# WHERE CLIENTS Slip Away

A practical self-audit to **find what's stopping potential clients** from choosing your business, and **what to fix first**

**KISHAN KR SONI**

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A practical self-audit to find what's stopping potential clients from choosing your business

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# Before you start

This guide is a working tool, not a book to agree with. Each chapter ends with a test you run on your own business, usually in under twenty minutes, with nothing more than a phone, a browser and a notebook.

It is written for owners of businesses where expertise or trust is the product: founders and consultants, business owners (local or online), clinic owners and practitioners, real estate professionals, and coaches. If people buy *you*, your judgment or your reputation before they buy anything else, it is for you.

Work through it in order the first time. Later, use the scorecard at the back to return to whichever gate is weakest.

Three promises about how it is written:

- **Facts are sourced.** Where a statistic appears, it comes from a named study you can check in the Sources section. Where reliable evidence does not exist, the guide says so.
- **Examples are labeled.** Anything marked *Hypothetical example* is invented to show a method. It is not a client story and its numbers are not results.

- **Observations are labeled.** Anything marked *Observation* is the author's experience-based view of how a type of business tends to behave. Treat it as a hypothesis to check against your own data, not as research.

You do not need to buy anything to use this guide. Everything in it can be done by you or your team.

## Where to start, by business type

Read Chapters 1 and 2 first; they take about ten minutes. Then, if you're short on time, start with the two gates where businesses like yours most often leak. These are the author's observations, explained in Chapter 2, not research findings: your own scores may point somewhere else.

| If you are... | Start with | Why |
|---|---|---|
| **A founder or consultant** | Gate 3: Chosen, Gate 5: Answered | Vague positioning and slow replies to warm introductions |
| **A business owner, local or online** | Gate 1: Found, Gate 4: Contacted | Invisible for the words customers use, and contact routes that quietly fail |
| **A clinic or practice owner** | Gate 5: Answered, Gate 2: Checked | Unanswered calls and thin or old reviews |
| **A real estate professional** | Gate 2: Checked, Gate 6: Booked | Sellers check you hard, and long timelines need follow-up |
| **A coach** | Gate 6: Booked, Gate 3: Chosen | Interest that never becomes a discovery call |

Chapter 1

# The inquiries you never see

Why the clients you lose never show up in any report, and why “get more leads” is often the wrong first fix.

Every business owner can describe the inquiries that arrived. The caller who booked. The form that turned into a project. The email that became a client.

Almost nobody can describe the ones that didn’t arrive, because there is nothing to see. The person who searched for your service and found a competitor first. The visitor who read your homepage, couldn’t tell whether you work with businesses like theirs, and left. The caller who reached voicemail at 6:40 pm and rang the next name on the list. None of them complained. None of them appear in any report.

Lost demand is silent. It never shows up in a report, only as a vague sense that marketing isn’t working.

That is why this problem is so easy to underestimate. Lost demand is silent. It shows up only as a vague sense that "marketing isn't working," which usually leads to the most expensive response available: spending more to bring in more strangers, while the same gaps quietly lose a share of them too.

## Why "more leads" is often the wrong first move

If one in five interested people slips away somewhere between finding you and booking with you, doubling your traffic doubles the losses as well. Fixing the gap does the opposite: it makes every existing source of attention worth more, including word of mouth, which you are already paying for in the form of good work.

There is also a practical argument. Most of the gaps in this guide cost little or nothing to fix. A clearer sentence on a homepage, a phone that is answered or called back within the hour, a review request that is actually sent. These are decisions, not budgets.

## What this guide asks you to do

You will look at your business the way a stranger meets it, one step at a time, using a simple diagnostic called the Six Gates. For each gate you will run a short test, score it honestly, and note what you found.

Then you will do something most marketing advice skips: put a careful, clearly labeled estimate on what each weak gate might be worth, so you can decide which to fix first. Finally, you will turn that into a thirty-day plan.

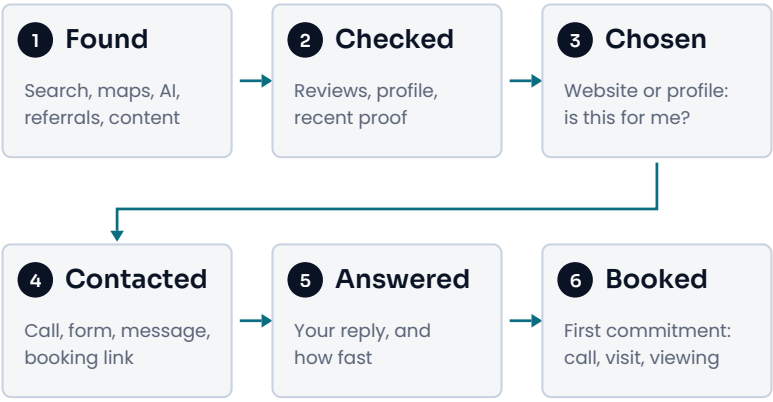
By the end you should know three things: where your most likely leaks are, roughly what they could be worth, and what you are going to change this month.

Chapter 2

# The Six Gates

The six points where interested people quietly drop away, and how that path looks different for your business.

Before someone becomes a client, they have to get through a series of small decisions. Each one is a gate: a point where they either move forward or quietly drop away.




A diagnostic order, not a fixed path: real journeys skip, loop and double back.

**1. Found.** They come across you: in search results, on a map, in an AI assistant's answer, through a referral, a post, or a listing.

**2. Checked.** They look for reasons to trust you: reviews, a profile, credentials, recent work, what other people say.

**3. Chosen.** They decide you are the right fit, usually on your website or profile, and usually in seconds.

**4. Contacted.** They try to reach you: a call, a form, a message, a booking link.

**5. Answered.** You respond, or you don't, or you respond too late.

**6. Booked.** They make a first commitment: an appointment, a consultation, a viewing, a discovery call.

## A diagnostic, not a map of every journey

The gates are a way to inspect your business, not a claim that every client walks through them in this order. Real people skip, loop and double back. A referral may arrive already convinced and go straight from Found to Contacted. A cautious buyer may Check you three times over six months. Someone may contact you first and do their checking afterwards, while they wait for a reply.

That is fine. The gates are useful because each one is a *different kind of failure*, with a different kind of fix. Weak visibility is not solved by a better follow-up email. A slow reply is not solved by more reviews. Naming the gate stops you from fixing the wrong thing.

Each gate is a different kind of failure, with a different kind of fix.

## How the journey differs by business type

The six gates apply to every type of business this guide is written for, but their order and weight change a lot. The notes below are observations, not research findings. Use them to decide which gates to examine most carefully, then check them against your own records.

**Observation: founders, consultants and B2B firms.** Being *Found* often happens through people rather than search: a referral, a LinkedIn post, a mention in a meeting. *Checked* is intense and repeated, because the purchase is larger and several people may weigh in. The journey can take months, so *Booked* (a first call) is only the beginning, and the biggest leaks are often in *Chosen* (vague positioning) and *Answered* (slow, generic replies to warm introductions).

**Observation: clinics and healthcare practices.** The journey is usually local and shorter. *Found* happens on maps and search; *Checked* leans heavily on reviews; *Contacted* is often a phone call, sometimes at a moment of discomfort or worry. That makes *Answered* unusually important: an unanswered call may simply move to the next practice on the list. Healthcare marketing is also regulated differently from country to country, so check local advertising and privacy rules before changing how you present treatments or handle patient messages.

**Observation: real estate professionals.** There are usually two journeys running at once: buyers, who often find properties through listing portals before they find an agent, and sellers, who choose an agent and check them carefully. For sellers, *Checked* (track record, local knowledge, presentation) and *Booked* (the valuation or listing appointment) carry the most weight. Timelines can be long and irregular, so follow-up after the first contact matters more than in most businesses.

**Observation: coaches.** *Found* is often driven by content: posts, videos, podcasts, talks. *Checked* means reading more of that content and looking for evidence of outcomes. Many coaching businesses lose people between

*Chosen* and *Booked*: interest is there, but the next step (a discovery call) is unclear, awkward to schedule, or never followed up.

**Observation: business owners, local or online.** For a local business, *Found* usually means search results and maps, and *Checked* means reviews and photos. For an online business, *Found* may be a marketplace, a social feed or search, and *Checked* means reviews, policies and whether the site looks cared for. In both, the owner is often also the person answering the phone and the inbox, so *Contacted* and *Answered* leak on busy days without anyone noticing.

## How to use the gates

For each gate, the next six chapters give you:

- **What usually goes wrong**, so you know what to look for.
- **What the evidence says**, where reliable evidence exists.
- **A self-test** with a simple score: 0 (clear problem), 1 (partly working), 2 (working well).
- **What to fix first** if you score low.

Record your scores on the Gate Scorecard at the back of the guide. Scores are not a grade. They are a way of comparing gates against each other, so you can see where to look harder.

## The Six Gates at a glance

| Gate | The question in the client's head | Typical leak | Fastest test |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Found | Who can help me with this? | Invisible for the words clients use | Search your service in their words |
| 2. Checked | Can I trust them? | Few or old reviews, no recent proof | Count reviews from the last 3 months |
| 3. Chosen | Is this for someone like me? | Vague first screen | The five-second test |
| 4. Contacted | How do I get in touch? | Broken or awkward contact routes | Contact yourself on a phone |
| 5. Answered | Did anyone get back to me? | Slow replies, unreturned calls | The two-week log |
| 6. Booked | When and what happens next? | No follow-up, no reminders | Review the last 20 open inquiries |

Chapter 3

# Gate 1: Found

1 Found | 2 Checked | 3 Chosen | 4 Contacted | 5 Answered | 6 Booked

Are you visible where your clients actually start looking, including AI assistants? A 15-minute stranger's search.

You can't be chosen by someone who never sees you. But "being found" is not one thing. A clinic is found on a map. A consultant is found in a conversation. A coach is found in a feed. The question is not "are we visible?" but "are we visible in the places where our clients actually start looking?"

## What usually goes wrong

- **The business is invisible for the words clients actually use.** Owners describe their service in professional terms; clients search in their own words. A physiotherapist may say "musculoskeletal assessment"; a patient searches "back pain physio near me."
- **The business profile is incomplete or inconsistent.** Different opening hours, phone numbers or addresses across the website, Google and directories.

- **Referrals have nowhere useful to land.** Someone recommends you, the prospect searches your name, and finds an outdated profile or nothing at all.
- **AI assistants don't mention you, or describe you wrongly.** A growing number of people now ask tools like ChatGPT for recommendations.

## What the evidence says

**Evidence.** Google states that local results are based primarily on three factors: *relevance* (how well a profile matches the search), *distance*, and *prominence* (how well known the business is). Google also says that complete, accurate business information helps, and that more reviews and positive ratings can help local ranking. (Google Business Profile Help, "Tips to improve your local ranking on Google.")

**Evidence.** In BrightLocal's 2026 survey of 1,002 US adults, use of ChatGPT and other generative AI tools for local business recommendations rose from 6% the previous year to 45%, making them the third most-used source of recommendations after Google and Facebook. (BrightLocal, Local Consumer Review Survey 2026.) This is a US consumer sample about local businesses; it says less about how B2B buyers search.

## Self-test: the stranger's search (15 minutes)

**Self-test.** Use a phone, in a private or incognito window, ideally on mobile data rather than office Wi-Fi.

1. Write down three phrases a *client* would type when they need what you sell, in their words, not yours. If you are unsure, look at the exact words in recent inquiry emails.
2. Search each phrase, adding your city or area if you serve a local market. Note whether you appear on the first screen, the map, or not at all.
3. Search your own business name. Is the first result accurate and current? Are your hours, phone and address the same everywhere you look?
4. Ask an AI assistant: "Who would you recommend for [your service] in [your area / for my kind of business]?" Then ask: "What do you know about [your business name]?" Note whether it mentions you and whether what it says is correct.

**Score:** 0 if you don't appear for any client phrase and your name search shows errors. 1 if you appear for some phrases or your information has minor inconsistencies. 2 if you appear for most phrases and everything about you is accurate.

## What to fix first

**If your information is inconsistent, fix that before anything else.** It is the cheapest fix in this guide and it affects every other gate. Make the name, phone number, address and hours identical on your website, your Google Business Profile and the two or three directories that matter most in your field.

**If you're invisible for client phrases,** create or improve one page per core service, written in the words clients use, answering the questions they ask before they call. One genuinely useful page beats five thin ones.

**If AI assistants describe you wrongly,** the fix is usually upstream: clear, consistent, up-to-date information on your own website and major profiles. These tools draw on public information; inaccurate public information produces inaccurate answers.

**If your clients come mainly through people,** your "Found" gate is your network and your name. Make sure a search for your name leads to a current, specific profile that tells a referred person, in one sentence, what you do and who for.

Chapter 4

# Gate 2: Checked

1 Found | **2 Checked** | 3 Chosen | 4 Contacted | 5 Answered | 6 Booked

What a careful stranger checks before trusting you, and what 97% of local buyers read first.

Once someone has found you, they look for reasons to trust you, and for reasons not to. This is the gate where silence is most damaging, because people rarely tell you what put them off.

## What usually goes wrong

- **Too few reviews, or old ones.** A handful of glowing reviews from three years ago reads as a business that used to be good.
- **Reviews are ignored.** No replies, or the same pasted reply under every review.
- **No visible evidence of recent work.** The last case study, post or update is from long ago.
- **Claims without proof.** “Trusted by hundreds” with nothing a stranger can verify.

## What the evidence says

**Evidence.** BrightLocal's 2026 survey (1,002 US adults, local businesses) found that 97% of consumers read reviews for local businesses and 41% "always" read them, up from 29% the year before. 47% said they would not use a business with fewer than 20 reviews, 74% said they only care about reviews written in the last three months, and 31% said they will only use a business rated 4.5 stars or higher.

**Evidence.** In the same survey, 89% of consumers said they expect businesses to respond to reviews, and 50% said templated or generic responses make them unlikely to choose a business. 83% of people asked to leave a review went on to leave one.

Two cautions. First, these are stated preferences from a survey, not observed behavior: what people say they do and what they do are not always the same. Second, the sample is US consumers choosing local businesses. A founder hiring a consultant checks trust in different places, through LinkedIn, mutual connections, case studies and conversations, but the principle holds: strangers look for recent, consistent, verifiable evidence.

## Self-test: the skeptic's ten minutes

**Self-test.** Pretend you are a careful, slightly suspicious buyer.

1. Count your reviews on the platform your clients most likely use. How many are from the last three months?
2. Read your last ten reviews. Did you reply to each, and does each reply sound written for that person?
3. Find the most recent piece of public evidence that you do good work: a case study, a client result you're allowed to share, a recent project, a recent post showing your thinking. How old is it?
4. Look at your main profile (Google, LinkedIn, or an industry directory). Would a stranger know within ten seconds what you do, for whom, and why to believe you?

**Score:** 0 if reviews are few or old and evidence of recent work is hard to find. 1 if some evidence is recent but replies or profiles are thin. 2 if a stranger could find recent, consistent, verifiable evidence in under a minute.

## What to fix first

**Ask, every time, at the right moment.** The most reliable way to get reviews is to ask satisfied clients directly, soon after a good result, with a direct link. Build it into your

process rather than relying on memory: the end of a treatment course, the day after closing, the last session of a program. A template is in the back of this guide.

**Reply to every review in your own words.** Two or three specific sentences are enough. For critical reviews, acknowledge, explain what you've changed if anything, and offer to continue the conversation privately. Never argue in public.

**Show recent work.** One short, specific case note every month or two does more for this gate than a large portfolio that never changes. Respect privacy: get written permission, and in healthcare follow local rules strictly.

**Never fake reviews, and never offer anything in exchange for positive ones.** Major platforms prohibit incentivized reviews, and in the US the FTC's rule on consumer reviews and testimonials (16 CFR Part 465, in effect since October 21, 2024) bans fake reviews and buying reviews that are required to be positive or negative.

Chapter 5

# Gate 3: Chosen

1 Found | 2 Checked | **3 Chosen** | 4 Contacted | 5 Answered | 6 Booked

The five-second test most homepages fail, with a before-and-after rewrite you can copy.

At this gate a person is deciding whether *you* are the right fit, and they usually decide fast, on your website or profile, often on a phone. The question in their head is simple: "Is this for someone like me, and what happens if I get in touch?"

## What usually goes wrong

- **The first screen describes the business, not the client's problem.** "Welcome to Smith & Co, a leading provider of integrated solutions."
- **Everyone is the audience.** If you work with "businesses of all sizes across all industries," nobody recognizes themselves.
- **The next step is hidden or vague.** "Contact us" at the bottom of a long page, with no idea what happens afterwards.

- **Price is a complete mystery.** Not every business should publish prices, but giving no sense of scale makes many buyers postpone contact.

## The five-second test

**Self-test.** Ask someone who doesn't know your business well to look at your homepage on their phone for five seconds, then hide it. Ask them three questions:

1. What does this business do?
2. Who is it for?
3. What would you do next if you were interested?

Do it with two or three people if you can. Don't explain or defend anything; just write down their answers.

**Score:** 0 if they can't answer two or more questions. 1 if they answer roughly but vaguely. 2 if all three answers match what you would say yourself.

## Before and after

**Hypothetical example.** A small management consultancy's homepage opens with:

*Before*: "Strategic solutions for forward-thinking organizations. We partner with clients to unlock sustainable growth."

A visitor cannot tell what the firm does, for whom, or what to do next.

*After*: "We help family-owned manufacturers with 50 to 250 staff plan a leadership handover, usually over 9 to 12 months. Most clients start with a two-hour planning session. Book a call to see if it fits."

The rewrite names the client, the problem, a realistic timeframe and the first step. It will put off some visitors, which is the point: the ones it keeps are the ones who might buy.

The same pattern works for any business: **who you help, with what, and what happens first.** A clinic might say which problems it treats and that new patients can book online the same week. A real estate agent might say which neighborhoods they sell in and what the first valuation visit involves. A coach might say who they coach, on what, and what the first call covers.

## What to fix first

**Rewrite the first screen** using the pattern above. Keep it to two or three sentences and test it again with the five-second test.

**Make one next step obvious.** Put it at the top and repeat it lower down. Say what happens after someone takes it: "You'll get a reply within one business day," "A 20-minute call, no obligation," "Choose a time that suits you."

**Give a sense of scale if you can.** “Most projects start between $X and $Y” or “Initial consultation: $X” helps serious buyers continue and saves you time with the rest. If you genuinely can’t publish anything, explain how pricing works.

Chapter 6

# Gate 4: Contacted

1 Found | 2 Checked | 3 Chosen | **4 Contacted** | 5 Answered | 6 Booked

The form that never arrives and the number that won't dial: friction you can't see from your own desk.

Someone has decided to get in touch. You would think the hard part is over. Often it isn't, because getting in touch is harder than the business realizes.

## What usually goes wrong

- **Forms that ask too much.** Ten required fields, including budget and company size, before someone can ask a simple question.
- **Phone numbers that can't be tapped.** A number inside an image, or text that a phone doesn't recognize as a link.
- **Booking that doesn't work on mobile.** Calendars that need zooming, or that break halfway.
- **No route outside office hours.** Many people only have time to research and get in touch in the evening.

- **Messages that go nowhere.** A contact form sending to an old inbox, a social media inbox nobody checks, a WhatsApp number that isn't monitored.

## Self-test: be your own prospect

**Self-test.** On your phone, outside office hours if possible:

1. Find your contact options from your homepage. How many taps does it take?
2. Tap your phone number. Does it dial?
3. Submit your own contact form with a realistic question. Time how long it takes and note every field that felt unnecessary. Check it arrived where it should.
4. Try to book an appointment or call, if you offer booking. Does it work smoothly on a phone?
5. Send a message through every channel you list (email, social, WhatsApp). Note which ones you would have missed.

**Score:** 0 if any channel fails or the form doesn't arrive. 1 if everything works but is slow or awkward. 2 if every channel works in under a minute on a phone.

## What to fix first

**Fix anything broken immediately.** A form that doesn't deliver is the most expensive bug a service business can have, because it fails silently.

**Cut the form to what you need for a first reply.** Usually name, contact detail and one open question. Gather the rest in conversation.

**Only list channels you actually monitor.** Three reliable routes beat six neglected ones.

**Decide what happens outside hours.** An honest auto-reply ("We'll call you back by 10 am tomorrow") is better than silence. Online booking, a callback request or a well-designed answering service can also help.

Chapter 7

# Gate 5: Answered

1 Found | 2 Checked | 3 Chosen | 4 Contacted | **5 Answered** | 6 Booked

The 42-hour reply problem, and the two-week log that replaces “we’re pretty quick” with a real number.

This is often the most expensive gate, and the easiest to overlook, because owners usually believe they respond quickly. The test in this chapter frequently shows otherwise.

## What the evidence says

**Evidence.** In a study published in *Harvard Business Review* in 2011, researchers submitted test inquiries to 2,241 US companies' websites. Among companies that responded within 30 days, the average first response time was 42 hours. The authors also reported, from a separate analysis of 1.25 million sales leads at 42 US companies, that firms that tried to contact a potential customer within an hour of an inquiry were far more likely to have a meaningful conversation with a decision-maker than firms that waited longer. (Oldroyd, McElheran and Elkington, "The Short Life of Online Sales Leads," *HBR*, March 2011.)

Read that evidence carefully. It is fifteen years old, from US companies, and mostly about sales teams. It shows a strong *association* between speed and successful contact, not proof that speed alone causes sales. Faster companies may also be better organized in other ways. Still, the direction is intuitive and consistent with everyday experience: interest fades, and people who are ready to act often contact more than one business.

You may also see claims such as "responding in 5 minutes makes you 100 times more likely to convert." Those figures are frequently attributed to the HBR article but come from a different, older industry study. This guide doesn't rely on them.

## Self-test: the two-week log

**Self-test.** For the next two weeks, log every new inquiry: time received, channel, time of first human reply, and outcome. Include missed calls (your phone's call log or phone system will show them). A simple table is in the Worksheets section.

At the end, work out:

1. The share of inquiries answered within one business hour.
2. The share answered the same day.
3. The number of missed calls never returned.
4. The slowest channel.

**Score:** 0 if missed calls go unreturned or typical replies take more than a day. 1 if most replies are same-day but few within the hour. 2 if most inquiries get a human reply within the hour during business hours and nothing goes unanswered.

If two weeks feels long, start today anyway and score provisionally. The log is the single most useful piece of data in this guide, because it replaces a feeling ("we're pretty quick") with a number.

The two-week log replaces a feeling with a number.

## What to fix first

**Make one person responsible for first replies, with a backup.** Inquiries that belong to everyone belong to no one.

**Return every missed call.** If calls are frequently missed, consider a callback rule (for example, every missed call returned within 30 minutes during working hours), a shared line, an answering service, or an automated text acknowledging the call. Check local rules on automated messages before using them; in many countries consent and opt-out requirements apply.

**Write a reply that moves things forward.** A fast reply that says “Thanks, we’ll be in touch” wastes the speed. Answer the question if you can, and propose a specific next step: two time options, a booking link, or what you need from them. A template is in the Worksheets section.

Chapter 8

# Gate 6: Booked

1 Found | 2 Checked | 3 Chosen | 4 Contacted | 5 Answered | **6 Booked**

Where “interested” quietly turns into “never booked”, and the three-message follow-up that fixes it.

The last gate is the first commitment: the appointment, consultation, viewing, or discovery call. Between “interested” and “booked” there is often a quiet gap where people intend to book, then get busy.

## What usually goes wrong

- **No follow-up after the first reply.** One message is sent, nothing comes back, and the inquiry is mentally filed as “not serious.”
- **Too many steps to schedule.** Back-and-forth emails to find a time.
- **No reminder, so no-shows.** Booked appointments are forgotten.
- **No clear picture of what the first meeting involves,** which makes it easy to postpone.

## Self-test: the follow-through check

**Self-test.** Look at the last 20 inquiries that received a reply but did not book.

1. How many got a second follow-up message? A third?
2. How long did scheduling take for the ones that did book?
3. Of booked first appointments in the last month, how many were missed or cancelled late?
4. Do you send a reminder before appointments, and does it explain what to expect?

**Score:** 0 if follow-ups rarely happen and no-shows are common. 1 if there's some follow-up but no consistent process. 2 if every open inquiry gets a planned sequence and reminders are automatic.

## What to fix first

**Agree a simple follow-up sequence.** For example: a first reply; a second message two business days later that adds something useful (an answer, a short example, a time option); a final, polite message a week later saying you'll close the file but are happy to help whenever they're ready. Then stop. Persistence is not pestering when each message is useful and the last one is clearly final.

**Let people book themselves.** Offer a booking link or two specific time options instead of “When suits you?”

**Send reminders with context.** A reminder a day before, with what to bring or prepare, reduces no-shows and makes the first meeting better.

Chapter 9

# Pricing the leak

Put an honest dollar range on each gap without fooling yourself, so you know what to fix first.

You now have scores for six gates. The next question is which weak gate to fix first. A useful input is a rough sense of what each leak might be worth. This chapter shows how to estimate that carefully, and how not to fool yourself with the result.

## Four rules for honest numbers

1. **Separate what you observed from what you assumed.** "We missed 9 calls in two weeks" is an observation. "Half of them would have booked" is an assumption. Label every number in your calculation as one or the other.
2. **Separate revenue from profit.** A new client worth $1,000 in fees is not $1,000 in your pocket. Use your gross margin to estimate profit.
3. **Use a range, not a single number.** A low and a high estimate, based on cautious and generous assumptions, is more honest and more useful than one precise-looking figure.

4. **Remember that a calculation is not proof.** It shows what a leak *could* be worth if your assumptions hold. It doesn't show that the leak *caused* any particular loss. People who didn't book may never have been likely to buy.

## The calculation

For each leak you can count, such as missed calls, unanswered messages, or open inquiries that never got a follow-up:

| Line | Input | Type |
|---|---|---|
| A | Inquiries lost at this gate per month | Observed (from your log) |
| B | Share of comparable inquiries that normally become clients | Observed from records, or estimated |
| C | Average revenue from a new client in their first year | Observed from records |
| D | Gross margin on that revenue | Observed or estimated |
| E | Share of lost inquiries that would realistically have been comparable to normal ones | Assumption: use a low and a high |

**Potential revenue at risk per month = A × B × C × E**

**Potential profit at risk per month = A × B × C × D × E**

Line E matters. People who slip away at a gate may be different from people who don't: a missed caller may have been less serious, or may have called back later. E is where you account for that uncertainty. If you have no basis for it, use a cautious low value such as 0.25 and a generous high value such as 0.75, and say so.

**Hypothetical example.** All numbers below are invented to demonstrate the method. They do not describe a real business.

A small dental practice keeps a two-week log and counts 11 missed new-patient calls that were never returned, about 22 a month (**A, observed**). Its records show that about 40% of answered new-patient calls become patients (**B, observed**). A new patient's first-year treatment averages $600 (**C, observed**). The practice estimates its gross margin at 35% (**D, estimated**). It doesn't know how comparable the missed callers were, so it uses 0.25 and 0.75 (**E, assumption**).

Potential revenue at risk: 22 × 0.40 × $600 × 0.25 = **$1,320** (low) to 22 × 0.40 × $600 × 0.75 = **$3,960** (high) per month.

Potential profit at risk: **$462** to **$1,386** per month.

The honest conclusion is not "we are losing $3,960 a month." It is: "Unreturned calls could plausibly be worth somewhere between a few hundred and around fourteen

hundred dollars a month in profit, which is more than enough to justify a callback rule that costs almost nothing."

A calculation shows what a leak could be worth if your assumptions hold. It never proves what a leak cost you.

## When you can't count the leak

Some gates can't be measured directly. You can't count the people who didn't find you, or who left your homepage confused. For these, don't invent a number. Use the gate score and your judgment instead, and mark the estimate as "not quantified." A clear "we don't know, but the test failed" is more useful than a made-up figure.

## Measuring whether a fix worked

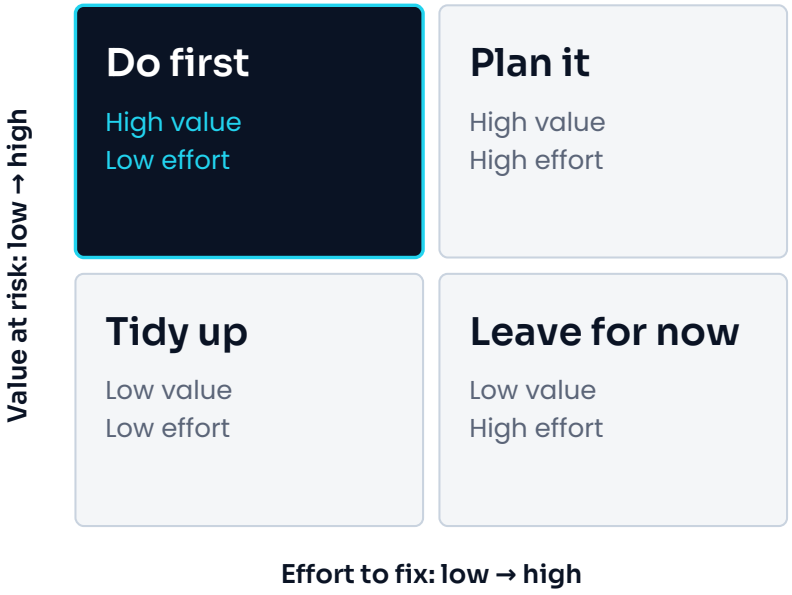
After you fix something, it is tempting to credit every improvement to the fix. Be careful. Inquiries also change with seasons, referrals, staff changes, prices and advertising. To get a fairer read:

- **Compare like with like:** the same length of period, and if possible the same time of year.
- **Change one major thing at a time** where you can.

- **Write down anything else that changed** during the period.
- **Treat the result as evidence, not proof.** If missed calls fell from 22 to 3 a month and bookings rose, the fix probably helped. “Probably” is the right word.

## Choosing what to fix first

Plot each weak gate on two simple questions: how much could it be worth (your range, or your judgment where you couldn’t calculate), and how much effort will the fix take?



Start with high-value, low-effort fixes. In practice these are often at the later gates (Contacted, Answered, Booked), because they involve process changes rather than new content or reputation, which take longer to build.

Chapter 10

# Your 30-day repair plan

Four weeks, two to three hours a week, in the order that pays back fastest.

A diagnosis without a plan becomes a document you mean to come back to. This chapter turns your scores into four weeks of specific actions. The plan assumes you can spend about two to three hours a week on it.

## Week 1: Measure

- Start the inquiry log (Gate 5) and keep it running all month.
- Run the self-tests for every gate and record your scores on the Gate Scorecard.
- Fix anything broken the moment you find it: forms that don't deliver, numbers that don't dial, inboxes nobody checks.

## Week 2: Fix the fast gates

- Assign one person to first replies, with a backup.
- Set a callback rule for missed calls and an honest out-of-hours reply.

- Write your reply and follow-up templates (Gate 5 and 6), using the Worksheets section as a starting point.
- Add a self-booking option or offer specific times.

## Week 3: Fix the trust and choice gates

- Rewrite your homepage first screen and re-run the five-second test.
- Make your next step obvious, and say what happens after it.
- Start asking every satisfied client for a review, with a direct link.
- Reply to every unanswered review in your own words.
- Correct inconsistent business information across your main profiles.

## Week 4: Re-measure and decide

- Compare your inquiry log from week 4 with week 1, with the cautions from Chapter 9 in mind.
- Re-score every gate.
- Choose the one or two gates to work on next month, especially slower ones like visibility and reviews, which build over months rather than weeks.

## What to expect

Some changes, like returning missed calls or fixing a broken form, can have a visible effect quickly. Others, like reviews and search visibility, build gradually and may take several months to show up. That is normal. The purpose of the first month is to stop the obvious leaks and set up the habits that make the slower gates improve.

Chapter 11

# Worksheets

The scorecard, inquiry log, leak calculator and ready-to-send reply templates, all in one place.

## The Gate Scorecard

Score each gate 0, 1 or 2 using the self-tests. Note the single biggest problem you found.

| Gate | Score (0–2) | Biggest problem found | Fix this month? |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Found | | | |
| 2. Checked | | | |
| 3. Chosen | | | |
| 4. Contacted | | | |
| 5. Answered | | | |
| 6. Booked | | | |

A total score matters less than the pattern. A business scoring 2, 2, 2, 0, 0, 2 has a very different problem from one scoring 0, 0, 2, 2, 2, 2.

## The inquiry log

| Date and time received | Channel | First human reply (time) | Who replied | Outcome |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

## The leak calculator

| Line | Input | Observed or estimated? | Low | High |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | Inquiries lost per month at this gate | | | |
| B | Normal conversion rate | | | |
| C | First-year revenue per new client | | | |
| D | Gross margin | | | |
| E | Comparability of lost inquiries | Assumption | | |
| | **Revenue at risk (A×B×C×E)** | | | |
| | **Profit at risk (A×B×C×D×E)** | | | |

## Templates

Adapt these to your own voice. They are starting points, not scripts.

**First reply to a new inquiry**

Hi [Name], thanks for getting in touch about [their question in their words].

[Answer their question briefly if you can, or say what you need to know to answer it.]

The best next step is [a short call / an initial appointment / a valuation visit]. I have [day, time] or [day, time] free, or you can pick a time here: [booking link].

[Your name]

**Follow-up, two business days later**

Hi [Name], following up on your question about [topic]. [One useful addition: a short answer, a relevant example, or a common question people in their situation ask.]

If it's helpful, I can still do [time option]. If now isn't the right time, no problem at all.

**Final follow-up, a week later**

Hi [Name], I'll close this off for now so I'm not filling your inbox. If [topic] comes back onto your list, just reply to this email and I'll pick it up from here.

**Review request, soon after a good result**

Hi [Name], it was good to [finish the project / see you today / help with the sale]. If you have a minute, a short review would genuinely help other people decide whether we're right for them: [direct review link]. A sentence or two is plenty. Thank you either way.

# Sources

Statistics in this guide come from the following sources. Each was checked against the original publisher's page where it was available. Survey figures describe what respondents reported, and the samples are noted because they limit how far the findings apply.

1. **BrightLocal, *Local Consumer Review Survey 2026*.** Published February 11, 2026. Representative panel of 1,002 US adult consumers, via SurveyMonkey. Used for: review reading, review count and recency expectations, star-rating thresholds, response expectations, review requests, and use of AI tools for local recommendations. https://www.brightlocal.com/research/local-consumer-review-survey/

2. **Google Business Profile Help, "Tips to improve your local ranking on Google."** Used for: relevance, distance and prominence as the main local ranking factors; the role of complete information and reviews. https://support.google.com/business/answer/7091

3. **Oldroyd, J. B., McElheran, K., and Elkington, D. "The Short Life of Online Sales Leads." *Harvard Business Review*, March 2011.** Used for: the audit of 2,241 US companies and the 42-hour average response time; the association between contacting inquiries within an hour and successful contact. Article: https://hbr.org/2011/03/the-short-life-of-online-sales-leads. Bibliographic record: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/facpub/9711

4. **US Federal Trade Commission, Trade Regulation Rule on the Use of Consumer Reviews and Testimonials, 16 CFR Part 465 (effective October 21, 2024).** Referenced for: the US prohibition on fake reviews and on buying reviews conditioned on positive or

negative sentiment. Summary by Hogan Lovells: https://www.hoganlovells.com/en/publications/ftc-publishes-final-rule-banning-fake-consumer-reviews-and-testimonials

5. **BrightLocal, *Local Consumer Review Survey 2026*** (same source as 1). Used for: the statement that offering incentives for reviews violates the guidelines of platforms such as Google and Yelp.

**What this guide does not claim.** It does not claim that any fix will produce a specific result, that the gates describe every client journey, or that the hypothetical examples reflect real businesses. Industry observations are the author's views and are labeled as such.

# About the author

**Kishan Kr Soni** works with founders, clinics, real estate professionals and coaches on the parts of growth that sit around their expertise: being found, being trusted, and turning interest into booked conversations. His work covers SEO and AI-search visibility, content and video, websites, and practical AI workflows such as voice agents that answer missed calls.

He is based in Indore, India, and works remotely with businesses in the US, UK, UAE, Canada and Australia. He is studying for his Chartered Accountancy Intermediate exams alongside this work, which is where his habit of separating evidence from assumption comes from, and why the leak calculator in this guide looks the way it does.

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## If you'd like a second pair of eyes

Everything in this guide can be done without outside help. If you would rather have someone run the audit with you, Kishan offers a Revenue Leak Audit: the same six gates, applied to your business by someone outside it, with a short written report of the fixes that matter most. To talk it through, book a free 20-minute call at calendly.com/kishanofficial012/free-content-strategy-call or email hello@kishankrsoni.com.