



FREE PLAYBOOK FOR HOME SERVICE OWNERS

Get off Angi, HomeAdvisor, and Thumbtack for good.

A 90-day plan for replacing rented leads with ones you own,
in an order that keeps the phone ringing while you make the switch.

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Why this playbook exists

Early in my career I worked with a home service provider operating in more than thirty cities. They were spending six figures a month on Google Ads and another five figures a month on leads from Angie's List. When we finally audited where that money went, three things stood out: they were billed more than once for the same homeowner request, a real share of the leads were fake, and some of the "companies" they were competing against were fronts built to capture and resell homeowner data.

That audit changed how I think about lead platforms permanently. They are not evil. For a business in its first year with no reviews and no website, they're a reasonable way to get the first jobs. But the model is built to keep you dependent: the same lead is sold to three to five competitors, the homeowner never sees your brand, and whoever answers fastest and quotes lowest wins.

This playbook is the plan we run for clients who have outgrown that. It's written for home service companies doing roughly \$1M to \$10M a year who spend four or five figures a month on leads they don't own. It assumes you can handle more work than you're getting. It does not assume you have a marketing team.

The core idea: you don't turn the platforms off on day one. You build your own channel alongside them, measure both on the same number (cost per *sold* job), and turn the platforms off when yours wins. Most owners who follow this plan are off the platforms within 90 to 120 days.

What's inside

- **Part 1.** The real math: a worksheet for your true cost per sold job on each platform
- **Part 2.** The 90-day transition plan, month by month
- **Part 3.** The one-page site that replaces the lead form
- **Part 4.** A starter Google Ads structure with budget guidance
- **Part 5.** Tracking so you can prove which channel is winning
- **Part 6.** When to turn the platforms off, and how to do it without losing your reviews

The real math on rented leads

Most owners know what they pay per lead. Almost none know what they pay per *sold job*, which is the only number that matters. Fill this in for each platform using the last 90 days. Rough is fine; honest is required.

Worksheet: cost per sold job

Line	Platform A	Platform B
1. Total spent on the platform (90 days)	\$	\$
2. Leads received		
3. Leads that were duplicates, wrong area, or fake		
4. Real leads (line 2 minus line 3)		
5. Jobs actually sold from those leads		
6. Cost per real lead (line 1 ÷ line 4)	\$	\$
7. Cost per sold job (line 1 ÷ line 5)	\$	\$
8. Average revenue of those sold jobs	\$	\$
9. Gross margin on those jobs (%)	%	%
10. Profit per sold job after lead cost (8 × 9) – 7	\$	\$

If line 10 is under \$150 for a job that takes a crew half a day, you are working for the platform. If it's negative, you are paying for the privilege.

What the numbers usually show

In the thirty-city audit, platform leads closed *smaller* jobs at a *higher* cost per sold job than Google Ads leads in the same market. Three things drive it:

- **You're paying for the race, not the job.** If a platform lead doesn't get a call back within five minutes, the odds of booking it drop sharply, because several companies are chasing the same request.
- **Price shoppers self-select.** A homeowner who fills out a form on a lead site is comparing phone numbers, not companies. The ones who care about quality found you some other way.
- **You're often paying twice.** The same homeowner shows up as a platform lead Monday and a paid click Thursday, and you pay both.

The 90-day transition plan

The order matters. Owners who cut the platforms first and build second go through a dry spell they can't afford and crawl back. Owners who build first and cut when the data says so don't.

Days 1–30: Build the foundation

- Run the Part 1 worksheet. Keep paying for the platforms; don't change anything there yet.
- Set up call tracking (Part 5) *before* anything else goes live, so your own channel is measured from its first day.
- Build the one-page site (Part 3). If your current site is dated, don't rebuild it; build one strong page and point everything at that.
- Claim and clean up your Google Business Profile: real photos, correct hours, correct categories, and start asking every happy customer for a review.
- Launch the starter Google Ads campaign (Part 4) with a modest budget. The goal this month is data, not volume.

Days 31–60: Compare on the same number

- At day 45, put your own channel through the Part 1 worksheet next to each platform. Same lines, same 45-day window.
- Fix the ads based on what you learn: add negative keywords, pause what isn't converting, move budget toward what is.
- Fix the page based on what you learn: if calls come in but don't book, the problem is the phone, not the page. If visitors don't call, the problem is the page.
- Cut the weakest platform now if your own channel's cost per sold job is already lower. Keep the strongest one.

Days 61–90: Shift the budget

- Move what you were spending on the cut platform into your own channel. Your cost per sold job should drop further as the account learns.
- Add a second service line or a second city to the ads if the first one is profitable.
- At day 90, run the worksheet one more time. If your own channel wins on cost per sold job and your volume is holding, cut the last platform (see Part 6 for how).

Expect the first 30 days of your own channel to look worse than the platforms. That's normal. New ad accounts need conversion data before they get efficient, and you're building something that compounds instead of renting something that resets every month.

The one-page site that replaces the lead form

A homeowner coming from a platform never saw your brand. A homeowner coming to your own page sees nothing else. That page has one job: get a stranger to trust you and call you in under a minute. Here's the order of sections that does it, top to bottom.

Section	What it does	Common mistake
Headline + one line	Says what you do, where, and for whom. "Greenville's pool builder since 1991."	A slogan. "Quality you can trust."
Phone + button, above the fold	Tappable number, one button, one action. On mobile this is the whole page.	A navigation menu with eight links and no number.
Three proof points	Years in business, review count and rating, a license or guarantee.	Stock photos of a handshake.
What you do (3–5 items)	Your core services, each one sentence, no jargon.	Twenty services nobody reads.
Real photos	Your crew, your trucks, your finished work. Four to six is plenty.	Stock photos. Homeowners can tell.
Three reviews, verbatim	Pulled from Google with the reviewer's first name. Specific beats glowing.	"Great service!" with no name.
How it works, 3 steps	Call, we come out, you get a quote. Sets expectations and lowers the bar to calling.	Skipping it. Strangers want to know what happens next.
Service area	The cities and neighborhoods you cover. This is also what Google reads.	"We serve the whole region."
Phone + button again	They scrolled this far. Ask again.	Ending on a footer.

Two rules

- **Match the ad.** If the ad says "emergency AC repair," the headline says "emergency AC repair," not "HVAC solutions."
- **Three fields, max.** Name, phone, one question. The phone number is still the primary action; the form is for people who can't call right now.

A starter Google Ads structure

This is the structure we use for every new home service client. It's deliberately simple. Depth comes once you have data; complexity on day one just burns budget.

Campaign setup

- **Search campaigns only** to start. Skip Performance Max, Display, and YouTube. Search catches people actively looking for your service, which is the highest intent you'll ever buy.
- **One campaign per core service.** "Pool installation," "pool repair," "hot tubs." Not one campaign for everything.
- **Tight geography.** Your actual service area, drawn as a radius or a list of cities. Not "South Carolina."
- **Ad schedule matched to your phones.** If nobody answers after 6pm, don't pay for clicks after 6pm.
- **Phrase and exact match keywords.** Broad match on a new account spends your budget on searches you'd never want.
- **A negative keyword list from day one.** "Free," "DIY," "jobs," "salary," "how to," and your competitors' names.
- **Call conversions tracked**, not just form fills. Most home service leads are calls. If Google can't see them, it optimizes toward the wrong thing.

Budget guidance

Business size	Starting monthly ad spend	Why
Under \$1M revenue, first time running ads	\$1,000–1,500	Enough to produce data in the first month. Below this, you can't tell what's working.
\$1M–3M revenue	\$2,000–4,000	Enough for two service lines or two cities.
\$3M–10M revenue	\$4,000–15,000	Based on a real audit of your market and competition. Don't guess at this level.

Keep the management fee separate from ad spend if you hire someone. You pay Google directly from your own card, and you pay the person managing it a flat fee. Any arrangement where you can't see those two numbers separately is one to walk away from.

Tracking so you can prove it worked

One of our clients, Hot Springs Pools & Spas, had the same phone number on their website, in Google Ads, on signage, and on every Google Business Profile. Thousands of calls a year, and no way to say which marketing made the phone ring. Three years after fixing that, the system has logged 6,939 tracked calls, and two-thirds of them come from the website itself, not a lead platform. You can't run this playbook without the same visibility.

The minimum setup

- **A tracked phone number for every source.** One for the website, one for each Google Ads campaign, one for each Google Business Profile, one for Facebook. Call tracking software (we use CallRail) swaps them in automatically and logs every call with its source. Budget \$45–100 a month.
- **Every call and form lands in one place.** A CRM (we use HubSpot; the free tier is enough to start) where each lead has a source, an owner, and a status.
- **A pipeline, not a phone log.** New → Contacted → Quoted → Won or Lost. Someone moves every lead through it. This is the only way to get line 5 of the worksheet right.
- **Ask every caller where they found you,** even with tracking. Tracking tells you the channel; the customer tells you the story.

The report you run monthly

Source	Spend	Leads	Sold jobs	Cost / sold job	Avg job
Your website (organic)	\$			\$	\$
Google Ads	\$			\$	\$
Google Business Profile	\$0			\$0	\$
Platform A	\$			\$	\$
Platform B	\$			\$	\$
Referral / repeat	\$0			\$0	\$

Run this every month. The first time you see your own channel beat a platform on cost per sold job with a higher average job value, you'll know exactly what to do next.

When to turn the platforms off

Three signals, all from the monthly report

- **Your cost per sold job is lower than the platform's** for two consecutive months, not one.
- **Your lead volume is holding or growing** as you've shifted budget. If volume dropped, you cut too early.
- **Your average job value is higher** from your own channel. This is the one owners miss. Platform leads skew toward small, price-shopped jobs; your own leads skew toward people who chose you.

How to cancel without losing what you built there

- **Export your reviews first.** Screenshot them, copy the text, and get permission from the best reviewers to use their words on your site. Platform reviews don't transfer; the words can.
- **Keep the free listing if the platform has one.** Angi and Thumbtack both have free profile tiers. Stay visible; just stop paying per lead.
- **Cancel the paid tier in writing** and keep the confirmation. Several platforms auto-renew and dispute cancellations.
- **Update your tracking.** Retire that platform's tracked number so the report stays clean.
- **Move the budget the same week.** Don't let it sit. Put it into the campaign or city that's been profitable.

What comes after

Once you own your lead flow, the next investments are the ones that make it compound: a real brand so homeowners recognize you before they search, a review system so your rating keeps climbing, and a full site built around the pages that are already converting. That's the shift from lead generation to being the name everyone in your town already knows. It takes years, and it's worth it.

About the author

Warren Coppage is an owner and the Director of Growth at branded by, a brand-first growth agency based in Greenville, South Carolina. He leads advertising and growth for branded by's clients, from Shark Tank-featured ecommerce brands to dozens of home service companies. branded by is a Google Partner and has managed more than \$4M in Google Ads spend.

If you'd like a second set of eyes on the numbers from Part 1, we'll record a free audit of your Google Ads account at brandedby.co/google-ads-audit. If you haven't started ads yet, our free budget forecast at brandedby.co/ad-budget-forecast will tell you what to expect before you spend a dollar.

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