

# State of Calls Report 2026

## Chapter 1

### The Revenue Leak Crisis

How Unanswered Calls Are Draining Restaurant Profits





It's 10:47 on a Tuesday night, and Sarah is craving pizza. She pulls up her favorite local shop's phone number and taps the call button. Ring. Ring. Ring. By the fourth ring, she's already opening DoorDash. By the seventh, she's placed an order with a competitor. **The local shop's phone continues ringing into the void, unaware that they just lost a \$45 order and possibly a loyal customer.**

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This scenario plays out thousands of times every day across the restaurant industry. But unlike a failed credit card transaction or a bounced check, most restaurant owners have no idea how much revenue is slipping through their fingers with every unanswered ring.

# The Scale of the Problem

Our analysis of 12,091 restaurant phone calls reveals missed revenue hiding in plain sight. Across the industry, more than one in 10 calls go unanswered. However, that industry average masks dramatic variation by restaurant type, and, for some, the problem is substantial.

# 40.1%

of QSR calls go unanswered.

That's 2 out of every 5 customers.

Restaurant Type	Answer Rate	Missed Rate
Quick Service (QSR)	59.9%	40.1%
Fast Casual	75.3%	24.8%
Full Service (FSR)	91.0%	9.0%
Pizza	93.1%	6.9%

The quick service restaurant (QSR) segment faces the steepest challenge, missing 40% of inbound calls. Fast casual eateries perform significantly better at 25% missed calls, showing that limited-service models can achieve better phone coverage with the right systems. Full-service restaurants and pizza establishments perform markedly better, but even their ~7-9% miss rates translate to thousands of lost opportunities across a chain or franchise system. And, as we'll see in subsequent chapters, rush hours and time zones affect answer rates.



## The QSR Paradox

Quick-service restaurants built their business model on speed and convenience, yet **they're missing four in 10 phone calls**. The very segment that should excel at high-volume, quick transactions is hemorrhaging revenue through their most basic customer touchpoint.

"Should restaurants aim for 100% answer rates? No. And if you try to get there manually, you end up paying a lot to solve a pretty small problem."

Michael Beck, CEO, Inc Tank ([www.inctankgtm.com](http://www.inctankgtm.com))

**Full-service restaurants**, don't celebrate just yet. You're potentially leaving more than **\$24,000** in lost revenue on the table. A nine percent miss rate looks trivial next to QSR's **40%**, but FSR calls represent a fundamentally different value.

A typical FSR location handling **25 calls per day** (vs QSR's 50) with a **9% miss rate** loses **821 calls annually**. At a conservative **\$60 average ticket** (reservations, takeout orders, catering inquiries), that's **\$24,630** in lost revenue.

For upscale concepts where average tickets exceed **\$100**, the leak reaches **\$41,050**, which is more than half the QSR's loss despite answering **91% of calls**. The math changes when every call could be a party of six celebrating an anniversary or a corporate catering order for 50 people. FSR operators can't hide behind "we answer most calls" because the calls they miss are often their most valuable.

**Fast casual restaurants** occupy an interesting middle ground. With a **24.75% miss rate**, they answer noticeably more calls than traditional QSRs (**59.9 vs 75.3% answer rate**) but lag behind full-service and pizza concepts. At **30 calls per day** with a **25% miss rate**, a fast casual location loses **2,738 calls annually**. With an average ticket of **\$18**, that's **\$49,284** in annual revenue leakage, nearly as much as QSR despite having half the call volume.

**Pizza franchises and regional chains** face a unique challenge: their business model depends heavily on phone orders, yet even best-in-segment performance



leaves money on the table. At a **6.9% miss rate**, which is better than the industry average, a typical pizza shop with **40 calls per day** can lose **\$22,120 annually**.

Fast casual's **24.75% miss rate** shows this isn't inevitable because better systems and processes can dramatically improve phone performance even in high-volume, limited-service environments. For a **100-location franchisee**, that scales to **\$2.2 million**. For a **500-location regional chain**, it's **\$11 million** walking out the door every year.

This is money that could be used for enterprise software, national advertising, and new equipment across the system. The pizza segment's efficiency paradox is that they've optimized operations to handle high phone volume, but even their impressive **93% answer rate** represents millions in lost opportunity at scale.

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# \$11M

For a 500-location regional chain, it's \$11 million walking out the door every year — from missed calls alone.

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✔ Hidden Call Out: The Coffee Shop

STAT:

66.3%

A well-known, multi-location coffee shop misses (nearly seven out of 10) of calls.



INSIGHT:

Coffee shops, built on the promise of quick service, have some of the worst performance. The variance within the QSR segment is **18.6 percentage points**, proving this is an execution problem, not one that's industry-wide. Some QSRs answer **72% of calls**, while others answer **less than 30%**. Brand matters more than segment.

WHY THIS MATTERS:

This contradicts the narrative that "QSR is just hard." It shows that operational excellence is achievable even in high-volume, low-margin environments. The gap between best and worst QSR performers is wider than that of QSR and FSR averages.

# Breaking Down the Numbers

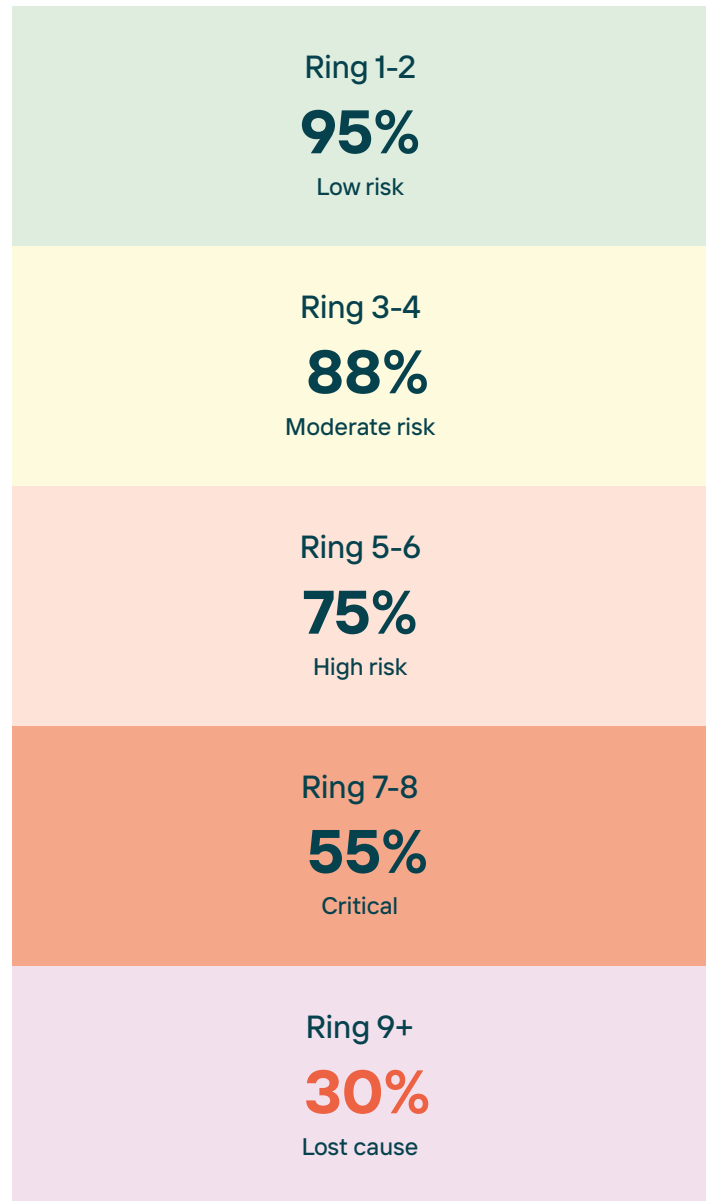
To understand the true cost of this crisis, we need to follow what happens when a customer picks up the phone. Let's first look at all calls across every type of restaurant.

Call Outcome	% of Calls	Avg Rings	Result
Answered	89%	1.8	Revenue captured
Unanswered	11%	5.5	Revenue lost

For the **11% of calls** that never get answered, the average customer listens to 5.46 rings before giving up. At roughly three seconds per ring, that's 16 seconds of mounting frustration before they make a decision that could cost your business hundreds or thousands of dollars over time.

## The 5-Ring Threshold: When Patience Expires

Our data reveals a crucial inflection point at five rings. This is the moment when customer patience begins to crack, and each additional ring exponentially increases the likelihood they'll abandon the call.



This means every second counts. The difference between picking up on ring three versus six is the difference between capturing revenue and losing a customer to a competitor.

"If you have a high volume of calls, wouldn't it be great if every call was answered quickly, without anyone sitting on hold and having their questions answered in a timely manner? Yes. That's what AI does."

David Rev Ciancio, CMO, Salad House | Handcraft Burgers & Brew (<https://www.restaurantsgrow.tv/>)



## An In-Depth Look: The Instant Abandonment Phenomenon

### Stat:

# 35.7%

of customers abandon in 0–2 rings

### Why this Matters:

The instant abandoners represent a different customer psychology. They're comparison shopping in real-time, so every ring is a competitive disadvantage. Conversely, the **10+ ring** persisters are likely regular customers. They may be willing to forgive the first unanswered call but will give up if their calls are regularly neglected.

### Insight:

More than one-third of customers who abandon calls do so almost immediately. This suggests they're calling while browsing alternatives and will switch to a competitor at the slightest friction. Meanwhile, **22% persist through 10+ rings**. These are your most loyal customers, and you're failing them the worst.

# 22%

wait 10+ rings

# >1/3

abandon instantly



## Calculating the Revenue Leak

Abstract percentages become concrete when translated into dollars. Let's examine a typical QSR location to understand the annual cost of missed calls with an average lower-ticket value.

Typical QSR Location-Annual Calculation	Value
Incoming calls per day	50
Annual call volume	18,250
Calls missed @ 40% rate	7,300
Conversion rate (calls to orders)	70%
Lost orders per year	5,110
Average ticket size	\$14.25
<b>Annual Revenue Leak</b>	<b>\$72,818</b>

This calculation assumes conservative industry averages. Many locations experience higher call volumes during peak seasons, have higher average ticket sizes, or see better conversion rates from phone orders. For these restaurants, the annual revenue leak could easily exceed \$100,000 per location.

## Fast Casual Revenue Impact

Typical Fast Casual Location - Annual Calculation	Value
Incoming calls per day	30
Annual call volume	10,950
Calls missed @ 25% rate	2,738
Conversion rate (calls to orders)	70%
Lost orders per year	1,917
Average ticket size	\$18.00
<b>Annual Revenue Leak</b>	<b>\$34,506</b>



## An In-Depth Look: Days of the Week Matter

### Stat:

**6.2** rings **MON**

**3.9** rings **SUN**

Customers persist 6.2 rings on Monday vs. 3.9 rings on Sunday

### Insight:

Customers give up fastest on **Sundays (3.9 rings)** and slowest on Mondays (6.2 rings), suggesting Monday callers are more motivated and loyal but encounter worse staffing. Even more surprisingly, people give up faster in **evening and night calls (5.38 rings)** versus morning and day (**5.87 rings**). They seem to have less patience when hungry.

### Why this Matters:

This reveals **temporal psychology patterns** that should inform staffing. Monday's patient customers are likely planning the week ahead or dealing with business needs, meaning they're **higher-value interactions**. Evening callers are impulsive and hungry and want instant gratification. **Different times require different strategies.**

## The Franchise System Multiplier

For franchises and multi-unit operators, these per-location losses compound dramatically. A QSR franchise with 50 locations isn't losing \$73,000, which equals \$3.65 million annually. A 500-location system? That's \$36.5 million in missed revenue.

# \$36M

million in missed revenue.

System Size	Locations	Annual Revenue Leak
Small Franchise	10	\$728,180
Regional Chain	50	\$3.65 Million
Mid-Size Operator	100	\$7.3 Million
Major Chain	500	\$36.5 Million

Calculate your potential missed revenue with our custom Revenue Calculator.



"If 4,000 people walked up to your store and found the door locked, you'd fire the manager on the spot. That is exactly what \$73k in missed calls represents. Stop viewing the phone as a communication tool and start viewing it as a transaction portal. If it's not being answered, your store is effectively closed to that revenue."

Paulos Berhane, Senior Director of Growth, [Reality Based Group](#)

# The Hidden Costs Beyond Lost Sales

Revenue leakage is the obvious cost, but unanswered calls create ripple effects that compound the damage:



## 01 Customer Acquisition Waste

Marketing dollars spent acquiring customers through **ads, SEO, and local campaigns** are wasted when those customers can't connect by phone. If you're spending \$50 to acquire a customer who can't reach you, you've simply **transferred that \$50 to your competitor.**



## 02 Lifetime Value Erosion

A customer who can't reach you once might forgive it. **A customer who can't reach you twice will remember it.** Each unanswered call jeopardizes the entire lifetime value of that customer relationship.



## 03 Brand Reputation Damage

In the age of online reviews, **operational failures become public.** "Tried to call three times, no answer" is a common refrain in one-star reviews. The reputational cost of these experiences extends **far beyond the individual caller.**



## 04 Competitive Disadvantage

In tight markets, restaurant success often comes down to **execution at the margins.** When competitors answer their phones, and you don't, you're voluntarily ceding ground in a **zero-sum game targeting customer loyalty.**



## The Loyalty Tax

Ironically, the restaurants most hurt by missed calls are often those with the most loyal customer bases. Regular customers **who know your number by heart** and call directly are **more profitable** than third-party app users. **Missing their calls means losing your most valuable customers** to the very aggregators you're trying to avoid.

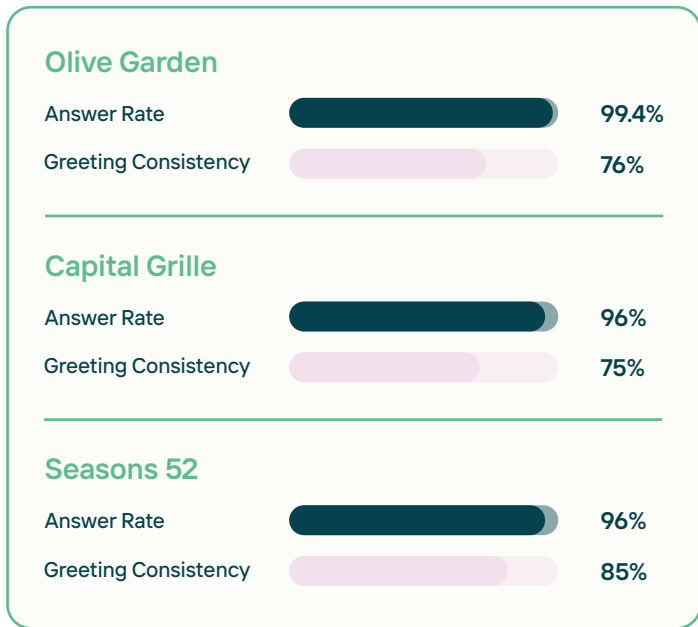




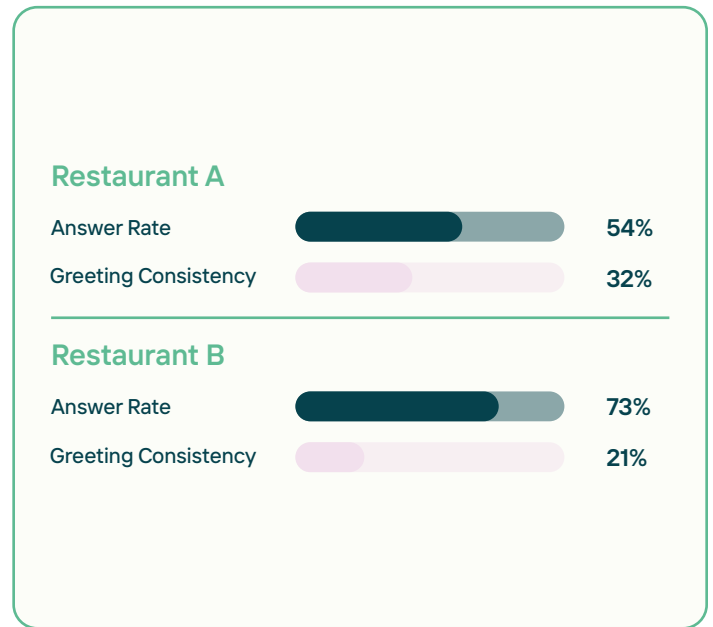
The overall industry sees a .24-point sentiment boost from proper phone greetings. FSR matches this exactly, which might seem unremarkable until you consider that this restaurant category has the highest baseline greeting rate (**77%**) and sentiment expectations.

When an FSR customer calls and doesn't receive a proper greeting, they're questioning whether this restaurant deserves their celebration dinner reservation or corporate event booking. The same greeting lapse that might be forgiven at a QSR becomes a brand violation at an upscale steakhouse.

**FSR brand leaders understand this:**



**Compare to bottom performers:**



**The correlation is clear:** FSR brands that compete on hospitality treat phone greetings as sacred. Those competing on price or convenience often neglect this basic courtesy, and their sentiment scores reflect it.

# Why This Problem Persists (and Why It's Getting Worse)

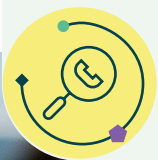
If missed calls represent such a massive revenue leak, why aren't restaurants fixing it? The answer lies in a perfect storm of industry challenges:

Challenge	Impact on Phone Coverage
Labor Shortage	Restaurants can't hire enough staff to cover all shifts, leaving phones as a "when we have time" priority.
Competing Priorities	During rush periods, in-person customers take precedence over ringing phones.
Lack of Visibility	Most restaurants don't track phone metrics, so they don't realize they have a problem.
Training Gaps	High turnover means new employees often lack phone training or scripts.
Technology Friction	Legacy POS systems and phone infrastructure make improvements difficult and expensive.

## Free Phone Audit

Historically, tracking phone metrics hasn't been available without secret shoppers and expensive custom solutions. Revmo offers a free phone audit, so you have a realistic understanding of your phone metrics along with tangible takeaways for improvement.

**Click here for a free phone audit.** →





These challenges feed each other. Understaffing makes phone coverage harder, which frustrates customers, then damages revenue, and constrains hiring budgets. The cycle continues, and the revenue leaks grow.

Counterintuitively, brands with higher call volumes have lower miss rates than low-volume counterparts (i.e., pizza restaurants). The data suggests busier restaurants are forced to develop better systems, which improves performance.

## The Digital Ordering Paradox

Many restaurants respond to phone coverage challenges by pushing customers toward online ordering. However, this strategy has unintended consequences.

**Third-party delivery apps charge commission rates of 15-30%**, turning your most profitable channel (direct phone orders) into your least lucrative one (marketplace orders). By failing to adequately staff phones, restaurants are essentially paying premium

commission rates to third-party platforms to solve a problem they themselves created.

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# 15-30%

Third-party delivery apps  
charge per order.

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## The Path Forward

The revenue leak crisis is solvable, but only if restaurants acknowledge its scale and prioritize phone operations with the same rigor they apply to in-person service. This is the first chapter in a series of five diving deep into the impact phone lines have on the restaurant industry. The following chapters explore how this crisis manifests in day-to-day operations, why current approaches fall short, and what high-performing restaurants are doing differently.

[Click here for the next chapter: The Strain on Staff.](#) →

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**The first step is measurement. You can't fix what you don't measure, and most restaurants have no visibility into their phone performance.**

[Click here for a free phone audit to see how your restaurants are performing.](#) →

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**Coming in Chapter 2:** *The Strain on Staff. Operational pressure impacts wait times, service quality, and the employee experience.*

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# REVMO

Revmo AI is a Phoenix-based company specializing in voice-enabled conversational AI designed for restaurants. From handling inbound calls and taking reservations to answering common customer questions, Revmo helps restaurants streamline communication, reduce missed calls, and keep tables full. By automating phone interactions, Revmo improves efficiency, enhances the guest experience, and allows restaurant teams to focus on what they do best; serving great food and creating memorable dining experiences.

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