Grow That Local

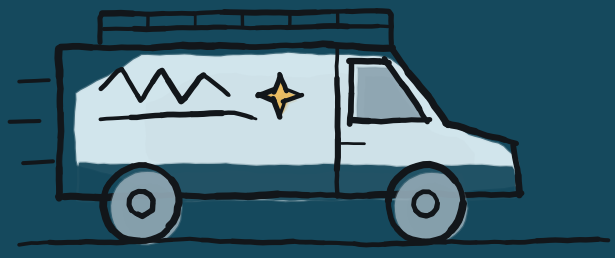
a free guide

Who can send you jobs: referral partners for local trades

The people who hear about your next job before you do, and how to get them sending it your way.

For any local business owner.

- 9 short sections in 3 parts
- 27 things you can do in the next 24 hours
- An example in every section
- Sources for every figure



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Before you start

Some people hear about a leak, an old roof or a tired yard before anyone picks up a phone. A real estate agent walking a listing. A property manager with a tenant on hold. A home inspector writing up a report. When their client asks "who should I call?", one of them can send you a job a month, every month, for free.

This guide covers the five kinds of partner that send local trades the most work. Section 1 has a table of the best partners for your trade. Sections 2 to 6 take each kind in turn: what they hear about, what they need from you, and how to start. Sections 7 to 9 give you a message to copy, a simple way to say thank you, and the rules on paying for referrals.

One rule runs through all of it: **don't offer money for referrals until you've checked your state's rules.** Agents, inspectors and insurance agents all work under license rules, and some of those rules limit what they can accept. Section 9 explains.

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 businesses.



Part 1

Start here

1 Find your best partners in the table

The idea. Every trade has two or three partners who hear about its jobs first. Start with the top two for your trade. One good partner who sends steady work beats ten who forget your name.

Trade	Best partners	What they need from you
Roofers	Home inspectors, real estate agents, insurance agents, gutter and siding installers	Fast roof checks before closing, photo reports, plain answers on storm claims
Plumbers	Property managers, home inspectors, real estate agents, water damage restoration companies, HVAC companies	Quick answers on tenant calls, inspection repairs before closing, billing the manager, not the tenant
HVAC	Property managers, home inspectors, real estate agents, electricians, plumbers	A visit time within the hour on no-AC calls, photos and a plain note after each visit
Landscapers	Real estate agents, property managers and HOAs, pool and fence builders, tree services, home builders	Curb-appeal cleanups before a listing, steady upkeep, repairing yards other trades tore up
House cleaners	Real estate agents, property managers and apartment offices, movers, home stagers, remodelers	Move-out and move-in cleans on a fixed date, after-build cleanups, before-and-after photos
Painters	Paint store staff, real estate agents and stagers, property managers, interior designers, flooring and drywall installers	Listing repaints with a quick start, turnover painting in the same colors, clean prep

Example. A made-up plumber reads the table and picks property managers and home inspectors. They already know two managers from past jobs, so they start there.

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] Circle the top two partner types for your trade.
- [ ] Write down five people of those types you already know, even a little.
- [ ] Ask your last ten customers how they found you. Note any partner names that come up.



Part 2

The five kinds of partner

2 Real estate agents

The idea. Every home sale brings repairs, cleanups and fresh paint, usually on a deadline. About 4.06 million existing homes were sold in the US in 2025 (National Association of Realtors, reported by NAHB Eye on Housing (eyeonhousing.org)). Agents need trades who can start soon, quote fast and send photos they can show their seller or buyer.

They also get asked for names long after closing. A buyer who just moved in asks their agent who to call for the gutters, the yard or the water heater.

Example. A made-up roofer's one-page sheet for agents: "Need a roof checked before closing? We inspect within two business days and send a photo report you can share with the buyer." They drop it at three local real estate offices.

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] List three agents who sold homes in your area this year.
- [ ] Write a one-page sheet: what you do for sales, how fast, and how to reach you.
- [ ] Drop it at one real estate office, or send it to one agent you know.

3 Property managers

The idea. Property managers handle repair calls from tenants all year, in every season. They don't want the cheapest trade. They want one who answers, shows up when they say, sends a photo when the job's done, and bills them cleanly.

Expect them to ask for your insurance certificate and a W-9 tax form before the first job. Have both ready.

Example. A made-up HVAC company's offer to a property management office: "Tenant without AC? Text us the address. We'll give you a visit time within the hour, and send photos and a plain note after every call." The manager adds them to the vendor list.

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] Find three property management companies in your area.
- [ ] Get a copy of your insurance certificate and fill in a W-9.
- [ ] Call one office and ask: "What do you need from a [trade] that you're not getting?"

4 Insurance agents

The idea. When a storm hits or a pipe bursts, the homeowner often calls their insurance agent first. The agent can't fix the roof, but they get asked "who do you know?" Roofers, plumbers and water damage companies get the most from this partner.

What agents want is a trade who explains the claim in plain words, takes good photos of the damage and doesn't pressure their client. Insurance is regulated state by state, so keep it to good work and good photos: no gifts or payments until you've checked your state's rules.

Example. A made-up roofer meets two local insurance agents for coffee. They show a sample photo report from a hail job and say: "If a client of yours has storm damage, we'll inspect and send them a report they can use with the adjuster. We never tell them how to file."

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] Write down the insurance agents who cover homes in your area. Your own agent is a good first call.
- [ ] Put together one sample photo report from a recent damage job, with the customer's details removed.
- [ ] Ask one agent what makes a contractor easy to recommend.

5 Home inspectors

The idea. Inspectors write up problems every week: an old roof, a water heater near the end, a furnace that needs service, peeling paint. The buyer reads the report and asks, "who should fix this?"

Inspectors protect their reputation. InterNACHI's code of ethics bars its inspectors from taking commissions or other benefits from agents or anyone with a financial interest in the sale, and from offering repairs on a home they inspected within 12 months (InterNACHI Code of Ethics, nachi.org). Your state may have its own inspector rules too. So never offer an inspector money. Offer what they do want: a trade they can name without worry, who backs up their report instead of arguing with it.

Example. A made-up plumber texts a local inspector: "If your buyers ever need a plumber after a report, we quote inspection items within one business day and send photos when they're fixed." The inspector starts passing their name to buyers.

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] Search for home inspectors in your area and pick three with good reviews.
- [ ] Write two lines on how fast you quote inspection items.
- [ ] Send it to one inspector, by text or email.

6 Other trades

The idea. The trades around you see jobs you do every week. A plumber sees water damage that needs a painter. A pool builder leaves a torn-up lawn. A painter's client asks about the gutters. Trades that don't compete with you can swap names all year.

The best swaps go both ways. Pick trades whose customers are the same homeowners as yours, and send them work first.

Example. A made-up painter works with a flooring installer on three jobs. After each one, they text the installer a photo of the finished room. The installer starts handing out the painter's number, and the painter passes on two flooring jobs in return.

Do it in 24 hours

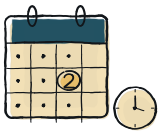
- [ ] List three trades you've met on jobs this year who don't do what you do.
- [ ] Text one of them a photo of a job you did near theirs.
- [ ] Ask them: "Want to swap names when our customers ask?"

or we can do it for you

Free sample: Your first newsletter, written

Email newsletter is $50 a month, with a 7-day full refund.

Email newsletter: growthatlocal.com/services/email-newsletter



Part 3

Ask, thank and stay on the right side of the rules

7 The message that starts it

The idea. Keep the first ask short. Say who you are, what you do for their clients, and one thing that makes you easy to recommend. Ask a question, not for a favor. Send each message yourself, one person at a time, from your own phone or email.

Example. Ready-to-copy messages:

Someone you've met:
"Hi [first name], it's [your name] from [business]. We met on the [street] job. If your clients ever need a [trade] in [town], we answer fast and send photos when we're done. Can I send you a few cards?"

Someone you haven't met:
"Hi [first name], I'm [your name], I run [business] in [town]. I'd like to be a [trade] you can count on for your clients. What do you need from a [trade] that you're not getting now?"

After a visit or call:
"Thanks for the time today, [first name]. Here's my number for your clients: [phone]. I'll text you when anyone you send us is booked."

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] Pick the message that fits your first partner and fill in the blanks.
- [ ] Send it to two people from your list in section 1.
- [ ] Put a reminder in your phone to follow up in one week if they don't reply.

8 A simple thank-you system

The idea. Partners keep sending work to people who make them look good and who say thanks. You don't need a program. You need four habits:

1. **Same day:** when a referral calls, text the partner: "Thanks for sending [customer first name] our way."
2. **After the job:** tell the partner it's done, and send a photo if the customer is happy for you to share it.
3. **Keep a list:** partner, who they sent, the date and the job. A notebook or a phone note is enough.
4. **Twice a year:** send each partner who sent work a handwritten card. If you want to add a small gift, check your state's rules and the partner's own rules first.

And the biggest thank-you of all: send them work back when you can.

Example (sample numbers). A made-up landscaper's partner list for the spring:

> **Agent, [first name]:**
> **sent 3 curb-appeal cleanups, about $1,800 in work. Card sent in June.**
>
> **Pool builder, [first name]:**
> **sent 2 lawn repairs. We sent them 1 pool lead back.**
>
> **Property manager, [first name]:**
> **14 upkeep visits. Card and photos of the finished yards sent in June.**

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] Start your partner list today, even if it has one name.
- [ ] Text a thank-you to anyone who has sent you work this year.
- [ ] Put two dates in your calendar for thank-you cards: one in spring, one in fall.

9 Paying for referrals: check your state's rules first

The idea. Many owners think about offering a fee per referral. With partners who work under a license, be careful.

- **Real estate agents:** the National Association of Realtors' code of ethics says agents must tell their client about any fee or financial benefit they get from recommending real estate products or services, such as insurance or home warranties (NAR Code of Ethics 2026, nar.realtor, Article 6). State license laws can also limit who may pay an agent. Check your state's rules.
- **Home sales with a mortgage:** a federal rule (RESPA, Section 8) bans giving or taking a fee or anything of value for referring settlement services on a federally related mortgage loan (CFPB, 12 CFR 1024.14, consumerfinance.gov). Whether your job counts depends on the details. Check your state's rules and ask a lawyer before paying anyone around a sale.
- **Home inspectors:** inspectors who follow the InterNACHI code can't take benefits from parties with an interest in the sale (section 5). Your state may have its own rules. Don't offer.
- **Insurance agents:** insurance is regulated state by state. Check your state's rules before you offer anything.
- **Other trades:** swapping names is common. If you want to pay a fee, check your state's rules for your trade's license first.

For your own past customers, a reward for sending a friend is a different thing. Our free referral reward calculator shows how many jobs one might bring in.

Example. A made-up roofer wants to pay agents a fee for each roof job. They call their state's real estate commission first. The rules are more involved than they expected, so they drop the fee and send photo reports and thank-you cards instead.

Do it in 24 hours

- [ ] Decide whether you want to pay referral fees at all. Most good partners don't need one.
- [ ] If you do, look up your state's real estate commission and contractor license board rules first.
- [ ] Write down the thank-you you'll give instead: speed, photos, cards and work sent back.

or we can do it for you

Free sample: Your first newsletter, written

Email newsletter is $50 a month, with a 7-day full refund.

Email newsletter: growthatlocal.com/services/email-newsletter



Your first 24 hours, in one list

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

- [ ] Circle your top two partner types in the table (section 1).
- [ ] Write down five people of those types you already know (section 1).
- [ ] Send the message to two of them (section 7).
- [ ] Start your partner list and thank anyone who has sent you work (section 8).
- [ ] Before you offer any fee or gift, check your state's rules (section 9).



If you'd rather hand it off

Partners remember the trades who stay in touch. Grow That Local's email newsletter keeps your name in front of past customers and partners every month. Each service starts with a free sample, so you see the work before you pay.

Best fit for this guide: Email newsletter. Free sample: your first newsletter, written. Email newsletter is $50 a month, with a 7-day full refund.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 and rule above, with where to check it:

1. National Association of Realtors, reported by NAHB Eye on Housing: about 4.06 million existing homes sold in the US in 2025. eyeonhousing.org (section 2)
2. InterNACHI Code of Ethics, items 1.6.2 and 1.11: no commissions or other benefits from agents or third parties with a financial interest in the sale; no repairs on a home inspected within 12 months. nachi.org (sections 5 and 9)
3. National Association of Realtors, 2026 Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, Article 6: Realtors must disclose fees or financial benefits they receive from recommending real estate products or services. nar.realtor (section 9)
4. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, Regulation X, 12 CFR 1024.14 (RESPA Section 8): no fees, kickbacks or things of value for referring settlement services on a federally related mortgage loan. consumerfinance.gov (section 9)

GTL estimates

These are our own judgment, not measured facts:

1. The partner types in the table are the best fit for each trade (section 1). Reasoning: each one hears about that trade's jobs before the homeowner starts searching, and doesn't compete for the same work.
2. One steady partner beats ten loose ones (section 1). Reasoning: referrals come from people who remember you when the question comes up, and that takes regular contact you can only keep with a few.
3. Buyers and tenants ask their agent, manager or inspector who to call (sections 2, 3 and 5). Reasoning: these people are already in the middle of the problem and are the nearest person the homeowner trusts.
4. Speed, photos and thanks keep partners sending work better than fees (section 8). Reasoning: a partner's own reputation rides on the trade they name, so a trade that makes them look good gets named again.

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