GUIDE

APRIL 4, 2026

STOP THE 3 PM GHOST: THE 3MESSAGE CONFIRMATION PLAYBOOK + HOTFILL SYS-TEM

A practical, paste-ready playbook for home service owners to install a 3-message confirmation flow and a hot-fill waitlist that stabilizes the board without adding headcount. Includes SMS copy, tool setup tips, a non-responder call script, compliance checks, and a 7-day rollout.

FROM EPISODE

STOP THE 3 PM GHOST: THE THREE-MESSAGE SYSTEM THAT CUTS NO-SHOWS IN HALF

CONTENTS

- Why this works (and what “good” looks like)
- The 3-message cadence
- Paste-ready message templates (SMS + email)
- Tool setup notes (ServiceTitan / Housecall Pro / Jobber)
- The hot-fill waitlist (turn cancellations into revenue)
- Night-before non-responder protocol (the 10-minute habit)
- Compliance and accessibility quick check (read this once)
- Metrics and a 7-day rollout

A direct, shop-floor guide to install a three-message confirmation flow and a simple hot-fill waitlist so empty driveways stop wrecking your day. Built for owner-operators and dispatch leads who want fewer no-shows without adding headcount. Use the paste-ready copy, tool tips, and the 7-day rollout at the end.

WHY THIS WORKS (AND WHAT "GOOD" LOOKS LIKE)

No-shows aren't random. They're created by (1) weak confirmation, (2) vague windows, and (3) no backup plan. The fix is a tight cadence with one ask per message plus a waitlist you can trigger in seconds. Your goals: 85%+ of tomorrow's jobs confirmed by 6:00 PM the night before; a clear, 30–45 minute ETA text the morning of; and a hot-fill text ready the moment a slot opens.

THE 3MESSAGE CADENCE

Send three messages. Keep each to one action.

1. Immediately after booking (lock it in):

- Purpose: Get on the customer's calendar and set expectations.
- One action: Add to calendar.
- Channel: SMS first, then email backup an hour later.

2. Day before (the money message):

- Purpose: Force a simple “yes” or make rescheduling easy without a call.
- One action: Reply C to confirm OR click a single reschedule link.
- Cutoff: If no confirmation by 6:00 PM local, trigger your call protocol (see Section 6).

3. Morning of / On-my-way (kill window confusion):

- Purpose: Tight, believable arrival window so customers are actually home.
- One action: Expect us in ~30–45 minutes; optional track link if your tool supports it.

Pro tips:

- Use the same cadence for landline-only customers via voice calls (see Section 7).
- Keep the reschedule link scoped to real, limited options (today/tomorrow/next best).

PASTEREADY MESSAGE TEMPLATES (SMS + EMAIL)

Copy it, paste it, and swap in your details. Include opt-out language on first contact of a thread.

Booking (send immediately after scheduling)

```
Thanks for scheduling with [COMPANY] for [DAY, DATE] between [START–END]. Add to
calendar: [CAL_LINK]. Reply STOP to opt out.
```

Day-before (send ~24 hours prior)

```
Tomorrow: your appointment is set for [TIME WINDOW]. Reply C to confirm. Need to
reschedule? [RESCHEDULE_LINK]. Reply STOP to opt out.
```

Morning of / On-my-way (tech taps the button)

```
Your technician [TECH_NAME] is on the way. ETA ~[30–45] minutes. Track: [TRACK_LINK].
Reply STOP to opt out.
```

Hot-fill (send to waitlist when a slot opens)

```
Opening today at [TIME] just came free. First to confirm gets it. Reply Y to claim.
Reply STOP to opt out.
```

Hot-fill follow-up (to others once filled)

```
That [TIME] slot is filled. You’re next on our list—watch for the next opening.
```

Email subject lines (belt-and-suspenders)

- Please confirm your [DATE] service window
- We’re on for [DATE] [TIME WINDOW]? Reply C by 6 PM

Spanish opt-out/HELP add-on (use when texting in Spanish)

- “Responda ALTO para cancelar. Responda AYUDA para ayuda.”

TOOL SETUP NOTES (SERVICETITAN / HOUSECALL PRO / JOBBER)

ServiceTitan

- Confirmations: Enable reply-to-confirm SMS so “C” marks the job confirmed on the Dispatch Board. Add your reschedule URL (portal/online booking) in the day-before template.
- On-My-Way: Have techs use the mobile “On My Way” button for a 30–45 minute ETA text.
- Same-day fills: Use the Dispatch Board Holding Area to drag unassigned work into freed slots.

Housecall Pro

- Reminders: Turn on day-before reminders and edit copy to include a confirm/reschedule single action.
- On-My-Way: Train techs to tap “On My Way” from the app; set realistic arrival windows in Settings so notifications reflect them.
- Reschedule: Point your link to Online Booking or Customer Portal (limited options work best).

Jobber

- Reminders: In Client communications, enable SMS reminders; use the manual text from Calendar for ad-hoc nudges.
- Client Hub: Route reschedule clicks to Client Hub with constrained options.
- Field: Coach techs to send an “on my way” text from the visit when appropriate.

Low-lift shop setup

- Add one reschedule URL you’ll use everywhere.
- Create two canned SMS snippets (day-before and hot-fill) and one call script (Section 6).
- Default ETA text to 30–45 minutes; don’t promise 10–15 unless you can hit it year-round.

THE HOTFILL WAITLIST (TURN CANCELLATIONS INTO REVENUE)

Build it once; trigger it in seconds.

1. Build the list

- When a customer asks for an earlier time, tag the job/customer “waitlist”.
- Keep basic fields: name, phone, zip, service type, flexibility (today only vs. any day this week).

2. Prioritize fast

- Sort by: proximity to the opening, service type match, and flexibility.

3. Text the list

- Send the hot-fill SMS (Section 3) to the top 5–10 people. First Y wins.
- Log the winner; auto-reply the rest that the slot is filled and they’re next.

4. Two backup plays if it’s still open at noon

- Call a morning job that wanted add-ons: “We’ve got a 3 PM opening if you want to handle [SECOND ISSUE] today.”
- Pull from your unassigned/holding queue (e.g., ServiceTitan Holding Area) and schedule it now.

Implementation tip: If your platform lacks a native waitlist, tags + a saved filter is enough to run this.

NIGHTBEFORE NONRESPONDER PROTOCOL (THE 10 - MINUTE HABIT)

Treat non-responders like a risk signal, not a mystery.

Cutoff

- If no SMS confirmation by 6:00 PM the night before, call. Not text.

Call script (40 seconds)

- “Hi [NAME], this is [DISPATCHER] with [COMPANY]. We’re set for [DAY] at [TIME WINDOW]. Can you confirm now so we keep the slot?”
- If yes: “Great, you’re locked in. See you then.” Mark confirmed.
- If no / conflict: “No problem—here’s a link to pick another time: [RESCHEDULE_LINK].” Free the slot and trigger hot-fill.
- If no answer: Leave a brief voicemail and send the day-before SMS again. If still no response by [7:30 PM], release the slot and work the waitlist.

Policy for high-value / half-day jobs

- Hold with card-on-file or deposit. Say it plainly at booking: “We’ll hold your [DAY] slot with a card on file. No charge unless you cancel inside 24 hours or no-show.” Use this selectively (installs, peak-season work).

COMPLIANCE AND ACCESSIBILITY QUICK CHECK (READ THIS ONCE)

Minimum to launch safely:

- Consent at booking: “We’ll text you appointment reminders. Message/data rates may apply.” Capture yes in your system.

- A2P 10DLC: Make sure your business number's SMS is registered (brand + campaign) through your provider.
- Opt-outs: Honor STOP/HELP (and ALTO/AYUDA when you text in Spanish). Don't text again until they opt back in.
- Landlines: Ask at booking, "Is this a mobile number for texts, or should we call?" Also set up a number-type check so landlines route to voice calls.
- Redundancy: Send the email version an hour after each SMS on high-value jobs.
- Keep first messages short and on-purpose; carriers penalize long, multi-ask texts.

METRICS AND A 7DAY ROLLOUT

Track a tiny set of numbers every week.

- Day-before confirmation rate (by 6 PM): confirmed jobs ÷ all next-day jobs. Target: 85%+.
- Rolling 7-day no-show %: no-shows ÷ (completed + no-show). Target: cut your baseline in half over 30 days.
- Reclaimed-slot %: same-day cancellations filled ÷ same-day cancellations. Aim for 50%+ in peak weeks.
- Opt-out rate: STOPs this week ÷ SMS sent on first-touch messages. If this spikes, your copy is too long or too frequent.

7-day rollout (90 minutes total)

- Day 1 (20 min): Turn on SMS reminders in your tool; add the consent line to your booking script.
-

Day 2 (15 min): Paste the templates (Section 3). Wire the single reschedule URL into the day-before SMS.

- Day 3 (10 min): Train techs to tap “On My Way.” Set default ETA to 30–45 minutes.
- Day 4 (15 min): Create a “waitlist” tag and a saved filter. Save the hot-fill SMS as a snippet.
- Day 5 (10 min): Define your cutoff (e.g., 6:00 PM) and paste the call script into your phone system notes.
- Day 6 (10 min): Dry-run on tomorrow’s board; place 1–3 calls to non-responders.
- Day 7 (10 min): Review metrics above. Adjust message timing or copy as needed.

One question to ask this week

- What was your day-before confirmation rate last week, and where in the flow did it fail?