

THE LEAD FOLLOW UP SEQUENCE

The first five minutes, the first ten days, and the next two hundred.

Everything in here was said out loud by a producing agent on the Billion Dollar Panel, with the numbers they gave and the disagreements left in. Nothing has been smoothed over to make it sound like one method. It is not one method.

Your leads are not bad. They were dropped.

The evidence for this is uncomfortable and it comes from the people who counted.

Mitch Ribak ran a study with a brokerage in Atlanta on a thousand online leads that were two years old. Thirty-eight percent of them had already bought a home. Another twenty percent were still actively buying. Fifty-eight percent of a lead pool everyone had written off as dead were good leads. The failure was not lead quality. Nobody pursued them long enough.

Years later he audited his own brokerage for a category he had never bothered to check, because he assumed no agent would be that careless. He found six thousand leads that his agents had personally taken out and shown property to, and then never called again.

The number that sets the whole calendar

Mitch puts the average internet lead at 233 days from registration to transaction. Cameron Smith says nine out of ten of his buyers closed months after the first conversation. If your follow up plan runs out in three weeks, you are handing a finished lead to whoever is still in front of them on day two hundred.

So the sequence below is built in four stages, and each stage has a different job. The first five minutes exist to get a human on the phone. The first ten days exist to reach the sixty-five percent you can reach at all. The next four months exist to sort them. Everything after that exists to still be there.

Stage	Window	What it is for
Contact	0 to 5 minutes	Get them to answer. This is the hard part, not the pitch.
Reach	Day 1 to day 10	Six to eight attempts across channels. Most agents quit after one.
Sort	Day 11 to day 120	Worked by a person, not a robot. Drive to yes or no.
Stay	Day 121 forever	Listing alerts and two emails a month, until they move.

Stage one: the first five minutes

And the argument the panel has never settled about whether they matter.

Cameron Smith's standard is three text messages and a phone call inside the first five minutes of the form submission. Ross Stout calls within fifteen to thirty seconds, leaves a voicemail, then sends a text that mirrors the voicemail, and repeats that set of three every four hours for a week.

David Lawson does not get a choice. As of 2026 his team has twenty-five seconds to respond to a realtor.com lead before the portal routes it to the next agent. That is a platform rule, not a coaching preference, and it is why speed is non-negotiable on routed portal leads whatever the conversion math says elsewhere.

The counter-evidence, and it is good

Mitch Ribak ran an inside sales operation handling ten to fifteen thousand leads a month for three years. On pay-per-click leads he measured twenty-one percent contact at five minutes against twenty percent at twenty-four hours. In his words the five-minute urgency on those leads is not real. What moved his number was four calls over eight days, which reached sixty-five to seventy percent. He separates lead types explicitly: on portal property inquiries, speed is genuinely critical.

How to hold both of these. Speed is decided by the lead type, not by your personality. A property inquiry on a specific address, or any lead a portal will route away from you, is a seconds problem. A registration, a Facebook form or a pay-per-click lead is an attempts problem. Setting a five-minute standard on everything is not wrong, it is just expensive in the wrong place, and it is the wrong thing to be proud of if you then stop calling on day three.

The first five minutes, written out

Copy these. Change the names. Do not polish them.

Cameron Smith's opening move is a video text, filmed on the phone, deliberately unpolished, sometimes from the car and not in dress clothes. The point is that somebody who was scrolling fifteen seconds ago now has a personal video from the human they were just looking at. Amazon does not do that.

1. THE VIDEO TEXT, SENT THE MOMENT THE LEAD LANDS

Hey Jim, Cameron Smith here. I just saw you were on our website looking at some homes. I would love to chat with you. Believe it or not, I am actually available right now.

Then he calls about thirty seconds later, while the notification with his face is still on their screen. Across thousands of calls, he says, they answer using his name instead of letting it go to voicemail.

2. THE TEXT RIGHT BEHIND THE VIDEO, FIVE LINES, SAME CONTENT

Sent because some people will not open a video from a number they do not know. If they think the video is a virus, the text still tells them who is about to call and why. Same words as the video, in writing.

If they do not pick up, Pete Middleton's voicemail is the one to leave. No surname, no reason, and the number twice, because the television announcer says it nine times and agents say it once.

3. THE VOICEMAIL, CURIOSITY ONLY

Hey, this is Pete. Sorry I missed you. Give me a call back. I have something to talk to you about. My number is 555 0134. Again that is 555 0134.

Where Mitch disagrees with all three of those

On portal inquiry leads specifically, his testing said call four times a day, leave no message at all, and do not send a text up front. Messages lowered his contact rate, and adding an upfront text dropped contact from sixty-five percent to thirty-five. He flags these as his own numbers from his own operation rather than universal law. If you buy portal leads, this is worth testing against your own results for thirty days before you assume.

Stage two: the first ten days

The stage where almost everybody quits, which is why it works.

David Lawson calls it ten days of pain. Call, text and email, every day, before any automation touches the lead at all. He runs a twenty-four thousand contact database and warns that the fastest way to get unsubscribed is generic drip, so the ten days have to be specific to the person.

Ross Stout puts it as a rule of fairness: a hand raise deserves ten days of call, voicemail, text and email. He adds that the email campaign's only job is to prompt a phone call. Another email will not close the gap.

Juli Inman gives the mechanism. One call reaches roughly one in three or one in four people. Calling a new lead up to six times reaches over ninety percent of them, and that discipline alone is what moved her conversion from one or two percent to five or six. Conversion follows contact rate, and contact rate follows dials.

Day	Call	Text	Email	Note
1	3 attempts	Video, then mirror	Intro	First attempt inside five minutes
2	1			Different hour than day 1
3	1	1 short		Mirror the voicemail, keep it easy to answer
4			1	Listing alert is already running by now
5	1			Try evening if mornings failed
6		1		
7	1			Attempt five or six lands here
8	1		1	Mitch's four-calls-over-eight-days mark
9		1		
10	1		1	Decide: working bucket or nurture bucket

Ten days done properly is six to eight live call attempts. That is the whole trick. It is not a clever script, it is that the agent who called six times is talking to somebody the agent who called once never reached.

The step almost everyone skips

Before any of the above, the lead goes on a property alert. Set it wrong on purpose.

Mitch Ribak's rule is that every lead, from every source, goes into a listing update before anything else happens. Open house, sphere, portal, website, it does not matter. He says this is the step most of the agents he has coached skip entirely.

The counterintuitive part is the width. Set the search twenty percent wide in both directions. A buyer who says five hundred thousand gets listings from four hundred to six hundred thousand. He wants at least twenty-five listings in the search.

Why a wrong search beats a right one

A search narrowed to exactly what they said they wanted stops notifying them, because almost nothing matches. A wide one puts you in their inbox two, three or four times a week for the whole 233 days. Several agents got the same lead. The one who is in front of them on the day they decide is the one who gets paid. The purpose of the alert is frequency, not accuracy.

The strongest argument for setting this up on every lead is the leads you cannot call at all. A quarter of Mitch's internet sales came from people who never gave a phone number. They could not be dialed under any circumstances. Those sales came from correct categorization, the drip, and a saved search that kept his name in their inbox.

Stage three: day eleven to day one hundred and twenty

Still a person. Not a robot yet.

Ross Stout's rule is that no lead goes onto an automated drip until it has been worked personally for a hundred and twenty days. He argues the front-end work is what determines how effective the eventual drip is, and that four months of manual nurture costs about an hour a day. Unresponsive leads go into a nurture bucket with human tasks in it, not into automation.

The job of these four months is sorting. David Lawson drives every lead to a yes or a no, because the second best answer is no. If the answer is maybe, he keeps asking questions until the person lands in one bucket or the other. His line for it is that maybe leads do not pay definite bills. A database full of maybes means you do not have a follow up problem, you have a question problem.

Bucket	What it means	Touch
Opportunity	Met them, no stated intent yet	Light, signals availability
Lead	Stated a timeframe or a need	Weekly, personal
Appointment	Calendar date exists	Daily until it happens
Transaction	Under contract	Set cadence with them at signing
Past client	Closed	Roughly every sixty days, forever

That five bucket pipeline is Brian Yarbor's. His observation is that most agents are good at exactly one bucket and push people through the other four too fast. Bobby Martins runs the same idea as a time rule: categorize every lead, then spend ninety percent of your time on the hottest ones and let the rest get a light touch that signals you are available.

Keep the working list small enough to work

Mitch keeps the active working database to two or three hundred people, because his own brokerage data showed conversion collapsing once a CRM held two to four thousand leads. Agents opened it, looked at it, and walked away. He keeps the bulk email list in a separate platform for exactly this reason, and only moves somebody into the CRM when they raise their hand.

The triggers worth watching

Three ways to call at a moment that does not feel random to them.

Call at the hour they browse. Ross Stout points out that the portal and search tools report which properties a lead viewed and when. If somebody looks at homes at five every evening, that is when you call, and you open by naming the exact address they were looking at.

THE BROWSE-HOUR CALL

Hey, you know what, 123 Main Street just popped up on market. I would love to show that to you, it seems to hit all your boxes.

Wait thirty-three minutes. Corinna Daninger gets notified when a client is active in their saved search, which the client does not realize. She sets a timer for thirty-three minutes, her deliberate number, then sends a text with no agenda in it at all. They write back that they were just looking at a house on her system. The coincidence makes the relationship feel synchronized.

THE NO-AGENDA TEXT, THIRTY-THREE MINUTES AFTER THEY BROWSE

Hey, I was just thinking about you today.

Match the channel to the person. Juli Inman's rule of thumb is that older buyers respond to a phone call and younger ones to a text. She keeps the call in the sequence regardless, because people choose an agent on the relationship and the relationship starts on the first call.

Stage four: two emails a month, forever

The cheapest part of the sequence and the one that produces listings.

Mitch Ribak sends the whole list exactly two emails a month for the rest of the relationship. The first carries last month's local market statistics from the board, which arrive every month and need copying and pasting. The second is a top ten list of things to do locally, with no real estate in it. Both end with the same explicit referral ask.

He defines the list as everybody you know, not just past customers, on the logic that people use whoever is in front of them at the moment they start thinking about moving. The mechanism is the consistency, not the quality of the writing.

Proof and warning in the same person

An agent with a four hundred person database ran those two emails and got six listings and four buyers in four months. Then she got busy, stopped sending them, and the results stopped with her.

David Lawson's contribution is the subject line. He puts the recipient's own street address in it. Baseline open rates run around eighteen percent, meaning most email is thrown away, and he says never send one unless the subject gives a reason to open it. An address in the subject roughly quadruples opens, and it has a second effect: people can always remember their own address, so years later they can search their inbox and find the whole presentation when a friend asks them for an agent.

SUBJECT LINE

Why list 123 Main Street

The highest responding email Mitch has is two lines, written in 2001 and unchanged since. The closing line exists because leads assume an agent only works their own town.

THE TWO-LINE CHECK IN

Just checking in, making sure you are getting my updates. Let me know if there is anything I can help with. And remember, I can show you any property wherever you are.

Past clients, and the call quota that comes from them

This is the part that turns a goal into a number of dials.

Mitch's ratio on warm past-client lists is about fifty calls per deal. As a beginner it was a hundred and eighteen. He rounds to fifty and uses it as the quota: multiply fifty by the number of deals you want. Twelve deals a year is fifty calls a month. A deal a week is fifty calls a week. A deal today is fifty calls today.

The reason that list is worth calling at all is that seven out of every hundred contacts in your phone will buy or sell in the next twelve months. They are going to use an agent. The only open question is whether it is you.

Deals you want	Calls per period	What that looks like
12 a year	50 a month	Roughly 12 a week, or 3 a day
24 a year	100 a month	Roughly 5 a day
1 a week	50 a week	10 a day, 5 days a week

Craig Lerch adds the retention floor: in this market you hold a client by touching them on the phone a minimum of four times in twelve months. Dennis DeSouza runs a sixty day cycle on every past client. Craig also offers the reason the orphans are worth chasing, which is that eighty-three percent of agents do not stay in touch with their own clients at all.

What to expect, by source

So you can tell a bad lead source from a bad follow up process.

These are the panel's own measured numbers, not industry marketing. Where two speakers gave different figures for the same thing, both are here.

Source	Conversion	Who measured it
Facebook lead form	About 1 in 300	Mitch Ribak
Google pay-per-click	About 1 in 100, 0.75% national average	Mitch Ribak
Portal leads, Zillow and realtor.com	About 3% nationally	Mitch Ribak
Same portals, with inside sales support	10 to 15%	Mitch Ribak
Website registration, typical agent	About 0.75%	Mitch Ribak
Website registration, his ISA operation	6%	Mitch Ribak
Property inquiry on a specific address	Around 1 in 3	Mitch Ribak
Open house	Best of any source he tracked	Mitch Ribak
Referrals	Should convert around 80%	Mitch Ribak
Any source, one call attempt	1 to 2%	Juli Inman
Any source, six call attempts	5 to 6%	Juli Inman

Read that table twice

The same lead converts at one or two percent with one attempt and five or six with six attempts. That is a bigger swing than the gap between most lead sources. Before you change what you are buying, count what you are doing with what you already bought.

Where the panel does not agree

Left in deliberately. Anyone selling you one answer here is selling you their own market.

Question	One side	The other side
Does speed to lead matter?	Ross Stout: call in 15 to 30 seconds. David Lawson: realtor.com gives his team 25 seconds before it reroutes.	Mitch Ribak: 21% contact at 5 minutes versus 20% at 24 hours on pay-per-click, across 10,000 leads a month.
Leave a voicemail?	Ross Stout: always, then mirror it with a text. Pete Middleton: always, curiosity only, number twice.	Mitch Ribak: on portal inquiries, no message at all. Messages lowered his contact rate.
Text before you call?	Cameron Smith: video text, then call 30 seconds later, then a mirror text.	Mitch Ribak: an upfront text dropped his contact rate from 65% to 35%.
When does automation start?	David Lawson: after ten days of personal work.	Ross Stout: not for a hundred and twenty days.

The honest reading is that these people are all right about their own lead sources and their own markets. The two that are not in dispute are the ones worth acting on first: almost nobody makes enough attempts, and almost nobody follows up past the point where the lead was going to transact anyway.

The whole sequence on one page

Print this one. Tape it where you make calls.

When	Do this
Instantly, every lead	Put them on a property alert set 20% wide, at least 25 listings.
0 to 5 minutes	Video text. Call 30 seconds later. Mirror text. On portal leads, call first and fast.
Day 1 to 10	Six to eight call attempts, different hours. Voicemail and a mirrored text on most of them. One or two emails.
Day 10	Decide. Working bucket, or nurture bucket with human tasks in it.
Day 11 to 120	Worked by a person. Drive every one to yes or no. Nothing automated yet.
Whenever they browse	Wait 33 minutes, send a text with no agenda. Or call at their browse hour and name the address.
Twice a month, forever	Market stats email, then a local top ten. Same referral ask on both. Their address in the subject.
Every 60 days	Past clients, by phone. Fifty calls per deal you want.

If you only change one thing

Count your call attempts per lead for two weeks. If the number is under four, nothing else on this page will matter as much as fixing that one number.

Where this came from

Every line above was said on the record by a producing agent.

The Billion Dollar Panel is a standing roundtable of top producing agents, team leaders and brokers. This guide was assembled from the lead generation, follow up and database sessions, and each claim carries the name of the person who made it so you can go and watch them say it.

Contributors quoted in this guide: Mitch Ribak, Ross Stout, David Lawson, Cameron Smith, Juli Inman, Pete Middleton, Bobby Martins, Brian Yarbor, Corinna Daninger, Craig Lerch and Dennis DeSouza.

The next thing to build

This guide tells you what to do with a lead once you have one. The One-Page Business Plan tells you how many you need, by turning a target income into a daily contact count. It is free at nxtgenagent.com and it is eight pages, mostly blanks.

The full panel library is on the NXTGEN Agent channel. Scripts, objection handling, listing presentations, pricing, open houses, recruiting and the rest, organized by situation.

nxtgenagent.com **talktocam.com**