



NEXTBUILD
— MARKETING —

THE LEAD BLUEPRINT

A Complete **Digital Marketing Blueprint**
for Contractors, Carpenters, and
Home Service Companies to Win More Jobs,
Eliminate Slow Seasons, and Build a Business
That **Runs on Autopilot**.

ELIJAH KYNER



The Blueprint for Endless Leads

A Complete Digital Marketing Blueprint for Contractors, Carpenters,
and Home Service Companies to Win More Jobs, Eliminate Slow
Seasons, and Build a Business That Runs on Autopilot

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FOREWORD: WHY MOST CONTRACTORS ARE INVISIBLE ONLINE

Let me start out with a little honest flattery...

You're probably better at your trade than 90% of the people who come up before you on Google.

But let me take a second to step back and clarify who I'm talking to exactly. If you're reading this, my hope is that you are a talented tradesman or tradeswoman who does *quality work*. That's assumption number one.

Assumption number two: *you want to grow*. I can't tell you how many trades folk I've talked to who feel stuck being a one (or two) man show and can't see a way into the next tier of business ownership, so they decide to stay where they are. They know how to do the work, so that's what they do, day in and day out.

And why not? You build things that last. You show up on time. Your customers love you. You've got glowing recommendations from clients who still brag about you to their neighbors. And yet, when someone in your town picks up their phone and types "carpenter near me" or "deck builder [your city]", your name isn't anywhere on the first page.

That's not a talent problem. That's a visibility problem.

And you know what makes it worse? The contractor who IS showing up at the top is not necessarily better than you (in fact, the opposite is true in most cases). He just has a better marketing system. He's running the plays that Google rewards. He's got a website that works, a Google Business Profile that's fully optimized, and an automated follow-up sequence that converts leads while he sleeps.

That's what this book is about.

I've spent years now building marketing systems specifically for contractors, carpenters, and home service companies. I've watched businesses go from zero online presence to booked **six to eight months out**. I've seen a single carpenter who had no website, no reviews, and no digital footprint turn into someone appearing on page one of Google and pulling in five to ten qualified leads per month... without spending a dollar on ads.

The strategies in these pages are the same ones we implement for our clients at NextBuild Marketing. They work. Not because they're complicated, but because they're consistent, systematic, and built on how Google actually thinks.

If you're a contractor who has relied on word of mouth, yard signs, and being at a good intersection of roads, this book will open your eyes to what's possible. And if you've tried marketing before (a "nephew who does websites," a Wix page, maybe some Facebook posts) and it hasn't moved the needle, you'll understand exactly why, and what to do about it.

Let's dig in.

— Elijah Kyner

Founder, NextBuild Marketing

INTRODUCTION: THE SYSTEM BEHIND CONSISTENT LEADS

Here's the big question I ask every contractor I talk to: "Where do your jobs come from?" Simple. To the point.

The answers fall into a handful of categories. Referrals and word of mouth. Repeat business from past clients. Maybe a few from yard signs or a truck wrap. Occasionally, someone found them on Google.

And here's the common thread: almost every contractor is living job to job, dependent on a pipeline they have little control over. When the referrals slow down because a key relationship moves away, or the economy tightens, or it's just a slow season — the work dries up fast.

That's the fragility problem of the referral-only business model.

Referrals are wonderful. You should absolutely keep generating them and building toward that. But they shouldn't be your only source of work. Because you can't scale something you can't control. A lot of small business owners I talk to are actually happy with the quantity of jobs they have coming down the pipeline... until they're not.

What you can control, and what most contractors never build, is a digital marketing system. A machine. Something that works in the background every single day, generating inquiries, nurturing leads, following up with past clients, collecting reviews, and presenting your business as the clear authority in your local market.

That's what I'm about to teach you how to build.

We're going to cover five core pillars, with a deep dive into each one:

1. Google Business Profile optimization: the single most powerful free tool available to local businesses.
2. A conversion-optimized, SEO-driven website: your #1 sales rep if built properly.
3. Citation building and local SEO authority: how Google decides to trust you.
4. Automations: missed call text-back, lead nurturing, and reactivation sequences.
5. Paid advertising and social media: how to scale once the foundation is set.

Each of these works independently. Together, they create a compounding effect that makes your business nearly impossible to ignore in your local market.

Those five strategies sound fairly technical, but I won't waste your time with theory. Everything in here is practical, tested, and implementable. Some of it you can start today. Some of it requires technical setup, but it's always good to know what is doable *now*.

One more thing before we start: you don't have to implement everything at once. In fact, I'd recommend against it. The most successful marketing transformations I've seen happen incrementally: one system at a time, built correctly, before adding the next layer.

The contractors who try to do everything at once usually do everything poorly. The ones who build step by step? They dominate.

Let's build your system.

PART ONE: BASE LAYING

CHAPTER 1 — THE GOOGLE BUSINESS PROFILE: YOUR MOST VALUABLE (YET FREE) ASSET

If you could only make one digital marketing move for your home services business, this would be it.

Your Google Business Profile, formerly called Google My Business, is the listing that shows up in the Maps section when someone searches "carpenter near me" or "deck builder [your city]." Those three boxes that appear at the top of local search results are called the Local Pack, and they are the **MOST valuable real estate** on the internet for a local contractor.

That's an extreme statement, but 100% true. It's not your website. Not your Facebook page. For a local search, the Local Pack shows up above everything else (including your website) with a map, your photos, your rating, your phone number, and a "Get Directions" button. If optimized correctly, it will bring you a steady flow of qualified leads.

And it's completely free to claim and optimize.

Yet the majority of contractors either haven't claimed their profile, or claimed it years ago and haven't touched it since. The carpenters showing up at the top of your market? They're feeding the algorithm. You need to do the same.

Here's a simple way to think about how Google decides who to put at the top of page one: When you Google, "Who is the President of the United States?" The Google algorithm knows that there is one, true, trustworthy answer to that question. And it wouldn't be much use to anyone if it gets that answer wrong. It pulls from thousands of databases, sites, blogs, and more to determine who exactly this President of the United States is.

And when you search, "Who is the best kitchen remodeler near me?" Well, Google has an answer to that question too. Getting your business to rank on Google, in the simplest terms, is putting signals in place to prove why you are the best answer to that question. And throughout the next couple chapters, we'll cover the specific ways to send those signals.

WHY YOUR GBP RANKS ABOVE YOUR WEBSITE

Google's Local Pack algorithm — the system that decides which three businesses appear for any given local search — is separate from the regular organic website ranking algorithm. It weighs different factors. Understanding this distinction is critical, because many contractors invest in

their website while neglecting their GBP, and then wonder why they're not showing up on the map.

The three primary ranking factors for the Local Pack are:

1. Relevance: How well does your profile match what the person is searching for? This is why your business category selection, your description, and the keywords throughout your profile matter more than most people realize.
2. Proximity: How physically close is your business to the searcher? You can't change your address, but you can expand your service area and ensure your profile clearly communicates every city and neighborhood you serve.
3. Prominence: How well-known and trusted is your business online? This is influenced by your reviews, the number of photos on your profile, how actively you post, how many citations you have, your website authority, and your overall engagement metrics. Reviews are the most important of the elements here, which is why we'll dedicate a full section of this book to them.

All three of these factors are within your control.

SETTING UP YOUR PROFILE THE RIGHT WAY

If you haven't claimed your Google Business Profile yet, go to business.google.com and start the process. Google will want to verify that your business is real. The verification process has changed significantly in recent years — Google moved away from postcard verification and toward video verification for many business types.

Video verification requires you to walk through your place of business (or, for mobile contractors, your setup at an active job site) while logged into Google on your phone. It's not as daunting as it sounds, but timing matters. For seasonal contractors, try to initiate this process early in your active season so you have time for resubmissions if needed.

Once verified, here's how to optimize every element:

Business Name: Use your real business name — exactly as it appears on your license and other listings. I wouldn't recommend you stuff keywords into your business name ("Best Carpenter Springfield LLC") — Google can (and likely will) penalize this, and it looks unprofessional.

Primary Category: This is the most important category decision you'll make. Your primary category tells Google which searches to show you for. Be as specific as possible. "Custom Carpenter" will outperform "Contractor" for searches like "custom built-ins near me." Research how competitors in your market are categorized and consider what terms your best customers actually search.

Secondary Categories: You can add multiple secondary categories. Use them. If you build decks, do trim work, and handle kitchen cabinetry, all three should have corresponding categories selected. Think of each category as an additional "antenna" picking up relevant searches.

Service Area: The hard truth with Google Business is this: businesses without specific addresses listed will have a harder time ranking above businesses that have them, everything else being equal. If you feel you can prove that you conduct business at your physical location via video verification, **add the address**. If not, you'll add your business as a *service area business*. Add every city within your realistic service radius. If you're based in one city but regularly work in three surrounding counties, claim them all.

Business Description: You have 750 characters for your description. Use them wisely. Your first 250 characters show in search results, so front-load your most important information. Naturally include your primary keyword (e.g., "custom carpenter in [City]"), what makes you different, and a call to action.

Hours: Keep your hours accurate and updated. If you're seasonal, use the seasonal hours feature. Outdated or incorrect hours are one of the fastest ways to lose trust with both Google and potential customers.

Photos: This is where most contractors drastically underinvest. Google's own data shows that profiles with over 100 photos receive 520% more calls than the average profile. This isn't a coincidence — it's because photos signal activity and authenticity to both Google's algorithm and to potential customers reviewing your profile.

What to upload: Before and after shots of completed projects. Your team at work. Your branded truck or van. Your workspace or shop if applicable. Photos of you with satisfied customers (with permission). The goal is to give a prospective customer a vivid picture of what it's like to hire you.

Add new photos consistently — ideally weekly. This signals ongoing activity to Google.

Services: Use the Services tab to list every individual service you offer with a description. This dramatically expands your keyword footprint. "Deck construction," "pergola installation," "custom built-in shelving," "hardwood flooring installation" — each one is a separate search term you can now rank for.

Q&A Section: Many contractors don't realize that anyone can post questions to their profile, and answers become public. Proactively populate this section yourself with common questions and detailed answers. "Do you offer free estimates?" "Are you licensed and insured?" "What areas do you serve?" These help undecided prospects and inject more keywords into your profile.

Posts: Google lets you post updates, offers, and project photos directly to your profile, similar to a social media feed. These appear in your profile and occasionally in search results. Posting at least once per week signals active engagement to the algorithm. Share recent project completions, seasonal offers, or helpful tips for homeowners. Each post should include a photo and a call to action.

THE REVIEW FACTOR

I'm going to dedicate a full chapter to reviews later because they deserve that depth. But here, within the context of your GBP specifically, understand this: reviews are the single most influential ranking factor you can actively control.

More reviews = higher ranking. More recent reviews = even higher ranking. More detailed reviews (that naturally include keywords like your service and location) = even higher still.

A competitor with 200 reviews at 4.8 stars will almost always outrank you with 20 reviews at 5.0 stars. Volume and recency matter as much as quality.

The system for generating reviews consistently — not just when you remember to ask — is covered in full in Chapter 4.

TRACKING YOUR GBP PERFORMANCE

Your Google Business Profile has a built-in analytics dashboard called "Business Profile Performance." Monitor these metrics monthly:

Searches: How many times your profile appeared in search results. Directional trend matters more than the absolute number.

Views: How many people actually clicked to see your full profile.

Directions Requests: The golden metric for local contractors. Every directions request is essentially a potential customer preparing to come to you or navigate to a job site address. Track this religiously.

Calls: Total phone calls initiated from your profile.

Website Clicks: Traffic sent to your website from your GBP.

Set a reminder to review these numbers on the first of every month. Track them in a simple spreadsheet. If directions requests are trending up, your profile optimization is working. If they're flat, something needs attention.

THE GOOGLE GUARANTEED BADGE

One powerful addition to your GBP presence is qualifying for Google's Local Services Ads program and earning the "Google Guaranteed" badge. This appears above even the regular ads and the Local Pack, with a green checkmark indicating that Google has screened and verified the business.

Getting the badge requires a background check, license verification, and proof of insurance — all things a legitimate contractor already has. Once approved, you appear at the absolute top of local search results and pay only per qualified lead, not per click.

More on this in the paid advertising chapter.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD YOU UPDATE YOUR PROFILE?

The short answer: regularly. The longer answer:

Weekly: Add a new photo and publish a new post. Respond to any new reviews that came in.

Monthly: Review and update your services list if anything has changed. Respond to any Q&A submissions. Check your analytics.

Seasonally: Update hours, add seasonal offers, adjust your service area if you've expanded.

Annually: Freshen your business description. Update your cover photo and profile photo. Do a full audit to ensure all information is still accurate.

This is not overly complicated work. Anyone on your team can be trained to handle the weekly maintenance. The contractors who dominate local search aren't doing anything magic — they're just being consistent.

CHAPTER 2 — BUILDING A WEBSITE THAT ACTUALLY CONVERTS

Let me describe a website I see at least twice a week.

It's got the company logo in the corner. A phone number in the header. A navigation menu with "Home," "About," "Services," "Gallery," and "Contact." The homepage has a photo of a house and a paragraph that says something like "We provide quality remodeling services with 20 years of experience." There might be a contact form at the bottom.

It looks professional enough. It was probably built by a nephew or a budget website company for \$500 five years ago. And it does almost nothing for the business that owns it.

Here's the problem: that website isn't working. It's not generating leads. It's not ranking on Google. It's not converting visitors into customers. It exists as a digital placeholder, or a way to say "yes, we have a website" without actually leveraging what a website can do.

In this chapter, we're going to fix that.

WHAT YOUR WEBSITE'S ACTUAL JOB IS

Most contractors think their website's job is to look professional and display their services. That's wrong. Your website has two jobs, and only two:

Job One: Generate traffic. Specifically, organic traffic from Google — people searching for the services you offer in your area. If no one is finding your website through search engines, you are leaving enormous amounts of potential revenue on the table.

Job Two: Convert that traffic into leads. Turn the people who do land on your website into people who call, fill out a form, or request a quote. Traffic without conversion is worthless. A visitor who bounces without contacting you costs you time and money you spent on SEO without any return.

Every design decision, every content choice, every structural element of your website should serve one of these two jobs. If a feature doesn't help you rank higher or convert better, it's at best a novelty and at worst a distraction.

THE ANATOMY OF A HIGH-CONVERTING CONTRACTOR WEBSITE

Homepage Structure

Above the fold (meaning the portion of your homepage visible before the user scrolls) is your most valuable real estate. A visitor makes a judgment about your business in approximately three seconds. Your above-the-fold section needs to communicate:

Who you are and what you do (specifically, not generically)

Where you operate

Why they should choose you

What they should do right now

The headline should be specific. "Custom Carpentry in Springfield, Missouri" is better than "Quality Craftsmanship You Can Trust." The first one is searchable, specific, and geographical. The second one says nothing distinctive.

Directly below or alongside the headline should be your primary call to action. For contractors, this is almost always a "Get a Free Estimate" button or a visible phone number. This button should be a contrasting color from everything else on the page so it pops visually. It should appear above the fold, again in the middle of the page, and once more at the bottom.

Trust signals come next. Show your Google rating and number of reviews prominently. Display your years in business, your license number if applicable, and any certifications or associations you belong to. For homeowners, hiring a contractor involves inviting someone into their home — one of the most intimate things you can ask. They need to feel safe saying yes to you, and trust signals provide that emotional safety.

Your portfolio (photos of past work) should be a core element of your homepage, not just buried in a "Gallery" page. Before-and-after pairs are especially powerful. They tell a story with no words required.

Service Pages

This is where most contractor websites are severely underdeveloped, and it's one of the most significant SEO opportunities available to you.

Each service you offer should have its own dedicated page. Not a bullet point in a list on a single Services page — a full, standalone page with its own URL, its own title tag, its own content, and its own call to action.

Here's why this matters from an SEO standpoint:

When Google's crawlers analyze your website, they evaluate each page individually. A page titled "Deck Building in Springfield" with 800 words of content specifically about deck building, photos of decks you've built, and a clear call to action targeting Springfield homeowners signals to Google that you are genuinely relevant to the search "deck builder Springfield."

A single page that lists all your services in a few bullet points doesn't trigger that same signal. Google doesn't know whether you're actually good at or focused on any particular service — it just sees a list.

Each service page should include:

A clear headline that incorporates your primary keyword and location: "Custom Deck Building in Springfield, MO"

An introduction that speaks to the customer's desire or problem: "A well-built deck extends your living space and dramatically increases your home's value. Here's how we make that happen."

Details about your process, materials, or approach: This demonstrates expertise without giving away proprietary methods.

Photos of actual work you've done: Ideally five to ten high-resolution images specific to that service.

Customer testimonials specific to that service: "The deck they built for us was exactly what we envisioned and finished two days ahead of schedule."

A call to action: A form, a phone number, or a button to request a quote.

Internal links to related pages: Link your deck building page to your pergola page, your railing page, or your outdoor living page.

Location Pages

If you serve more than one city, location pages are a powerful SEO tool available to you, and one of the most underused.

A location page is a dedicated page on your website targeting a specific city or service area that isn't your main location. For example, if you're based in Springfield but also regularly work in Nixa, Ozark, and Republic, you should have separate pages for each:

yoursite.com/carpenter-nixa-mo

yoursite.com/carpenter-ozark-mo
yoursite.com/deck-builder-republic-mo

Each of these pages tells Google "this business is relevant and active in this specific city." When someone in Nixa searches "carpenter near me," your Nixa location page is far more likely to rank than a homepage that only mentions Springfield.

Location page content should feel authentic and specific. Mention local landmarks if you've worked near them. Reference the types of homes typical to that area. Include photos of projects completed in that community. Generic "We also serve [City Name]" language does very little — detailed, specific content is what earns rankings.

Mobile Optimization: Non-Negotiable.

Over 60% of local home services searches happen on mobile devices. This is not a trend. It's the current reality and it's only increasing. If your website is not optimized for mobile, you are failing the majority of people who find you.

Mobile optimization means:

Fast load speed: Aim for under 3 seconds on a mobile connection. Use Google's PageSpeed Insights tool to test your site and see exactly what's slowing it down. Large uncompressed images are the most common offender.

Clickable phone numbers: The phone number in your header should be a tap-to-call link. A user on mobile should never have to copy and paste your phone number.

Responsive layout: Every element of your site should reformat cleanly for a small screen. Buttons should be large enough to tap with a thumb. Text should be readable without zooming. Contact forms should function smoothly on mobile.

Simplified navigation: Mobile menus should be clean and simple. If your navigation has dropdown submenus that are hard to navigate on a touchscreen, simplify them.

Load Speed and Core Web Vitals

Google announced years ago that page experience metrics — how fast your page loads and how stable it is as it loads — are ranking factors. These are measured through a set of metrics Google calls Core Web Vitals:

Largest Contentful Paint (LCP): How long until the main content of the page loads.

Target: under 2.5 seconds.

First Input Delay (FID): How quickly the page responds to interaction.

Target: under 100ms.

Cumulative Layout Shift (CLS): How much the page elements move around as it loads.

Target: under 0.1.

You don't need to understand the technical mechanics behind these metrics. What you need to know is that a slow, unstable-loading website hurts your Google ranking and drives visitors away. Test your site at PageSpeed Insights (pagespeed.web.dev) and share the results with your web developer. These are solvable problems, not permanent ones.

The Contact Form and Lead Capture Strategy

Your contact form is often the last thing contractors think about and the first thing a potential customer interacts with when they decide to reach out.

Keep it short. Name, phone number, and a brief description of what they need. Every additional field you add reduces completion rates — sometimes dramatically. Ask for what you actually need to make contact and qualify the lead, nothing more.

Confirmation matters. When someone submits a form, they should immediately receive a confirmation page and an automated text or email acknowledging their request. More on this in the automation chapter, but the principle is simple: people want to know their message was received. Silence after form submission creates anxiety and leads to abandoned inquiries.

Lead magnets. For contractors looking to build an email list for long-term nurture, offering something of value in exchange for contact information is extremely effective. A free guide ("5 Questions to Ask Before Hiring a Carpenter") or a free project planning checklist gives prospective customers a reason to share their email address before they're ready to book. These become part of your long-term nurture database.

ON-PAGE SEO: SPEAKING GOOGLE'S LANGUAGE

On-page SEO refers to the elements within your website that signal to search engines what your pages are about and who they should be shown to. Get these right on every page and you build a compounding ranking advantage over time.

Title Tags

Your title tag is the text that appears in the browser tab and as the clickable headline in Google search results. It's one of the most important on-page ranking factors. Every page should have a unique, keyword-rich title tag that follows this formula:

Primary Keyword | Secondary Keyword | Business Name | Location

Example: Custom Deck Builder | Pergola Installation | Smith Carpentry | Springfield MO

Keep title tags under 60 characters to avoid truncation in search results.

Meta Descriptions

The meta description is the two-line preview text that appears under your title in search results. It's not a direct ranking factor, but it significantly influences click-through rates — and click-through rate does affect ranking indirectly.

Write meta descriptions that are compelling, keyword-inclusive where natural, and action-oriented. "Get a free estimate for custom carpentry in Springfield. Licensed, insured, and backed by 150 five-star reviews." Keep them under 155 characters.

Header Tags (H1, H2, H3)

Every page should have exactly one H1 tag — your main headline. It should include your primary keyword. Supporting sections should use H2 and H3 tags to create a clear hierarchy. This structure helps search engines understand what a page is about and helps human readers navigate the content.

Image Optimization

Every image on your website should have descriptive alt text. Alt text is read by Google's crawlers (since they can't see images the way humans do) and used to understand what the image

depicts. An image of a finished deck before and after renovation should have alt text like: "Custom cedar deck installation by Smith Carpentry in Springfield MO."

Additionally, compress your images before uploading. An uncompressed 4MB photo from your phone loads slowly and hurts your Core Web Vitals scores. Use a tool like TinyPNG to compress without visible quality loss.

Internal Linking

Every page on your website should link to at least one or two other relevant pages. This creates a network of connections that helps search engine crawlers discover and index all your pages, passes "ranking authority" between pages, and keeps visitors engaged longer — all positive signals.

Your deck building page should link to your pergola page, your fence installation page, and your contact page. Your blog posts should link to your service pages. Your homepage should link to your most important service pages and locations.

CONTENT STRATEGY FOR CONTRACTORS

One of the most underutilized SEO assets for local contractors is a blog. Not a corporate newsletter, not a collection of press releases — a genuinely useful resource of articles targeting the questions and searches your ideal customers make.

Consider the search journey of a homeowner planning a deck build:

They start by searching "how much does a deck cost" or "composite vs pressure treated deck." They're in research mode. They don't want to be 'sold to' yet.

A contractor who has a blog post answering these questions shows up in those early searches, earns a click, and begins establishing trust before the homeowner ever submits a form. When that homeowner eventually decides to get quotes, they're already familiar with you. They already trust you. Your competitors — who have no blog and never showed up in those early searches? They're starting from scratch.

Blog content ideas for contractors:

- "How Much Does a Custom Deck Cost in [City]?" (This one keyword generates thousands of searches monthly in mid-sized markets)
- "Composite vs. Pressure Treated Wood: A Contractor's Honest Take"
- "5 Questions to Ask Before Hiring a Carpenter"
- "Before and After: [Project Type] Transformation in [Neighborhood]"
- "How to Maintain Your Deck Through [Season] in [Climate Zone]"
- "What to Expect During a Kitchen Cabinet Installation"

Each of these targets a different search query, reaches a prospect at a different stage of their decision, and builds your authority as the knowledgeable expert in your trade.

Aim for one new piece of content per month at minimum. Two to four is better. Over time, this library of content compounds — each article is an additional entry point into your website from Google, running permanently without ongoing cost.

CHAPTER 3 — THE CITATION NETWORK: HOW GOOGLE DECIDES TO TRUST YOU

Quick scenario: you're looking at a website for a new competitor who popped up in your area, and you're trying to verify whether a business is real and legitimate. You can't visit in person. All you have is data.

You'd look for consistency. Does this business's name, address, and phone number appear the same way across multiple independent sources? Is it listed on Yelp, on the Better Business Bureau, on Apple Maps, on Angi? Does every listing say the same thing? Are the hours and services consistent?

That's exactly what Google does. The process is called citation building, and understanding it gives you an enormous advantage over competitors who've never heard the term.

WHAT IS A CITATION?

A citation is any online mention of your business's name, address, and phone number — collectively referred to as NAP. Citations appear on directory sites, social platforms, local business listings, industry-specific sites, and anywhere else that aggregates business information.

Citations serve two functions in local SEO:

Trust signals: Consistent NAP data across authoritative directories tells Google that your business is real, stable, and trustworthy. The more reputable directories confirm the same information, the higher your trust score climbs, and the higher you rank.

Backlinks: Most directory listings include a link back to your website. Each of these links acts as a vote of confidence in the eyes of search engines. Not all backlinks are equal. A link from the Better Business Bureau carries far more weight than a link from a random blog — but collectively, citations from authoritative sources meaningfully improve your website's domain authority.

THE NAP CONSISTENCY IMPERATIVE

This cannot be overstated: your business name, address, and phone number must be formatted exactly the same way across every single listing.

Not approximately the same. Not close. Identical.

"Smith Carpentry LLC" and "Smith's Carpentry" are different in Google's data model. "123 Main Street" and "123 Main St." are different. "(417) 555-1234" and "417-555-1234" are different.

These inconsistencies create what SEO professionals call "NAP conflicts" — situations where Google's crawlers find contradictory data about your business. When Google can't confidently confirm your business information, it doesn't reward you with rankings. It hedges.

Before you build new citations, audit your existing ones. Do a search for your business name and look at every directory that appears. Note any inconsistencies. Fix them before adding new listings.

Tools like Moz Local, BrightLocal, or Yext can automate much of this process. They scan directories, identify conflicts, and push consistent information to dozens of sites simultaneously. This is one of the most efficient investments a contractor can make in their local SEO.

THE CITATION HIERARCHY

Not all directories are created equal. Here's a general tiering:

Tier 1 — Core Directories (highest authority, do these first):

Google Business Profile
Apple Maps / Yelp
Bing Places for Business
Facebook
Better Business Bureau

Tier 2 — Industry-Specific Directories:

HomeAdvisor / Angi
Houzz
Porch
Thumbtack
BuildZoom (for licensed contractors)
Bark.com
Nextdoor Business

Tier 3 — General Business Directories:

Yellow Pages / YP.com

MapQuest

ChamberofCommerce.com

Manta

Foursquare

Superpages

Local.com

MerchantCircle

Tier 4 — Local and Regional:

Your local Chamber of Commerce

Regional business associations

Local newspaper business directories

City-specific directories

Start with Tier 1 and work your way down. Complete every field on every profile, not just name, address, and phone. Upload your logo and photos. Write a full business description that naturally incorporates your service keywords and location. The quality of each individual listing matters, not just the quantity.

BUILDING BACKLINKS BEYOND CITATIONS

Citations are one type of backlink, but not the only kind. Higher-authority backlinks, especially from local, relevant sources, can dramatically improve your website's domain authority and organic rankings.

Here are practical strategies for building quality backlinks as a contractor:

Local Chamber of Commerce membership: Most chambers include a directory listing with a backlink to member websites. This is one of the highest-quality local backlinks you can acquire.

Supplier and manufacturer pages: If you build decks with a specific brand of composite lumber, or install kitchens using a specific cabinetry line, contact those manufacturers or suppliers. Many have "find a contractor" or "certified installer" directories. Getting listed there gives you an industry-relevant backlink.

Local news coverage: A before-and-after project transformation in a local neighborhood can be newsworthy. Reach out to local journalists or city blogs with a visual story pitch. A single local news backlink can carry as much SEO weight as fifty directory listings.

Charitable work or community projects: If your company volunteers in the community — building something for a local nonprofit, donating services to a cause — those organizations often publish their sponsors and partners on their websites with a link.

Guest content: Home improvement blogs, real estate agent blogs, and local lifestyle publications sometimes accept guest contributions. A practical article from a contractor about "what to look for when hiring someone to build your deck" is genuinely useful to their audience and earns you a backlink.

Testimonials: Offer to provide a testimonial for a tool, material, or service you genuinely use and love in your business. Many companies will publish customer testimonials on their website with a link back to the testimoner's business.

DUPLICATE LISTINGS: THE SILENT RANKING KILLER

One issue you might run into, even if you're an established business: duplicate listings. Sometimes these are created by data aggregators pulling your information from multiple sources and creating inconsistent entries. Sometimes they were created by the business owner who forgot about an old account.

Duplicate listings split your ranking authority instead of consolidating it, confuse Google about your actual address and information, and can result in your profile showing inaccurate data to potential customers.

As part of your citation audit, specifically look for and resolve duplicate listings. On most directories, you can claim and merge duplicates. On Google specifically, having two separate GBP listings for the same location can get your legitimate listing suspended or flagged, so this isn't just an SEO concern, it's a business critical one.

CHAPTER 4 — THE REVIEW GENERATION ENGINE

The biggest, and I really mean *biggest*, reason you'll lose business to a competitor: you're falling behind on getting five-star reviews on Google.

Reviews are simultaneously a ranking factor, a trust signal, a conversion tool, and a competitive moat. Businesses with more reviews and better ratings win the click, win the call, and win the job over competitors who might deliver better actual work but look inferior online.

Success here is about building a system — not just occasionally asking for reviews, but a repeatable, semi-automated process that generates a steady stream of new reviews after every completed job.

WHY THE SYSTEM MATTERS MORE THAN THE ASK

Most contractors who struggle with reviews have a process problem, not a relationship problem. Their customers love them. The quality is there. But reviews require the customer to take action. They've got to find the review link, log into Google, write something, and submit it. And people delay that action until they forget.

Here's what I will tell every home service business owner: if you don't get that 5-star review *before you leave the job site*, your chances of getting one at all get sliced in half.

A system removes friction and capitalizes on the window of peak satisfaction: the moment immediately after a project is completed to the customer's delight.

THE REVIEW GENERATION SEQUENCE

Step 1 — Plant the Seed at the Estimate

This sounds small, but it's one of the most effective things you can do. During the estimate or initial consultation, mention reviews naturally. Something like: "We really rely on Google reviews to grow our business. When we do great work for you, I'm going to ask if you'd mind sharing that experience online."

This sets an expectation. When you ask for the review later, it's not surprising; it's a logical completion of a promise they implicitly invited by hiring you.

Step 2 — The Walkthrough Ask

When you've completed the project and you're walking the client through the finished work, pay attention to their reaction. When they express genuine satisfaction — "This is exactly what we were hoping for" or "Wow, this looks incredible" — that's your moment.

Say something like: "I'm so glad you love it. It would mean the world to our team if you'd share that in a quick Google review. I can text you the link right now; it takes about two minutes."

This is not pushy. You've earned a five-star review through quality work. Asking for it is appropriate and professional.

Step 3 — Send the Link Immediately

Don't wait until you're back in the truck. Don't add it to your to-do list. Text the review link while you're standing with the customer. People have the intention to leave a review at peak satisfaction, but that intention fades fast. The easier you make it, the more likely they are to follow through within hours while the emotions are fresh.

Your Google review link is a specific URL you can create through your Google Business Profile dashboard. It looks like: [g.page/\[yourbusiness\]/review](https://g.page/[yourbusiness]/review). Save it in your phone's notes app, text it out infinitely.

Step 4 — Automate the Follow-Up

For the percentage of customers who receive the link but don't complete the review within a day or two, an automated follow-up message dramatically increases conversion.

Set up an automation using a CRM like GoHighLevel, Jobber, or similar that triggers three days after a job is marked complete. The message should be brief and non-pressuring:

"Hi [Name], just following up to see if you had a minute to leave us a quick Google review! Here's the link: [URL]. We really appreciate it and it helps homeowners in [City] find us."

One gentle reminder recovers a significant percentage of reviews that would otherwise never happen. Set up a second reminder at day seven if the first doesn't result in a review. After that, let it go.

Step 5 — Respond to Every Review

Google notices whether businesses respond to their reviews. Responding to reviews, both positive and negative, signals active engagement with your customer base. It also shows prospective customers that you pay attention and care.

For positive reviews: Thank them by name, mention something specific about the project if possible, and invite future contact. "Thank you so much, Sarah! We loved working on your kitchen renovation in Nixa — enjoy your new space!"

For negative reviews: Don't be defensive. Acknowledge the issue, take responsibility where appropriate, and offer to resolve it. Prospective customers reading your negative reviews are not necessarily looking for perfection — they're looking for how you handle problems. A gracious, professional response to a complaint can actually improve your conversion rate.

Don't sweat a couple negative reviews from disgruntled homeowners. They won't sink you. Instead, they give you an opportunity to show the world how you handle difficult situations. Take that as a win (but do try and keep those to a minimum).

HOW MANY REVIEWS DO YOU NEED?

There's no magic number, and the answer varies by market. In a small town, 30 reviews at 4.9 stars might be enough to dominate. In a competitive metro area, you might need 200+ to rank in the top three.

What matters more than reaching a specific count is maintaining a steady stream of new reviews. Google's algorithm values recency. A business that gets 5 reviews per month, every month, will outrank a business that got 200 reviews two years ago and hasn't gotten one since.

Aim for at least two to four new reviews per month as a baseline. Track this number actively.

HANDLING FAKE OR UNFAIR REVIEWS

Every contractor will eventually encounter a review they feel is unfair: a disgruntled former employee, a competitor, or a customer whose expectations were unrealistic regardless of your work quality.

Google allows businesses to flag reviews that violate their policies (spam, fake reviews, off-topic content, inappropriate language). If a review meets one of these criteria, report it through your GBP dashboard. The review may be removed.

If the review is genuine but negative, your best path is a professional, empathetic response followed by a private outreach to resolve the situation if possible. Generating more legitimate five-star reviews dilutes the impact of a single negative one. It becomes a data point in a sea of excellence rather than a defining feature of your profile.

What you should never do: post fake reviews yourself, ask employees to post reviews, or use any service that "guarantees" reviews. Google aggressively detects and removes inauthentic reviews and can suspend your profile entirely for violations. It's not worth the risk.

CHAPTER 5 — SEO DEEP DIVE: HOW TO RANK AND STAY THERE

If the previous chapters were about putting your business on Google's radar, this chapter is about understanding the mechanics that determine whether you rank in position one or position twenty.

Search engine optimization is often surrounded by mystery and jargon (intentionally so) by people who want to make it seem more complex than it is so they can charge more for it. Let me demystify it.

Google's goal is to return the most relevant, most trustworthy, most useful result for any given search query. Everything in your SEO strategy should serve that goal. If it makes your website more relevant and more trustworthy to a real human reader, it will generally also make Google rank you higher.

THE TWO PILLARS: ON-PAGE AND OFF-PAGE SEO

On-page SEO refers to everything within your own website that you control: your content, your structure, your page speed, your keywords, your technical setup.

Off-page SEO refers to everything outside your website that influences how Google views it: backlinks from other sites, your citations, your GBP signals, social proof, and brand mentions across the web.

Both pillars matter. Overinvesting in one while neglecting the other is like building a strong foundation with no walls, or walls with no foundation.

KEYWORD RESEARCH FOR CONTRACTORS

Keyword research is the process of identifying which search terms your potential customers are actually using and building your content strategy around those terms.

The most valuable keywords for a contractor fall into two categories:

Commercial intent keywords: These indicate the user is ready to hire. "Deck builder Springfield MO," "carpenter near me," "kitchen cabinet installation Nixa." These generate the highest-value traffic. People in buying mode.

Informational keywords: These indicate the user is researching. "How much does deck installation cost," "composite vs wood deck," "how to find a good carpenter." These generate traffic earlier in the buying journey, allowing you to build trust and get your name in front of prospects before they start soliciting quotes.

Use Google's autocomplete feature to discover real search queries. Start typing your service + location into Google and see what autocomplete suggests. These are actual common searches. Also scroll to the bottom of the search results page for the "People also ask" and "Related searches" sections, which are goldmines of content ideas.

More advanced keyword research can be done with tools like Ahrefs, Answerthepublic, Semrush, or the free Google Keyword Planner. These tools show you search volume, competition level, and related keywords - giving you data to prioritize which content to create first.

THE ANATOMY OF A WELL-OPTIMIZED PAGE

Every page you want to rank should follow this structure:

- ➔ Title tag that includes the primary keyword and location (under 60 characters)
- ➔ Meta description that's compelling and keyword-inclusive (under 155 characters)
- ➔ H1 headline that includes the primary keyword (one per page)
- ➔ Introduction that states clearly what the page is about and who it serves
- ➔ Body content of sufficient depth (800 to 2,000+ words for service pages and blog posts)
- ➔ Secondary keywords woven naturally throughout (H2/H3 headers are great places for these)
- ➔ At least three to five high-quality images with keyword-rich alt text
- ➔ Internal links to two to three related pages on your site
- ➔ A clear call to action at the end

Content length deserves a note: longer isn't always better, but for competitive keywords, longer, more comprehensive content consistently outranks short, thin content. Google interprets content depth as a signal of authority. A 1,500-word guide on "how to choose a deck builder in Springfield" demonstrates expertise that a 300-word service blurb does not.

UNDERSTANDING GOOGLE'S LOCAL ALGORITHM

For local service businesses, Google uses a slightly different ranking algorithm for the Local Pack (the map results) versus the regular organic search results. Many people don't realize this distinction, and it matters for how you allocate your SEO effort.

The Local Pack algorithm is heavily weighted toward your Google Business Profile signals:

- Proximity to the searcher
- Completeness and activity on your GBP
- Review count, velocity, and rating
- Relevance of your categories to the search query
- Citations and NAP consistency

The organic algorithm is weighted more toward your website:

- Domain authority (backlink profile)
- Content quality and depth
- Technical SEO factors
- On-page keyword optimization
- User experience signals

For most contractors, appearing in the Local Pack is the higher priority because it positions you above all organic results and includes your reviews, photos, and phone number directly in the search results. But organic rankings matter too, especially for informational searches earlier in the buyer's journey where no Local Pack appears.

THE TECHNICAL SEO BASELINE

Technical SEO refers to the behind-the-scenes infrastructure of your website that enables Google to properly discover, crawl, and index your content.

The key elements:

HTTPS: Your website must use HTTPS (the secure version of HTTP). If your website still shows as "Not Secure" in the browser, this is hurting both your SEO and your conversion rate dramatically.

XML Sitemap: A sitemap is a file that lists all the pages on your website and tells Google about their structure. Submit your sitemap to Google Search Console to ensure all your pages are indexed.

Google Search Console: This is a free Google tool that shows you how your website is performing in search. Set it up and connect it to your site. It reveals which queries are triggering impressions and clicks, which pages have errors, and whether Google is having trouble indexing any of your content.

Robots.txt: This file tells search engine crawlers which pages to index and which to ignore. Make sure your robots.txt isn't accidentally blocking important pages.

Canonical Tags: If multiple URLs lead to the same content, canonical tags tell Google which version is the "official" one to index. This prevents duplicate content issues.

Structured Data (Schema Markup): Schema markup is code that helps Google understand specific elements of your content: your business name, hours, reviews, services, and more. For contractors, Local Business schema, Service schema, and Review schema are the most relevant. Properly implemented, schema can earn "rich snippets" in search results: enhanced listings that include your star rating, operating hours, and other information directly in the search result.

These technical elements are generally handled by your web developer or SEO provider. You don't need to implement them yourself, but you should ask your provider to confirm they're in place and functioning correctly.

Or, of course, if you're a tech wizard *and* a successful home service business owner, go crazy.

TRACKING YOUR SEO PROGRESS

SEO results take time. It's typically three to six months before significant movement is visible in most markets. This is one of the main reasons contractors abandon SEO efforts prematurely: they expect paid ad-like immediacy from an organic strategy that builds compounding value over time.

Set realistic expectations and track the right metrics:

Keyword rankings: Use a tool like Google Search Console, SEMrush, or Ahrefs to track where you rank for your target keywords. Track movement over 90-day periods, not week to week.

Organic traffic: Total visits arriving from organic search. Should trend upward as your SEO matures.

Conversions from organic search: Phone calls, form submissions, and direction requests attributed to organic search. This is the number that ultimately matters.

Google Business Profile insights: Monthly directions requests, calls, and search queries are your most direct signals of local pack performance.

CHAPTER 6 — THE MISSED-CALL PROBLEM THAT'S COSTING YOU THOUSANDS

Here is a scenario that happens hundreds of times every day for contractors across the country.

A homeowner needs a deck built. They've done their research, they liked your reviews, they clicked "Call" on your Google Business Profile.

Your phone rings. You're under a customer's deck running electrical. Or you're on a ladder. Or you're in the middle of explaining something to a subcontractor. You can't answer.

The call goes to voicemail. The homeowner maybe leaves a message. More likely, they hang up and call the next contractor on the list.

You lost a job that should have been yours. Not because of your price, your quality, or your reputation. Because you were doing your job.

This is the missed-call problem, and it represents one of the most significant revenue leaks in any contractor business. The solution is elegant, simple, and now entirely automated: the missed-call text-back.

Now, if you have a full time office administrator whose job is to answer and route those calls, that is golden. But that's not the majority of remodelers, deck builders, carpenters, or other contractors I've worked with.

HOW THE MISSED-CALL TEXT-BACK WORKS

The moment a call comes in and goes unanswered, the system sends an automatic text message to the incoming number. The message arrives within seconds.

It reads something like:

"Hi! This is [Your Name] from [Company Name]. I'm on a job right now and couldn't grab the phone. I wanted to make sure I caught you though — how can I help? I'll reply as soon as I get a break."

What does this do?

1. It stops the prospect from calling the next contractor. They just received a response. The conversation has started.
2. It moves the interaction to text, where you can respond at a natural break in your work.
3. It signals professionalism and attentiveness — a significant trust-builder for homeowners.
4. It creates a record of the conversation in your CRM.

We've seen contractors implement this single automation and immediately notice an uptick in qualified conversations that were previously lost. Some businesses attribute 20 to 30 percent of their monthly revenue to calls that went unanswered but converted to jobs via the text-back sequence.

THE SPEED-TO-LEAD PRINCIPLE

Research from the Harvard Business Review and multiple sales analytics firms confirms what anyone who's been in business knows instinctively: the faster you respond to a new lead, the dramatically higher your conversion rate.

Specifically, leads contacted within the first minute of inquiry are nearly ten times more likely to convert than leads contacted an hour later. The gap widens further at four hours, at 24 hours, and beyond.

For contractors, this creates a real operational challenge. You can't sit by the phone all day waiting for calls. You're doing the work that generates the revenue. Automation bridges this gap; not by replacing your personal response, but by providing an instant engagement that holds the lead until you can respond personally.

BEYOND THE MISSED CALL: THE LEAD NURTURING SYSTEM

Even when you do answer the call or respond quickly to a form submission, not every lead converts to a booked job immediately. Some homeowners are in early planning stages, getting multiple quotes, working within budget constraints, or simply not ready to start yet.

Without a follow-up system, these leads disappear into the void. You gave them an estimate, they said they'd think about it, and you never heard from them again. Meanwhile, a competitor with a follow-up system stayed in touch, earned their trust over time, and got the call when they were ready to move forward.

The Ghosted Estimate Sequence

One of the highest-value automations any contractor can implement is a sequence that triggers when a prospect receives a quote and then goes silent.

Day 2 after the estimate: "Hi [Name], just wanted to make sure you received our quote for your [project type]. Do you have any questions I can answer?"

Day 5: "Hi [Name], still happy to chat if you have any questions or want to go over the details. We'd love to work with you on this."

Day 10: "Hi [Name], I know projects take time to plan. Just wanted to let you know we do have some openings coming up in the next few weeks if you're looking at timing. Would love to get you on the calendar."

This sequence is friendly, non-pushy, and keeps you present in the prospect's mind without requiring any manual effort from you. The contractor who doesn't follow up loses to the contractor who does, almost every time.

What happens to prospects who still don't convert? Add them to a long-term nurture list (a monthly or quarterly email newsletter showcasing recent projects, seasonal tips, or occasional promotions). Six months later, when they're finally ready to move forward, you're the contractor they've been hearing from regularly. That familiarity becomes the tiebreaker.

PART TWO: THE AUTOMATION ADVANTAGE

CHAPTER 7 — CUSTOMER REACTIVATION: THE GOLDMINE YOU'RE IGNORING

If I could show a contractor one number that would immediately change how they think about their existing client list, it would be this:

It costs five times more to acquire a new customer than to re-sell to an existing one.

Yet almost every marketing conversation among contractors centers on lead generation: how to get new people calling. The far more economical and often faster path to revenue is sitting in a spreadsheet or shoe box of past client names that almost every contractor owns but almost none systematically activates.

Your past clients already trust you. They've seen the quality of your work firsthand. They have friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers who own homes and need work done. They have their own home, which continues to age and require maintenance, improvements, and expansions.

They are not cold leads. They are pre-sold contacts waiting to be re-engaged.

THE REACTIVATION SEQUENCE

A reactivation campaign is a specific set of automated touchpoints designed to bring past clients back into an active conversation. Here's the framework:

The 6-Month Check-In

Six months after completing a project, an automated message goes to the client:

"Hi [Name], it's been about six months since we finished your [project]. Hope you're still loving it! Is there anything else we can help you with around the house?"

This message accomplishes several things: it shows you care about the long-term quality of your work (not just collecting payment and disappearing), it often triggers a referral ("actually, my neighbor was just asking about getting a deck built"), and it occasionally generates direct new business from the client themselves.

The Anniversary Message

On the one-year anniversary of their project completion:

"Hi [Name], can you believe it's already been a year since we built your [project]? Just wanted to reach out and see how everything is holding up. If you ever have any questions or need anything, we're always here."

Again, it shows care, keeps your name top of mind, and generates referrals.

The Seasonal Promo

Before peak season (spring for deck builds, fall for interior work):

"Hi [Name] — spring is just around the corner and our calendar is already starting to fill up. If you've been thinking about any home projects this year, now is a great time to reach out and grab a spot. We'd love to work with you again!"

This generates actual bookings. Set it to go out in February for spring work, October for fall and winter projects.

The Referral Ask

Once per year, a dedicated message asking for referrals:

"Hi [Name], we loved working with you on your [project]. If you know anyone who might be looking for quality carpentry or home improvement work, we'd really appreciate the introduction. We always take great care of our clients' referrals."

Optionally, offer an incentive: "We'll send you a \$50 gift card for any referral that books with us."

THE 9-WORD EMAIL

Among all reactivation tactics, the simplest and often highest-performing is what marketers call the "9-word email." It's exactly what it sounds like: a plain-text email with approximately nine words in the body, no graphics, no design — just a direct question from you to the customer.

Example: "Hi [Name], are you planning any home projects this spring?"

That's it. No pitch. No call to action. Just a genuine question.

The reason it works is precisely because it doesn't look like a marketing message. It looks like a note from a contractor who actually knows you and is checking in. In a world of promotional emails and carefully designed campaigns, a nine-word email in plain text stands out wildly.

Response rates for this type of message are remarkably high. Some of those responses will be "not right now", and that's fine. Others will be "actually we've been thinking about adding a mudroom." Those conversations are worth hundreds or thousands of dollars, activated by nine words and five minutes of setup.

THE ANNUAL REACTIVATION CAMPAIGN

Beyond individual sequences, consider running a full "win-back" campaign once per year to your entire historical client list. This is a concentrated three-message series over two weeks with a specific offer attached. Perhaps it's a small discount on their next project, or a complimentary site visit to assess any maintenance needs.

The goal isn't necessarily to generate immediate bookings from every recipient. It's to resurface your name to people who may have mentally "moved on" from working with you, reconnect, and identify the subset who are actively planning projects.

CHAPTER 8 — LEAD NURTURING SEQUENCES THAT CLOSE JOBS ON AUTOPILOT

Lead nurturing is the systematic process of maintaining a relationship with prospects who are not yet ready to buy, keeping your business relevant and top-of-mind until they are.

Without nurture, your funnel looks like this: prospect inquires, you give a quote, they go silent, they hire someone else six weeks later when they are ready.

With nurturing, your funnel looks like this: prospect inquires, you give a quote, they receive a helpful message every week or two from you, when they're ready to hire they call you because they've been "hearing from you" and feel like they already know you.

THE FULL NURTURE STACK

Immediate Response (0-60 seconds after inquiry):

Whether the inquiry comes in via phone call (missed), website form, Google message, or Facebook message, an automated response should go out within 60 seconds. This is your first impression. It should be warm, professional, and set expectations:

"Hi [Name], thank you for reaching out to [Company]! We received your message and [Name] will be in touch within the next few hours. In the meantime, you can see some of our recent work at [portfolio link]. Looking forward to talking!"

The 48-Hour Follow-Up:

After the initial conversation or estimate, if you haven't heard back: "Hi [Name], just wanted to follow up to see if you had any questions about the estimate we sent for your [project]. Happy to go over the details anytime."

The 5-Day Touch:

"Hi [Name], we're about to start planning our schedule for the next few weeks. Wanted to check in one more time — are you still interested in moving forward with the [project] we discussed? We'd love to work with you."

The Long-Term Nurture (Monthly):

Any prospect who doesn't convert in the short term should receive a monthly email or text from you. Not a pitch, but a value touchpoint. A photo of a similar project you recently completed with a brief description. A seasonal tip. A story about a challenge on a recent job and how your team solved it.

Over a six-month period, the majority of home improvement decisions that were in consideration will have been made. The prospects who get your nurture messages are far more likely to hire you when they finally move forward than prospects who received one estimate and never heard from you again.

CENTRALIZED INBOX MANAGEMENT

One of the practical challenges for service businesses is that customers reach you through multiple channels: phone, text, email, Google Business Profile messages, Facebook Messenger, Instagram DMs. Managing each platform separately is chaotic, leads to missed messages, and creates a terrible customer experience.

A quality CRM (GoHighLevel is what we use with our clients at NextBuild, along with options like Jobber for field-service businesses) consolidates all these conversations into a single inbox. One place to see and respond to every customer interaction, regardless of channel.

This single change, centralizing your communications, can reduce missed leads by 30 to 50 percent for contractors who currently try to manage multiple inboxes manually.

CHAPTER 9 — YOUR CRM: THE NERVOUS SYSTEM OF YOUR BUSINESS

Every system described in this book — the review sequences, the missed-call text-back, the lead nurturing, the reactivation campaigns, the automated responses — depends on one thing: a CRM.

CRM stands for **Customer Relationship Management**. It's the software platform that stores all your contacts, tracks your communications, triggers your automations, and centralizes your pipeline.

Without a CRM, automations are possible in patches; a separate tool for emails, a different one for texts, maybe a spreadsheet for tracking leads. But they're fragmented, unreliable, and require manual coordination that rarely gets done consistently.

With a CRM, the system runs itself.

When a new lead submits a form on your website → the CRM adds them to your contact database, tags them as a new lead, triggers the immediate response message, notifies you to make a call, and starts the 48-hour follow-up sequence.

When you mark a job as complete → the CRM schedules the review request text for that afternoon, adds the client to your 6-month reactivation sequence, and logs the project details.

When you miss a call → the CRM fires the text-back within seconds.

This is not science fiction. This is standard automation that any contractor can have running within a week of setup.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A CRM

For home service contractors, the non-negotiables are:

Two-way SMS and email: The ability to send and receive text messages within the platform. Most leads prefer text communication.

Pipeline management: A visual board showing where every lead is in your sales process — new inquiry, estimate sent, follow-up pending, booked, deposit received.

Automation builder: Drag-and-drop tools to create sequences of messages triggered by specific events (form submission, missed call, job completion, etc.).

Centralized inbox: All channels — text, email, Google messages, Facebook — visible in one place.

Calendar and booking: The ability to let leads book a consultation or walkthrough directly into your calendar.

Review request automation: Triggered sequences to request Google reviews after job completion.

PART THREE: SCALING

CHAPTER 10 — PAID ADVERTISING: WHEN AND HOW TO TURN ON THE TAP

Paid advertising and organic SEO are not rivals; they're teammates. The mistake many contractors make is treating them as either/or decisions.

Organic SEO builds a sustainable foundation of free traffic that compounds over time. It takes months to build, but once established, it generates leads indefinitely without a per-click cost.

Paid ads generate immediate visibility. Turn them on today and you can be at the top of Google for target keywords by tomorrow. Turn them off, and you disappear. There's no compounding — you're renting visibility, not owning it.

The strategic approach is to invest in SEO for long-term growth while using paid ads to fill gaps, launch new services, cover slow periods, or accelerate growth during seasons when you want maximum lead flow.

GOOGLE LOCAL SERVICES ADS (LSAs)

For most contractors, this is the highest-ROI ad product available. LSAs appear above regular paid ads and above the Local Pack — at the absolute top of Google search results. They carry the "Google Guaranteed" badge, which Google awards only after background checks, license verification, and insurance confirmation.

The pricing model is unlike regular PPC: you pay per qualified lead, not per click. Google only charges you when a call comes in that meets the criteria for your service type and geographic area. You can dispute leads that don't qualify.

For competitive keywords like "deck builder near me," the cost per lead on LSAs is typically \$15 to \$50, which is lower overall than what PPC campaigns would cost for similar placement.

The setup process requires time (verification can take a few weeks) but the ROI is consistently strong for contractors who qualify.

GOOGLE SEARCH ADS (PPC)

Standard Google PPC allows you to bid on specific keywords and show an ad at the top of search results for those keywords. When someone clicks your ad, you pay the bid rate.

The key principle for contractor PPC: ***never send ad traffic to your homepage***. Always create a dedicated landing page for each ad campaign that directly matches the ad copy, focuses on a single service, and has a single call to action.

If someone clicks an ad for "deck builder Springfield MO," they should land on a page specifically about deck building in Springfield, and not your general homepage where they have to figure out what you do.

Landing page conversion optimization is its own discipline, but the essentials are: a compelling headline that matches the ad, a brief value proposition, social proof (reviews and project photos), and a prominent form or phone number above the fold.

REMARKETING / RETARGETING

Retargeting shows ads to people who have already visited your website. Using the Google and Meta Pixel (small tracking codes on your website), you can build an audience of website visitors and serve them ads as they browse other websites and social media.

This is powerful for contractors because the buying cycle for home improvement is often weeks or months long. A homeowner who visited your website three weeks ago is still thinking about their project. A retargeting ad showing your best before-and-after photos or a client testimonial keeps you in view during that long consideration period.

Retargeting campaigns typically have much higher conversion rates and lower costs per conversion than cold traffic campaigns, because you're reaching people who already have some awareness of your brand.

META ADS (FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM)

Meta ads allow you to target specific demographics with visual content. They operate differently from Google — users on Facebook aren't searching for a contractor, so relevance is earned through scrolling.

For contractors, the most effective Meta ad content is:

- ➔ Before-and-after videos or photo carousels of notable project transformations
- ➔ Short authentic video clips of work in progress (time-lapse resonates especially well)

- Client testimonial videos
- Seasonal offers targeting local homeowners
- Photos of you, your family, or your team.

That last one is the most simple, yet oddly effective from my experience. Homeowners are wary of large, enterprise businesses, and often prefer a personable experience. Leverage that with your creative content.

Meta's targeting capabilities let you serve ads specifically to homeowners in your zip codes, within a given income bracket, and in a certain age range. This gives you a high level of control over who sees your ad. Meta also has rolled out certain updates of late that use AI to analyze your ad creatives to get you in front of the right audience as well. For example, if you use a picture of someone running to promote your running shoe brand, Meta will likely position your ad in front of people who are interested in running.

This can take some AB testing and experimentation until you hit the right configurations, but Meta Ads can often outperform pay per click if you are getting in front of the right audience.

CHAPTER 11 — SOCIAL MEDIA FOR CONTRACTORS: AUTHENTICITY BEATS PRODUCTION

Social media for contractors has one primary job: build enough familiarity and trust that when a homeowner is ready to hire, your name is the first one they think of.

That's it. Not to go viral. Not to build a massive following. To become the recognizable, trustworthy local contractor that people think of when a home project comes up at the neighborhood cookout.

With that goal in mind, the entire approach changes. You don't need a production team. You don't need a social media manager. You don't need to post every day. What you need is consistent, authentic content that shows the humans behind the hammers.

THE THREE TYPES OF CONTENT THAT WORK FOR CONTRACTORS

Project Documentation

The single most effective content category for home service contractors. You're doing extraordinary work that makes homes more beautiful and functional. Document it. Pull out your phone before you start, take progress photos, and capture the finished product.

Before-and-after posts perform exceptionally well because they tell a complete story. The viewer sees the problem and the solution in two frames. It's satisfying, relatable, and aspirational. For most homeowners, seeing the transformation triggers a cascade of "I wish my [similar space] looked like that." This doesn't need to even be highly produced. Authentic videos get attention.

Behind-the-Scenes Process Content

This category builds trust more deeply than any other. Showing how you work — your attention to detail, your problem-solving process, how you handle unexpected challenges — communicates quality in a way that finished photos don't.

"This is what we found when we opened up the wall. Old framing from 1953. Here's how we're handling it..." This content makes prospective customers feel confident that even when things get complicated, you know what you're doing.

Team and Culture Content

Introduce your crew. Show the humans behind the business. This is especially important as homeowners are increasingly selective about who they let into their homes — seeing that your team are real people with families and personalities makes the decision feel less risky.

PLATFORM PRIORITIES FOR CONTRACTORS

Facebook: Still the dominant platform for homeowners aged 35 to 65 in most markets. Your professional Facebook page should be active with consistent posts. Join local neighborhood groups and community pages (with genuine value, not spam) to build local visibility.

Instagram: Visual platforms favor visually compelling content — which is exactly what great carpentry and home improvement projects are. Reels (short video) get dramatically more reach than static photos. A 30-second time-lapse of a deck build going up is worth ten photos.

NextDoor: Underutilized and underrated. Local recommendations on Nextdoor drive real referrals. Actively participate in your service area communities.

YouTube: The highest-value investment for contractors willing to make the commitment. Longer-form project videos and how-to content rank in Google's search results and build deep trust with viewers. Not for everyone, but for contractors who can commit to regular uploads, the long-term ROI is extraordinary.

THE CONTENT CALENDAR

Consistency matters more than frequency. Most contractors would be better served by posting three quality updates per week than posting daily for a week and disappearing for three.

A simple weekly rhythm: Monday: a project update or progress photo from the week. Wednesday: a finished project showcase or before-and-after. Friday: something personal, a team moment, or a helpful tip.

That's 12 pieces of content per month. Achievable. Sustainable. Enough to build a visible presence over time.

CHAPTER 12 — BUILDING A REFERRAL ENGINE THAT NEVER STOPS

Everything in this book so far has focused on digital systems. This final chapter is about the most human marketing channel that exists, and how to systematize it.

Word of mouth, or referrals, is almost universally the highest-quality lead source for contractors. Referred clients come pre-qualified by the trust relationship with the person who referred them. They haggle less, complain less, pay faster, and refer more. The economics of a referred client are dramatically better than a cold digital lead.

The problem is that most contractors treat referrals as something that happens to them, not something they actively build. They do good work and hope their customers tell people. Sometimes they do. Often enough to sustain a business, rarely enough to grow it.

A referral engine treats referrals as an intentional outcome of a systematic process.

THE SYSTEMATIC REFERRAL ASK

The best time to ask for a referral is immediately after a customer expresses satisfaction — exactly the same window as the review ask. In fact, you can ask for both at the same moment.

"I'm so glad you love it. This kind of feedback means the world to us. Two things I'd love — first, would you mind leaving us a quick Google review? And second, if you know anyone who might be thinking about a deck build or any home project, we'd love the introduction. We take really good care of people who come through our clients."

Simple. Direct. Human.

THE REFERRAL INCENTIVE

A small referral incentive — a gift card, a discount on future service, a donation to a charity in their name — increases referral volume meaningfully. It acknowledges the value of what they're doing for your business and gives them a small positive reward for thinking of you.

Automate this too: when a referral is marked as "referred by [client name]," trigger a message to the original client acknowledging the referral and delivering the incentive.

THE PARTNER NETWORK

Beyond your direct clients, build a network of professionals who serve the same homeowners you do. Real estate agents are among the most valuable referral partners for contractors — they regularly need contractors for pre-listing repairs, and new homebuyers often need immediate improvement work.

Interior designers, landscape architects, kitchen and bath showrooms — anyone who serves homeowners on home projects is a potential referral partner. Build genuine relationships with these professionals, refer business to them when it makes sense, and make it easy for them to refer business to you.

WORK ON YOUR BUSINESS, NOT JUST IN IT

There it was... the firehose. If you've read this far, you have more marketing knowledge than the majority of contractors working in your market right now.

That knowledge only becomes valuable when you act on it.

The contractors I've seen transform their businesses (going from word-of-mouth dependence to booked-out schedules with consistent, predictable revenue) didn't do everything at once. They picked one system, implemented it correctly, and let it run while they moved to the next.

Start with your Google Business Profile. Claim it, complete it, optimize it, and commit to weekly posts and consistent photos. That one action will move the needle faster than almost anything else.

Then build your website the right way — with dedicated service pages, location pages, a mobile-first design, and proper on-page SEO.

Then build your citation network for NAP consistency and local trust.

Then implement the automations — the missed-call text-back, the review generation sequence, the lead nurturing stack.

Each layer builds on the one before. Each system compounds the value of the others. After six to twelve months of consistent implementation, the contractor who started where you are today looks unrecognizable — not because of luck, but because they built a machine.

Build the machine.

— Elijah Kyner
NextBuild Marketing
nextbuildmarketing.com

ABOUT NEXTBUILD MARKETING

NextBuild Marketing was founded with one mission: give home service contractors the digital marketing infrastructure that companies ten times their size take for granted.

We build conversion-optimized websites, manage Google Business Profiles, implement local SEO campaigns, and set up the automation systems that keep leads flowing and customers engaged — without requiring contractors to become marketers.

Our clients focus on their craft. We handle the digital engine.

Real Results: A custom carpentry client of ours generated a 400% revenue increase in one year. Over \$300,000 in a single job closed from organic search. Eighty percent of total revenue now is attributed to SEO. Two to five qualified jobs per month from organic search alone.

"I didn't have any online presence before, and now I'm consistently getting calls through the site every month. I'm ranking on the first page of Google in my area." — Josh Schoon, Schoon Custom Carpentry

Interested in having NextBuild build your marketing system?

Visit nextbuildmarketing.com or email elijah@nextbuildmarketing.com to book a discovery call.

We build the system. You build the projects.

THE SYSTEM THAT BUILDS YOUR BUSINESS WHILE YOU STAY ON THE JOB SITE.

Most contractors are great at what they do—but marketing? That's a different story. **The Lead Blueprint** shows you how to stop relying on luck, referrals, and word of mouth—and start building a predictable system that brings in high-quality leads on autopilot.

Whether you're just getting started or ready to scale, this step-by-step blueprint will help you attract more leads, win more jobs, and build a business that runs without your constant attention.

Inside, you'll discover how to:

- ✓ Generate consistent, high-quality leads without relying on referrals or word of mouth.
- ✓ Build a powerful online presence that positions you as the go-to expert in your area.
- ✓ Automate your marketing so you can fill your schedule without working more hours.
- ✓ Convert more leads into paying customers with proven messaging and follow-up strategies.
- ✓ Eliminate slow seasons and create predictable, year-round growth.

The Lead Blueprint gives you the exact roadmap to market your business with confidence, close more jobs, and create a company that works for you—not the other way around.



ELIJAH KYNER

Elijah Kyner is the founder of NextBuild Marketing, a digital marketing agency that helps contractors, carpenters, and home service businesses get more leads, win more jobs, and scale with confidence. With years of experience in lead generation, automation, and online growth strategies, Elijah has helped countless businesses transform their marketing and achieve predictable, measurable results.

His mission is simple: Help blue-collar businesses build systems that bring in more leads, close more jobs, and create a business that works for them—not the other way around.

