

WHERE QUOTES GO QUIET.

We asked 154 shops across Alberta and BC one simple question, the same one a real customer would ask. Here is what came back, and what it says about where jobs get lost.

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50 OF 154

answered a customer's question

30 MINUTES

median time to answer

NOT ONE

described a system that chases quotes automatically

YOUR NEXT JOB STARTS IN SOMEONE'S INBOX.

A customer sends you a request. What happens in the next hour decides whether you get the job or somebody else does. Most shops never see this part. It happens on the customer's side of the screen. So we went and looked.

02 · WHAT WE DID

ONE QUESTION. 154 SHOPS.

154

shops that build to order

8

trades

2

provinces

1

question, asked the same way

Millwork, metal fab, machining, truss plants, modular builders, precast, windows and glass. We filled in the contact form on each company's own website and asked the same thing:

“What is your typical turnaround on a firm quote once you have a complete drawing set?”

THE QUESTION EVERY SHOP GOT

That is it. One question. No sales pitch, no hint that it was a study. Then we waited and wrote down exactly what came back and how long it took.

FAST, OR NOT AT ALL.

50 shops wrote back. 104 never did. Of the ones who answered, half replied within half an hour. The quickest took 2 minutes. The slowest took 5 days.

HOW LONG IT TOOK TO GET A REPLY, 49 SHOPS



Look at the gap. 38 of the 49 replies landed inside two hours. Then the working day went dead. Across all 154 shops, **exactly one reply arrived between 2 hours and 8 hours**. Everything else showed up the next morning or later. In this business you either answer right away, or you answer tomorrow.

Silence was the normal outcome by a long way, and most of it was silent both ways. In the first round, where we tracked it, **64 of 70 shops sent nothing back at all**, not even an automatic “we got it.” The customer has no idea the request even landed. Some of that is on purpose. One shop told us they get four or five junk messages a day. But a real buyer’s first message looks exactly the same in the inbox.

Some trades answer far more than others. Truss plants and modular builders wrote back 20 times out of 26. Millwork shops wrote back 9 times out of 49.

FIVE THINGS NOBODY IS WATCHING.

FINDING 01

Most shops just do not answer.

104 out of 154 never wrote back. Not a no, not a “we are too busy right now.” Nothing. If this is happening at your shop you would never find out, because the customer does not complain. They just go and ask somebody else.

FINDING 02

A fast reply is not a fast quote.

Answering the email is the easy part. Getting a real price out the door is the hard part. One shop replied in 10 minutes and said the quote would take 6 to 8 weeks. Another replied in 5 minutes and said 3 to 5 weeks. **Only 13 of the 50 said they could quote in under a week.** The quickest shops were not the keenest. They were just set up so requests hit the right desk straight away.

FINDING 03

More than a quarter could not give a number at all.

14 of the 50 said some version of “it depends.” That is often true, but the customer still has to pick somebody today. Plenty of shops also had to come back and ask for plans or a location first. One truss shop put it plainly: two to three weeks if they do the take-off, **two days if you send one.** Same job, same shop, seven times the wait.

FINDING 04

Nobody chases a quote once it is out the door.

Hardly anyone follows up on quotes that go quiet, and not one shop described anything automatic. One general manager told us how he keeps track: **“Habit, and can look back in our ERP.”** Another said someone walks the whole open-estimate list most days to work out who needs a call. Habit works fine at ten open quotes. Nobody could tell us what happens at fifty.

FINDING 05

When a job gets passed along, nobody owns the clock.

One request we sent to a manufacturer got answered two days later by a dealer in another city. A truss plant told us they hear nothing once a quote reaches the yard that sells it. So a job you lost and a job nobody ever showed the customer look exactly the same from the shop floor.

FOUR GAPS, FOUR FIXES.

None of this means throwing out what you already run. It sits between the request coming in and your estimator picking it up, and it never sets a price.

1 Answer inside five minutes

A real reply from a real name. It says what you got and when the quote will land. In the first round, 64 of 70 shops sent nothing at all.

2 Ask for what is missing right away

Plans, location, scope, a take-off if they have one. All asked for the moment the request arrives, instead of a week later when an estimator finally opens it and finds the holes.

3 Sort the junk before your estimator sees it

Spam and half-finished requests get filtered out first. Real buyers get a quick answer instead of being mistaken for spam, and your estimator's hours go to work you can actually win.

4 Chase every quote until you get a yes or a no

Follow up on everything you send, including the quotes that go out through a dealer, with every outcome written down. This is the gap that costs the most and the one nobody is watching.

Your estimator still sets every price. This runs alongside the tools you already use. Everything above is built and working today, and it takes about two minutes to show you.

FIVE QUICK QUESTIONS.

- 1 Does every request get a reply that names a person and a date?
- 2 Do you chase missing plans and details the same day?
- 3 Does your estimator only see requests that are real and complete?
- 4 Do you follow up on every quote until you get a yes or a no?
- 5 Do you know your win rate, and why you lost the ones you lost?

Two or more “no” or “not sure”? Then your shop has the same gaps we found in 154 others.

SEE WHERE YOUR QUOTES STALL.

It is a twenty-minute call. We walk through how a request moves through your shop right now, from the inbox to the order, and line it up against the 154 shops in this study. You will come away knowing where requests stall, what that is costing you, and a straight answer on whether it is worth doing anything about.

Book a 20-minute call →

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HOW THE STUDY WAS RUN

154 suppliers drawn from the Architectural Woodwork Manufacturers Association, the Western Wood Truss Association, the Provincial Glaziers Association of Alberta, the Modular Building Institute and COSSD listings, contacted on weekdays in September 2026. Not a random sample. One question through each supplier's own website form, as a prospective customer, without saying it was a study; every supplier who replied was told afterwards and sent their own result. The 50 figure counts companies, not messages: those 50 shops sent 58 replies between them. One reply could not be timed, so the chart covers 49. Times are taken from email timestamps and the suppliers' own form notifications, Mountain time. Turnaround figures are what suppliers said, not what was measured. Automatic acknowledgement was recorded in the first round only. Trade, send day and wording overlap between rounds, and no supplier is named.