⏱️ 30 MIN SETUP

Missed call text back app: build it yourself or buy one?

Part of our Small Business Automation guide: what to automate first and the 10 easiest wins.

The problem

You want every caller you miss to get a text straight away, and there are two ways to get one. You can pay for an app that has missed-call text-back built in, or you can build the same thing yourself with an automation tool and a Twilio number. This guide compares the two so you can pick the one that suits your business.

Saves: money on features you don't need, or hours spent fiddling with a setup that doesn't suit you.

Your options

- **Off-the-shelf apps.** All-in-one marketing and CRM platforms such as GoHighLevel, many business phone systems, and some job-management apps include a missed-call text-back feature. You switch it on and write your message.
- **Build it yourself (DIY).** Connect a Twilio number to Zapier, Make or n8n. When a call goes unanswered, the automation sends your text.

How they compare

	Off-the-shelf app	DIY with Twilio + Zapier, Make or n8n
Setup	Usually the quickest. Switch it on in settings	About 20 to 30 minutes, or less with a ready-made template
Cost	A monthly subscription, often bundled with features you may not use	Twilio charges per number and per text. Zapier, Make and n8n have free or low-cost plans
Control	Limited to the options the app gives you	You choose the message, the timing, after-hours rules and where the details go (a spreadsheet, your CRM or an email)
Phone number	Often means moving to, or forwarding to, the app's number	Forward unanswered calls to your Twilio number and keep your existing one
Lock-in	Your contacts and setup live inside the app	You own the setup and can move it between tools

Check current pricing with each provider, because plans change often.

Which should you choose?

- **Pick an app** if you already pay for a platform that includes the feature, or you want a full CRM with texting, pipelines and booking in one place.
- **Build it yourself** if you only need the text-back (plus maybe a log of callers), you want low running costs, or you want to keep your current phone setup.

What you need for the DIY route

- A Twilio account and a local number that can send SMS.
- Zapier, Make or n8n. The free plans are fine to start with.

- Call forwarding from your business line to the Twilio number when you're busy or don't answer.
- Your message, written in advance (see the template below).

Setup with Zapier

1. **Get a Twilio number** and forward unanswered calls to it. [Screenshot]
2. **Create a Zap** with the trigger **Twilio, New Call**. [Screenshot]
3. **Add a filter** that only continues when the call status is *no-answer* or *busy*.
4. **Add an action: Twilio, Send SMS** to the caller's number with your message. [Screenshot]
5. **Test it** by calling from another phone and not answering, then turn the Zap on.

Setup with Make

1. Create a scenario that starts with **Twilio, Watch Calls**.
2. Add a filter for a status of *no-answer* or *busy*.
3. Add **Twilio, Create a Message** and send it to the caller.
4. Run it once to test, then switch the scenario on.

Setup with n8n

1. Start a workflow with a **Webhook** node and paste its URL into your Twilio number's call status callback.
2. Add an **If** node that continues when the call status is *no-answer* or *busy*.

3. Add a **Twilio** node set to send an SMS to the caller.
4. Test it with a real call, then activate the workflow.

FAQ

Is there a free missed call text back app?

The DIY route can run on free plans of Zapier, Make or n8n. Twilio still charges for the number and each text, so it’s low-cost rather than free.

Can I keep my existing business number?

Yes. Forward unanswered or busy calls to your Twilio number, and callers still dial your usual number. Nothing changes for your customers.

Which DIY tool is easiest?

Zapier is usually the simplest for beginners. Make gives you more control for the same job, and n8n can be self-hosted.

Can I send a different message after hours?

Yes. Add a time-of-day filter, or see Auto-reply after hours. Most apps and DIY tools can handle this.

Skip the setup with our template pack

Our US$19 missed-call text-back template pack includes a ready-to-import Make blueprint, an n8n workflow, a Zapier build sheet, a message copy pack and a one-page setup checklist. You add your own Twilio details and switch it on.

Message template

> Hi, it’s [Business]. Sorry we missed your call! We’ll call you back shortly. If it’s easier, just reply here with what you need.

If you send a follow-up later:

> Hi, it’s [Business] following up on your call. Still need a hand? Just reply here. Reply STOP to opt out.

Consent and local rules

The first text replies to someone who just called you, so it isn’t marketing. It only needs your business name, and you shouldn’t add promotions to it. Any follow-up text should include your business name and “Reply STOP to opt out”, and you must stop when someone opts out. Sending marketing messages needs opt-in consent (TCPA in the US, the Spam Act in Australia, PECR in the UK, CASL in Canada). This applies whichever app or tool you use. This isn’t legal advice.

Related

- Automation for tradies: all the easy wins
- Missed-call text-back: step-by-step setup
- Missed-call text-back for trades
- Auto-reply after hours
- Missed-call text-back template pack
- Get it ready-made

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One-page checklist: Missed call text back app: DIY vs off-the-shelf

- ☐ Get a Twilio number and forward unanswered calls to it.
- ☐ Create a Zap with the trigger Twilio, New Call.
- ☐ Add a filter that only continues when the call status is *no-answer* or *busy*.
- ☐ Add an action: Twilio, Send SMS to the caller's number with your message.
- ☐ Test it by calling from another phone and not answering, then turn the Zap on.

Consent note: only message people who have contacted you or agreed to hear from you, and include a way to opt out. This isn't legal advice.

Full guide: https://www.automatequick.com/guides/missed-call-text-back-app-comparison