



7 TESTED & PROVEN STEPS GUARANTEED TO TRIPLE MECHANIC LEADS & SALES

Rev Up Your Business: A Practical Guide to Getting More Customers Into Your Auto-Repair Workshop

Seven steps, in the order that matters, for workshop owners who want the bays full. Every number in here has a source at the bottom of the page, and every step ends with one thing you can do this week that costs nothing but time.

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YOU PROBABLY DO NOT HAVE A LEAD PROBLEM

Most marketing guides for workshops open by telling you that you need more leads. This one does not, because there is a reasonable chance you do not.

Marchex analysed call handling across large multi-location automotive service groups. They found that appointment-set rates ranged from single digits to over sixty per cent **within the same network**. Same brand. Same training. Same advertising. Same phone system. One location was booking six times the rate of another.

They also found that up to twenty-one per cent of automotive service calls go unanswered, dropped or mishandled, and that even the best-performing locations still miss around ten per cent.

Read those two findings together and you get the uncomfortable version of the truth. For a lot of workshops the phone is already ringing enough. The work is already walking in. It is leaking out somewhere between the first ring and the booked job, and no amount of advertising fixes a leak. It just pushes more water through the same hole.

So this is not a list of fourteen things to try. It is seven steps in a deliberate order, and the order matters. You find the leak first. You fix what you already have before you pay for more. Then, and only then, you turn the tap up.

If you work through it and conclude that your problem was never lead volume, we will have done our job. That is a strange thing for a marketing agency to write in its own guide. We would rather tell you the truth and have you trust the rest of it.

Marchex, automotive service call analytics, 2025.

How to use this. Each step ends with one thing to do this week that costs nothing but time. Do them in order. The order is the method.

SIX NUMBERS, BEFORE YOU READ ANOTHER PAGE

You cannot fix what you have not measured, and most owners have never worked these out. None of them take longer than ten minutes. Write them in the margin.

YOUR WORKSHOP, LAST MONTH

Write the number beside each line.

Car count. Vehicles through the workshop.	
Bays, and working days you were open.	
Cars per bay per day. Divide one by the other.	US avg 2.2
Average repair order. Sales divided by jobs.	500–749 USD
Missed calls, as a percentage of calls in.	under 10%
Reviews received in the last ninety days.	

Keep these somewhere. Step 7 comes back to them with the benchmarks beside them, and by then you will know which one is your constraint.



A free way to check three of them

Tekmetric publishes a free tool called the Shop Index, built on aggregated data from around fifteen thousand workshops. Type your numbers in and it shows you where you sit. You do not need to be a customer.

PartsTech, State of General Auto Repair Shops in the U.S., 2025, survey of 752 workshops. Tekmetric Shop Index, 2025.



STEP

01

**KNOW EXACTLY
WHICH CARS YOU
WANT IN YOUR BAYS**

Most workshops take whatever comes through the door, then wonder why the average ticket will not move.

Step 1

KNOW EXACTLY WHICH CARS YOU WANT IN YOUR BAYS



Your ideal customer is a job, not a demographic

Every marketing guide tells you to define your ideal customer by age, gender, income and location. For a workshop that is close to useless. Nobody has ever chosen a mechanic because the mechanic was targeting thirty-five to fifty-four year olds.

Define it the way your workshop actually runs. Your ideal customer is **a job type at a ticket size that fits a bay for the right length of time.**

- **Which jobs did you want more of?** Not the ones you enjoyed. The ones that billed well and went out on time.
- **What did they bill, and how long did they hold a bay?** A four hundred dollar job that takes an hour is worth more than a nine hundred dollar job that ties up a hoist for a day and a half waiting on parts.
- **Who brought them in?** A fleet manager, a repeat customer, a Google search, a referral. Most owners cannot answer this, and it is the one that tells you where to spend.

Do that for fifty jobs and your ideal customer stops being a guess. It becomes a list.



The work you say no to

There is a particular kind of workshop that is always busy and never profitable. It happens when the workshop has never decided what it is. Every job is a one-off, every quote starts from nothing, nobody in the bay has done this exact thing enough times to be fast at it, and the effective labour rate quietly falls because half the work is being learned rather than performed.



Specialising is a pricing decision

Workshops that specialise in European, hybrid or EV work command labour rates twenty to thirty per cent above the regional benchmark. Not because they are better negotiators. Because the work is narrower, the technicians are faster at it, and the customer has fewer places to take it.

There is a second effect that almost nobody connects to the first. Google's local ranking is driven more by your primary business category than by anything else. A narrower category ranks better for the narrower search, and the narrower search is almost always the higher-value job. Somebody typing *transmission specialist near me* is worth considerably more than somebody typing *mechanic*.

So specialising does two things at once. It lifts what you can charge, and it lifts where you appear. One decision, two returns.



Fleet work, and what your workshop sells for

Fleet and business accounts usually make up ten to twenty per cent of an independent workshop's revenue. The work is routine, it schedules well, and it does not disappear in a quiet January.

Here is the part nobody mentions. Workshops with more than twenty-five per cent of revenue from fleet contracts sell for a higher multiple than pure retail workshops. But push a single account past about forty per cent of your revenue and the multiple starts falling again, because a buyer sees one phone call away from disaster.

WickedFile labour rate analysis, 2025–26. Whitespark Local Search Ranking Factors, November 2025. Fleet valuation figures are industry advisory data, not independent research.



FIELD NOTE

A transmission workshop came to us doing good work with no control over what came through the door. We rebuilt the targeting around the jobs they actually wanted rather than everything with an engine. Within a month the lead sheet had gone from 29 leads to 162.

ACTION 01 / DO THIS WEEK

LIST YOUR LAST FIFTY JOBS. CIRCLE THE TEN YOU WANT MORE OF.

- 01** Pull the last fifty job cards. Write down the ticket value and the hours billed on each.
- 02** Circle the ten with the best value per hour of bay time. Not the biggest tickets. The best value per hour.
- 03** Look at what they have in common: make of car, type of work, where the customer came from. That is your target.

TIME REQUIRED 45 MIN . TOOLS JOB CARDS, PEN . DIFFICULTY LOW

WHO OWNS THIS _____



STEP

02

OWN THE GOOGLE SEARCH THAT HAPPENS BEFORE THEY CALL

Half of everything Google uses to rank you is free, and sitting in an account you already own.

Step 2

OWN THE GOOGLE SEARCH THAT HAPPENS BEFORE THEY CALL



Where local ranking actually comes from

Whitespark surveys the people who do local search for a living and publishes the weightings. The November 2025 edition put it like this.

SIGNAL	WEIGHT	VS 2023
Google Business Profile	32%	+15
Reviews	20%	+4
Website on-page	15–19%	flat
Links	15%	–
Behaviour	8%	+
Citations and directories	7%	–8

The first two lines add up to just over half of everything Google weighs, and both are free and entirely within your control. Not your website. Not your ad budget. A profile you already own and reviews you already have customers for.

Then look at what happened to citations. Fifteen per cent in 2023, seven per cent now, the fastest-declining factor measured. If somebody is selling you a package built on submitting your workshop to two hundred directories, they are selling you the losing side of that trade.



The single most important setting

Your primary category is the number one local ranking factor overall. Whitespark is blunt about it. If your primary category is wrong, nothing else compensates. Not reviews, not photos, not posting, not paying somebody.

Most workshops are set to Auto repair shop, and for a general workshop that is correct. But if the money is in something narrower, the narrower category almost always wins.

Whitespark Local Search Ranking Factors, 6 November 2025, survey of 47 local search specialists.

EXHIBIT 2

 Half of what you are sold for your profile does nothing

Whitespark’s specialists ranked every Google Business Profile feature by its effect on ranking. Worth knowing before you pay anybody for any of it.

EFFECT ON RANKING	
Three of these are still actively sold to workshops as a service.	
Primary category, review generation, photos	Strongest
Additional categories, address, website link	High
Services with descriptions, opening hours	Moderate
Google Posts, booking links, social links	Barely
Geotagged images	None
Keywords in review responses	None

Whitespark Google Business Profile tier list, 18 August 2025.



Ranking and converting are different jobs

Google Posts barely move your ranking. That is not a reason to stop posting. It is a reason to post for the right purpose. Someone has already found you and is deciding whether to call, and a profile full of recent work is what closes that.

Same with the questions and answers section. It will not rank you, but it is the right place to answer the thing you get asked on the phone forty times a week. Whether a logbook service with you affects a new car warranty. Whether you have a courtesy car.

Post for the human who is already looking at you. Do not post because you were told it ranks you.



And one warning

The most common reason workshops lose their profile is making too many edits to important fields in a short window, which trips Google's protection against listing hijacking. Fix things one at a time, with a fortnight between changes.

Opening hours rank fifth in the local pack factors. Wrong or missing hours is a ranking problem, not just an inconvenience.

The bar moved under you

BrightLocal surveys a thousand consumers a year about how they choose local businesses. Comparing 2026 to 2025 tells a story that has nothing to do with you getting worse.

EXHIBIT 3 / BRIGHTLOCAL, N = 1,002

The four-star floor moved thirteen points in a single year.

Will only use a business rated 4 stars or above	55% → 68%
Will only use 4.5 or above	17% → 31%
Only consider reviews from the last three months	74%
Will not use a business with fewer than 20 reviews	47%
Expect a reply the same day	6% → 19%
Use ChatGPT to check a business	6% → 45%

A workshop sitting on 3.9 stars did not slip. It stood still while the floor came up underneath it.



Recency beats total, and it is not close

Two hundred reviews from 2019 are worth less to a customer standing in the car park with a phone than fifteen from this quarter. Reviews are not a trophy cabinet. They are a pulse, and yours needs to be beating this month.



Answer all of them, not just the bad ones

Eighty per cent of consumers say they would use a business that responds to all of its reviews. Respond only to the negative ones and that drops to forty-seven. Only to the positive ones, forty-five. Both are barely better than the forty-two per cent who say they are unlikely to choose a business that never replies at all.

BrightLocal Local Consumer Review Survey 2026, 1,002 respondents.



Never pay for a review, and the reason is not the one you think

You will have been told, possibly by somebody you paid, to offer a discount or a free service in exchange for a Google review. It is common advice. It is also the fastest way to lose the reviews you already have.

Google's policy prohibits it outright. The wording covers offering payment, discounts, free goods or services in exchange for posting *any* review. Note the word *any*. It is not limited to positive ones. "Leave us an honest review and get ten per cent off" is still a breach. What Google explicitly does allow is asking.

In the United States the Federal Trade Commission's rule on consumer reviews took effect in October 2024. It bans fake reviews, bought reviews, undisclosed insider reviews, and suppressing genuine negative ones. Penalties run to 51,744 USD per violation.

In Australia the law is actually more permissive, which surprises people. The ACCC's position is that incentives are acceptable if they apply regardless of whether the review is positive or negative, and if they are clearly disclosed. What the ACCC does prohibit is removing genuine negative reviews without an adequate basis. HealthEngine paid a 2.9 million dollar penalty in the Federal Court, in part for exactly that.

The law is the floor. The platform's rules are the ceiling, and the ceiling is lower.

So never incentivise a review, in either country. Not because Australian law forbids it, because it does not. Because Google forbids it regardless of where you are, and Google is the one who deletes your reviews and suspends your listing.



What works instead

Seventy-eight per cent of consumers say they have been asked to leave a review. Of those who get asked, between sixty-five and eighty-three per cent do it. Asking is the entire tactic, and most workshops do not ask.

Ask every customer, the same way, every time, at the moment the keys go back across the counter and the job came in at or under what you quoted. Make it one tap. Do not gate it by sending happy customers to Google and unhappy ones to a private form. That is prohibited, and in the United States illegal.

Google contribution policy. FTC Rule on the Use of Consumer Reviews and Testimonials, 16 CFR Part 465, effective 21 October 2024. ACCC guidance on online reviews.



FIELD NOTE

A workshop we work with was sitting on a 3.8 rating and no reviews newer than a year. We changed nothing about the marketing. We changed when and how they asked. The rating and the call volume both moved inside a quarter.

SELF CHECK

SCORE YOUR GOOGLE PROFILE

Tick honestly. Nobody scores well the first time.

- 01 My primary category is the one my best work sits in, not just “Auto repair shop” by default
- 02 I have filled all nine additional category slots
- 03 My opening hours are correct today, including public holidays
- 04 I have more than twenty Google reviews
- 05 I have received at least one review in the last thirty days
- 06 I have replied to every review, positive and negative
- 07 My most recent reply was written within a day of the review
- 08 I have added photos of actual work in the last ninety days
- 09 My services are listed individually with descriptions written out
- 10 Nobody has ever offered a customer anything in exchange for a review
- 11 My business name on Google matches the name on my signage exactly
- 12 I know what my star rating is without looking it up

10-12

Your profile is doing its job.
Go to Step 3.

6-9

You are losing searches to
workshops doing less good
work than you.

5 or fewer

This is the cheapest
problem in this report to fix.

Scored under six? That is the same checklist we work through on a workshop audit. The questions are at newlimits.com.au/questionnaire

ACTION 02 / DO THIS WEEK

FIX YOUR PRIMARY CATEGORY. THEN LEAVE THE PROFILE ALONE.

- 01** Open your Google Business Profile and check the primary category against the work that actually pays you.
- 02** Change it if it is wrong, then fill the additional category slots.
- 03** Stop there for a fortnight. Too many edits in a short window is the most common cause of suspension.

TIME REQUIRED 20 MIN . TOOLS YOUR GOOGLE PROFILE . DIFFICULTY LOW

WHO OWNS THIS _____



STEP

03

TURN THE PEOPLE WHO FIND YOU INTO BOOKED JOBS

More advertising will not fix a leak. It just pushes more water through the same hole.

Step 3

TURN THE PEOPLE WHO FIND YOU INTO BOOKED JOBS

EXHIBIT 4



Two workshops, identical marketing, six times the bookings

This is the most important number in this report.

Marchex analysed call handling across large multi-location automotive service groups, where every location runs the same brand, the same training, the same advertising and the same phone system.

EXHIBIT 4 / MARCHEX, AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE CALL ANALYTICS, 2025

Appointment-set rates ranged from single digits to over sixty per cent within one network.

Automotive service calls unanswered, dropped or mishandled	up to 21%
Still missed by the best-performing locations	around 10%
Owners reporting customers delaying or declining work	50%

Marchex sells call analytics software. The variance figure is a measurement of their customers' own networks.

Nothing about the marketing explains that. The leads arrived. Somebody at one location turned six times as many of them into booked work as somebody at another.

So before you spend another dollar on advertising, find out what percentage of your calls you do not answer. Your phone system will tell you and it takes ten minutes. If the number is over ten per cent, you do not have a lead problem. You have a leak, and every extra dollar you spend goes through it at the same rate.



The phone is still the front door

Every workshop has an unanswered-call number and almost no owner knows theirs. It is not a staffing failure. It is a measurement failure. Nobody is looking, so nobody fixes it.

- **Count it.** Most phone systems report unanswered calls. Pull last week's. That number is your ceiling.
- **Text back automatically.** If nobody picks up, a text should go out within seconds. A missed call at a workshop is usually a lost one, because the next workshop on the map answers.
- **Make it everybody's job.** If bookings can only be taken by one person and that person is under a car, you have designed the leak in.



How fast you respond matters more than what you say

The famous number here is that responding within five minutes makes you twenty-one times more likely to qualify a lead than responding within thirty.

We should be honest about that statistic. It comes from a single study run by Dr James Oldroyd with InsideSales, tracking fifteen thousand leads across a hundred companies. It was conducted around 2007, and InsideSales sold response-time software. It is old data from people with an interest in the answer.

It has also been directionally reproduced by nearly everyone who has tested it since, and the logic is not exotic. A person with a broken car is contacting several workshops. The first to respond is talking to someone with a problem. The fourth is talking to someone who has already booked.

Set the standard at five minutes during opening hours. Outside them, an automatic acknowledgement and a callback first thing. Around forty per cent of service appointments are booked outside business hours.

Oldroyd / InsideSales Lead Response Management study, circa 2007. Scheduling industry data, 2026, cross-industry rather than automotive-specific.



Book the slot, not the price

Every guide tells workshops to put online booking on their website, and most skip the obvious objection. You cannot quote a diagnostic job from a form. You do not know what is wrong with the car yet.

That is not a reason to skip online booking. It is a reason to book the right thing. The customer books a **time**, not a price. Book your diagnostic time, we will call you with the quote before we touch anything. That sentence removes the fear that stops people booking online with a workshop, which is not the cost of the diagnosis. It is being committed to an unknown bill.



Nobody chose a workshop because of the website

They choose because they got a straight answer quickly from someone who sounded like they knew what they were doing. The website's only job is to make that conversation easy to start. What you do, where you are, when you are open, what other people say about you, and an obvious way to make contact that works with one thumb. Everything else is decoration.



The most valuable person in your workshop is at the counter

This is an odd thing for a marketing agency to write, so here it is plainly. If your appointment-set rate is at the bottom of that range, the highest-leverage investment available to you is not a better advertisement. It is a better service advisor, or better training for the one you have.

Industry benchmarks put a service advisor's closing ratio at thirty to fifty per cent, with sixty-five as the target for a good one. The gap between a thirty per cent advisor and a sixty-five per cent advisor, on the same leads, is more revenue than most workshops' entire advertising budget produces.

Service advisor closing ratio benchmarks, Chris Collins Inc, 2025. Industry coaching data rather than independent research.



FIELD NOTE

ONB Automotive Repair were running at twenty-two cars a week. The constraint was never awareness. Once the enquiries were being captured and converted properly, the workshop moved to full capacity.

ACTION 03 / DO THIS WEEK

COUNT THE CALLS YOU DID NOT ANSWER. THAT IS IT.

- 01** Log into your phone system and pull last week's unanswered call count.
- 02** Divide it by total incoming calls. Write the percentage on this page.
- 03** If it is above ten per cent, fix that before you do anything in Step 4.

TIME REQUIRED 10 MIN . TOOLS PHONE SYSTEM . DIFFICULTY LOW

MY MISSED CALL RATE



STEP

04

BUY ATTENTION WITHOUT SETTING MONEY ON FIRE

Your trade is the cheapest lead on Google and one of the worst performers on Meta. Most workshops have it backwards.

Step 4

BUY ATTENTION WITHOUT SETTING MONEY ON FIRE

EXHIBIT 5

Search and social are not comparable channels

WordStream and LocaliQ publish annual advertising benchmarks by industry, drawn from tens of thousands of campaigns. Here is the automotive repair category against the average of every industry they track.

EXHIBIT 5 / US CAMPAIGN DATA, 2025-26

On Google, auto repair is the cheapest lead of any industry measured. On Meta it converts worse than any industry measured.

Google search, cost per lead	28.50–29.96 USD
All-industry average cost per lead	66.69 USD
Google search, conversion rate	14.67%
All-industry average conversion rate	8.18%
Meta, cost per lead	81.45 USD
Meta, conversion rate	4.86%

WordStream 2025 Google Ads benchmarks, 16,446 US campaigns. LocaliQ 2026. WordStream 2025 Facebook Ads benchmarks. All figures US.



Nearly one click in seven becomes an enquiry on search. That is not a marketing achievement, it is the nature of the trade. Nobody idly browses for a mechanic. They search when something is wrong.

So if somebody is selling you a Facebook lead generation package as your main source of new customers, understand what is being sold. The worst-performing platform for your trade, at roughly triple the cost of the best one.

That does not make Meta useless. It makes it the wrong tool for cold acquisition. Its job for a workshop is staying visible to people who already know you, which is Step 6.



STEP 04 BUY ATTENTION WITHOUT SETTING MONEY ON FIRE

NEW LIMITS



What you should actually be spending

Across analyses of mid-size independent workshops, marketing lands at **one to five per cent of revenue**. Parts and materials take thirty to forty, technician wages twenty to twenty-seven, rent five to ten, shop supplies five to seven, and what is left is yours.

That one to five per cent is more useful than it looks, because it turns an argument you have been having with yourself into arithmetic.

A workshop turning over 1.2 million a year, spending at the top of the band, has about 5,000 a month to work with.

Put that next to the numbers on the previous page. At roughly 30 USD a lead on search, five thousand dollars is in the region of 160 leads a month. If your counter converts at fifty per cent, that is eighty booked jobs. At an average repair order of 550, that is around 44,000 dollars of work.

Those are illustrative figures using US benchmarks and your real numbers will differ. The shape of the calculation is the point. Once you know your cost per lead, your conversion rate and your average repair order, how much should I spend on marketing stops being a feeling and becomes a sum you can do on the back of a job card.

Notice which of those three levers is cheapest to move. It is not the cost per lead. You do not control Google's auction. You control what happens when the phone rings, and you control your average repair order. That is why the counter comes before the advertising in this report.

Cost structure composite from SharpSheets, BusinessDojo and ProjectionHub via WickedFile, March 2026. Industry analysis rather than primary survey data.



Five things you will be sold that do not work

We sell marketing services. Take this list in that spirit, and check every claim in it yourself.

- **Directory submission packages.** Citations fell from fifteen per cent of Google's ranking weight to seven between the 2023 and 2026 surveys, the fastest decline of any factor measured.
- **Geotagging your photos.** Whitespark's specialists rate it as having no measurable ranking effect at all. It is still sold as a service.
- **Keywords in your review responses.** Also no measurable effect. Also still taught.
- **Your suburb and services in your Google business name.** This one is different, because it does work. It is also against Google's guidelines and a documented cause of suspension. If somebody offers to do it, understand the deal. You are renting rankings and your listing is the collateral.
- **Bought leads from a lead platform.** The same enquiry is typically sold to three or four workshops at once, so you are entering a race you have to win on speed and price, against competitors who got the identical text message.



And one to change rather than drop

Discount vouchers off a repair select for the customer who leaves the moment somebody is five dollars cheaper. If you want to run an offer, discount the **inspection**, not the repair. It gets the car on the hoist, which is where the real conversation happens, and it does not train your customers to expect money off your highest-margin work.

ACTION 04 / DO THIS WEEK

WORK OUT WHAT ONE BOOKED JOB ACTUALLY COSTS YOU.

- 01** Take last month's total marketing spend. Everything, including anything on retainer.
- 02** Divide it by the number of jobs you can trace back to it. Not leads. Booked jobs.
- 03** Compare that to your average repair order. If it is more than a fifth of it, something in Steps 2 and 3 is leaking.

TIME REQUIRED 30 MIN . TOOLS INVOICES, JOB CARDS . DIFFICULTY MEDIUM

MY COST PER BOOKED JOB _____



STEP

05

**MAKE EVERY
JOB PRODUCE
THE NEXT TWO**

The cheapest work you will ever win is
work you have already quoted.

Step 5

MAKE EVERY JOB PRODUCE THE NEXT TWO



There is a five-figure job list in your system right now

Every workshop has it. Nobody works it.

When a technician inspects a car and finds five things, the customer typically approves some and defers the rest. Industry models put the unapproved share at around forty-five per cent of recommended work.

Think about what that deferred work already has attached to it. It is diagnosed. The parts are priced. The labour is estimated. The customer already knows about it and has already been in your workshop. **Its acquisition cost is zero.** There is no other source of revenue in your business that can say that.

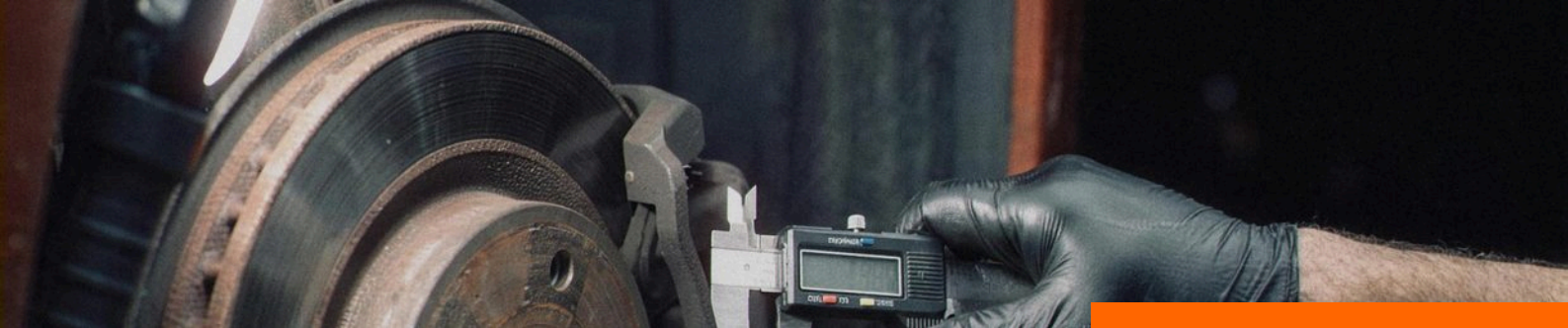
Follow-up data from the dealer side suggests roughly twenty per cent of customers with declined work will convert on a timely, personal, specific follow-up, where timely means within about a fortnight. Two hundred deferred items a month, a twenty per cent recapture, an average of 450 dollars, is eighteen thousand dollars a month from work you have already done the hard part of.



How to actually work the list

- **Be specific.** Not “you have work outstanding”. Say “the rear pads we measured at three millimetres when you were in during April”.
- **Call, do not text.** A text is easy to ignore. This is a five-figure list and it deserves a phone call.
- **Sort by value first.** You will not get through all of them. Start at the top.
- **Give it to one person, once a week.** Half a day of a service advisor’s time against a five-figure opportunity is the best-paid half day in the workshop.

Declined-work recapture figures from Numa, 2026 and Affinitiv, 2025. Both vendor data.



Photograph everything, because photos sell work

AutoVitals, who make digital inspection software, publish something worth knowing even allowing for the fact that they are selling it. Across their customer data, the average repair order on an inspection with twenty or more photos runs about thirty per cent higher than on an inspection with five or fewer.

Photo count on the inspection is not a documentation habit. It is a pricing lever.

The reason is not complicated. A customer told their brake pads are worn is being asked to take your word for it. A customer sent a photograph of their own brake pads, on their own car, with an arrow pointing at the wear, is looking at evidence. One of those conversations ends in an approval more often than the other.



Ask for the referral at the only moment it works

The moment is when the customer is happiest, and it is not when you hand back the keys. It is when the job came in under what you quoted, or when you found the thing three other workshops missed, or when you got them back on the road a day early. Most workshops have a referral scheme nobody mentions. The scheme is not the problem.



The offline channels worth your Saturday

Car shows, chambers of commerce and community sponsorship show up in every marketing guide written for workshops. Honestly, most return very little for the time they take. The exception is worth the effort: relationships with businesses that touch the same cars you want. A tyre shop that does not do mechanical work. A panel beater. A used car yard that needs pre-sale inspections. One good relationship of that kind outperforms a year of breakfast meetings.

AutoVitals customer data, 2023–24. Vendor data, published by the company selling the software.



FIELD NOTE

One workshop we work with has now referred us more business than we have sent them invoices, and told us they had passed our name on around a hundred times. That did not come from a referral scheme. It came from the work landing.

SELF CHECK

SCORE YOUR FOLLOW-UP

The same rules. Tick what is true today, not what you intend.

- 01 I can pull a list of declined work from the last ninety days in under five minutes
- 02 Somebody calls that list every week
- 03 When we call, we name the specific item and when we measured it
- 04 Every vehicle gets a digital inspection with photographs
- 05 We send those photographs to the customer before asking for approval
- 06 We take more than twenty photographs on a typical inspection
- 07 Customers due for a service get contacted without anyone remembering to do it
- 08 I know what percentage of my customers came back within twelve months
- 09 We ask for referrals at the moment the customer is happiest
- 10 I have a working relationship with at least one business that sends me cars

8-10

Your existing customers are working for you.

4-7

There is money in your own system you are not collecting.

3 or fewer

Start here, before advertising. This is the cheapest revenue in the report.

Scored under four? This is the part of a workshop we look at first. The questions are at newlimits.com.au/questionnaire

ACTION 05 / DO THIS WEEK

PULL NINETY DAYS OF DECLINED WORK. CALL THE TOP THIRTY.

- 01** Filter the last ninety days of job cards for anything marked amber or red that was not sold.
- 02** Sort by value, highest first. Take the top thirty.
- 03** Call them. Name the specific item and the date you measured it. Do not text.

TIME REQUIRED HALF A DAY . TOOLS JOB CARDS, PHONE . DIFFICULTY LOW

WHO OWNS THIS _____



STEP

06

**STAY IN FRONT OF
THE CUSTOMERS
YOU ALREADY OWN**

You have already paid for these people
once.

Step 6

STAY IN FRONT OF THE CUSTOMERS YOU ALREADY OWN



Use their deadlines, not your calendar

Most reminder marketing fails because it is built around the sender. A newsletter goes out because it is the first of the month. Nobody was waiting for it.

Your workshop has something better, already sitting in your database. Your customers have **dates that are not optional**.

In New South Wales the pink slip or eSafety inspection is due annually for vehicles over five years old. In Victoria a roadworthy certificate is valid for thirty days and needed on sale. In Queensland, a safety certificate. Everywhere, rego renewal comes around whether anyone feels like it or not, and every logbook has a service interval printed in it with the customer's warranty attached.

A message that says your rego is due next month and your logbook service is due at the same time, we can do both in one visit, is not marketing. It is a useful reminder about a legal deadline, sent by the person who already knows the car. It gets opened, because ignoring it has consequences that have nothing to do with you.

Start with the three lists that already exist in your system. Rego due next month. Logbook service due by date or distance. Inspection expiring. That is a year of relevant contact without writing a single newsletter.



Segment by the car, not the customer

The most useful split in a workshop database is not age or suburb. It is what they drive and what it needs next. A fleet of vans and a fifteen-year-old European wagon need entirely different messages, and both need something specific rather than a monthly bulletin.



What is worth doing, and what is not

Marketing guides tell workshops to blog weekly, post daily, make videos and run webinars. Some of that is worth your time. Most is not, and the difference matters when you are already working six days.

- **Worth it: photographs of your actual work.** The car that came in on a truck and drove out. The part that failed in a way people do not expect. The only content a workshop produces that people genuinely stop for, and it takes ten seconds on a phone.
- **Worth it: answering the questions you get asked on the phone.** Does servicing here void my new car warranty. Do you have a courtesy car. Write those once, put them on your website and in your Google profile. They are the most-read words on any workshop website.
- **Not worth it: posting daily to reach nobody.** Organic reach on a Facebook page runs around two and a half per cent. On a page with a thousand followers that is roughly twenty-six people.
- **Not worth it for most workshops: blogging on a schedule, and webinars.** If you enjoy it, do it. If a guide told you to, that hour is worth more spent on the declined-work list in Step 5.



A note on email

It still outperforms social for a workshop, for the simple reason that a reminder lands in an inbox the customer checks rather than a feed an algorithm controls. Keep it short, keep it specific to their car, and measure whether people open it. If they do not, the problem is the subject line, not the channel.



Retention is a pricing lever too

Repeat customers spend more per visit than first-timers, on the order of fifteen to twenty per cent more, because the trust conversation has already happened. They are not deciding whether to believe you about the worn bushing. They already do. So a returning customer is worth more than a new one twice over. You did not pay to acquire them, and their ticket is bigger.

ACTION 06 / DO THIS WEEK

BUILD ONE LIST FROM YOUR OWN DATABASE. JUST ONE.

- 01** Pull every customer whose logbook service is due in the next sixty days.
- 02** Check which of them also have a rego or inspection date in the same window.
- 03** Contact that overlap first, offering to do both in one visit.

TIME REQUIRED 1 HOUR . TOOLS YOUR MANAGEMENT SYSTEM . DIFFICULTY LOW

WHO OWNS THIS _____



STEP

07

MEASURE THE ONE NUMBER THAT TELLS YOU WHAT TO FIX

Not leads. Not clicks. Booked jobs, and
what each one costs you.

Step 7

MEASURE THE ONE NUMBER THAT TELLS YOU WHAT TO FIX



Cost per booked job

Most workshops that track anything track leads, because that is what the person selling them advertising reports on. Leads are an input. They tell you the top of the funnel is working and nothing else.

Cost per booked job is the number that contains everything in this report. If your advertising is wrong, it goes up. If your phone is not answered, it goes up. If your service advisor is closing at thirty per cent instead of sixty-five, it goes up. One number, and when it moves you know something real changed.

Total marketing spend, divided by jobs you can trace to it. Monthly. That is the whole method.



Two words that are not interchangeable

You will hear productivity and efficiency used as if they mean the same thing. They do not, and the difference is where money hides.

- **Productivity** is hours worked divided by hours available. Is the technician at the bench.
- **Efficiency** is hours billed divided by hours worked. Did the job beat book time.

A technician can be busy all day and unprofitable, or fast and idle. Productivity is a scheduling problem. Efficiency is a skills and process problem. Solid workshops run around eighty per cent productivity and eighty to eighty-five per cent efficiency. The best go past ninety.



The gap between what you charge and what you get

Your posted labour rate is what is on the wall. Your **effective labour rate** is total labour sales divided by total hours billed, and it is always lower. If you charge 150 an hour and your effective rate is 115, you are giving away 35 dollars an hour. Not to one big discount. To goodwill on a comeback, to unbilled diagnostic time, to a complex job quoted like a simple one.

Across a year, on one technician, that gap is a car.

Efficiency and productivity benchmarks from auto shop coaching sources, 2025. Industry coaching data rather than independent survey.



EXHIBIT 6

 The six numbers, with the benchmarks beside them

Go back to page 4. Here is what you wrote down, and what good looks like.

EXHIBIT 6 / WHERE YOU SHOULD SIT

Whichever line is furthest from the benchmark is the step you go back to.

Cars per bay per day	US average 2.2
Average repair order	500–749 USD
Missed call rate	under 10%
Reviews in the last 90 days	at least a few
Effective rate against posted rate	the gap is the number
Cost per booked job	yours, trending down



One last honest thing

There is a version of this where more leads is the wrong answer for you.

Fifty-nine per cent of American workshop owners say the technician shortage significantly affects their operations. In Australia, Capricorn's annual survey found forty-eight per cent of workshops affected by skills shortages, with thirty-eight per cent of those actively struggling to find qualified people.

If you cannot staff the bays you have, more enquiries will not make you more money. They will make you a longer waiting list, a more stressed front counter, and eventually a worse reputation than the one you started with.

We would rather say that than sell you something that makes your week harder. If that is where you are, the steps that matter to you are 1, 5 and 7. Choose better work, get more out of the customers you have, and put your prices where they should be. The advertising can wait until the bays can take it.

PartsTech 2025. BrightLocal 2026. Marchex 2025. Capricorn State of the Nation 2025, Australia and New Zealand.

ACTION 07 / DO THIS WEEK

CALCULATE YOUR EFFECTIVE LABOUR RATE. COMPARE IT TO YOUR POSTED RATE.

- 01** Take last month's total labour sales. Not parts. Labour only.
- 02** Divide by total hours billed in the same month.
- 03** Put that number next to the rate on your wall. The difference, times your annual billed hours, is what it is costing you.

TIME REQUIRED 20 MIN . TOOLS LAST MONTH'S FIGURES . DIFFICULTY LOW

POSTED RATE / EFFECTIVE RATE _____

RECAP

THE SEVEN STEPS, IN THE ORDER THAT MATTERS

- **1. Know exactly which cars you want in your bays.** Your ideal customer is a job type at a ticket size, not a demographic. Specialising raises your labour rate and your Google ranking at the same time.
- **2. Own the Google search that happens before they call.** Your profile and your reviews are half of everything Google weighs, and both are free. Your primary category is the single most important setting. Never pay for a review.
- **3. Turn the people who find you into booked jobs.** Locations with identical marketing convert at wildly different rates. Count your missed calls before you spend another dollar advertising.
- **4. Buy attention without setting money on fire.** Your trade is the cheapest lead on Google search and one of the worst performers on Meta. Budget from your revenue, not from your gut.
- **5. Make every job produce the next two.** The declined work in your system is already diagnosed, already quoted, and costs nothing to win. Photograph everything.
- **6. Stay in front of the customers you already own.** Use their deadlines, not your calendar. Rego, roadworthy and logbook dates are already in your database.
- **7. Measure the one number that tells you what to fix.** Cost per booked job. When it moves, something real changed.

If you only do one thing from this report, count the calls you are not answering.

It takes ten minutes and it tells you whether anything else here is your actual problem.

WE ONLY WORK WITH WORKSHOPS

New Limits is a performance marketing agency that works with auto repair workshops. Only auto repair workshops. We do not take on restaurants, dentists or gyms, which means everything in this report came from workshops rather than from a general marketing playbook with the word mechanic pasted over the top.

We are not neutral about any of this. We sell marketing services and you should read the report knowing that. It is also why we have put the sources at the bottom of every section, including the ones that come from companies selling the thing they measured. Check them.



What we actually do

We rebuild the Google profile, we run the advertising, and we work on what happens between the enquiry arriving and the job being booked. That third part is the one most agencies leave alone, and it is usually where the money is.

Waheed founded New Limits and still takes the strategy calls.

SELECTED RESULTS

NUMBERS FROM WORKSHOPS WE WORK WITH

NEW LIMITS CLIENT DATA

Every figure below is from a live account, not a projection.

Cost per lead, before and after rebuilding targeting	\$46 → \$20.87
Leads in the same thirty-day window, same budget	29 → 162
Cash collected against ad spend, five months	8.25×
Monthly revenue, quarter on quarter	\$43k → \$76k
Leads in fourteen days, one workshop	126 at \$14.52
Average ticket per converted lead	\$3,600

Figures drawn from the New Limits client win archive. Individual results vary by market, budget and how quickly the workshop answers the phone.

If you want the long version of any of these, the case studies are on our website with the client talking rather than us.

THE SEVEN STEPS, DONE FOR YOU

Everything in this report is yours to use. Most of it costs nothing but time, and if you work through the seven steps in order you will find your own constraint without us.

Some owners would rather have someone else do the finding.

If that is you, we will go through your workshop the same way this report does. Your profile, your reviews, where your enquiries come from, what happens to them when they arrive, and what a booked job is actually costing you. You get the findings whether or not you ever work with us.



Who this is for

Workshops already turning over enough to grow, who want to grow, and who can staff the work if it arrives.



Who it is not for

Anyone looking for the cheapest option. We are not it, and we would rather say so now than on a call.

| [*newlimits.com.au/questionnaire*](https://newlimits.com.au/questionnaire)

It is a short set of questions about your workshop. No calendar, no sales call until you want one.

THE FINE PRINT THAT PROTECTS YOU

None of this wins you a customer. All of it can cost you one.



Your obligations

Licensing, environmental handling and workplace safety requirements vary by state in both Australia and the United States. If you have not reviewed yours since you opened, review them.



Customer data

You hold names, addresses, phone numbers, vehicle identification and payment details. If your management system is cloud-based, your provider carries some of that responsibility, but not all of it. Know which part is yours.



Reviews, again

Covered properly in Step 2, and it belongs here too because it is the compliance issue most likely to actually bite a workshop. Never incentivise. Never gate. Never delete a genuine negative.



Hiring and training

The technician shortage is the constraint on most workshops' growth, and it is the one marketing cannot solve. Whatever you spend on finding and keeping good technicians is competing directly with your marketing budget for the same outcome, which is more completed work. Sometimes it wins.



Your money

Review your financials monthly rather than annually. Every number in Step 7 depends on you knowing what came in and what went out, and a workshop that only looks at this at tax time is deciding with year-old information.

