



THE SMALL BUSINESS GROWTH TOOLKIT

PART 1 OF 4

The 5-Minute Lead Response Guide



Actionable strategies for growing your business



Build a Measurable Response Process

Part 1 of The Small Business Growth Toolkit

Examples, scripts, and schedules are illustrative. They are not customer case studies, reported NBS results, or guarantees. Measure outcomes using your own data.

Set a Response Target You Can Support

A prompt acknowledgment helps a customer understand the next step. Choose a target based on your staffed hours and coverage. Five minutes is a planning goal in this guide, not a research-backed deadline or a promised conversion rate.

Record inquiry time, first useful reply, and final outcome. Distinguish an automated acknowledgment from a human response. Review delays and missed handoffs using your own data.

Different customers and services need different response times. Explain after-hours availability and make it easy to reach a person when needed.

The 5-Minute Response Framework

Step 1: Get Notified Instantly

You can't respond to what you don't know about. Set up instant notifications:

- Email alerts with a distinct sound/vibration
- SMS notifications for new leads
- Push notifications on your phone
- Slack/Teams integration if your team uses it

Pro tip: Create a dedicated notification that's different from all your other alerts. You want to know immediately when a lead comes in, not when you happen to check email.

Step 2: Have Templates Ready

You don't have time to craft the perfect message when a lead comes in. Prepare templates in advance:

Initial Response Template (Call-back):

Hi [Name], this is [Your Name] from [Company]. I just got your inquiry about [service/product] and wanted to connect while it's fresh. Do you have a couple minutes to chat? If not, when's a good time to call you back?

Initial Response Template (Text):

Hi [Name]! This is [Your Name] from [Company]. Just saw your inquiry come through. Quick question - are you looking for [specific service] for [home/business]? Happy to help point you in the right direction.

Initial Response Template (Email):

Subject: Quick question about your inquiry

Hi [Name],

Thanks for reaching out! I wanted to connect with you right away.

To make sure I can help you best, could you tell me a bit more about [specific question related to their inquiry]?

I'm available [today/tomorrow] at [times] if you'd like to hop on a quick call.

[Your Name]

Step 3: Qualify and Book

Your first response has two goals:

- Acknowledge their inquiry (make them feel heard)
- Move them forward (book a call, send a quote, schedule an appointment)

Don't just respond-advance the conversation.

Step 4: If No Answer, Follow Up

Here is an illustrative follow-up sequence to adapt to customer preferences and consent:

- Attempt 1: Immediate response (call + text)
- Attempt 2: 1 hour later (text)
- Attempt 3: Next day morning (email)
- Attempt 4: 2 days later (call)
- Attempt 5: 1 week later (email with value-add)

Plan follow-up around customer preferences and stop when someone declines or opts out.

Scripts That Convert

The Warm Call Script

"Hi, is this [Name]? Great! This is [Your Name] from [Company]. You reached out about [their inquiry] and I wanted to call you back right away. Did I catch you at an okay time?"

[If yes]: Perfect! Tell me a little more about what you're looking for.

[If no]: No problem at all. When would be a better time for me to call you back?"

Key points:

- Use their name
- Reference their specific inquiry
- Ask permission to continue
- Have a backup plan if timing is bad

The Text Response Script

"Hey [Name]! Just got your message about [inquiry]. Quick question - is this for [clarifying question]? I've got some availability this week if you'd like to chat about options."

Key points:

- Casual, friendly tone
- Ask a qualifying question
- Offer next step

The Voicemail Script

"Hi [Name], this is [Your Name] from [Company]. I'm calling about the inquiry you just submitted. I'd love to help you out with [their need]. I'm going to shoot you a quick text as well. Looking forward to connecting!"

Key points:

- Keep it under 20 seconds
- Mention you'll follow up another way
- Sound enthusiastic, not desperate

Tools to Hit 5 Minutes Consistently

For Solopreneurs

- Google Voice: Check current business calling and messaging plans
- Calendly/Cal.com: Let leads book time directly
- Zapier: Connect your form to instant notifications

For Small Teams

- CRM with automation: Automatic lead assignment and follow-up
- Shared inbox: So someone's always watching
- Round-robin routing: Distribute leads fairly

For Growing Businesses

- AI chatbots: Engage leads 24/7 (even while you sleep)
- Auto-dialers: Call leads back within seconds
- Full CRM platform: Track every touchpoint

The Cost of Slow Response (Calculator)

This hypothetical calculation illustrates the effect of different assumed close rates. It is not a customer result or a forecast.

Your numbers:

- Monthly leads: _____
- Average sale value: \$_____
- Current response time: _____ hours
- Current close rate: _____%

The calculation:

If you get 100 leads per month with a 10% close rate and \$1,000 average sale, you're closing \$10,000/month.

For comparison, assume a 25% close rate in a second scenario. This is an illustrative input, not an expected effect of faster replies.

- Current: $100 \text{ leads} \times 10\% = 10 \text{ sales} \times \$1,000 = \$10,000$
- Assumed alternative: $100 \text{ leads} \times 25\% = 25 \text{ sales} \times \$1,000 = \$25,000$

The difference under these assumptions is \$15,000/month in gross revenue. It does not establish a causal effect or profit. Use measured conversion and delivery costs to evaluate a real change.

Common Objections (And How to Overcome Them)

"I can't be available 24/7"

You don't have to be. Set up:

- Auto-responders for after hours
- AI chatbots to engage leads
- Next-day callbacks scheduled automatically

Something is better than nothing. Even an auto-text saying "Got your message! I'll call you first thing tomorrow" keeps the lead warm.

"My leads aren't that time-sensitive"

Test it. Track response times for a month. Compare close rates for leads contacted within 5 minutes vs. 5 hours vs. 5 days. The data will speak for itself.

"I don't have time to call back that fast"

Then you're leaving money on the table. Either:

- Restructure your day to prioritize lead response
- Hire help to handle initial responses
- Automate the first touch

Evaluate the costs and results using your own lead history.

Your Action Plan

This Week

- ☐ Set up instant lead notifications on your phone
- ☐ Create 3 response templates (call, text, email)
- ☐ Time your current average response and write it down

This Month

- ☐ Implement a 5-attempt follow-up sequence
- ☐ Track response time and close rate weekly
- ☐ Test one automation tool

This Quarter

- [] Evaluate AI chatbot options for after-hours coverage
 - [] Achieve consistent sub-5-minute response time
 - [] Document your results and optimize
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Key Takeaways

- Set a response target. Track inquiries and useful replies.
- Five minutes can be a staffed-hours goal. Set honest expectations outside your available hours.
- Templates save time. Have responses ready before leads come in.
- Follow up thoughtfully. Respect replies, consent, and opt-outs.
- Automation is your friend. Use tools to stay fast without burning out.

The leads are coming. The only question is: who's going to get them-you or your competitor?

This guide is Part 1 of The Small Business Growth Toolkit from NBS. For more strategies and to see how NBS can automate your lead response, visit nbsscrm.com