

01 · WHY THIS STAGE

The enquiry doesn't go cold. *It goes somewhere else.*

Half of enquirers expect to hear from someone within the hour, and fewer than a quarter will wait past a day; contact inside that hour makes qualification roughly seven times more likely. Almost nobody replies in the channel the enquiry arrived on — a WhatsApp gets an email back, two days later, from an address nobody recognises. That is the leak. Not the intake form.

Sources: Ruffalo Noel Levitz speed-to-lead study; Oldroyd et al., Harvard Business Review.

02 · THE SEQUENCE

WHEN	CHANNEL	THE JOB OF THE TOUCH
Minute 0–5	Same channel, automated	Name a person and a time. “Thandi will call you before 4pm” beats “we’ve received your enquiry”.
Hour 1	Same channel, human	The one that counts. One question only — the one that decides whether this course is right for them.
Hour 4	Switch channel once	Form → WhatsApp. WhatsApp → call. Never a second email to a silent inbox.
Hour 24	Original channel	Last touch in the sequence. A named next step and a door left open — then stop.

03 · THE RULE UNDER ALL FOUR

Reply where they wrote from. *Every time.*

A channel switch inside the first hour reads as a handover to a department. The only sanctioned switch is at hour 4, after the same-channel reply has gone unanswered.

04 • THE FOUR MESSAGES

Short, named, *and answerable in one line.*

MINUTE 0-5 • AUTO-REPLY, SAME CHANNEL

“Thanks [first name] — this is the [programme] intake line. Thandi picks these up and will come back to you before 4pm today. If it’s urgent, call her directly on [number].”

HOURL 1 • HUMAN, SAME CHANNEL • WHATSAPP

“Hi [first name], Thandi here from [provider]. Quick one so I send you the right thing: are you looking to start in [month], or still deciding whether this is the right course at all? Either answer is fine.”

HOURL 4 • THE ONE SANCTIONED SWITCH • VOICEMAIL

“Hi [first name], Thandi from [provider] — you asked about [programme] this morning. I’ve got two minutes’ worth of answer, not a sales pitch. I’ll try again at [time]; if it’s easier, WhatsApp me on this number.”

HOURL 24 • THE LAST TOUCH • ORIGINAL CHANNEL

“[First name] — I’ll stop chasing. Two things before I do: applications for [month] close on [date], and if you’d rather just read than talk, the course outline and the fee schedule are here [link]. When you’re ready, reply to this message and it comes straight to me.”

05 • WHAT BREAKS THIS SEQUENCE

A shared inbox with no name on it. Enquiries reply to people, not to info@.

An auto-reply that promises “within 48 hours”. You have just told them not to expect you today.

Weekend enquiries answered on Monday. Half of that intake has already applied elsewhere.

Three questions in the first reply. One question gets an answer; three get a read receipt.

06 · THE SHEET

Log twenty enquiries. The median will *tell you everything*.

- 01 Copy the sheet: thepipelinefixer.com/sheets/education-speed-to-lead — log your next twenty enquiries. All channels, no cherry-picking.
- 02 Record the time it arrived and the time a human replied. The sheet does the maths.
- 03 The number that matters is the share answered inside the hour, in the same channel.

07 · THE SCORING KEY

Under 60 min	Inside it. This is where the seven-times odds live.
1-4 hours	Watch. Still recoverable, but you are no longer first.
Over 24 hours	Leaking. Most of these enquirers have stopped waiting.

08 · WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR TOTAL

Fill in the sheet, send me the total,
and I'll tell you *what it says*.

Reply to help@thepipelinefixer.com with your median reply time and the share answered in the same channel. I'll write back with which of the four touches is missing and what to automate first. No call needed. Whole pipeline instead: thepipelinefixer.com/leak-check.