

# THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO **RUNNING A PROFITABLE TRADE BUSINESS**

A Practical Handbook for Self-Employed Tradespeople  
and Small Construction Businesses



**PRICE WITH CONFIDENCE  
AND COVER ALL YOUR COSTS**



**WIN MORE WORK  
AND QUOTE PROFITABLY**



**MANAGE PROJECTS,  
CASH FLOW AND  
AVOID COMMON PITFALLS**



**GROW A STRONG,  
SUSTAINABLE AND  
VALUABLE BUSINESS**

✓  
**PRACTICAL ADVICE.  
REAL-WORLD TOOLS.  
BETTER PROFITS.  
EVERY DAY.**



**TRADE SKILLS HUB**  
ACADEMY PUBLICATIONS

# **THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO RUNNING A PROFITABLE TRADE BUSINESS**

*A Practical Handbook for Self-Employed Tradespeople  
and Small Construction Businesses*

Trade Skills Hub Academy Publications

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This book is intended to provide general guidance and information for self-employed tradespeople and small construction businesses. It does not constitute legal, financial, tax, or professional advice specific to your circumstances. While every effort has been made to ensure the information in this book is accurate at the time of writing, laws, regulations, tax thresholds and industry standards change over time, and the reader should seek independent professional advice — from an accountant, solicitor, or other qualified adviser — before making decisions based on the content of this book.

Figures, worked examples and case studies used throughout this book are illustrative and do not represent guaranteed outcomes for any individual business. The author and publisher accept no liability for any loss or damage arising from reliance on the content of this book.

References to the Trade Profit App, masterclasses, and other Trade Skills Hub Academy resources reflect the products and services available at the time of writing and may be subject to change.

## About Trade Skills Hub Academy

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Trade Skills Hub Academy is an independent publisher of practical, plain-English guides for tradespeople and small construction businesses. Each title in the series focuses on a specific trade or business skill — from starting up a specific type of business, to pricing, marketing, tendering and managing money — written for people who want clear, actionable guidance rather than academic theory.

This handbook sits alongside the wider Trade Skills Hub Academy library of trade-specific start-up guides, and is designed to work together with the Trade Profit App, companion masterclasses, and downloadable templates referenced throughout its chapters.



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## Introduction

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Most tradespeople start their business because they're good at their trade — not because they set out to become an accountant, a marketer, or a project manager. Yet running a profitable trade business asks for all of those skills, usually learned on the job, often the hard way, and sometimes at real financial cost.

This handbook exists to shorten that learning curve. It brings together, in one place, the pricing, quoting, planning, money management and growth decisions that determine whether a trade business is merely busy or genuinely profitable. The central idea running through every chapter is simple to state and easy to forget under pressure: every decision in your business affects your profitability, whether that decision is how a charge-out rate is calculated or how a single overdue invoice is chased.

The book is organised in twelve parts, moving from the foundations of understanding your costs and calculating a proper charge-out rate, through winning work, managing projects and money, growing the business, and finally a set of practical resources — templates, worksheets and checklists — to put every idea into daily practice.

Each chapter follows the same practical structure: a plain-English explanation of the idea, worked examples where they help, a summary, key points, common mistakes to avoid, practical exercises, and downloadable resources available in the Trade Profit App. Chapters also link to companion masterclasses for readers who want to go deeper into a specific topic.

You don't need to read this book cover to cover before it's useful. Many readers will start with the part most relevant to a problem they're facing right now — pricing, cash flow, or winning more work — and return to other parts as the business grows and new challenges appear. However you use it, the aim is the same: to help you build a trade business that pays you properly for the skill and risk you bring to it, year after year.

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# **Part 1 – Building the Foundations**

## **Chapter 1 – Welcome to Trade Skills Hub Academy**

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If you have picked up this handbook, the chances are you already know how to do your trade well. You can install it, build it, fix it, or finish it to a standard most people could never manage themselves. What this book is not going to do is teach you that trade. What it is going to do is teach you the other half of the job — the half that decides whether all that skill actually turns into a business that pays you properly, or just a very demanding way of staying busy.

This chapter is a short one. Its job is simply to show you how this handbook is put together, how it connects to the wider Trade Skills Hub Academy resources — the masterclasses, the Trade Profit App, the templates and worksheets — and to give you a clear picture of the route this book is going to take you on, from the first page to the last.

### **How to Use This Handbook**

This is a practical handbook, not an academic textbook, and it has been written to be used that way. You do not need to read it cover to cover before you get any value from it, although there is a logical order to the twelve parts that make it up, and most readers will get the most out of it by following that order at least once.

Each of the thirty-five chapters ahead follows the same structure. The main content walks you through a specific, practical part of running a profitable trade business — calculating a charge-out rate, pricing materials, writing a quotation that wins work without giving away your margin, and so on. At the end of every chapter you will find the same five sections: a summary of what the chapter covered, a short list of key points worth remembering, the common mistakes tradespeople make in that area, a set of practical exercises to apply the chapter to your own business, and a note of any downloadable resources that go with it.

Treat those end-of-chapter sections as the real work. Reading about how to calculate a charge-out rate will not change your business. Actually sitting down and working through the exercise, with your own numbers, will.

### **How the Handbook Links to the Masterclasses**

Trade Skills Hub Academy is built around the idea that people learn in different ways, and that a single format rarely suits everybody. This handbook gives you the complete, written explanation of every topic, at a pace you control. The masterclasses cover much of the same ground in a shorter, more visual format, which some readers prefer for a first introduction to a topic, or as a refresher once they have already read the relevant chapter here.

Where a chapter has a corresponding masterclass, you will see it referenced clearly at the start of that chapter, so you can decide whether to watch first and read second, or the other

way round. Neither replaces the other — the masterclasses are built to complement this handbook, not substitute for it.

## **Downloadable Resources**

Wherever a chapter involves a calculation, a template, or a worksheet you would genuinely benefit from having as an editable document rather than just a page in a book, it is provided as a downloadable resource. That includes the quotation and invoice templates in Part 12, the estimating worksheets, and the various calculators referenced throughout the costing and pricing chapters.

These are designed to be used, not filed away. Print them, fill them in, adapt them to your own business. A template that stays untouched on a hard drive has not saved you any time at all.

## **Using the Trade Profit App**

Several chapters in this handbook — particularly those in Part 3 on calculating your charge-out rate, and Part 11 on technology — connect directly to the Trade Skills Hub Academy Trade Profit App. The app takes the same calculations this book teaches you to do by hand and automates them, so that once you understand how a charge-out rate or a job's true profitability is actually worked out, you can calculate it in seconds for every future job rather than repeating the exercise manually each time.

It is worth doing the manual calculations in this book at least once, even if you intend to use the app for everyday use afterwards. Understanding what the app is actually calculating, and why, is what stops you blindly trusting a number you do not understand — and it is what lets you spot when something in your own business has changed enough that the numbers need revisiting.

## **Your Business Success Roadmap**

The twelve parts of this handbook follow a deliberate order, built around a simple idea: every decision in your business affects your profitability, and those decisions build on each other.

- Part 1 sets the foundations — understanding why trade businesses commonly struggle, and setting clear goals for your own.
- Part 2 makes sure you understand your true business costs, including the ones that are easy to overlook.
- Part 3 turns those costs into a proper charge-out rate, calculated rather than guessed.
- Parts 4 and 5 cover estimating labour and pricing materials accurately, so your quotes reflect reality.
- Part 6 turns accurate pricing into a professional quotation that actually wins work.
- Part 7 covers winning more of that work, across domestic, commercial and tendered opportunities.

- Part 8 covers managing the projects you win, so profitable pricing does not get eroded on site.
- Part 9 covers managing the money once it starts coming in — cash flow, profit and loss, and tax.
- Part 10 looks at growing beyond where you are now, through marketing, staff, and better systems.
- Part 11 brings in technology and AI as practical tools for running the business day to day.
- Part 12 is your resource library — the templates, worksheets and checklists referenced throughout, gathered in one place.

You do not need to master every part before moving to the next, but each one is built assuming you have at least read what came before it. If you are already confident in an area — you may already have a solid grip on your overheads, for example — feel free to move through that part more quickly. But resist the temptation to skip straight to the parts that feel most exciting, like marketing or growth, before the foundations underneath them are solid. A brilliant marketing campaign that brings in work priced below its true cost does not build a profitable business — it just builds a busier, less profitable one.

## Summary

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This chapter introduced how the handbook is structured, how it connects to the wider Trade Skills Hub Academy masterclasses, downloadable resources and Trade Profit App, and set out the roadmap the rest of the book will follow — from understanding your costs, through pricing and winning work, to managing money and growing sustainably.

## Key Points

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- This is a practical handbook — the value is in doing the exercises, not just reading the chapters.
- Every chapter ends with a summary, key points, common mistakes, practical exercises, and downloadable resources.
- Masterclasses and downloadable resources complement this handbook rather than replace it.
- The Trade Profit App automates the calculations this book teaches you to do manually — understand the calculation first, then let the app save you time.
- The twelve parts build on each other in order — resist skipping ahead to the exciting parts before the foundations are solid.

## Common Mistakes

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- Reading a chapter without completing its practical exercises, then wondering why nothing in the business has changed.
- Jumping straight to marketing or growth chapters before working out true costs and a proper charge-out rate.
- Using the Trade Profit App as a black box without ever understanding what it is actually calculating.
- Downloading templates and worksheets and never actually adapting them for use in the real business.

## Practical Exercises

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1. Before reading any further, write down — honestly — what you currently believe your business's true hourly cost is, and how confident you are in that number. Keep this note; you will return to it in Part 3 once you have calculated it properly.
2. Look at the twelve-part roadmap above and identify which one or two parts you suspect are your weakest area right now. Note them down as the sections to give extra time to when you get there.
3. Set up a dedicated folder — physical or digital — for the templates and worksheets you will download as you work through this handbook, so they stay organised and easy to find and reuse.

## Downloadable Resources

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 Business Success Roadmap (one-page summary of the twelve-part structure, printable for quick reference)

 Chapter 1 reflection worksheet, covering the three practical exercises above

# END OF SAMPLE

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## Want to read more?

This sample includes the front cover,  
preliminary pages, contents and Chapter 1.

To continue reading and discover how to build  
a genuinely profitable trade business,

**Please purchase the complete book.**

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