



THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO MOUNTING TVs

and Building a Business Doing It

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The Complete Guide to Mounting TVs — and Building a Business
Doing It
TV Install Chicago

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First Edition

Disclaimer

This book is intended for informational and educational purposes only. Mounting a television involves inherent risks, including but not limited to injury, property damage, and damage to the television or wall itself. The author and TV Install Chicago make no warranties or guarantees regarding the completeness, accuracy, or applicability of the information provided and assume no liability for any injury, loss, or damage resulting from the use of this book as a guide.

Always verify the suitability of a wall, mount, and anchoring method for your specific situation, and consult your local building codes and municipal regulations before beginning any installation. When in doubt, consult a licensed professional.

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Part One: The Technical Guide

Chapter 1: Before You Start

Mounting a TV looks simple. Find a stud, drive a few screws, hang the bracket, done. Anyone who’s actually done it — or fixed one that was done wrong — knows that’s only true when everything goes right. When it doesn’t, the result isn’t just an ugly job. It’s a TV on the floor, a hole in a wall you didn’t mean to make, or a mount that holds fine for six months and then doesn’t.

This book exists to close that gap between “looks simple” and “is actually simple, because you know what you’re doing.” Whether you’re mounting your own TV once and never again, or you’re thinking about doing this for other people and getting paid for it, the fundamentals are the same. Part 1 covers those fundamentals in full. Part 2 is for anyone who wants to turn the skill into income.

What you’ll get out of this book

- The practical knowledge to hang any TV, on any wall type, correctly the first time
- A working knowledge of tools — which ones matter, which ones are optional
- The techniques professionals use to make a mount look finished, not just functional
- How to handle the surprises: metal studs, plaster, brick, tile over drywall
- If you’re going further with it: how to price, run, and grow a mounting business

Read straight through if you’re new to this. If you already know your way around a drill, skip to the chapter that solves the problem in front of you — the wall-reading chapter and the mount-selection chapter are the two most people come back to.

A note before you start drilling

Every wall is different, and every jurisdiction has its own codes about what’s acceptable when it comes to running wire inside walls, weight limits, and fire-rated assemblies. Nothing in this book replaces checking your local codes or a manufacturer’s specific instructions for a mount. Secure the mount properly, respect the weight rating, and if a wall doesn’t feel right, it probably isn’t — walk away from the job rather than force it. That’s true whether you’re doing this for your own living room or as somebody’s paid technician.

Chapter 2: Reading the Wall

Before you pick a mount, before you pick up a drill, you need to know what’s actually inside the wall. This is the single most important skill in this entire book, and it’s the one most DIYers skip straight

past. They buy a stud finder, wave it around, and assume the reading is the truth. Sometimes it is. Often, especially in an older building, it isn't — and that's where jobs go wrong.

Here's what you're likely to run into, roughly in order of how often you'll see it and how much trouble it causes.

Drywall with wood studs. The easiest wall there is. A basic stud finder will find these reliably almost every time. Studs typically run 16 inches on center, occasionally 24 inches in newer or interior construction. This is the wall type most stud finders and most tutorials assume you're working with — which is part of the problem, because plenty of walls aren't this.

Drywall with metal studs. Common in newer construction and in a lot of downtown, high-rise, and commercial-adjacent buildings. This is where most DIYers get stuck. They've learned "find a stud, drill a lag screw into wood," and metal breaks that entire mental model. A standard wood-boring bit hits metal and stalls, or worse, the person doesn't recognize what happened and just concludes the wall is unworkable. It isn't — you just need the right bit (a metal-rated bit, not a wood spade bit) and, in most cases, the right anchor instead of drilling into the stud at all. More on that below, because it matters enough to repeat: for most flat and tilt mounts, you don't need to hit a metal stud at all if you use the correct wall anchor.

Plaster walls. The hardest wall type to work with, and the one where a stud finder is least reliable. Plaster construction uses horizontal wood lath strips under the plaster, and the density and inconsistency of the material confuses most stud finders — you'll get false positives, false negatives, or no reading at all. One stud finder that has a real track record on plaster is the Bosch model in the roughly \$100 range; even that one can overcorrect and give false readings on regular drywall, so it's a plaster specialist, not a do-everything tool.

When a stud finder won't cooperate on plaster, here's the sequence to fall back on:

1. **Look for an outlet near the floor on the wall in question.** Outlets are very often mounted to a stud on one side. Pull the cover plate and gently push on each side of the outlet box — the side that doesn't move is generally the side attached to the stud; the side with a little give usually isn't.
2. **Measure and count.** If there's no outlet to reference, measure from a known wall edge or corner and count in 16-inch increments — that's standard on-center spacing in most residential construction, with 24-inch spacing showing up occasionally on interior walls in newer builds.
3. **Drill a pilot hole to confirm before committing.** Everything above narrows down *where a stud is likely to be* — it doesn't guarantee it. Always confirm with a small pilot hole before you commit to the mounting holes for a full plate or bracket.

Brick and cinder/cylinder block. You're not looking for studs here — you're anchoring directly into masonry with the correct masonry anchors and a hammer drill with a masonry bit. The main things to get right are anchor spacing and depth, and matching the anchor to the actual load of the TV and mount.

Combination walls. The one that causes the most trouble in older housing stock: drywall or plaster applied directly over — or backed up against — brick or block. You may be drilling through a thin layer of one material into a completely different one, and the two behave differently under a drill. This is worth treating with extra caution and a slower approach, checking what you're hitting as you go rather than assuming.

A word on specific neighborhoods and building eras

If you work across a city with a real mix of old and new construction, you'll start to notice patterns. Older, historically-preserved neighborhoods tend to have more plaster; newer construction and recently developed areas lean toward drywall with metal studs, especially in taller buildings. Knowing the general building era of what you're walking into before you arrive can save you from showing up with the wrong bit or anchor.

Walls to be cautious about regardless of material

Utility closets and closet walls deserve a second look before you commit to mounting anything heavy on them. These are sometimes the walls that got the least attention during construction or renovation — full of duct work, plumbing, or other penetrations that can compromise structural integrity. A wall riddled with holes for utility runs may not be sturdy enough for a large TV, especially on a full-motion mount, which puts significantly more leverage on the wall than a fixed mount does. If a wall doesn't feel solid, or if a job calls for mounting to a wall like this with a large or heavy setup, it's reasonable — and often correct — to decline or recommend an alternative location.

Chapter 3: Choosing the Right Mount

Once you know what kind of wall you're working with, the next decision is the mount itself. The type of mount you choose affects three things: how the TV looks on the wall, how much room you have to manage cables and devices behind it, and how much the wall itself needs to bear.

Fixed (flat) mounts. These hold the TV closest to the wall, which gives the cleanest, most “built-in” look. The trade-off is functional: no tilt, no swivel, and very little room behind the TV for cables or devices unless you build the mount out with longer screws and spacers — which then pushes the TV further off the wall and undercuts the flush look you bought a fixed mount for in the first place. Fixed mounts are usually the least expensive option, which is why they're a common first purchase — often by people who didn't fully think through the cable-management trade-off before buying.

Tilt mounts. Similar flush profile to a fixed mount, but with a small amount of extra depth built in, which creates just enough of a gap behind the TV to route cables and mount small devices. The tilt function itself matters most when a TV is mounted above eye level — a bedroom mount, for example — where tilting the screen down improves the viewing angle noticeably.

Full-motion / articulating / swivel mounts. The most flexible option, and the most expensive — expect \$300 and up for a quality one. These extend anywhere from roughly 10 to 36 inches off the wall, with 24 inches being a common average, and let the TV pull out, swivel, and angle to match where the viewer is actually sitting. They also make it easy to mount a device shelf behind the TV, since you can simply pull the screen away from the wall to access it. This is a meaningful space-saver in smaller rooms — it can eliminate the need for a media console entirely.

One important physical fact about full-motion mounts: leverage matters. A mount extended to its full reach puts substantially more stress on the wall anchor point than a flat mount does, because you're multiplying the TV's weight by the distance it's extended from the wall. A heavy TV on

a long-reach articulating arm needs a genuinely solid anchor point — this is not the mount to compromise on wall integrity for.

Ceiling mounts. Useful when wall space simply isn't available — rooms with floor-to-ceiling glass, for instance. These work especially well in high-rise units with concrete ceilings, which give you flexibility in exactly where you place the mount. In wood-frame construction, you'll want to anchor into a ceiling joist, typically located by running a stud finder along the ceiling perpendicular to the joist direction. In commercial spaces with drop ceilings, the pole is usually run through a cut panel and anchored to the structure above, not the drop-ceiling grid itself.

Mantle mounts. Designed for above a fireplace, where a TV mounted at a fixed height would otherwise force an uncomfortably steep viewing angle. A mantle mount lets the screen pull down toward eye level when in use. The same mechanism is useful anywhere else you need the TV mounted high but want the option to bring it down closer to a normal viewing height.

Pillar mounts. For mounting to a round or square pillar rather than a flat wall — common in commercial spaces or apartments with structural columns. These typically use ratchet straps rather than wall anchors, and while dedicated pillar-mount products exist, a capable installer can build an equivalent solution.

Matching the mount to the situation, not just the TV

A common mistake — by DIYers and, honestly, by some professionals — is picking a mount based on TV size alone. Size determines the weight rating you need, but the *room* determines which mount type actually serves the viewer. A TV mounted higher than eye level almost always benefits from tilt. A room where cable management matters needs the extra depth a fixed mount doesn't offer. A room that will be viewed from multiple seating positions is a strong case for full motion, price notwithstanding.

Chapter 4: Placement and Height

Getting the wall right and the mount right doesn't matter much if the TV ends up in the wrong spot. Placement is where a mount either disappears into the room or becomes the thing every guest comments on for the wrong reasons.

Finding the right height

The method that works consistently: measure the TV itself, not the wall. A 55-inch TV is roughly 28 inches tall; a 65-inch TV is roughly 32 to 33 inches tall (exact dimensions vary slightly by model, so measure the actual unit when you can). Once you know the TV's height, lock a tape measure to that exact measurement and hold it up against the wall at the intended mounting location.

Then bring in the viewer. Ask the person who'll actually be watching the TV to sit or stand where they normally would, and ask where their eyes naturally land on that tape measure span. The goal is for their eye line to fall comfortably within the middle of that height — not at the very top, not at the very bottom. Adjust the mounting height up or down until that's true, then mark it.

This sounds like a small thing, but it's the difference between a customer who's thrilled with the mount and one who lives with a stiff neck for the next five years and quietly wishes they'd asked for

it lower. It costs nothing extra to get right, and it's the kind of detail that turns into a referral.

A few situational adjustments

- **Above a fireplace** almost always puts the TV higher than ideal eye level. A mantle mount that pulls down toward the viewer, or a tilt mount angled downward, helps compensate — but the honest answer is that above-fireplace placement is always a compromise between aesthetics and comfortable viewing.
 - **Bedrooms** often call for a slightly higher mount than a living room, since the viewer is usually reclined. A tilt mount earns its keep here.
 - **Multiple seating positions** — an open living/dining area, for instance — are the strongest case for a full-motion mount, since no single fixed angle serves both zones well.
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Chapter 5: Handling the TV

The instructions above assume you've got a mount ready and a wall prepped. Before any of that, you need to get the television itself out of the box and positioned safely — and this is where a surprising number of preventable accidents happen.

Unboxing

TV boxes vary. Some have a cardboard strap you cut to lift the outer box up and off the TV. Others have plastic clips at the base holding the bottom panel in place, sometimes both a strap and clips. Take a moment to actually look at how a given box is constructed before cutting or pulling — working against the box's design is how corners get crushed and styrofoam gets forced into the screen.

Handling once it's out

The rule that matters most: **handle the TV as little as possible**. Every additional lift, turn, or repositioning is another chance for something to go wrong. Once the TV is out of its outer packaging, lean it screen-side against something clean, flat, and stable — a couch, a made bed, a cleared wall — and work on the back from there rather than moving it repeatedly.

Where possible, leave the TV partially in its box while you work. Many boxes only need the bottom portion removed to expose the base of the screen and the mounting bracket holes — the rest of the box can stay on as cushioning and a stable base while you attach the bracket. This matters even more with OLED televisions, which are exceptionally thin and considerably more delicate than standard LED panels; minimizing handling isn't optional with these, it's the whole ballgame.

Attaching the bracket

Lay the TV flat and screen-down on a clean, padded surface — a coffee table, an empty TV box, or a bed all work — to attach the mounting bracket. This is also the point where you'd attach any soundbar bracket hardware if the soundbar mounts to the bottom of the TV rather than the wall (more on that in the next chapter). Confirm the mounting holes line up before fully tightening anything, since forcing misaligned hardware is a common way to strip a mounting point on an expensive television.

Chapter 6: Cable Management and Devices

A mount that’s technically solid but visually cluttered — cables hanging, a cable box perched on a shelf below — undercuts the entire point of mounting a TV in the first place. This chapter covers making the setup actually look finished.

Soundbars

How a soundbar attaches depends entirely on the manufacturer. Some require only two screws directly into the wall. Others — Bose and Sonos are common examples — use their own proprietary wall-mount hardware, sold separately or included depending on the model. Manufacturers like LG and Samsung typically include their own mounting hardware in the box. If you’re buying open-box or refurbished, double-check the hardware is actually included before you’re relying on it — otherwise you’re ordering a replacement part directly from the manufacturer, which can take a while.

When no wall-mount hardware exists or is missing, universal soundbar shelf-mounts (small wall-mounted shelves the soundbar simply sits on) are a reliable fallback, as are aftermarket L-brackets.

Mounting the soundbar to the TV itself is another option, using brackets — sold under names like Soundbar Mounting Brackets — that attach the soundbar to the bottom of the television rather than the wall. This has one real advantage: if the TV is on a full-motion mount, the soundbar moves with it, keeping the sound source aligned with the screen no matter the viewing angle. It has one real drawback: if the soundbar has been calibrated to the room’s acoustics, repeatedly moving it defeats the point of that calibration. For a soundbar that supports room calibration, mount it independently rather than to the TV.

Devices behind the TV

Cable boxes, streaming devices, and game consoles can usually be wall-mounted directly behind the television using device-specific brackets — a quick search for “[device name] wall mount” on most retail sites turns up a bracket, typically in the \$20 range. This is especially valuable with a full-motion mount, since pulling the TV away from the wall gives full access to everything mounted behind it for cabling or swaps.

Wall-mounted media shelves

Worth knowing about even though they’re less commonly used: a shelf mounted to the wall just above the lower outlet gives you a clean home for any device that isn’t itself wall-mountable, without resorting to a media console taking up floor space. In smaller rooms, this can be the difference between a room that feels open and one that feels crowded.

Chapter 7: Tools of the Trade

You don’t need a fully stocked van to mount a TV correctly, but the right tools turn a frustrating job into a fast, clean one. Here’s what actually matters, roughly in order of importance.

Essential: - Drill/driver - Stud finder (and, if you regularly work on plaster, a plaster-rated model) - Level - Tape measure - Phillips screwdriver (and a full Phillips bit set — most mount hardware uses it) - Drill bit set, including a bit rated for metal (not just wood) and a masonry bit for brick/block - A 1/2" socket, for lag bolts into wood, cinder block, or brick - Standard hex/Allen key set — though most mounts ship with the one they need

Frequently useful: - Hammer drill (makes masonry work dramatically faster and cleaner) - Step bit - Drywall knife - Zip ties, for cable management - Electrical tape - Glue gun (a Surebonder-style gun is a common choice for securing low-voltage cable runs)

Bare minimum, if you're doing this once for yourself: a Phillips screwdriver, wood screws in the 3-inch range, and washers will get a basic fixed mount onto a wood-stud wall. Everything above that list simply makes the job faster, cleaner, and capable of handling walls that aren't the easy case.

Chapter 8: Special Wall Cases

Some walls come up often enough, and cause enough confusion, that they deserve direct treatment beyond the general wall-reading guidance in Chapter 2.

Steel studs, in more depth

This is the single biggest point of hesitation for DIYers, and it's worth being direct about the fix: **for most flat and tilt mount installs, you don't need to anchor into the metal stud at all.** Using the correct wall anchor — a snap-toggle or butterfly-style anchor sized appropriately (3/16" and 1/4" snap togglers are both common choices, with the 1/4" giving a slightly more solid feel once tightened) — into a 1/2" hole in the drywall itself can support a TV up to roughly 75 inches without touching the stud, provided it's a flat mount.

The exception is a large, heavy TV on a full-motion mount, where the leverage involved does call for a genuine structural anchor point rather than relying on drywall anchors alone.

The failure mode to watch for with customers doing this themselves: they find what they believe is a stud, drill a pilot hole expecting wood, hit something hard and immovable, don't recognize it as metal, and simply stop — assuming the wall can't be worked with. It almost always can. The fix is a metal-rated bit and, in most cases, skipping the stud entirely in favor of the correct anchor.

Butterfly and toggle anchors, done wrong

A common DIY mistake even on straightforward drywall: using a butterfly anchor but not seating it properly, so the wings never fully expand behind the drywall. If the screw doesn't drive the anchor in deep enough for the wings to open completely, the anchor doesn't grip the way it's designed to — and the failure often isn't obvious until real weight is on it.

Concrete anchors on drywall

The reverse mistake also happens: using a masonry-rated concrete anchor on plain drywall, which doesn't seat or hold the way it's designed to in solid masonry. Match the anchor to the actual material, not to whichever anchor happens to be in the bag.

Layered and combination walls

Drywall or plaster applied directly against brick, or backed up next to brick or cinder block, deserves particular care — you may be drilling through a thin outer layer into a completely different, harder material a short distance in. Go slower than you would on a straightforward wall, and check what you're hitting as you go rather than assuming the first material you meet is the only one there.

Chapter 9: Common Mistakes (and How to Avoid Them)

A short summary chapter, pulling together the failure points that show up most often — whether you're doing this yourself or training someone else to do it.

1. **Trusting a stud finder blindly on plaster.** Confirm with a pilot hole; don't mount on a reading alone.
 2. **Using a masonry anchor on drywall, or a drywall anchor on masonry.** Match the anchor to the actual wall material.
 3. **Not seating a butterfly/toggle anchor fully,** so the wings never expand and the anchor doesn't hold real weight.
 4. **Choosing a fixed mount, then wanting cable access behind the TV.** Decide on cable management needs before buying the mount, not after.
 5. **Mounting height chosen by eye rather than measurement.** Use the tape-measure-to-TV-height method in Chapter 4 — it removes the guesswork and the regret.
 6. **Underestimating leverage on full-motion mounts.** A long-reach articulating arm multiplies stress on the anchor point; don't cut corners on the anchor just because the mount itself is rated for the TV's weight.
 7. **Mounting on a compromised wall** — utility closets, walls riddled with old penetrations — without checking structural soundness first.
 8. **Over-handling the TV,** especially OLED panels, during unboxing and bracket attachment. Fewer lifts and repositions means fewer chances for damage.
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Part Two: Building the Business

Chapter 10: From Skill to Income

Everything in Part 1 makes you capable of mounting a TV correctly. This part is about what happens if you decide to get paid for that skill — as a side hustle, a full business, or something in between.

The short version: mounting TVs is a real, viable service business. It doesn't require a large upfront investment, the barrier to entry is low, and demand is steady — people buy TVs constantly, and a meaningful share of them would rather pay someone \$100+ to do it right than spend an afternoon guessing at a metal stud. That combination — low overhead, steady demand — is what makes it worth taking seriously as a business rather than treating it as a one-off gig.

It's also worth being honest about the flip side: because the barrier to entry is low, a lot of people try it. Not everyone who tries is good at it, and that gap — between “can technically hang a TV” and “runs a business people call back and refer to friends” — is where the rest of this section lives. The technical skill from Part 1 gets you in the door. Everything below is what keeps the door open.

Chapter 11: Pricing and Bidding Jobs

Pricing is where most people starting out either leave money on the table or scare away business — usually the former.

Don't price to the bottom

There's a real psychological effect at play with service pricing: price too low, and a customer's instinct isn't “great deal,” it's “why is this so cheap — is the work going to be bad?” Pricing a job fairly, even at a premium, often reads as a signal of quality rather than a deterrent. That doesn't mean overcharging — it means not assuming the lowest bid wins the job or the customer.

Detach from the number

It helps to mentally separate the job from what you assume the customer can or can't afford. You don't know their financial situation, and guessing tends to bias your pricing in ways that don't actually serve you or them. Price the job on its own merits — the wall type, the mount, the complexity, the time — not on assumptions about the person paying for it.

Scope the job before you arrive, then confirm the scope on-site

A lot of pricing problems don't start at pricing — they start at scoping. A phone call establishes the basic job: TV size, wall type if the customer knows it, mount situation. But the real scope gets confirmed in person, before work starts, in a short conversation with the customer about exactly what's being done. This isn't just professionalism — it's the foundation for the next section.

When the job grows mid-visit

This happens constantly: you arrive, start work, and the customer starts describing things that weren't part of the original conversation — an extra device to mount, a more complex cable run, a second TV. This is the single highest-leverage moment in the entire pricing conversation, and it's worth handling deliberately rather than just plowing ahead and hoping it works out.

The approach that works, drawn from negotiation principles in Chris Voss's *Never Split the Difference* (worth reading in full if you want the deeper framework — he's a former FBI hostage negotiator, and the empathy-driven approach translates surprisingly well to home service work): make sure the customer clearly understands what was originally discussed and agreed to, so that when the scope expands, they already know internally that the price is going to expand with it. Most customers, when they've asked for something extra, are already expecting to hear the number go up — they'll often ask directly what they owe. At that point, explain what the additional work involved, then state the price. Don't do free work by default just to avoid an awkward conversation. A clear, calm explanation of what changed and why the price reflects it is not confrontational — it's just accurate.

The bigger principle underneath all of this: **you don't work for free**, and being clear about that from the first phone call through the final invoice protects you from a slow leak of unpaid extra work that adds up fast over a year of jobs.

Chapter 12: Customer Service That Builds a Business

Technical skill gets a job done once. Customer service is what turns a one-time job into a referral, a repeat customer, and a business that grows without a big marketing budget.

Respect the customer's time, and expect the same in return

Most home-service industries default to giving customers large arrival windows — four hours is common — because the people doing the scheduling often don't have a precise sense of how long the actual work will take, or don't want to be held to a specific time. A tighter, honored time window is a real differentiator. If you're running late, call ahead — even ten minutes matters. Customers remember being treated like their day has value, and this alone can be a meaningful point of difference from competitors.

Be honest, and expect honesty back

Ask direct questions and expect direct answers about what the job actually involves. This isn't just a moral stance — it's practical. A customer who trusts that you're being straight with them is a customer who's comfortable telling you the truth about their budget, their timeline, and what they actually want, which makes the whole job smoother.

Build rapport without overstepping

Small, genuine observations — about the space, about something on display, about a shared interest — go a long way in a house-call business. People remember installers who felt like a real person in their home rather than an interchangeable technician. That said, this only works when it's genuine; forced small talk reads as exactly that.

Know when to walk away

Not every job or every customer is worth finishing under bad terms. If a customer is being unreasonable — genuinely unreasonable, not just difficult in a normal negotiating sense — it's worth calmly explaining your position once, giving them a real chance to respond reasonably, and if that doesn't resolve it, being willing to walk away from the job entirely. This should be rare. But knowing you're willing to do it, and having a calm, non-confrontational way of getting there, protects both your business and your ability to keep doing good work for everyone else.

Take a break during your slow season, not your busy one

If the work has a seasonal rhythm, take time off during the slower stretch rather than the period when customers need you most. Customers generally understand and respect an off-season break far more than they'll understand being unavailable during peak demand — and taking your break at the wrong time costs you both goodwill and income.

Chapter 13: Tools and Setup for Professionals

The tool list in Chapter 7 covers what you need to do a single job well. Running this as an ongoing business adds a few considerations.

- **Hammer drill.** If you're doing masonry work regularly — brick, block, older buildings — this stops being optional and becomes a core tool. It dramatically speeds up masonry anchoring and reduces wear on both you and your bits.
- **A genuinely reliable stud finder for plaster,** even at a higher price point, pays for itself quickly if a meaningful share of your work is in older buildings.
- **A consistent, organized kit.** Consistency across jobs — knowing exactly where every bit, anchor, and driver head lives — is a small thing that adds up to real time saved across dozens of jobs a month.
- **Vehicle setup.** However you're transporting tools and mounts, organization here directly affects how professional you look showing up to a job and how quickly you can move between appointments.

Chapter 14: Marketing and Getting Booked

Where the work comes from

Review-driven platforms — Yelp, Google Business listings, Thumbtack — are the backbone of lead generation for a service business like this. Customers researching a TV-mounting service are, almost

by definition, already looking to hire someone rather than do it themselves, which makes these platforms high-intent compared to broader advertising.

Reviews compound

Every completed job is a chance at a review, and reviews compound in a way that's easy to underestimate early on. A strong, consistent review history does more to win the next job than almost any other single factor, because it answers the exact question a new customer is silently asking: can I trust this person in my home with an expensive TV?

Relationships beyond individual jobs

Beyond one-off bookings, there's real value in building relationships with people who manage volume — property managers and leasing staff at large apartment complexes, for instance. A single relationship like this can become a recurring, low-effort source of jobs, since new residents moving into managed buildings frequently need the same service.

Paid platforms

Google Ads and similar paid placement can work, but they're worth approaching carefully and measuring — a service business with a strong review profile and decent word-of-mouth often gets more return from reinvesting in that reputation than from a broad paid campaign.

Chapter 15: Certifications and Leveling Up

As the business matures, a few credentials and areas of specialization become worth considering, especially if you want to move upmarket into higher-end residential and light commercial work.

- **ISF Certification** (Imaging Science Foundation) — relevant if you're expanding into TV calibration as an additional service, not just mounting.
- **CEDIA membership** — the trade association for the custom home-technology industry, roughly \$500/year. Worth it once you're doing enough higher-end work that industry credibility and networking pay for themselves.
- **Control systems** — familiarity with home control platforms like Control4, Crestron, and URC opens the door to higher-value jobs. At a basic level, this might mean simply understanding how a TV integrates into a broader system — for example, connecting an eARC-enabled TV to an eARC-capable receiver so the TV remote can control basic receiver functions like power and volume. At a more advanced level, it's a specialization of its own.

None of these are necessary to run a solid mounting business. They're worth knowing about as a path upward once the core business is established and you're looking to increase the average value of each job.

Chapter 16: Working With TVs and Devices — What Customers Ask

A working knowledge of the major TV brands and streaming devices isn't about being a technical expert on every model — it's about being able to answer the questions customers actually ask, and speak knowledgeably about the ecosystem their TV lives in.

On TV brands

You don't need encyclopedic knowledge of every manufacturer's lineup. What's useful is a general sense of how different brands are positioned and how customers tend to experience them day to day — this comes from doing enough jobs that patterns become obvious, more than from technical specification study.

On streaming devices

Fire TV, Roku, and Apple TV are the common third-party options customers ask about, beyond whatever smart-TV OS is built into the television itself. The main advantage of a standalone streaming device over a built-in smart TV interface is portability of the customer's setup — accounts and preferences move with the device rather than being tied to one specific television, and the device carries over cleanly if the TV itself is ever replaced.

The trade-off customers should understand: built-in smart TV operating systems can be slower or less polished than a dedicated streaming device, with common friction points being app crashes and the tedium of entering passwords using a TV remote's on-screen keyboard — something every one of your customers has experienced and will immediately relate to if you bring it up.

A brief note on coax and cable

Older buildings sometimes still have outdated RG-59 coax rather than the current RG-6 standard, and older cable runs may simply not support modern service even where a jack physically exists. If you're terminating coax as part of a job, terminate it to the same clean standard used for satellite installations — no exposed barbs at the connector end — using proper coax compression connectors and a compression tool rather than crimp-on or twist-on connectors, which tend to fail over time.

Chapter 17: The Legal and Practical Basics

This chapter is a starting orientation, not legal or tax advice — consult an actual professional for your specific situation and jurisdiction. But there are a few practical realities worth knowing going in.

Business structure

Many people doing this kind of work start as a sole proprietor, which is the simplest structure to set up. One practical detail worth knowing: a sole proprietor with no employees is generally not required to carry workers' compensation insurance, since that requirement is tied to having employees — though general liability insurance is a separate, and often necessary, consideration given you're working with customers' expensive equipment inside their homes.

Access and insurance requirements

Larger buildings — high-rises, managed apartment complexes — will often require proof of insurance before granting access for any kind of installation work. This is worth sorting out before you need it for a specific job, not in the middle of trying to book one.

Tax basics

At minimum, understand your resale certificate situation if you're purchasing mounts or materials for resale as part of a job, and keep organized records from day one — this becomes significantly harder to reconstruct after the fact than to maintain as you go.

Who you'll actually work with

Over time, you'll find yourself dealing with a wide range of people connected to any given job — not just the end customer, but sometimes maintenance staff, building managers, doormen, leasing office staff, IT staff in commercial settings, and occasionally distributors or other contractors. Treating every one of these relationships with the same professionalism as the paying customer tends to pay off — building staff in particular are often the ones who recommend a technician to residents.

About the Author

Lance Lee is the founder of TV Install Chicago, a professional television mounting and installation service based in Chicago, Illinois. Over years of hands-on work across the city's full range of building types — from century-old plaster walls to modern high-rise construction — he has developed and refined the techniques covered in this book.

TV Install Chicago provides professional TV mounting, cable management, and home entertainment setup services throughout the Chicago area.