The Project Photo & Portfolio Playbook

Take and use photos that sell $30,000+ projects

By the SmallBiz Marketing team
Contractor marketing specialists · 20+ years of marketing experience

smallbizmarketing.net

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Take and use photos that sell $30,000+ projects.

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PART 1

The essentials

The core steps, in order. Start here.

SECTION 02

Why photos matter most

High-end homeowners hire with their eyes. Your photos are the strongest proof that you can do the job they want.

SECTION 03

Your first 60 minutes

- Clean your phone lens and turn on grid lines in camera settings
- Pick your next finished project to photograph
- Create one album per project on your phone

SECTION 04

Gear you already have

A recent smartphone is enough. Clean the lens, shoot in daylight and hold the phone level.

SECTION 05

The shot list for every project

- Before: same angle you will shoot after
- Wide shot of the finished room
- Three detail shots: tile edges, fixtures, trim
- One shot showing scale or layout
- Team at work, with permission

SECTION 06

Lighting and staging

- Open blinds, turn on all lights

- Remove towels, tools, bottles and clutter
- Shoot from a corner at chest height
- Avoid wide-angle distortion on vertical lines

SECTION 07

Before-and-after pairs

Shoot the before and after from the same spot. Pairs are among the most shared and clicked contractor images.

SECTION 08

Naming and alt text

- File name: city-service-detail.jpg, such as roseville-walk-in-shower-niche.jpg
- Alt text: a plain description, such as walk-in shower with large-format porcelain tile and built-in niche

SECTION 09

Where to use them

- Website service pages and gallery
- Google Business Profile, twice a month
- Quotes for similar projects

RECOMMENDED TOOL

Wix

Gallery tools make it easy to add project photos from your phone.

Visit Wix at wix.com →

SECTION 10

Project checklist

- [ ] Before photos taken
- [ ] Finished wide and detail shots taken
- [ ] Files renamed and alt text added
- [ ] Posted to website and Google profile

PART 2

Going deeper

The strategy behind each step, with frameworks and diagrams.

SECTION 12

Deep dive: composition that makes work look expensive

Shoot from slightly lower than eye level, around chest height, and keep vertical lines straight. Straight lines read as quality; tilted lines make even great work look sloppy. Step back to the corner of the room to show depth, then move in for details.

Use natural light whenever possible. Turn on all lights to avoid dark corners and mixed shadows. Avoid shooting directly into a bright window, which darkens the room.

- Chest height, phone level, vertical lines straight
- Corner shots for depth, then details
- Daylight plus all lights on

SECTION 13

Deep dive: telling the project story

A finished photo shows quality. A before, during and after sequence shows skill and process, which is what high-end clients pay for. Capture a few in-progress photos on every job: demolition, waterproofing, layout and installation. These make great social posts and reassure clients that the hidden work is done right.

- Before: same angles as your planned after shots
- During: demo, waterproofing, layout, installation
- After: wide, detail and matching before angle

SECTION 14

Deep dive: organizing and reusing photos

Create one folder per project named with the date, city and project type. Pick your best five photos per project for your website, Google profile and proposals. Over a year this builds a library you can match to any new lead: a homeowner asking about heated floors sees three heated-floor projects in your proposal.

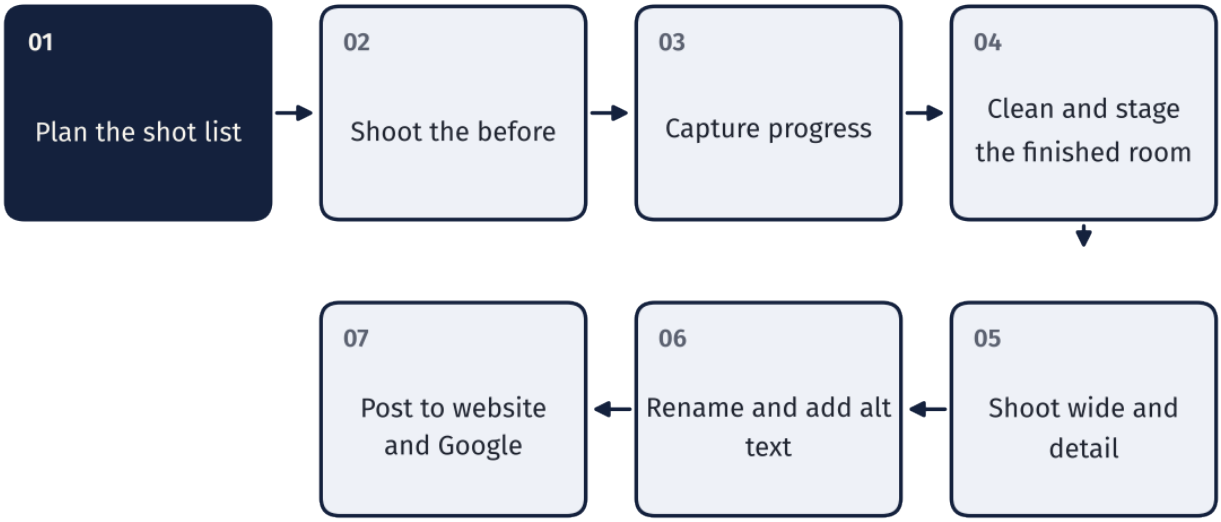
- One folder per project: date-city-type
- Best five per project flagged for marketing use

- Match photos to each new lead's project type

SECTION 15

The big picture: photos do your selling

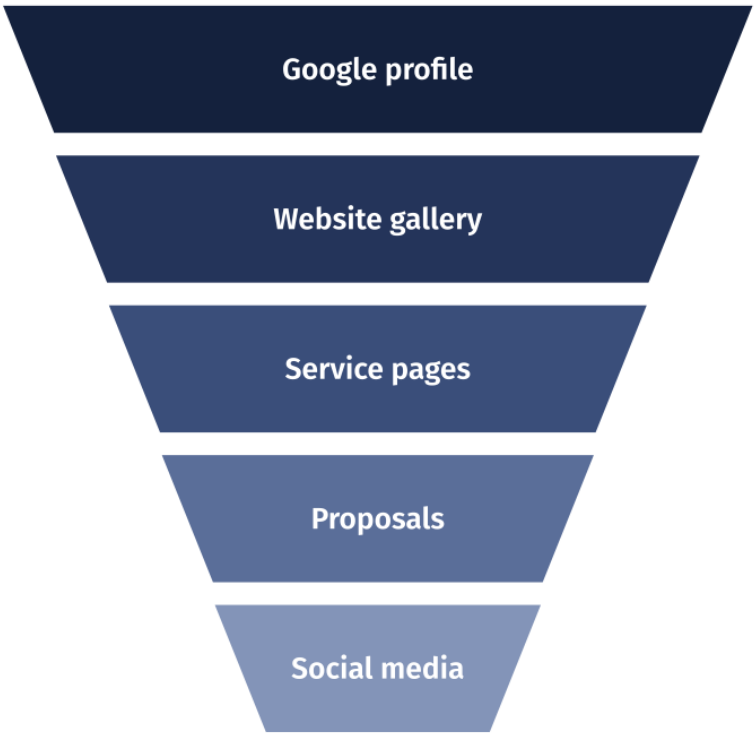
Homeowners hire with their eyes. Before they read a word, they look at your photos and decide whether your work matches the home they picture. Great photos make every other part of your marketing work better.



A photo routine for every project.

SECTION 16

Where your photos earn money



first impression on the map

proves quality

matches the job they want

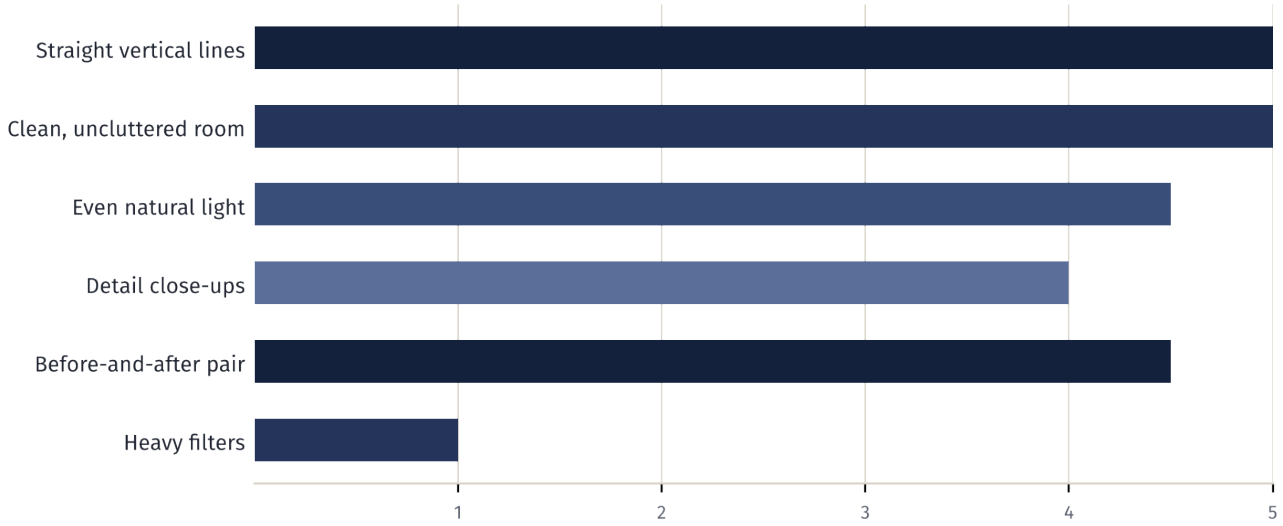
shows similar finished work

keeps you top of mind

The same photos can work in five places. Shoot once, use everywhere.

SECTION 17

What makes a photo look high-end



Our view of what makes contractor photos look premium, rated 1 to 5.

SECTION 18

Where to spend your time first



Most of the gains come from free habits.

SECTION 19

Real-world scenario: better photos, bigger jobs (illustrative)

This is an illustrative example. Mia's tile work is excellent, but her photos are taken at the end of long days, in poor light, with tools still in the room.

She starts following a shot list on every job: before photos from the doorway, progress shots of waterproofing and layout, and finished photos in daylight with the room cleaned. She renames files, writes alt text and adds the best five from each job to her website and Google profile.

Homeowners begin mentioning her photos during consultations, and her proposals include matching photos of similar projects.

The lesson: the work was always good. The photos finally showed it.

SECTION 20

Troubleshooting: photo problems

Photos look dark	Shoot in daylight with every light on and avoid shooting into windows.
Rooms look crooked	Hold the phone level at chest height and use grid lines.
Forgot before photos	Add before photos to your job start checklist.
Photos sit on your phone unused	Spend 15 minutes after each job posting the best five.

PART 3

Tools you can use today

Examples, templates, worksheets, calendars and trackers.

SECTION 22

Worked example: one bathroom, ten shots

EXAMPLE

1. Wide from the doorway 2. Wide from the opposite corner 3. Shower straight on 4. Niche close-up 5. Tile edge and trim detail 6. Vanity and mirror 7. Floor pattern 8. Fixture detail 9. Before shot from the doorway 10. Matching after shot from the doorway.

SECTION 23

Worked example: captions that sell

EXAMPLE

Curbless walk-in shower with 24x48 porcelain and a linear drain, Granite Bay.

Before and after: dated tub converted to a spa-style shower in six working days, Roseville.

SECTION 24

Worksheet: your photo plan

Next three projects to photograph

Your file naming format

Who on your team takes photos

Where each project's photos will be posted

SECTION 25

Common mistakes to avoid

- Shooting with tools, trash or towels in frame
- Tilted vertical lines from holding the phone too high or low
- Heavy filters that misrepresent the finish
- Forgetting the before photo

SECTION 26

FAQ

Do I need a pro photographer?

For your top two or three showcase projects a year, it can be worth it. Phone photos are fine for the rest.

Can I post clients' homes?

Ask permission and avoid showing house numbers or personal items.

30-DAY ACTION CALENDAR

30 days to a photo library that sells

Do one task a day. Tick the box in your head, or print this page and cross off each day as you go.

DAY 1 Clean phone lens	**DAY 2** Turn on grid lines	**DAY 3** Make project albums	**DAY 4** Pick next project	**DAY 5** Shoot before photos
DAY 6 Shoot demo	**DAY 7** Shoot waterproofing	**DAY 8** Shoot layout	**DAY 9** Shoot install	**DAY 10** Clean finished room
DAY 11 Shoot wide from door	**DAY 12** Shoot opposite corner	**DAY 13** Shoot 3 details	**DAY 14** Shoot matching after	**DAY 15** Pick best 5
DAY 16 Rename files	**DAY 17** Write alt text	**DAY 18** Add to website gallery	**DAY 19** Add to service page	**DAY 20** Post to Google
DAY 21 Post to social	**DAY 22** Repeat on next job	**DAY 23** Review older projects	**DAY 24** Reshoot one project	**DAY 25** Make a before-after pair
DAY 26 Add to proposals	**DAY 27** Ask team to shoot progress	**DAY 28** Organize folders	**DAY 29** Remove weak photos	**DAY 30** Plan next month

SECTION 28

shot list template

TEMPLATE · COPY AND CUSTOMIZE

Bathroom remodel shot list

Before: doorway wide, opposite corner, problem areas.

During: demolition, waterproofing, layout lines, tile setting.

After: doorway wide, opposite corner, shower straight on, niche, tile edge, fixtures, floor, vanity.

TEMPLATE · COPY AND CUSTOMIZE

Kitchen remodel shot list

Before: full room from entry, counters, backsplash.

During: cabinets installed, backsplash layout.

After: full room, island or counters, backsplash detail, lighting, hardware.

TEMPLATE · COPY AND CUSTOMIZE

Photo caption formula

[What it is] with [standout detail], [City].

TRACKER

Project photo log

Project	City	Before done	After done	Posted

SECTION 30

glossary

Alt text	A short description of a photo that Google can read.
Composition	How the room is framed in the photo.
Before-and-after pair	Two photos from the same spot, before and after the work.

SECTION 31

Recommended tools

Every tool recommended in this playbook, in one place. Some links may be affiliate links; we only recommend tools we use or would set up for clients.

RECOMMENDED TOOL

Wix

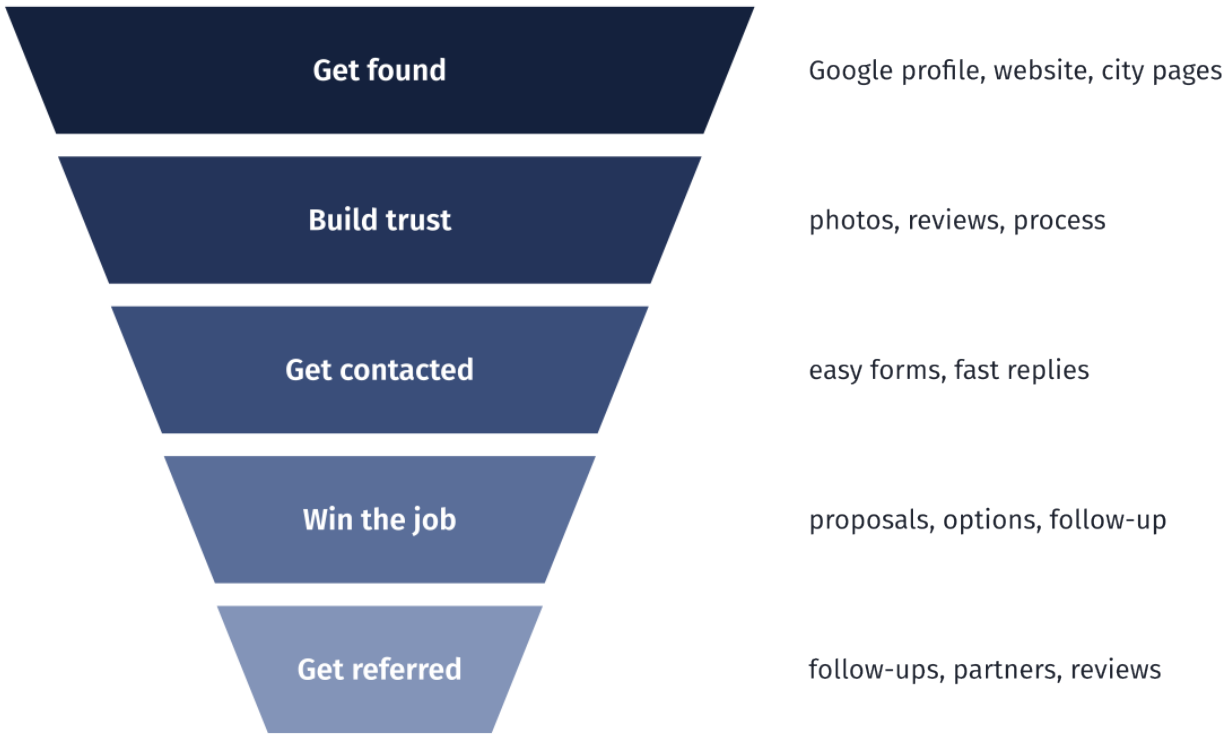
Gallery tools make it easy to add project photos from your phone.

Visit Wix at wix.com →

SECTION 32

Bonus: the contractor marketing system on one page

Every playbook in this series fits into one simple system. Homeowners find you, trust you, contact you and refer others. Each part supports the next.



The five stages of contractor marketing and the tools for each.

SECTION 33

Bonus: your weekly marketing hour

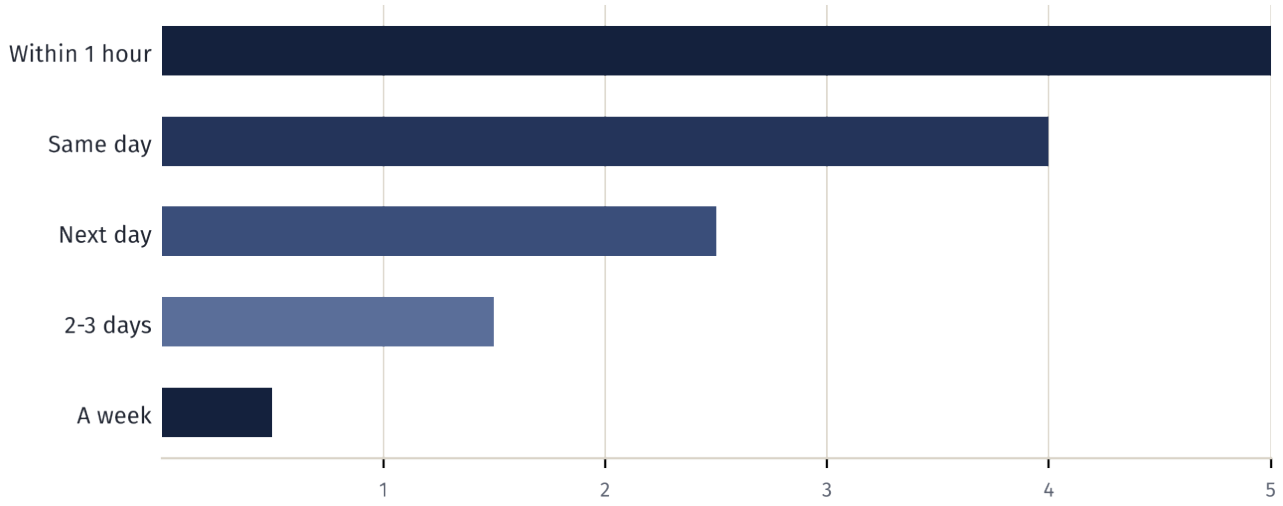
You don't need a marketing department. One focused hour a week, done consistently, beats occasional bursts of effort.

- First 15 minutes: answer every new lead and message
- Next 15 minutes: send review requests for finished jobs
- Next 15 minutes: upload new project photos to your website and Google
- Last 15 minutes: work on one improvement from your current playbook

SECTION 34

Bonus: how fast to reply to a lead

Homeowners often contact several contractors at once. The first professional reply makes a strong impression.



Our view of how reply speed affects your chances of winning the job, rated 1 to 5. Based on experience, not a study.

SECTION 35

Bonus: master checklist

- [ ] Website with a page for each main service
- [ ] Contact form on every page
- [ ] Google Business Profile complete and active
- [ ] Review request after every job
- [ ] Real project photos added monthly
- [ ] Pages for your top cities
- [ ] Job management software for quotes and payments
- [ ] Follow-up with past clients and partners
- [ ] One marketing hour every week

SECTION 36

Bonus: when to get help

Doing it yourself works if you have the time. If your calendar is full of jobs, it's often worth having a professional set up the foundation so you can focus on the work you do best. SmallBiz Marketing builds premium contractor websites and Google setups and can run your monthly marketing for you.

ABOUT SMALLBIZ MARKETING

SmallBiz Marketing builds premium websites and Google visibility for home-improvement contractors. Our team brings 20+ years of marketing experience, and every playbook is built from the same systems we use for client websites.

Rather have it done for you?

We build premium websites and Google setups for contractors, live in 5 days. Tell us about your business through the contact form at smallbizmarketing.net/contact.

Contact us →

Contractor website	$2,495
Website + Google setup	$3,495
Monthly growth plan	$995/mo

Some links in this playbook may be affiliate links. We only recommend tools we use or would set up for clients. Tool features and pricing change; check each company's site for current details.