

Specific First Replies Linked to Higher Customer Response Across Yelp, Thumbtack, and Google LSA

A holdout analysis of 4,699 real home-service lead conversations found the same first-reply pattern associated with stronger customer engagement across all three major third-party lead channels.

60.5% vs 50.3%

24-hour customer reply rate for first messages that named the specific job, asked one focused question, and did not immediately ask for a phone number, compared with all other first replies, pooled across Yelp, Thumbtack, and Google Local Services Ads.

WHY THIS IS WORTH COVERING

- **It's a real, sizable dataset, not a survey.** 4,699 actual lead conversations across three major platforms, not a self-reported poll or a marketing survey.
- **It replicated.** The pattern was identified in an earlier 1,000-message study, then re-tested against a separate, larger holdout before publication. The direction held on every channel.
- **It's a universal small-business pain point.** Millions of home service businesses (plumbers, electricians, HVAC, roofers, contractors) depend on third-party leads and don't know if their replies are working.
- **It has a contrarian hook.** Asking for a phone number immediately, the instinct many businesses have, was one of the worst-performing moves measured.
- **The company is transparent about its limits.** Wide per-channel confidence intervals and a disclosed correction to an earlier draft make this a credible, citable source rather than a marketing claim.

THE PATTERN THAT WORKED EVERYWHERE

Across all three channels, first replies that did three specific things were associated with more customers responding:

1. Referenced the **specific job** the customer asked about, not "your request"
2. Asked **exactly one** focused question
3. **Did not** immediately ask for a phone number or contact info

"Thanks for reaching out about [specific job detail]. [One focused question that helps move the request forward]?"

ADJUSTED LIFT BY CHANNEL

YELP	THUMBTACK	GOOGLE LSA	ALL PLATFORMS
+1.3	+4.2	+5.4	+3.2
adjusted pp	adjusted pp	adjusted pp	adjusted pp

"Adjusted pp" compares the pattern against other messages within the same contractor account, so account quality or speed differences aren't credited to the message itself.

THE REVERSE PATTERN (A CONTRARIAN ANGLE)

A few habits were consistently linked to **fewer** replies across the dataset:

- × Zero questions in the reply, a pure acknowledgment with no next step (–28.5 pp pooled)
- × Asking for a phone number or a call before answering anything (–15.8 pp pooled; worst single move on Yelp specifically, at –18.7 pp)
- × Generic, copy-paste-sounding replies that don't reference the actual job

FAST FACTS FOR EDITORS

Conversations analyzed	4,699
Lead channels	Yelp, Thumbtack, Google LSA
Contractor accounts	87
Primary outcome	24-hour customer reply
Study type	Observational holdout
Replication check	86.7% test-retest

QUOTABLE

"By the time a third-party lead reaches a contractor, the customer has usually already explained what they need. The first response should prove the business read that, not force the customer to repeat it or start over."

Aaron Decker, Co-founder, LeadTruffle

SUGGESTED HEADLINES

What Gets Home Service Leads to Reply?

A study of 4,699 first responses across Yelp, Thumbtack, and Google Local Services Ads.

Generic First Replies May Be Wasting Home-Service Leads

Contractors pay for the lead. The first reply decides whether it was worth it.

A NOTE ON CONFIDENCE

This is an observational study, not a controlled experiment. It measures association, not causation, and it measures replies, not bookings or revenue. Confidence intervals are wide for any single channel. The strength of the finding is consistency of direction across three independent channels.

Full white paper: [Download here](#)

Media kit: [Download here](#)

Research page: leadtruffle.co/research/first-reply-benchmark

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