Grow That Local

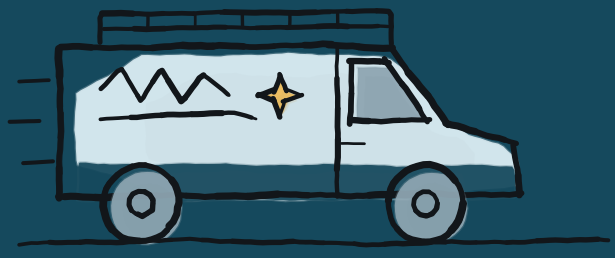
a free guide

The marketing mistakes plumbers make

The ten that cost plumbers the most, what each one costs you, and the fix for each.

Check these before the next dollar goes out the door.

- 10 short sections in 4 parts
- 41 things you can do in the next 24 hours
- An example in every section
- Sources for every figure



growthatlocal.com · Text us at (423) 924-2014

Contents

Before you start: how this guide works 3

Part 1 **Mistakes that lose the emergency call** 3

1 A voicemail box at 2 a.m., and a missed-call text that doesn't help 3
2 Quoting the sewer line or repipe and never following up 4
3 Buying shared leads and never counting which ones booked 4

Part 2 **Mistakes on your website and Google profile** 6

4 A website that hides the trip charge, the after-hours rate and your towns 6
5 A Google profile stuffed with keywords and set to "open 24 hours" 7
6 Sending a stranger: no name, no photo, no "on the way" text 7

Part 3 **Mistakes with reviews and past customers** 9

7 Never asking for reviews, or offering a discount for them 9
8 Waiting for the freeze and the holidays to hit 9
9 Forgetting every water heater you've ever installed 10

Part 4 **Mistakes that waste money on mail** 11

10 One postcard blast to the whole town 11

Your first 24 hours, in one list 12

Where to go next 13

If you'd rather hand it off 14

Sources 15

GTL estimates 15

Before you start

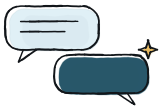
These are the ten marketing mistakes we see cost plumbers the most money. Most of them lose emergency calls you already earned. A few put your Google profile or your reviews at risk.

Each one has four parts: what the mistake looks like, what it costs, the fix, and a short checklist you can finish in 24 hours. Read the list, find the two or three you're making, and fix those first.

Two rules we kept while writing it:

- Every number has a public source you can check, listed at the end. When we didn't have one, we say "GTL estimate" and tell you why we think it.
- Every example is made up to show the idea. None of them are real customers, plumbers or results.

One note on texting. Several fixes below use texts to customers. A marketing text needs the customer's OK first, should say who it's from, and must stop when they reply STOP. Section 9 has the details.



Part 1

Mistakes that lose the emergency call

1 A voicemail box at 2 a.m., and a missed-call text that doesn't help

What it looks like. A pipe lets go at night. The homeowner, standing in wet socks, calls you and gets a full voicemail box, or a greeting that says "leave a message." They hang up and call the next plumber on the map. In the day it's the same story: you're under a sink, the phone rings out, and the caller moves on.

What it costs. Speed decides who gets the job. In a well-known Harvard Business Review study, companies that contacted a lead within an hour were nearly seven times more likely to qualify it than companies that waited longer, and 23% never responded at all (HBR, "The Short Life of Online Sales Leads," 2011, hbr.org). The study is older and wasn't about plumbers, but the lesson fits. GTL estimate: for emergency calls, the first plumber who answers or texts back gets the job most of the time, because a caller with water on the floor stops calling around once someone is on the way.

> **Example (sample numbers).** A made-up plumber misses eight calls a week. If two are real emergencies and they lose both, that's about eight emergency jobs a month. At $450 a job and 45% margin, that's around $1,600 of gross profit a month, before counting the water heaters those households would have bought later.

The fix. Turn on missed-call text-back, and make the text useful: tell them how to stop the water while they wait. Then decide in daylight what happens after hours: who's on call, what it costs, and what the greeting says.

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] Call your own line tonight at 11 p.m. Is the voicemail box full? What does the greeting say?
- [ ] Turn on missed-call text-back with: "Sorry we missed you. If water is leaking, turn off the main valve, usually where the water line enters the house. Reply with what's happening and we'll get right back to you."
- [ ] Record an after-hours greeting that says the same thing and tells callers when they'll hear back.
- [ ] Call back every missed call from last week today.

2 Quoting the sewer line or repipe and never following up

What it looks like. Small jobs get fixed on the spot. The big ones don't. You scope a sewer line, quote a repipe or a tankless upgrade, and hear nothing. You assume they went cheaper. Often they're getting a second opinion, checking with insurance or saving up.

What it costs. These are your biggest tickets, and each quiet quote already cost you a camera run, a trip and an hour of your time.

Example (sample numbers). A made-up plumber quotes ten big jobs a month and wins four. Six go quiet. If three friendly texts win back one $8,000 sewer replacement a month, that's about $3,600 of gross profit at 45%.

The fix. Follow up three times over a month. GTL estimate: one message is easy to miss, and more than three starts to feel pushy. Make each text useful: resend the camera clip, answer the question they didn't ask, or offer to talk to a second plumber they've called.

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] Pull every big-job quote from the last 90 days that didn't book.
- [ ] Text each one today, if they've agreed to texts: "Just checking you got the quote and the camera video. Any questions I can answer?"
- [ ] Set reminders for day 2, day 7 and day 30 on every new big quote.
- [ ] Write down the reason each one gives for waiting.

3 Buying shared leads and never counting which ones booked

What it looks like. You pay a lead site for drain and water heater leads. They arrive by text while you're on a job, and by the time you call, two other plumbers already have. At month's end you know what you spent, but not what it bought.

What it costs. On Angi, for example, "each time a homeowner submits a project request, we will match them with no more than five pros" (Angi pro help, intercom.help). You can be one of five plumbers racing for the same clogged drain, and you pay for the lead either way.

Example (sample numbers). A made-up plumber buys 50 leads a month at $45 each, which is $2,250. Nine become jobs at an average of $350. That's $250 in lead cost per $350 job, before gas and time. They only saw it once they wrote it down.

The fix. Shared leads can pay, but only if you count them. Track every lead from first contact to paid invoice, and judge each source by cost per booked job. Reply within minutes, since you're one of several. Angi says "in some cases, you can request a lead credit" (same page), so ask for one on leads outside your area or for work you don't do.

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] Make a sheet with one row per lead: date, source, cost, minutes to reply, booked, invoice amount.
- [ ] Fill it in for every lead from the last 60 days.
- [ ] Work out cost per booked job for each source.
- [ ] Request credits on every lead that doesn't fit.

or we can do it for you

Free sample: Your first 25 customers texted

Win-back texts is $100 a month, with a 7-day full refund.

Win-back texts: growthatlocal.com/services/win-back-texts



Part 2

Mistakes on your website and Google profile

4 A website that hides the trip charge, the after-hours rate and your towns

What it looks like. The site says "Call for pricing" and "Serving the area." It doesn't say what it costs to come out, whether nights and Sundays cost more, or which towns you cover. Every job sits on one "Plumbing services" page.

What it costs. Surprise bills turn into one-star reviews. The homeowner who expected a small bill and got a weekend rate nobody mentioned writes about it, and the next customer reads it. Meanwhile the person searching "water heater replacement (town)" finds the plumber with a page for exactly that.

Example (sample numbers). A made-up plumber gets three one-star reviews a year about surprise weekend bills. If each one turns away just two future customers, and a household is worth about $1,200 of gross profit over the years, that's $7,200 lost to three reviews a pricing line would have prevented.

The fix. You don't need a full price list. Say how you charge: the trip or diagnostic fee, when after-hours rates apply, and that you quote before you start. Give each job its own page (water heaters, drains, sewer lines, leak detection, repiping), and list every town you serve.

Example. A plain-words pricing answer on a made-up plumber's site:

> **What does it cost to come out?**
> **We charge a flat visit fee to diagnose the problem, and we tell you the price of the fix before we start. Nights, weekends and holidays cost more, and we'll say how much when you call.**

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] Write a three-sentence "How we charge" answer and put it on your homepage.
- [ ] List your three best-paying jobs and check each has its own page.
- [ ] Add an "Areas we serve" page with every town.
- [ ] Read your one- and two-star reviews. Count how many are about a surprise price.

5 A Google profile stuffed with keywords and set to "open 24 hours"

What it looks like. Your profile name is "(Your Name) Plumbing Emergency Plumber Drain Cleaning." The hours say open 24 hours, but calls after 9 p.m. go to voicemail. The primary category is something general.

What it costs. Google's rules say "including unnecessary information in your business name isn't permitted" and ask you to "provide your regular customer-facing hours of operation" (Google Business Profile guidelines, support.google.com). Breaking them can get the profile suspended, and a suspended profile drops out of the map, sometimes on the first freezing night of the year. Hours that say open while nobody answers earn the angriest reviews of all.

Example (sample numbers). A made-up plumber's profile says open 24 hours. Five night callers a month reach voicemail and call someone else. At $450 an emergency job, that's $2,250 a month in work they advertised and didn't answer, plus the reviews that follow.

The fix. Use your real name only. Set the primary category to "Plumber." Google says not to "select a category for every product or service" (Google Business Profile Help, support.google.com), so put jobs like drain cleaning and water heater installation in your services list. Set hours you really answer. If you do take night calls, say so in the description and make sure someone picks up.

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] Take screenshots of your profile today, so you have a record.
- [ ] Remove every keyword from your business name.
- [ ] Set the primary category to "Plumber" and remove categories for work you don't do.
- [ ] Change your hours to the hours someone really answers.
- [ ] Make changes one at a time, a day or two apart.

6 Sending a stranger: no name, no photo, no "on the way" text

What it looks like. The homeowner books a visit and hears nothing until a van pulls up. They don't know who's coming, what they look like or when. Often they're home alone. Your site and profile have no photos of your plumbers.

What it costs. Every plumbing call asks someone to let a stranger into their home. Most won't say they're nervous. They'll just book the plumber who feels safest next time, and that's lost repeat work. Google treats plumbing as an urgent category: for its Local Services ads, Google says plumbers go through an extra level of screening, including background checks on the people who go to homes (Google Local Services help, support.google.com). Homeowners expect that bar.

Example (sample numbers). A made-up plumber serves 60 households a month. If five of them pick a different plumber next time because the visit felt uneasy, and each household is worth about $1,200 of gross profit over the years, that's $6,000 of future work lost each month.

The fix. Send an "on the way" text with the plumber's first name, photo and arrival window. Put real photos of your team on the site and profile. Wear shoe covers and lay a drop cloth: it's the first thing a nervous homeowner notices.

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] Write your "on the way" text: "Hi, it's (company). (First name) is on the way and should be there by (time). Here's a photo so you know who's at the door."
- [ ] Take a clear, friendly photo of each plumber (with their OK).
- [ ] Add your team photos to your website and Google profile.
- [ ] Put shoe covers and a drop cloth in every van.

or we can do it for you

Free sample: A profile check-up with 10+ fixes

Google Business Profile is $200 a month, with a 7-day full refund.

Google Business Profile: growthatlocal.com/services/google-business-profile



Part 3

Mistakes with reviews and past customers

7 Never asking for reviews, or offering a discount for them

What it looks like. The water's running again, the customer says thanks, and you're off to the next call. Nobody asks for a review. Or someone tries to catch up with "10% off your next visit for a 5-star review," or asks only the customers who seemed happy.

What it costs. Plumbing shoppers look at fresh reviews. In BrightLocal's 2026 survey, 97% of consumers said they read reviews for local businesses, 74% look for reviews from the last three months, and 32% look at the last two weeks (BrightLocal Local Consumer Review Survey 2026, brightlocal.com). Paying for reviews is worse than not asking. Google bans offering "payment, discounts, free goods and/or services" in exchange for a review, asking only happy customers, giving staff review quotas, and asking staff to get reviews with specific content, including a staff member's name (Google Maps content policy, support.google.com). The FTC's rule on fake reviews has applied since October 21, 2024 (FTC, ftc.gov).

The fix. Text your review link from the van, right after the job, to every customer, and offer nothing for it. Plumbers do many short jobs, so a steady flow is realistic. GTL estimate: aim for at least four new reviews a month, because with a third of shoppers looking at the last two weeks, a month-long gap shows.

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] Get your Google review link from your profile (look for "Ask for reviews").
- [ ] Text it to every customer from the last 30 days.
- [ ] Remove any discount, gift or tech bonus tied to reviews.
- [ ] Make "send the review link" part of closing out every job.

8 Waiting for the freeze and the holidays to hit

What it looks like. A hard freeze is in the forecast for Thursday. You find out the same way your customers do, on Thursday. No posts, no emails, no plan. Same with the Thanksgiving drain rush.

What it costs. These are a plumber's storm days. State Farm handled more than 20,000 frozen pipe and winter water claims from 2024 through June 2025, paying over $628 million, with an average claim over $30,000 (State Farm, newsroom.statefarm.com). Roto-Rooter reports a 50% spike in service calls the day after Thanksgiving (Roto-Rooter, Nov 20, 2025, prnewswire.com). The plumber who posts first is the name people remember when the pipe goes.

The fix. Write your freeze and holiday posts and emails now. Two days before a hard freeze, post how to protect pipes. The week before Thanksgiving, post what not to put down the disposal. Set special hours on Google for holidays, so nobody calls a closed line.

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] Write a freeze-warning post and a Thanksgiving drain post, and save them on your phone.
- [ ] Set a weather alert on your phone for 20°F or lower in your area.
- [ ] Enter your holiday hours in Google as special hours.
- [ ] Decide who's on call for the next freeze.

9 Forgetting every water heater you've ever installed

What it looks like. You've put in water heaters, sump pumps and toilets for years, and the only record is your invoices. You never hang a tag on the shut-off or a sticker on the tank. When that heater fails, the homeowner searches Google and calls whoever's first.

What it costs. These are your cheapest calls, going to someone else. InterNACHI's chart puts a conventional tank water heater at 6 to 12 years and a sump pump at about 7 (InterNACHI, nachi.org), so your invoices are a calendar of future work. Texting them carelessly has a cost too. Federal law lets people sue for $500 per violation for some unwanted texts, and up to three times that when it's willful or knowing (47 U.S.C. 227, law.cornell.edu).

The fix. On every job, tag the main shut-off and put a sticker with your number and the date on the water heater. Text or email past customers who agreed to hear from you when their heater nears the end of its range. Say who it's from, and stop when anyone replies STOP: the FCC's rule treats replies like "stop," "quit" and "unsubscribe" as an opt-out that must be honored within ten business days (47 CFR 64.1200, law.cornell.edu).

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] Order shut-off tags and water heater stickers with your name and number.
- [ ] Pull every water heater you installed eight or more years ago.
- [ ] Check which of those customers agreed to texts or emails.
- [ ] Send them a check-in: "Hi, it's (your name) from (company). Your water heater is about (age) years old. Want us to check it before it gives out? Reply STOP to opt out."

or we can do it for you

Free sample: Your first 10 requests sent

Review requests is $100 a month, with a 7-day full refund.

Review requests: growthatlocal.com/services/reviews



Part 4

Mistakes that waste money on mail

10 One postcard blast to the whole town

What it looks like. You mail 10,000 cards across town once, with a coupon and a list of every service. A few calls come in. You decide mail doesn't work.

What it costs. GTL estimate: a single mailing brings only a few calls per thousand cards. Most homes don't have a plumbing problem the week your card arrives, so a one-off blast spends the whole budget on homes that weren't ready.

Example (sample numbers). A made-up plumber spends $4,500 on one town-wide mailing and gets 15 calls, mostly small drain jobs. Next year they spend the same on 300 homes around each sewer and repipe job, three times each, with the line "We just replaced a sewer line on your street. Homes built the same year often have the same pipes."

The fix. Mail the streets around your big jobs. Homes on one street were often built in the same years, with the same pipes, under the same old trees. Mail them more than once. Put one message on the card and a phone number you can read from across the room.

Do it in 24 hours

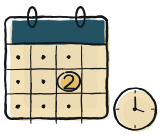
- [ ] Pick your last three sewer, repipe or slab leak jobs.
- [ ] Circle 100 to 300 homes around each on a map.
- [ ] Write a two-sentence card about the job you just did nearby.
- [ ] Get a quote from a local printer or the post office's Every Door Direct Mail service, and plan three mailings.

or we can do it for you

Free sample: Your ad, designed and shown on the card

Neighborhood postcard is $400 a month, with a 7-day full refund.

Neighborhood postcard: growthatlocal.com/services/neighborhood-postcards



Your first 24 hours, in one list

If you only fix five things this week, fix these:

- [ ] Call your own line after hours and fix what you hear (section 1).
- [ ] Turn on a missed-call text that tells callers how to shut off the water (section 1).
- [ ] Text every quiet big-job quote from the last 90 days (section 2).
- [ ] Clean the keywords out of your Google name and set hours you really answer (section 5).
- [ ] Text your review link to every customer from the last 30 days (section 7).

Next week, check three numbers: missed calls that got a text, after-hours calls answered, and new reviews.



Where to go next

Every fix here comes from The Plumber Marketing Playbook, our free 34-section guide to the whole job of getting more plumbing calls: your website, your Google profile, reviews, posts, email, search, follow-up, after-hours rules, freezes, water heaters, sewers and tracking.

Most emergency calls start in the Google map, so that's where we'd start too.

or we can do it for you

Free sample: A profile check-up with 10+ fixes

Made before you pay anything. Google Business Profile is $200 a month, with a 7-day full refund.

Google Business Profile: growthatlocal.com/services/google-business-profile



If you'd rather hand it off

Grow That Local fixes these for plumbers every month. Each service starts with a free sample, so you see the work before you pay.

Best fit for this guide: Win-back texts. Free sample: your first 25 customers texted. Win-back texts is $100 a month, with a 7-day full refund.

Win-back texts — **$100 a month · 7-day full refund**
Bring past customers back for their next job. Free sample: your first 25 customers texted.

Websites — **from $1 a month · 7-day full refund**
A fast, good-looking site that turns visitors into calls. Free sample: a preview of your new site.

Google Business Profile — **$200 a month · 7-day full refund**
Show up in the map when neighbors search for what you do. Free sample: a profile check-up with 10+ fixes.

Review requests — **$100 a month · 7-day full refund**
More 5-star reviews, without the awkward asking. Free sample: your first 10 requests sent.

Social media posts — **$200 a month · 7-day full refund**
Fresh posts every week, made from your real job photos. Free sample: two weeks of posts, ready to go.

Email newsletter — **$50 a month · 7-day full refund**
Stay top of mind, so past customers call you first. Free sample: your first newsletter, written.

SEO — **$400 a month · 7-day full refund**
Climb Google for the searches that bring in jobs. Free sample: a ranking check and 10 fixes.

Neighborhood postcard — **$400 a month · 7-day full refund**
Your ad in mailboxes across nice neighborhoods. Free sample: your ad, designed and shown on the card.

Monthly report card — **free**
See how you stack up against local competitors. Free sample: your first report card, this month.

Text us at (423) 924-2014, or start at growthatlocal.com/start.

Sources

Every statistic above, with where to check it:

1. Harvard Business Review, "The Short Life of Online Sales Leads" (2011): contacting within an hour made qualifying a lead nearly 7 times more likely. hbr.org (section 1)
2. Same study: 23% of companies never responded to the lead. (section 1) (hbr.org)
3. BrightLocal Local Consumer Review Survey 2026 (1,002 US adults, published Feb 11, 2026): 97% read reviews for local businesses. brightlocal.com (section 7)
4. Same survey: 74% look for reviews from the last three months. (section 7) (brightlocal.com)
5. Same survey: 32% look for reviews from the last two weeks. (section 7) (brightlocal.com)
6. State Farm newsroom: more than 20,000 frozen pipe and winter water claims, 2024 through June 2025. newsroom.statefarm.com (section 8)
7. Same source: over $628 million paid. (section 8) (newsroom.statefarm.com)
8. Same source: average claim payment over $30,000. (section 8) (newsroom.statefarm.com)
9. Roto-Rooter press release, Nov 20, 2025: a 50% spike in service calls the day after Thanksgiving. Company-reported. prnewswire.com (section 8)
10. InterNACHI Standard Estimated Life Expectancy Chart: conventional water heater 6 to 12 years. nachi.org (section 9)
11. Same chart: sump pump about 7 years. (section 9) (nachi.org)

Rules and platform terms cited (checked 2026-11-12):

- Angi pro help, opportunities and leads FAQ: a request is matched with no more than five pros; lead credits in some cases. intercom.help (section 3)
- Google Business Profile guidelines (no unnecessary information in the name; regular customer-facing hours): support.google.com (section 5)
- Google Business Profile Help, choose a business category: support.google.com (section 5)
- Google Local Services, business screening (plumbing gets extra screening, including background checks): support.google.com (section 6)
- Google Maps prohibited and restricted content (bans incentives, asking only happy customers, staff quotas and asking staff to get reviews naming them): support.google.com (section 7)
- FTC, questions and answers on its rule against fake reviews (in effect since October 21, 2024): ftc.gov (section 7)
- 47 U.S.C. 227(b)(3), private right of action, $500 per violation, up to three times for willful or knowing violations: law.cornell.edu (section 9)
- 47 CFR 64.1200(a)(10), revoking consent by any reasonable means, honored within ten business days: law.cornell.edu (section 9)

GTL estimates

These are our own judgment, not measured facts:

1. For emergency calls, the first plumber who answers or texts back gets the job most of the time (section 1). Reasoning: a caller with an active leak can't wait for a callback, and stops calling around once someone is on the way.
2. Three follow-ups over a month on quiet big-job quotes (section 2). Reasoning: one message is easy to miss, and more than three starts to feel pushy.
3. Aim for at least four new reviews a month (section 7). Reasoning: plumbers do many short jobs, so a steady flow is realistic, and with a third of shoppers looking at the last two weeks, a month-long gap shows.
4. A single postcard mailing brings only a few calls per thousand cards (section 10). Reasoning: most homes don't have a plumbing problem the week the card arrives, so repeat mailings to the right streets build calls over time.

want it done for you?

Every part of this guide is something we do.

Each one starts with a free sample, so you see the work before you pay. Text us at (423) 924-2014 or start at growthatlocal.com/start.

Grow That Local