

Constructing profit: Growing your home services business during turbulent times.

Build a solid foundation for success.

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IN THIS GUIDE WE'LL COVER:

- Industry trends and customer expectations
- Responding to a new climate
- Strategies for winning new leads
- Tips for developing consistent business
- Ideas for managing customer needs on the go
- Maintaining work-life balance while growing your business



INTRODUCTION

Running a home services business has its share of challenges – from winning new clients and retaining staff to riding out seasonal spikes in demand and managing your business on the go. Difficult economic times make things even trickier.

As a home services entrepreneur, you're used to being flexible, wearing all of the hats, and thinking on your feet to respond to the shifting needs of your business. While these skills serve you well, added demands on an already demanding business can lead to frustration and burn out.

But, tough times also offer new opportunities to regain focus and set your business up for success. Returning to the basics and understanding customer needs can ensure stability now and help you thrive when circumstances stabilize.

This eBook highlights research and stories to help you pave a path toward profit without sacrificing work-life balance, even during changing times.



PART ONE

The state of the home services industry.

While there's a wide variety of trades in the home services industry, most business owners agree on a handful of key challenges that shape their day-to-day.

Customer expectations are on the rise

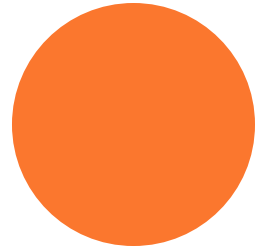
Our online, on-demand world has made an impact on expectations, adding pressure to offer stellar customer service, instant responses, and quality work or face negative reviews and damaged reputations.

Finding and winning new leads is a constant priority

Bringing new business through the door is critical to your success, but it can be hard to know where to focus your marketing efforts to get the best results.

Maintaining consistent business can be a challenge

Since many contractors work on a project basis, workloads can feel like feast or famine. This is further complicated by seasonal spikes in demand that can be difficult to manage, especially during a shifting cultural and business climate.



Hiring and retaining qualified staff keeps you up at night

Home services businesses face a competitive hiring market and seasonal swings that make maintaining the right staffing levels difficult.

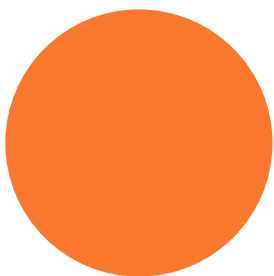
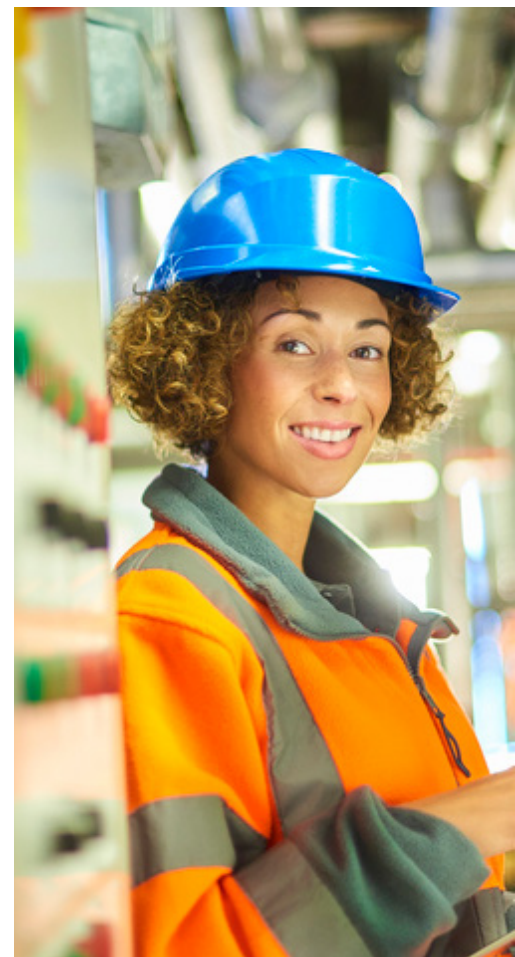
Growing your business can take a toll on personal time

Being responsive to customer requests and hustling to grow your business can limit your time off work.

Difficult times impact us all

Current global events and the resulting economic downturn has made an impact on all types of businesses. Thinking outside the box, remaining flexible, and adjusting practices as needed can help you successfully respond to the unexpected.

We'll discuss ways to overcome these challenges and put your business on the path to growth.





PART TWO

Customer expectations.

Your success lies in the hands of your customers. Understanding their needs and learning how they think is the key to building a strong reputation and increasing your chances of getting hired.

The current customer experience climate

Think about your last great interaction with a business. What made it special? It's often the simple things that make or break your opinion of a business.

Customers want quick and effective responses

66% say instant, on-demand engagement is a critical decision-making factor in purchasing new goods and services.

When reaching out to a business, more than **80%** of customers expect a response within an hour and **75%** expect help within five minutes.

Customers want to be understood, cared for, and treated like they are important.

84%

of customers say being treated like an individual, not a number, is very important to winning their business.²

73%

expect companies to understand their needs and expectations³

84%

say the experience a company provides is as important as its products or services (up from 80% last year)⁴

Responding quickly and treating customers well every time will give you a tremendous opportunity to rise above your competitors, as only 8% of customers believe that companies meet their expectations for excellent service.⁵

1 2017 SALESFORCE

2 2019 SALESFORCE CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT TRENDS

3 IBID

4 2019 SALESFORCE CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT TRENDS

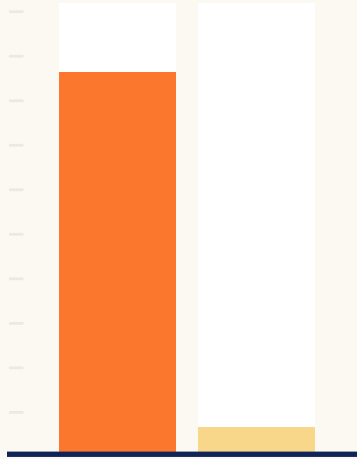
5 BAIN & COMPANY CLOSING THE DELIVERY GAP

Customer expectations vs. Reality

CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS

84%

say experience is as important as products or services



REALITY

8%

of customers believe that companies meet their expectations

What's unique about home services customers?

While all customers expect to be responded to and treated well, home services customers deal with additional factors that make strong communication and excellent service even more critical.

The HGTV effect

With millions of viewers tuning in to watch miraculous and speedy home transformations on television, it's no wonder home services customers can have unrealistic expectations at times. You can address this issue by providing consistent, clear communication. Taking the time to set expectations up front and explain the why behind your costs and timelines can help your customers understand the realities of their project.



The importance of building trust

Your customers are inviting you into their homes and trusting you with their most meaningful and expensive asset. Home projects are typically costly, time consuming, and disruptive, which puts extra pressure on decision making. That's why earning trust is even more critical in the home services industry than in other types of work. Earning trust starts with your reputation online and continues with every interaction a customer has with your business. Following through on your promises and being honest throughout the process is key, even when things go wrong.

Real problems need quick solutions

While it's not always the case, home services customers often face the added stress of real problems that need immediate solutions. Plumbing leaks can cause major damage, clogged drains can make bathrooms challenging to use, failed air conditioning systems can make life uncomfortable, and the list goes on and on. When customers need an immediate solution, they're more likely to keep calling competitors until they connect with someone who can help.



PART THREE


Navigating the changing landscape.

An uncertain economic future and new safety concerns have many families thinking carefully about how they spend their limited budgets. The good news is that most home services remain essential, and people are more connected to their homes than ever.

There are a number of ways you can help protect your team's health, support your customers, and maintain your business during these unstable times.

Prioritizing and communicating safety

Safety is the first and most essential issue to consider. If you're able to continue with projects or service calls, you've likely implemented new procedures to ensure your health and protect your customers.



“What we are seeing right now is home service professionals are focusing on essential repairs but changing their process with a renewed focus on safety and transparency. In addition, they are embracing technology to start early repair diagnosis via video, photos or chat and a one-person, one-visit approach to maximize multiple repair and revenue opportunities.”⁶

Angie Hicks

CO FOUNDER OF ANGIE'S LIST AND CHIEF CUSTOMER OFFICER AT ANGI HOMESERVICES

⁶ 2020 FORBES

As things evolve, keep an eye on the CDC's guidelines and plan ahead to maintain your inventory of personal protective equipment to support your customers and your team. Current guidelines suggest wearing masks, cleaning hands, and maintaining at least a six-foot distance from others. You may also want to require other protective equipment and take extra steps to clean and sanitize your work area.

In addition, using technology to facilitate virtual meetings, diagnostics, and project estimates can help you limit contact and operate responsibly.

Once you have thought through the safest ways to continue your work, communicate them clearly to your team and your customers. Setting your customers' minds at ease about safety and social distancing before your project begins helps you earn trust and sets the stage for work to go smoothly. It may even be the deciding factor for customers who are considering canceling projects that no longer feel essential. Your customers will appreciate the empathy, which will likely translate into future referrals and positive reviews.

Staying connected to your customers and your team

Even though conditions are stressful, resist the urge to go dark. The first and simplest way to stay top of mind with your customers is to let them know how your hours, services, process, or safety procedures have changed. Take the opportunity to thank them for their past business and let them know how much you look forward to supporting them in the future.



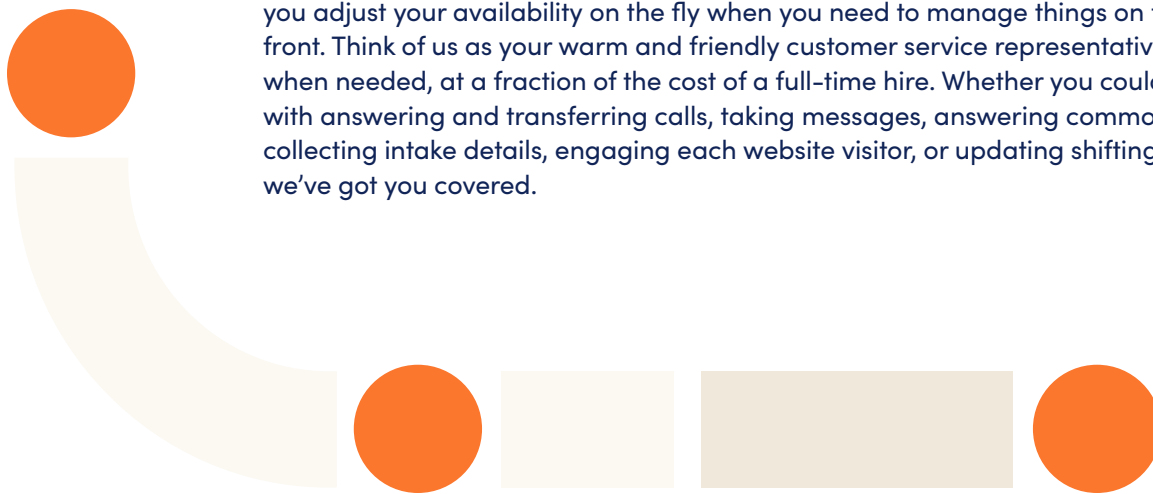


Since people are spending more time at home, many are taking the time to learn new skills, which may mean tackling small projects themselves. If you have basic tips or tricks to offer, share them. Being generous with your expertise now can help build a strong reputation.

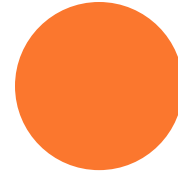
If you need to furlough or lay off employees due to the economic climate, give them as much notice as possible and take the time to demonstrate how much you care. This is a uniquely stressful time, so connecting employees to government benefits and letting them know how much you appreciated working with them means a lot. Tell them you'd be glad to rehire them if circumstances allow and offer references to support their job search. Employees who feel you did all you could will be more likely to consider working with you again and can spread positive messaging about you in the community.

Building smart support into your plans

Many small business owners are juggling homeschooling, entertaining their children, cooking meals, and sourcing household supplies safely. The added demands of staying home take a toll on your ability to communicate proactively and focus on work. Ruby's live virtual receptionists and chat specialists can take some of the pressure off, helping you adjust your availability on the fly when you need to manage things on the home front. Think of us as your warm and friendly customer service representative who is there when needed, at a fraction of the cost of a full-time hire. Whether you could use support with answering and transferring calls, taking messages, answering common questions, collecting intake details, engaging each website visitor, or updating shifting schedules, we've got you covered.



Three keys to growth.



1 Winning new business

Your ability to win new business starts with your ability to answer every call and engage leads that visit your website. Add a warm, empathetic tone and helpful answers to questions and you'll be ahead of the game in turning contacts into customers. And, add chat services to your website to engage every site visitor and answer every potential customer's question.

2 Maintaining consistency

For many contractors, workloads are anything but consistent. Shifting demands make it difficult to keep talented subcontractors employed year-round, draining your time and limiting growth potential. Providing an excellent customer experience each and every time is the foundation for earning consistent business. Happy customers send others your way and help build your reputation through glowing reviews.

3 Mobile management

Between visiting job sites, sourcing materials, and other demands, you're likely on-the-go, all the time. Daily work takes you away from the office, which can leave your phone ringing with no one to answer. Each missed call is a missed opportunity to grow your business, so the ability to respond from anywhere is key to continued growth.



In the next sections, we'll dive deeper into these topics and share solutions that can strengthen your business.

PART FOUR

Winning new business.

By the time customers contact you, they already know they have a problem to solve and have determined that you may be able to help them solve it. To win their business before they move on to a competitor, respond quickly, respond well, and help your customers take the next steps.



The ROI of responsiveness

Let's say you get 10 phone calls per day, 30% of your phone calls result in a sale, and your average sale is \$1,000. If you answer every call that comes in, then three out of every 10 will earn you \$1,000 with a total value of \$3,000 per day. Over the course of a year, that's \$783,000 in revenue captured by the simple action of picking up the phone without fail.

It's easy to see how quickly the simple action of answering every call can add up. And these numbers are on the low end of the scale, since

43%

of Ruby's home services customers say that

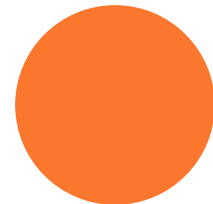
50%

or more of their phone calls result in new business.⁸



70%

of Ruby's home services customers say that while there are more ways for customers to get in touch than ever, phone calls remain the number one way that new customers reach out.⁷



7 2020 RUBY HOME SERVICES SURVEY
8 2020 RUBY HOME SERVICES SURVEY

If you get **10 phone calls a day** and answer 100% of them

2610

Calls per year

30% of those calls will result in a sale

x.3

Conversion

Resulting in **783 more sales** per year

783

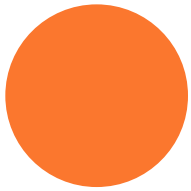
Net new sales

783 more sales x **\$1,000** average deal size

\$783,000.

In new business!


Now consider the flip side. When you miss calls and opportunities to engage website visitors, you're not only missing the opportunity to increase your revenue, you're also missing out on the potential for online reviews and word-of-mouth referrals. Since the customer still has a problem to solve, you're likely lining your competitors pockets and helping them grow their businesses in addition to missing the opportunity to grow yours.



Adding live chat to your website expands your opportunities to respond to customers needs and win new business. It's also an under-utilized resource that can help you set yourself apart, since 64% of the home services businesses we surveyed don't offer live chat on their websites.⁹

Expand opportunities with live website chat

Your future customers are already in the evaluation stage once they hit your website, and likely have questions. If you can offer help and make a connection in the moment, they're more likely to take action to hire you. Connecting with a real human who can help answer questions right away adds a vote of confidence in favor of your business.



“Be very realistic about scheduling. Take into account weather, delays, Murphy’s Law, maintenance, transportation, setup and breakdown time, etc. Use a calendar or scheduling software religiously. Lock every appointment in the schedule right now. If it doesn’t go on the schedule, it’s guaranteed to never get done.”

Keith Kalfas

KALFAS PROFESSIONAL SERVICES¹⁰

⁹ IBID

¹⁰ IBID

The importance of friendly, clear communication

While answering the phone is a critical first step, it's not the only thing that can influence a customer's decision to hire you. Customers also expect to be treated well and receive clear and helpful answers to their questions.

CONSIDER THIS:

68%

of customers said a **pleasant representative** was the reason for their recent positive service experiences

62%

said a representative's **knowledge or resourcefulness was key.**¹¹

Good communication also means setting expectations and next steps up from the start. This way customers aren't left with unrealistic assumptions. For example, share as much information as you can before visiting a customer's home to put together an estimate. Are you able to offer a ballpark figure based on past projects? Even a rough price range and timeline can help put customers' minds at ease.

Quick and simple scheduling

42%

of home services businesses say efficient scheduling is a top challenge.¹² Mastering timely, accurate scheduling gives your business another opportunity to shine.

Your customers want to understand next steps and know there is a plan in place they can count on. Being quick to schedule projects and following through on your commitments can reduce your customers' concerns around timing and put an end to their need to look for other solutions.

¹¹ 2017 AMERICAN EXPRESS CUSTOMER SERVICE BAROMETER

¹² 2020 JOBBER ACADEMY



“As our schedule seems to change every few hours, the best tools we have are the people in charge of the schedule. The more they are on top of things and communicating with our clients and team members, the smoother things run.”

Graham Audenart

PAINTERS ENTERPRISE¹³

13 [IBID](#)



Do it all with smart support

If you're reading this and wondering "How will I be able to answer every call, support website visitors with chat, provide all the right details, speak in a friendly tone, and get appointments booked, all while delivering quality results and living my life?" Never fear—Ruby to the rescue! Our live virtual receptionists and chat specialists can assist with critical, but time consuming tasks, giving you time to focus on your trade.

Ruby makes real human connections. We start with a friendly greeting and focus on thoughtful attention to detail in every interaction. Our service is flexible, affordable, and available right when you need it. You can even switch Ruby support on and off with the tap of a button using our handy phone app.



RUBY CAN HELP YOU WIN NEW BUSINESS BY:

- Ensuring a warm, caring tone for all callers
- Taking detailed messages
- Conducting customer intake so you have the details you need to follow up effectively
- Answering common questions based on information you provide
- Placing outbound calls to share additional information or gather details from customers
- Scheduling quick and accurate appointments based on your availability using Calendly
- Engaging your website visitors through 24-7 live chat
- Providing bilingual receptionist support in English or Spanish

When your communication is handled by warm, caring professionals, you'll quickly see the difference that responsiveness and customer service can make. In fact, Ruby customers see an average increase of more than

20% in new business leads.

PART FIVE

Maintaining consistency.

According to the home services business owners we surveyed, maintaining consistent business is the top challenge they face.¹⁴

Yet many business owners overlook or undervalue the power of their existing customer base. Loyal, satisfied customers are the key to driving consistent business through positive reviews, referrals, and repeat business.

While digital channels present new opportunities to connect with customers, the grapevine is still alive and well. 75% of home services entrepreneurs say that word of mouth remains one of their most important sources of new clients.¹⁵ And nearly 60% of Ruby's home services customers say more than half of their business comes from customer referrals.¹⁶

Positive word of mouth comes from providing an amazing experience every time a customer interacts with your business. The results of your efforts will send a steady stream of customers through your door.

Consistent business can also help address a major challenge many contractors face—hiring and retaining employees. When business is predictable, you can maintain staffing levels, reducing the need to continually look for qualified help.



¹⁴ 2020 RUBY HOME SERVICES SURVEY

¹⁵ [2020 JOBBER ACADEMY](#)

¹⁶ 2020 RUBY HOME SERVICES SURVEY

Providing a stellar customer experience

So how do you make customers happy? It can be as simple as treating them as though you're always trying to win their business, regardless of how long you've been working with them. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- Just like new customers, existing customers want to be able to reach you and get quick answers to their questions
- They want to get updates on how their project is going
- They want an honest answer and a clear explanation when prices or timelines shift
- They want to know you care about them and their home and that you're invested in solving their problems
- They want to know you are planning ahead for their safety and your own
- They want to be appreciated and thanked for their business. Feeling unappreciated is the #1 reason customers switch away from products and services¹⁷
- They want a good value, but not at the cost of customer service. When it comes to making a purchase, 64% of people find customer experience more important than price¹⁸
- They want good work and quality results
- They want to know your safety and sanitation procedures and policies



Remember, creating happy customers has tremendous value—increasing customer retention rates by 5% can grow profits anywhere from 25% to 95%.

Building reputation and referrals

The first thing most customers do when looking for a contractor is turn to Google or ask a friend or neighbor for a recommendation. Your reputation, website, and satisfied customers are the key to ensuring potential customer's queries and online searches lead them straight to you.

¹⁷ NEW VOICE MEDIA

¹⁸ 2014 GARTNER



Don't be afraid to ask your happy customers for reviews or help in spreading the word about your business. And when they do, be sure to thank them!

Ruby's wow-worthy customer service

Virtual receptionists provide affordable customer experience that builds your reputation, driving consistent business through your door with every happy customer and positive review.

Ruby goes above and beyond to delight your customers; we call it Wowism. It means we take the time to get to know them, anticipate their needs, and provide solutions before they ask. That's why the majority of our home services customers say that they get their best return on investment from our responsive service.²⁰

In our 2019 survey, Ruby customers reported a **10% increase in customer happiness** as a result of our services.

What could a 10% increase in loyal fans do for you in terms of referrals, repeat business, and positive reviews?

¹⁹ [2020 JOBBER ACADEMY](#)

²⁰ 2020 RUBY HOME SERVICES SURVEY

PART SIX

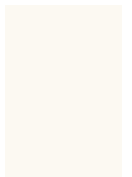
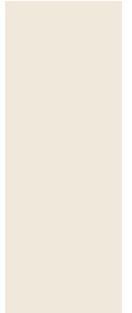
Mobile management.

Securing new work while on the job

We've already established the high cost of missed calls. But it's equally important to ensure quality and communicate with existing customers, which often means visiting job sites in person.

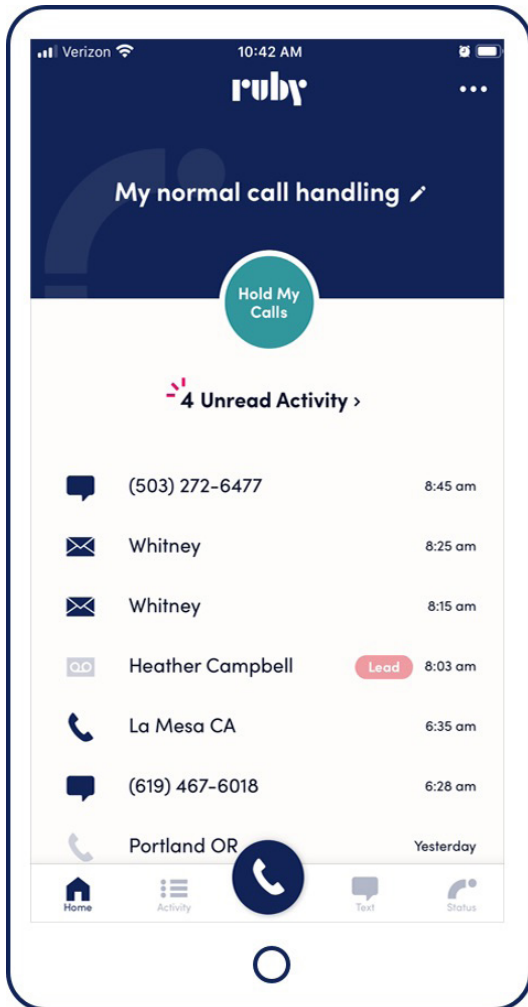
To stay in touch while on the go, you need a strong mobile solution. Responding from your personal cell phone affects your privacy, your free time, and appears less professional than using a business line. But getting a dedicated work cell phone means an added expense and another device to keep track of and charge.

Ruby offers a flexible and professional mobile solution, so you won't have to decide between responding to new opportunities and managing existing work.



Respond from anywhere with the Ruby app

At Ruby, we understand the importance of being able to manage your business no matter where you are. We can host your business number, helping you turn your cell phone into a work phone without sharing your personal information.



The Ruby app enables you to manage your business from the palm of your hand, including the ability to:

- Set your status for where and when you want to take calls
- Control who you want to receive calls from during specific timeframes
- Forward and unforward calls from your office to your cell phone with the touch of a button
- Build a call handling schedule that matches your availability
- Set your caller ID number as your business line to keep your cell number private
- Send text messages from your business phone number when using your cell phone
- Review message details from your Ruby receptionist
- And more!



The Ruby app is the perfect companion to our virtual receptionist and live chat services, helping you stay connected, capture leads, and provide exceptional customer service from any location.

PART SEVEN

Gaining freedom and flexibility.

As a small business owner, knowing everything rests on your shoulders can be overwhelming to say the least. And it can be difficult to communicate the pressures you face to family and friends. Without the ability to delegate to trusted, reliable partners, many business owners keep giving back to their businesses, supporting their customers and helping their teams until the day they burn out for good.



"You need to have people and systems in place that allow your business to keep running, even if you're not there. A lot of guys let their ego get in the way. They don't understand the power of delegation and creating a team they believe in. Replace yourself in the field, start building systems, and start delegating—immediately."

Stanley "Dirt Monkey" Genadek²¹



Protecting personal time

Ruby helps customers gain an average of more than 10 hours of distraction-free time back each month. What could you do with **10 hours back in your life?**

Our affordable support helps you regain focus and get back to the work you truly love. And when it's finally time to call it a day, you can enjoy your time with friends and family with a clear mind, knowing Ruby is there to handle calls and delight your customers, even during off-hours.

²¹ [2020 JOBBER ACADEMY](#)

PART EIGHT

Bringing it all together.

While there are many challenges to running a home services business, there's huge potential in getting back to the basics.

For example:

- Closing leads by making sure to pick up the phone every time it rings
- Engaging every website visitor with live chat
- Providing friendly, helpful service
- Increasing business consistency by letting a great customer experience build your reputation and fill your pipeline
- Implementing technology that enables you to respond to customer needs from anywhere
- Getting smart, affordable support that ensures customer satisfaction without sacrificing your work-life balance

Strengthening these foundations will help your business ensure consistent growth while providing you with the support you need to succeed.





Ruby is here to help.

Ruby forges a human connection between contractors and customers. Our caring people provide personalization that's supported by smart technology. Our service builds the customer loyalty you need to help your company thrive while allowing you to focus on your highest value work.

Our services


Ruby's 24/7 live virtual receptionists and chat services deliver exceptional customer experiences that help you win new business and build loyalty. We train each specialist to represent your business just as you would, making them indistinguishable from an in-house customer service representative, at a fraction of the price.

From answering your calls while you're at a job site to transferring high-priority callers to capturing leads while you're with your family – Ruby offers friendly, professional service that sets your business apart from the competition.

And, Ruby's convenient mobile app allows you to manage your business from anywhere so you can oversee projects without missing new opportunities.



What our customers have to say



"Since we signed up with Ruby we've seen increased inbound leads by 10-15%, while saving over \$1,600 in marketing costs per month. That's a huge return on our investment."

Ariel Istueta


ISTUETA ROOFING



"Ruby's extended hours helps us to present a professional image even outside our normal business hours and on weekends. We have been pleased in every way with Ruby!"

Brian Workman

BLIND CORNERS AND CURVES



"Ruby's chat staff is very friendly, professional, and treats our customers with respect. This service is helping us capture leads that we otherwise may have lost. Great company and super service!"

Angie Snow

WESTERN HEATING AND AIR CONDITIONING



Try Ruby risk-free and see why 10,000+ customers trust us with their most valuable asset: their customers. Business owners who work with Ruby report increased productivity, better profit margins, and higher client retention rates.

Learn more about how Ruby's live, friendly receptionists and chat specialists can help you turn contacts into customers.

Contact us today!

866-611-ruby (7829)

www ● **ruby** ● **com**

 *Try Ruby Risk Free*