PHONES

HOW TO FIND YOUR TRUE ANSWER RATE

A four-step check any owner can run this week.

In one analysis, home service owners estimated they answered 97% of their calls. Call tracking measured 66%. Most owners have never checked.

RUN THE CHECK

1. Export last month's call log, including every inbound call, answered or not.
2. Divide answered calls by total calls. Repeat by hour of day and day of week.
3. Count missed callers who never appear in your software as a booked job.
4. Multiply by your booking rate and average ticket.

WHERE TO LOOK FIRST

Calls usually slip away in four moments: peak spikes such as Monday mornings and bad weather, breaks and lunch, after hours, and any time a dispatcher or office manager is also the phone.

WHAT TO DO WITH THE ANSWER

Pick your two weakest hours and cover those first. You don't need to fix the whole week to recover real money.

WHY THE NUMBER SURPRISES PEOPLE

Most phone systems report on the calls that reached a person. They leave out the calls that rang until the customer hung up, the calls that went to voicemail, and the calls that came in while the office was closed. When an owner says "we answer everything," that usually means "we answer everything we hear."

Your answer rate is the plainest measure of how much of your marketing you actually use. You already paid for that call. A truck wrap, a Google ad, a five-star review or a referral made the phone ring. Whatever happens next is up to you.

GET THE DATA

Ask your phone provider for a call log covering at least 30 days. You want one row per call, with the date, the time, the caller's number, the duration, and how the call ended. If your system can't export that, your call tracking provider may be able to. If you have neither, put a test on it: for one full week, have someone count every ring and every voicemail by hand.

Then clean the log:

- Remove internal calls and transfers between extensions.
- Remove known vendors, spam and robocalls.
- Treat repeated calls from the same number within a few minutes as one customer trying to reach you.
- Count calls under 10 seconds separately. Some are hang-ups during the greeting, and those count as missed.

BUILD A SIMPLE HEAT MAP

Make a grid with days across the top and hours down the side. In each box, put the share of calls answered. Color anything under 80% red. Most owners learn more from that one sheet than from a year of monthly reports.

You will usually see a pattern. Monday morning runs red. Lunch runs red. The first hot or cold day of the season runs red. The last hour of the day often runs red, because the person answering is also closing out tickets.

FOLLOW THE MISSED CALLS

This is the step almost everyone skips. Take your missed callers for the month and look each one up in your field software. Sort them into three groups:

- **Called back and booked.** You got lucky.
- **Existing customers who never booked.** You lost work from people who already trust you.

- **New numbers that never booked.** These are the leads you paid for and lost.

Call a sample of that last group. Keep it short: "We missed your call last week. We're sorry about that. Did you get taken care of?" You will learn who they went to, and you'll book a few jobs along the way.

PUT A DOLLAR FIGURE ON IT

Take your missed new-customer calls, multiply by your normal booking rate, then by your average first ticket. That's a conservative number, because it ignores replacements and repeat work. Use the missed-call calculator to run it.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

Set a target, and judge each daypart against it. A single monthly average can hide a terrible Monday. Decide what you'll do when a block falls short: a second person on the phones, a shared ring group, an overflow service, or a callback rule that says every missed call gets returned within five minutes.

CHECK IT EVERY WEEK

Put the answer rate, and the two weakest hours, on your weekly meeting agenda. Numbers people see every week tend to improve. Numbers that appear in a quarterly review tend to get explained away.

Sources: Service Direct (2019), as reported by Abby Connect. White Paper 04.

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BEST PRACTICES: MISSED CALLS

MAKE IT A HABIT

What good looks like

> Aim to answer at least 9 in 10 calls live during business hours.

> Aim to pick up within about 20 seconds.

> Every voicemail and missed call returned within minutes, not by the end of the day.

The habits

1. Measure your true answer rate by hour of day, not your gut feel. Most owners guess high.
2. Cover the gaps on purpose: lunch, the first and last hour of the day, Saturdays and the first big weather day.
3. Set an overflow rule: after a set number of rings or calls waiting, calls roll to a second person or an outside team.
4. Return every missed call fast, with a named owner for the call-back list.
5. Write a short after-hours plan: what counts as an emergency, who is on call and what the caller is told.
6. Listen to five recorded calls a week and coach one thing at a time.

Signs it's time to get help

- Your answer rate is under 80% in your busiest hours.
- Your dispatcher answers phones and runs the board at the same time.
- Weather days or ad spikes regularly swamp the office.

How one shop did it: Bonney Plumbing (multi-brand plumbing, HVAC and electrical company). Merged five brands' customer service teams into one team that can answer for any brand, stretched coverage to seven days without adding staff, and coaches with call transcripts and role-play. Booking rate rose from 35% to 41%, missed calls fell from 10% to 4%, and abandoned calls fell from 12% to 4%. Case study published by its software provider, April 10, 2025

Where we fit: Service ProCall answers overflow, lunch, after-hours and surge calls in your name, and books into your own software.

More on missed calls