

FOR HIGH-END REMODELERS &amp; DESIGN-BUILD FIRMS

# THE COMMODITY TRAP

**Premium work.  
Price-first buyers.**

The 2-Minute Scorecard + 14-Day Reset for Remodeling and  
Design-Build Firms Tired of Being Treated Like the Third Bid

• JUDGED ON PRICE

• PRE-FRAMED VALUE

• BETTER-FIT DEMAND

Strategic Visibility LLC — Rome, GA

## THE OWNER'S BRIEF

# WHAT'S **INSIDE**

For established design-build firms, kitchen and bath remodelers, general remodeling companies, and luxury pool and outdoor living builders that do premium work but still feel trapped by price shoppers, weak consultations, and inconsistent project flow.

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| <b>01</b> | <b>THE REAL ISSUE STARTS BEFORE THE CALL</b><br>Premium work, commodity demand, and the Point A → Point B shift | → |
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| <b>09</b> | <b>THE 6-POINT SCORECARD</b><br>Score your marketing in about 2 minutes                                         | → |
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| <b>10</b> | <b>WHAT YOUR SCORE MEANS &amp; YOUR FREE TEARDOWN</b><br>Your next step, the bottom line, and sources           | → |
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## CHAPTER 01 · THE REAL ISSUE STARTS BEFORE THE CALL

**PREMIUM WORK,  
COMMODITY DEMAND**

01

If your company already builds quality remodels, the answer is usually **not** to work harder, chase more leads, or discount to keep crews busy. The real problem often starts earlier, before the homeowner ever calls, books, or fills out a form.

A premium contractor can have strong crews, impressive photos, good reviews, and years of reputation, yet still be perceived online as “one more contractor to compare.” When that happens, homeowners enter the conversation asking for ballpark, rough pricing, design ideas, or a few more quotes.

**⚠ THE COMMODITY TRAP**

What happens when a premium contractor's marketing, positioning, and online presence attract homeowners who evaluate the company like an **interchangeable bidder** instead of a **premium authority**.

The trap is dangerous because it doesn't always look like failure. It often looks like **activity**: the phone rings, the calendar fills, and the team stays busy while the business quietly absorbs more estimating, follow-up, price resistance, smaller scopes, weaker margins, and owner involvement.

**40–60%**

In large-scale sales research, the biggest share of lost opportunities doesn't go to a competitor. It goes to **“no decision.”** When a premium remodeler, design-build firm, or pool and outdoor living builder looks interchangeable online, high-intent homeowners hesitate, keep collecting quotes, and fall back on price.

DIXON & MCKENNA · THE JOLT EFFECT (2022), ANALYSIS OF 2.5M+ SALES CONVERSATIONS

## CHAPTER 01 · THE SHIFT

# POINT A → POINT B

Same crews. Same craftsmanship. The difference is what homeowners believe about you before the first conversation.

## POINT A · COMMODITY POSITIONING

- ✗ Homeowners ask for rough prices early.
- ✗ The company is compared against several bidders.
- ✗ The owner educates low-fit prospects.
- ✗ More leads create operational drag.

## POINT B · PREMIUM DEMAND POSITIONING

- ✓ Homeowners understand process and value first.
- ✓ The company is framed as a trusted specialist.
- ✓ Marketing pre-educates and filters demand.
- ✓ Better-fit demand creates selectivity and control.

## WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE IN THE FIELD

### KITCHEN & BATH

"Can you ballpark a kitchen?" before anyone has seen the space, the layout, or the budget.

### DESIGN-BUILD

Your design gets handed to two cheaper contractors to price.

### POOL & OUTDOOR

The resort-backyard wish list, right up until it's time to talk budget.

### THE GOAL

Move homeowners from **judged on price** to **pre-framed value** to **better-fit demand**, before you ever set foot in the house.

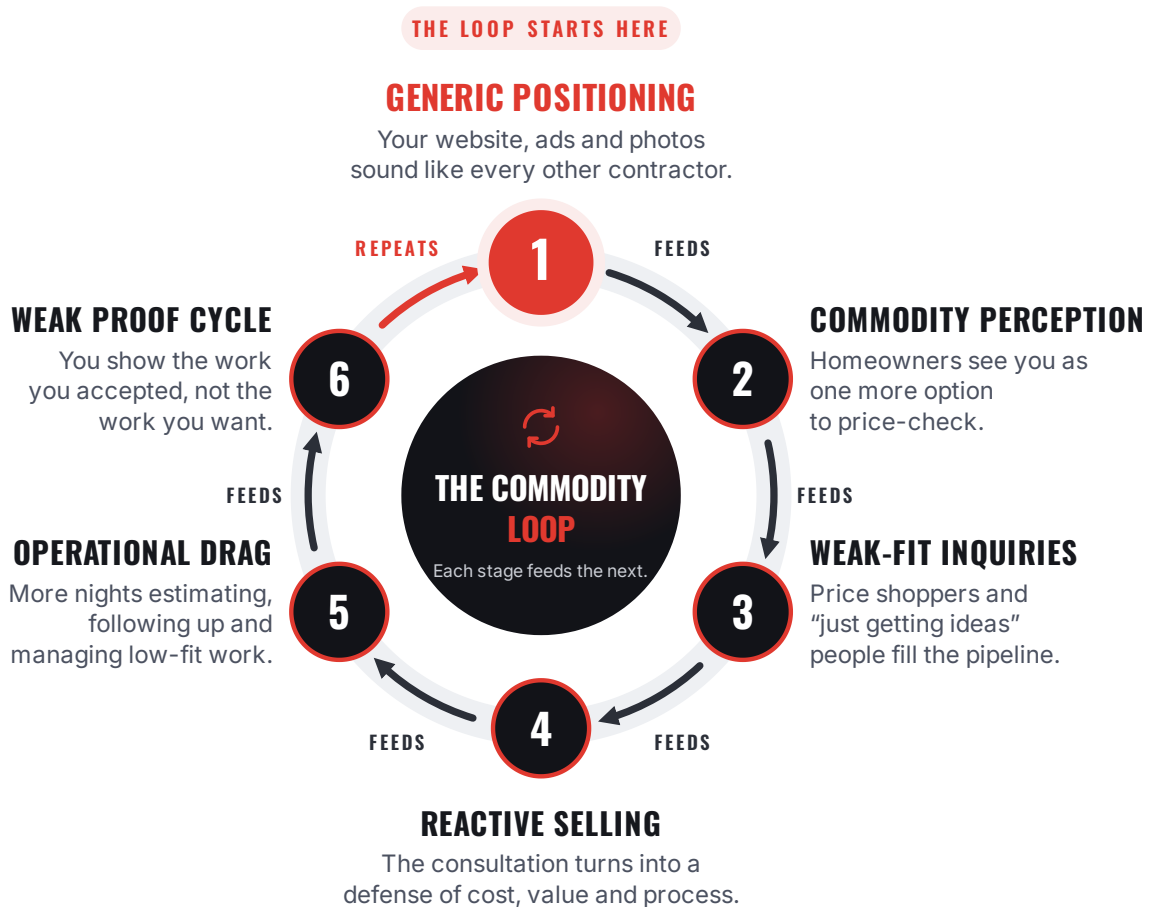


CHAPTER 02 · THE PATTERN TO BREAK

# THE COMMODITY LOOP

02

The Commodity Trap repeats because each stage feeds the next. If the business doesn't deliberately break the loop, more exposure can simply push more low-fit demand into the same system.



**WHY IT KEEPS SPINNING**

Each stage creates the next one. **Until Stage 1 changes, the loop keeps turning, and more leads just make it spin faster.**

## CHAPTER 02 · THE PATTERN TO BREAK

# WHERE THE LOOP BREAKS

Look at the wheel again. Stages 2 through 6 are symptoms. Most contractors try to fix them one at a time: tighter lead filters, a better sales script, another estimator, more project photos.

Those fixes help for a while, but none of them touch Stage 1. As long as your website, ads and photos look like everyone else's, homeowners keep sorting you into the price-check pile, and the wheel keeps turning.

That's why more leads rarely fix it. More exposure pushes more homeowners through the same loop, and it just spins faster.

## 17%

In high-consideration purchases, buyers spend only about **17% of their decision engaging providers directly**. The rest is self-guided research. By the time a homeowner calls about a six-figure kitchen, addition, or backyard, most of their opinion is already formed. Pre-framing has to happen before that call.

GARTNER · THE B2B BUYING JOURNEY

### ✓ HOW TO BREAK IT

Break it at Stage 1: the signals homeowners see before they contact you. A premium remodeling company doesn't need more of everyone. **It needs more of the right homeowners entering the conversation with the right beliefs.**

The next five steps show you how, starting with **defining the work you want more of** →



STEP 01

# DEFINE THE WORK YOU WANT MORE OF

1

Premium positioning starts with selectivity. If the business doesn't clearly define the projects it wants, the market will define it by whatever appears most often online.

## \$140K+

The top 10% of renovating homeowners spent **\$140,000 or more** on their projects last year. Whole-home remodels, high-end kitchens and baths, additions, and full backyard projects are exactly where that spend concentrates. Define for that tier, or the market defines you down to it.

HOZZ · 2025 U.S. HOZZ & HOME STUDY (22,000+ HOMEOWNERS)

### SCOPE

What project types should the company be known for?

### HOMEOWNER FIT

Which homeowners value design, planning, communication, and execution?

### GEOGRAPHY

Where do home type, income, taste, and project potential align?

### PROOF VALUE

Which completed projects would attract more of the same?



### ACTION ITEM

Identify the top three project types you want more of over the next year. Then review your website, ads, social pages, and portfolio. If those project types aren't immediately obvious, the market is probably receiving a mixed signal.



STEP 02

# TRANSLATE CRAFTSMANSHIP INTO BUYER-RELEVANT VALUE

2

Most strong contractors assume the quality of their work is obvious. To homeowners, it often isn't. They may see attractive photos, but they don't automatically understand the planning, design thinking, structural and waterproofing details, material selection, sequencing, communication, or site management behind the project.

10/10

Homeowners rate the projects you build near-perfect for joy: **a kitchen upgrade and a primary suite addition both earn a 10/10 "Joy Score,"** and so does an in-ground pool. Your value isn't the cabinets, the tile, or the plaster. It's the life the space gives back.

NAR & NARI · 2025 REMODELING IMPACT REPORT · NAR & NALP · OUTDOOR FEATURES (2023)

16%

Customers will pay up to a **16% price premium** for a better experience, and the premium is highest on big, considered purchases. **Translating craftsmanship into that felt experience is what earns the premium.**

PWC · "EXPERIENCE IS EVERYTHING" (15,000 CONSUMERS)

## "QUALITY WORK"

What quality protects them **from**: delays, rework, hidden water damage, weak layout, and change-order surprises.

## "LUXURY REMODEL"

The kitchen that works for how they cook, the bath they never think about again, the space that finally fits how they live.

## "EXPERIENCE"

How planning, sequencing, expectation-setting, and communication create fewer surprises.

## "CUSTOM"

How the design fits the house, lifestyle, future use, and long-term value.



## ACTION ITEM

For each ideal project type, write three short explanations: what the homeowner wants, what can go wrong if the project is handled poorly, and how a premium process creates a better experience.



STEP 03

## PRE-FRAME THE HOMEOWNER BEFORE THE CONSULTATION

3

The consultation should not be the first time a homeowner understands the difference between your company and everyone else. Pre-framing means shaping the homeowner's beliefs before they reach out, so the right buyer thinks: **"This company understands the kind of project I want, and they seem more serious than the others."**

# 50ms

Homeowners form a first impression of your website in about **50 milliseconds**, before they read a single word, and roughly **46% judge a company's credibility on visual design alone**. For a premium builder, a generic first screen quietly frames you as average before the conversation even starts.

LINDGAARD ET AL., BEHAVIOUR & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (2006) · STANFORD WEB CREDIBILITY PROJECT

### WEBSITE HERO

Who you serve and why you are not generic.

### PROJECT PAGES

Before, challenge, design direction, outcome.

### REVIEWS

Trust, process, communication, professionalism.

### ADS & POSTS

The homeowner problem, not only finished work.

### INQUIRY PAGE

What happens next and what makes a good fit.



### ACTION ITEM

Review the first screen of your website and the first nine posts or project examples a homeowner is likely to see. If a stranger couldn't tell what makes the company premium in less than 30 seconds, the positioning needs to be sharpened.



STEP 04

## FILTER DEMAND WITHOUT SOUNDING DISMISSIVE

4

Filtering doesn't mean being arrogant, difficult, or turning away good people. It means helping homeowners understand whether the company is the right fit before the owner spends hours on a consultation that was never likely to become a strong project.

### WEAK FILTER

- × "Contact us for a free estimate."
- × "We do kitchens, baths, basements, decks, and more."
- × "Call for pricing."

### STRONGER PREMIUM FILTER

- ✓ "Tell us about the space you want to create, how you plan to use it, and what level of design or construction support you're looking for."
- ✓ "We specialize in planned remodels where design, existing conditions, and long-term usability matter."
- ✓ "Every project depends on scope, existing conditions, materials, design direction, and construction requirements."



### ACTION ITEM

Replace generic inquiry language with three fit-building prompts: what the homeowner wants to change, how they want to use the space, and what has made them start planning now.



STEP 05

# BUILD PROOF THAT ATTRACTS THE NEXT RIGHT PROJECT

5

Your portfolio should not only prove that the company can build. It should **teach the market** what kind of work the company should be hired for next. Better proof explains the problem, the plan, the existing conditions, the homeowner goal, and the finished result.

97%

**97% of consumers read online reviews** for local businesses, and **68% won't even consider one rated under 4 stars**. For high-end work, proof isn't a nice-to-have. It's the filter homeowners use before they ever pick up the phone.

BRIGHTLOCAL · LOCAL CONSUMER REVIEW SURVEY 2026

## THE PROJECT STORY STRUCTURE

1

### GOAL

What the homeowner wanted the space to do.

2

### CHALLENGE

The existing condition, layout issue, or planning problem.

3

### DIRECTION

The design or build decision that guided the project.

4

### OUTCOME

The finished experience and practical improvement.

### PROJECT PHOTO

Add context about the goal, challenge, and transformation.

### BEFORE & AFTER

Explain changes in flow, function, storage, light, or livability.

### REVIEW

Highlight trust, communication, process, and professionalism.

### CASE STUDY

Show the path from problem to plan to finished space.



### ACTION ITEM

Choose five completed projects that represent the work you want more of. For each one, create a short project story using the Goal, Challenge, Direction, and Outcome structure.



## IMPLEMENTATION PATH

# THE 14-DAY COMMODITY TRAP RESET

14

You don't need to rebuild the entire business to start escaping commodity positioning. Begin by tightening the signals homeowners see before they contact you.

|                   |                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>DAYS 1-2</b>   | <b>DEFINE IDEAL DEMAND</b><br>List the project types, neighborhoods, and homeowner situations you want more of. |
| <b>DAYS 3-4</b>   | <b>REMOVE MIXED SIGNALS</b><br>Audit the homepage, ads, social profiles, and inquiry page for generic language. |
| <b>DAYS 5-6</b>   | <b>REWRITE FIRST IMPRESSION</b><br>Make specialty, fit, and premium value clear above the fold.                 |
| <b>DAYS 7-8</b>   | <b>ADD BUYER EDUCATION</b><br>Explain process, scope, planning, and value in short, clear pieces.               |
| <b>DAYS 9-10</b>  | <b>STRENGTHEN FILTERS</b><br>Replace vague estimate language with questions that reveal fit and intent.         |
| <b>DAYS 11-12</b> | <b>UPGRADE PROOF</b><br>Turn five strong projects into project stories with context and outcome.                |
| <b>DAYS 13-14</b> | <b>ALIGN FOLLOW-UP</b><br>Make the first reply and consultation prep reinforce the same premium positioning.    |

**RESULT**

**Sharper demand signals:** clearer message, stronger proof, better inquiry language, and more aligned conversations.



SELF-DIAGNOSIS

# THE 6-POINT SCORECARD

09

Score each area from **1** ("not clear at all") to **5** ("very clear"). Be honest: score it the way a homeowner seeing your company for the first time would.

| AREA                            | SCORE 1-5                                                                                                                    | WHAT A STRONG SCORE LOOKS LIKE                                                    |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>IDEAL PROJECT CLARITY</b>    | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | The company clearly shows the work it wants more of.                              |
| <b>PREMIUM FIRST IMPRESSION</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | The website and profiles feel aligned with the quality of the work.               |
| <b>BUYER EDUCATION</b>          | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | Homeowners understand why planning, process, and execution matter.                |
| <b>INQUIRY FILTERING</b>        | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | The form and first conversation reveal project fit before too much time is spent. |
| <b>PROOF QUALITY</b>            | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | Project examples explain transformation, not just finished appearance.            |
| <b>MESSAGE CONSISTENCY</b>      | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | Website, ads, social, inquiry, and follow-up all reinforce the same positioning.  |

**YOUR TOTAL** \_\_\_\_\_ / **30**

## UNDER 20

Your marketing is probably pulling in more price shoppers than premium homeowners.

## 20-25

You're close. One or two gaps homeowners notice.

## 26-30

You're ahead of most companies in your market.



YOUR NEXT STEP

## WHAT YOUR SCORE MEANS



Add up your six scores from the scorecard. Your total tells you how much commodity demand your marketing is likely pulling in, and where to start.

### Under 20

#### **YOUR MARKETING IS PROBABLY PULLING IN MORE PRICE SHOPPERS THAN PREMIUM HOMEOWNERS.**

Start the 14-Day Reset on Day 1. Then send me your score and your website, and I'll record a free video teardown showing you the first thing I'd fix.

### 20–25

#### **YOU'RE CLOSE.**

There are one or two gaps homeowners notice. Send me your score and your website, and I'll show you which one to fix first.

### 26–30

#### **YOU'RE AHEAD OF MOST COMPANIES IN YOUR MARKET.**

The next step is making sure your ads, inquiry page, and follow-up say the same thing your website does. Send me your score and I'll point out where they don't.

FREE FOR GUIDE READERS

## GET YOUR FREE VIDEO TEARDOWN

I'll record a short video walking through your website, ads, inquiry page, and full digital presence against the 6 points, and show you the first thing I'd fix. Complimentary. No obligation.

**01**

Reply to the email this guide came in.

**02**

Include your scorecard total.

**03**

Include your website address.

— Josh · Strategic Visibility

# THE BOTTOM LINE

The Commodity Trap is not a craftsmanship problem. It is a **perception and demand-quality problem**. When homeowners don't understand why a premium contractor is different before the consultation, they default to the easiest comparison points: price, availability, rough estimates, and competing bids.

The path out is to shape the market's beliefs earlier.

01  
**DEFINE**

02  
**TRANSLATE**

03  
**PRE-FRAME**

04  
**FILTER**

05  
**PROVE**

## SOURCES

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Helping premium remodelers and design-build firms escape price-first demand.

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