

The AI Phone Agency Blueprint: Answering Calls Local Businesses Miss

ELEVENLABS USAGE- BASED, ~\$0.05-0.10 / 1K CHARACTERS	RETELL \$0.07- 0.15 / MIN	BLAND \$0.09-0.14 / MIN (RAISED PRICES DEC 2025)	TWILIO ~\$1/MO + USAGE	MAKE \$20- 50/MO	CAL.COM \$0- 15/MO
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THE STACK · ≤ \$150/MO

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SOURCES 11	DIFFICULTY Med	SECTIONS 06

01 The idea

Build and resell AI voice agents that answer inbound phone calls for local service businesses — plumbers, dentists, salons, florists — that miss most of their calls today. You're not selling software. You're selling a receptionist that never misses a call, and charging a retainer for the maintenance behind it.

Who this is for: Operators who've worked in or sold into ops-heavy local businesses and want a service business with recurring retainers, not a coding project.

02 The evidence

\$11B → \$500/mo

The stack behind the answer-every-call agency

CLAIM	NUMBER	SOURCE	CONFIDENCE
Small-business calls answered live	~38% (62% missed)	411 Locals 2024 study, vendor-recycled	LOW one study, vendor-adjacent
Callers who hit voicemail and never call back	~85%	Same vendor ecosystem	LOW reported, unaudited
Unanswered callers who call a competitor instead	~62%	Same vendor ecosystem	LOW reported, unaudited
ElevenLabs valuation / raise	\$11B valuation, \$500M round, Feb 2026	TechCrunch, Feb 4 2026	● HIGH
ElevenLabs ARR growth	~\$350M → ~\$500M in 4 months	Sacra estimate	MEDIUM
Vapi valuation	\$500M, May 2026, after Amazon Ring picked it over 40 rivals	TechCrunch, May 12 2026	● HIGH
Retell AI call volume	50M+ AI phone calls/month	Retell press/blog	MEDIUM vendor-reported
AI voice agent market size	\$2.5–3.5B (2025), 30–40% CAGR into early 2030s	Grand View Research / Market.us	MEDIUM analyst estimate
Reseller pricing vs. platform fee	\$297–997/mo charged, \$99–299/mo paid, 50–70% margin	Trillet pricing guide	LOW vendor content selling to agencies
No verified solo case study at scale	—	Research brief honesty note	STATED explicitly as a gap

03 The stack

≤ \$150/MO TOTAL

TOOL	ROLE	MONTHLY COST
ElevenLabs Agents	Voice generation + conversational agent	Usage-based, ~\$0.05–0.10 / 1K characters
Retell AI or Vapi	Call orchestration: answer, qualify, book	\$0.07–0.15 / min
Bland (alternative)	Outbound-capable platform	\$0.09–0.14 / min (raised prices Dec 2025)
Twilio	Phone number provisioning	~\$1/mo + usage
Make or n8n	Booking + CRM handoff automation	\$20–50/mo
Cal.com or Calendly	Appointment write-back	\$0–15/mo

SOURCE: PUBLIC VENDOR LIST PRICING · JUL 2026

01

WEEK 1

Pick a vertical and build a real demo

- Choose one local vertical where a missed call is a missed job: home services, dental, salons, florists. Ideally one you've worked in or sold into before.
- Build a working demo agent against a *real* business's own current missed-call line — not a hypothetical script. Let it answer, qualify, and book a fake appointment.
- The demo is the sales call. You're showing them their own phone working correctly for the first time, not pitching a concept.

02

MONTH 1

Price it right, land three clients

- Price as a receptionist replacement, never as software: \$500–2,000 setup fee + \$300–700/mo flat retainer.
- Never quote per-minute pricing to the client — that's your cost structure, not theirs.
- Land your first three clients from your own network inside the vertical.
- Stay inbound-only. Outbound AI calling is regulated (TCPA) — this is not the place to test that boundary.

03

MONTH 2

Delivery discipline

- Set the escalation path before the first live call: anything ambiguous goes to a human, owner gets a text summary either way.
- Send a short monthly report: calls answered, appointments booked, revenue recovered. This report is what renews the retainer.
- Rebuild the FAQ list from real transcripts weekly. The agent gets better every week or it quietly gets worse.
- Turn each client's before/after missed-call numbers into a case study to land the next five.

05 The honest math

\$1,500–5,000/month



OUR ESTIMATE

RANGE + RISKS

×1 **Realistic year-one range** \$1,500–5,000/month from 3–8 local clients. This is an estimate reasoned from pricing bands, not an audited result, and it's a lower ceiling than some other AI-agency niches — the solo evidence here is thinner and the space is younger.

×2 **Failure mode #1 — the embarrassing call** The agent handles roughly 80% of calls cleanly; the other 20% needs a human. Churn happens exactly when that escalation path doesn't exist.

×3 **Failure mode #2 — platform risk** You're reselling someone else's per-minute margin. Bland already raised prices once. Retell already sells an AI receptionist directly to small businesses — the platforms you build on could squeeze the agency layer out entirely.

×4 **The open question** not whether small businesses will pay for this (the missed-call math already answers that), but whether the agency layer between platform and plumber survives the next 18 months, or whether ElevenLabs and Retell just sell it themselves.

06 Sources

- [01] 411 Locals 2024 study (85 businesses, 58 industries), recycled via getaira.io/skipcalls – vendor-adjacent
- [02] TechCrunch, Feb 4 2026 – ElevenLabs \$500M Series D, \$11B valuation
- [03] Sacra estimate – ElevenLabs ARR growth
- [04] Tech Funding News – ElevenLabs secondary talks at ~\$22B (unclosed, hedge explicitly)
- [05] TechCrunch, May 12 2026 – Vapi \$500M valuation, Amazon Ring selection
- [06] Retell AI press/blog – call volume and ARR, vendor-reported
- [07] Grand View Research / Market.us – AI voice agent market size, analyst estimate
- [08] Trillet pricing guide – vendor content, unverified reseller margins
- [09] Research brief – per-minute pricing convergence across Bland, Retell, Vapi
- [10] Research brief – TCPA/regulatory note on inbound vs. outbound calling
- [11] Research brief – explicit honesty note: no verified public solo case study exists at scale

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