

Ex-Plumber Leads the Charge Against Digital Marketing Misinformation in the Trades Industry

Ex-plumber Stu Clark helps trades combat marketing misinformation with honest, results-driven digital strategies at EightySix Digital.

NEW ZEALAND, August 14, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Across United States, Canada, United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia, trades businesses are grappling with an often-overlooked challenge: a flood of misinformation and unrealistic promises from digital marketing providers. Many small operators in plumbing, electrical, construction, and related industries are finding themselves locked into long contracts, paying high fees, and receiving little in return.

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Stu Clark

Stu Clark, founder of [EightySix Digital](#), knows the problem better than most, because he’s been on the receiving end of it. Before building his Dunedin-based [digital marketing agency](#), Clark spent over a decade running his own plumbing and renovations business in the UK.

“In the trades, your time is consumed with the job, early mornings, urgent call-outs, managing clients,” Clark explains. “That means when a marketing company tells you they can get you on the first page of Google in weeks, you’re more likely to take their word for it. I did, and I learned the hard way that those claims are rarely what they seem.”

The Problem: False Promises and Costly Consequences

Marketing misinformation in the trades sector often follows a familiar pattern:

Over-promised timelines – Guarantees of rapid rankings or instant leads that ignore the reality of search engine algorithms.

Opaque pricing – Packages that hide additional costs for services like hosting, basic maintenance, or ad spend.

Lack of accountability – Long-term contracts that make it difficult for business owners to walk

away when results fail to materialise.

Recent industry discussions highlight that trades businesses, particularly sole traders and small operators, can lose thousands each year to ineffective or misleading marketing. In many cases, these losses also represent missed opportunities to connect with local customers.

“It’s not just about wasted money,” Clark says. “It’s about the months or even years you lose that could have been spent building a real, sustainable presence online.”

A Different Approach

Clark founded EightySix Digital with the intention of cutting through the noise. Instead of chasing quick wins, his approach focuses on long-term strategies that are both measurable and realistic.

This includes:

[SEO campaigns](#) designed to improve search visibility in the areas tradespeople actually serve.
Google Ads management with transparent budgets and reporting.
Website design that prioritises functionality, loading speed, and user experience over unnecessary extras.

But Clark emphasises that the agency’s core value is honesty. “If someone comes to me expecting overnight results, I’ll tell them it doesn’t work like that. I’d rather turn away business than set false expectations.”

Why the Trades Are Especially Vulnerable

Tradespeople face a unique combination of pressures that make them susceptible to marketing misinformation:

Time scarcity – Running a trade business leaves little room to learn the intricacies of online marketing.

Technical jargon – Complex terminology can make it difficult to assess whether a strategy is legitimate.

Local competition – In smaller markets, the fear of losing business to a competitor can push owners to sign up quickly without due diligence.



Stu Clark - Owner & Founder of EightySix Digital

These challenges create an environment where unscrupulous marketing providers can thrive. "It's a trust gap," Clark explains. "And unfortunately, bad actors are very good at exploiting that gap."

Real-World Impact

Since launching EightySix Digital, Clark has worked with a wide range of trades and service businesses across New Zealand and Australia. Many came to him after disappointing experiences elsewhere.

In one case, a small electrical company had been locked into a 24-month contract for "SEO services" that consisted primarily of automated reports and minimal on-page work. They saw no measurable increase in calls or website visits. Clark rebuilt their strategy from scratch, focusing on local search terms, optimising their Google Business Profile, and running targeted ad campaigns. Within six months, the company reported a 45% increase in inbound enquiries.

"These wins aren't about magic formulas," says Clark. "They're about doing the fundamentals right, consistently, and adapting as the digital landscape changes."

The Bigger Picture: Education and Empowerment

Clark is increasingly focused on education, creating content aimed at helping tradespeople spot red flags before committing to a marketing provider.

Some of his key advice includes:

Ask for clear definitions of deliverables before signing a contract.

Understand the difference between ad spend and management fees.

Be wary of guarantees for rankings, reputable providers know that search results can't be controlled.

"Even if a tradesperson doesn't work with me, I want them to be equipped to make informed decisions," Clark says. "That's how we change the culture around digital marketing in this industry."

Looking Ahead

With AI-driven tools and search engine changes accelerating, Clark believes the gap between good and bad marketing advice will only grow. His mission for EightySix Digital is to remain a trusted source of clarity in an often-confusing space.

"Technology will keep changing," he says. "But trust, honesty, and delivering on what you

promise, those are constants. That's what tradespeople deserve, and that's what I built this business to deliver. It's what I built my plumbing business on and it's what I'm doing now."

About EightySix Digital

EightySix Digital is a New Zealand-based digital marketing agency founded by former UK plumber Stu Clark. Specialising in SEO, Google Ads, and WordPress websites for trades and service-based businesses, the agency delivers practical, transparent, and effective online strategies tailored to the realities of running a trade business.

They're able to work with businesses in the U.S, Canada, U.K, Australia and New Zealand due to the nature of working digitally.

Stuart Clark

EightySix Digital

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