GROWTH

WHAT OWNERS AND TRADE PRESS SAY WORKS

Solutions that keep showing up in public reporting, with the numbers and the caveats.

HOW TO READ THIS PAGE

This is a roundup of what contractors and trade publications have reported, in their own settings. Some of it comes from owners. Some comes from consultants writing columns, and those people often sell services. Individual results aren't guarantees. Look for the patterns across sources, and test them on your own numbers.

COVER THE PHONES WHEN YOU CAN'T

A backup that paid during a storm. ACHR News reported on Mike Agugliaro, then owner of Gold Medal Service in New Jersey, who used an outside answering service for after-hours, emergency and overflow calls. The article credited it with an additional $5.4 million in revenue. When his phones failed during a major storm, outside agents kept picking up. "We would have lost millions of dollars," he said. The article is several years old and that is an unusually large company, but the lesson about backup is a lasting one.

Planning for it from the start. The same article described Scott Good of Goodco Mechanical in Pennsylvania, who understood from his company's early days that he'd need help with after-hours calls.

Answer rate moves bookings. In Contractor magazine, a consultant described a four-technician HVAC company that went from answering 61% of calls to 94% after automating call handling. Over 90 days, weekly booked jobs rose 31%, and the owner got back 12 to 15 hours a week. It's a single case reported by someone in the business of this work.

Don't assume outsourcing is automatically right. A longtime HVAC operations person told Contracting Business that outside help is part of a strategy and not always the answer. Her point is that most companies have moments each day when calls outnumber the people available.

Fix the script too. ACHR News reported on clients who received about two calls a week meant for a competitor. After changing how those calls were handled, they went from booking none to booking half.

WORK THE CUSTOMERS YOU ALREADY HAVE

Slow months are for maintenance. In ACHR News, contractors including Robert Axelrod of Cooling Equipment Services in Illinois described scheduling maintenance in slow months. Robert Crawford of Abacus Plumbing and Heating in Houston said agreements bring technicians into the home each spring and fall. Joe Kirby of Hawks and Co. in New Jersey said regular visits let the company find problems early and be proactive about repair or replacement.

Use your reports. A recent ACHR News shoulder-season plan recommends pulling lists of customers with aging systems, multiple recent repairs, skipped maintenance and open estimates, then calling them.

Tighten the list first. Contracting Business described one contractor that removed 15% of its inactive list and focused on people served in the last three years. Its email response rate rose 35%.

Make it personal. One ACHR News columnist reported $135,000 booked in five days from 250 contacts with no ad spending. Expect your own results to be more modest.

GET OFF PAPER

Dispatch that saves repeating yourself. Buddy Smith of Russell's Heating and Cooling in Virginia told Contracting Business that having job details appear on the technician's tablet was "a huge time saver." Dispatchers no longer talked techs through each call, and invoices stopped piling up in summer.

One record for each customer. ACHR News profiled McAfee, a contractor that moved to tablets tied to its schedule. Technicians could see complete customer history on

repair calls, invoices went out when the job was finished, and barcode scanning replaced handwritten parts requests.

Fewer missed windows. Contractor magazine has noted that more plumbing companies are moving off paper boards and shared spreadsheets, and that software which automatically tells crews about changes tends to produce fewer missed windows than tools that only record the schedule.

Connect the systems. A 2025 survey of more than 600 trade businesses, reported in Contractor, found that nearly 80% of owners considered strong invoicing essential. The average business ran at least five software systems, and nearly a third had no plan for connecting them. Electrical Contractor magazine makes a similar case for one system across scheduling, field work and billing.

THE COMMON THREADS

- **Answer every call you can, and have a backup for the ones you can't.**
- **Treat your customer list as an asset.**
- **Get information into one place.**
- **Measure before and after.**

Run the same test in your own business. Pick one change, measure it for 90 days, and tell other owners what happened on the message board.

Sources: ACHR News, call-answering services; Contractor, manual back-office work; Contracting Business, inbound calls; ACHR News, phone presence; ACHR News, shoulder seasons; ACHR News, shoulder season plan; Contracting Business, reactivating customers; ACHR News, Stop the Revenue Yo-Yo; Contracting Business, dispatching; ACHR News, field and office tools; Contractor, scheduling and no-shows; Contractor, 2025 trades survey; Electrical Contractor, field service automation.

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BEST PRACTICES: THE OWNER IS THE BOTTLENECK

MAKE IT A HABIT

What good looks like

> The business runs for 30 days without you.

> Each key job has a written process and a person who owns it.

> You spend more time on the business than in it.

The habits

1. Write down the jobs only you do today, and hand off one a month.
2. Put processes in writing: booking, dispatch, sales follow-up and billing.
3. Give people numbers to own, and review them weekly.
4. Hire or outsource the work that ties you to the phone.
5. Keep clean books and records a buyer or lender can trust.
6. Plan your exit years ahead, even if you never sell.

Signs it's time to get help

- You answer customer calls at night and on weekends.
- Nothing gets decided when you are away.
- Your best people wait for you to make every call.

How one shop did it: Rogers Heating, Cooling, Electrical (Lynchburg and South Boston, Virginia). Spent a year hiring, training and building processes, and put a trusted leader over the call center. The company's vice president took a July 4th weekend off in peak season and the calls were handled without her. She notes it took more than one false start with hiring to get there. Contracting Business, August 17, 2026

Where we fit: Service ProCall takes the phones and the follow-up calls off your plate, and ProCall Field puts the processes in one system.

More on the owner is the bottleneck