

# WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN THE HOMEOWNER GHOSTS ME?



“Ghosting” isn’t just something that happens to people in online dating relationships. It also happens to contractors and service workers — and it’s been happening in the home services space for decades. Sometimes, you’ll be working on a bid when the homeowner simply stops responding to messages and answering your phone calls. Or worse, the homeowner breaks off all contact in the middle of a job.

Nobody likes being ghosted. And while you can take a few steps to prevent it, the only thing you can control about ghosting is how you respond.



# What to do when you've been ghosted:

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## 1 Try not to take it personally.

Many factors go into homeowners' hiring decisions, and they often feel awkward trying to discuss it with people they've turned down. To them, ghosting sometimes appears to be the best option. Maybe you didn't fit their specific needs; maybe you were a little too expensive for them; maybe they ditched the project entirely. You can do everything right and still lose the contract.



## 2 Set clear expectations around communications.

Ask the homeowner for multiple ways to contact them in your initial meeting, and make sure you know which they prefer. (In this day and age, calling someone who prefers receiving a text message is sometimes in itself enough to get someone to ghost you.)

When you try to jump-start contact after ghosting, be specific in your messages. Giving someone a concrete call to action can spur a response.

And no matter how you try to make contact, remain professional at all times. It might just be an honest mistake, and even if it was intentional, you won't improve the situation by being unprofessional or hostile.



## 3 Consider ways to prevent ghosting in the future.

Sometimes it's not your fault. But then again, sometimes it might be – yours, or someone who works for or with you. If you find yourself consistently ghosted, do a self-assessment. Take an honest look at your procedures and the employees who have contact with homeowners and consider what might be driving people away.



## 4 Walk away.

Sometimes, especially before money has been spent, walking away is the best course of action. Investing time and effort in a bid that goes nowhere is frustrating, but this is sometimes just the cost of doing business. If you prefer, continue to make efforts through regular means to reach out to the client, but anyone who breaks off contact early in negotiations probably doesn't want to do business.



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## WORST CASE SCENARIO

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## 5 File a lien.

There are numerous tools available to help contractors recover losses. A mechanic's lien is a tool that should be used sparingly, but it will get the attention of a homeowner who's ignoring their debts. You can't repossess bricks once they're installed, but you can leverage your interest in the home.

## 6 Get the courts involved.

Familiarize yourself with local small claims courts. For a small business owner, this is a good idea anyway. Various jurisdictions have different limits on what constitutes small claims. You can file in this court without needing an attorney's help. Should these means fail or not be available, consider hiring an attorney or a collection agency. Nobody wants to have to do this, but if the homeowner won't respond to their debts any other way, it may be your only recourse.

