

A WORKS CO. MANUAL · NO. 04

# The Pressure Washing Works

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*How to build a driveway, patio and softwash round — and the sealing that pays.*

# The Pressure Washing Works

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## WHAT THIS MANUAL IS — AND IS NOT

This manual is a detailed account of how a pressure washing and softwashing business works, written with care and published in good faith. It is information, not professional advice. Read these points before you spray a single drop:

- **The numbers are honest examples, not promises.** Prices, costs and incomes reflect the UK market in 2026 and the worked examples we built. Your results will depend on your patch, your effort and your decisions. Nobody can guarantee you an income, and we do not.
- **Tax, legal and insurance specifics change.** Verify any figure that matters — thresholds, rates, regulations — with HMRC, your insurer or a qualified professional before relying on it. The templates in your bundle are working documents, not legal advice.
- **Pressure washing and softwash chemicals can damage property and injure if misused.** High pressure strips render and pointing and gouges soft stone, timber and windows; sodium hypochlorite and other softwash chemicals burn skin and eyes, stain and kill planting, and are hazardous. Waste wash-water and biocides must be contained and disposed of lawfully — releasing them to a surface-water or storm drain is a pollution offence under Environment Agency guidance. Working at height, for roofs and upper render, is dangerous. This manual is guidance, not training. You must follow COSHH, your product manufacturers' instructions, the Health and Safety Executive's published guidance, your insurance requirements, and all environmental regulations, and carry out your own risk assessments. You are responsible for working safely and lawfully.

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## BEFORE CHAPTER ONE

# Your first weekend.

You do not need to read the whole manual before you earn a pound. This page is the shortest honest path from here to your first yes — the chapters fill in everything else as you need them.

**1 Saturday morning**

Make the kit decision and place the order: the £800–£2,000 starter rig (petrol pressure washer, rotary surface cleaner, hoses and lances, plus a basic softwash sprayer), or plan the £3,000–£6,000 pro rig if the work is already there. Chapters 4 and 5 make the case. Buy what earns first.

**3 Saturday evening**

Line up two or three friends' or family drives and patios to clean for free this weekend. These are your practice runs and, more importantly, your first before-and-after photos — the single most persuasive thing you will own.

**5 Sunday afternoon**

Post the before-and-afters to your local Facebook groups, Marketplace, and Instagram or TikTok. Name the area. Price the first real jobs off the standard ranges — driveway £100–£300, patio £80–£250 — and quote plainly.

**2 Saturday afternoon**

Sort your waste-water awareness before you clean anything for money. Learn where a surface-water drain goes versus a foul one, and that softwash chemicals and dirty wash-water must be contained, not sent to the storm system. Chapter 3 has the detail; today, just get the principle.

**4 Sunday morning**

Do the free cleans. Shoot the before from a fixed spot, do the work, shoot the after from the exact same spot. Get the half-and-half shot — clean stripe beside filth — because that is the image that sells.

**6 Sunday evening**

Reply to every enquiry the same day and book your first paid cleans. A named day closes better than a polished quote. Register with HMRC once the money starts (Chapter 3).

**IF YOU ONLY READ FOUR CHAPTERS**

Chapter 2 (is this for you) · Chapter 4 (the rig) · Chapter 6 (first customers) · Chapter 10 (pricing). Everything else will be waiting when you need it.

**THE ONE-WEEK TARGET**

Your first three paid jobs. A kit on order, a handful of before-and-afters shot, the first enquiries answered — that is a business starting, not an idea. Get legal and covered before you charge (Chapter 3).



PART ONE

# Foundations

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*The trade, the season, the setup.*

# 01

CHAPTER 1 · PART ONE

## The Pressure Washing Opportunity

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*Why this trade. Why now. What is possible.*

It is a cold, bright Thursday morning in late February in Bristol, and Rob is standing on a driveway in Fishponds that has not been clean in nine years. Block paving, maybe forty square metres, the colour of wet cardboard. Green at the edges where the moss has taken hold. The homeowner, a retired teacher called Margaret, says her husband used to do it with a brush and a bucket, and points at the garage as if the brush is still in there somewhere.

Rob does not use a brush. He pre-treats the moss, runs a petrol washer through a rotary surface cleaner, and works backwards across the paving in slow, overlapping passes. The grey lifts in front of the machine like a curtain pulling back. Underneath, the brick is terracotta and buff, a proper pattern, colours Margaret had genuinely forgotten were there. It takes him a little under two hours.

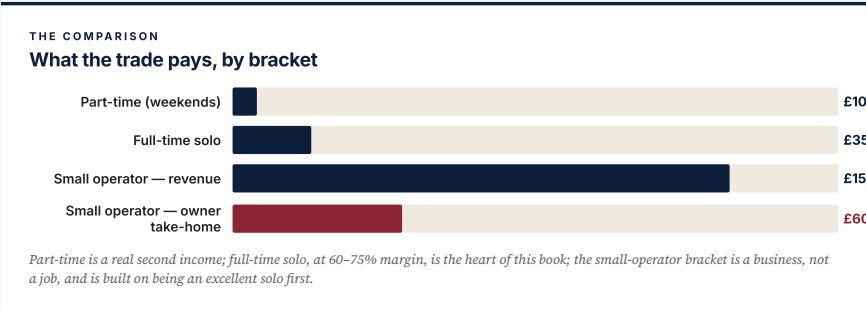
He charges £180 for the clean. Then, standing on the now-clean drive with a coffee Margaret insisted on making, he explains that bare block paving will be green again inside two winters unless the joints are re-sanded and the surface sealed. He quotes £450 for the sealing, booked for the following week once the paving has dried out. Margaret says yes before he has finished the sentence.

Two hours of work. £180 in the bank today, £450 booked for next week. One driveway. That is the trade in a single morning, and the rest of this manual is about how to do it on purpose, again and again, for a living.

Why this trade, and why now

Most trades sell you something you cannot see. The plumber fixes a pipe inside a wall. The electrician's best work is invisible by design. You take their word for it, and you pay.

Exterior cleaning is the opposite. The result is instant and it is obvious. You point a machine at a filthy surface and a clean one appears behind it, in real time, while the customer watches from the kitchen window. There is no other trade where the before-and-after is this dramatic and this immediate. That single fact drives almost everything good about the business: the customer is sold before you have finished, the photos market themselves, and the neighbours come out to ask what you are charging.



On top of that, the numbers work. A solo operator can clear a real day-rate, often £300 to £500 of work in a day on domestic jobs, with the kind of margin most trades would envy because your main consumables are fuel, water and a little chemical. There is no expensive material to buy in, no stock sitting in a unit, no wholesaler's markup eating your quote. What you sell is a clean surface and the skill to produce it safely, and the customer can see exactly what they are paying for.

The UK climate does the marketing for you. We are wet, we are temperate, and that means moss, algae and black spot grow on every north-facing surface in the country. The work renews itself. A drive you clean this year is dirty again in two or three, and the customer already has your number. Few trades have demand that literally regrows on the same patch of ground you cleaned last time.

Three things have widened the opportunity recently, and they are worth naming because they are where the money has moved:

- **The sealing upsell.** Cleaning is the way in. Sealing is where a chunk of the profit lives. A £180 driveway clean becomes a £630 job the moment the seal goes on, for an extra hour or two of work and a few pounds of materials.
- **Softwashing.** Low-pressure chemical cleaning, sodium-hypochlorite based, has opened up render and roofs, surfaces you must never put a pressure washer near. A render softwash on a house runs £300 to £900. A roof clean runs £400 to £1,500. This is the growth area of the trade, and most of the cheap jet-wash operators do not offer it.
- **Commercial recurring work.** Forecourts, car parks, cladding, social housing, managing agents. Priced per visit, booked on a cycle, paid by invoice. This is the work that fills the diary when the domestic phone goes quiet.

COACH MOMENT

Do not let the word "opportunity" make you think this is easy money for no work. It is physical, it is weather-dependent, and the regulatory side is real. What "opportunity" honestly means here is this: the demand is large, the skill is learnable in a season, the kit is affordable, and the margins are genuinely good. Those four things are not true of most trades at once. That is the opportunity. The graft is still yours to do.

### The three income brackets

Let us be straight about what this earns, because vague promises help nobody. There are three honest brackets, and where you land depends entirely on how seriously you treat it.

| Level          | What it looks like                                         | Realistic earnings                                          |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Part-time      | Weekends, evenings, a few jobs a week alongside other work | £10,000–£20,000/yr                                          |
| Full-time solo | One person, one rig, cleaning plus the sealing upsell      | £35,000–£65,000/yr, margin 60–75%                           |
| Small operator | 2–4 staff and vans, domestic plus commercial contracts     | £150,000–£400,000 revenue; owner take-home £60,000–£140,000 |

The part-time bracket is a real thing and a sensible place to test the water. A few jobs at the weekend, learning the kit on low stakes, building a handful of reviews. Plenty of people stay here on purpose and treat it as a useful second income.

The full-time solo bracket is where most readers of this manual are heading, and it is the heart of the book. One person, one well-chosen rig, working the spring-to-autumn peak hard and filling winter with softwash and sealing. Sixty to seventy-five per cent margin as a solo operator is not a typo. Your costs are low and your labour is your own.

The small-operator bracket is where it stops being a job and becomes a business. Two to four vans, staff you have trained to your standard, a book of commercial contracts that pays whether it is sunny or not. The revenue is large but so is the complexity, and your take-home depends entirely on running it well rather than just running it big. A poorly run three-van operation can earn its owner less than a well-run solo one, because every van that is idle or doing sloppy work still costs wages, fuel and insurance. Chapters 16 and 17 are about getting here without it falling over.

**MENTOR MOMENT**

The most common mistake I see is the new operator who fixates on the small-operator revenue figure and skips the boring middle. The £150,000 number is real, but it is built on a year or two of being excellent and well-reviewed as a solo first. You cannot hire your way to a standard you have not yet set yourself. Earn the right to scale. The diary that justifies a second van is the diary you have already filled on your own.

## The money model: one-off, sealing, commercial

The reason this trade pays better than people expect is that it is really three businesses stacked on one rig.

**One-off cleans** are the engine and the marketing. Driveways at £100 to £300, patios at £80 to £250, decking at £80 to £200. These are the jobs that fill the early diary, generate the reviews, and put your clean work in front of every passing car. Margins are strong because the consumables are cheap. But one-off work alone has a flaw: it does not repeat often enough to be predictable, and in deep winter it can stop almost dead.

**Sealing** is the high-margin layer that turns a decent day into a good one. After a block-paving clean you re-sand the joints with kiln-dried sand and apply a sealant. Block-paving seal runs £400 to £900; a patio seal £250 to £600. The material cost is modest and the time is an hour or two. This is the single most-missed money in the trade, and it is why Rob's Fishponds morning turned £180 into £630. Chapter 10 does the full upsell maths and Chapter 17 treats sealing as the cornerstone of the add-on stack.

**Commercial** is the layer that flattens the seasons. Forecourts, car parks, cladding, signage, social housing, facilities managers, estate agents wanting a pre-sale clean. Priced per square metre or per visit, often booked on a planned cycle. It is less glamorous than a gleaming domestic drive and it comes with paperwork — runoff recovery, RAMS, accreditation — but it pays through the winter and one good managing agent can mean a dozen sites. Chapters 14 and 15 are devoted to it.

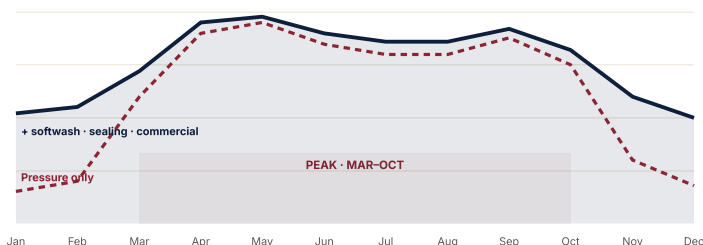
Stack the three and the picture changes. The one-off work brings customers and cash in the busy months. The sealing lifts the margin on a good share of those jobs. The commercial keeps the rig earning when frost has stopped the domestic phone. Run only the first layer and you have a summer job. Run all three and you have a year-round business.

## The seasons, told honestly

The single biggest thing to understand before you spend a penny is that this is a seasonal trade. The peak runs roughly March to October. Spring is the rush — everyone looks at their green drive after winter and wants it gone before the garden parties start. Deep winter is quiet, because frost halts pressure washing and nobody seals a wet, cold surface.

## THE SHAPE OF THE YEAR

## One year, two income lines



The dashed line is a pressure-only round: a summer job with a January hole. The solid line is the same operator who fills winter with frost-tolerant softwash, sealing booked ahead, and commercial contracts that pay on a cycle. Same van — a business instead of a season.

If you build your whole plan on summer driveways, you will have three lean months every year and a cashflow problem every January. The smart operator plans for this from day one, and the fix is built into the money model above: softwash render and roof work is far less frost-sensitive than pressure washing, commercial contracts pay on a cycle regardless of weather, and sealing can be booked ahead and scheduled into the shoulder months. Chapter 2 looks hard at whether the seasonal reality suits you, and Chapter 16 covers the seasonal-labour problem once you have staff.

## Who this suits, and who it does not

We would genuinely rather you put this manual down now than spend a season discovering the trade was not for you. So, honestly.

### This suits you if you:

- like physical, visible-result work and do not mind being outside in British weather
- are methodical, the sort who does the slow overlapping passes properly rather than rushing the finish
- can organise yourself around a seasonal calendar and plan winter work in advance
- are willing to learn a bit of chemistry, because softwash is where the modern margin is
- take property and pollution seriously, because a pressure washer can etch stone and the wrong runoff can land you in trouble with the Environment Agency

### This probably does not suit you if you:

- need a flat, predictable income twelve months a year with no seasonal dip
- are careless around chemicals, or impatient with PPE and dilution
- would cut corners on someone's render or natural stone to save twenty minutes
- cannot be bothered to sort out where the dirty wash-water goes

That last point is not a throwaway. Dirty wash-water and softwash chemicals must not enter surface-water or storm drains untreated — that is Environment Agency guidance and a genuine legal duty, not a nicety. Controlling your runoff is both the law and the clearest signal that separates a professional from the bloke with a jet-wash and a van. Chapter 3 covers it in full.

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

You have bought three things, and they are meant to be used together.

**This manual** is the thinking and the craft — twenty-one chapters from setting up the business through equipment, customers, commercial work, scaling and the decade ahead. Read it through once for the shape of it, then return to chapters as you hit them in real life.

**The 15-file Excel Toolkit** is the doing. A self-assessment scorecard, an accounting starter, a job database that doubles as your CRM, a pricing calculator, quality-standards sheets, a proposal template, a 90-day checklist and more. Wherever a chapter says "see the Toolkit", there is a spreadsheet that saves you building it yourself.

**The 95-prompt AI Library** is the modern operator's shortcut for the admin — drafting quotes, writing customer messages, producing the social posts and before-and-after captions that sell this trade, handling the commercial cold emails. Chapter 18 shows the 2026 tech stack in full, and the prompts are referenced throughout.

The price for all three is £47, with free updates for life and a same-day, no-friction refund: email [refunds@theworksco.co.uk](mailto:refunds@theworksco.co.uk) and keep the materials. We mean that. We would rather you spent the £47 on a coffee with someone you love than on a manual for a trade that was never going to be yours.

### MENTOR MOMENT

Read Chapter 3 before you spend money on kit. Every season we hear from someone who bought a £4,000 rig, started cleaning, and only then thought about insurance, COSHH and where the runoff goes. Get legal and covered first. The kit will still be there next week, and you will buy the right kit rather than the shiny kit once you understand the work it has to do.

## What success looks like in one year

Picture Rob, twelve months on from that Fishponds driveway.

He is registered, insured for £5m public liability, and properly set up for COSHH and runoff. He has a starter rig that paid for itself in the first month and a softwash system that opened up render and roof work he could not touch before. He has somewhere north of forty reviews on his Google Business Profile, most with a before-and-after photo attached, because in this trade the photos do the selling. His diary is full from March, and he has learned not to leave January empty — there is softwash and commercial work in there now, and a stack of sealing jobs booked ahead from the autumn.

He is somewhere in that full-time solo bracket, £35,000 to £65,000, at a margin most trades cannot match, and he is starting to wonder whether the spring rush is getting too big for one pair of hands. That question — when to stop being the only person on the lance — is a good problem, and it is where the small-operator bracket begins.

That is one realistic year. Not a fortune overnight, not a fantasy. A real trade, learned properly, earning well, with room to grow.

It starts with an honest look in the mirror. The next chapter asks the only question that matters before you spend a pound: is this actually for you.

# That was Chapter 1.

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

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