

# **Why Answering Service Customers Leave and What Central AI Should Do About It**

*154 churn stories from 409 reviews | 9 competitors | Reddit & Trustpilot | 2015–2026*

## TL;DR

1. **79% of churn maps to two problems Central AI's model solves.** AI fixes call handling (45%). Flat-rate pricing fixes billing (33%). Both require a different business model, not just better technology.
2. **Ruby and Smith.ai are bleeding customers.** Ruby has the worst net flow (-4). Their customers are actively shopping.
3. **The ratings are fake.** Before mid-2024, organic reviews averaged 1.2–3.8 stars. Then sudden waves of 5-star reviews appeared. The real experience hasn't changed.
4. **AI-native proves the concept but can't execute.** Synthflow has 47% billing churn and 35% reliability churn. They solved calls. They broke everything else.
5. **Lead with scripts and flat-rate pricing at \$99–199/mo.** That addresses 76% of churn and undercuts legacy pricing by 50–90%. Price isn't why people leave — billing model is.

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## The Setup

Central AI is entering a market where thousands of small businesses — law firms, medical offices, home service companies — pay \$235 to \$2,800 per month for someone to answer their phones. These businesses can't afford a full-time receptionist, so they outsource to an answering service. A remote agent reads from a script, takes a message, routes the call. The business pays per minute or per call.

The model has built-in problems. One receptionist juggles hundreds of clients. Training time per client is minimal. Staff turnover is high. Your “dedicated receptionist” is actually a stranger reading a script they saw 30 seconds ago.

I wanted to understand exactly how and why customers leave these services — not from the companies' perspective, but from the customers' own words. So I went to the two places where customers talk candidly: Reddit and Trustpilot.

I read 409 reviews of 9 answering services. 154 of them described a specific reason for leaving — not just “I’m unhappy” but a concrete complaint I could classify. I had two independent classifiers tag every single one into 11 categories. They agreed 142 out of 154 times (Cohen’s kappa = 0.91, “almost perfect” in stats terms). The 12 disagreements were all borderline cases within the same group.

What follows is the analytical journey through that data — the questions I asked, what I found, and what it means for you.

## Where the data comes from

Every number in this document traces back to a real review. Here’s the breakdown by competitor:

Competitor	Trustpilot (churn)	Reddit (churn)	Churn Quotes	Trustpilot Link
AnswerConnect	36	0	36	<a href="https://www.trustpilot.com/review/answerconnect.com">https://www.trustpilot.com/review/answerconnect.com</a>
Ruby Receptionist	33	3	36	<a href="https://www.trustpilot.com/review/ruby.com">https://www.trustpilot.com/review/ruby.com</a>
PATLive	28	0	28	<a href="https://www.trustpilot.com/review/patlive.com">https://www.trustpilot.com/review/patlive.com</a>
Smith.ai	19	4	23	<a href="https://www.trustpilot.com/review/smith.ai">https://www.trustpilot.com/review/smith.ai</a>
Synthflow	17	0	17	<a href="https://www.trustpilot.com/review/synthflow.ai">https://www.trustpilot.com/review/synthflow.ai</a>

*Total: 154 churn quotes from 409 reviews. Every quote is linked to its original source in the appendix.*

## How the Market Breaks

The first question I asked was the most basic one: what exactly goes wrong? When a small business owner decides to leave their answering service, what pushed them over the edge?

Before I get into the numbers, it's worth hearing the raw voice of the customer. I pulled one quote from each major failure group — not because they're outliers, but because they're representative of dozens of stories like them.

### The Call Handling Problem

*"They have wasted our ad budget, lost customers for us, and wasted hours of our time."*

— Smith.ai customer, Trustpilot

### The Billing Problem

*"They charged me \$221 for overage charges for minutes I used that were included in my 200 minute plan."*

— AnswerConnect customer, Trustpilot

### The Reliability Problem

*"I have lost clients and potentially hundreds of thousands of dollars because of this company's negligence."*

— Smith.ai customer, Trustpilot

### The Category Problem

*"Not to mention I am now saving over \$1,000 a month by cancelling my answering service!"*

— Dialzara customer, Trustpilot

## The four groups

Reading hundreds of these stories, a pattern emerged quickly. Every complaint falls into one of four groups — and the distribution isn't even close to uniform. Call handling dominates.



### #1: CALL HANDLING — 45% of churn (66 quotes)

This is the core failure of the answering service model. Customers are paying for someone to represent their business on the phone, and that person doesn't know the business, doesn't follow the script, and garbles the information they collect. It's not a training problem — it's a structural one. A single receptionist juggling hundreds of clients will never match someone dedicated to one business.

Most of this is agents not following the script (19%, 32 quotes) and not knowing the business well enough to sound credible (16%, 15 quotes). A smaller chunk is basic data entry errors — wrong phone numbers, misspelled names, garbled emails (8%, 14 quotes). And a handful of cases where calls simply go to the wrong person (2%, 5 quotes).

*Most affected: AnswerConnect (69%), Ruby Receptionist (44%), Smith.ai (39%)*

### #2: BILLING — 33% of churn (51 quotes)

The second-largest group is about how customers are billed, not how much. Per-minute billing creates perverse incentives: longer calls mean more revenue for the service, not better outcomes for the customer. Add in hidden charges for spam calls, after-call work time, and deliberately difficult cancellation processes, and you get a billing model that feels predatory — because it is.

The biggest slice is hidden charges and inflated bills (14%, 21 quotes) — customers charged for spam calls, billed for "after-call work" time, or upsold to plans they didn't need. Then there's the cancellation trap (9%, 15 quotes): services that make you email to cancel, require 30-day notice, or keep billing after you've stopped. Opaque pricing (6%, 11 quotes) rounds it out — bills that don't match what was promised, charges no one can explain. Pure price sensitivity (4%, 4 quotes) is actually the smallest billing sub-problem.

*Most affected: Synthflow (47%), Smith.ai (43%), Ruby Receptionist (33%)*

### #3: SERVICE RELIABILITY — 12% of churn (22 quotes)

These are the customers who were happy once. They signed up, it worked, and then something changed. Staff turnover, management shifts, growing pains — whatever the cause, the service

degraded. The most painful quotes come from long-time customers who watched a good thing fall apart.

Most of this is quality decay (7%, 14 quotes) — 5-year customers who describe watching the service deteriorate, getting \$10 credits for errors that cost them thousands. The rest is missed calls (4%, 8 quotes): messages delivered too late, callers put on hold until they hang up, leads lost to competitors before the business even knew they called.

*Most affected: Synthflow (35%), PATLive (21%), Ruby Receptionist (17%)*

#### #4: INDUSTRY DISILLUSIONMENT — 10% of churn (15 quotes)

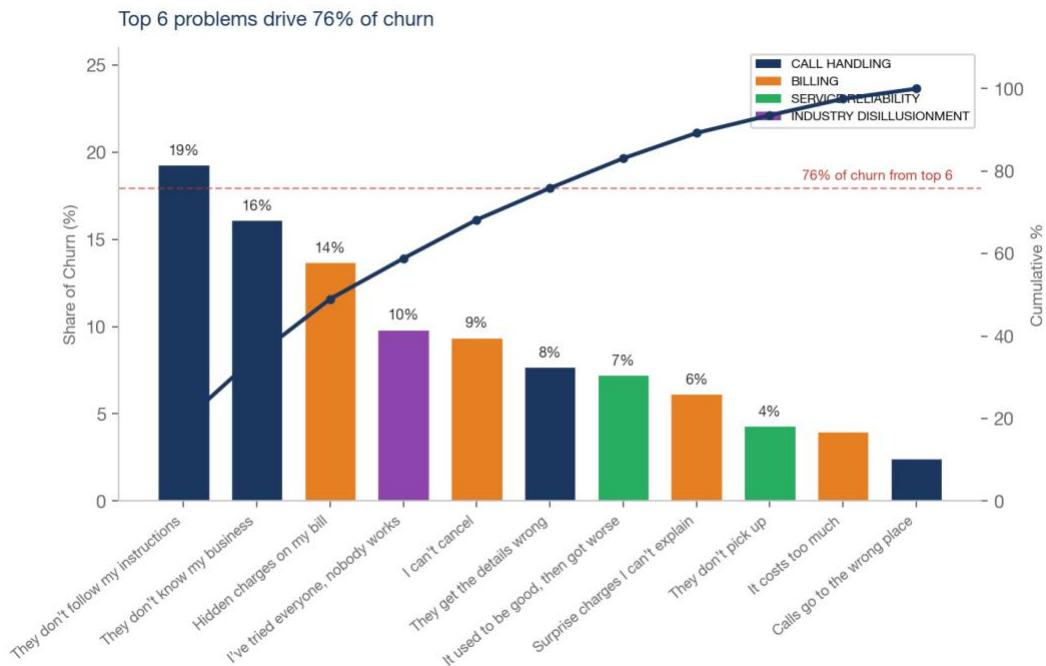
Some customers have given up on the entire category. They've tried three, four, five answering services and concluded that none of them work. These are the highest-intent prospects for Central AI — they want the problem solved, they just don't believe a human-pool model can do it.

All 15 quotes in this group describe the same pattern: a business owner who has tried multiple answering services and is looking for something fundamentally different. They're not comparing feature lists — they're asking whether the entire category can work.

*Most affected: PATLive (14%), Smith.ai (9%), Synthflow (6%)*

### Where churn concentrates

The next question I asked was about concentration: are complaints spread evenly across all 11 categories, or do a few dominate? This matters for you because it determines whether Central AI needs to solve everything or can win by solving a few things well.



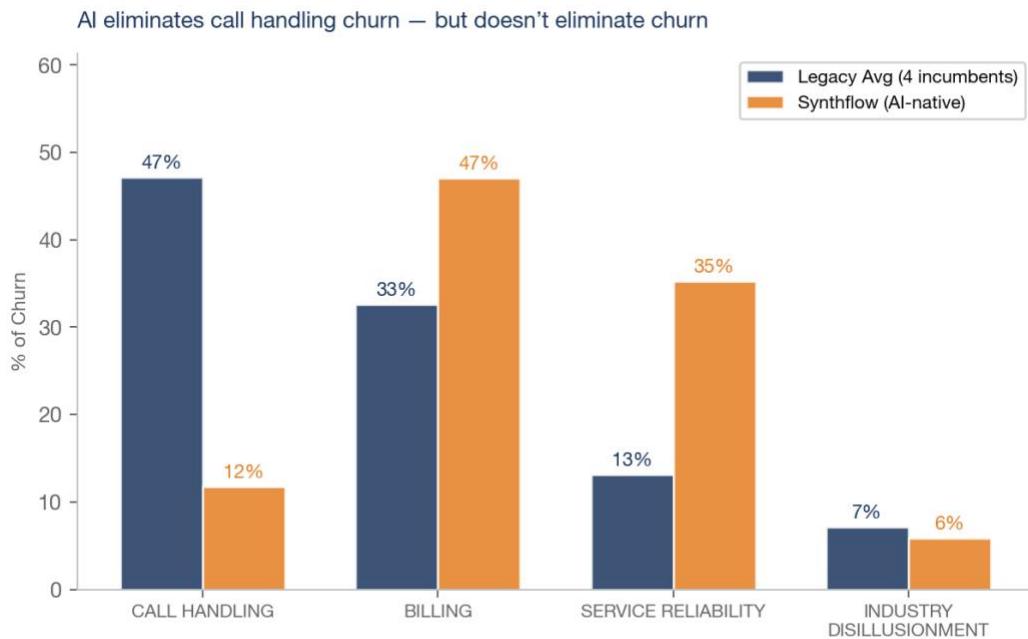
The data is decisive. The top 6 reasons account for the vast majority of churn. Everything below the line is real, but it's diminishing returns. This means Central AI doesn't need to be perfect at everything — it needs to be excellent at scripts, inauthenticity, and billing.

## What happens when you switch to AI?

Here's where I asked a question that turned out to be more interesting than expected: if the core problem is human receptionists failing at calls, does switching to AI fix it?

Synthflow is the only AI-native competitor with enough data to analyze (17 churn quotes on Trustpilot). And the answer is nuanced. AI does solve the call handling problem — script adherence complaints essentially vanish. But churn doesn't vanish. It moves.

- Call handling drops from 44–69% (legacy) to 12% (Synthflow). AI follows the script every time. That specific problem is solved by design.
- But billing jumps to 47% and reliability to 35%. Synthflow customers complain about bait-and-switch pricing, features locked behind enterprise plans, and a platform that breaks silently.



This is a crucial insight for Central AI. Winning isn't just about having an AI that handles calls well — Synthflow already proved that's possible. Winning means avoiding both failure modes: the call handling problems that plague legacy services AND the billing and reliability problems that plague the AI-native ones. The bar isn't "better than human receptionists." The bar is "better than human receptionists, without introducing new reasons to leave."

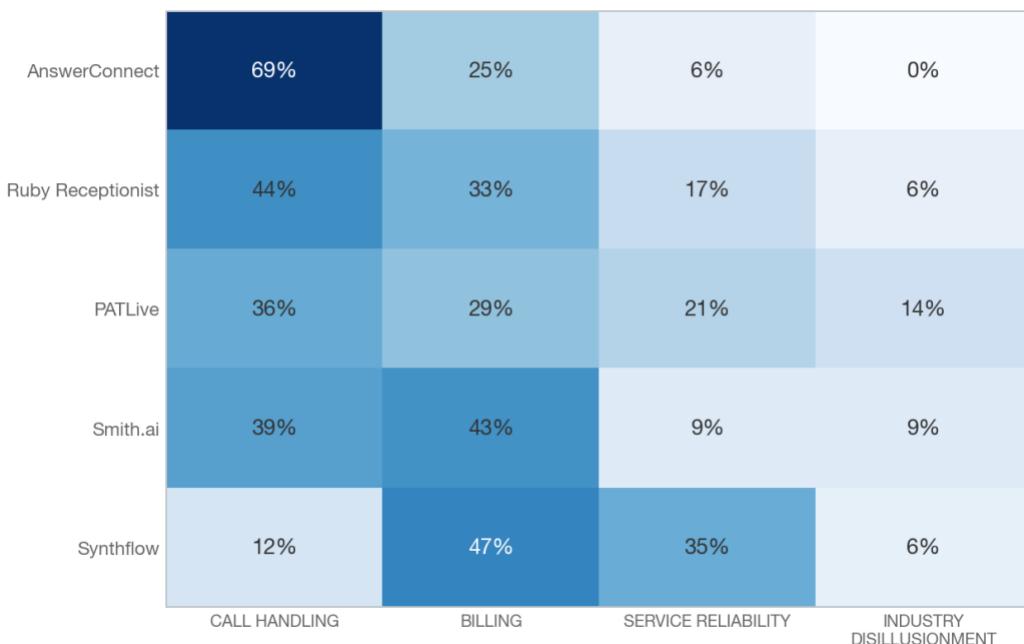
## Who's Bleeding

At this point I knew what breaks. The next question was more actionable: does every competitor fail the same way, or are some more vulnerable than others? If you're going to target churning customers, you need to know whose customers to target and what message will resonate with them.

### Each competitor fails differently

I cross-tabulated every churn quote by competitor and failure group. The heatmap below shows what percentage of each competitor's churn falls into each group. The differences are striking — these companies don't just fail, they fail in distinctive ways.

Each competitor fails differently

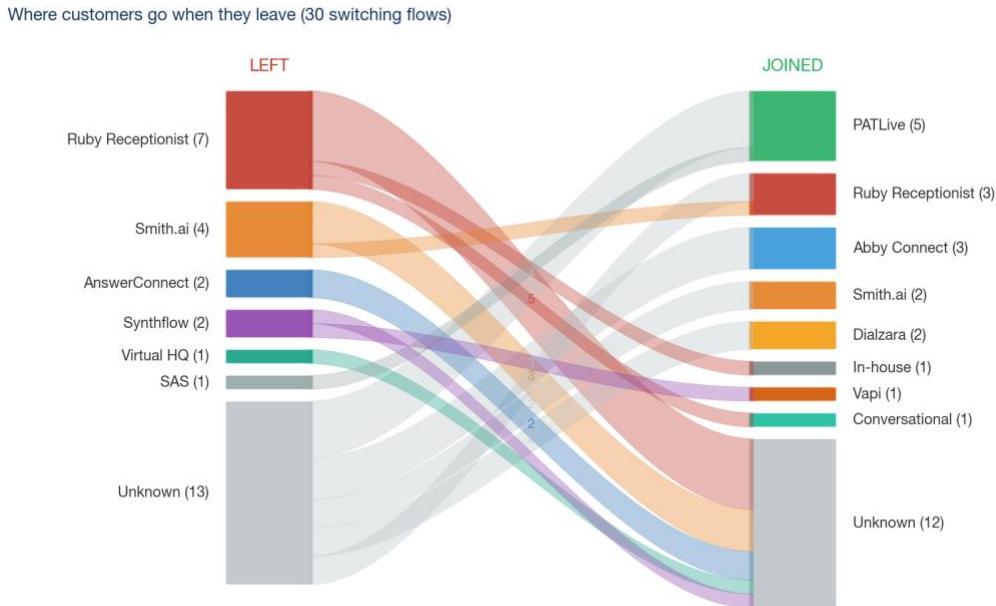


- **AnswerConnect** (36 churners): 69% call handling. Top complaints: They don't follow my instructions (12), Hidden charges on my bill (7).
- **Ruby Receptionist** (36 churners): 44% call handling. Top complaints: They don't follow my instructions (8), It used to be good, then got worse (5).
- **PATLive** (28 churners): 36% call handling. Top complaints: They don't follow my instructions (4), I've tried everyone, nobody works (4).
- **Smith.ai** (23 churners): 43% billing. Top complaints: They don't follow my instructions (7), I can't cancel (4).
- **Synthflow** (17 churners): 47% billing. Top complaints: It used to be good, then got worse (4), Hidden charges on my bill (4).

This tells you something important: the go-to-market message for a Ruby churner (“your calls will be handled right”) is completely different from the message for a Smith.ai churner (“transparent billing, cancel anytime”). One size won’t fit all.

## Where customers go when they leave

I then looked for switching stories — reviews where a customer named both the service they left and the one they moved to. I found 30 of them. That’s a small sample, so treat the direction as signal, not the exact numbers as proof. But the pattern is consistent.



The chart maps each of the 30 switching stories as a flow from the company a customer left (on the left) to the one they joined (on the right). The “Unknown” band is large — most reviewers name only one company, not both — but among those who do name names, the pattern is clear.

On the departures side: Ruby Receptionist (7), Smith.ai (4), AnswerConnect (2). Ruby stands out as the biggest named source of churning customers.

On the arrivals side: PATLive (5), Ruby Receptionist (3), Abby Connect (3). PATLive appears to be catching the most named switchers, which aligns with their reputation for customization and onboarding support.

The trigger breakdown reinforces what the churn data already showed: quality (20/30), capability (4/30), pricing (6/30). People switch because the calls are handled badly — not because of price, not because of missing features. This is the opening for Central AI.

*Confidence note: 30 switching stories is directional signal, not statistical proof. The pattern is consistent (quality-driven, Ruby losing) but the sample is small.*

## The dollar amounts are real

One question I anticipated you'd ask: are these real businesses spending real money, or just price-sensitive bargain hunters who'd churn from anything?

The data answers clearly. 22 of 154 churn quotes mention specific dollar amounts — these are businesses spending hundreds to thousands per month. And the complaints aren't about the price being too high ("It costs too much" is only 4% of churn). They're about how they're billed: surprise charges, per-minute inflation, impossible cancellation. These customers aren't looking for cheaper — they're looking for fairer.

- **Hidden charges on my bill** (21 quotes, 14% of churn)
- **I can't cancel** (15 quotes, 9% of churn)
- **Surprise charges I can't explain** (11 quotes, 6% of churn)
- **It costs too much** (4 quotes, 4% of churn)

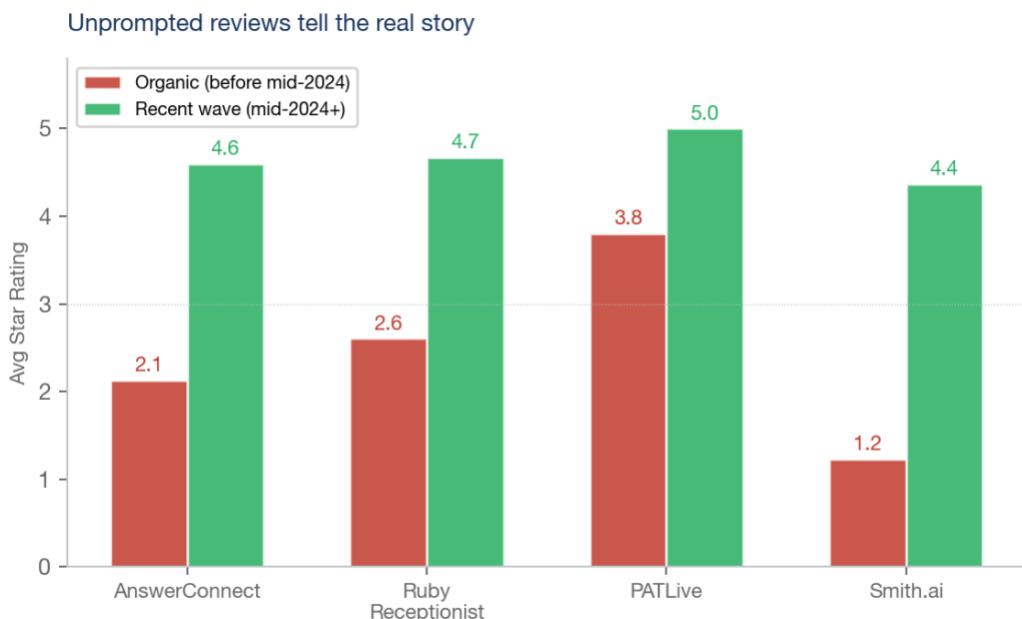
## Why Now

So far I've shown you what breaks and who's most vulnerable. But there's an obvious question you should be asking: if these services are so bad, why haven't customers already switched to something better? Is this actually a moment of opportunity, or has the market already settled?

I dug into the timing data to find out. What I found surprised me.

## The ratings are fake

If you look at Trustpilot today, these companies look fine. Some even look good. I almost stopped here — maybe the churn quotes were just the vocal minority. Then I split the reviews by date and saw something that changed the picture entirely.



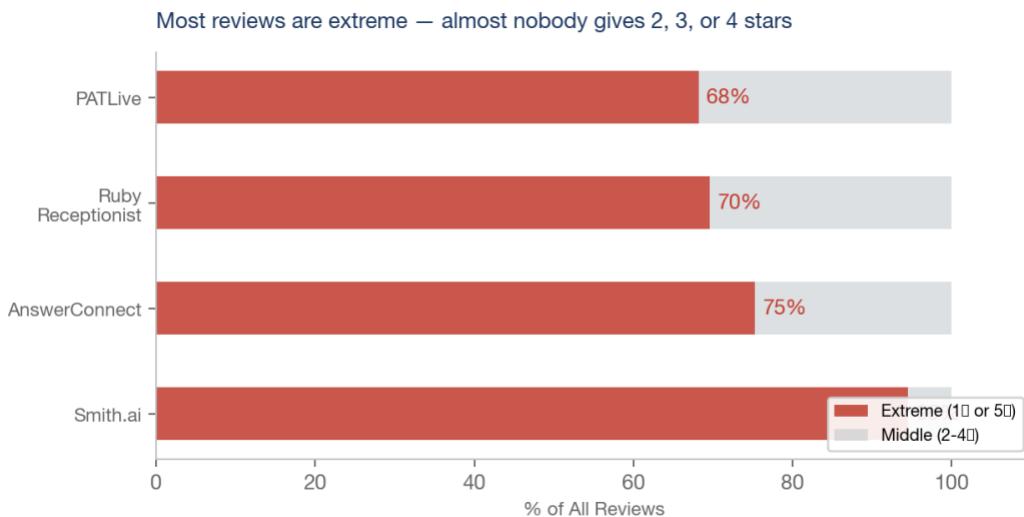
Before mid-2024, when reviews were purely organic, the average ratings for these companies ranged from 1.2 to 3.8 stars. Then, starting around mid-2024, waves of 5-star reviews appeared across multiple companies simultaneously.

- **AnswerConnect:** organic avg 2.1 (38 reviews) → recent 4.6 (67 reviews)
- **Ruby Receptionist:** organic avg 2.6 (56 reviews) → recent 4.7 (46 reviews)
- **PATLive:** organic avg 3.8 (72 reviews) → recent 5.0 (16 reviews)
- **Smith.ai:** organic avg 1.2 (13 reviews) → recent 4.4 (60 reviews)

Smith.ai had zero 5-star reviews before mid-2024. Then 49 appeared. AnswerConnect: same — zero, then 59. The service didn't change. The review strategy did.

## The distribution proves it

I wanted to be rigorous about this claim, so I looked at the star distribution. If these services were genuinely improving, you'd expect reviews to spread across 1–5 stars — some lingering dissatisfaction, some moderate improvement, some genuine fans. That's not what the data shows.



Instead, reviews cluster at the extremes — almost nobody gives 2, 3, or 4 stars. This is a classic fingerprint of two separate populations: unhappy organic reviewers and solicited positive reviewers. The barbell distribution tells you the positive reviews are from a different population than the negative ones.

- **Smith.ai:** 95% extreme. Unprompted 5-star: 0/13. Recent 5-star: 49/60.
- **AnswerConnect:** 75% extreme. Unprompted 5-star: 0/38. Recent 5-star: 59/67.
- **Ruby Receptionist:** 70% extreme. Unprompted 5-star: 10/56. Recent 5-star: 41/46.
- **PATLive:** 68% extreme. Unprompted 5-star: 38/72. Recent 5-star: 16/16.

Here's what this means for you: the real competitive landscape is much weaker than Trustpilot suggests. You're not competing against 4-star services. You're competing against the organic experience (1.2–3.8 stars). The bar is low.

## AI-native competitors are proving the concept

I also looked at the AI-native alternatives that have entered the market. Dialzara (14 reviews, 5.0 avg) and My AI Front Desk (8 reviews, 5.0 avg) show the AI receptionist concept resonates with customers — but these are tiny samples, too small to draw conclusions from.

Synthflow, with 69 reviews, shows what happens at scale: billing and reliability become the new battleground. The AI handles calls fine. The company behind it doesn't.

But here's the urgency: Bland AI raised \$65M (YC, Emergence Capital). Synthflow has backing from Atlantic Labs. These are well-funded teams who will eventually fix their execution problems. The window where AI-native competitors have broken platforms is temporary. You need to move while it's open.

## What competitors can and can't fix

Before jumping to recommendations, I asked one more question: which of these competitive weaknesses are permanent, and which are temporary? If a competitor can patch their way out of a problem, you shouldn't build your strategy around it. You should bet on the structural ones — the problems baked into their business model.

Problem	Structural or Patchable?	Why
Agents don't know the business	Structural	Shared-pool model: one receptionist juggles hundreds of clients. Adding an AI screening layer doesn't fix the human's lack of context.
Per-minute billing incentives	Structural	Revenue = call duration. Flat-rate would cannibalize the business model. This is the innovator's dilemma — incumbents can't switch without destroying margin.
Staff turnover → quality decay	Structural	Human call centers have 30–45% annual turnover. Constant retraining is the norm, not a fixable bug. New hires will always be worse than tenured staff.
Script adherence	Patchable (slowly)	Better training helps marginally, but is limited by the shared-pool constraint. An agent handling 200 clients will never master all 200 scripts. AI solves this by design.
Technology integrations	Patchable	CRM integrations, scheduling APIs — these can be added. Smith.ai is already moving here with their hybrid model.
Review solicitation	Patchable	Already happening (the mid-2024 surge). Masks the problem but doesn't fix it.

Bottom line: the three biggest pain drivers (scripts, inauthenticity, billing model) are structural. Competitors would have to rebuild their entire business to fix them. That's the moat you should build around.

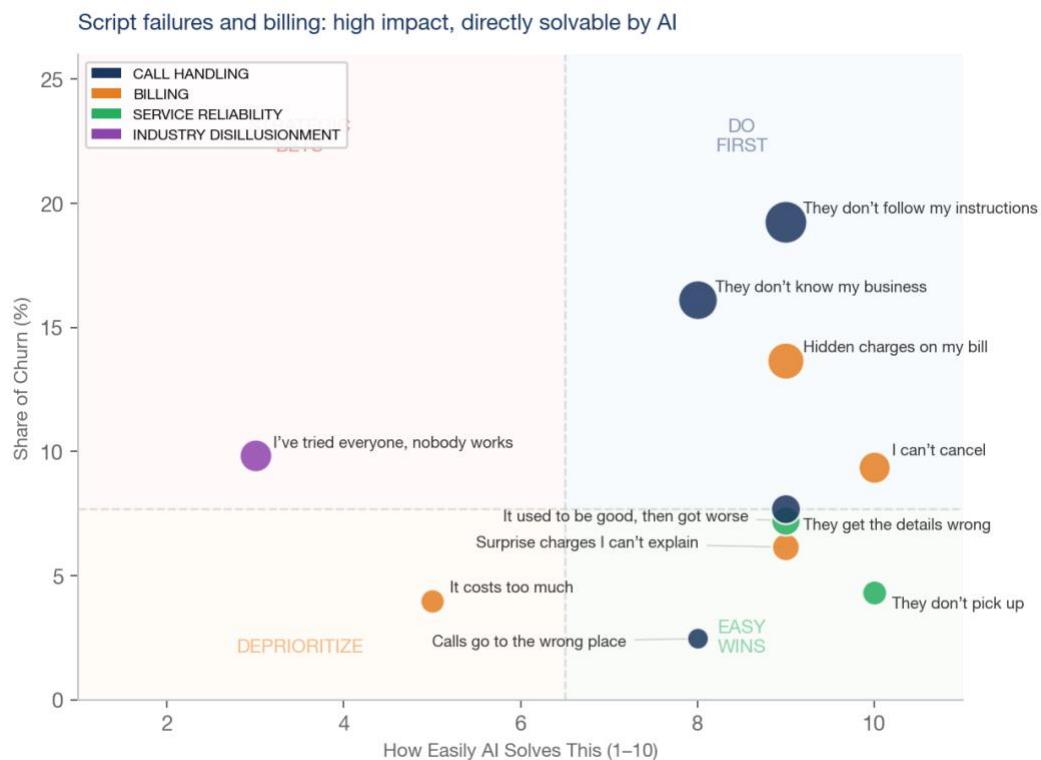
## The Play

So here's what the data tells you. Legacy services can't fix their structural problems. AI-native entrants have the right idea but haven't earned customer trust yet. The real ratings show incumbents are far weaker than their Trustpilot pages suggest. And the window is open but closing as well-funded competitors fix their platforms.

The rest of this section translates those findings into specific product, pricing, and go-to-market recommendations. Everything ties back to a number from the data above.

## What to build

I plotted every churn category on two axes: how much churn it drives (impact) and how naturally AI solves it (ease). The upper-right quadrant — high impact, high AI advantage — is where you should focus first.



Three features land squarely in that quadrant. Here's what they look like as product requirements:

Priority	Product Feature	Churn It Prevents	What Customers Said
P0	Configurable call scripts with branching logic	"They don't follow my instructions" (19%)	AI IS the script, not reading one
P0	AI trained per client: business FAQ, repeat caller recognition	"They don't know my business" (16%)	Dedicated AI vs stranger with a screen
P0	Flat monthly rate, no per-minute billing	"Hidden charges on my bill" (14%)	Eliminate the per-minute incentive entirely

P1	Structured data capture with spell-back validation, CRM push	"They get the details wrong" (8%)	Structured forms, not free-text note-taking
P1	Self-serve cancellation, no contracts, no 30-day notice	"I can't cancel" (9%)	One-click cancel, no hoops
P1	Real-time usage dashboard with itemized call logs	"Surprise charges I can't explain" (6%)	Show every call, every charge, in real time
P2	24/7 instant answer, zero hold time	"They don't pick up" (4%)	AI doesn't have staffing gaps
P2	Automated quality monitoring, no staff turnover	"It used to be good, then got worse" (7%)	"Used to be great, now it's terrible" — Day 1000 = Day 1

P0 features address 49% of all churn. Ship these before anything else.

## What to charge

I looked at what the churn data says about pricing. The signal is unambiguous: the problem isn't how much these services charge — it's how they charge.

- “**It costs too much**” is only 4% of churn. Price is not why people leave.
- All billing complaints combined** is 33% of churn. How they're billed is why people leave.
- Dollar amounts in complaints:** 22 of 154 churners mention specific dollar amounts (\$3–\$3,000). They're spending real money and expecting real service.

Segment	Current Pricing	Central AI Opportunity
Legacy incumbents	\$235–\$2,800/mo (per-minute)	Undercut by 50–70% while eliminating per-minute surprises
AI-native (Synthflow etc.)	\$29–\$450/mo (per-minute + base)	Price similarly but deliver reliability and support they can't
Recommended range	—	\$99–199/mo flat rate. Above AI-native noise, below legacy pain. Flat-rate directly addresses billing-model churn (29% of all churn: predatory billing, billing traps, and opaque charges).

Flat-rate pricing isn't just a feature — it's a structural advantage you should lean into. Incumbents can't match it without destroying their per-minute revenue model. That's the innovator's dilemma working in your favor.

## How big is this

You'll want to know the size of the opportunity. I built a bottoms-up estimate using what this analysis gives us. It's intentionally conservative — I'd rather give you a number you can defend than one that sounds impressive.

Input	Estimate	Source
Ruby customer base	15,000+	Ruby's public marketing

Four legacy incumbents combined	~40,000–60,000 SMBs	Estimate from Ruby (15K) + AnswerConnect, PATLive, Smith.ai
Annual churn rate (industry)	15–25%	Typical for B2B SaaS/services; our data shows persistent dissatisfaction
Customers actively shopping/year	~6,000–15,000	40–60K base × 15–25% churn
Central AI capture rate (year 1)	1–3%	Conservative for a new entrant with no brand
Capturable accounts (year 1)	60–450 accounts	Rows above
At \$149/mo average	\$107K–\$804K ARR	Accounts × \$149/mo × 12

This is conservative. It excludes AI-native switchers, new market entrants, and the long tail of smaller answering services not in this dataset. The real TAM is larger — but even the conservative case shows a viable beachhead.

## Who to target

Based on the competitor vulnerability data and switching patterns, here's who I'd prioritize and in what order. The logic: start with the highest-intent, most-accessible customers and work outward.

Priority	Target	Why (from data)	Lead Message
1	Ruby churners	Worst net flow (-4), quality decay complaints, 44% call handling churn	"Your calls handled right, every time"
2	Smith.ai churners	Billing-driven churn (43%), net -2, customers describe "intentionally difficult" cancellation	"Transparent pricing, cancel anytime"
3	Serial switchers	15 quotes describing trying 3–4 services. Highest-intent prospects — they've given up on the category	"Different technology, not another answering service"
4	Synthflow refugees	47% billing churn, 35% reliability. They wanted AI but got a broken platform	"AI that actually works, with real support"

## What to say

Each channel should lead with the pain point most relevant to the audience it reaches. I mapped the churn categories to specific channels and drafted messages grounded in the exact language customers use in their complaints.

Channel	Message	Pain It Addresses	% of Churn
Google Ads / SEO	"AI receptionist that follows your script"	"They don't follow my instructions"	19%
Trustpilot competitor pages	"Flat rate. No per-minute billing. Cancel anytime."	All billing complaints	33%
Competitor review responses	"Same problem? We built something different."	"I've tried everyone, nobody works"	10%
Direct outreach — Ruby customers	"Still happy with your call quality?"	"It used to be good, then got worse"	7%
Direct outreach — Smith.ai customers	"Tired of surprise charges? We do flat rate."	"Hidden charges" + "Surprise charges"	20%

## What could go wrong

I wouldn't give you a recommendation without flagging the risks. The Synthflow data is instructive here: it shows that AI doesn't eliminate churn — it shifts it. Here are the failure modes you need to plan for, along with what I'd suggest doing about each.

Risk	Evidence from Data	Mitigation
Billing becomes the new churn driver	Synthflow: 47% of churn is billing (bait-and-switch, hidden costs). AI-native doesn't mean billing-clean.	Flat rate from day one. No usage tiers that surprise. Publish pricing publicly. Self-serve cancellation.
Platform reliability failures	Synthflow: 35% reliability churn. Silent breaking updates, features stop working, support absent.	Invest in engineering discipline early. Uptime SLA. Status page. Regression test suite before every deploy.
Callers detect 'outsourced' feel	"They don't know my business" is 16% of legacy churn — callers notice when the receptionist doesn't know the business. AI could trigger the same reaction for a different reason (robotic tone vs clueless human). No AI-specific data yet — AI-native services are too new.	AI must be trained per client. Graceful handoff to human when AI is uncertain. Don't pretend to be human — be upfront and be competent.
New competitors fix their problems	Bland AI (\$65M raised), Synthflow (Atlantic Labs). Well-funded teams will eventually fix billing and reliability.	Speed matters. The window is open now. First mover with reliable AI + clean billing wins. Build switching costs through CRM integrations and client-specific AI training.

## Appendix: Methodology

**Data:** 409 reviews scraped from Trustpilot (9 companies) and Reddit (7 subreddits). Filtered to 154 with a specific churn reason.

**Classification:** 11-category taxonomy with clear decision rules. Two independent AI classifiers tagged every quote. Agreement: 142/154 (92.2%). Cohen's kappa: 0.91 ("almost perfect"). 12 disagreements manually reviewed.

**Weighting:** Detailed, highly-upvoted Reddit posts carry more weight than one-line reviews. Weight =  $\text{quote\_quality} \times \log_2(\text{upvotes})$  for Reddit,  $\text{quote\_quality} \times 1.0$  for Trustpilot.

### Known limitations:

- 92% Trustpilot, 8% Reddit. Trustpilot skews negative.
- All Reddit churn quotes from r/LawFirm.
- Both classifiers are AI — may share blind spots.
- 34 of 154 quotes are pre-2020. Complaint types hold across time windows; competitor ranking shifts slightly.
- Mid-2024 review surge cutoff is judgment-based.

**Temporal sensitivity:** Complaint types (call handling ~45%, billing ~33%) hold in both all-dates and post-2020 windows. Competitor ranking shifts: Ruby and Smith.ai move up in recent data, AnswerConnect moves down.

## Appendix: Evidence Samples

Three representative quotes per failure group, ranked by weight (quote detail × community engagement).

### CALL HANDLING (66 quotes)

- *"I came to the conclusion that if I was going to hire a remote paralegal for X amount of \$ already, I'd rather spend a to..."* — Virtual HQ (Reddit)
- *"Costs about \$700/month depending on volume."* — Ruby Receptionist (Reddit)
- *"The first few client complaints I ignored because I thought "clients can be tough" but after the 4th complaint I realize..."* — Smith.ai (Reddit)

### BILLING (51 quotes)

- *"Used smith.ai for about two years."* — Smith.ai (Reddit)
- *"I tried out Call Ruby (a US-based virtual receptionist service)."* — Ruby Receptionist (Reddit)
- *"When Upgrading service I was charged over 10 minutes (yeah \$30) for their internal testing."* — Ruby Receptionist (Trustpilot)

### SERVICE RELIABILITY (22 quotes)

- *"Smith.ai used to be fantastic, they have been our answering service of choice for over 8 years."* — Smith.ai (Trustpilot)
- *"Just got an email of a message to call a customer from 05/23/16."* — AnswerConnect (Trustpilot)
- *"I have lost clients and potentially hundreds of thousands of dollars because of this company's negligence."* — Smith.ai (Trustpilot)

### INDUSTRY DISILLUSIONMENT (15 quotes)

- *"I've used a few services and am not happy with them."* — Other (Reddit)
- *"first, that is the third split as mentioned above is probably better."* — Smith.ai (Reddit)
- *"Dialzara is by far the best and most user-friendly option we've come across."* — Dialzara (Trustpilot)

## Appendix: Sample Raw Data

Every claim in this document traces to a real review. Here are 10 sampled quotes with their original source links.

#	Competitor	Category	Quote (truncated)	Source
1	Virtual HQ	They don't know my business	"Background: General practice solo (rep a ton of businesses, ep, probate, have so..."	Reddit: <a href="https://reddit.com/r/LawFirm/comments/1q7jhqv/_/nyi4b5i">https://reddit.com/r/LawFirm/comments/1q7jhqv/_/nyi4b5i</a>
2	Ruby Receptionist	They don't know my business	"We use Ruby. Not sure if they handle Spanish. We get about 500 inbound calls p..."	Reddit: <a href="https://reddit.com/r/LawFirm/comments/190sf6s/_/kgqbd9y">https://reddit.com/r/LawFirm/comments/190sf6s/_/kgqbd9y</a>
3	Smith.ai	They don't know my business	"We dropped Smith.ai for the same reason. The first few client complaints I ignor..."	Reddit: <a href="https://reddit.com/r/LawFirm/comments/1bl4qtc/_/kw2ryfw">https://reddit.com/r/LawFirm/comments/1bl4qtc/_/kw2ryfw</a>
4	Smith.ai	It costs too much	"Used smith.ai for about two years. They were great, but became more expensive. P..."	Reddit: <a href="https://reddit.com/r/LawFirm/comments/1bvnhk0/_/ky0fppf">https://reddit.com/r/LawFirm/comments/1bvnhk0/_/ky0fppf</a>
5	Ruby Receptionist	It costs too much	"I tried out Call Ruby (a US-based virtual receptionist service). They were real..."	Reddit: <a href="https://reddit.com/r/LawFirm/comments/1cbj683/_/l115m0s">https://reddit.com/r/LawFirm/comments/1cbj683/_/l115m0s</a>
6	Ruby Receptionist	Hidden charges on my bill	"It is a great service with numerous hiccups. The number that RUBY assigned me t..."	Trustpilot: <a href="https://www.trustpilot.com/reviews/5c2f8b839d37800b040d1016">https://www.trustpilot.com/reviews/5c2f8b839d37800b040d1016</a>
7	Smith.ai	It used to be good, then got worse	"Smith.ai used to be fantastic, they have been our answering service of choice fo..."	Trustpilot: <a href="https://www.trustpilot.com/reviews/6904b43df0cadc93d679d972">https://www.trustpilot.com/reviews/6904b43df0cadc93d679d972</a>
8	AnswerConnect	They don't	"Just got an email of a	Trustpilot: <a href="https://www.trustpilot.com/reviews/57587f480000ff0009640080">https://www.trustpilot.com/reviews/57587f480000ff0009640080</a>

		pick up	message to call a customer from 05/23/16. We called him ..."	
9	Smith.ai	It used to be good, then got worse	"This is now the fourth time the company fail to make a call after telling me tha..."	Trustpilot: <a href="https://www.trustpilot.com/reviews/666dbce1d7f63c429e050507">https://www.trustpilot.com/reviews/666dbce1d7f63c429e050507</a>
1 0	Other	I've tried everyone, nobody works	"Best virtual receptionist/google ads Hey just wondering if 1) anyone can make a..."	Reddit: <a href="https://reddit.com/r/LawFirm/comments/183yb9d/best_virtual_receptionistgoogle_ads/">https://reddit.com/r/LawFirm/comments/183yb9d/best_virtual_receptionistgoogle_ads/</a>

Full database of all 154 quotes with source links available in the supplementary data files.