

NEW LIMITS

2026 EDITION



WHERE THE WORK COMES FROM

How auto shops fill their bays with the jobs they actually want

Twelve short chapters on where a workshop's customers actually come from. The free listing, the ads, the page they land on, the phone, the follow-up, and the counting that tells you which one of them is broken.

Most of it costs nothing but time.

WHAT'S INSIDE

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BEFORE YOU START

YOU DON'T HAVE A LEAD PROBLEM



Most owners say the same thing

Most shop owners who call us say the same thing. We need more leads. Almost none of them do. The work is already out there, and something between the search and the invoice is leaking.



There are only about six places it leaks

Who you're targeting. Whether you get found. Where the click lands. What happens on the phone. Whether anyone follows up. And whether you're counting any of it. Six places. That's the whole list.



One chapter each

Twelve short chapters, one problem at a time. **This is the order we work in, and most of it you can do yourself.** The two chapters you will not be able to finish alone are the ones about buying ads, and we say so when we get there.



If you only read one, read the phone chapter

Chapter 6, when the phone rings. It costs nothing to fix, you can start on Monday, and in most shops we look at it is quietly losing more money than the advertising is making.



CHAPTER 01

ADS DON'T MAKE MONEY. CUSTOMERS DO.



Ads just buy the customer

An ad has never made anyone a dollar. A customer does. The ad only buys you the chance. Once you see it that way, advertising stops being a gamble and starts being sums you can do.



Know what a customer is worth first

A car owner visits their shop two or three times a year. So an \$800 brake job isn't an \$800 customer. Over a few years, that's closer to \$5,000.



Why this works so well for repair shops

Nobody pays \$50 to fix a car. Most repair orders land between \$700 and \$1,000, and people decide in a day, not in six months. Big tickets and fast decisions are what make paying for customers add up.



Four numbers decide everything

What you spend to get a lead. What share of leads you close. What the average job is worth. What it costs you to deliver. Know those four and you can work out what you can afford to pay for a customer.

FROM A REAL SHOP

A diesel shop in Washington was averaging \$170,000 a month. Their ads produced \$109,588 in collected work on \$13,281 of spend. That's the first visit only. It counts nothing those customers spend afterwards.

IF YOU'RE DOING THIS ALONE

Pull three numbers this week: your average repair order, your close rate on new enquiries, and what you spent on marketing last month. Most owners have the first one and not the other two. Getting the close rate means logging every enquiry for a month, which is where most people stop.



CHAPTER 02

DECIDE WHICH CARS YOU WANT IN YOUR BAYS



Two shops, same town, same number of cars, double the revenue

One shop's bays are full of oil changes and \$200 brake jobs. The other is doing transmissions and diagnostics. Same number of cars through the door. Completely different month.



“We do everything” is a decision, not a default

Advertising to everyone within ten kilometres brings you everyone. A headlight globe and a transmission rebuild arrive through the same door, and you paid the same to get both.



Pick by the job, and by the badge

Two ways to aim. By service: transmissions, brakes, suspension, air conditioning, diesel. And by make: the European work, the Japanese work, the 4x4s. Most shops use neither.



You're setting your average ticket before the phone rings

A rebuild buyer and a replacement buyer are different people. They search differently, they're worried about different things, and they're worth different money.

Choose which one you're talking to and you've chosen your average ticket.



Sometimes the leads are fine and the aim is wrong

One owner, stuck between \$35,000 and \$55,000 a month, had plenty of calls. All of them price shopping. The leads weren't bad. They were the wrong ones for the shop he wanted to build.

FROM A REAL SHOP

That shop repositioned around European cars, because in that particular area those owners had higher incomes and less price resistance. Within a week he went from six to eight cars a week to six a day. January was \$30,000. May was \$87,000.

IF YOU'RE DOING THIS ALONE

Write down the three jobs you'd want more of tomorrow. That's the easy half, and you can do it tonight. The hard half is knowing what those jobs cost to buy in your town, and the only way to learn that alone is to spend money and watch.



CHAPTER 03

THE FREE LISTING MOST SHOPS LEAVE HALF EMPTY



This is the cheapest customer you will ever get

Somebody searches for a mechanic near them and Google shows a map with three shops on it. No ad spend, no click cost. If you're one of the three, that call costs you nothing. If you're not, it went next door.



It's usually the deciding factor, not the introduction

They've already found you. Now they're looking at your photos, your hours, your reviews and what you say you do, deciding whether to bother ringing. A half-empty profile loses that decision and never tells you.



It's a live listing, not a signpost

Most owners set it up once and never open it again. It's a ranking system, and it goes stale. A profile untouched for a year quietly slides down.



Google publishes three things that matter. Only three.

How well you match what they typed, how close you are, and how well known you are. That's the published list. Everything else you've been sold, nine categories, weekly posts, getting your name and address listed on a hundred other websites, is industry folklore.



Find your leaks in sixty seconds

Read your description out loud. Would a stranger know what you specialise in? Open your products tab. Is it empty? Look at your categories. Just the one? That's three leaks and it took a minute.



The products tab is the biggest thing on a phone

It's the most visible block on a mobile listing and it's the one most shops have never used once. Cards for the work you actually want, with the brands and the tools you use, named.



Everything on it should be true on your website too

If your profile says you do hybrids, there should be a page about hybrids. Google checks one against the other, customers check, and now so do AI assistants. If they don't match, you lose people you never hear from.



The category test almost everyone fails

A category has to finish the sentence "this business **is** a", not "this business **has** a". A general shop that does brakes is not a brake shop, and telling Google otherwise doesn't help you.



It matters more this year than last

When somebody asks an AI assistant for a mechanic near them, it reads Google Business Profiles to answer. The listing you haven't opened in two years is now feeding a second search engine.

FROM A REAL SHOP

On one shop we read all 13 product cards word by word. One was seven words long. One ran nearly 60 words about a BMW without naming a single BMW service. A third had a phone number buried in it that didn't match the number on the profile. Then we clicked every button on their website and found all four "Book" buttons went nowhere.

IF YOU'RE DOING THIS ALONE

Do the sixty-second audit today, then fix one thing a week. Not all of it on a Saturday. Google says itself that it prefers changes made a few at a time, which is why we do them one at a time.

None of what's wrong is your fault. Cards get added over years by different people and nobody reads them back. It's the hardest job to do on your own shop, because you stopped seeing it.



CHAPTER 04

BUY THE SEARCH



The decision happens the second something breaks

The transmission slips on the highway. The AC dies in July. The first thing they do is pull out their phone. Whoever shows up in that ten-second window usually gets the job.



Broad searches hand you a mixed bag

“Mechanic near me” is the most expensive habit in shop advertising. You pay the same for the oil change call as you do for the transmission, and you get whatever turns up.



One campaign per job. One campaign per badge.

Somebody searching “Subaru mechanic near me” isn’t comparing prices. They own that car, they want somebody who knows it, and they’re ready to book. That’s a different human to “auto shop near me”.



The words you refuse matter as much as the words you buy

Every campaign needs a list of searches you will not show up for. Skip it and you’ll spend your month’s budget on people who were never going to book anything.



Size the map to the job

Nobody drives an hour for an oil change. Plenty of people will drive an hour for a \$5,000 rebuild they trust. If you advertise both the same distance out, one of them is wrong.



Google charges you less for being relevant

Match the ad to the exact search and Google scores it higher, and a higher score costs you less per click. **Being specific isn't just better marketing. It's cheaper marketing.**



Write six headlines, not one

Give the system room to learn which line works in your town. And put an offer in it. A free safety inspection beats a discount, because it protects your margin and finds you the next job.

FROM A REAL SHOP

A 13-bay transmission shop in Tennessee had the capacity for far more cars than were coming through the door. We stopped advertising general repair and ran transmission searches only. First week from the ads, just under \$8,000 closed. The week after, \$11,000 from two jobs. Average ticket from those leads, \$3,600. At one point there were 28 cars in the shop and only two were under \$3,000.

IF YOU'RE DOING THIS ALONE

Start with one campaign for your best job, not five. Write the list of searches you refuse before you switch it on. Then expect two or three months of paying to find out what a lead costs you.

We rebuilt one client's account from 725 keywords to more than 30,000. That is not clever, it is just a lot of work, and it is the part nobody enjoys.



CHAPTER 05

WHERE THE CLICK LANDS



Your website is a roundabout

You can go left, right or straight on, and it's a bit stressful. Somebody who searched for one specific repair lands there and has to go looking. Most don't bother.



One search, one page

If they searched for transmission repair, they should land on a page about transmission repair. Your hours, your reviews, your guarantee, your phone number. Nothing else to click.



Seven seconds to prove they're in the right place

A relevant photo and a headline that repeats what they typed. No menu. A phone number they can tap. That's the whole job of the top of the page.



Stack the offer, don't discount it

"Free quote" is what everyone says. A free 20-point safety inspection alongside it is worth more, costs you less, and gives you a legitimate reason to quote the next job.



Answer the fear, don't list the features

Ten years in business is a feature. “We’ll show you the old part” answers what they’re actually afraid of. Write down what your customers are scared of and put the answers on the page.



Reviews on the page have to match the page

A brake page carries brake reviews. Generic five-star quotes do far less work than one review from somebody with the same car and the same problem.

FROM A REAL SHOP

One shop ran 15 campaigns, each with its own page. Over three months, \$7,495 of spend produced \$58,639 in tracked sales, around 65 to 75 completed jobs. Several of those 15 campaigns produced nothing at all, which is normal.

IF YOU'RE DOING THIS ALONE

Build one page for your highest-value job before you build six. One phone number, one action, no menu. Then ask every caller what page they were looking at.

A page per service is easy to say and slow to do. A shop that wants brakes, transmissions and European work needs three of them, and each one needs its own reviews and its own photos. We keep more than 70 built and tested for that reason.



CHAPTER 06

WHEN THE PHONE RINGS



“How much for brakes?” is not a price question

It's a trust question in disguise. A customer from an ad has never met you. They're not trying to haggle, they're trying not to sign a blank cheque.



So don't give the price

Give a number and one of two things happens. They take it to three other shops, or they hang up. Either way you did the work and somebody else gets the job.



Get the car first, then the problem

Make and model, then what they're actually experiencing. Noises, feel, warning lights. You'll learn more in that one question than in ten minutes of talking about price.



Never tell them they're wrong

If they've diagnosed it themselves, agree with them first. “That makes a lot of sense, and I've seen that one misdiagnosed plenty of times. I've seen dealers get it wrong.” Now there's doubt, and nobody's been insulted.



Name what it costs to be wrong, both ways

They could pay to fix something that didn't need fixing. Or they could leave something that gets much worse and much less safe. Then offer the second opinion. By now they want one.



If your diary really is full, say so

"He's usually booked about four weeks out. But it'll keep me up at night if I don't get this looked at, so let me move something." Only ever say it when it's true. A wait you invented is the one thing a customer can catch you on.



Then nail the time down

"Is there any reason at all you couldn't make it?" Anything vague gets a different time, offered right then. **That one question is the difference between a booking and a maybe.**

FROM A REAL SHOP

One shop we coached was booking plenty of cars in and losing a quarter of them before they arrived. Nothing about the calls changed except the last two questions, and the reminders that followed them. This script came out of coaching more than 100 shops, and those two questions are the part that moves the number.

IF YOU'RE DOING THIS ALONE

Print this page and leave it by the phone. Then record yourself on three calls and listen back, which is the part almost nobody is willing to do.

Nobody listens to four hundred calls a month either. So for our clients every call gets scored on its own and lands in their sheet with the thing that lost the booking written next to it. It's almost always the same sentence, repeated all day.



CHAPTER 07

THE LEAD YOU DIDN'T ANSWER



Leads arrive two ways, and they are two different jobs

Somebody fills in the form on your website and you have to ring them. Somebody rings your number and you have to answer. Two different jobs. Most shops call both of them “leads” and end up doing neither properly.



A missed call is not a bad lead

It's a lead you still have, for about an hour. Nothing beeps when you miss one. Nobody's told. It just goes quiet, and the customer rings the next shop on the list.



Count the ones you didn't answer

Almost no owner can tell you that number. It's the cheapest number in the business to fix, and until somebody's counting it, it isn't a problem anybody can see.



Five minutes, then voicemail and a text

When somebody fills in the form on your website, ring them within five minutes. Don't email. If they don't pick up, leave a voicemail, send a text, then ring again five minutes later.



Say who you are, because that's why they didn't answer

They don't know the number. They think it's a sales call. They're busy. "Hi, it's Joe from the workshop, ringing about your quote" solves all three, and they'll ring you back.



Then protect the booking

Confirm the day and time before you hang up. Text them straight away. Text again the day before, and again an hour before. We have seen that lift show-up rates by as much as half.

FROM A REAL SHOP

A shop's calls were being marked poor quality across the board. They weren't poor leads. Nobody was picking up the phone. The advertising was working perfectly and the money was walking out anyway.

IF YOU'RE DOING THIS ALONE

Two rules, starting this week. Everybody who fills in your website form gets a call inside five minutes. Every missed call gets counted. Both are free and both work on Monday.

The hard part isn't starting. It's that both quietly stop about three weeks after somebody gets busy, and nobody notices for a year.

So we don't leave it to anybody's memory. Every enquiry lands in your inbox the moment it arrives telling you who to ring, and every missed call raises a flag on its own. Nothing depends on somebody remembering on a busy Thursday.



CHAPTER 08

NOW COUNT IT



“I think it’s working?”

Ask most owners how their marketing's going and that's the answer, with the question mark on the end. The question mark is the whole problem. Money goes out, cars come in, and nobody can say which dollar did what.



Every lead should carry where it came from

Which campaign, what time, how long the call ran, whether anyone answered. If you can't tell a brakes lead from a transmission lead, you can't tell which one's paying for itself.



Half the record is yours

We can show that a lead arrived. Only you know what happened next. Did it quote, did it book, what did it collect. It's about a minute a lead and nothing works without it.



Then the sums actually work

Money in, money out, for each thing you're paying for. Not how many people saw the ad, not how many clicked it. **What you spent against what you banked, on one line.**



Scale what pays, and expect some zeroes

One shop ran 15 campaigns and several produced no jobs at all. That's normal. You turn off the taps that aren't flowing and open the ones that are.



A low close rate isn't always a bad campaign

A rebuild might close at 5% and still return ten times what it cost, because the ticket is huge. A Volkswagen campaign might close at 28% and earn less. Judge the money, not the percentage.



Two options, not one

When something isn't working you can switch it off, or you can listen to the calls first. A campaign that looks dead is sometimes a phone problem in disguise.

FROM A REAL SHOP

On one account: \$3,200 spent, \$22,000 collected. On another, a Volkswagen campaign returned nine times its cost in the same month a transmission campaign in the same shop returned nothing at all. Same shop, same town, same month.

IF YOU'RE DOING THIS ALONE

Open a spreadsheet. One row per enquiry, four columns: where it came from, did you quote it, did it book, what did it collect. That's the whole thing.

Filling it in every week is the entire discipline, and it's the first thing to go when the shop gets busy.

For our clients, half that sheet fills itself. Every call and every form turns up already logged with the campaign it came from, how long it ran and whether anyone picked up. Four columns are left, and they're the four only you can answer.



CHAPTER 09

FIND THE NUMBER THAT'S BROKEN



Only one of your numbers is the real problem

They sit in a chain: click, call, booking, sale. Go along it in order. The first one that looks wrong is the one to fix. Everything after it only looks wrong because of that one.



Here's what normal looks like

Cost per click around \$6 or \$7. One in five visitors becomes a lead. A lead costs \$35 to \$40. One in four leads books. A booked customer costs about \$160.



And here's the line under all of it

At a 60% gross margin you need to make **\$1.67 for every dollar of ad spend just to break even.** Below that you're paying for the privilege of working.



Only the first question is about advertising

If the clicks and the leads are fine, stop looking at your ads. Ask whether email leads get rung straight away. Whether three reminders go out. Whether your advisor has ever been trained.



Fix one thing

Nobody fixes five numbers at once. Find the first broken one, fix that, and watch what moves. The next one will show itself soon enough.

FROM A REAL SHOP

One shop's ads produced hundreds of leads and a handful of jobs. On paper the advertising was the problem. It wasn't. Nobody had ever looked at what happened after the phone rang.

IF YOU'RE DOING THIS ALONE

You need a month of the sheet from the last chapter before this page is any use, so start that first. Then put your own five numbers next to these and find the first one that's out of line.

What you can't do on your own is know whether \$40 a lead is good in your town. You only ever see your own shop. These benchmarks come from running around 100 of them in three countries.



CHAPTER 10

REVIEWS, PROPERLY



A good name only travels so far

“We’ve got a great reputation in this town.” Usually true, and that’s the frustrating part. It only reaches people who already know you. The bloke whose gearbox went this morning has never heard of you.



Reviews don’t bring people in. They close the ones who found you.

Two hundred five-star reviews and a quiet week isn’t a contradiction. Not enough people are finding you. The reviews are doing their job. Nobody’s looking at them.



Just ask. At the counter, every time.

Not a sign, not an email blast two weeks later. At handover, while they’re happy and standing in front of you. **That’s the whole method, and in our experience nothing else works as reliably.**



Never offer anything in return

Not a discount, not a free service, not for a positive review, not for any review. Google prohibits it and it's a documented reason for listings being suspended. It isn't worth the risk.



Answer the bad ones in public

Reply publicly, quickly, and name the specific thing they raised. You're not writing to them. You're writing to the next person who reads it while deciding whether to call you.

FROM A REAL SHOP

One shop came to us for advertising and we read their reviews first, which is what we do before taking anybody on. The reviews were the problem. Advertising into a shop with a reputation problem just tells more people about it faster.

IF YOU'RE DOING THIS ALONE

Ask at the counter, at every handover, starting tomorrow. Nobody can do that part for you and it costs nothing.

The written replies are the part that eats a morning a week, and the part most shops quietly stop doing after about a month. That one can come off your plate.



CHAPTER 11

THE FIRST JOB ISN'T THE CUSTOMER



About 70% of your revenue is repeat work

New customers are roughly 30% of what an auto shop turns over. The rest is people coming back. That single ratio changes what a new customer is worth to you.



So every number in this report is understated

Everything we've shown you counts the first job only. Not the next service, not the other car in the household, not the neighbour they send you.



Breaking even on the first job is a win

If a campaign pays for itself on the first visit, you got the customer for nothing, and everything they spend after that is profit. **Most shops switch off campaigns that were about to become their best ones.**



The cheapest marketing you own is a text message

Six months after a job, a short check-in. That's it. It costs nothing, it takes a minute, and it is the only marketing in this report you already have the phone numbers for.

FROM A REAL SHOP

A transmission specialist in Oregon went from 29 leads a month to 162. The strongest sign he was happy wasn't the review he left. It was bringing us onto his second shop.

IF YOU'RE DOING THIS ALONE

Send a text six months after every job. One line, asking how the car's going. Set a reminder if you have to.

Nothing on this page needs an agency. It needs somebody whose job it is, and in most shops that person is the owner, who is already the busiest employee in the building.



CHAPTER 12

WHAT YOU'RE ACTUALLY BUILDING



Most shops rent their customers

The dealership that sends you overflow. The parts store. A lead site. Two fleet contacts. All fine, until the dealership opens its own service bay or the referral bloke retires.



You can't build a business on a flow you don't control

When it dries up there's nothing you can do about it, because it was never yours. The point of everything in this report is to own the tap instead of standing under someone else's.



It breaks the chicken and egg on hiring

You can't take more work without another tech, and you won't hire until you're sure the work's there. Steady flow you can see coming is what turns that gamble back into a decision.



And it's what your shop is worth

If all the work comes from you, your name and your relationships, the shop isn't an asset. It's a job that needs you in the building. **Nobody can buy your relationships.**



A documented flow of customers is worth real money

A buyer can see where the work comes from and know it keeps arriving without you. That's the difference between selling a business and selling a set of tools.

FROM A REAL SHOP

A shop in Georgia went from six cars a week to six a day, was booked two weeks ahead inside a quarter, and then had a different problem: it hired new technicians and put in four more lifts. Being booked out isn't the finish line. It's where the next decision starts.

IF YOU'RE DOING THIS ALONE

Write down where your last twenty customers actually came from. If more than half of them trace back to you personally, your name and your relationships, that's the number to work on.

We can build the other flow and show you exactly where it comes from. Whether you use it to step back, to hire, or to sell in ten years is entirely yours.

WHO WROTE THIS

WE ONLY WORK WITH WORKSHOPS

New Limits is an advertising company that works with auto repair workshops. Only auto repair workshops. No restaurants, no dentists, no gyms.

We are not neutral about any of this. We sell marketing services and you should read the report knowing that.

What we actually do. We rebuild the Google profile, we run the advertising, and we work on what happens between the enquiry arriving and the job being booked. That third part is the one most agencies leave alone, and it is usually where the money is.

SELECTED RESULTS / NEW LIMITS CLIENT DATA

Numbers from workshops we work with

Cost per lead, before and after rebuilding targeting	\$46 → \$20.87
Leads a month, same workshop, on less than double the budget	29 → 162
Ad spend against tracked sales, three months	\$7,495 → \$58,639
Collected work against ad spend, one workshop	\$109,588 on \$13,281
Monthly revenue, January to May	\$30k → \$87k
Average repair order from those leads	\$3,600

Figures drawn from the New Limits client win archive. These are among our strongest results rather than our average ones, and individual results vary by market, budget and how quickly the workshop answers the phone.

IF YOU WANT US TO LOOK AT YOUR WORKSHOP

WE'LL FIND THE LEAK FOR YOU

Everything in this report is yours. Most of it costs nothing but time, and if you work through it in order you'll find your own leak without us.

Some owners would rather somebody else did the finding. If that's you, there are a few questions about your workshop at the address below. If what you tell us looks like a fit, we set up a **free 30-minute session** and go through it together: where your shop is now, the work worth chasing in your town, and what ninety days looks like in real dollars.

**Who this is for**

Workshops already doing \$30,000 a month or more, who want to grow, and who have the bay space to take the work if it arrives.

**Who it isn't for**

Anyone looking for the cheapest option. We're not it, and we'd rather say so now than on a call.

**What we put in writing**

There's a written performance guarantee in every contract we sign. The target is agreed before you sign, based on your shop and your market.

newlimits.com.au/questionnaire

A short set of questions about your workshop. It takes a few minutes, and there is no calendar to book at the end of it.



NEW LIMITS

Twelve chapters, from choosing the work you want through to what your shop is actually worth.

WANT US TO FIND YOUR LEAK?

newlimits.com.au/questionnaire