DEMO

First chapter only

Hyper-Local Leads for Mobile Trades

Fill the Calendar for Mobile Mechanics, Detailers, and Groomers Without Burning Gas

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Hyper-Local Leads for Mobile Trades

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Published by Pragma Vision LLC

First edition, 2026.

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The Radius Trap

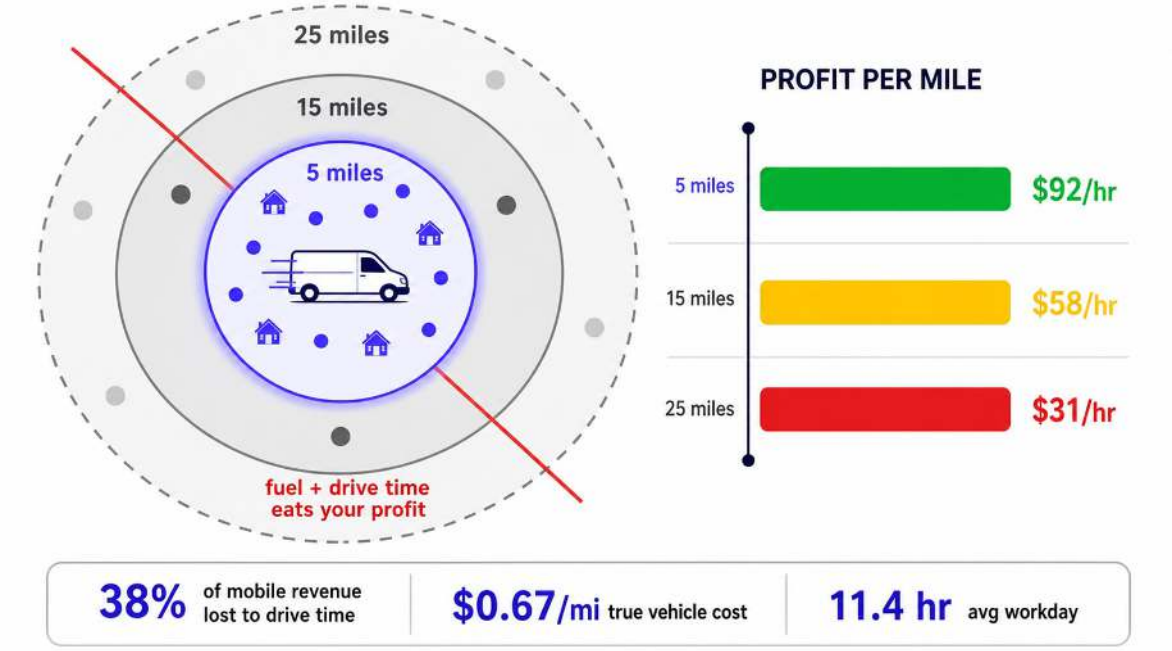

Figure 1. The radius trap falls from $92/hr at 5 miles to $58/hr at 15 miles and $31/hr at 25 miles, with 38% revenue lost to drive time, $0.67/mi vehicle cost, and an 11.4 hr workday

1.1 The Lead Looks Great Until You Drive There

Here is the story every mobile operator knows by heart. A new lead pings your phone. Yelp says it converts at 8%. Facebook Lead Ads says it cost $32. Your dispatcher (or you, between jobs) sees a job worth $180 and books it. Three days later, you climb into the van at 7:14 AM, punch the address into Waze, and watch the screen tell you the drive is 47 minutes through morning traffic.

You arrive at 8:21. The detail takes 90 minutes. You leave at 9:51, get back to your next job at 10:38, and you are already 30 minutes behind for the rest of the day. You earned $180 on the appointment. You burned 2 hours of windshield time, $18 of fuel, and an opportunity cost of one neighborhood job at $140 that you had to push to tomorrow.

Your "successful" lead made you $42.

38%

of mobile service revenue is consumed by drive time, fuel, and missed bookings caused by out-of-zone scheduling[1]

This is the radius trap. Yelp, Google Local Services Ads, Thumbtack, Angi, and Facebook Lead Ads all optimize for the same thing: lead volume. They have no incentive to ask whether the lead is 4 miles from your van or 24. The platforms get paid per lead. You get paid per profitable hour, and the math is not the same math.

Warning

Most mobile operators have never calculated their true profit per mile. They look at gross revenue, subtract product costs, and call the rest "profit." But windshield time is not free. At $28/hour loaded operator cost (wages + insurance + vehicle wear) plus $0.67/mile in fuel and depreciation, a 40-mile round trip costs you

[1] Verizon Connect, "2024 Fleet Technology Trends Report."

> $45 before you ever pull out a chamois. If you are not pricing for it, you are subsidizing it.

1.2 Why Generic Ads Fail Mobile Businesses

A storefront business and a mobile business have opposite economics. The storefront wants leads from as wide a radius as possible—every customer who walks in pays the same overhead. The mobile business wants leads from as narrow a radius as possible—every additional mile cuts margin.

But generic ad platforms treat both businesses the same. They optimize for cost-per-lead, not profit-per-job. They expand your targeting radius automatically when nearby leads dry up, because their algorithms reward "more leads at lower cost" and punish "fewer leads at higher relevance."

Cost Structure	Storefront	Mobile
Marginal cost per customer	$0–$5	$15–$45 (drive + fuel)
Optimal service radius	25+ miles	3–7 miles
Profit hit from +10 miles	Negligible	22–38% margin loss
Best lead source	Search ads	Hyper-local content

Mobile operators who run the same playbook as storefronts (broad Facebook ads, city-wide Google Local Services, generic Yelp boost) lose money on every distant booking and never realize it because their P&L lumps fuel into "operating costs" and drive time into "owner labor."

1.3 The True Profit Per Mile Calculation

Run this for your last 20 jobs. You only need four numbers per job:

1. **Gross revenue** from the appointment (what the customer paid)
2. **Round-trip miles** from your previous job or shop
3. **Round-trip drive time** in minutes (use Google Maps history)
4. **Service time** on-site in minutes

Now compute:

- **Fuel + vehicle cost**: miles × $0.67 (IRS 2025 standard rate, conservative for vans)
- **Drive labor cost**: (drive minutes ÷ 60) × your loaded hourly rate ($28 for solo, $35 with employee)
- **Opportunity cost**: drive minutes × your hourly billable rate ÷ 60
- **True profit**: revenue − supplies − fuel − drive labor

Divide true profit by total job-block minutes (drive + service) to get **profit per minute**. Then multiply by 60 for your true hourly rate on that job. Mobile operators are routinely shocked: a $200 detail 22 miles away yields $31/hour after drive costs, while a $140 detail 4 miles away yields $92/hour.

Key Insight

Stop thinking in revenue per job. Start thinking in profit per minute of your van being unlocked. A 90-minute job 4 miles away is more profitable than a 90-minute job 18 miles away, even at the same price. Every mobile pricing, marketing, and scheduling decision should optimize for profit per route-block minute, not gross revenue per appointment.

1.4 The Three Failures of Generic Lead Platforms

Mobile operators bleeding money on Yelp, Angi, and Thumbtack are usually losing on all three of the same axes:

Failure 1: Radius creep. Platforms auto-expand your service area when nearby demand thins, especially during slow seasons. Your "5-mile" targeting becomes "15-mile" without you noticing because the dashboard never flags it—it just says "more leads delivered."

Failure 2: Auction inflation. Per-lead pricing rises with competition. As more mobile mechanics enter your city, your $22 Yelp lead becomes a $58 lead. Per-lead pricing is a one-way ratchet—it never goes down, only up.

Failure 3: Lead-quality blindness. The platform tells you "lead delivered" but does not tell you the lead is 19 miles away in a price-sensitive zip code. By the time you realize the pattern, you have spent $2,400 over 90 days on out-of-zone leads that converted at $31/hour.

The fix is not "better targeting on the same platforms." The fix is owning your local channel through hyper-local organic content, neighborhood referrals, and route-density pricing—which is what the next six chapters build.

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