

Handle After-Hours Calls

You don't need to answer at midnight. You need a plan that isn't silence.

TIME	COST	DIFFICULTY	AUDIT SIGNAL
30 minutes	Free	Easy	after_hours_coverage

WHAT WE MEASURED

We called outside your posted business hours and recorded what happened.

WHY IT MATTERS

A meaningful share of local service calls arrive outside business hours — evenings, weekends, and the moment something breaks. Most of them go to whoever picks up or calls back first.

You do not need 24/7 staffing. You need the caller to hear something other than a ring-out, and you need to keep whatever you promise.

Genuinely free answering services essentially don't exist — the "free" ones are trials. Everything below is free using what you already have.

FIX IT YOURSELF

1 Rewrite your voicemail greeting

Free, five minutes, and the highest-return item on this page. Most business voicemail greetings say nothing useful.

Yours should say, in this order:

1. Your business name
2. That it's after hours
3. **The exact time you will call back** — "before 9am tomorrow," not "as soon as possible"
4. An alternative channel — "or text this same number and we'll see it first thing"

A greeting that names a specific callback time measurably reduces the caller shopping your competitor while they wait.

2 Turn on voicemail transcription

Free on Google Voice and included on most carrier plans. It emails or texts you the message as text.

This converts "check voicemail" — which you won't do at 10pm — into a message you actually read on your phone.

3 Roll unanswered calls to an on-call mobile

Use conditional forwarding (****61** on GSM, **92** on Verizon) so the office line rolls to whoever's on call, then to voicemail. Costs nothing beyond your existing service.

See *Make Sure Your Phone Gets Answered* for the codes.

4 Turn on missed-call auto-text

Both iPhone and Android can send a canned reply to a missed call. Set yours to something useful:

"Thanks for calling [business] — we're closed right now but we've got your number and will call you back before 9am. Urgent? Text this number."

Free, instant, and it stops the caller feeling ignored.

5 Decide the emergency rule

Some calls genuinely can't wait — burst pipes, no heat in January, lockouts. Decide now:

- Which situations you'll actually take at night
- Who takes them
- What you charge for them

Then say it in the greeting: *"For a true emergency — no heat, active leak, or no power — press 1 and it will ring my mobile."* Being clear about this earns you the emergency premium and protects your evenings.

6 Rotate the on-call phone if you have staff

A cheap shared handset, or a forwarding schedule that changes weekly. Post the rota where everyone can see it.

CHECK YOUR WORK

- ☐ Your after-hours greeting names your business, says you're closed, and gives a specific callback time.
- ☐ Voicemail transcription is on.
- ☐ Unanswered calls roll to an on-call phone before voicemail.
- ☐ Missed-call auto-text is enabled.
- ☐ You have a written emergency rule.
- ☐ You've called your own number after hours to test it.

COMMON MISTAKES

- **A full voicemail box.** Empty it weekly — a full box is the same as no phone.
- **'As soon as possible.'** Meaningless. Give a time.
- **Promising 24/7 and not delivering.** Worse than posting real hours.
- **An answering service that just takes a message you don't get until Monday.** Same as voicemail, but you paid for it.

This fix is free. You can earn and keep any Agenarys Seal tier — including Platinum — without paying Agenarys anything beyond the audit itself. If you would rather have help doing it, we sell that. We never sell passage.

SOURCES & FURTHER READING

Carrier call-forwarding standards; Google Voice Do Not Disturb scheduling