



THE CORNERBEACON PLAYBOOK

The Small-Business IT + AI Playbook

A plain-English guide to making your technology reliable, secure, and genuinely smarter — without hiring a tech team.

Why now

Your customers already expect instant answers, 24/7 booking, and zero friction. At the same time, private-equity-backed chains are rolling up local industries with 24/7 call centers and tech stacks independents can't normally afford. The good news: the same reliability, security, and AI those chains buy is now within reach of any small business — if it's set up right.

This playbook lays out the three layers every business needs, the five moves with the fastest payback, what it costs, and a 30-day plan to get your first win live.

The one idea to remember: good technology shouldn't just "keep the lights on." Done right, it makes the whole business run better — fewer fires, less busywork, more booked jobs.

The three layers every business needs

1. Managed IT — the foundation

24/7 monitoring, a real help desk, patching, backups, and vendor management — for a predictable flat monthly fee instead of surprise "break/fix" bills. Problems get caught before they're outages.

2. Security & compliance — non-negotiable

Endpoint protection, email security, tested backups, staff training, and the controls your cyber-insurance now requires (MFA, EDR). Built in, not bolted on.

3. AI & automation — the edge

Once the foundation is solid, AI does the busywork: answering calls, following up on leads, drafting documents, digitizing paper. This is where the real leverage is.

5 moves with the fastest payback

If you do nothing else this year, do these — roughly in order.

- 1 **Switch from break/fix to managed IT.** Proactive monitoring, patching, and backups cost less than one bad outage and end the surprise invoices.
- 2 **Lock down the security basics.** Multi-factor authentication, endpoint protection (EDR), tested backups, and a 20-minute staff training session. Most breaches and denied insurance claims trace back to missing these.
- 3 **Never miss a call.** The average local business misses about 1 in 4 calls. An AI receptionist answers every call and text 24/7, books the job, and texts you the details.
- 4 **Automate the follow-up.** Speed-to-lead texting, reminders that cut no-shows, and automatic review requests — the stuff that quietly wins (and loses) revenue.
- 5 **Get found by AI & local search.** Optimize so Google and AI assistants (ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity) recommend you when locals ask — plus a complete Google Business Profile.

What it actually costs

Predictable beats cheap. Here's how to think about it (figures are typical starting points — your exact numbers come from a free assessment):

Layer	How it's priced	Typical starting point
Managed IT + Security	Flat monthly, per seat / device	Scoped to your team — no hourly surprises
First AI tool (e.g. receptionist)	Fixed build + small monthly	From \$2,500 one-time
Full AI-First package	Fixed build + monthly to operate	\$7,500 + \$499/mo
Custom / industrial build	Quoted	From \$15K

The number that matters is cost-per-result, not cost-per-seat. One recovered after-hours job often covers a month of AI. One avoided outage or breach covers a year of managed IT.

Your 30-day plan

Week 1 — Assess. Map how the business runs, review current IT and security, and pick the 1–2 highest-impact fixes.

Week 2 — Secure the foundation. Stand up monitoring, backups, MFA, and endpoint protection. Boring, essential, done once.

Week 3 — Launch your first AI win. Usually the AI receptionist or automated follow-up — the fastest payback.

Week 4 — Get found & measure. Optimize local + AI search, complete your Google Business Profile, and set up review requests.

Where to start

You don't have to do this alone, and you don't have to do it all at once. The simplest first step is a **free 30-minute IT + automation assessment**: we review your current setup, flag what to fix, secure, and automate first, and you walk away with a clear plan — whether or not you hire us.

Book your free assessment

Online: cornerbeacon.com · Call or text: **(401) 608-6539** · Email: hello@cornerbeacon.com

CornerBeacon is the AI-native MSP for New England — managed IT, security, and AI automation from one local partner, based in southern Rhode Island. We keep your systems running, and make them smarter.