

A HIRE BLOOM RESEARCH REPORT

What 10,000 Customer Reviews Say About AI in Home Services

The honest data on AI in your front office — and what leading operators tell us is actually working in 2026.



INSIDE THIS REPORT

What 10,000 reviews tell us about the human side of AI.

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A NOTE TO THE READER

AI is moving through home services faster than the benchmarks can keep up. This report is built on what your customers are actually writing — not on vendor pitches or theoretical case studies. Use it as a working document, not a finished playbook. The right mix for your operation is the one you build deliberately, on top of what your reviews are already telling you.

01

SECTION ONE

What the reviews actually say

We analyzed 10,938 Google reviews across HVAC, pest control, plumbing, electrical, and roofing — and pulled out every one that mentioned AI, chatbots, or automated phone systems. Here's what your customers are writing about AI in your front office.

If you run a home services business with 100+ employees, you've already made an AI decision. Or you're about to.

AI is now woven through the front office. Intake bots greet inbound calls. AI receptionists book appointments after hours. Automated SMS handles reminders and review requests. AI-assisted dispatching routes technicians. AI tools draft owner replies to Google reviews. Most of this happens without the customer being told. Most of it is invisible until something goes wrong.

We wanted to know what your customers actually think about all of it. So we pulled the most honest data source we have access to — Google reviews — and read what they said. The headline is in the box below. Everything else in this report is the operator commentary, the cost research, and the playbook the best companies are running, layered on top of it.

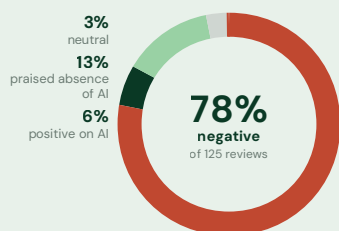
THE HEADLINE FINDING

Across **125 home services reviews** where customers weighed in on AI in the service experience — chatbots, virtual assistants, automated phone systems, or named AI tools — sentiment toward the AI itself ran **78% negative, 16% neutral, and just 6% positive.**

The pattern held across all five industries we looked at: HVAC, pest control, plumbing, electrical, and roofing. Another 11 reviews mentioned AI only as the customer's research tool and are excluded from the sentiment split.

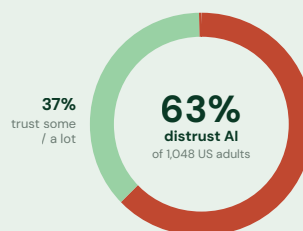
Customer skepticism shows up in Home Services and Beyond

HOME SERVICES AI REVIEWS



Source: Hire Bloom review analysis, May 2026

US ADULT TRUST IN AI



Source: Morning Consult, The AI Trust Report, May 2026

A caveat up front. 125 scored reviews out of nearly 11,000 is a small share. AI is still new enough in home services that most customers aren't interacting with it yet. The benchmarks don't exist, and won't for another year or two. But the direction in our data is consistent with broader national research. Morning Consult's May 2026 AI Trust Report surveyed 1,048 US adults. 63% trust AI "only a little" or "not at all" — and the share who don't trust AI at all rose 9 points year-over-year. The skepticism in your reviews isn't an outlier. It's the national mood, showing up in your front office.

HOW WE GOT HERE

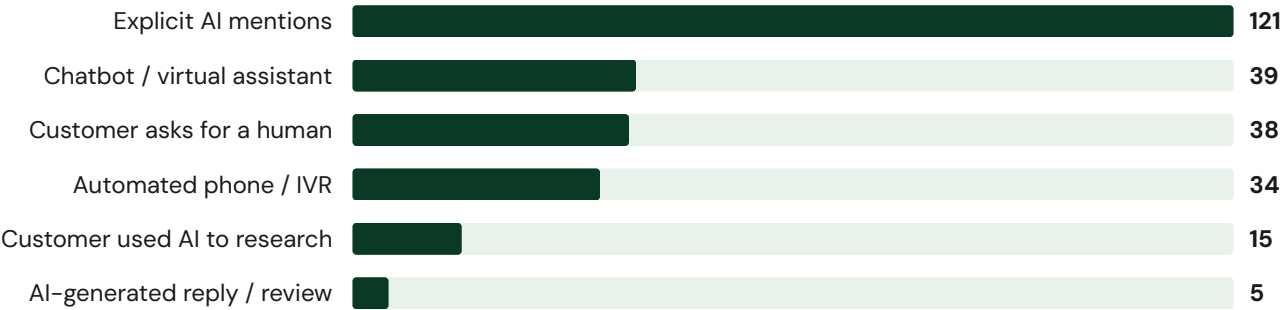
We analyzed 10,938 Google reviews of home services companies from the past year, covering nearly 100 US cities. We pulled out every review that mentioned AI, chatbots, virtual assistants, automated phone systems, or named AI tools by brand. We read each one and scored sentiment on what the customer said about the AI, not on the overall star rating. **136 reviews surfaced as AI-relevant.** We set aside 11 where AI was only the discovery channel — the customer's ChatGPT or Claude found the company, but the company's own AI never entered the experience. The remaining 125 reviews are the working dataset for every sentiment number that follows.

FINDING 01

Where the friction concentrates

Customers mention AI two ways. The first is explicit: they name the tool, the chatbot, the receptionist, or the brand. The second is implicit: they ask for a human, praise a real person, or complain about an answering system. Both carry the same emotional weight.

Where AI shows up in customer reviews



Number of reviews (may include multiple categories per review)

Categories overlap — one review can land in several. Of the 15 "customer used AI to research" mentions, the 11 where research was the only AI involvement are excluded from the sentiment split.

Three patterns dominate the negative reviews

When we look only at the negative reviews of AI in our dataset, three patterns account for almost all of the damage. Each one is a fixable architectural problem — not an AI problem.

1 AI-booked appointments that don't exist.

The single most damaging pattern in the data is the AI agent confirming an appointment the company can't actually keep — wrong service, wrong time window, or a slot the human dispatchers have to call back and cancel the next day.

2 Named AI receptionists that customers can tell are AI.

Sara. Sarah. Chris. Hank. Kristin. Customers are identifying these agents by name in reviews — which means the humanization is failing AND it is memorable.

3 Verification loops that take longer than the hold time they replaced.

Multiple reviews describe AI agents asking for the same information three or four times before reaching a human who asks for it all again.

"The AI booked me for a time slot they didn't have, and I didn't have an appointment. An answering machine would have been better customer service."

HVAC customer · 1-star review

FINDING 02

AI is most damaging in emergencies

The most damaging reviews — the ones where customers cancel service, switch providers, or warn others — almost all share one feature. The customer was in an emergency, and the AI gatekept the escalation path.

Ice storms. No water for five days. A \$16,000 install that left tenants without heat. A multi-day plumbing failure where the only contact channel was an AI assistant. These are not theoretical edge cases. They are the moments that decide whether a customer becomes a lifetime account or a one-star review with a screenshot.

FROM THE DATASET

"We spent \$16k and have no heat or hot water. My tenants are now at risk of leaving. There is no emergency line to call because it is AI. We are desperate."

FINDING 03

Only 6% of reviews genuinely praise a company's AI

The 78% negative number is stark. The positive side of the ledger is starker. When we scored sentiment, only one kind of review counted as genuinely positive toward a company's AI — and it's a 6% slice.

6%

Genuine positives: deployed AI worked

Five-star reviews that praise a company's AI — all clustered around one use case: AI books an after-hours or overflow slot, and a human honors it. The 2am call confirmed for 7am. The Sunday-night booking that holds.

13%

Reward for not using AI

Five-star reviews that specifically praise the absence of an AI receptionist. "The only ones who still have a human answering the phone." AI is the foil in these reviews, not the feature — so this is its own category, not part of the positive number.

11 reviews

Customer used AI to research

"I used Claude to find an honest HVAC company." "ChatGPT recommended them." The customer's AI is the actor here — the company's AI isn't in the picture. These 11 reviews are excluded from the sentiment base.

THE GENUINE-POSITIVE PATTERN

"Huge fan of their AI phone reception active 24/7 for instant booking. Was able to call at 2 a.m. and the AI confirmed my appointment for 7 a.m."

HVAC customer · 5-star review

The recut matters because it sharpens the playbook. The 6% who reward deployed AI are doing one specific thing right. The 13% rewarding its absence tell you to keep the human-first experience intact even as your competitors automate it away.

02

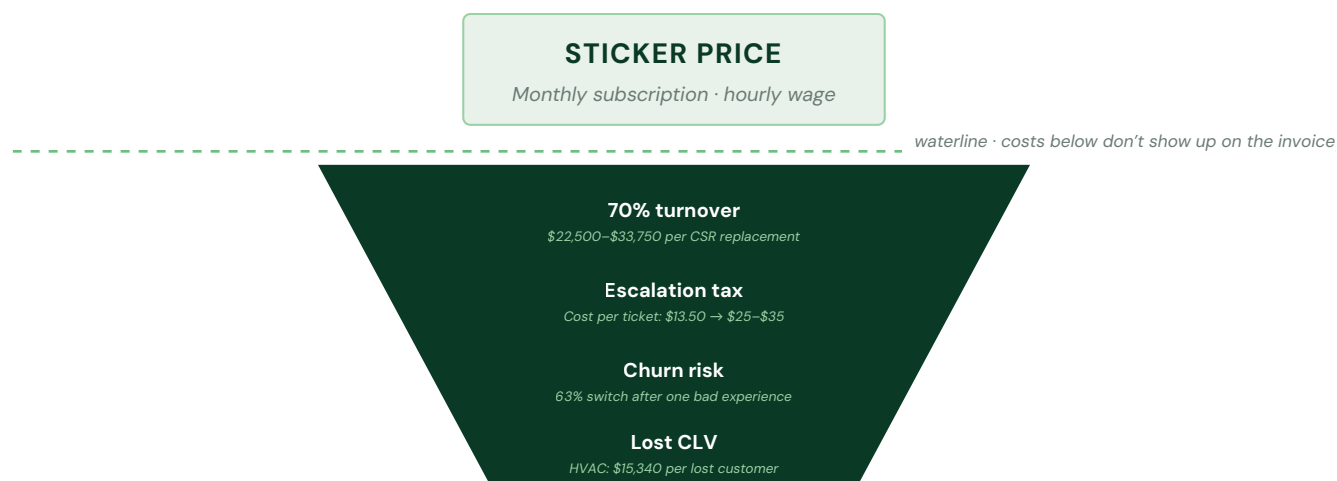
SECTION TWO

The real cost debate

Every cost case for AI in the front office leads with the same number. The math looks decisive on paper. In practice, it almost never is — because of three costs almost no one runs the numbers on.

Every cost case for AI in the front office leads with the same number: an AI receptionist costs a few dollars per resolution. A local CSR earning \$20–\$25 an hour costs \$35–\$45 fully loaded. The gap looks decisive on paper. In practice, it almost never is — because of three costs almost no one runs the numbers on.

THE COST MOST OPERATORS NEVER CALCULATE



1 The turnover tax.

Call center attrition runs 30–45% on average (*ICMI / BLS, 2025*). Replacement cost: 50–75% of annual salary — \$22,500–\$33,750 per CSR (*SHRM*). Anchor on \$20/hr and you're really paying \$35/hr.

2 The escalation tax.

85% of customers re-explain their situation to the human after AI (*Zendesk CX Trends, 2025*). Cost per human-handled ticket rises from \$13.50 to \$25–\$35 once AI absorbs the simple traffic.

3 The churn cost.

63% of consumers switch after one bad experience — up 9 points year-over-year (*Zendesk CX Trends, 2025*). HVAC CLV is \$15,340 (*ServiceTitan industry data*). One AI-mishandled emergency call costs between \$1,205 and \$15,340.

The full comparison

Put it all together and the line item on your invoice is a small part of the actual Total Cost of Ownership. The complete picture, side by side:

COST FACTOR	AI FRONT-OFFICE TOOL	LOCAL US HIRE	HIRE BLOOM TEAM MEMBER
Direct cost	\$200–\$2,000+/mo or ~\$1–\$3 per resolution	\$20–\$25/hr base · \$35–\$45/hr fully loaded	\$13/hr flat — all-inclusive
Setup	Medium to high (training, integration)	Low (standard onboarding)	Low (standardized process)
Turnover	N/A (software)	Up to 70% annually — \$22,500–\$33,750 per replacement	86% first-year retention
Escalation handling	Requires human backup	Included	Included
Customer churn risk	Moderate–high	Low	Low (trade-specific training)

FROM THE DATA

“Companies cutting the most workers showed nearly identical financial returns to those cutting the least. Workforce reductions create budget room. They do not create return.”

Gartner · May 2026 survey of 350 enterprises deploying AI

03

SECTION THREE

What the best companies are getting right

Two themes show up in every conversation with the operators winning in 2026. They are not the ones with the most AI or the least — they're the ones who figured out two things the rest of the industry is still arguing about.

THEME 01

AI is infrastructure, not a replacement

The operators winning with AI are not running a labor-replacement strategy. They're running a friction-removal strategy. AI earns its place where the work is repetitive, low-judgment, and high-volume — and frees their people to focus on the moments that drive revenue.

"AI does not replace people. It substitutes for the requirement that people perform dumb tasks. You don't need it to turn a wrench. You need to use it to make your humans superhuman."

Tersh Blissett, CEO, Service Emperor HVAC · Contracting Business, July 2025

Chad Peterman runs Peterman Brothers — \$120M+ in HVAC, plumbing, and electrical across Indiana and Ohio. His take is operational economics. Demand spikes with weather. You can't fully staff peak-season call volume without burning money in the slow months. AI solves the math. More importantly, it filters the noise.

"50 to 70% of the calls that come into our contact center are not actual leads. That's where AI becomes impactful. It scrubs the junk off our CSR's plate so they can focus on the interactions that customers really value."

Chad Peterman, President & CEO, Peterman Brothers · Hatch AI Case Study, 2025

THEME 02

Architecture wins, not tools

Every operator we listened to lands on the same point: the failures customers are writing reviews about aren't AI failures. They're architecture failures. The companies getting this right have decided in advance which work AI owns, which humans own, and how the handoff happens.

"This isn't about tech vs. people — it's about making sure the right person is in the seat. And sometimes, that person is AI."

Tim Brown, Founder, Hook Agency · Hook Agency Blog, 2025

"AI is just another tool in the toolbox — powerful when used with purpose, dangerous when used without systems."

Al Levi, Founder, The 7-Power Contractor · The 7-Power Contractor blog, 2025

FEATURED OPERATOR



Inside Best Choice Roofing's AI strategy



Bryce Barnett

Chief Executive Officer · Best Choice Roofing

A 25-year industry professional with deep expertise in business transformation, sales optimization, and operational excellence. Bryce brings a track record of scaling businesses and leveraging technology to drive growth. A servant leader at heart, he is dedicated to empowering teams and aligning business goals with both employee and customer success.

4th

Largest US residential roofer

74

Locations nationwide

24

States across the US

100K

Customers per year

Best Choice Roofing spent the past year overhauling its tech stack. Barnett landed at the same conclusion the review data did: the customer pushback on AI is real, and it's louder than most CEOs realize.

"More and more people are realizing that AI is everywhere, and then they're also saying, 'I don't want that.' I actually want to deal with people. Being able to find that balance for homeowners and for my employees allows me to be more efficient in how we're deploying those tools."

Bryce Barnett · CEO, Best Choice Roofing

He starts every AI decision with two questions: can AI replace this job, or can it make a person more efficient? "It doesn't have to be 'or,'" he says. "It's always 'and.'"

The Best Choice estimating team is a clean example. Seven internal staff were handling 600–700 insurance contingency contracts a year, with estimates attached to fewer than 25% of them. Barnett ran the AI playbook — a custom agent helped, but not enough. Then he added 12–15 Hire Bloom team members and a tighter software stack on top. The result: over 80% of contingencies now have estimates. Same workflow. More than three times the throughput. Humans doing the parts AI couldn't.

BEFORE

7

Internal staff · 600–700 contingencies/yr

<25%

Of contingencies with an estimate attached

AFTER

15+

Hire Bloom team members added alongside AI

80%+

Of contingencies now have estimates — 3x+
throughput

"I've been spending the last year focusing on the tech stack. That's allowed me to identify where we want to invest more — and scale back less in our tech and focus more on people-to-people interactions."

Bryce Barnett · CEO, Best Choice Roofing

04

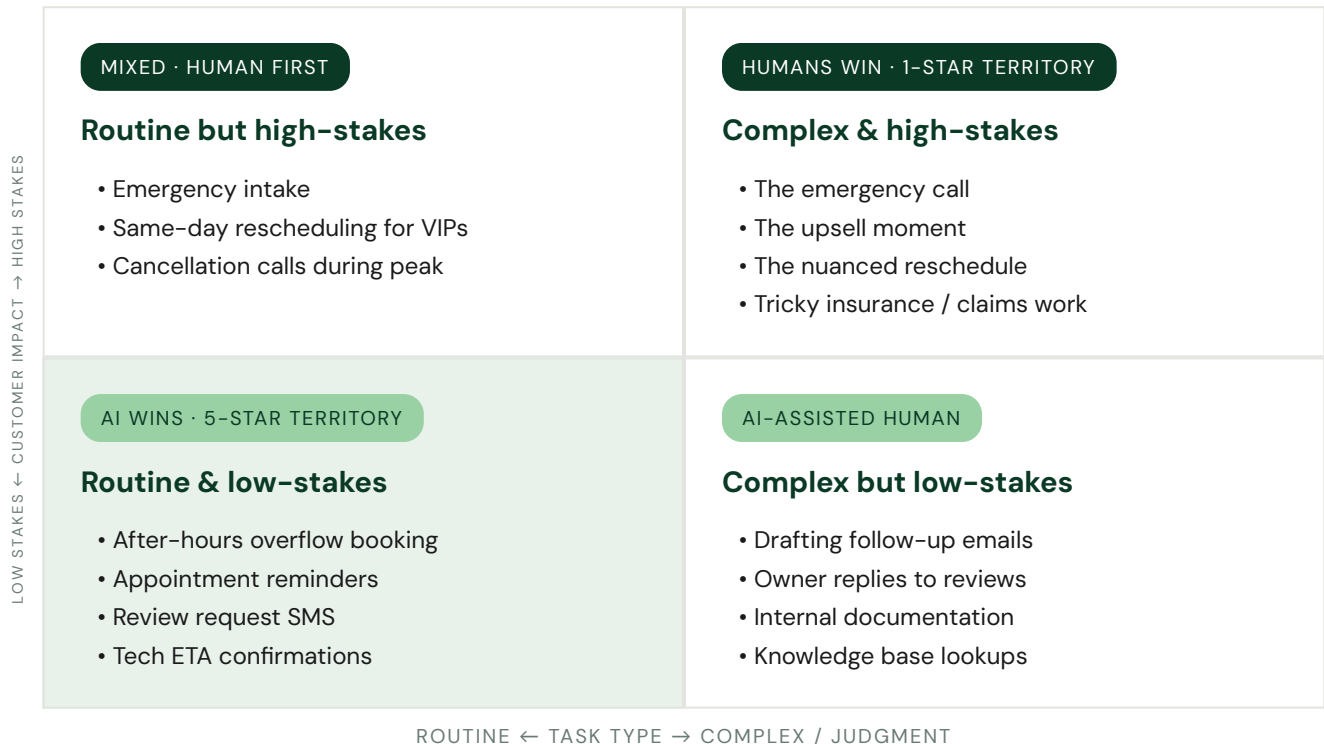
SECTION FOUR

Where each model actually wins

Put the review data, the cost math, and what operators told us side by side. There's no AI-versus-humans war to win or lose. There's a stack to build — one task at a time.

The work-allocation matrix

The matrix splits front-office work along two dimensions: how routine the task is, and how much is at stake for the customer when it goes wrong. The further up and to the right a task sits, the more it needs a trained human. The further down and to the left, the more it earns AI.



The cases that show up as five-star reviews fall in the bottom-left; the cases that show up as one-star reviews fall in the top-right.

Why this map matters more for home services

Home services has a customer-base problem most consumer industries don't. According to Morning Consult's May 2026 AI Trust Report, nearly two-thirds of Americans now distrust AI — and the skepticism is concentrated in exactly the demographics that buy home services.

“48% of rural Americans and 48% of adults 65+ do not trust AI at all — roughly double the rate among urban and Millennial respondents.”

MORNING CONSULT · THE AI TRUST REPORT, MAY 2026

Translation: the homeowner most likely to call you for a roof leak, a furnace issue, or a pest problem is also the homeowner most likely to hang up on your AI receptionist. Industry-wide trust in AI fell year-over-year for the first time in the May 2026 reading. Companies treating AI as a quiet infrastructure layer behind a human-led experience are aligned with where their customers are. Companies putting AI on the first call are not.

“Industry trust in AI peaked in October 2025 and has softened in subsequent readings. The companies growing fastest are not the ones absorbing that headwind. They're the ones routing around it.”

MORNING CONSULT · THE AI TRUST REPORT, MAY 2026

Where humans win — three real moments

These come straight from the review data and from how operators are actually staffing their front office. Each one illustrates a moment AI is structurally bad at and a trained human is structurally good at.

1 The emergency call

Tenants are without heat. The customer is panicking. The AI assistant gives them a four-hour window and ends the conversation. A trained human pulls up the technician's schedule, sees a window in 90 minutes, calls dispatch, holds the line, and confirms back. The customer keeps the contract. The AI catches the routine. The humans catch the panic.

2 The upsell moment

A pest control customer calls in about ants in the kitchen. The trained CSR hears two questions earlier in the conversation that signal a rodent problem the customer hasn't mentioned yet, asks one open-ended follow-up, and books the higher-margin rodent-and-bait add-on alongside the standard treatment. AI doesn't catch the side comment. A trade-trained human does — and the conversion is real revenue.

3 The nuanced reschedule

A high-value customer needs a quote rescheduled. The install bid is \$11,000, the customer is flying out tomorrow, and they want a specific technician they had a good experience with two years ago. AI is built to optimize the calendar. A human is built to keep the relationship. The right call here is obvious — and it's the call AI is structurally worst at.

CONCLUSION

Yes-and, not either-or.

01

Customers aren't anti-AI. They're anti-bad-AI.

78% of AI mentions in reviews are negative — and only 6% reward deployed AI directly. All of those cluster around one move: AI books, a human honors. Customers love the 2am booking. They hate being trapped in a verification loop while their basement floods. Build for that distinction and you avoid almost every one-star review in the dataset.

02

The cost case is more complicated than the invoice.

Sticker price is misleading once you factor in turnover, escalation, and churn. A \$13.50 ticket that becomes a \$25–\$35 escalated ticket isn't cheaper. A \$1 resolution that loses you a \$15,340 lifetime customer isn't cheaper either. Run the full Total Cost of Ownership before you reorganize the front office around the wrong line item.

03

The winners are building a stack, not picking a side.

Every credible operator we listened to — Blissett, Peterman, Brown, Levi, Barnett — is saying a version of the same thing. AI does the routine. Humans do the moments that matter. The handoff is engineered. The companies that treat this as a religious debate are losing to the ones that treat it as an architecture problem.

04

Nobody has the playbook yet. Test deliberately.

AI is too new in home services for benchmarks to exist. The 136 reviews in this report are a leading edge, not a settled dataset. The operators who win the next 18 months will be the ones running deliberate tests now — one workflow at a time, measuring what reviews say, and walking back the things that don't work. Wait for the data to mature and you'll be reading someone else's case study.

ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

Sources & methodology

Reviews were scored on the customer's stated sentiment about the AI specifically, not the overall star rating. Of 136 AI-relevant reviews identified, 11 mentioned AI only as the customer's research tool and were excluded; the working sentiment dataset is the remaining 125 reviews. Five-star reviews praising the absence of AI were scored as their own category, not as positive toward AI. National survey data is provided as context. AI is still new enough in home services that benchmarks don't yet exist — we expect findings here to mature over the next 12–18 months.

CUSTOMER REVIEWS

Hire Bloom Reviews Analyzer pipeline (HVAC + pest control, May 2026); supplementary AI-keyword review set across five home services industries (April–May 2026).

NATIONAL AI SENTIMENT

Morning Consult, “The AI Trust Report” (May 2026, nationally representative survey of 1,048 US adults).

COST RESEARCH

Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employer Costs for Employee Compensation (December 2025); Singh Tomer, “Human Labor Versus Artificial Intelligence” (ResearchGate, April 2026); Gartner survey of 350 global enterprises (May 2026); Zendesk CX Trends (2025–26); MIT Project Iceberg via Fortune (November 2025); HBR / UC Berkeley (February 2026); NFPA State of the Skilled Trades (January 2026).

OPERATOR QUOTES

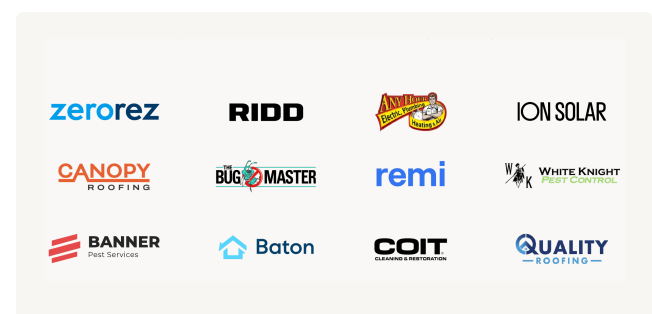
Tersh Blissett — Contracting Business (July 2025); Chad Peterman — Hatch AI Case Study (2025); Tim Brown — Hook Agency Blog (2025); AI Levi — The 7-Power Contractor blog (2025); Bryce Barnett — Hire Bloom AMA recording (May 2026).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: HIRE BLOOM

Hire Bloom publishes home-services research to inform how operators think about staffing, AI, and the modern front office. If the patterns here match what you're seeing in your own reviews, we'd be happy to walk through them with you.

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