

A WORKS CO. MANUAL · NO. 11

The Oven Cleaning Works

*How to build a recurring round cleaning the one job
nobody wants to do.*

The Works Co. · Trade manuals

How to build a recurring round cleaning the one job nobody wants to do.

The Oven Cleaning Works. Version 1.0, published 2026 by The Works Co. UK English, pounds sterling, written for the trade as it stands in 2026. You bought the manual, the Toolkit and the Prompt Library as one bundle for £47, and that bundle is yours to keep. If it is not right for you, we will refund you the same day, with no questions and no friction — email refunds@theworksc.co.uk and keep the materials. Updates are free for life: when we revise the manual or the tools, you get the new version at no extra cost. We would rather you spent the £47 on a coffee with someone you love than on a manual for a business that wasn't yours.

How to use this manual

Read it twice. The first pass is a straight read, cover to cover, with nothing to do but understand the shape of the work — what the job is, what it costs to start, who pays for it and how the year runs. Do not stop to make decisions. You are getting the lie of the land.

The second pass is the working pass. Go back chapter by chapter with a pen, the Toolkit open on your laptop and the Prompt Library to hand. This is where you fill in your own numbers, score yourself honestly and start building the round. The chapters are written to be used in this order, but they also stand alone, so you can come back to any one of them when you hit that part of the job for real.

Two things travel with the manual, and the chapters point you to them throughout:

- **The Toolkit** is ten Excel spreadsheets — a self-assessment scorecard, a profit-and-loss tracker, a customer job database, a pricing calculator and the rest. They turn the advice in these pages into your own figures. Appendix A lists all ten and what each one does.
- **The Prompt Library** is sixty ready-made AI prompts for the writing and admin around the work: quotes, customer messages, marketing copy, agent approaches and the annual rebooking campaign. Appendix B explains how it works and how to get the most from it.

Every promise in this manual is paired with its honest cost. The work is hands-on, physical and involves corrosive chemicals in other people's kitchens. Done with care, it is a low-overhead, well-paid local business with a strong recurring book. We have tried to give you both halves of that picture on every page, so you can decide with your eyes open.

PART ONE

The Foundations

The Oven Cleaning Opportunity

It is a Monday in October, just gone half past seven, and Marie is parked outside a 1930s semi on the edge of Taunton with the dip tank already warming in the back of her van. By the time the kettle in the kitchen has boiled, the oven racks, the trays and the door glass are out and sliding into the heated solution. She cleans the cavity by hand with a fume-free paste while the tank does the heavy work on the parts. An hour later the oven looks like it did in the showroom, the customer is paying £75 by card on the doorstep, and Marie has already pencilled them in for the same week next year.

By half twelve she has done three. A single oven at £75, a double at £90, and a range cooker with a hob added on at £115. That is £280 on the books before lunch, in a town she could drive across in fifteen minutes, with a van, a tank and a box of consumables that owe her nothing now because she paid for them months ago. She eats a sandwich in a layby, answers two enquiries from a local Facebook group, and books a fourth job for the afternoon.

This is the shape of the work. Not glamorous, not complicated, but steady, local and properly paid. This chapter is about why that shape is worth your attention in 2026, who it suits and who it does not, and how the rest of this manual, the Toolkit and the Prompt Library fit together to get you there.

Why oven cleaning, and why now

Most small service businesses fail on one of two things: the overheads eat the margin, or the work dries up. Oven cleaning is unusually resistant to both.

The overheads are low. The heart of the business is a **heated dip tank** that lives in your van. A full independent setup — tank, chemicals, hand tools, PPE and the van kit-out — costs **£1,500–£4,000**. That is the bulk of your spend, and once it is bought, your ongoing cost is consumables: caustic crystals or solution, cavity pastes, scrims and gloves. You are not paying rent on a shop. You are not holding stock you might never sell. You carry your whole business in a van.

The margin is high. A **single oven is £55–£75** and takes about an hour. A **double oven is £70–£95**. A **range cooker is £90–£130**, and a large **AGA or range master is £120–£180**. Add a **hob at £15–£25**, an **extractor or hood at £15–£25**, a **microwave at £15**. Working solo at four to six ovens a day, a margin of **60–75%** is normal. The chemicals and pads for a single oven cost a few pounds; the rest is your time and skill.

The demand has two engines, and that is what makes it durable. The first is **recurring domestic work**. People rebook every **6–12 months** because an oven gets dirty again and they would still rather pay someone than do it themselves. The second is **agent and end-of-tenancy work** — estate and letting agents, end-of-tenancy cleaning firms, landlords and Airbnb hosts — which runs all year and comes in volume. One engine smooths the other. When domestic bookings dip in midsummer, the lettings churn keeps the van busy.

And then there is the calendar. Oven cleaning has a strong **pre-Christmas peak**. People want a clean oven before the festive cooking, and they want it in November and early December. There is a second, smaller lift in spring. If you know it is coming, you can build your round to meet it instead of being surprised by it.

COACH MOMENT Do the maths on your own town before you spend a penny. Open a map, count the streets within a fifteen-minute drive, and estimate the households. Even if one in a hundred books you once a year, what does that round look like at £70 a job? Marie's Taunton round is built on roughly that ratio. The point is not the exact number — it is that you can see the work is there before you commit. Toolkit 04, the Pricing Calculator, will let you sketch the income side once you have a sense of the volume.

The honest version: this is a job people gladly pay to avoid. Cleaning an oven by hand is unpleasant, slow and easy to do badly. You are selling them out of an afternoon on their knees with a tin of supermarket oven cleaner and a sore back. That is a real service with a real price, and you should never apologise for charging it.

There is also a barrier that protects you. The dip tank and the caustic solution are not things a customer can easily replicate at home, and they are not things most rivals can be bothered to set up properly. The kit is the line between a professional finish and a smeary one. That barrier is low enough to cross with a few thousand pounds and a careful attitude, and high enough to keep the truly casual competition out. You are not competing with a national chain on price; you are the local operator a household calls when they want it done once and done right.

The three income brackets

It helps to be honest about what this business pays, because the range is wide and depends entirely on how you run it.

If you run it as...	You can expect...
A part-time round	£10,000–£20,000/yr
A full-time solo operator (4–6 ovens a day)	£30,000–£55,000/yr, at 60–75% margin
A small operator with 2–4 vans and staff	£80,000–£150,000+ in revenue

Read those brackets as a ladder, not a promise. A part-time round of a few jobs a week around school hours is a real and worthwhile thing — it is the bottom rung, and plenty of people stay there happily. Full-time solo is where most committed operators land: it is a proper income for a proper week's physical work. The small-operator bracket is a different business again — you stop being the person at the tank and start managing people who are. Chapter 11 deals with that step honestly, including the part most people skip: your margin per cent falls when you put someone else on a wage, even as your total revenue climbs.

Where you land depends on how many ovens you do, how well you price, how much add-on work you bundle into each visit, and how good you are at getting customers to rebook. Those are all things you can learn, and they are what the rest of this manual teaches.

The model: recurring domestic plus agent volume

The single most important idea in this whole business is the **rebooking cycle**.

A one-off oven clean is a transaction. A customer who rebooks every year is an asset. The first time you clean Mrs Patel's double oven in Taunton it is a £90 job you had to find and win. The second time, twelve months on, it is a £90 job that found you, because you texted her a reminder and she said yes. Do that for five years and one customer is worth £450 with almost no marketing cost after the first visit. Build a few hundred of those and you have a round that fills itself.

This is why Marie pencilled in next year's booking before she had even packed the van. The rebooking ask is not pushy — it is the most useful thing you can do for a customer who is already happy. Chapter 8 covers exactly when and how to make it, and Chapter 13 covers the software that fires the annual reminder for you.

Think of your first year as planting and your second year as the first harvest. In year one nearly every job is one you had to find and win, which is hard graft and slower money. In year two a growing share of your diary is last year's customers saying yes again, at no marketing cost. That compounding is the quiet maths behind every settled operator you have ever met. It is also why we push so hard, all through this manual, on recording every customer in the Job Database from day one — a clean before-and-after photo, the appliance,

the price, the date. Skip that record and you are starting from zero every January. Keep it and your round builds on itself.

Sitting alongside the recurring domestic book is the **agent and end-of-tenancy channel**. This is volume work: a letting agent who needs an oven cleaned between tenants, an end-of-tenancy firm that subcontracts the appliance, a landlord turning a flat around, an Airbnb host resetting between guests. It pays per job, it comes steadily, and one good agency branch can mean regular weekly work. It is less personal than domestic — they want reliability and an invoice, not a relationship — but it fills the gaps in your week and it does not care what month it is. Chapters 9 and 10 are dedicated to winning and keeping this work.

MENTOR MOMENT I have watched operators chase one channel and ignore the other, and it always costs them. The ones who go all-in on agents end up busy but squeezed on price, with no annual rebookings to fall back on. The ones who only do domestic have a lovely round and a terrifyingly quiet January. Build both from the start. Let the recurring domestic book give you margin and loyalty, and let the agent work give you volume and a floor under your quiet weeks. A round that leans on two legs does not fall over when one of them wobbles.

Who it suits, and who it does not

We would rather you knew this now than after you had spent £47, so here is the honest version.

This suits you if you:

- Take genuine pride in a finish. The job is judged on whether the oven looks new, and the people who do well are the ones who cannot leave a smear.
- Are comfortable working in other people's homes. You are in someone's kitchen for an hour, often alone, often with the customer there. Being easy to have in the house is half the job.
- Are careful and methodical, especially with chemicals. The dip solution is **caustic** and corrosive. Respect it, wear the PPE, handle and dispose of it properly, and it is perfectly safe. Be careless and it will hurt you.
- Are fit enough for a physical day. Lifting oven doors, kneeling, carrying trays of hot solution, in and out of the van. It is honest, tiring work.
- Like being your own boss and are happy to do your own marketing, quoting and admin, at least at the start.

This is not for you if you:

- Want money without effort. There is no version of this where the oven cleans itself while you watch. Plenty of people are sold easy money elsewhere; you will not find it here. The income is real, but every pound of it is earned with your hands.
- Are uneasy in strangers' kitchens or anxious about being trusted alone in a home. That discomfort will show, and customers feel it.
- Are slapdash with safety. Caustic soda does not forgive a casual attitude. If COSHH and PPE sound like someone else's problem, this trade is genuinely not for you.
- Hate the physical side. Sore knees and a tired back are part of the deal.

Chapter 2 turns this into a proper self-assessment, and Toolkit 01 is a scorecard you can fill in. If you read those honestly and it is not you, that is a good outcome — you have saved yourself thousands. We would rather you spent the £47 on a coffee with someone you love than on a manual for a business that wasn't yours.

How to use this manual, the Toolkit and the Prompt Library

What you have bought is three things that work together, all for **£47**, with free updates for life and a same-day, no-friction refund if it is not for you — email refunds@theworksco.co.uk, keep the materials, no argument.

The manual is the reasoning and the craft. Part One sets the foundations and the legal setup. Part Two covers the kit — the dip tank, the tools, the chemicals and the van. Part Three is about finding customers, including the make-or-break first twenty. Part Four is the commercial side, agents and lettings. Part Five is about growing. Part Six is the modern tech stack, and Part Seven looks at where the trade is heading and why it stays a real business. Read Part One and Two before you spend money, then work through the rest in order.

The 10-file Excel Toolkit is the doing. The self-assessment scorecard (01), the business setup and accounts tracker (02), the Job Database that doubles as your customer CRM (03), the Pricing Calculator (04), the quality checklist (07), the proposal and quote tools (08) and the 90-Day Checklist (10) all turn the chapters into things you actually fill in. Wherever a chapter says "Toolkit 0X", that is your cue to open the file and work it.

The 60-prompt AI Library is the time you get back from modern tools. It writes your quotes, your customer messages, your Facebook posts, your agent cold-emails and your annual rebooking campaign, in your voice. Chapter 6 and Chapter 13 lean on it heavily. You do not need to be technical; you need to copy, paste and edit. A morning of admin becomes twenty minutes, and the words come out sounding like a tradesperson rather than a brochure.

COACH MOMENT Do not try to read all fifteen chapters before you act. The people who get stuck are the ones who treat this like a textbook to be finished. Read Chapters 1 to 3, fill in the Toolkit 01 scorecard, and decide if it is for you. If it is, the 90-Day Checklist in Toolkit 10 becomes your map. Action first, perfection later — your first paid oven teaches you more than your fifth chapter.

What success looks like in one year

Picture Marie twelve months from her first job.

She works a four-day week by choice. On a typical day she cleans four to six ovens around Taunton, most of them £70–£100 once a hob or extractor is added on. Her diary is roughly two-thirds recurring domestic — customers she cleaned last year who rebooked because her software reminded them — and one-third agent and end-of-tenancy work from two letting branches who call her first because she always turns up. She is paid on the doorstep by card. Her margin is comfortably the right side of 60%.

She has a few hundred customers in the Job Database, a quiet little engine that gets stronger every month as last year's one-offs become this year's rebookings. November is her busiest month and she planned for it, because she knew the pre-Christmas peak was coming and built her round to catch it. January is quieter, but the agent work keeps the van moving.

She is somewhere in the full-time solo bracket — **£30,000–£55,000** — and she can see, if she wants it, the path to a second van and the small-operator bracket beyond. Or she can stay exactly where she is, working four days, knowing her round, and earning a proper living from a tank in a van and a reputation for not leaving a smear.

That is the opportunity. It is real, it is local, and it is earned with honest work and a bit of system. The next chapter helps you decide, plainly and without flattery, whether it is genuinely the business for you.

Is This For You?

It is a wet Wednesday morning in Crewe, and Phil is on his knees on a stranger's kitchen floor with his head halfway inside an oven. The radio is on low in the next room. The customer, a woman called Jean who booked because her daughter is coming for Sunday lunch, has gone to put the kettle on. Phil has spread a dust sheet across the worktop, laid out his scrims and pads in the same order he always does, and clipped the oven door off its hinges. The racks, the trays and the door glass are already in the heated dip tank out in the van, soaking in caustic solution. He is working the cavity by hand with a fume-free gel, scraping twenty years of carbonised fat off the back wall in long, patient strokes.

It is not glamorous. His knees ache by Thursday. He has caustic burns checked off a near-miss in his first month because he got casual with his gloves. But the job in front of him will take about an hour, Jean will pay him £75 on the doorstep by card, and she has already asked him to come back next October before Christmas. He has two more ovens booked today. By half four he will be home, the van cleaned down, four hundred-odd pounds taken.

That is the honest shape of this work. Before you spend a penny on a dip tank, you need to know whether it is the shape of work that suits you. This chapter is here to talk you out of it if it should. We mean that.

The work, described plainly

Strip away the marketing and here is what you actually do, day after day.

You drive to someone's house. You carry a heated tank of corrosive solution in your van. You kneel, bend and reach inside ovens for an hour at a time. You handle sodium hydroxide solution that will burn your skin and blind you if you are careless with it. You make small talk with the homeowner while you work, in their kitchen, with their dog watching you. You scrub, you rinse, you refit, you wipe down, and you leave the kitchen cleaner than you found it. Then you do it again at the next house, four to six times a day.

It is physical. It is chemical. It is social. It happens in other people's homes. If any one of those three things fills you with dread, this is the wrong trade, and it is far cheaper to learn that now than after you have bought a van.

But if that description made you nod rather than wince, read on, because the rewards are real and the barriers to entry are low. A full-time solo operator doing four to six ovens a day earns **£30,000 to £55,000 a year**, at a margin of 60 to 75 per cent once you are established.

Part-time, around a job or the school run, the bracket is **£10,000 to £20,000**. The kit to start independently runs **£1,500 to £4,000**. There is no qualification gate, no franchise you must buy, no boss. People genuinely thank you for doing a job they would pay almost anything to avoid.

Green lights: the markers that say yes

Over years of watching who lasts in this trade and who quits inside six months, a clear pattern shows up. The people who do well tend to share these traits.

You are methodical. The dip-tank method rewards order. Parts come out, get labelled in your head, go in the tank, come back, go back in the right slots. The operators who struggle are the ones who work in a flurry and lose track of which rack came from which oven. If you are the sort of person who lays your tools out the same way every time and works through a job in a steady sequence, that instinct is worth money here.

You take pride in a spotless finish. The whole business runs on the reveal at the end, the moment the customer sees their oven looking like the day it was installed. That moment is what earns the rebooking, the review and the word-of-mouth referral that brings the next three jobs. If "good enough" sits comfortably with you, you will leave money on the table on every job. If a smear on the door glass nags at you until you have buffed it out, you have the right wiring.

You are comfortable in other people's homes. You will be in kitchens of every kind, from spotless show-homes to houses that have not been deep-cleaned in a decade. You will be trusted, alone, near people's belongings. Some customers will chat your ear off; some will leave you to it. You need to be easy company, trustworthy, and unbothered by the variety. For repeat domestic work, trust is the entire product.

You are careful with chemicals. This is not optional, and we will keep saying it. Caustic soda solution is corrosive. The operators who respect it, glove up every time, mix it properly and dispose of spent solution responsibly, work for decades without incident. The careless ones get hurt. Being temperamentally cautious with dangerous materials is a genuine asset in this trade, not a weakness.

You are fit enough for a physical day. You do not need to be an athlete. You do need knees, a back and shoulders that can handle kneeling, bending and reaching for four to six hours a day, plus loading and unloading kit. People in their fifties and sixties do this work well. People who cannot kneel without pain do not.

You can run your own day. Nobody hands you a rota. You decide how many jobs to book, how to route between Crewe, Nantwich and the villages, when to chase a rebooking, when to send an invoice to an agent. The freedom is the appeal for most operators, but it is also a

responsibility. If you have always wanted someone else to structure your day, the self-employed reality can feel exposing. If you quietly relish setting your own pace and standards, this trade hands you exactly that.

COACH MOMENT Go and clean your own oven this weekend, properly, by hand. Pull the racks, scrub the cavity, do the door glass until it is clear. Time yourself. Notice how your knees and back feel afterwards, and notice whether the finished result gives you a small flush of satisfaction or just relief that it is over. That hour tells you more about your fit for this trade than any chapter can. It costs you nothing but a Saturday morning, and it is the single most honest test in this book.

Red flags: the markers that say no

Just as clear is the pattern among people who should not start. If several of these are you, we would genuinely rather you kept your £47 and your savings.

You are casual about safety. If you read "wear your goggles every time" and your instinct is "I will be fine, I have done risky jobs before", stop. Caustic does not care how careful you usually are. It punishes the one time you cut a corner. The trade needs people who treat COSHH as a discipline, not a suggestion. Chapter 3 covers the rules in full, but the temperament has to come first.

You are uncomfortable in people's kitchens. Some people find it draining to spend a day making small talk in strangers' homes, navigating the awkwardness of a watching customer, working around their clutter and their pets. That is a completely reasonable way to be. It also makes domestic oven cleaning a poor fit. You can lean harder on agent and end-of-tenancy work, where the houses are often empty, but the recurring domestic round is the engine of most one-van businesses, and it is built on being good company.

You want money without the graft. This is the big one. There is a certain kind of person who reads "60 to 75 per cent margin" and "no boss" and pictures easy money. The margin is real, but it is the reward for kneeling on hard floors, handling corrosive chemicals, driving between jobs in the rain and turning up reliably when you would rather not. If the physical work itself is something you are trying to avoid, no amount of margin will make this enjoyable, and customers feel it when an operator resents the job.

You cannot be reliable. Agents and repeat customers book you because you turn up when you say you will. Miss appointments, run hours late without warning, or cancel because you fancied a day off, and the recurring revenue that makes this trade worthwhile never builds. If reliability is a struggle for you, that is worth being honest about before you take deposits from people.

You will not learn the safe method. Some people cannot abide being told how to do a job and will improvise around the dip-tank process from day one. In most trades that costs you a bit of efficiency. Here it can cost you your eyesight or a customer's appliance. The method exists because it works and because it is safe. If following a proven process feels like a straitjacket to you, the risk in this particular trade is not worth carrying.

MENTOR MOMENT I have watched people talk themselves into this trade because they liked the numbers, ignoring a quiet voice telling them they hated the idea of the actual work. Every one of them was out within a year, poorer and a bit bruised. The numbers in this book are true. They are also the back half of the sentence. The front half is the kneeling, the caustic, the kitchens and the early starts. Read the whole sentence before you commit. A business that fits you will carry you through the hard mornings; a business you chose only for the figures will not.

The reality nobody puts in the advert

Let us be specific about three things the glossy franchise brochures tend to skip.

It is chemical-handling work, and that is permanent. This is not a phase you graduate out of once you are experienced. Every single job involves caustic solution. You will always be gloved, goggled and aproned around the tank. You will always need to mix, handle and dispose of the solution safely, and you can never pour spent caustic to a surface drain. Chapter 3 makes this a full section because it is genuinely the most important operational fact in the trade. If lifelong careful chemical handling sounds like a chore you will come to resent, listen to that.

It is hands-on, and your body is your tool. A single oven takes about an hour of kneeling, reaching and scrubbing. Four to six of those a day adds up. You can protect yourself with knee pads, good technique and sensible scheduling, and plenty of operators do this comfortably for fifteen years. But you cannot delegate the physical work in a one-van business. You are the labour.

It happens in occupied homes, and that brings its own weight. You are working on an expensive appliance, in someone's house, often while they are home. That is why you carry treatment and care-custody-control insurance, covered in Chapter 3, and why trust and a clean record matter for repeat domestic work. It also means every job is a small social performance: be pleasant, be tidy, respect the space, and leave it better than you found it. Most operators come to enjoy this. A few find it a strain that never eases.

None of this is meant to frighten you off. Phil, on his knees in Crewe, would not swap it for an office. It is meant to make sure that if you go in, you go in with both eyes open.

The self-assessment scorecard

Before you read another chapter, do the structured version of the gut-check. **Toolkit file 01, the Self-Assessment Scorecard**, walks you through a short set of honest questions across four areas: your tolerance for physical work, your discipline with safety and chemicals, your comfort with customers and homes, and your reliability and follow-through. You score each, total it up, and the sheet gives you a candid read on your fit.

Be ruthlessly honest with it. The scorecard is worthless if you answer the way you wish you were rather than the way you are. A low score is not a failure; it is the cheapest piece of business advice you will ever receive. A high score means the rest of this manual is pointed at you, and you can read on with confidence. If you sit in the middle, the chapters ahead, especially Chapter 3 on safety and Chapter 8 on doing the work, will help you decide whether the bits you are unsure about are learnable or dealbreakers.

On the money, and our promise

We will say this once, plainly, because it matters. You have paid **£47** for this manual, the ten-file Excel toolkit and the sixty-prompt AI library. If, having read this far, you have realised that kneeling on kitchen floors handling caustic in strangers' homes is not the working life for you, that is a good outcome, not a bad one. You have saved yourself thousands of pounds and months of misery.

If you want your money back, email refunds@theworksco.co.uk the same day and we will refund you, no friction and no questions. Keep the materials. We mean it when we say we would rather you spent the £47 on a coffee with someone you love than on a manual for a business that was never going to be yours.

But if the description of Phil's Wednesday made you lean in rather than back away, if the scorecard in toolkit 01 comes back strong, and if you can picture yourself taking quiet pride in handing a customer back an oven that looks brand new, then you are exactly who the rest of this book is written for. The work is honest and the margins are real. Chapter 3 is next, and it gets you legal, insured and safe before you touch a tank.

Setting Up the Business

On a grey Friday morning in March, Bina sat at her kitchen table in Redditch with a mug of tea going cold and three browser tabs open: the HMRC sign-up page, a comparison of insurance quotes, and a half-finished COSHH risk assessment for the caustic solution that would soon be sitting in a tank in her van. She had picked Friday on purpose. It was a quiet day at her old job, the bank was open, and she wanted the weekend to read through the paperwork once more before anything went live. By the time the kettle had boiled twice, she was registered as a sole trader, had a quote for the right insurance in front of her, and had written down — in plain words — exactly how she would mix, handle and dispose of the chemical that makes this whole trade work.

That morning cost her about four hours and roughly £300 in first outlays. It is the least glamorous part of starting an oven-cleaning round, and it is the part that keeps you out of trouble. Get it wrong and a single chemical burn, a damaged £1,500 range cooker or an uninsured claim can end the business before it earns a penny. Get it right and you are legal, covered and free to spend the rest of your energy on ovens and customers. This chapter walks you through the lot: your business structure, tax, the big one (COSHH and caustic soda), insurance, and the trust side of working in people's homes.

Sole Trader or Limited Company

Start by deciding what kind of business you are. For most people opening an oven-cleaning round, the honest answer is **sole trader**, at least to begin with.

As a sole trader you and the business are the same legal person. You register with HMRC, you keep records of what you earn and spend, and once a year you file a Self Assessment tax return and pay Income Tax and Class 4 National Insurance on your profit. It is cheap, quick and simple. You can register online in about twenty minutes and there is no fee. For a one-van operator turning over £30,000–£55,000 a year, this is usually the right home.

A **limited company** is a separate legal person. It can protect your personal assets if something goes badly wrong, and at higher profits it can be more tax-efficient. But it comes with more admin: annual accounts, a Confirmation Statement, Corporation Tax, and usually an accountant's fee of £600–£1,500 a year. Setting one up costs £50 to register at Companies House, or more if you pay someone to do it for you.

Here is the plain version. If you are starting solo and testing whether the round works, be a sole trader. If you are heading for two or three vans, staff and revenue of £80,000–£150,000,

a limited company starts to make sense — and that is a conversation to have with an accountant, not a decision to agonise over in week one. You can change from sole trader to limited later. Most people do.

COACH MOMENT Do not let the structure question stall you for a fortnight. Bina spent twenty minutes registering as a sole trader and got on with finding ovens. The structure can be upgraded once you know the round earns. A business that exists and trades beats a perfect company structure that never gets off the table.

Whichever you pick, open a **separate bank account** for the business on day one. It does not have to be a fancy business account to start — a second personal account, kept strictly for business in and out, is enough at the sole-trader stage, though many high-street banks technically require a business account once you are trading, so check the terms. The point is the same: every job paid in, every tin of paste and box of gloves paid out, all in one place. When January comes and your tax return is due, you will thank yourself. The Toolkit's **Accounts & Bookkeeping spreadsheet (toolkit 02)** is built to take exactly this feed: date, customer, amount in, expense, category. Fill it in weekly and the year-end becomes an afternoon, not a panic.

HMRC, Tax and the £90,000 VAT Threshold

Register with HMRC for Self Assessment as soon as you start trading — the deadline is 5 October after the end of the tax year in which you began, but there is no reason to wait. Keep every receipt: van fuel, chemicals, PPE, insurance, phone, the dip tank itself. These are business costs and they reduce the profit you pay tax on. A van bought for the business, the £1,500–£4,000 of start-up kit, the ongoing caustic crystals and pastes — all allowable, recorded properly.

Set aside money for tax as you go. A simple rule for a sole trader at this income level is to put **25–30% of your profit** into a separate pot the moment it lands, so the tax bill in January is money you already have, not a shock. Do not spend HMRC's money on a new dip tank in November and find yourself short.

Now the number every growing operator must watch: **the VAT registration threshold is £90,000**. When your **VAT-taxable turnover** — your total takings, not your profit — passes £90,000 in any rolling twelve-month period, you must register for VAT. You also have to register if you expect to cross it in the next thirty days alone.

For a solo operator this is a good problem and a distant one. Four to six ovens a day at £55–£95 puts a full-time round somewhere around £30,000–£55,000 a year — comfortably under the line. You will not trip the VAT threshold cleaning ovens on your own. But the moment you add a second van and a member of staff, and revenue climbs toward £80,000–£150,000,

That was Chapter 1.

The other twenty chapters, the Excel toolkit and the
AI prompt library are in the full bundle.

theworksco.co.uk/oven-cleaning · GBP 47 · refund without friction