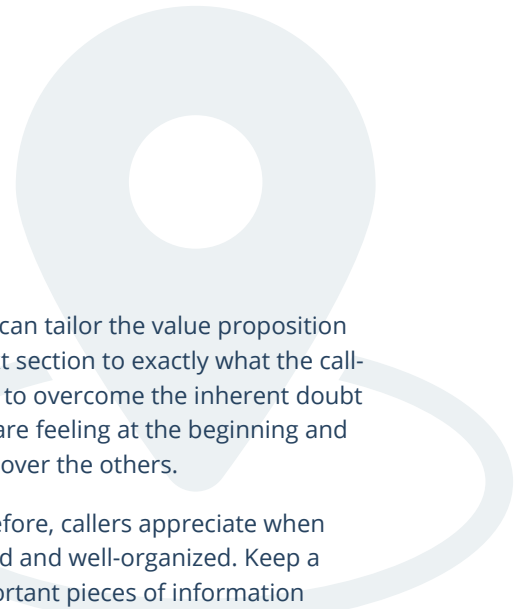
During this part of the call, it is very important to lis-

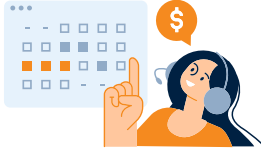
ten carefully so you can tailor the value proposition described in the next section to exactly what the caller needs. They have to overcome the inherent doubt and distrust callers are feeling at the beginning and trust your company over the others.

**Call Taker:**  
“We serve the entire (metropolitan) area, if you can tell me your zip code I can tell you if we can help you.”

If the service address is too far away, this is another opportunity to refer to a friendly business who would refer customers to you if the roles were reversed.

As we mentioned before, callers appreciate when a call taker is focused and well-organized. Keep a list of the most important pieces of information you need to gather at the ready, and ask follow up questions that help you get what you need and demonstrate to the caller that you are professional and know what you’re doing.





## Describe Your Value Proposition and Ask for the Appointment


Now that you've greeted, built rapport with, qualified the caller, and listened to them explain their problem, it is finally time to offer your solution. The call taker will do this by offering the value proposition and asking for the appointment.

### VALUE PROPOSITION

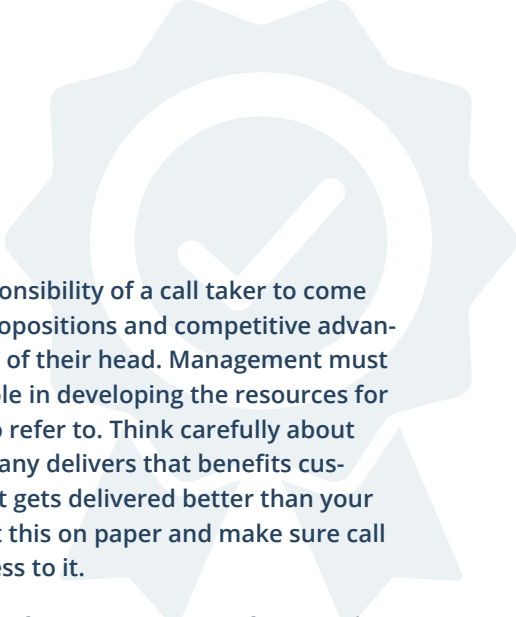
A value proposition is a statement of why the caller should choose your company over their other options, which includes not only your competitors, but also doing it themselves. Your call taker has done the work to start breaking down the doubt and distrust that the caller started with. They are now ready to hear what your company has to offer.

**An example script for a value proposition for a plumbing company sounds like this:**

**Call Taker:**  
 "When you book an appointment with us, a certified and background-checked plumber will call you when they are on their way to your house inside the 2 hour window we provide. They will assess the situation and provide you with a quote for repairs. This will be the amount charged regardless of how long it takes to complete the work. This will cost \$65 to provide. If you wish to proceed with the repairs, they will be completed right away and the \$65 will be applied to the cost of repairs. We guarantee our work, and if there are any problems within 30 days, we'll come back and make sure it's right at no charge."

 VALUE PROPOSITION

The caller now knows exactly what is going to happen. They know a trustworthy person is coming to their house when they say they will. They know what it will cost to get them out there. They know when they're given a price it won't change, They know they can let go of worry that their problem won't get solved, because the work is guaranteed.



It is not the responsibility of a call taker to come up with value propositions and competitive advantages off the top of their head. Management must take an active role in developing the resources for the call takers to refer to. Think carefully about what your company delivers that benefits customers and what gets delivered better than your competitors. Put this on paper and make sure call takers have access to it.

**Other ideas for value statements and competitive advantages not mentioned in the example:**

- Years in business
- Awards
- Bonded & Insured
- BBB rating
- Average ratings on Google or Yelp
- Guaranteed arrival time window
- Guaranteed labor warranty
- Charitable work



## HOW TO ASK FOR THE APPOINTMENT

You might be surprised to learn that this step is skipped 55% of the time. When call takers get to the end of a speech like the one above, many will just stop and wait for the caller to make the next move. This is a move, but the time for it is after you ask for the appointment, not before.

Right at the end of the value proposition, the call taker should move directly into asking for the appointment with a question like this:

**Call Taker:**

“Would a morning or afternoon appointment work better for you?”

This is a flow that says, “of course you want to book and we want to work with your schedule.” It gives the call taker a minute to access the schedule to see the next available appointment. It also forces the caller to use an objection if they are not yet convinced to become your customer.

### Other ways to ask for the appointment:

**Call Taker:**

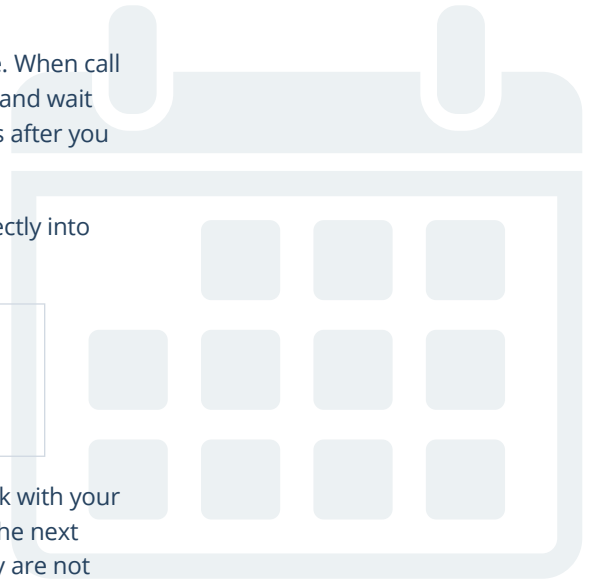
- “Would Monday or Tuesday be better for you?”
- “Can I put you on the schedule for tomorrow between 8 and 10?”
- “Our next available appointment is today between 3-5, does that work for you?”
- “It sounds like your schedule is busy, our last appointment window of the day is 5-7pm and we have that open on Thursday or Friday, do either of those days sound good?”

 ASK FOR THE APPOINTMENT

Now is the time to sit back and be quiet. The next move belongs to the caller.

Hopefully all the groundwork the call taker performs before this “ask” pays off and it’s an easy decision for the caller to say yes. If so, now the nitty gritty data collection comes into play. Record the name, address, and any other information the technician needs to get the job done. The wrap up should include a restatement of the appointment time and address as confirmation of understanding that everything is correct.

Unfortunately, sometimes this is not the way it goes and there is more work to be done. Objection is not a rejection. Let’s look at some ways to overcome common objections.







## Overcoming Objections

A caller who isn't ready to book an appointment directly after the value proposition shouldn't be a surprise to an experienced call taker. All you need is a plan. Even callers with objections want to have their problem solved, they just need a little more information or encouragement to dispel the last little bit of doubt and distrust that's still lingering. Here we'll describe how to identify and overcome common objections.



### Common Objections

In phone-call-based business where the work is performed at a client's location there are two primary objections:

- **Price:** The price is too high against the perceived value.
- **Schedule:** The service is not convenient enough and I want to be in more control of this process.

These objections are easy to address when they're identified properly, but sometimes they are obscured with language that makes it less clear. Let's look at some common phrasing used by callers and the correlating objection they are raising.





## Get to the Core of the Objection

PHRASES USED BY CALLERS WHO HAVE A PRICE OBJECTION:	PHRASES USED BY CALLERS WHO HAVE A SCHEDULING OBJECTION:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Wow, that's expensive"</li> <li>• "So it still costs \$X even if I don't have any work done?"</li> <li>• "Company X is less expensive"</li> <li>• "Why can't I get a full quote over the phone?"</li> <li>• "Let me call you back."</li> <li>• "I need to check with my significant other before I agree."</li> <li>• "I don't know."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I need someone who can come out sooner."</li> <li>• "I'm working at that time."</li> <li>• "I don't know if that time will work for me."</li> <li>• "Let me call you back."</li> <li>• "I need to check with my significant other before I agree."</li> <li>• "I don't know."</li> </ul>

You can see here that some phrases can go either way. When the core objection is unclear, the call taker must ask a follow-up question to determine exactly what is causing the hesitation:

**Caller:**  
"I need to check with my significant other before I agree."

**Call Taker:**  
"Are you worried about whether or not the time will work, or are you concerned about the price/service fee?"

**SCHEDULING OBJECTION**

**Caller:**  
"Well, normally my significant other is the one who will be home, so I need to be sure it works with their schedule."

VS

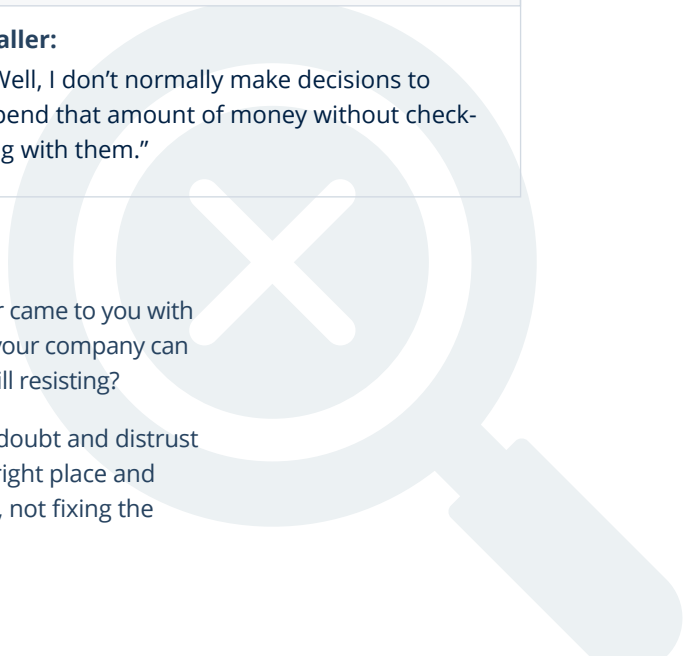
**PRICE OBJECTION**

**Caller:**  
"Well, I don't normally make decisions to spend that amount of money without checking with them."

### OBJECTIONS MAY BE AN UNADDRESSED NEED

In the midst of the objection, it can be easy to forget that the caller came to you with a problem that they wanted you to solve. At this point, you know your company can solve this problem for them, and at a fair price. So why are they still resisting?

The caller is telling you you haven't broken down the barriers of doubt and distrust by selling value. They still need reassurance that they called the right place and that your company won't leave them hanging by not showing up, not fixing the problem, or charging way too much.





## How to Address Common Objections

By understanding and addressing the caller's objection, you can turn the call around and give the caller the confidence and comfort level to book the appointment.

We've walked through the listening and understanding, but on this "addressing" part, what do you say \*exactly\* to get a caller to book? We're so glad you asked! Here are a few great examples:



### PRICE OBJECTION RESPONSES:

**Caller:**

"The price is too high."

**Call Taker:**

"I understand that you are watching where your money is going, let me tell you about the benefits of choosing our company..."

**Call Taker:**

"I'm glad to see that you are someone who appreciates good value, let me tell you about what you're getting when you choose us..."

 OVERCOMING PRICE OBJECTION

If these still don't produce a booked appointment, try:

**Call Taker:**

"I know finding the best deal is important to you and I hear you saying that you are going to call a few more places either way, but I want to be sure you get your first choice of appointment times so what if we go ahead and put you on the schedule now, and if you find a better deal later, you can always call back and cancel.."

If even this does not work:

**Caller:**

"Can you give me a price quote over the phone?"

**Call Taker:**

"We don't provide full quotes over the phone like some other companies, because our customers tell us that they have had those companies give very low estimates on the phone and then once they get there, the price changes and it's too late or too much trouble to send the technician away. We want to lay eyes on the situation and only provide an air tight quote that will not change. Anyone who provides a phone quote is just guessing and cannot guarantee what it will actually cost in the end."

 PRICE QUOTE OBJECTION


**Call Taker:**

"I understand you don't want to schedule right now, but I don't want you to be left without a solution. Would it be ok if I call you back at this number tomorrow and see if you still need help?"




**SCHEDULING OBJECTION RESPONSES:**


**Call Taker:**  
 "We want to provide service in a time frame that works for you. If Tuesday doesn't work for you, what time/day would be better?"

 SCHEDULING OBJECTION 1

**Call Taker:**  
 "We know your time is valuable which is why we have a short appointment window of Tuesday hours and always call when the technician is on their way to your house so you don't have to stay home all day."

 SCHEDULING OBJECTION 2


**Call Taker:**  
 "If you need to check your significant other's schedule, I'm happy to wait on hold a minute if you can check in with them now to see if this time will work."

 SCHEDULING OBJECTION 3

**Call Taker:**  
 "I hear you saying that the matter is urgent and our first available time was not soon enough, but our schedule is so full because our customers trust us so much and call us again and again. If there's any way you can hold off, we assure you that you will be happy with the service you receive"

If these still don't produce a booked appointment, try:

**Call Taker:**  
 "I know finding the ideal time is important to you and I hear you saying that you are going to call a few more places either way, but you may find calling around that no one has a sooner appointment available, so what if we go ahead and put you on the schedule now, and if you find a better appointment later, you can always call back and cancel."

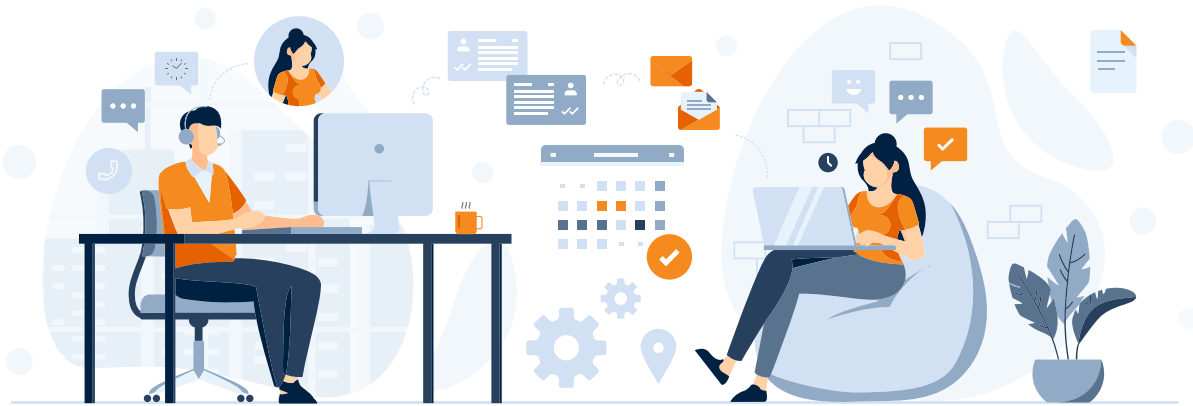
 SCHEDULING OBJECTION 4

If even this does not work:

**Call Taker:**  
 "I understand you don't want to schedule right now, but I don't want you to be left without a solution. Would it be ok if I call you back at this number tomorrow and see if you still need help?"



Remember where we started. Each phone call that comes into the office is so valuable! "Hundreds-of-dollars-each" valuable! Every single qualified caller should be pursued to a reasonable degree until it is clear they are a bad fit and will never become a customer. Overcoming objections works remarkably well when you have a good plan.



## Following Up

The last step requires a follow-up on the part of the call taker. A simple follow-up can make a world of difference in turning phone calls into booked appointments, yet many companies don't do so in any strategic or structured way.

Considering and implementing a well-thought-out follow-up strategy can help you stand apart from the pack and win more customers.



### What Do We Mean by "Follow-Up?"

Following up is when the call taker or another designated person is responsible for taking another action after the initial phone call is concluded. Following up, like the final step in overcoming objections, is often for the purpose of getting the appointment booked, but it could also be to provide additional information not immediately available to the call taker. A follow-up to a phone call could be another phone call, an email, or even a text message.

Have you ever encountered a sales organization who said, "We only take sales from people who buy from us on the first point of contact. We just don't have time to do any follow-up." How successful do you think that would be? Not very. Why would it be any different for your business?

Outstanding service starts with doing what you say you are going to do. If someone promises a caller that they will find something out and get back to them, failing to do so is failing the caller and destroying trust before the relationship even starts.

Answering service and voicemail messages are an important part of a phone-based business's opportunity base. Phone calls come in at all times of the day and night, and properly handling those calls and getting back to those callers promptly is imperative. Set the expectation for after hours callers with a promise from the call center agent or the outgoing voicemail message. Will it be first thing the next business day? Within an hour of receiving the message? Whenever it is, stick to it. This is an opportunity to keep a promise and build trust.



Following up is a guiding principle of **outstanding sales and service**.





## The Impact of Excellent and Poor Follow Up

EXCELLENT	POOR
BUILDS TRUST	TEARS DOWN TRUST
BOOKS MORE APPOINTMENTS	LETS QUALIFIED PROSPECTS GO
ENCOURAGES LOYALTY	DISCOURAGES REPEAT BUSINESS
CALL TAKERS PROVIDE REAL VALUE	CALL TAKERS JUST ANSWER PHONES



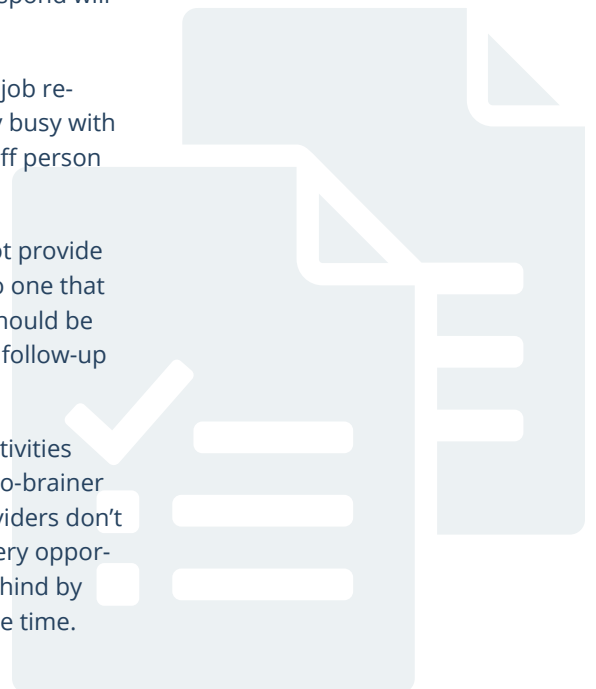
## Follow-Up is a Daily Task

Even if your outgoing voicemail or phone answering service set an expectation of when their call will be returned, the caller most likely did not stop trying to reach a service provider after they left a message. By the next morning, there could be 4 or more other companies competing for the business. The first to respond will most likely get the appointment.

Following up on all promised call backs must be incorporated into the job responsibilities of each call taker on staff. If current staff are consistently busy with the answering of incoming calls, it is worth the expense of an extra staff person to make room in the schedule for consistent follow-up calls.

If your current customer management or scheduling software does not provide functionality to prompt and assign tasks like this, consider switching to one that does. A good system does not have to be based in technology, but it should be used consistently and allow visibility into who is doing what and when follow-up items are completed.

Companies who are rock stars at offering and completing follow-up activities set themselves apart from the masses of competitors. While this is a no-brainer tactic for all other sales professionals, some call takers for service providers don't consider themselves salespeople and often neglect to follow up on every opportunity. Scoop up the prospective customers your competitors leave behind by offering to follow up and following through on the promise 100% of the time.



# Conclusion

## Way back at the beginning of this guide we made some big promises:

- Help you better understand the value of an inbound phone call
- Share data on the phone habits of service businesses and how they affect new customer acquisition
- Explain what callers are thinking and feeling when they call your business, and how that impacts what you need to do when speaking to them
- Give insights into the critical components that determine success when it comes to turning inbound calls into appointments
- Share practical tips on how to handle various aspects of a phone call
- Reveal the critical step to close deals that you competitors aren't doing

We showed how each phone call is worth hundreds of dollars apiece and how an average company can double annual revenue without spending an additional dollar on advertising by improving their call answer rate and appointment booking rate.

Remember that callers are full of doubt and distrust that the company they've reached can solve their problem within a reasonable time at a reasonable price. Call takers must change the way they think of themselves and optimize each critical component of the phone call. Following up with prospective customers will set your company apart and win more customers.

## Final Thought – The Role of Business Owners

It can seem like most of the onus of the advice given here lands on the call takers, but that's not the final word. Business owners and managers have a responsibility to set them up for success.

### Action items business owners can take away from this include:

- Treat your call takers as the valuable resource they are. They are the face and voice of your business to your potential customers at the moment they decide to buy or not.
- Develop a network of friendly businesses in complementary industries and geographical areas for referrals.
- Create quick reference sheets of value propositions and competitive advantages.
- Ensure staffing is adequate to take the time needed to try to win the business of every caller.
- Monitor call taker performance by listening to calls (or utilize Service Direct's Call Insights & CSR scorecard services) and identify whether or not certain aspects of each call are being performed. Use this monitoring to reward improved performance.

Reading any content of this length is time consuming and demands more of you than the average blog post, so thank you for sticking with us! Hopefully it was valuable and worth the investment.

## Ready to put what you've learned to the test with exclusive live phone leads?

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