

THE COMPLETE

Local Online Marketing Guide
For Home Service Contractors



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Introduction

Online marketing can be a daunting task. Between taking calls, giving estimates, filing paperwork, and actually being on the job site, you probably have no time left to keep up with your online marketing. In today's marketplace, we see a lot of home contractors that are either ignoring their online marketing or simply don't have the time it takes to increase their online presence. The good news is that after the initial setup, keeping up with online marketing is fairly straightforward.

Like anything else, a solid foundation is critical, but having a follow-up strategy is equally important. In order to be successful, you should break down your strategy into 3 steps:

- **Acquire** – How are you going to get visitors to your site?
- **Engage** – How do you plan on converting visitors into customers?
- **Follow up** – How do you plan on following up with customers after the job?

Each of these steps is vital to your online marketing strategy, and if even one of them is missing, you are destined to fail. This whitepaper will cover not only how to set up your online marketing campaign, but also teach you simple ways to keep up with it throughout your day. Online marketing doesn't have to be time-consuming, but it also shouldn't be ignored.



Acquire:

Quality matters. You can't build a racecar from a lemon; no matter how many additional parts you put on the car, it will still break down. You should take a similar approach to your online marketing. Whether you are just starting out, building a new website, or just trying out a new strategy, if you do not follow some best practices, then no matter how much work you put into it, it won't perform the way you want it to. At the same time, when you are setting up the marketing campaigns for your website, they must also follow best practices as well. This includes setting up paid search correctly, as well as your local SEO strategy. In the following section, we will go into more details about how best to accomplish this.





Website Design

If you're thinking about selling a house, but only have a limited budget to fix it up before you do, it can be tempting to spend all of that money on cosmetic changes to make it appear appealing from the outside. Unfortunately, if the foundation of the house is bad, no amount of superficial work will make it a good home to live in. The house might attract some visitors initially, but once they get inside and see all the repairs it still needs, they probably won't buy it. This is a lesson we hear often, especially as children growing up, but seem to forget sometimes once we reach adulthood: appearance isn't everything, it's what's inside that really matters. It doesn't matter how nice your property looks on the outside, if the foundation is faulty and needs work, eventually you're going to face some big problems. The same is true of your website.

It doesn't matter whether you are looking to redesign your old website, or build a new one from scratch. Either way, your goals are the same: gain exposure for your company, show off your business in the best possible light, and make sure that you are easily found by search engines. (That last point is especially important because it doesn't matter how nice your website is if nobody sees it.) Now, all of this isn't to say that the appearance of your website doesn't matter – it totally does – but you also need to pay attention to SEO, page speed, and a myriad of other factors that will ensure that your website is a success. The experts at 33 Mile Radius have a few suggestions that will aid you in designing your website for success.

Need for Speed

The amount of time it takes your web page to load is called page speed, or site speed. It's a no-brainer that people aren't going to want to wait more than a few seconds for your page to load. Most people will wait less than ten seconds before deciding that it isn't worth the trouble and moving on to the next site. The designers at Google have even stated that your page speed is actually an important factor when their algorithms decide page rank. Needless to say, your page speed is a big deal. Here are a few suggestions to help your website load faster:

- **Compression** – The size of the files and images on your website can be a big factor, and lowering the size of those files can ensure that you are experiencing quick page speeds. GZIP is a popular tool to achieve this, but there are many options out there to explore.

- **Lightweight Code** – This affects the development end, but make sure that your website developer is using optimized code and removing non-required characters from your page.
- **Redirects** – Redirects can be useful in taking your visitors to different pages or domains, or directing them to recently updated content. Having too many redirects, however, can cause a dramatic increase in loading times. Minimize the amount of redirects and maximize your speed!
- **Image Format** – In case you didn't already know, the preferred format for website images are PNGs and JPGs. If your website uses any other type of image format, you should consider updating for faster load speeds and general accessibility.

HTML5

The coding language HTML has been around since the dawn of search engines. It's common enough that just about everybody knows a tag or two. Like many other things on the internet, HTML has evolved over time, as developers have used custom codes or made changes. While these changes may look cool, they might not be easily read and understood by a search engine. This problem was solved with the introduction of HTML5, which gave all developers a set language and parameters that search engines can easily understand. This allows the search engines to read your web page and rank it accordingly, without becoming confused by unfamiliar tags. Consider using HTML5 a standard practice. If you have not yet made a website or are considering a redesign, make sure that your new site uses HTML5.

Schema Markup

Search engine algorithms are not as sophisticated as human beings, and can often mistake the context of a page. If your page mentions a jam, the computer can't always tell from context clues whether your content is about traffic or fruit spread. Schema markup is code that can be added to your website to help search engines figure out what your page is about. In this way, it can deliver more reliable information to users, and bring people to your website who are looking for the specific services that you provide. Before your web developer starts working on your website, make sure that he or she is following the schema.org markup.



Responsive Web Design

Reports show that as of 2016, more than 60% of all web traffic comes from people on a mobile device. That means that if your website is not mobile-friendly, you are missing out on more than half of internet traffic! Not only does this make a huge difference to people browsing from their phones and other mobile devices, but it can actually affect your search engine page ranking. It's not enough these days to have a separate mobile and desktop site because screen size and devices are constantly changing. What you really need to stay competitive is a responsive website that can adapt to any screen size or device instantly. Not only that, but it helps to be able to focus all of your efforts on a single mobile-responsive design, rather than try to keep two websites updated and running smoothly. Even Google recommends that you use responsive web design, which means that it will have a definite influence on your ranking. Optimizing for mobile is just about the smartest move you can make.

Strong Foundations

Just like the house we mentioned, your website is nothing without a good foundation. If your website utilizes clever design from the inside out, it'll have a positive impact on your page rank, SEO, and more importantly the conversion of visitors into sales. In the next chapter, we will discuss how to lay the framework to optimize your business for local search and start getting visitors and conversions to your site.

Local SEO

Now that you have a website set up, you can start the process of getting visitors to your site. Search Engine Optimization, or SEO, is the process of enhancing your website or web page to become more visible in a search engine's organic (unpaid) results. It is a necessary process if you want your website to be seen by potential customers, but the process can be challenging – especially for small business owners who may not have the money or manpower to spend on a marketing team. Many large businesses not only have a dedicated marketing team, but also SEO experts on call to make sure that their websites are displayed prominently in search engine results; as a result, more and more small businesses are being left in the dust. Not only is it a question of money and manpower, but also keeping up with the updates and changes that are constantly happening behind the scenes with big name search engines. Search algorithms are constantly being updated (Penguin, Panda, and Hummingbird – just to name a few!), and it can be daunting to jump right in and try to understand not only the underpinnings of SEO, but the constant improvements being made. A recent report by Bloomberg states that Google's newly-developed AI "RankBrain" will process a "very large fraction" of its search queries. With so many advances in both technology and processing being made, you may be asking yourself how a small-to-midsize business can compete, or if all this search engine ranking stuff is even worth it.



The Importance of Rankings

What makes SEO so important? Think about it, the last time you needed a particular service, what did you do? The odds are pretty good that you got on your computer or mobile device and used a search engine to find it. Studies show that your Google search page ranking has a direct influence on the amount of traffic that your website gets; so all this search engine ranking stuff is important if you want to get potential customers to your website. After all, there's no point in having a beautifully designed website if nobody ever gets to see it! In order to get the online traffic your business needs to thrive, it's important to make sure that your website is both highly ranked and displays beautifully across all devices, such as mobile, tablets, laptops, and desktops.

The Factors for Success

The most important ranking factors are constantly changing. In fact, the top SEO minds worldwide gather through Moz.com to discuss both positive and negative ranking factors that will affect SEO. Not every small business owner has time to keep up with the latest trends in SEO, but we've come up with a short list of factors that we believe that every small business marketer should be practicing in order to get your company's website the ranking and visibility that will allow your business to stand out above the competition.



- **Domain Authority of Website** – The history of your website's domain may have a lot to do with the success or failure of your SEO ranking. Unless you possess an SEO-friendly domain, you may never achieve a good ranking. The best way to find out for sure is to contact a professional service and find out where your particular domain ranks on the measuring factors: popularity, age, and size.
- **Google My Business** – GMB can be a powerful tool for understanding how your website ranks. It is necessary to have a properly verified account to use this service to its best advantage. Also, make sure that all of your business information (name, address, phone number) is consistent with all local listings and any other web properties you may own. It helps to choose the fewest possible categories to describe your products and the services your company offers.
- **Structured Citations** – A structured citation happens when your business is mentioned on websites or business directories such as Yelp, Google+, Bing, or Yellow Pages, that use a consistent format. A mention on a blog or newspaper website is not considered a structured citation. There are many categories, including local, national, social media, review, and even industry-specific categories, so choose wisely. Don't forget to make sure that your business name, address, and phone number are correct and consistent across all listings. A great way to stand out is to include your logo, website, business description, and even some eye-catching photos that demonstrate what your business can do.
- **Engaging Content** – With so many factors involved and options available, it can be difficult to know what to do to make your rank for local listings. Not only are there several influential aspects that can determine your website's rank, but those factors are constantly evolving and changing to suit new algorithms. Make sure to keep up with the trends and updates and adjust accordingly. If not, you might notice traffic from your local listings change over time. In the next chapter, we will discuss how to set up a targeted paid search campaign that can deliver a steady flow of targeted traffic to your website.



Paid Search: Adwords

If you've never heard of it before, Google Adwords is a paid advertising service that displays your ads on Google and its advertising network. Largely keyword based, this service enables businesses to set a budget, and only makes you pay when people click the ads. While it's easy enough to sign up for an account, mastering the finer details of Adwords can be tricky. Google Adwords does have an excellent guide for helping you learn the basics, of course, but here are a few extra tips and tricks that will make it a little bit easier for you. Using Adwords effectively can have a huge positive impact on your online marketing strategy, and is an important tool for any business.

Getting Started

- **Set Your Intention** – Just like everything else in business, it helps to set your goal. Before you begin the process of setting up your Adwords account, take a moment to write down the reason why you're using paid search. This will not only help to set the tone of your project, but also help you to stay focused later on.
- **Know Your Target Customer** – Now that you know what you're aiming for, it's time to decide who you want to see your ads. It is vital to know and understand who your target customers are because every other aspect of your paid search has to align with that. The keywords you use, the imagery you create, and even the content of your website should all reflect a deep knowledge of your target customer, and be formed in a way that is appealing to them. Much like the goal, this will serve as a guideline later on.
- **How's Your Website?** – Effective marketing strategy will only carry you so far, but you still need to have a good website to send your customers to. You may think that with new Click to Call ads, the website itself might not be as important, but a poorly constructed and executed website can be off-putting to potential customers. You want to make sure that your website is clean, appealing, and conversion-friendly. If you don't have a website, or can't afford to hire someone, at least consider creating a simple landing page. Your website or landing page is your chance to make a good impression, so make sure that it reflects your commitment to good business. Your website should also display beautifully across all devices. We suggest testing the way your website displays on mobile devices, tablets, laptops, and desktops.

- **Research Your Keywords** – Effective use of keywords is the foundation of any successful marketing campaign. It’s nearly impossible to get right the first time, but the more research you do before you set up your Adwords account, the better off you’ll be. Our best recommendation is to start small and let your campaign grow as you learn, test, and optimize. Your keywords should reflect the needs of your target customers. Adwords has a keyword planner that will help you to build out your optimized list. Your best bet is to use phrase and/or exact match keywords, at least to begin with. Broad match isn’t as effective; it may bring in clicks, but they are not necessarily the potential customers you’re looking for. Don’t forget to also add a negative keywords list!

Getting Set Up

Now that your intentions are set, your target customers and keywords researched, and your website polished, it’s time to get into the process of setting up your Adwords account.

- **Creating Your Ads** – Your advertisements will have limited space, so you have to make it stand out. The character limits do not give you a lot of space to work with, so you have to make every single letter count! It is important to include keywords in the wording of your ad. These keywords will stand out in bold when your target customers do a search, and will help guide them to click on your link. Next, be sure to incorporate a call to action. Try to avoid the “click here” cliché, but using a phrase like “learn more,” or “get a free estimate” will help draw your potential customers in. Be sure to send all incoming traffic to a landing page. Your landing page should include information about the specific services that your company provides, as well as your company information, logo, and contact information.
- **Ad Extensions** – The ads below demonstrate how using ad extensions can really make your ad stand out. Ad extensions are not required, but they will help your ad succeed. Take a look at these ads, and think about how they might attract a potential client’s notice.

Cheers Boston

www.cheersboston.com/ - Skip intro

Home of the Bull and Finch **Pub**, where exterior shots for the TV show **Cheers** were filmed. Located on Beacon Hill. Includes menu, entertainment schedule, ...

★★★★★ 69 Google reviews - Write a review



84 Beacon Street Boston, MA 02108
(617) 227-9605



Not only will ad extensions make your ads pop, but Google search algorithms give preference to ads with active extensions. The following extensions are available for use: App, Call, Location (requires Google My Business), Review, Sitelink, Callout, and Structured Snippets. These extensions will not always show up if you are testing your ad, but we highly recommend their use!

Campaign Settings

Okay, everything is ready to go . . . now what? There are a lot of settings to choose from, so make sure that you're choosing the ones that are right for you!

- **Campaign Type** – There are a few different options here, but we recommend that home contractors doing paid search should focus on the following two types:
 - **All features** – If you choose standard, you might find out later on that you've limited an advanced feature that you suddenly need. Choosing "all features" lets you keep your options open.
 - **Call-only** – These ads only work on mobile phones, but they do allow visitors to call you directly from the ad – without ever even visiting a website! While this can be a handy feature, it will only work if your target customer doesn't want to do any more research on your business prior to calling.
- **Location** – This seems so obvious you might wonder why we've even bothered to include it, but you'd be surprised how many people make a mistake here. If you don't choose a location, you can end up targeting the entire United States! If you are a home contractor based in Florida, you don't want to be advertising to people who live in Michigan, so be selective about the cities you target. Otherwise, you'll end up wasting your money.
- **Device Settings** – This is another commonly overlooked setting, but it can be a powerful tool in your ad campaign's success. This feature lets you segment bids for mobile visitors higher or lower, depending on what device they are using. This is especially handy if you want to target mobile customers or desktop users instead of targeting them equally.
- **Search Network** – It's important to choose the right search network for the job. For example, "Google Search Network" only searches Google properties, while "search partners" includes third party sites. For those businesses with a limited marketing budget, we recommend deselecting the "include search partners" option and focusing your campaign on the Google Search Network only.

- **Budgeting** – Paid search budgets are done “by day.” That is something you should definitely keep in mind when planning your monthly or yearly budget. You are going to need a daily budget that is higher than your bids if your keyword costs are high. If at all possible, try to budget for at least a few clicks a day.

Additional Settings

The following settings aren’t necessarily required, but they can help you to refine your campaign and keep things running smoothly. Default settings aren’t always optimal for home service companies and small businesses, so don’t be afraid to change things!

- **Ad Rotation** – They say variety is the spice of life, and this is also true for advertising. Having more than one ad, and rotating between them can be beneficial for many reasons. When you are running A/B tests with ads, this can really help to give you a clearer understanding of which ad is working better for you.
- **Ad Schedule** – Setting up a schedule for your ads can help you to make the best use of a limited budget by showing ads only during business hours. If your business does not operate 24/7 this is definitely the setting for you! Not only will you save money, but you will also avoid missed calls during off hours.
- **Delivery Method** – Unless your budget is very limited, try changing your delivery method to “accelerated” so that your ads get shown as quickly as possible to potential clients. Small tweaks like this can have an enormous impact on your campaign.

Properly setting up your paid search campaign can take a lot of time and effort. It can be frustrating, but take your time and try to remember how well this will pay off later. Rushing a paid search campaign will only lose you money in the long run. It really pays to proceed slowly and thoughtfully when setting up a paid search campaign. Now that you have targeted traffic and a well-converting website, in the next section we are going to review how to engage your new visitors and customers.

Engage:

Keeping up with online marketing is often the most difficult part for home contractors. Not only is it time-consuming, but it can be difficult to implement a strategy day in and day out. The key to engaging your customers is to stay in contact with them. This includes, but isn't limited to; lead handling, maintaining an online presence in social media and networking sites, and even in areas outside the realm of "normal online marketing". The most important touch points for contractors are social media and lead handling. In the next section we will go over how to implement a winning strategy in both areas.





Social Media

Keeping up with social media can be demanding, especially for small businesses. Most people are too busy with their day-to-day tasks of answering phone calls, meeting with existing or potential customers, and performing on-site work to maintain a couple social media accounts. While it is understandable that most companies don't really consider social media to be a priority, you may be missing out on potential customers by ignoring it completely. Many home contractors don't pay enough attention to popular social media sites like Twitter, Facebook and Google Plus, but just because you're not interested doesn't mean that your potential customers are not actively using social media. Sure, it may seem like a pain to have to update your social media, but the good news is that for the most part, once you've got a solid profile set up, the rest is pretty easy. Having a successful social media presence boils down to two things: proper setup, and sound daily process. Once you've got these two things going, you'll end up way ahead of the competition!

Where to Start?

While there are certainly many different social media platforms out there to choose from, there are really only two that we feel are essential for every home contractor. Setting up an online profile with Facebook is really a no-brainer. Everyone and their grandmother uses Facebook these days, not to mention the fact that you can make a free page for your business in less than the time it takes to read this article. Creating a Facebook profile gives you a platform to show off your business, logos, and photographs that demonstrate how skillfully your business handles jobs. Not only that, but it also allows you to be reviewed as well as answering customers' questions or responding to their comments. The second site that you'll want to be on is Google Plus. While Google Plus is still much smaller and less widely used than Facebook, it is attached to the world's largest search engine. Incorporating a Google Plus profile into your online presence not only puts you in good with Google but allows you to use tools like Google My Business, as well as giving you another outlet to show off photos and other information and content. If you only use two social media outlets, going with Facebook and Google Plus are a must!



Successful Set Up

Once you've decided to create an account, it is important that you set it up properly. Most of these types of sites make it pretty easy, but here are a couple tips to keep in mind:

- **Google Plus** – In order to stay connected with your Google My Business account, use the same email.
- **Facebook** – Before creating a new page, search for your business name. It sometimes happens that some one else has created your page already, and you might have reviews there.

Now that you're rolling, make sure you do the following:

- Make sure that your company details such as address and phone number are correct and consistent across multiple platforms.
- Always include your logo, and make sure you use a background photo as well. These will help you with brand recognition, as well as also adding consistency across many social media outlets. If you don't have a graphics artist already, you can go to sites like fivver.com to have one created at a reasonable price.
- Photos! For every site, upload at least 10 – 15 photos that are the best representation of your team and their work. Make sure that your pictures are crisp and clean, and facing the right way (most smartphones have the photo editing software you'll need). If you don't have pictures of your work already, start taking them right away. There is nothing like a dramatic before and after picture to entice new customers.

Sound Daily Process

Now that your social media accounts have been set up, it's time to add content. If you need a little help establishing a daily routine, we recommend that you set a daily reminder to post something new to both channels. New content keeps people interested and gains new followers. Simply having a page isn't really enough. It can be helpful to sort the content you're planning on posting into categories, and rotating between them. It doesn't have to be elaborate, but it helps to keep your content varied.

- **Generic posts** – These are easy. All you have to do is post a relevant comment like, "Good morning!" or mention a topical event that people are interested in, like the big game.
- **Pictures of jobs** – You're already taking pictures of your jobs now, right? Posting job pictures is a great way to show off, and give you an easy content boost!

- **Industry updates** – Linking to articles that are relevant to your industry shows off your knowledge and keeps things interesting as well.
- **New content** – The whole point of social media is sharing content. If someone you follow posts a good article or other content, be sure to share it.

Respond to Your Customers

This is so very important. Once your page is up and running, you will begin to get messages and feedback not only from current customers but also potential customers. It is vital that you respond to these messages, comments and reviews as quickly as possible. Be attentive to your pages, and it will demonstrate that you care about customer service. Lots of people use social media to communicate, so timeliness can be critical, especially if it is a message from a client. If you respond to these communications in a manner that is both prompt and professional, then you will be letting your customers (and future customers) know that their input matters to your company.

No Excuses

It doesn't really take a lot of effort to successfully maintain your social media accounts. Neglecting them, or not setting them up in the first place, only hurts you! When you take the time to set up and maintain your social media accounts, you are definitely taking a positive interest in the future of your business. Now that you have engaged your customers online, you will need to engage them in a positive way on the phone. The next two chapters review how to answer and route calls correctly!



Call Routing

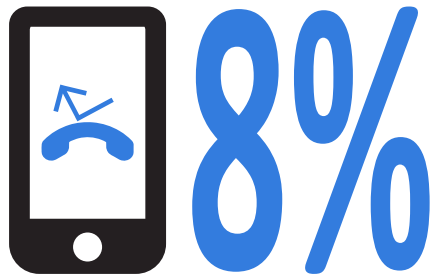
Anyone who's ever been in a traffic jam knows how frustrating it can be. Most of the time, problems with traffic flow could be solved by opening another lane or two. Wouldn't that be nice? It doesn't matter whether you're talking about traffic flow or the flow of calls heading into your business; nobody likes to be kept waiting. If your customers have to sit and wait for someone to answer their call, they're likely to hang up and try someone else. This is especially true for those customers who need emergency help or services and have money to pay for them. The last thing you want is for potential customers to turn away from your business because of an inefficient call management system!

The first step toward a more efficient call routing system is to analyze your current process. You'll want to ask yourself some questions, starting with: could my grandparents easily navigate my call system? Ease of use is just as important as a quick and helpful answer. We advise that you try to stay objective, and try to think of your potential clients' needs first.

Here are some questions you'll want to ask yourself while evaluating your own system:

- Are your calls being directly routed to a live person?
- If so, is that person someone who can actually help them?
- What is the average amount of time it takes to answer a call?
- Are you providing quality service 24/7? Even at 3 am?
- If you're using a call center, can/do they turn leads into jobs?

Asking yourself these questions can give you new insights into how your system works, as well as letting you know what parts of it might not be helpful to your clients. Really, no matter how good your current system is, there is almost always room for improvement. Below are some of the most common problems we see in the business, and our suggestions on how to improve your performance and bring in those leads!



of calls are missed

Average cost of a water job

\$3,000

If a water damage contractor receives 10 calls a week, they MISS about \$124,800

in jobs a year by not answering the phone.

Problem: Incorrectly Routed Calls

In every case, the first step towards a successful call management system is to make sure that calls are being routed to the right person. That means you'll need a good call routing system. Many call tracking systems already have call routing features built in. Utilizing your current system for this task is often the most cost-effective way to go, so make sure that you know the capabilities of your call tracking system before you invest in an expensive (and possibly unnecessary) new system.

It doesn't matter whether you're expanding the capabilities of your current system, or trying out something new – here are a few important features you will need to set up either way:

- **Call Blasting** – The call blasting feature allows you to submit multiple phone numbers. This works especially well if you've got a group of people to answer your incoming calls. With this feature, every phone that is connected will ring at the same time, and the first person to pick up will get the call. Of course, this feature only works if you've got your company phones in the hands of the right people!
- **Local Number** – In today's world of Local SEO, it is critical to have your number appear as a local one. This goes for online advertising as well! Toll-free numbers may be used, but only alongside a local number. Nobody likes to think that they are being routed to a call center, or somewhere far away. Investing in a local number can increase the likelihood of customer calls.
- **Caller ID Spoofing** – This feature allows you to set the number that shows up on the caller ID. Even if calls are being routed to multiple phones, the same number will show up every time. This is not only reassuring to customers but also makes sure that your employees don't screen their calls. It also helps to save this particular number in your phone as something that will remind you that it is a lead and not just a random call.
- **Time of Day Routing (optional)** – If you rotate who answers the calls, or if you use a call center, this can be a great feature. While it is considered optional, especially if you're not a 24-hour business, it can certainly be helpful.

Problem: Calls Not Answered

Ensuring that calls are being answered quickly and efficiently is one of the most important aspects of call flow. After all, even if your calls are being correctly routed, it won't matter if nobody is on the other end!

Here are a few ways to make sure that the calls get answered:

- **Blast Multiple People** – Sending incoming calls to more than one person can make a big difference in whether a call gets answered or not. There are many times on the job where it is not convenient, or downright impossible to answer a call, but when a call is sent to more than one phone number, the odds are greatly increased that somebody will actually be able to answer. It also helps if you are able to give your partners and employees good incentive to answer calls.
- **Buy a Separate Cell Phone** – If you have a separate phone that all of the emergency calls are routed to, not only can you assign people to the phone on a rotating basis, but it also eliminates screening. After all, every single call to that phone is an emergency (and a potential client!). Designating a phone for emergencies can also serve as a reminder not to forget the phone, or leave it behind somewhere.
- **Use a Call Center** – There are upsides and downsides to call centers. The upside is that you know that your calls will always get answered, but the downside is that you will be adding more steps between your customers and your employees. Adding unnecessary steps can lead to possible hang ups as people become impatient. After all, nobody wants to be put on hold while waiting for a connection when water is flooding their basement. We advise that you use call centers sparingly, and only in certain situations (like after business hours).

Problem: Calls Not Being Closed

Even if your calls are being routed correctly and answered promptly, there is no guarantee that the call will actually be closed and a new lead created. Here are a few ways to make sure that everyone walks away satisfied:

- **Only the Best** – Calls should be routed to your best sales people. Keep track of who is closing the most calls, and reward them with incentives to continue their good work. If someone isn't measuring up, maybe they shouldn't be at the phones. Also, consider including yourself as someone who may potentially answer calls. As an owner, taking calls yourself is one of the best ways to get more jobs.
- **Use a Script** – Having an outline or script to work from can work wonders. Especially in cases when you are too busy to take a call yourself, having a script to work from ensures that your employees are going to get the information they need, and present themselves to the customers in a way that reflects your business values.

Set Up for Success

If you follow our advice while setting up a call routing system, we guarantee that your time and effort will pay off! Not that it will work perfectly from the start – remember, every system needs tweaks and changes along the way toward finding peak efficiency. Finding the system that works best for you is key, but it's also okay to adjust as needed. Not every system is the same, but once you've found one that works for you – stick with it! Now that you are routing the call properly, you need to make sure that you answer them correctly. In the next chapter, we review the most important step for any home contractor!



Handling Calls Correctly

Everyone can tell the difference between a call that is being effectively handled, and one that just . . . isn't. A correctly handled call flows better, helps the customer, and converts calls into jobs. Still, most businesses know that even with a good system, sometimes calls are just missing something. It doesn't take much, however, to add back that missing element and turn adequate calls into successful ones. The key element here is realizing that it's just more cost-effective to make each call great than it is to waste time and money on the marketing that brings in calls, only to lose your potential customers because of how those calls are being handled. The most important aspect of online marketing has nothing to do with the internet – it has to do with handling the customer correctly!

What makes a call bad? Three of the most common mistakes are: forgetting to properly identify yourself and your company at the beginning of the call, asking the wrong questions, and giving too much information. Fortunately, these mistakes can be easily fixed. The experts at 33 Mile Radius have come up with a few pointers that will help you get your calls on track!

Identification, Please

The beginning of the call can be the most important part, so it helps to make sure that you're doing everything you can to reassure your potential customers that you know what you're doing. Make sure that each incoming call is answered in a way that is both consistent and professional. You want your customer to know who you are, and that you are there to help them with their problem.

Example:

"Thank you for calling (company name). This is (name), how can we help you?"

Ask the Right Questions

If you let your customer ask all the questions, the conversation will eventually end up being all about price. As a business, it is your responsibility to guide the caller into giving you the important information you need, while keeping the conversation natural. If you maintain a professional tone and aspect customers will, generally speaking, follow your lead. If you make them feel like you are there to help them, they will give you the information you need.

Example:

Caller: *“When I got home I found water in my basement from a burst pipe.”*

Contractor: *“I’m sorry to hear that, but that is what (company name) is here for. We can take care of this situation for you. Are you the homeowner? If so, do you have insurance?”*

Too Much Information

If you’re giving too much information to a customer, it will not only lead to them asking more questions than you may be prepared to answer over the phone, but that conversation almost always ends with a discussion about price. Since it is unlikely that you or anyone else has even seen the problem firsthand, chances are good that this isn’t a conversation you want to have over the phone. Instead, keep the conversation straightforward, and inform them about the services you can offer.

Example:

Caller: *“Yes, I am the homeowner, and we do have insurance. How much is this going to cost?”*

Contractor: *“Sir, I can’t know how much it will cost until someone evaluates the property. I wouldn’t want to give you an inaccurate quote. We will send a service technician out and give you a free estimate. If you like our quote, we will be prepared to start work immediately. We can also bill your insurance directly. What is your address, so I can have my lead technician out there in 30 minutes?”*

Successful Calls = More Jobs, Revenue, and Profit

Remember, your business depends on incoming calls. If customers are handled correctly, it can bring more jobs your way, which leads to more revenue and profit to grow and promote your business. Finding the method of handling calls can take time and effort, but it is a guaranteed way to increase the revenue and profit coming into your business. A good plan when it comes to taking calls can make all the difference. Now that you are engaging and converting calls into jobs, you are ready for the most important step – the follow up!

Follow Up:

Getting and closing leads is the lifeblood of your business, but once that part is over a lot of people forget to do the follow-up work that comes after. Just like in a good baseball swing – the follow through is the most important part! In the previous section, we spoke in-depth about how tracking, routing, and handling calls are critical to your success. Now, we will explain why tracking your calls and the revenue associated with them is even more important. Reviews are the most essential and most overlooked item that every home contractor can use to improve their online presence and reputation. Reviews are not only a great way to get the feedback that lets you continue to improve, but it also lets your customers know that you care about their opinions and about giving great customer service.



80-90%

of people use reviews before purchase



Reviews

Reviews can be the cornerstone of your online presence, and a great way for past, present, and future clients to gain an interactive understanding of how your business operates. Reviews can be powerful; having a page or two full of good reviews is a great way to attract new customers. Studies show that around 80-90% of online consumers rely on reviews to determine whether or not to use a service. These responses aren't based solely on good reviews, either. Even negative reviews can aid someone in the decision-making process, because they can not only offer you an opportunity to respond and demonstrate good customer service but also because they help consumers determine which service is going to be a good fit. A negative review presents you with a chance to mitigate the negative impact on your reputation by solving their problems and addressing their concerns in a considerate manner. Asking for reviews at the right time and place can be critical as well; you have to be careful not to abuse the system.

Stay Engaged

It isn't enough just to set up your social media and review sites, you also have to stay engaged with those sites. The information you present there should always be up-to-date and accurate, especially when referencing company name, address, phone number, website address, email address, and hours of operation. The key to maintaining a good relationship with your customers is to reply to all of the comments and reviews they leave. Even the most negative review may be turned around if it is replied to in a considerate manner. You'll be surprised at how much you can accomplish simply by addressing their concerns. Replying to reviews – both good and bad – can both help to keep your current customers happy as well as attracting new ones. Staying engaged is a great way to show that customer service matters to your company.

Timing is Critical

Setting up a station in your business solely for reviews isn't actually a great way to start because most review sites frown upon getting reviews en masse. Instead, you can send a follow-up email once the job is completed, asking how your client is doing. Mention that if they enjoyed good service, they can show their appreciation by leaving an online review. Of course, if they are unhappy with your services, this is a great way to address that before they hit the review site. Once their concerns have been dealt with in a kind and courteous manner, you can suggest to your (much happier) client that they leave a review online.

Keep it Simple

When you send an email to your clients, be sure to add links to your review pages and social media sites. This makes it very simple for your clients to leave a comment or review, without seeming too pushy about it. It's a good idea to offer links to more than one site since that gives your customers more options. Not every client uses the same social media or review sites, and it will also serve to keep your review base diverse. If you have the means, it can be a great idea to provide your customers with a way to leave a review from within the email itself, negating the need for external links. The fewer steps between asking for a review and receiving one, the more likely it is that you will get a review from a customer.

Nobody likes to receive spam, so make sure that your follow-up email is thoughtful, thorough, and provides your clients with easy access to your social media and review sites. Consider your strategy carefully before you send it out, and don't forget to include links! Once you've asked for a review, make sure to stay engaged and respond with appreciation. A kind review deserves your thanks, and a negative review is just an opportunity to address problems and demonstrate great customer service. Once you have this completed, you are ready to move on to the final step – tracking all of the hard work you have put in!



Tracking Revenue

Years ago, businesses would spend their marketing budget on billboards, Yellow Pages, radio, TV, and newspaper ads – without ever really knowing what (if any of it) was working. Everyone followed the same rules in a never-ending cycle of one-upmanship, trying to make an ad that would stand out from the rest. Still, it was a total guessing game, and it was very easy to waste your money on ineffective advertising. For small businesses especially, this trial and error approach was simply unsustainable.

These days, things are a little different. Now that we have ways to track all sorts of helpful data, the entire advertising game has changed. With the right tools, you can stay competitive and make sure that you are using your marketing budget to its best effect!

Change is Good

From a marketing point of view, the internet was a game-changer. Everything from the way we market to how we collect data had to be done differently. New technology has made marketing data available for everyone – not just big businesses – and consequently, the way we market can be much more targeted. Instead of placing a newspaper ad and hoping that it brings in calls, you can simply log in to Google Adwords or Analytics and see where the traffic on your website is coming from. The days of scatter-shot marketing are over!

Too Much of a Good Thing?

With all the improvements that allow us to track and access more data, the results can be a little overwhelming. On one hand, small businesses have the same access to metrics and other data as large businesses. On the other hand, with so much data available, it's hard to know where to start. It isn't always easy to determine what data is important and relevant, and which isn't. Many home contractors lack the time and knowledge to sift through the fountain data to find what they need, which leads to the sad truth that most home contractors are just ignoring the data altogether. Unfortunately, that is the equivalent of going back to trial and error marketing, and just as effective.

Don't be Overwhelmed

There are really only a handful of metrics that need your attention. The trick is knowing which ones to pay attention to. The two aspects of data that most matter to your marketing are conversions and revenue. If nothing else, monitor and measure these two things and you will be able to refine your marketing strategy. It's not hard to find the data, but some people may not know where to look – or even that all that data is readily available. Some people may not want to do the extra work, but believe me, it's worth your time – and money. It's not as difficult as you might think, and you'd be surprised what a positive impact it can have on your marketing plan.

Here is an easy 3-step guide to start call tracking today:

- **Get a call tracking tool** – This may seem obvious, but you'd be surprised how many small businesses haven't even taken this first step. There are a variety of call tracking tools available, and many of them share the same features, so don't base your decision on cost alone. Call trackers are handy for a number of reasons, and can also be used to route calls.
- **Set up a different phone number for each marketing source you use** – That means that you'll have a different phone number for your website, social media, paid search, and even offline marketing. This may seem like a hassle, but this is the easiest way to find out which marketing source is actually driving customers your way.
- **Create a process** – It's hard to get a full understanding of where best to spend your marketing dollars, but setting up a revenue tracker can help. If you set up a revenue tracker for each job that comes through, it can provide you with some insights as to where the money is going, and where it needs to be. You can also use your call tracking software, and keep detailed notes on every job in your system. That way you can see how much revenue you gained from each individual marketing source you're tracking.

Like anything else, the hardest part is getting started. Once you have a system in place, analyzing the data to help form an effective marketing strategy will be much easier. It seems like a basic step in any business, but many small businesses still suffer because they are not measuring their marketing success and learning from their mistakes.

Conclusion

Even though online marketing can seem like a daunting task at first, with the right tools even a beginner can launch a successful marketing campaign. Like most other things in life, once you break it down into smaller tasks and set up good daily habits, what seemed impossible suddenly becomes not only possible, but simple to do. In these pages, we have recommended various tips and tricks to make your transition into online marketing go smoothly. The experts at 33 Mile Radius have laid out the groundwork for a solid foundation, but remember that the follow-up work is just as important in order to succeed.

In the first section of this document, we discussed how to **acquire** more visitors. The first step in this task is to design and implement a fast-loading, informative website that is both easy to use and responsive to mobile devices. Once your website is up and running, it is a good idea to focus on local SEO and explore your paid search options. Doing all of these things will draw people to your website, and ultimately bring in more paying customers to your business.

In the second section, we explored the importance of keeping your customers **engaged** once they get there. Providing a back-and-forth over social media and review sites can really help to demonstrate how important good customer service is to you. It is also vital to have a comprehensive and well-thought-out set up for receiving calls and handling call routing and tracking procedures. Communication is the key to keeping your customers happy, bringing them back around, and inviting new clients to engage in your services.

In the final section, we have gone on to discuss the importance of **following up** with your customers after the job is done. This can be done in a number of ways, and might be the most important (but also the most overlooked) stage in your online marketing journey. By having an ongoing conversation through email, reviews, and social media, you are keeping the lines of communication open for your current and future customers.

All of these steps and stages of development are intertwined and dependent on one another for you to maximize your online business potential. Without any step, the other two wouldn't work. If you follow our guide, it may open up whole new avenues of business that you might not have thought about previously. Taking steps down an unfamiliar path can be daunting, but that is why the experts at 33 Mile Radius are always available to help. We enjoy answering your questions and discussing new and exciting marketing strategies with our business fellows. If you care to discuss anything you've read about in this document in more depth, we urge you to reach out and contact us by phone or email! By sharing our information and ideas with others, we all benefit from fresh perspectives and unique mindsets. Please feel free to utilize and share the tips and tricks we've arranged here, and don't forget to share your success stories with us! Good luck!

