Podcast

Podcast Title: The LaunchBox - Ep 1: Is Your Speed Killing Your Revenue?
Speakers: Ray Wagner (Host), Tommy D (Contractor & Guest)

Ray: Tommy, welcome to the LaunchBox, my friend. Thank you for being here. Also, thank you for creating the idea of doing this podcast.

Tommy: Yeah, thanks, man. Looking forward to it.

Ray: "Speed is killing revenue." Talk to me a little bit about that. When you say speed is killing revenue, do you mean like how long it takes to get to the job?

Tommy: I mean, yes, that's part of it. But mostly, with this day and age, with AI and different plugins and integrations, it's more about your "speed to lead." When someone comes to your website, social media, or however you gather your leads, how long is it taking you to get that touchpoint? To start that conversation? Whether it's a live person, yourself, an office manager, or—this day and age, like what I use in our businesses—automation and AI.

Ray: That's the thing, too. I guess I should say, Tommy, you are a contractor. You work for us as well, but you came to us basically as an expert on what it's like to be in the field. So then you mention in your businesses you're using automation. What does that look like?

Tommy: So, product like LaunchSMS. We use it on our backend systems quite a bit just with software for scheduling and such. But more recently, in the last year, we've used it for the front end. On our website or websites to gather information. To have that quick initial touchpoint and start warming the conversation. Now, there are always things that AI can't do, especially in this industry. But there are things that it certainly can help with. And I think that front-end fact-finding, lead gathering, and automatically loading into your CRM—I think a lot of those things can be handled with automation.

Ray: Basically acting as a first responder. AI as a first responder.

Tommy: Correct.

Ray: So what does that look like in practice for your business?

Tommy: If somebody is coming to our website or even running Meta ads, however we're gathering information—even if it's in person, you've got QR codes you can scan—LaunchSMS gathers the information simply right there instead of trying to text it, write it down, or remember it.

But a lot of it is on the front end, the customer-facing website or landing pages. The customer is able to input their information. And if the office manager, or myself, or whoever it is, is tied up—on the phone, out in the field, up on the ladder —in this industry, there are thousands of things going on. But it's also very time-sensitive. Customers want a response. We're in the age of instant gratification. People are not used to waiting. If a customer has to wait four hours... There are even websites I still see, or contractors I talk to, that have an "old school" contact form. They may not get back to the customer for 24 or 48 hours. That's just not going to work.

Ray: You know, I will say the last time I called a provider, we had flooding in our basement. And you're right. If someone did not answer immediately, I called the next person. Because I'm in a house filling up with water! The things I love are in jeopardy. And you're right, I can't sit and wait to hear back when you get off the ladder.

Tommy: Yeah, it's just not going to work. Especially in those industries. Your air conditioner goes out in the summer, your heater goes down in the winter, your basement starts flooding... those are emergency-type situations. But even more so in the contracting side—like outdoor living, building pools, patios, pouring concrete—those aren't quite as urgent.

Ray: But you're right though. By the time I make the decision that I want to start talking to somebody, I'm mentally ready to do it. If I have to go to the post office, in addition to doing my regular job, I'm like, "Well, there goes Thursday." So you're right, by the time I get around to reaching out to someone, I can't wait for them to call me back two days later. Because God only knows what's happening two days later.

Tommy: Exactly.

Ray: So you're saying you can use the AI as a first responder. What is the AI's lane? Because I admit, I don't want to get my pool from a robot.

Tommy: Exactly. And I don't think we'll ever get there—not in my lifetime. But the AI automation can handle just about all that front-end stuff. It's kind of the new office manager. Now, the office manager and those types of people are still very important for walk-ins, customer service, callbacks, and that human interaction. But on the front end? Keeping the conversation warm, like you said, the "first responder." That first touchpoint.

The customer can fill out their information. It can gather full name, email address, address, zip code, and a little bit about the job.

The most key thing, Ray, is during regular business hours. When you as the contractor, your crews, or your office manager are busy running around putting out fires, talking to other customers... you're not always available at the drop of a hat to take that call. You see the missed call, you think, "Okay, I got to call them back." You put your phone in your pocket and before you know it, it's 8:00 PM.

Ray: Yeah, I can imagine the stress of that. Trying to finish a job, and you've got two blinking missed calls on your phone. That's got to be an incredible thing psychologically to carry around.

Tommy: It just adds another stressor that really is not necessary. Your automation, a simple plugin like LaunchSMS, isn't there to add more complexity. It's there to help you streamline and take some of that off your shoulders. And also be able to handle *more*. It makes what you're already doing a little less stressful, but allows you to take on more leads.

One of the other beautiful parts about it is... let's face it, at 7:00 PM or 8:00 PM, you're coaching your kid's teams, you're running around, or you're on date night with your wife—and she's tired of you having to be interrupted.

Ray: You can't order mozzarella sticks without the table vibrating! That's no way

to have a marriage.

Tommy: I've gotten to the point where I just leave my phone in the car or at home.

Ray: But then you're missing everything! I don't know how you can do that either. It feels like a very hard thing to reconcile. Leaving everything in the car is like going, "Well, I hope you enjoyed this dinner because this is the last money we'll ever make!" Because I'm not making more when people call! But also, going out... I hope you enjoyed this dinner because I'm not going to keep showing up if you're going to spend it on the phone.

Tommy: Correct. So that's where you bridge that gap with a system like LaunchSMS. It doesn't only work during business hours. Your AI doesn't get sick. Your AI doesn't go on vacations. Your AI doesn't have kids that have to go home early from school. AI can gather that information and respond at 10:00 PM, on Sundays when you're at church, or whenever.

And the customer can also schedule their estimate right there. So not only does it gather the information and start that friendly banter back and forth, but the customer can also schedule. So they aren't just filling out a contact form and getting ghosted until Monday. Miss Jones can go on, look at your company, see your reviews, fill out her information, but she can *also* schedule for Monday at 8:00 AM. That's perfect.

Ray: Because now you can enjoy your potstickers and understand that there's still going to be business to come back to after date night.

Tommy: And let's face it, a lot of the times when you are interrupted, you may not be in the best state of mind. You're frustrated, overwhelmed, you've been working 14 hours. It's probably better for AI that doesn't have an attitude to book that!

Ray: You've been doing it 7 days a week, 12 to 14 hours a day. They've got 30 minutes after their kids go to bed. So you have that conflict there.

Tommy: AI can do a great job, but it also allows you to do more. It doesn't have bandwidth issues. It's more scalable than you are. Even if it's you, a crew, and an office manager, you may not be able to handle three or four phone calls at a time. Whereas if you've got five or ten leads coming to your website after hours, there are no issues. You wake up Thursday morning and your calendar is booked for the next week.

Ray: And that's interesting too because there are lots of people that use answering services, but this is more for your website. And again... most people don't want to call anymore.

Tommy: That's what I was going to ask you. If you just wanted to get some rooms in your house painted, or your soffits out front aren't any good... sending a message is way, way easier.

Ray: Yeah. Because I don't know what they're doing. I technically have a job doing *this*, so it's hard during the day to stop and call. So sending them a message is easier.

Tommy: With the competition and options out there, customers aren't going to give you the benefit of the doubt. We're not talking about a dollar here or there. You missed that call, you don't have something in place to schedule... and Ray

goes somewhere else for his soffits or his basement flooding? You're talking real dollars. Hundreds of thousands of dollars in revenue potentially lost just from being busy and missing calls.

[AD BREAK]

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Ray: Tommy, thank you for making yourself available to do this today.

Tommy: Yeah, appreciate it, Ray. Thanks.

Ray: LaunchSMS, these types of programs and automation... they are not to put more on your plate. They are to help you simply get set up, have AI assistance—almost adding another employee for a fraction of the cost. You're talking hundreds, maybe $200 a month for basically an employee. Which is incredible.

Tommy: It's a no-brainer. The value it adds and the revenue it can add... In most home services, you're looking at a couple thousand upwards of six figures per job. If you got *one or two* jobs per year because of LaunchSMS? You've more than paid for it. Not per day, not per month... per year. The value is going to far outweigh the cost.

It's a great product. It does marketing broadcasts, automatic five-star reviews, Nexus technology, payment functions, mini microsites... there are so many other features we could talk for the next two months about.

Ray: We won't do that to everybody! Not on the first episode. Hopefully, you can enjoy some of the other episodes and learn more about that. Tommy, thanks again.

Tommy: Appreciate it. Thanks.