ROADSIDE
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THE COMPLETE 2026-2027 GUIDE

START & GROW YOUR OWN ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE BUSINESS

A PRACTICAL STEP-BY-STEP STARTUP PLAYBOOK

Business setup • Equipment • Pricing • Insurance
Marketing • Motor clubs • Dispatch • Growth

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Welcome: build a business, not just a side hustle

Roadside assistance can be started with a modest set of tools and expanded as your skills, customer base, and cash flow grow. This guide walks through the practical decisions, from choosing services to getting paid and finding customers.

A realistic starting point

Start with four common services: spare-tire changes, jump starts, vehicle lockouts, and fuel delivery. Offer only work you are trained, equipped, and insured to perform. Mobile tire replacement, batteries, towing, and mechanical services can come later.

How to use this guide

- Read the seven startup phases in order, then complete the planning worksheet and launch checklist.
- Treat all prices as planning examples, not guaranteed costs or earnings. Confirm local rules, insurance coverage, and vendor requirements.
- Start part-time if necessary; match advertised hours and response times to what you can reliably deliver.

The seven phases

- 1. Define your market, services, and operating schedule.
- 2. Choose equipment and establish safe work procedures.
- 3. Register your business and understand local requirements.
- 4. Obtain appropriate insurance and financial systems.
- 5. Build dispatch, pricing, and customer service processes.
- 6. Generate calls with marketing and partnerships.
- 7. Measure performance and scale deliberately.

01 Choose your services and business model

Before buying equipment, decide whom you will serve, where you will operate, and when you will answer calls.

Four practical starter services

- Spare-tire changes: Install a customer’s usable spare when appropriate; verify the vehicle can be safely lifted and follow manufacturer procedures.
- Jump starts: Diagnose basic no-start situations and use appropriately rated equipment; a jump start does not fix every battery or charging problem.
- Vehicle lockouts: Use proper authorization, specialized tools, and damage-prevention procedures; check any locksmith licensing rules.
- Fuel delivery: Deliver the correct fuel using approved containers and applicable transportation and fire-safety rules.

Choose a coverage plan

- Part-time: Nights or weekends can test demand while limiting overhead.
- Full-time: A predictable 5-7 day schedule can help you build a customer base.
- 24/7: Only advertise around-the-clock coverage if you have reliable staffing, dispatch, and response capacity.

Define your service area

Start with a manageable radius. Longer trips consume fuel and labor, and may make low-priced jobs unprofitable. Establish service boundaries and after-hours surcharges before launching.

Expansion options

Once your core services are consistent, evaluate mobile tire repair/replacement, battery installation, commercial roadside services, winch-outs, and towing. Each requires its own equipment, training, and insurance review.

02 Buy equipment and work safely

You do not need every tool on day one. You do need reliable equipment for the jobs you accept and a safety-first process.

Starter equipment checklist

- Tire service: Vehicle-rated jack, stands where appropriate, wheel chocks, torque wrench, sockets, breaker bar, and suitable impact tools.
- Jump starts: Rated jump pack, appropriate cables, battery testing tools, and eye protection.
- Lockouts: Professional long-reach tools and wedges; verify vehicle ownership or authorization.
- Fuel delivery: Approved and labeled containers, spill supplies, and fuel-handling protection.
- Roadside safety: High-visibility vest, work lights, warning devices, gloves, and hands-free communications.
- Vehicle: A dependable car, SUV, van, or truck suited to your equipment and the services you offer.

What will startup cost?

A bare-bones tool kit for a limited service menu may cost several hundred dollars, while a more complete commercial setup can run into the thousands. A basic four-service tool kit might be planned around $500-$600, while more complete equipment can run $1,500-$5,000 or more, excluding a service vehicle. These figures represent different equipment levels. Price each item before buying.

Never skip safety

Do not work in unsafe traffic conditions, under an unsupported vehicle, or beyond your training. Keep a process for declining a job and arranging a safer alternative.

03 Register your business and get covered

Registration, permits, and insurance depend on your location and the work you perform. There is no universal setup that fits every roadside operator.

Business setup

- Choose an available business name and check state registration requirements.
- Consider sole proprietorship versus LLC with a qualified professional; an LLC does not automatically protect against every liability.
- Register with your state or local authorities as applicable, and obtain any required licenses or permits.
- Apply for an EIN directly through the IRS if needed. The IRS does not charge for an EIN.
- Set up a professional email, business telephone number, invoices, and recordkeeping.

Insurance to discuss with a licensed agent

- Commercial auto insurance appropriate for business use.
- General liability insurance and coverage for damage to customer vehicles where applicable.
- Garagekeepers, on-hook, towing, or other specialty coverages if your operations require them.
- Workers' compensation and employment-related coverage if you hire, as required by law.

Important business consideration

Do not assume roadside assistance insurance is optional. Coverage and licensing obligations vary by jurisdiction, contract, and activity. Personal auto policies may exclude commercial roadside work. Verify before accepting jobs.

Useful official starting points

IRS EIN: irs.gov • State registration: your Secretary of State website • Local licensing: city/county business office.

04 Build your financial and dispatch systems

A business becomes easier to manage when every call, payment, and expense is recorded consistently.

Money and bookkeeping

- Open a dedicated business checking account and consider a separate tax savings account.
- Choose a card processor such as Square, Stripe, or Clover, and understand fees and chargebacks.
- Use bookkeeping software or an accountant to track revenue, mileage, fuel, equipment, insurance, and taxes.
- Set a written policy for deposits, cancellations, refunds, and invoices; disclose terms before taking payment.

Create a simple call-intake procedure

- Collect caller name, callback number, exact location, vehicle year/make/model, and requested service.
- For tire calls, ask whether there is a usable spare, tire size, and any damaged or locking lug nuts.
- For battery calls, verify vehicle specifications and whether the request is a jump or replacement.
- Quote the price and realistic ETA, then communicate updates and confirm completion.

Tools to evaluate

Towbook, Dispatch Anywhere, and similar dispatch systems can help organize jobs. CallRail or other call-tracking platforms can help attribute leads. Compare current features, contracts, and costs before selecting a system.

Price for profit, not just volume

A $75 call is not necessarily profitable after labor, travel, advertising, processing, and overhead. Calculate your cost per completed job and set minimum prices by service, distance, and time of day.

05 Get customers: marketing that produces calls

Most urgent roadside customers search for immediate help. Your marketing should make it easy to find your company, understand the service, and contact you.

Your essential marketing foundation

- Google Business Profile: Create or claim an eligible profile, use accurate service areas and categories, add photos, and request genuine reviews. Follow Google’s eligibility and verification policies.
- Website: Build fast mobile pages with clear services, coverage areas, hours, and visible call/text options.
- Google Ads: Use relevant Search campaigns, tightly themed keywords, conversion tracking, geographic controls, and negative keywords.
- Local SEO: Keep business details consistent, publish useful service-area content, and earn relevant local links.
- Social media: Share real work, safety practices, customer education, and behind-the-scenes operations.

Google Ads: current campaign setup

Standalone call-only ads have been retired by Google. For phone leads, use supported
use supported responsive search ads with call assets and properly configured conversion tracking instead. Avoid broad promises about immediate call volume or revenue.

Track the numbers that matter

- Qualified calls, booked jobs, completed jobs, and average revenue per job.
- Advertising spend, cost per qualified lead, and cost per acquired customer.
- Missed-call rate, cancellation rate, review quality, and repeat/referral business.

A practical first 30 days

Launch an accurate business profile and mobile website, test a limited set of high-intent search keywords, answer calls consistently, and review search terms and job outcomes each week.

06 Motor clubs, fleets, and local partnerships

Motor clubs can provide opportunities to build volume, while direct-pay customers and local contracts may offer more pricing flexibility.

Potential sources of work

- Motor clubs and roadside networks, such as AAA, Agero, HONK, Urgent.ly, and other programs accepting providers in your region.
- Dealerships, repair shops, tire shops, property managers, and fleet operators.
- Local businesses that need recurring jump starts, lockouts, tire service, or fuel assistance.

Before signing a provider agreement

- Review rates, mileage, cancellation fees, response expectations, and payment terms.
- Confirm required insurance limits, certifications, equipment, background checks, and service coverage.
- Calculate actual profit per job, including deadhead miles and time spent on site.
- Do not depend entirely on one source of calls.

Contracts are not guaranteed

Provider acceptance and job volume vary by market and network. Use the current official application process for each company and verify requirements directly.

Growth without chaos

Add new services only after you can deliver existing work reliably. Standardize scripts, job documentation, quality checks, training, and customer follow-up before hiring dispatchers or technicians.

07 Know your numbers and scale carefully

A roadside business can be a flexible starting point, but profitability depends on service mix, geography, marketing costs, labor, and execution.

Build a basic monthly forecast

Planning item	Example
Completed jobs	80
Average collected per job	$110
Gross monthly revenue	$8,800
Variable cost per job	$35
Total variable costs	$2,800
Revenue less variable costs	$6,000

Illustrative math only. The $6,000 figure is before fixed overhead, advertising, owner compensation, taxes, debt payments, and other expenses. It is not a profit forecast.

A reasonable growth sequence

- First 30 days: Validate service demand, confirm compliance, and track every call and expense.
- Months 2-3: Refine pricing, improve response consistency, and review marketing quality.
- Months 4-12: Consider additional services or staffing only when demand and margins justify it.
- Beyond year one: Build repeatable processes, diversify lead sources, and invest based on measured returns.

Revenue is not take-home pay

Do not confuse gross sales with profit. Claims that a new business will reliably earn a particular amount in its first month are not substantiated by this guide and should not be treated as typical outcomes.

Your launch checklist and planning worksheet

Use this page to turn the guide into an action plan. Print it or fill in your answers digitally.

Launch checklist

- [ ] Choose name, service area, and operating hours
- [ ] Identify core services and training needs
- [ ] Price essential equipment and safety gear
- [ ] Register business and verify permits
- [ ] Obtain appropriate insurance
- [ ] Open business bank account and payment processing
- [ ] Create intake, dispatch, pricing, and refund procedures
- [ ] Launch website and eligible Google Business Profile
- [ ] Set up call and conversion tracking
- [ ] Contact potential partners and review contracts

My business plan

Business name: _____

City / service radius: _____

Initial services: _____

Hours of operation: _____

Startup budget: _____

Minimum job price: _____

Monthly revenue goal: _____

Marketing budget: _____

First partnership target: _____

Frequently asked questions

Can I start with my personal vehicle?

Often yes for certain non-towing services, if the vehicle is suitable and your insurer approves its commercial use. Check local rules and safety requirements.

How much money do I need?

It depends on your services, vehicle, equipment, licensing, insurance, and cash reserves. Build a line-item budget rather than relying on a single universal startup estimate.

Do I need an LLC?

Not necessarily. Entity selection depends on liability, taxes, ownership, and state law. Consult an accountant or attorney.

Do I need insurance?

Verify coverage requirements for your services, contracts, vehicles, and jurisdiction before operating.

How much should I charge?

Research local competition and calculate your labor, mileage, advertising, and overhead. Different jobs and times of day may justify different prices.

Should I join motor clubs?

They may help generate work, but compare rates, payment terms, requirements, and profitability before accepting contracts.

How do I get more direct-pay calls?

A strong local presence, a useful website, qualified Google Ads traffic, fast call handling, and genuine customer reviews can help.

What dispatch software should I use?

Compare Towbook, Dispatch Anywhere, and other platforms against your call volume, integrations, pricing, and team size.

Your Roadside Genius startup roadmap

This roadmap brings together the practical planning questions and business-building steps you can use to build your company. Work through each item as you plan and launch.

1. Design your company

- Name: Will you use a local geographic name or a brand that can expand into new cities?
- Identity: Define your mission, vision, logo, colors, uniforms, decals, and what makes you recognizable.
- Structure: Compare sole proprietor, LLC, and corporation options with an adviser.
- People: Consider how accountants, drivers, dispatchers, family, and partners will affect your business.
- Hours: Choose a schedule you can fulfill, whether 8-5, evenings, weekends, or 24/7.
- Services: Start with four basic services, then identify 8-15 possible services as expansion goals.
- Market: Decide whether you will serve retail cash customers, motor clubs, fleets, or a mix.

2. Build your business identity

- Set up a company email and branded email signature.

? Choose a local or cloud phone system. Options to evaluate include CallRail, Vonage, PhoneWagon, and traditional carriers such as AT&T or Verizon.

- Create a customer-facing number, voicemail, and procedures for returning missed calls.

3. Register and organize

- Check city and county rules, state registration, federal tax requirements, and EIN eligibility.
- Open business checking, savings, and a tax reserve account where appropriate.

? Set up merchant services, such as Square or Stripe, to accept customer payments.

- Meet an accountant; compare QuickBooks, Xero, and accounting integrations in your dispatch software.

Equipment, branding and operating systems

The tools you carry, the software you choose, and the way you present yourself shape the customer experience.

4. Equipment and supplies

- Tire change tools: properly rated lifting equipment, wheel chocks, impact tools, sockets, torque wrench, and safety supplies.
- Lockout equipment: wedges and long-reach tools, used with authorization and any required licensing.
- Jump-start equipment: appropriate jump packs, cables, and battery-testing tools.
- Fuel delivery: approved containers, spill prevention equipment, and safety procedures.
- Hands-free communications and reliable vehicle storage for equipment.
- Select a car, truck, van, or commercial vehicle appropriate to the services you offer.

5. Software and dispatch

- Compare Towbook, Dispatch Anywhere, and Swoop or other active dispatch platforms.
- Define how calls are answered, assigned, tracked, documented, and closed out.
- Track calls and lead sources with tools such as CallRail when useful.

6. Branding essentials

- Logo, company colors, uniforms, vehicle decals, stickers, receipts, invoices, and business cards.
- Use a consistent business name, phone number, service descriptions, and coverage area across platforms.

7. Insurance and permits

- Discuss commercial auto, general liability, customer-vehicle damage coverage, garagekeepers coverage, and any towing-specific insurance with a licensed agent.
- Verify required local permits, licensing, and certifications for each service.

Motor clubs and business contracts

Use this provider prospecting list as a research checklist, not a guarantee that any network is
guarantee that each network is currently onboarding providers.

Motor club and network prospect list

- Agero; HONK; Urgent.ly; AAA; NSD; Allstate-related roadside programs.
- Quest X; Allied Dispatch; NAC; Roadside Protect; Gerber-related programs.
- Verify current company names, operating status, enrollment pages, requirements, and service territories directly before applying.

Other partnerships to pursue

- Automotive repair shops, tire shops, car dealerships, insurance agents, and fleet operators.
- Property managers, delivery fleets, rental vehicle operators, and local businesses.
- Ask about required insurance, service-level agreements, payment schedules, and cancellation policies.

Motor clubs versus retail calls

Motor clubs can offer job opportunities but may pay less per service than direct-pay customers. Retail pricing offers more control, but obtaining those calls requires marketing, availability, and customer service. Compare net profit and payment reliability, not just call volume.

Your contract worksheet

For each prospect, record: contact person, application URL, insurance limits, required equipment, service radius, per-job pay, mileage, cancellation policy, payment terms, and date of follow-up.

Your 12-part online marketing checklist

Use these steps to build visibility beyond your first customers, strengthen your local presence, and develop sustainable marketing practices.

- 1. Google Business Profile: Verify eligibility, choose accurate categories, and add services, descriptions, service areas, photos, and updates.
- 2. Reviews: Request honest reviews from real customers; never buy or fabricate reviews.
- 3. Website: Build a mobile-friendly site with service pages, location coverage, and clear contact information. Website platforms to evaluate include Wix, WordPress, and GoDaddy.
- 4. Social accounts: Set up Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and other channels you can maintain.

? 5. Listings: Submit accurate business information to relevant directories and consider 100+ potential listing opportunities. Quality and accuracy matter more than raw count.

- 6. Google Ads: Target high-intent local searches with responsive search ads, call assets, and conversion tracking.
- 7. On-page SEO: Improve titles, service descriptions, location relevance, and site speed.
- 8. Starter backlinks: Seek legitimate local and industry links rather than purchased link schemes.
- 9. Local backlinks: Connect with chambers, business partners, and community organizations.
- 10. Citations: Maintain consistent name, address/service area, and phone details across directories.
- 11. Map visibility: Strengthen relevance, prominence, and profile completeness; no one can promise a top-three Maps ranking.
- 12. Expand services: Add mobile tire services, batteries, towing, locksmith-related work where licensed, and delivery services as demand permits.

Pricing, expenses and business goals

Choose your target customer, understand your expenses, and set measurable business goals for first-, second-, and fifth-year goals.

Expense categories to track

- Tools and equipment; service vehicle; fuel; insurance; licensing; payment processing.
- Marketing and call tracking; dispatch software; accounting; labor and subcontractors; taxes; miscellaneous costs.
- Cash reserves for slow weeks, equipment failure, chargebacks, and unexpected repairs.

What should I charge?

A starting price of $55-$75 for basic services may be a useful illustration in some markets, but it is not a universal recommendation. Research local competitors, calculate your real costs, calculate your real costs, and consider service difficulty, distance, urgency, and time of day.

Write down your goals

My first-year goal: _____

My second-year goal: _____

My five-year goal: _____

My target monthly completed jobs: _____

My target average ticket: _____

My target monthly net operating margin: _____

Where do I get roadside assistance insurance?

Start with a licensed commercial insurance agent or broker. Ask whether your current insurer offers appropriate business coverage; do not assume a personal policy covers commercial work.

What tools do I need?

Choose tools according to the services you will offer. The tire, lockout, jump-start, fuel-delivery, and safety lists in this guide provide a starting point.

How do I start my roadside business?

Define your service model, register and insure appropriately, purchase equipment, set up banking and dispatch, then market and measure completed jobs.

How do I get more cash calls?

Improve local search visibility, run carefully measured Google Ads, respond quickly, and develop a reputation for reliable service.

How do I get more customers?

Combine Google Business Profile, your website, Facebook, Instagram, contracts, motor clubs, local partnerships, and referrals.

How can I rank better on Google?

Maintain accurate listings, create useful service content, improve the website experience, and earn genuine reviews and relevant links.

What other contracts can I sign?

Explore fleet, dealership, repair-shop, property-management, and roadside network relationships; verify each contract independently.

Can I talk to someone at Roadside Genius?

Contact Roadside Genius to ask about current consultation options and scheduling.

Is this business right for me?

Evaluate your time, available capital, physical demands, local demand, risk tolerance, and willingness to answer urgent calls.

Can you sell me tow-truck insurance?

Roadside Genius does not sell insurance in this guide; consult a licensed insurance provider for quotes.

Your 21-step business-building workbook

Use this Roadside Genius sequence as a long-term progress tracker. It extends beyond the initial seven phases and can be revisited as your company grows.

[ ] 01. Choose a business name, mission, vision, structure, team, hours, services, target market, and goals.

[ ] 02. Create a company email and phone number.

[ ] 03. Form the entity and register with the appropriate governments.

[ ] 04. Open business bank accounts and merchant processing.

[ ] 05. Set up accounting, invoicing, and tax systems.

[ ] 06. Secure appropriate insurance and permits.

[ ] 07. Purchase equipment, supplies, software, tools, and a suitable vehicle.

[ ] 08. Develop your logo, shirts, decals, stickers, and receipts.

[ ] 09. Apply to relevant motor clubs and provider networks.

[ ] 10. Create or claim an eligible Google Business Profile.

[ ] 11. Build your official business website.

[ ] 12. Create and maintain social media accounts.

[ ] 13. Submit accurate business information to relevant directories.

[ ] 14. Use Google Ads to test and expand qualified call volume.

[ ] 15. Improve your website SEO.

[ ] 16. Build relevant starter backlinks.

[ ] 17. Strengthen local citations and business listing consistency.

[ ] 18. Improve your Google Maps presence through legitimate optimization.

[ ] 19. Continue earning quality local and industry backlinks.

[ ] 20. Expand into mobile tires, batteries, towing, and other services as appropriate.

[ ] 21. Schedule a consultation if you need help with your next stage.

Get support from Roadside Genius®

You can follow this guide independently or get help building the marketing and operational foundation of your business.

The OG Service - guide-reader offer

$650 introductory first month

Roadside Genius offers guide readers a $650 introductory first month for the OG Service, subject to confirmation of eligibility, scope, and availability. Ask for the current terms and subsequent-month pricing before enrolling.

What the OG Service includes

- Google Ads campaign management
- Website or landing page development
- Google Business Profile optimization and posts
- 60+ business citations
- Call tracking through CallRail
- Consulting, training, and ongoing strategy

Want to learn before you outsource?

Explore the Roadside Genius Business Course for additional lessons on business setup, pricing, marketing, motor clubs, customer service, and operations. Course details and pricing are listed on the website.

Connect with us

Website: www.geniusroadside.com
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