



# Budget Slashing

The Marketing  
Playbook for (mostly)  
Painless Cost Cutting

# Introduction

There's a lot of uncertainty in today's economy, and one of the first things to often get clipped when your company faces uncertainty is your marketing budget.

Marketing teams have to run lean and prioritize smart investing in their ads and the tools they use. Every tool has to be a heavyweight, capable of clearly demonstrating:



Your team's ROI



The strategies that are working  
(and the ones that aren't)

With the right marketing attribution tools, you can easily pinpoint your growth opportunities and optimize the channels, ads, and keywords that bring in the highest-value conversions.

And, if you want to cut costs and slash budgets without killing your team's creative spark or getting marked for layoffs, the key is to:

- Report on exactly where your best leads are coming from
- Capitalize on those avenues of revenue
- Understand that your paid advertising strategy should be unique to you and your company.

**Remember:** There is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to marketing strategy.

At the end of the day, you need the right tools and strategy to deliver results, no matter how many factors are at play i.e., team size, budget, competitor resources, pressure from leadership, etc.

It can be overwhelming to think about, but don't worry – the right approach, paired with the right tools, can help you meet those budgeting demands from the top by cutting costs without major team sacrifices. **In this e-book, we'll show you how.**

# Contents

- 1.** Identify your unique growth opportunities
- 2.** Test and optimize your channels
- 3.** Use the right tools

## PART ONE

# Identify your unique growth opportunities

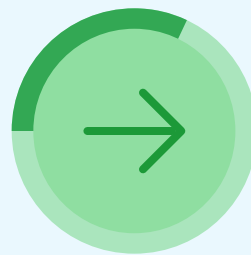
Budget constraints and “do more with less” pressure is felt by marketers everywhere—and the pressure is only going up.

With the proliferation of AI tools, expanding tech stacks, and marketers trying to keep up with all the above while simultaneously proving value, learning new tools, and adjusting strategies, the whole industry can feel...overwhelming.

And, to cap it off, marketers are doing this with less budget for outside help because, according to [Salesforce's 9th State of Marketing Report](#), “while at least one-tenth of budgets are dedicated to agency support, both B2B and B2C marketers have pulled back on the use of external partners... signaling marketers have less support and more work to take on themselves.”

Unfortunately, bringing messaging and analytics back in-house isn't making marketers more satisfied with how their tech stack (and AI tools) are leveraged for customer data and, in turn, customer experiences. In fact, “Only 32% of marketers are completely satisfied with how they use customer data to create relevant experiences,” and “Even fewer are satisfied with efforts to maximize AI's value.”

This means there is pressure to perform at a higher level while using the tools at hand and creating relevant experiences without external help or bigger budgets. Whew!



## Did you catch that?

Only 32% of marketers are completely satisfied with how they use customer data to create relevant experiences.

Even fewer are satisfied with efforts to maximize AI's value.

Source: Salesforce



## So how can marketers achieve all of that?

How can marketers connect their data points for consistent, personalized experiences across customers' journeys without adopting 10 new platforms? (Not to mention how they can use AI to achieve the above.)

**The answer is to focus on what's working, and optimize, maximize, and capitalize.**

While not every channel is going to deliver amazing results for your business, the best new practice is to focus your budget on channels that find success, even if you're still left wishing for more dollars to play with. If you can then layer on AI capabilities from the tools you use every day to help streamline and personalize your marketing efforts, that satisfaction—from the marketing team up to the CEO—will tick up.

For reference, **9.4% of most businesses' gross revenue is going to marketing in 2025**, with over **50% of that budget now going to digital advertising**. However, for small businesses, the percentage of revenue slotted for marketing can easily go as low as 5%, and as high as 15% for enterprise ventures.

To give you a sense of scale, for a business that makes \$2 million in annual revenue, if 7% of their budget is allocated to marketing, they would have \$180,000 total to work with. At least half of that would need to go to digital channels, leaving them with \$90,000, or just shy of \$7,500 a month, to dedicate to paid advertising.

\$7,500 may sound like a lot to you or nothing, depending on your industry and what you're used to spending, but more likely than not, \$7,500 is a tight budget to compete for top keywords on search engines. **According to Wordstream, the average cost per click (CPC) in Google Ads is around \$4.22** on the search network, and can go way up from there (or down - cost can vary by industry and competition). The most expensive keywords in Google Ads and Bing Ads can cost upwards of \$50 or more per click.

**\$9K-  
\$10K**



The average small business using Google Ads spends between \$9,000 and \$10,000 per month on their Google paid search campaigns.

50% of marketing budget in 2025 is going to digital advertising.

**50%**

DIGITAL

OTHER

Source: Improvado

These are generally highly competitive keywords in industries that have high customer lifetime values, like law and insurance. And while giant retailers could spend up to \$50 million per year on paid search, the average small business using Google Ads spends between \$9,000 and \$10,000 per month on their Google paid search campaigns. Let's say our sample business that has \$2 million in revenue dedicated their \$7,500 to Google Ads and generated 100 leads in a month—only for none of them to turn out to be qualified.

How do you think satisfaction would be then?

They would have spent all their money on a channel that wasn't performing for them, unless (of course) they also had opportunities to optimize with better audience targeting, conversion events, ad copy, landing page performance, etc.

By using tools that help you refine the effectiveness of your marketing strategy and pivot quickly for more/better conversions in real time, you can get the most “bang” for your buck. You may even find that channels or strategies you hadn't considered or invested in can deliver the highest return on your investment.

### **But who has all the time and money to figure this out?**

Fortunately, there are tools and techniques that can help you determine how to prove ROI, use customer data to create relevant experiences for your audiences, and cut costs without sacrificing quality.

### **What makes a keyword more expensive?**



### **Tools that combine call tracking and marketing attribution can be immensely helpful in understanding:**

1. What type of leads your ads are bringing in
2. The quality of your team's conversations
3. The quality of your conversions

Knowing all three gives you the insight you need to see trends over time or tweak your method and/or campaigns in real time for faster results. This, in turn, helps you make the most of your budget.

# Where to Start

So, if you can't be everywhere with limitless funds – how do you know where to be?

First things first: Take an inventory of your current advertising campaigns and workflows and ask the following questions:

- What's giving you the most bang for your budget?
- Which ads, channels, keywords, or campaigns are underperforming?
- How many channels are in your marketing mix?
- Would you benefit from diversifying, or should you zero in on just a few of your top performers?

Try to do a full audit of what your team has invested in over the past year (or more) and tie your most important results (think leads and conversions) to the tools and channels you invested in for a clear picture of what's moving you closer to your goals and which are holding you back (or not meaningful contributions).

Next, you'll need to define what success looks like for your business – you should prepare to be surprised.

For example, you may have set lofty goals in the past that weren't realistic and discover, with your numbers in front of you, that actually hitting just 50% of that goal was one of your strongest performance periods. You should set realistic expectations that align with your previous performances – this will help you understand how any changes moving forward impact your goals and performance.

## Getting Started Checklist

- ✓ Take an inventory of what's working—and what's not.
- ✓ Define your metrics of success and how you'll measure them.
- ✓ Choose your advertising channels.

You should also consider performing market research around industry benchmarks for conversion rates and other metrics to establish your KPIs (key performance indicators). If you're able, set goals for qualified lead counts, cost per acquisition, time to conversion, overall site conversion rates, etc., that you want to hit so you can develop focused strategies to measure which of your campaigns are (a) working or (b) underperforming. Feel free to get creative with this too.

For example, even if a call that was generated from a Google ad didn't convert into a sale, if it lasted over two minutes, that could still be indicative of a quality lead and valuable for retargeting data in the future.

Without those metrics in place, though, you won't have data to back up whether the money you're spending is doing what you want it to. (And won't be able to advocate for more funds without the results to show for it.)

# How you'll measure success

## Google Tag Manager

For starters, every marketer should take advantage of free tools, such as Google Analytics and Google Tag Manager, for their business. You need Google Analytics (GA) to track website performance and audience behavior over time.

Combining GA's forces with Tag Manager (GTM), which allows you to easily add tags—or snippets of code used to collect information about how people use and navigate your site—means you can monitor and create goals around activities like downloading a file, clicking certain links, or adding or removing items from a shopping cart.

## Google Analytics 4

In Google Analytics, set up key event tracking to measure how often users complete specific actions. [There are over 40 automatic events](#) to help monitor the engagement across your websites and apps in GA4, which makes it very easy to track things like page views, file downloads, clicks to external sites, and even form submissions. You can also create audiences in GA based on actions users take on your site, and use those audiences to personalize your campaign targeting in Google Ads.

## The final piece? Capturing offline conversions.

Offline conversions happen over the phone or in-person at your store or office. Importing offline conversion events into a platform like Google Ads gives you a more comprehensive look at which keywords and targeting criteria are providing the best ROI on your campaigns.

# Choosing your advertising channels

When choosing where to focus your campaigns and budget, you want to concentrate on a full funnel, omnichannel strategy to reach and capture as many leads as possible. And this might look different now than what you're used to.

In the (recent) past, customers could pretty reliably move through the sales funnel through carefully placed touchpoints that focused on three actions: awareness of your brand, consideration of your product, and final

purchase. For example, they might become aware of your brand in a TV ad, consider your products after exploring your website, and convert through a well-placed discount email or final ad.

**That was the traditional funnel, easily recognized by anyone who trained in sales and marketing over the past 20 years.**



Now, you have to build a lot more flexibility into your strategy and messaging because the modern consumer's journey is "streaming, scrolling, searching, and shopping" – often at the same time. Which means your touchpoints should be considered holistically and your funnel should be truly "full". Every touchpoint, from your landing pages to ads to sponsorships, should reinforce a brand narrative that is cohesive, persuasive, and engaging.

This can seem overwhelming – and can be overwhelming! But with careful strategy, the right tools, and a focus on the channels your leads are most likely to inhabit, your brand can reach even the most distracted consumer as they scroll their phone over their morning coffee.

## AWARENESS

display advertising  
informational videos  
content downloads



## Make them Aware of Your Brand

An awareness campaign usually focuses on educating people or building awareness around your brand. This could include online display advertising, informational videos, or content downloads describing your product or what problems your business can solve—without necessarily pushing that hard sell yet.

## CONSIDERATION

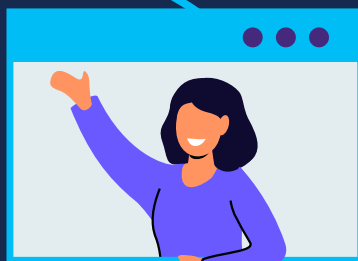
paid search  
social advertising  
comparison pages

## Show Up Again...and Again...and Again...

As buyers move into the consideration phase, paid search and social advertising become more important to boost brand visibility and discovery. This is when buyers are likely researching competitors and comparing products or services.

## ACTION

retargeting  
promotions  
sales demos



## Make Them an Offer They Can't Refuse

In the last phase, you want to reinforce your offer and encourage action from your prospective buyers. This is where tactics like retargeting come into play – it's when you hit them with very specific, personalized messaging to inspire them to purchase.

# Reaching the **right people** at the **right stage** with the **right message** is key.

And there are no shortage of advertising channels to choose from, including:

## GOOGLE ADS

The most popular PPC (pay-per-click) platform for search ads.

## MICROSOFT ADVERTISING

Bing is the second most popular search engine worldwide, with a 4% market share.

## META

The most popular social media platform, with 3.1 billion active users and sophisticated ad targeting options.

## YOUTUBE

With over 2 billion monthly users, YouTube is a great way to promote your brand with videos for awareness or action.

## LINKEDIN

Target professionals and B2B buyers at every stage of the funnel on today's most credible social media platform.

## TIKTOK

Create video ads, set your budget and target audience, and analyze performance. Popular for niche marketing with a target demographic of 18-24 year olds.

## PINTEREST

Over 420 million active users turn to Pinterest every month to shop virtual "aisles" for inspiration. Pinterest's audience is global, exploratory, and a key player for seasonal marketing.

## FORUMS (REDDIT, QUORA)

Influence targeted content communities with engaged audiences.

## PROGRAMMATIC NETWORKS / SELF-SERVE PLATFORMS

Use display ads, native ad formats, and audio and video ads to promote your brand on over 2 million websites, videos, apps, connected TV, and streaming audio.

This isn't an exhaustive list, and each channel has its pros and cons regarding cost, reach, or competition. And though omnichannel marketing is the word du jour, there are some drawbacks to trying to be everything to everyone on every channel. The more moving parts you have to manage, the higher your budget is going to tick up.

If you want to cut costs a bit more painlessly, isolate which channels are most effective with your intended audience and bring in the highest quality leads – and focus your attention on those. If you have to experiment first, that's great – you shouldn't hesitate to explore new options. But if budget is your main concern, focus on what your analytics tell you and stick to what works best (until it doesn't).

## PART TWO

# Optimizing your channels and testing for improvement

Once you've decided which channels to focus on, now it's time for the fun part: scaling your impact without increasing your budget.

To accomplish this, you'll need to test and optimize for improvement.

Start by identifying any low-hanging fruit i.e., opportunities to quickly assess and improve your strategy. The following shouldn't be too heavy a lift to adjust on your team's end, but could have a major impact on performance.

## 1. Review your campaign strategy and retargeting

Historically, in digital advertising, so much emphasis was placed on keywords, ad copy, and landing pages, but those elements are no longer enough to guarantee the results you want. Without a holistic, omnichannel campaign strategy, your beautiful landing pages may never be seen by your ideal customers, let alone drive sales.

So here are some quick settings checks you can make to ensure you're strategizing effectively across channels and campaigns – or, if they are different, make sure there's a strategic reason why..

Here's some settings to review:

### AD SCHEDULE

Look at when your ads show and convert. Are weekdays more valuable than weekends? What about nights versus mornings?

### BID OBJECTIVES

Make sure these match your goal; for example, do you want more volume (optimize to clicks) or more cost efficiency? (optimize to a target CPA or ROAS).

### PLACEMENTS

Look at where your ads show and convert across the web and exclude poor-performing placements, like bad sites and irrelevant YouTube channels.

### CONVERSION WINDOWS

Update to match your buyer's cycle. 7 days? 30 days?

### AD ASSETS

For paid search ads, include as many assets as possible: Callouts, location, call, price, app, structured snippets, etc., to help increase your ad's click-through rate.

### DEVICE TARGETING

Look at the devices where your ads show and convert. Is desktop traffic better for your business than mobile? Do you even get any traffic from tablets? Be mindful of increased traffic on streaming TVs and devices.

### LOCATION TARGETING

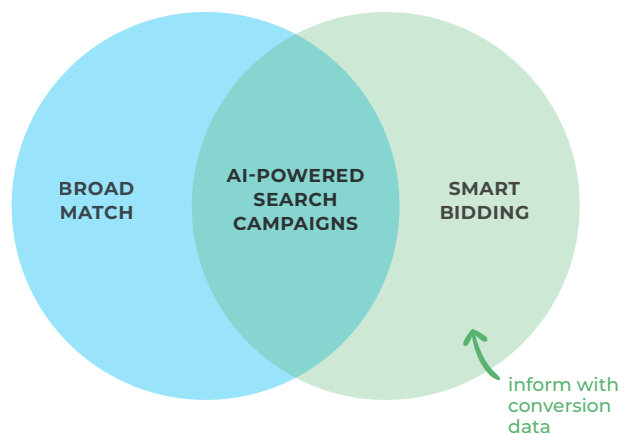
Look at the locations driving the highest-quality traffic from your ads. You can choose to target specific locations or exclude locations. Think about what makes the most sense for your business, too - do you want to target and exclude by city, state, zip, DMA, a radius, etc.

### BROADEN YOUR NETWORKS

Do you have a full-funnel, omnichannel strategy in place? Reach your customers where they are and increase your awareness touchpoints.

### KEYWORD MATCH TYPES

This is ever-evolving as automation takes hold. Stay on top of trends and keep testing. If exact match is working for you, don't change it. But as broad match becomes more prevalent, find ways to test how it can work for your business.



## 2. Analyze your audiences

Creating strategic audiences is a bit of a science and will require ongoing adjustments as you learn more about your customers and what they're looking for. With many data sources and decisions to be made around how you'll build your audiences, it can be complicated but not if you take a strategic and thoughtful approach.

For most brands, the most important audience source is their first-party data (customer lists, email lists, survey data, etc.).

Use this to:

- Target ads to your lists
- Build lookalike audiences, or
- Exclude users (so you're not spending money on ads to existing customers)

Then, utilize third-party data such as audiences provided by Google (i.e., in-market audiences) or data segments available through display and social vendors, such as browsing interests, brand affinity, purchase likelihood, job titles, etc.

As a baseline, start with similar users to your audience(s), and also review audience recommendations from your ad platforms, like the in-market recommendations from Google in your audience manager, such as the example shown to the right.

<input type="checkbox"/> ● Audience segment ↓	Type
Total: Filtered segments	
<input type="checkbox"/> ● Business Services > Business Technology <u>Web Services</u>	In-market segment
<input type="checkbox"/> ● Business Services > Business Technology > Web Services <u>Web Hosting</u>	In-market segment
<input type="checkbox"/> ● Business Services > Business Technology > Web Services <u>Web Design &amp; Development</u>	In-market segment
<input type="checkbox"/> ● Apparel & Accessories <u>Wallets, Briefcases &amp; Leather Goods</u>	In-market segment
<input type="checkbox"/> ● Media & Entertainment <u>Video Games</u>	In-market segment
<input type="checkbox"/> ● Education > Post-Secondary Education <u>Technology Education</u>	In-market segment
<input type="checkbox"/> ● Financial Services <u>Tax Preparation Services &amp; Software</u>	In-market segment
<input type="checkbox"/> ● Apparel & Accessories > Formal Wear <u>Suits &amp; Business Attire</u>	In-market segment
<input type="checkbox"/> ● Financial Services > Credit & Lending <u>Student Loans</u>	In-market segment
<input type="checkbox"/> ● Business Services > Advertising & Marketing Services <u>SEO &amp; SEM Services</u>	In-market segment
<input type="checkbox"/> ● Employment <u>Sales &amp; Marketing Jobs</u>	In-market segment
<input type="checkbox"/> ● Home & Garden > Home & Garden Services <u>Roofing Services</u>	In-market segment
<input type="checkbox"/> ● Real Estate <u>Residential Properties</u>	In-market segment
<input type="checkbox"/> ● Real Estate	In-market segment
<input type="checkbox"/> ● Home & Garden > Home & Garden Services <u>Plumbing Services</u>	In-market segment

Source: Google Ads

### 3. Amp up your retargeting efforts

Most people don't buy something the first time they visit a website or discover a service – but that doesn't mean they're not interested or gone for good. Retargeting will display your ads to past visitors more than once, and keep your product top of mind as they browse the web. It's effective, too.

Website visitors who are retargeted with display ads are [70% more likely](#) to convert on the retailer's website, and 3x more likely to click on an ad than someone who hasn't interacted with that brand before.

You can retarget on search too, and choose to bid higher for someone who has visited your site and show them tailored ad copy. To get granular, retarget people based on the activity they performed on your site (note: you will need to make sure you have enough visitors to your site/in your retargeting pools to make this effective).

Someone who just visited your site should be treated differently from someone who downloaded a piece of content from you, or who visited your pricing page. This lets you get more personalized in your ad content and speak to where they are in the funnel.

### 4. Exclude the traffic delivering low quality leads

If you want to succeed in digital advertising, you have to figure out which keywords, sites, and audiences are most profitable, i.e., bringing in the most qualified leads. Once you've determined your best-working keywords, for example, you can create relevant ad groups, ads, and landing pages around those keywords. At the same time, you should exclude the ones that aren't bringing in money/wasting your ad spend.

You can use [negative keywords](#) to eliminate poor quality searches and help get your ads only (mostly) in front of your target audience. Take the same approach in excluding the sites and channels where your display and video ads appear that contribute to low quality traffic.

### 5. Make testing a habit with CRO

One way to cut costs is to make sure your campaigns are optimized through regular testing. Regular testing helps ensure that your ad copy and landing pages are working for you—not against you.

Conversion rate optimization (CRO) is the basic principle that, to get more out of your existing traffic and leads, you should make consistent (yet small) tweaks by A/B testing your CTAs (call-to-action), lead flows, landing page copy, form positioning on a page, and more. Something as simple as a red button versus a blue button might outperform and generate more form submissions. A good rule of thumb is to run a test for at least two weeks to collect data before actually implementing a change.



#### TESTING TIP:

When A/B testing, run the test for at least two weeks to collect data before actually implementing a change.

#### Did you catch that?

Website visitors who are retargeted with display ads are 70% more likely to convert on the retailer's website.

# Automate your campaigns with smart bidding

Save valuable time (and budget) by automating your campaigns with smart bidding.

Most ad platforms today offer automated bidding for your campaigns.

Depending on your goals you can choose whether you want the systems to bid automatically to get you more clicks or more conversions. Taking it one step further, bid strategies like Target CPA, available through Google Ads, set your bids to help you get as many conversions as possible at or below the target cost-per-action (CPA) you select using machine learning.

You can determine your financial funnel model by understanding conversion rate-to-sale and average-order-value, then input a Target CPA, and let Google do the rest. (tCPA will also look at more criteria than what you've manually added yourself, which is helpful when you already have several complex audiences you're working with.)

The trick to getting smart bidding to work?

Getting enough conversion data. The more conversion data you feed into Google, or other ad platforms, the more likely you are to get good results. Google recommends at least 30 conversions per month for tCPA. Okay, but what if you aren't generating that many?

A great (read: logical) next move is to start measuring other more promising lead activities, such as phone calls or live chat interactions from a platform like CallTrackingMetrics. That way, you're able to feed Google more data – even around a broader set of interactions – that are valuable for the business, which in turn contributes to your overall learning goals and targets. More data makes for smarter bidding.

That said, it's important to still routinely monitor performance and make sure the data is doing what you want it to. You don't want to simply set it and forget it for a month or more. Test and measure. Check things frequently. Understand what normal, good, and bad looks like for your account. Don't forget! Smart bidding is not a substitute for thoughtful analysis and optimization on your end.



## REMEMBER:

More data makes for smarter bidding.

Smart bidding is not a substitute for thoughtful analysis and optimization.

## PART THREE:

# Use the right tools

Between setting up your campaigns, testing regularly, and optimizing based on your results, managing your paid advertising efforts is no small undertaking.

Fortunately, there are tools that can help.

Even if your budget is limited (or shrinking), partnering with outside resources—such as an agency or call tracking platform—can be a good investment if it helps you save valuable time and resources. Agencies and contractors can provide guidance and access to tools and resources without overhead. This, in addition to insights from an expert team and use cases you might not have access to, like other client successes and failures.

**The key, however, is to invest in tools that can:**



Control costs



Boost conversions



Drive revenue

## Questions to consider when evaluating whether a new tool or partnership to aid your advertising efforts is worth it:

### DOES IT...

- help you scale?
- consolidate more than one system?
- integrate with other tools you're using?

### CAN IT...

- impact more than one department within your organization?
- help you make smart budgeting decisions?
- Save you time?

### IS IT...

- customizable to fit your evolving needs?
- cost effective and in your budget?



And those tools should be useful not just for your marketing team, but across your entire organization. For marketers in particular, call tracking gives you the tools to determine the ROI of campaigns, track numbers, advertising channels, and more. With this level of tracking, you can be more strategic in your spending, with a laser focus on high-reward areas.

While call tracking is traditionally allocated as a marketing expense, the insights gleaned from call tracking can be used by many departments to boost productivity and customer insights, including sales, customer support, and operations.

CallTrackingMetrics, in particular, goes beyond most call tracking providers by also tracking text messages, form fills, and live chats (in addition to phone calls) so you get a full picture of how your marketing efforts are driving conversations and sales. This will help you cut costs without sacrificing your team's creativity or output.

## Need a quick win?

If your Sales team is paying for their phone system, and you're paying for marketing attribution, **you can consolidate into CallTrackingMetrics**. As the only call tracking provider with a cloud-based contact center solution built in, we help bring insights about your leads and provide the tools to convert them into customers.



## Why conversations?

When you understand what inspires customers to contact you, it's going to be a lot easier to:

- Improve your customer experience with real-life insights
- Equip your sales team with data they can use to sell better
- Increase your overall productivity
- Manage your resources

If you're ready to see how call tracking and analytics can help you cut costs without sacrificing creativity, we're here for you.



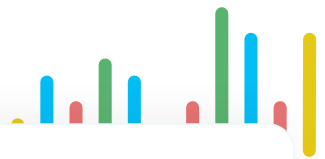
Book a custom demo now to find out how – with the right tool – you can turn more leads and conversations into revenue without losing team members or tanking sales.

[Book a Demo](#)

844.462.2553

[SALES@CALLTRACKINGMETRICS.COM](mailto:SALES@CALLTRACKINGMETRICS.COM)

### ROI Report January



**Bill Spencer**

(410) 757-5695

2:43PM >



repeat caller

conversion

new signup

tracking number

SmartRouter



**ABC Plumbing**

(443) 232-4545

2:20PM >



repeat caller

conversion

new signup

tracking number

SmartRouter

salesforce

repeat caller

conversion

SmartRouter

tracking number

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