



The ultimate guide to virtual receptionists



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A call for customer experience

People have more ways than ever to connect with businesses. From live chat to email to social media, technology makes it easy for potential clients and customers to get instant, personal answers from companies they're interested in buying from.

Well, in theory.

In practice, these channels frequently create more distance between businesses and their customer bases. We live in a noisy, confusing, and increasingly impersonal world—a world of screens and autoresponders, a world where real conversations between humans feel too often out of reach.

Your customers deserve better. Not only that—they expect better. After all, if you can't provide someone with the best possible experience—however they connect—they'll simply move on to the next company on their list.

Ready to create experiences that delight customers and win their business? Let's dive in.



Did you know? For 90% of consumers, customer service is the deciding factor for making a purchase.¹

When experience reigns supreme, businesses that anticipate customer needs will stand apart from the competition. And whether you're in your first year or your tenth, adapting to evolving customer expectations is paramount to cash flow, the lifeblood of a flourishing small business.

Understanding evolving customer expectations

Customers aren't shy about their experience expectations. Eight out of ten people say a company's customer service is as its products and services², and why shouldn't that be the case? Customers have more choices than ever, and access to products and services is no longer restrained by physical proximity. A simple online search delivers tens, hundreds, or thousands of companies with similar offerings to someone's needs. With so many options right at their fingertips, customers have the luxury of being selective, and they're choosing companies with a track record for making people happy.



¹ Microsoft
² Salesforce

Traditional word-of-mouth, coupled with reviews on sites such as Trustpilot and Yelp, provides consumers with ample opportunity to form an opinion before ever interacting with a company. For businesses touting five-star reviews and zero public customer complaints, this organic marketing is a dream.

Most people will pay **up to 16% more** to do business with companies boasting great reputations when it comes to customer service.³

On the flip side, however, companies with even one less-than-stellar review can expect to lose potential customers to competitors—regardless of price point or perception of quality.

In fact, companies **lose more than \$62 billion annually** due to poor customer experiences.⁴

³ PwC

⁴ Forbes

⁵ GlobeNewswire

⁶ Inc.

⁷ Northwestern

Companies with
positive reviews
get higher returns.

95%

of shoppers read
online reviews before
making a purchase.⁵

84%

of consumers trust online
reviews as much as they
trust recommendations
from friends.⁶

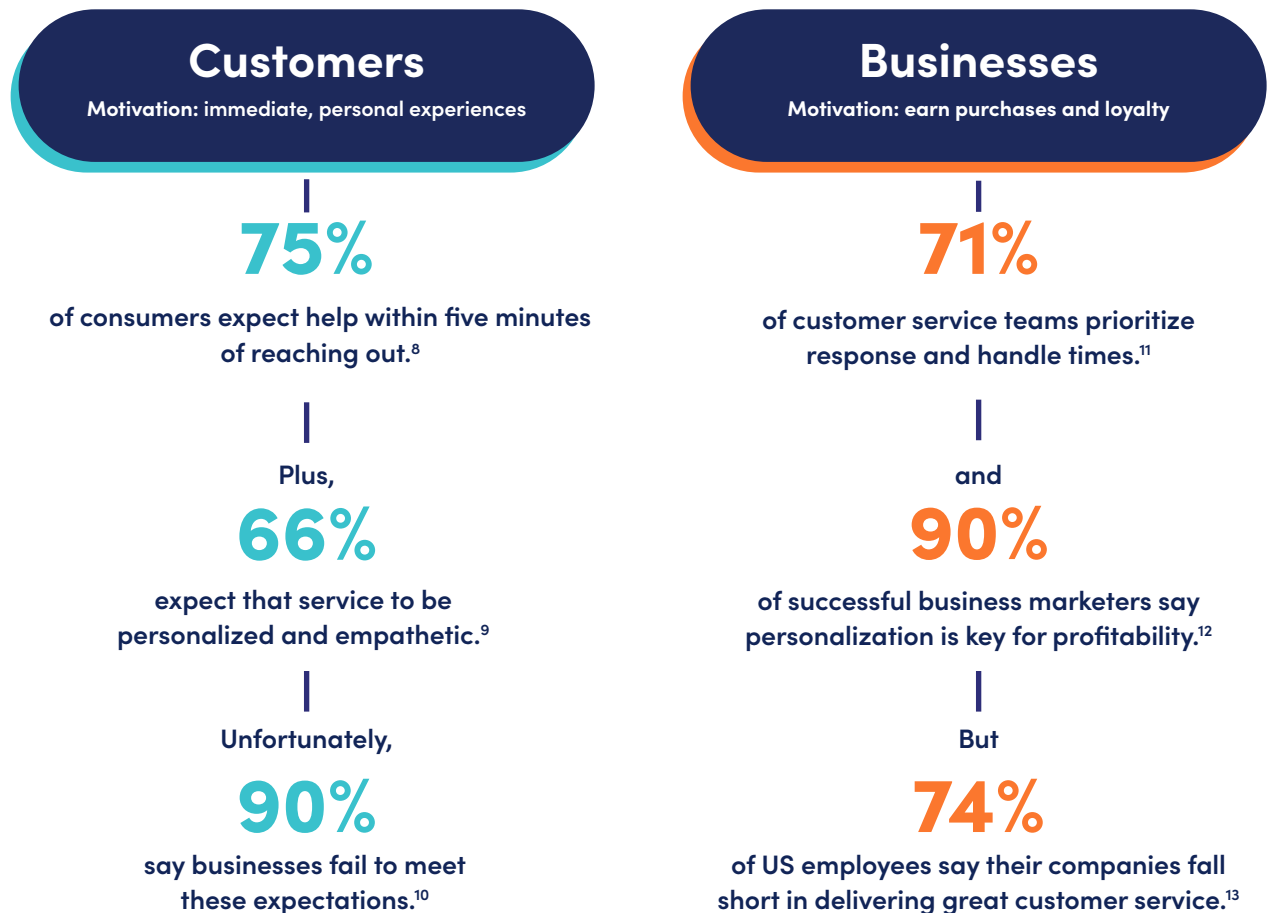
270%

conversion rate increase
can be seen by displaying
reviews.⁷



What do customers really want?

Customers are looking for companies they can trust. What does it take for small businesses to win over the hearts and lasting loyalty of today's consumers?



On paper, the mindsets of businesses and their customers match up nearly perfectly. Customers desire personalized interactions; businesses recognize this need and aim to fulfill it. Quality of communication is paramount to happy customers, and companies hope to create reliably exceptional experiences. But despite this shared vision, there's still a discrepancy between expectations and reality.

So why the disconnect? If businesses know what their customers want, why aren't they delivering?

⁸ McKinsey
⁹ Salesforce

¹⁰ Acquia
¹¹ Salesforce

¹² Think with Google
¹³ CIO

The business call is back.

Anyone who has used a phone tree or interactive voice response (IVR) system—continuously pressing “0” in hopes of reaching a representative—knows there’s a gap between customer expectations and outcomes.

In other words, how companies handle their phone calls can make or break a customer’s willingness to continue doing business with them.

60%

of consumers prefer to contact businesses by phone, dwarfing the next most popular channel (email, at 16%).

but...

74%

of consumers are very likely to choose another business after a poor phone experience.

Business owners are seeing these interactions influence both brand perception and their profit margins. Why? Because more people are calling businesses than ever before.

What’s more, when they do call, people are more and more likely to make a purchase. That’s once again thanks to websites, live chat, social media, and more online tools that make it easy for people to research on their own. As a result, the percentage of calls comprising prospective customers has been increasing in most industries over the last few years.¹⁴

How many opportunities are you losing to voicemail?

¹⁴ Ruby, 2023 call trends report

Worksheet

Phone calls and potential revenue

Imagine you receive **10 calls** per day and **answer 70% of them**.

Statistically, 27% of those calls will be from current or potential customers. Multiply 0.27 by the total answered calls to get your daily possible conversion rate.

$$0.27 \times 7 = 1.89$$

There are 261 weekdays in one year. Multiply conversion rate by 261 to see how many sales you currently earn per year.

$$1.89 \times 261 = 493.29$$

Now, multiply this number by your average profit per sale to find your current revenue in answered calls. For the sake of this exercise, let's assume your profit per sale is \$1500.

$$493.29 \times \$1500 = \$739,935$$

Now, what if you were able to answer your phone **100% of the time**?

You'd be bringing in an additional

\$317k

in revenue every year.

The concept of answering the phone to connect with more potential customers seems simple. But for small business owners performing services, managing employees, balancing the budget, stocking supplies, updating the website, hosting clients, and more this "quick" task can become a major distraction.

The good news: business owners have options for automating or outsourcing this crucial function. Let's explore those options and determine which is right for your business.

What kind of answering is right for you?

To answer that question, consider another:

What kind of answering is right for your customers or clients?

Keep that in mind as we take a look at different kinds of solutions.

Automated answering

An automated answering service (also sometimes called an interactive voice response system, or IVR system for short) is a phone system that interacts with callers without a real human on the line. The entire phone call, or phone tree portion of the phone call, is done through interactions with a preset machine. These systems vary, depending on what you're looking for, but they have some general processes in common:

1. **They answer an incoming call.**
2. **A pre-recorded message plays.**
3. **The system asks callers for their intent.**
4. **The system transfers caller or provides pre-recorded information.**

While these services are typically affordable, easy to use, and highly customizable, the lack of human interaction negatively impacts customer service.

88% of callers would prefer to speak to a human agent rather than navigate a phone menu.¹⁵

Furthermore, inefficiencies in automated systems can frustrate or confuse callers. While automation can be a necessity for large organizations that receive hundreds or thousands of calls a day, they run the risk of alienating customers and clients who expect to reach a real person every time they call—costing businesses money in the long run. Simply put, people dislike IVR.¹⁶

What about voicemail? Unfortunately, voicemail proves ineffective in capturing the hearts and minds of prospects, and rarely manages to serve its intended purpose of collecting important contact information. 72–80% of callers will hang up without leaving a voicemail if their call isn't answered.¹⁷

¹⁵ Clutch.co

¹⁶ App Developer Magazine

¹⁷ Destination CRM

PROS

of automated answering

- Low upfront costs
- Easy to use
- Customizable

CONS

of automated answering

- Impersonal
- Ineffective for capturing opportunities
- Frustrating for callers

Consider what customers say is the optimal experience:

Highly-personalized, responsive, and consistently exceptional service across all communication channels. While on the surface, automation seems to aid business owners stretched thin, the brief respite it affords can result in disgruntled customers, missed opportunities to connect with prospects, and diminished profit margins.

People buy from people—and their relationship with you, your business, and your brand influences their purchasing decisions. Giving customers the human interaction they crave can be the difference between barely surviving and thriving. Rather than opting for an impersonal automated system, leverage technology to empower real, human connections.

Five benefits of live call answering¹⁸

67%

Increase customer satisfaction
of customers will hang up when they can't reach a live person.

72%

Elevate customer service reputation
of customers will share good experiences with others.

85%

Collect more call information
of people whose calls aren't answered will not call back.

75%

Stand apart from the robo-crowd
of consumers still choose to interact with a real person if given the option.

80%

Win more business opportunities
of first-time buyers will become repeat customers based on positive phone experiences.

¹⁸ HelpScout

In-house receptionists

Many businesses have front office admins or receptionists ready to greet walk-in visitors. These customer-facing employees wear many hats, answering phones, setting appointments, responding to customers' inquiries... the list goes on. Customers and clients usually appreciate (and sometimes expect) businesses to have a real human as the face of their operation.

That said, while there are plenty of pros to having a real-life person manning the front desk, they're also, well, human—meaning they have limitations on what they can accomplish on their own.

In-house receptionists often have their hands full.

In-house receptionists typically do more than handle customer communication. They may also perform the duties of an office manager, office administrator, event coordinator, project manager, travel booker, accounts payable specialist, human resources staff member, and more.

In fact, according to the International Association of Administrative Professionals' "State of the Industry" report, the majority of administrative professionals have over a dozen different day-to-day responsibilities, only a quarter of which relate to customer communication.¹⁹

It's no wonder these professionals' biggest concern is "juggling multiple priorities." As such, they're unable to manage customer communication full-time, let alone 24/7.

In-house receptionists can only help one person at a time.

The best front office admins know how to delight clients by greeting them professionally, providing prompt service, and making them feel at ease. They're usually talented conversationalists and know how to turn a phrase.

But they're only able to connect with one customer at a time. Lines form, call waiting gets activated, and impatient customers take their business elsewhere.

Employees need a break from time to time.

Whether it's a lunch break in the middle of the day, calling in sick, or taking a well-deserved vacation, in-house receptionists can't be expected to be at their desks all day every day.

¹⁹ IAAP

PROS of in-house receptionists

- Full visibility into calls
- Immersed in your business and customer base
- Can take on other responsibilities as needed

CONS of in-house receptionists

- High overhead costs (salary, hiring, training, benefits, etc.)
- Unavailable 24/7
- Frequently busy with other tasks

Virtual receptionists

A virtual receptionist is someone who speaks to people who call a business, but who is not employed by that business. Some virtual receptionists also respond to website visitors through live chat.

Like web designers, accountants, data analysts, or others in specialized jobs, virtual receptionists are trained professionals who perform a specific business function. In a virtual receptionist's case, that function is customer communication.

It's a bit of customer service, and a bit of sales, but a lot of answering questions, collecting information, and helping people feel heard and at ease.

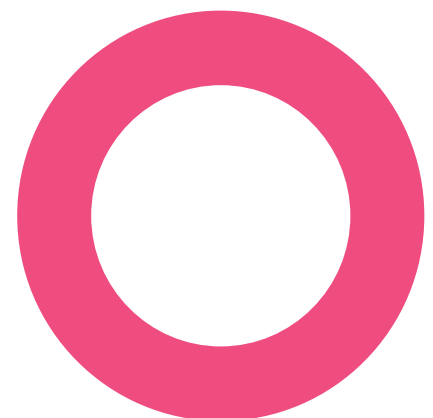
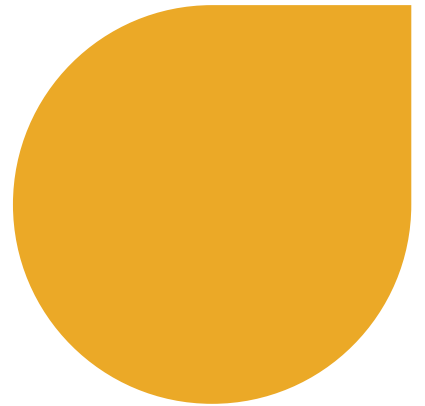
What's "virtual" about a virtual receptionist? Back in the day, many businesses had one or more receptionists who worked as full- or part-time employees. As the realities of business changed, however, and the world went online, the role transformed—and the virtual receptionist was introduced.

These days, not every business has or needs its own receptionist. Instead, organizations can save money—and still ensure callers reach a real person—by using virtual receptionists.

Virtual receptionists are "virtual" in the sense that they stand in for a business. They're not bots. They're not holograms. They're real people who represent a company and talk to callers, but are not physically located at that company's office or employed by the company.

Why are virtual receptionists essential to today's growing businesses? Because virtual receptionists provide a range of benefits—at less than the cost of an in-house hire—they're an ideal solution for small and growing businesses.

They can answer and connect calls, take messages, answer common caller questions, schedule appointments, return calls, screen for solicitors, and more. Some even speak multiple languages to better communicate with callers from different locations and backgrounds. They can do it all on demand, when businesses need them, for ultimate flexibility.



What's the difference between virtual receptionists and an answering machine?

A growing number of businesses out there are using answering services to ensure their callers always get through to another human being. So, how are these services different from virtual receptionist providers?

Well, in many ways, virtual receptionist solutions are answering services. But they're also so much more. Here are just a few key areas where virtual receptionists outshine a typical answering service:

Live call transferring: Many traditional answering services can only take messages. Live virtual receptionists are able to transfer calls to businesses whenever and wherever they like. They're even able to try multiple lines—say, a person's desk phone, then their personal phone—at no additional cost.

Professional and friendly service: Answering services are built on efficiency. It's what allows them to take on large amounts of clients and answer countless calls each day.

However, this focus on efficiency above all else often results in impersonal service for both a business and the people it serves. Virtual receptionists, on the other hand, are trained to provide one-of-a-kind experiences for callers and website visitors.

Minimal background noise: Unlike noisy call centers, the best virtual receptionist services use noise-canceling technology to keep background noise to an absolute minimum. This helps keep callers from realizing they're talking to someone outside of the business's office.

Additional features: As the name implies, answering services excel at one thing: answering calls. However, they offer few other services aside from taking messages.

Virtual receptionist services like Ruby offer a multitude of additional features and services, such as business number hosting, texting, lead capture, appointment scheduling, and more.

What about call centers? Call centers are built for size and speed. They're used by large companies and organizations that need to handle a high volume of low-complexity calls at once—as quickly as possible. Unlike virtual receptionists, who provide personalized customer service experiences, call center agents typically work from pre-written scripts and undergo less intensive training for each business they represent.

Virtual receptionists and your business

More time. Fewer distractions. More opportunities.
Happier customers or clients.

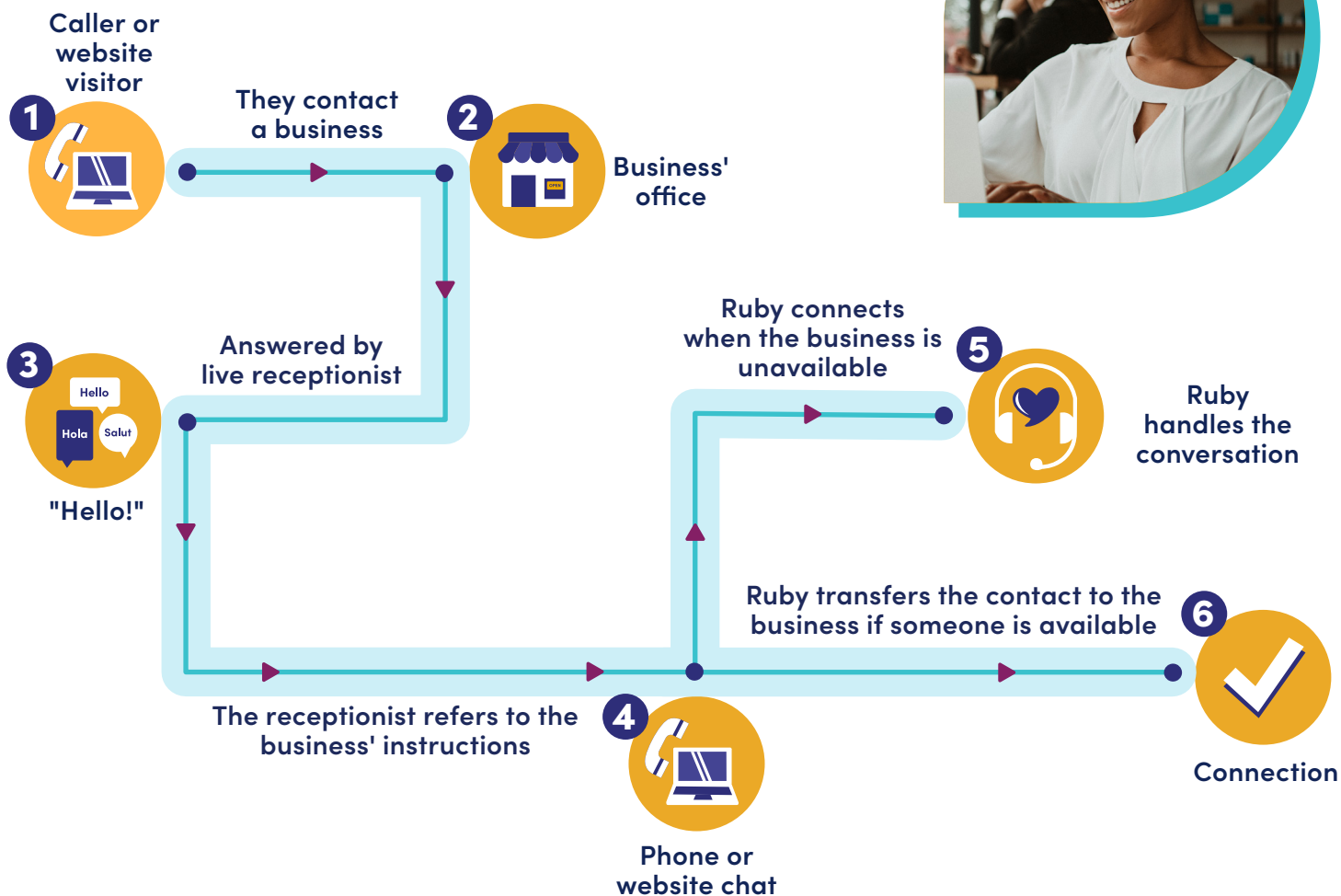
These are a few of the benefits of using a virtual receptionist service. If you run a small business, virtual receptionists can be transformative for you and your organization. More and more growing businesses are using virtual receptionist services and other outsourced customer communication solutions to reclaim hours every day, save money, and optimize customer experience.

And these benefits aren't limited to one industry, location, or company structure. Virtual receptionists can meet the needs of all sorts of businesses, from one-person operations to small and medium-sized teams. They can even be a great fit for companies with one or more employees already dedicated to communicating with callers.



How it works

Virtual receptionists answer calls from US-based offices, greeting callers with a personalized message such as "Thank you for calling ABC Company, how may I help you today?" From there, receptionists route callers according to call handling instructions tailored to fit the unique needs of your business. Specific types of calls can receive their own treatment: a prospect, for example, being immediately connected to your office while solicitors are offered voicemail.



What kinds of businesses use virtual receptionists?



Service-oriented small businesses rely on virtual receptionists to quickly answer callers' frequently asked questions regarding hours, availability, and types of services offered. With the right tools, virtual receptionists can serve as an extension of the business when other staff members are unavailable to speak with callers.



Attorneys and law firms depend on virtual receptionists to create meaningful connections with callers, so they prioritize their casework and increase their number of billable hours. Some virtual receptionists can also perform new client intake, vital for busy attorneys to have important information readily available.



Home services providers such as roofers, plumbers, landscapers, and electricians widely use virtual receptionist services so that they can remain focused at job sites knowing that current and new customers are being engaged with and tended to.



Healthcare providers such as doctors, dentists, and veterinarians use virtual receptionists to schedule patient appointments over the phone, call and remind patients of upcoming appointments, cover the cancellation or rescheduling of patient appointments, take calls from patients and pharmacies regarding prescriptions or lab work, take after-hours emergency calls, and much more.

Should your business use a virtual receptionist service? If you run a business and you're not sure whether virtual receptionists are the right fit, consider the following questions:

- Are you receiving more calls than you or your team can handle?
- Does customer experience impact your ability to gain and retain customers or clients?
- Has unavailability or lackluster customer service negatively affected your company's reputation?
- Are you looking for ways to grow your business through word-of-mouth and referrals?

If the answer to any or all these questions is "yes," your business might be precisely the kind of company that should use virtual receptionists.

Using virtual receptionists as backup Backup answering is sometimes referred to as delayed call forwarding or conditional call forwarding, among other terms. (At Ruby, we often use the term “call forward / busy no answer.”)

With this setup, calls come to you first, then to the virtual receptionist service if a condition is met. For example, you can have backup answering “kick in” after a certain number of rings, or if your line is busy. Backup answering is especially useful for people who like to answer their own phones but may have an unreliable signal. It’s also great when you’re traveling and don’t have consistent access to your network or need to keep your device in airplane mode.

When virtual receptionists answer the phone, they can do practically anything an in-house receptionist can do, **including...**

- Transfer calls to you or members of your team
- Direct people to relevant information on your website
- Handle customer service inquiries
- Answer frequently asked questions
- Gather insights about the people you serve
- Assist with outbound calls
- Onboard new clients
- Schedule appointments
- Qualify new leads
- Make lasting first impressions
- And much more!



Four ways virtual receptionists increase revenue



- 1 Money saved without sacrificing quality:** gain a team of model professionals who are never sick, late, or on vacation, at a fraction of the cost of a single on-site employee.
- 2 Freedom to focus on your business:** funnel your energy toward the big picture while resting assured your receptionists are representing your brand with enthusiasm.
- 3 Human connections create client loyalty:** build trust and meaningful relationships for a quantifiable ROI that takes shape in increased referrals and returning opportunities.
- 4 Business earned with every answered call:** turn more callers and website visitors into clients or customers when you have virtual receptionists serving as an extension of your organization.

Scorecard

How to choose a virtual receptionist solution

Not sure what virtual receptionist solution is right for your business? We've put together a quick guide to help you out. When looking at solutions, consider the following questions, and then rate your level of confidence from 1-10, 10 being the highest.

	PROVIDER A	PROVIDER B	ruby
1 Will 100% of the calls be answered live?	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
2 Are your receptionists based in the US?	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
3 Do you offer receptionist services in English and Spanish?	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
4 Does your solution support multiple communication channels?	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
5 Does your solution include key features such as live transfers, personalized greetings, customized call handling, and appointment scheduling?	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
6 Do you provide ongoing support from a real person?	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
7 Does your company provide training and supervision for receptionists to ensure quality?	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
8 Do you own the technology powering your solution?	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
9 Does your company offer flexible plans that meet the needs of my business?	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
10 Will your solution help my business grow?	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>

After you've rated all the above, take a look at your results. If your cumulative score falls below 80, consider another option. Start making personal connections with customers and prospects today with Ruby's friendly, US-based, live virtual receptionists. Contact Ruby to learn more and get started!

Total

Why businesses choose Ruby

Ready to transform your business? Ruby's virtual receptionists are here to save you time, delight your callers, and capture new customers or clients.

Ruby is all about making personal connections that help small businesses grow. At the heart of everything we do is a promise to treat every moment of customer communication as an opportunity to make a lasting, positive impression. We are committed to the success of our customers, providing exceptional experiences—and a friendly, human touch—for the people they serve.

Our virtual receptionist capabilities include:

- 24/7 live answering
- Custom voicemail
- Top-rated mobile app
- Information at your fingertips
- Appointment scheduling
- Bilingual answering
- Flexible call forwarding
- Lead capture
- Robocall filtering
- Number porting and hosting
- Outbound calling HIPAA compliance

It's all available full-time, part-time, or as backup—and you can change your instructions in seconds on our handy app or online dashboard.

Fast facts on Ruby's live receptionist services:

Our average answer time is **<10 seconds**. That's less than one ring cycle—which means you won't lose callers to frustration or your competition.

20,000 robocalls filtered per month. Our technology ensures we don't waste anyone's time on robocalls, keeping virtual receptionists focused on the conversations that matter.

10+ hours gained per month. Whether you need to work, sleep, or catch up on your to-do list, we'll give you more time to do what matters.

Countless connections made. There's call answering and then there's providing an oh-wow-you-just-made-my-day caller experience. Ruby does both.




Our story

In 2003, Ruby started as a small business dedicated to helping other small businesses. We were built on the belief that creating meaningful human connections in our technology-focused world would build trust, foster customer loyalty, and help our customers grow and thrive.

Ruby's boot-strapped humble beginnings shape every aspect of how we operate—both as individuals and as a company. Our small business beginnings continue to guide us as we meet the dynamic and changing needs of the people we serve.

What was once a small, four-person business answering phones in a tiny studio has flourished into what we are today: a team of over 700 people across the United States applying industry-leading talent, training, and technology to help businesses achieve more.

What customers have to say about Ruby's virtual receptionists



"I love Ruby! They make me look good, keep costs in check, and always respond promptly if an issue arises (which is rare in the first place). You just cannot replace the value of a live, professional person to answer your calls, especially if you're in a high-touch, service business. And with Ruby, you don't have to."

FRANK MOLINAR
MOLINAR AND COMPANY



"We're relieved to have Ruby on the team! As a startup, we want to ensure every customer speaks to a real person and that nothing is missed. Ruby has been great from the beginning—responsive, personable, and truly acting like a member of our team."

SAVANA RADLEY
FILLIP FLEET

What customers have to say about Ruby's virtual receptionists



"As a small firm, it is great to have competent, well-trained backup receptionists who have made our clients feel that they are not speaking to merely robotic call answerers."

CLAUDE SCHWESIG
HERRICKGLOBAL

"Ruby is amazing! They will go above and beyond to handle your calls however you want them to, even after hours and weekends. They employ the most cheerful and helpful people."

DARREN COLEMAN
MYDWARE IT SOLUTIONS



Imagine you, powered by **Ruby.**

Ready to see what Ruby can do for your business and the people you serve? Let's talk!

866-611-7829

www ● ruby ● com

Check out our online demo:

ruby.com/online-demo



ruby.