

# The 5-Minute Rule

## A 10-minute scorecard for how fast your business answers a new lead — and what the gap is costing you.

Most service businesses don't lose leads because their marketing is weak. They lose them in the quiet gap between "a prospect raised their hand" and "someone actually responded." This short guide gives you a way to measure that gap honestly, in about ten minutes, with no software and no opt-in.

### Why speed is most of the game

Widely cited industry research on inbound leads keeps landing on the same uncomfortable finding: a lead contacted within **5 minutes** is roughly **21x more likely** to convert than one contacted after 30 minutes, and the odds keep falling by the hour after that.

We're not claiming a guarantee — results vary by business, offer, and lead source. But the *direction* is remarkably consistent: the first business to respond, with a real answer, wins a disproportionate share of the deal. Being first is something you can control. It's also the part that's easiest to automate.

**The honest version:** you almost certainly already know your follow-up is slower than it should be after hours. This guide just turns that hunch into a number you can act on.

### The scorecard

Score each row 0-2. Be honest — guess if you have to; a rough number beats no number.

#	Question	0 pts	1 pt	2 pts
1	A new lead arrives <b>during business hours</b> — how fast does a human reply?	> 1 hour	5-60 min	< 5 min
2	A new lead arrives <b>after hours / weekend</b> — what happens?	Waits till next shift	Auto-acknowledged	Real answer + next step
3	If the lead isn't ready to buy, do you <b>follow up more than once</b> ?	No	Once	A planned sequence
4	Can a lead <b>book a time with you</b> without a phone-tag loop?	No	Sometimes	Yes, self-serve
5	Do you <b>know your numbers</b> — leads in, response time, % that convert?	No idea	Some	Tracked

#### Add up your score (0-10):

- **8-10 — Sharp.** Speed isn't your leak. Look upstream (lead quality) or downstream (offer).
- **4-7 — Leaky.** You're losing winnable leads to the response gap, mostly after hours.
- **0-3 — Wide open.** The fastest revenue you have access to is responding sooner. Start here.

### The cost-of-inaction worksheet

Fill in your own numbers. This is the figure most owners stop on:

A. New leads per month ..... \_\_\_\_\_

B. % that arrive after hours / go slow ..... \_\_\_\_\_ %

C. Leads affected by the gap (A x B) ..... \_\_\_\_\_

D. Your average closed-deal value ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

E. Realistic conversion if answered fast (10-30%) ..... \_\_\_\_\_ %

Monthly revenue exposed to the gap = C x D x E = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

If that number is bigger than the cost of fixing the gap, the gap is the priority — not more ads, not a new website.

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## Five fixes, fastest first

1. **Instant acknowledgement, 24/7.** Every inquiry gets a real reply in seconds, day or night — even if it's just “got it, here's what happens next.”
2. **Self-serve booking.** Let qualified leads put a time on the calendar without phone tag.
3. **A real follow-up sequence.** Most deals need several touches; one-and-done leaves money on the table.
4. **Route the urgent ones.** Flag high-value or time-sensitive inquiries to a human immediately instead of treating every lead the same.
5. **Measure it.** You can't improve a response time you don't track.

The first two alone close most of the gap for most businesses — and both run without adding headcount.

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## Want us to run your numbers with you?

If your scorecard came back **leaky** or **wide open**, we're happy to walk through the worksheet with you and map exactly where the leads are slipping — and what closing the gap would actually take for *your* setup. No slides, no obligation, and if response speed isn't your real problem, we'll tell you straight.

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