
FREE RESOURCE · NO. III

Why your website isn't getting *leads*

Twenty symptoms, what is actually causing each one, and how to confirm it yourself in ten minutes.

Almost every lead problem is one of three things: the right people never find you, they find you and do not trust you, or they trust you and cannot work out what to do next. Those need **completely different fixes**. Guessing wrong is expensive.



Start with the right diagnosis

"The website isn't working" is not a diagnosis. It is a symptom, and it has at least three completely different causes. The expensive mistake — the one that costs small businesses tens of thousands of dollars a year — is treating a trust problem with more traffic, or a traffic problem with a redesign.

Every lead problem lives in one of three places

THE GAP	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	WHAT ACTUALLY FIXES IT
1. They never find you	Very little traffic. You rank for your own business name and almost nothing else.	Structure, content, and local presence — not design
2. They find you and don't trust you	Traffic arrives and leaves quickly. People call asking things the site should answer.	Proof, clarity, and specifics — not more traffic
3. They trust you and don't act	Good traffic, people read several pages, and almost nobody contacts you.	Calls to action, forms, and follow-up — not more content

Work out which gap you have *before* you spend a dollar. The 20 symptoms that follow are sorted into those three groups. Find the one that sounds like your business and start there.

QUICK TIP

If more than one section sounds like you, always fix the later gap first. There is no point sending more people to a site that cannot convert the ones it already gets. Fixing gap 3 makes every future dollar spent on gap 1 worth more.

Every fix in this guide is something you can check by hand. No paid tools, no agency, no AI. That is deliberate — if you have never diagnosed one of these yourself, you have no way of knowing whether the person you hire actually fixed it.

1. "We only show up when someone searches our business name."

WHAT IS HAPPENING: Your site has pages about *you* and no pages about what people actually type. Nobody searches "Miller & Sons Inc". They search "emergency plumber near me".

CONFIRM IT: List the five things customers ask you for. Search each one plus your city in a private browser window. Count how many times you appear in the first three pages.

THE FIX: One page per service, named the way customers say it. Not a single combined "Services" page. This is structural work, and it is usually the whole problem.

2. "We rank fine in normal results but never in the map."

WHAT IS HAPPENING: The map pack and the regular results are two different systems. Your website can be excellent and your Google Business Profile still incomplete, mis-categorised, or unverified.

CONFIRM IT: Open your Business Profile. Check the primary category, the hours, and whether it is verified. Then look at the three businesses in the map pack for your main service and compare their categories.

THE FIX: Google names three local ranking factors: relevance, distance and prominence. A specific, accurate primary category is the strongest relevance lever you control. Distance you cannot change at all.

3. "Traffic fell off a cliff after we relaunched."

WHAT IS HAPPENING: Almost always one of three things: old URLs were not redirected to new ones, the staging site's "do not index" instruction went live with it, or pages were consolidated and the content that was ranking no longer exists.

CONFIRM IT: Visit *yourdomain.com/robots.txt*. Then open Google Search Console and compare clicks for the eight weeks before and after launch. Then click three old links from an old email or business card.

THE FIX: Urgent, and cheap if caught early. A leftover indexing block is the single most expensive small mistake in web development, and it is invisible from the front of the site.

4. "We do well in one town and are invisible in the next one over."

WHAT IS HAPPENING: Distance is a genuine Google local ranking factor and you cannot influence it. What you can influence is whether you have anything genuinely useful about that second town.

CONFIRM IT: Search your main service plus each town. Then look at whether your site says anything specific and true about the second town at all.

THE FIX: Real location pages: work you have actually done there, named neighbourhoods, local specifics, response times. Not the same page with the city name swapped — that is the most commonly flagged problem in public site audits, and Google is good at spotting it.

5. "We publish pages and Google never seems to show them."

WHAT IS HAPPENING: Either they are not indexed at all, or they are indexed and nobody is searching for what they are about. Those are opposite problems with opposite fixes.

CONFIRM IT: Search *site:yourdomain.com* to see roughly what is indexed. Then use the URL Inspection tool in Google Search Console on a specific new page — it will tell you directly.

THE FIX: If it is not indexed, that is technical: submit a sitemap, check for blocks, make sure the page is linked from somewhere. If it is indexed and getting nothing, the page answers a question nobody asks.

6. "We get plenty of traffic and none of it is our customer."

WHAT IS HAPPENING: Your content attracts researchers rather than buyers. A page called "the history of air conditioning" brings in students. A page called "what does AC repair cost in Tampa" brings in someone with a broken air conditioner.

CONFIRM IT: Open your top ten pages by traffic. Next to each one, write down what the person reading it wants. If most of them want information rather than a service, there is your answer.

THE FIX: Shift the balance toward buyer-intent pages: service pages, cost and pricing questions, comparison pages, "how to choose" pages. Keep the educational content — just stop expecting it to produce leads.

QUICK TIP

Google states plainly that there is no way to request or pay for a better local ranking, and that its advertising programs are independent of search results. Anyone offering to "get you in the map pack" through a relationship with Google is selling you something that does not exist.

7. "People land on the site and leave within seconds."

WHAT IS HAPPENING: The top of the page did not confirm they were in the right place. Attention is heavily front-loaded — Nielsen Norman Group's eye-tracking work found 57% of viewing time happens above the fold and 81% within the first three screenfuls. If the first screen is a stock photo and a slogan, you have spent your best asset on nothing.

CONFIRM IT: Show your homepage to someone unfamiliar for five seconds on a phone, then hide it and ask what the business does and where.

THE FIX: Put what you do, who you do it for, and where, in the largest text on the page.

8. "We have hundreds of great reviews and the website never mentions them."

WHAT IS HAPPENING: Your proof is sitting on someone else's platform. Research from Northwestern's Spiegel Research Center found nearly all of the lift in purchase likelihood comes from the first ten reviews — but only if the buyer sees them at the moment of deciding.

CONFIRM IT: Open your main service page. Count the pieces of proof visible without scrolling.

THE FIX: Put real reviews on the pages where people decide, not on a separate testimonials page nobody visits. Note that the same research found purchase likelihood peaks between 4.0 and 4.7 stars and *declines* toward a perfect 5.0 — a flawless record reads as filtered.

9. "People read our blog and never look at what we sell."

WHAT IS HAPPENING: Your articles have no exits. The reader finishes, has no next step, and returns to Google — where your competitor is waiting.

CONFIRM IT: Open your five most-read articles. Count the links to your own service pages inside the body text. Zero is common.

THE FIX: Every article links to the service it relates to, and ends with an obvious next step.

10. "People call to ask things the website already answers."

WHAT IS HAPPENING: It technically answers them, somewhere, in a paragraph, on page four. Findable is not the same as answered.

CONFIRM IT: Write down the five questions your phone answerer hears most this week. Try to find each answer on your own site in under thirty seconds.

THE FIX: Each of those questions becomes a clearly-titled page or a prominent section. The calls you get are free market research that most businesses throw away.

11. "We look exactly like every competitor in town."

WHAT IS HAPPENING: Same template, same stock photography, same words — "quality", "professional", "family owned", "trusted". When everything is identical, people default to price.

CONFIRM IT: Put your homepage and two competitors' homepages side by side. Cover the logos. Can you tell which is which?

THE FIX: Specifics are the only real differentiator. Real photos of your actual crew and actual work. Real numbers. Real names. A stock photo of a smiling person in a headset says nothing about you.

12. "People ask whether we're a real company."

WHAT IS HAPPENING: Missing basic credibility signals: no address, no real photos, no named people, no evidence of recent activity. The Stanford Web Credibility study — 2,684 participants — found visual design was the single most-cited factor in how people judged whether a site could be trusted, mentioned in 46% of comments.

CONFIRM IT: Look for your address, a real photo of a real person, and a date on anything.

THE FIX: Address or service area in the footer. Faces with names. Something dated within the last few months. A copyright notice reading 2019 quietly tells visitors nobody is home.

13. "Our salesperson closes easily and the website closes nothing."

WHAT IS HAPPENING: Your salesperson handles objections in real time. Your website does not handle them at all, because nobody ever wrote them down.

CONFIRM IT: Sit with whoever sells and list the objections they answer every week. Search your site for those answers.

THE FIX: This is the highest-value hour on this entire list. Those objections, answered plainly on the page, are the difference between a brochure and a salesperson that works while you sleep.

QUICK TIP

Nielsen Norman Group's usability testing found people are more sceptical of testimonials hosted on your own website than the same praise found elsewhere. Link out to the platform. Being checkable is worth more than being polished.

14. "Plenty of traffic, almost no enquiries."

WHAT IS HAPPENING: There is no obvious next step, or there are so many competing options that the visitor picks none of them.

CONFIRM IT: Open five important pages on a phone. On each, ask: what is the one thing this page wants me to do, and can I do it without hunting?

THE FIX: One primary action per page, repeated at natural decision points. "Learn more" is not an action. "Get a free quote" and "Call now" are.

15. "Form submissions stopped completely."

WHAT IS HAPPENING: The form is broken and has been for weeks. This happens constantly after a plugin update, a hosting migration, or an email change — and it is completely silent.

CONFIRM IT: Submit your own form right now, from your phone, with a real email address. Check the inbox, the spam folder, and wherever leads are supposed to land.

THE FIX: Fix it, then put a monthly reminder in your calendar to test it again. This one check recovers more lost revenue than anything else in this guide.

16. "People start filling in the form and give up."

WHAT IS HAPPENING: The form is asking more than the visitor is willing to pay at this stage of the relationship. Across 93 million form sessions analysed by Zuko, roughly half of people who start a form never finish it — and mobile completion runs consistently below desktop.

CONFIRM IT: Count your fields. Then fill in your own form on a phone, in a hurry.

THE FIX: Ask for the minimum that lets you have a conversation. A controlled study published at CHI 2014 found that applying established form-usability guidelines roughly doubled first-attempt success rates. Get the rest of the detail on the call.

17. "We get leads, but they're all tyre-kickers."

WHAT IS HAPPENING: Usually the opposite of a problem — your site is attracting people too early, or your messaging speaks to price shoppers.

CONFIRM IT: Look at where bad leads land first and what that page promises. "Free quote" with no qualification attracts everyone.

THE FIX: Qualify gently on the page rather than in the form: state who you are the right fit for, mention typical project ranges, be clear about your minimum. Repelling the wrong customer is a feature.

18. "The phone rings less since the site went mobile-friendly."

WHAT IS HAPPENING: The number was moved into a menu, turned into an image, or dropped from the header on small screens. It is now three taps away instead of zero.

CONFIRM IT: Open your homepage on a phone. Can you see the number without scrolling? Does tapping it open the dialler?

THE FIX: Tappable number in the header on every page. Over half of all web traffic is now mobile, and for consumer businesses it is closer to two thirds.

19. "We pay for ads and the traffic bounces instantly."

WHAT IS HAPPENING: The ad promised one thing and the landing page shows something else, so the visitor assumes they clicked wrong. Google's own advertising documentation instructs advertisers to choose a landing page that closely matches the ad and mirrors its call to action — and this affects what you pay per click.

CONFIRM IT: Click your own ad. Does the page repeat the exact promise in the ad, in the same words, in the first thing you see?

THE FIX: Match the words. One large field test of 239,000 people found matching the ad image to the landing page image lifted conversions by roughly 48% — one test, one organisation, but the direction is well supported and the change costs nothing.

20. "Leads come in and never turn into customers."

WHAT IS HAPPENING: This is usually not a website problem at all. It is a response-time problem. The business that replies first usually wins, and most small businesses reply in hours or days.

CONFIRM IT: Submit a lead through your own site on a Friday afternoon and time the response.

THE FIX: Decide who responds, how fast, and what they say. An automatic acknowledgement that sets expectations buys you time. No website change will outperform simply calling people back quickly.

QUICK TIP

Symptoms 15 and 20 cost most businesses more than everything else in this document combined, and neither one requires a designer, a developer, or a single dollar.

What to fix first

Order matters more than effort. Working from the bottom of this table upward means every improvement you make afterwards is worth more, because it lands on a site that can actually convert.

ORDER	FIX	COST	SYMPTOMS
1	Test your own forms and phone number, and fix your response time	Free, one hour	15, 18, 20
2	Check for indexing blocks and broken redirects	Free, one hour	3, 5
3	Make the next step obvious on every important page	Free to low	9, 14
4	Complete and correct your Google Business Profile	Free, one afternoon	2, 4
5	Rewrite the top of your homepage to say what, who and where	Low	7, 11
6	Write down every objection and answer it on the page	Low, high value	10, 13, 17
7	Move real proof onto the pages where people decide	Low	8, 12
8	Build one page per service, then real location pages	Ongoing	1, 4, 6
9	Match ad wording to landing page wording	Free	19

Notice what is not on this list. A redesign. In the great majority of cases the problem is not how the site looks — it is what it says, whether it can be found, and whether the next step is obvious. A redesign that does not address those three things reliably produces a better-looking site with the same lead count, and people conclude that "websites don't work for our industry."

Five Numbers people will quote at you

Website advice is full of statistics that sound authoritative and fall apart when you look for the source. Here are five you will hear repeatedly, and where each one actually comes from. Knowing these makes you very hard to sell to.

"A one-second delay costs you 7% of conversions."

Traces to a 2008 Aberdeen Group report based on a *survey of around 160 organisations* asking them what they thought — not a measurement of user behaviour. It was sponsored by two web-performance vendors selling the solution. It is now eighteen years old and is routinely misattributed to Amazon or Google.

"Every 100 milliseconds cost Amazon 1% in sales."

Traces to a single conference slide presented by a former Amazon employee in 2006. No dataset, no paper, never published by Amazon, never replicated.

"People now have an attention span of eight seconds, shorter than a goldfish."

There is no original research behind this. It traces to a statistics aggregation site citing unnamed sources. The goldfish comparison has no scientific basis whatsoever.

"Red buttons convert 21% better than green."

One A/B test, on one page, in 2011. Never replicated. Later work attributes any effect to *contrast* with the surrounding design rather than the colour itself — which means the answer depends entirely on your site.

"Businesses with photos get 42% more direction requests and 35% more website clicks."

Quoted constantly in local SEO advice and attributed to Google. It does not appear anywhere in Google's current documentation, has no published methodology, and no stated sample. Add photos — Google does recommend it — but not because of this number.

What actually does hold up

- **Speed affects sales** — shown in a genuine 50/50 randomised test at Vodafone, where a 31% improvement in load time produced 8% more sales. Worth knowing: the largest multi-brand study found no equivalent benefit for lead-generation sites specifically.
- **Form usability roughly doubles first-attempt success** — a controlled experiment published at CHI 2014.
- **Reviews affect sales, and negative ones weigh more than positive ones** — peer-reviewed research in the *Journal of Marketing Research*.

— IF THE DIAGNOSIS IS CLEAR AND THE CURE IS NOT

We can fix the leak we *find*.

You can now name which of the three gaps you have, and that is most of the battle. A good number of these symptoms have fixes you can carry out this week, for nothing.

For the ones that need building, that is what we do. **Hyde & Co. is an agency for business owners** — we build the asset, host it, watch it, and hand it to you.

i. We run the twenty symptoms against your site and tell you which apply.

ii. We name the three costing you the most customers, in order.

iii. You decide whether to fix them yourself, or have us do it.

No obligation. If your problem is response time rather than the website, we will tell you that and charge you nothing for it.

[Book a consultation](#)

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WE BUILD ASSETS, NOT JUST WEBSITES

Where this came from

Everything in this guide is either something you can verify yourself in ten minutes, or a claim traceable to a named source. Those sources are below so you can check them — and so you can tell the difference between evidence and marketing when someone quotes a number at you.

USED IN	SOURCE
Symptoms 2, 4, 6 Local ranking	Google Business Profile Help, <i>Improve your local ranking on Google</i> — relevance, distance, prominence; no way to pay for local ranking. support.google.com/business/answer/7091
Symptom 6 Ads and rankings	Google Search Central, <i>How my site's position in Google Search results is determined</i> — advertising programs are independent of search results. developers.google.com/search/help/site-position-in-search-faq
Symptom 7 Attention above the fold	Nielsen Norman Group, <i>Scrolling and Attention</i> (2018) — 120 participants, 130,000+ eye fixations; 57% of viewing time above the fold, 81% in the first three screenfuls. nngroup.com/articles/scrolling-and-attention
Symptom 8 Reviews	Spiegel Research Center, Northwestern University (2017) — first reviews drive most of the lift; purchase likelihood peaks at 4.0–4.7 stars. Observational, conducted with a reviews vendor. spiegel.medill.northwestern.edu
Symptom 12 Credibility	Fogg et al., Stanford Persuasive Technology Lab (2002) — 2,684 participants; "design look" cited in 46.1% of credibility comments. Self-reported, and old. Stanford Web Credibility Project
Symptom 13 On-site testimonials	Nielsen Norman Group, <i>Trustworthiness in Web Design</i> (2016) — qualitative usability testing; external testimonials trusted more than on-site ones. nngroup.com/articles/trustworthy-design
Symptom 16 Form abandonment	Zuko form benchmarking — 93 million form sessions; roughly half of starters do not complete, mobile below desktop. Vendor data, self-selected sample. zuko.io/benchmarking
Symptom 16 Form usability	Seckler, Heinz, Bargas-Avila, Opwis & Tuch, <i>Designing Usable Web Forms</i> , CHI 2014 — controlled experiment; guideline-compliant forms roughly doubled first-attempt success. research.google.com/pubs
Symptom 18 Mobile share	StatCounter Global Stats (all web, ~52% mobile) and Contentsquare Digital Experience Benchmark 2026 (consumer brands, ~70%). Different populations — both are real. gs.statcounter.com
Symptom 19 Message match	Google Ads Help, <i>Optimize your ads and landing pages</i> ; and NextAfter field test (2016), n=239,607, +47.6% relative lift from matching ad and page imagery. One test, one organisation. support.google.com/google-ads/answer/6238826

Myth page
Speed evidence

web.dev Vodafone case study (randomised 50/50 test, +8% sales); Deloitte/Fifty-Five *Milliseconds Make Millions* (Google-commissioned, correlational, found -1.9% for lead generation).
web.dev/case-studies/vodafone

NEXT IN THE SERIES

The Website Audit Scorecard turns this diagnosis into a score out of 100. *The Website Playbook* is the eight-phase plan for fixing what you find.

This guide is free to use and share. Pass it to clients, teammates, or fellow business owners.
The only goal is better websites and better results.