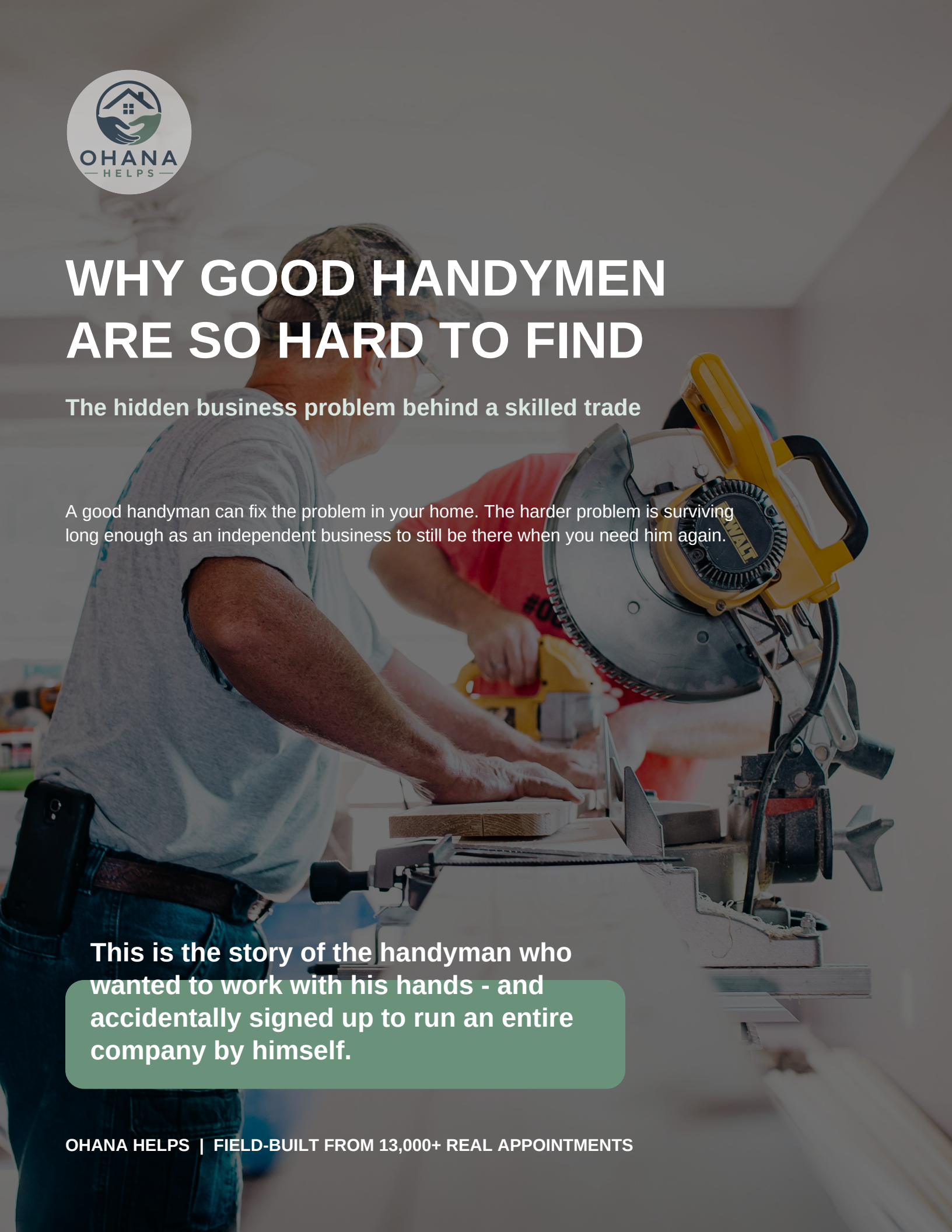


WHY GOOD HANDYMEN ARE SO HARD TO FIND

The hidden business problem behind a skilled trade

A good handyman can fix the problem in your home. The harder problem is surviving long enough as an independent business to still be there when you need him again.

This is the story of the handyman who wanted to work with his hands - and accidentally signed up to run an entire company by himself.

CHAPTER 1

He Just Wanted to Be a Handyman

The industry usually starts with a capable person, a toolbox, a truck and a simple goal: do good work and make a living.

Meet the handyman. He knows how to replace a toilet, patch drywall, hang a fan, install a door, troubleshoot a leak, assemble furniture and solve the hundred little problems that keep a home running.

He is not trying to build a giant corporation. He did not get into the trade because he dreamed about CRM software, collections, contracts, accounting or call-center operations. He wanted to be independent and spend his days doing the work he is actually good at.

So he starts the way many solo handymen start: with a cell phone. Customers text photos. Appointments live in text threads or a personal calendar. Quotes are typed between jobs. Payment might be cash, Venmo or Zelle. If a customer wants a receipt, he may have to create one after the fact.



Being excellent at handyman work and being excellent at running a handyman company are two completely different jobs.

That difference is where the trouble begins.

CHAPTER 2

The Second Full-Time Job Nobody Warned Him About

The 32-34 billable hours are not an arbitrary productivity goal. They are the math of earning a full-time living from field work.

THE PAYCHECK MATH

$75,000	$1,500	30 hrs	34 hrs
annual income target	per week at 50 weeks	at $50/hr for $1,500	at $50/hr for $1,700

Formula: annual income target ÷ working weeks ÷ effective labor rate = required billable field hours.

The $75,000 figure is an Arizona working example. In a higher-cost market, the income target may be higher. The formula stays the same.

WHAT 34 HOURS LOOK LIKE

Across the last 1,600 Breakthrough Handyman Services jobs, the average appointment was **3.48 billable hours**. At that average, 34 billable hours requires about **9.8 completed jobs per week** - essentially two jobs per day.

34 ÷ 3.48 ≈ 9.8 jobs/week
before driving or office work.

DRIVE TIME + CANCELLATIONS

Those jobs are spread across town. Many days mean one or two drives between appointments; four short jobs can mean three drives. If tomorrow's average 3.48-hour job cancels, he usually cannot replace it overnight. At $50/hr, that is about **$174 of expected labor revenue** gone from a week that already needed nearly every field hour.

THEN COMES THE SECOND JOB

After the field work that actually pays him, the company still has to be run.

- Answering calls and texts
- Free estimates and quote writing
- Scheduling and rescheduling
- Buying and returning materials
- Bookkeeping, receipts and taxes
- Collecting money and chasing payment
- Marketing and following up with leads
- Reviews, reputation and warranty issues

That is why “32 billable hours” is not a light week. It is the revenue-producing portion of a much longer week. The handyman is also acting as estimator, dispatcher, accountant, marketer, collector and customer-service department.

The economics force the problem: to earn a full-time living he has to stay in the field, but every hour spent running the business pulls him out of the field.

CHAPTER 3

The Phone, the Quote and the Lead Trap

The tools that are supposed to help him get work can consume the same time and money he needs to stay in business.

THE PHONE PROBLEM

A handyman under a sink, on a ladder, carrying materials or driving between appointments cannot answer every call. Larger service companies solve this with dispatchers, estimators and office staff. A solo handyman is all of them at once.

THE FREE-ESTIMATE PROBLEM

A 30-minute drive, 30–45 minutes on site, the return drive and quote writing can consume close to two hours. If the customer never books, every minute was unpaid - and it displaced field work that could have produced revenue.

THE LEAD MARKETPLACE MATH (ANGI, THUMBTACK, ETC.)

The exact fee and number of competing providers vary by platform and market. The example below shows why paying for shared leads can become brutal even when the handyman actually wins work.

$35	4 pros	$140
example price per lead	same customer request	collected across 4 providers

One homeowner needs one TV mounted. In this illustration, that request is sold to four handymen at $35 each. The lead company collects $140 before anyone has mounted the TV. There is still only one appointment to win.

WHAT IT DOES TO THE HANDYMAN

1 WIN FROM 4 PAID LEADS

4 leads × $35 = $140 lead spend
1 job × 3.5 hrs × $50 = $175 labor revenue
$175 - $140 = **$35 left**
$35 ÷ 3.5 field hours = **$10/hr**

2 WINS FROM 4 PAID LEADS

4 leads × $35 = $140 lead spend
2 jobs × 3.5 hrs × $50 = $350 labor revenue
$350 - $140 = **$210 left**
$210 ÷ 7 field hours = **$30/hr**

Even the 2-for-4 result is not a healthy full-time business. At a $30 effective field rate, 32 billable hours produces only about **$960/week** before drive time, vehicle cost, insurance, taxes, tools, accounting, marketing, cancellations, warranty work or any other overhead.

THIS IS A ZERO-SUM FIGHT FOR THE SAME APPOINTMENTS. Across four customer requests there are only four jobs. If one handyman wins two, only two jobs remain for the other three providers - so at least one gets zero appointments from that set despite paying for the same opportunities. The lead marketplace gets paid either way.

The handyman does not simply need more leads. He needs real demand turned into real appointments without buying the same customer against several competitors.

CHAPTER 4

The $300 Material Problem

Good people can be especially vulnerable when kindness substitutes for business systems.

Customer needs a $300 fixture. The handyman buys it with his own money. The job may only produce $150–$200 of labor. He has now loaned the customer more money than he expects to earn.

This happens because many handymen are trying to be helpful. They pick up the toilet, fan, faucet or other materials on the way. They assume the customer will reimburse them when the work is complete.

But without a card on file, deposit policy, signed terms or formal collection process, the handyman is taking the financial risk. If the customer delays payment, disputes the work, disappears, or simply refuses to pay, the handyman can lose both his labor and the materials he purchased.

One bad job can erase the profit from several good ones. A few bad jobs can create a cash-flow crisis even while the handyman looks busy on paper.

NO TERMS

No clear cancellation rules, payment deadlines, late fees, scope-change process or warranty boundaries.

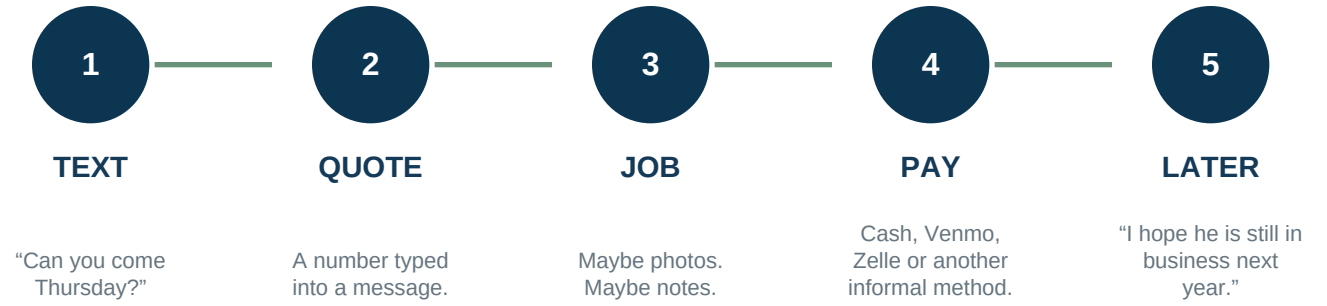
NO LEVERAGE

The customer has the completed repair and the material. The handyman may have only a text thread and a promise to pay.

CHAPTER 5

Text Messages Are Not a Business Operating System

For the customer, the experience can feel uncertain even when the handyman is excellent. There may be no business phone system, no formal confirmation, no real appointment workflow, no standard terms, no professional receipt and no permanent service history.



The customer is not necessarily dealing with an irresponsible person. The customer is often dealing with a skilled person who never built the business infrastructure around the skill.

That same lack of structure hurts the handyman when a customer cancels, is not home, disputes the scope, refuses to pay or later claims something was not completed. Without formal records, both sides are operating on memory and trust.

CHAPTER 6

Why “Just Go Work for Somebody Else” Is Not the Answer

Most independent handymen chose this work because they wanted independence. Moving into a franchise or traditional employer can solve some administrative problems, but it also changes the thing they were trying to build.

They may lose control of their schedule, customer relationships, reputation and upside. The appointment belongs to the company. The brand belongs to the company. The customer belongs to the company.

That can be appropriate for some people. But it does not solve the structural problem for the handyman who is capable of running his own field work and simply needs the infrastructure that larger companies already have.



The goal is not to turn a great handyman into an employee. The goal is to let a great handyman stay independent without forcing him to build an entire back office alone.

That means preserving the parts of self-employment that matter: choosing work, setting availability, owning customer relationships, building a reputation, earning repeat business and being responsible for the quality of the work.

CHAPTER 7

What a Handyman Actually Needs to Stay in Business

Not more complexity. Not another list of leads. The operating system around the work.

REAL APPOINTMENTS

Customers can book actual available times instead of beginning another round of phone tag.

QUOTING INFRASTRUCTURE

Pricing and time expectations can be informed by thousands of real completed jobs, so the handyman does not have to stop field work to estimate every common task.

FORMAL TERMS

Cancellation, payment, disputes, warranties and customer responsibilities are established before the job becomes a problem.

PAYMENT & RECEIPTS

Professional payment records, receipts and documented transactions replace “send me a Zelle when you get a chance.”

JOB DOCUMENTATION

Photos, time, notes, approvals and history give both sides a record of what actually happened.

CUSTOMER CONTINUITY

The handyman can build repeat relationships while the customer has a system that still exists if one individual is unavailable.

Technology handles the friction. The handyman stays in the field. The customer gets the handyman.

CHAPTER 8

Why Ohana Was Built This Way

The customer experience improves when the handyman is given the tools to remain a professional, independent business owner.

Ohana is designed around a simple idea: **empower the handyman to spend his time being a handyman.** The platform supplies the business infrastructure that a solo operator usually cannot afford to build alone, while preserving independence.

THE HANDYMAN

Sets availability, chooses work, performs the job, documents reality, builds relationships and remains responsible for the quality of the work.

THE PLATFORM

Handles quoting infrastructure, booking, records, payment systems, terms, communication tools, protections and repeat-business infrastructure.

THE CUSTOMER

Gets instant quoting, real appointment times, transparency, receipts, documented work, warranty support and a professional system around the person doing the work.

Good handymen are hard to find because the market has required one person to do two jobs: be an excellent handyman and operate an entire service company around himself.

Ohana does not solve that by replacing the handyman. It solves it by taking the business friction off his shoulders so he can stay in the field, stay accountable,

When better systems take care of the handyman, the handyman can take better care of the customer.