

A WORKS CO. MANUAL · NO. 18

The Roof Cleaning & Moss Removal Works

*How to build a high-value roof-cleaning business,
done safely.*

The Works Co. · Trade manuals

How to build an honest, high-value roof-cleaning business in the UK — and come home safe every night.

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How to use this manual

This is a complete kit, not just a book. You own three things: the manual you are reading, a 10-file Excel toolkit, and a 60-prompt AI library. Each one does a different job, and they are meant to be used together.

The **manual** is the thinking. It walks you through the trade in order — how roofs get mossy, the two honest ways to clean them, what to charge, how to win work, and how to grow without cutting corners. Read it once, front to back, so the whole picture sits in your head. Then keep it nearby and return to single chapters as you need them. Every chapter answers the same four questions for its topic: what to do, when to do it, what it costs, and what it earns. Where a chapter leans on a spreadsheet or a prompt, it says so, so you always know which tool to reach for.

The **10-file Excel toolkit** is the doing. It is where the numbers live: a scorecard to check you are suited to the work, a profit-and-loss tracker, a pricing calculator, a job database, a roof survey and method statement, a working-at-height risk assessment, a quality-and-safety checklist, a quote template, a pipeline tracker, and a first-90-days plan. You do not need to build any of this from scratch. Open the file the chapter points to, type in your own figures, and the sheet does the arithmetic. Appendix A lists all ten with a one-line summary of each.

The **60-prompt AI library** is the speed. These are tested prompts you paste into an AI assistant to draft quotes, write customer replies, handle a complaint, plan a week of work, or talk through a method statement. They save hours of staring at a blank screen. Appendix B explains what they cover, chapter by chapter.

A word on emphasis before you start. This trade is defined by one thing above all others: **working at height**. Falls from a roof are a leading cause of death at work in the UK, and the law — the Work at Height Regulations 2005 — exists because of it. So this manual treats safety as the spine of the business, not an afterthought. You will see it in nearly every chapter, and in two of the toolkit files built only for it. Please do not skip those parts. Coming home safe is the whole job.

One last thing. If this manual is not right for you, email refunds@theworksco.co.uk on the same day and we will refund you, no friction, and you keep all the materials. We would

rather you spent the £47 on a coffee with someone you love than on a business that was never going to be yours. Updates are free for life.

PART ONE

The Foundations

The Roof Cleaning Opportunity

It was a Monday in late April when Brett pulled his van onto a quiet close in Stafford and looked up at the roof he had quoted the week before. A detached house, four-bed, and a roof gone almost entirely green. Thick moss in the gutters, black streaks of algae running down the north-facing slope, lichen freckling the ridge tiles. The owners were putting the house on the market in June and had been told, gently, by an estate agent that the roof "let the place down". Brett had quoted £650 for a full manual moss removal, a gutter clear, and a softwash treatment to keep it clean. They said yes.

He worked the whole day. Scaffold tower up the gable end, roof ladder hooked over the ridge, harness on. He scraped and brushed the moss off tile by tile, bagged the debris, cleared the gutters of the dark wet clumps that had been holding water against the fascia, then went back over the lot with a low-pressure softwash. By half five the roof had gone from a green eyesore to clean terracotta. The kind of difference a neighbour notices from their own front garden.

He took a photo from the same spot he had taken the "before" shot that morning. Same angle, same light. The two pictures side by side were the whole sales pitch.

By the time he was loading the van, a man two doors down had walked over to ask what he charged. Then a woman from across the close came out and asked the same thing. Two enquiries before he had even left the street. He booked one of them in for the following week. The other called him on the Thursday.

That is roof cleaning. One visible result, done properly, and the work starts selling itself.

What is worth noticing in Brett's day is how little of his profit came from marketing. He did not pay for an advert. He did not knock on those two doors. He simply did one job well, in full view of a street, and the street did the selling. Few trades work like that. A plumber's good work is hidden behind a wall. A roof cleaner's good work is forty feet up where the whole neighbourhood can see it. That visibility is the engine of the entire business, and once you understand it, everything else in this manual follows.

Why this trade, and why now

Most cleaning trades fight over small jobs. A window round is a few pounds a house. A pressure-washing job on a drive might be £150 and take a morning. Roof cleaning is different, and the difference is the whole reason this manual exists.

The jobs are high value. A terraced roof is £150 to £350. A semi-detached is £250 to £500. A detached like Brett's is £400 to £900 and up. A softwash treatment on its own runs £200 to £600. You are not doing twenty jobs a day to make a living. You are doing one or two, and each one is worth real money.

The demand is driven by a visible problem. A homeowner does not always know they need their gutters cleared, but they can see a green roof from the pavement. They can see the black streaks. And the moment they decide to sell the house, that roof becomes a number in their head, because they know a buyer will see it too. That gives you two strong streams of work: people who simply want their home to look right, and people preparing to sell who need it sorted before the photos go up.

The softwash model gives you something most trades do not have: a treatment you can re-sell. When you apply a biocide, the roof keeps clearing for weeks and months as it weathers, and the customer can be brought back onto a re-treatment plan a year or two later. That is the beginning of recurring revenue, which we come back to in Chapter 12.

And competition, done properly, is thin. Plenty of people own a ladder. Far fewer are properly insured, properly equipped for working at height, and honest about what a roof actually needs. The cowboys cut corners on safety and oversell coatings nobody needs. If you do this trade safely and honestly, you are not competing with them. You are the obvious better choice.

There is a timing point worth making too. The UK housing stock is old and getting older, and an older roof grows more moss. House sales keep coming, and every sale puts a fresh roof in front of a buyer and an estate agent who both notice. Customers increasingly book on the strength of reviews and photos, which rewards the operator with a clean record and a strong portfolio. None of these forces is a fad. They are slow, steady tailwinds, and they all point the same way: toward the operator who does the work properly. Chapter 15 looks at where the trade is heading over the next decade, but the short version is that the conditions favouring a safe, honest operator are getting stronger, not weaker.

COACH MOMENT The single before-and-after photo is your most valuable tool, and it costs nothing. From your very first job, take the "before" shot from a fixed spot before you touch the roof, and the "after" from the exact same spot when you finish. Same angle, same distance. Build a folder of these from day one. By job ten you will have a portfolio that closes quotes for you while you sleep.

The three income brackets

Be clear-eyed about what this trade pays, because the honest numbers are good enough that you do not need inflated ones.

Part-time: £12,000 to £25,000 a year. Evenings, weekends, the drier months. A fair second income while you keep another job or build the business slowly. Many operators start here.

Full-time solo: £30,000 to £60,000 a year. You, your van, your kit, working the season properly. Fewer jobs per day than a window cleaner, but each one worth far more. This is a genuine living, and it is where most people who commit to the trade land.

With staff and access equipment: £80,000 to £200,000 and beyond in revenue. A small team, the right access gear, agent and commercial contracts on top of domestic work. This is a real business with real margin, and Chapters 11 and 12 are about how you get there.

None of these brackets happen by accident, and the higher ones come with wages, equipment and a safety culture to manage. But the ladder from the first to the last is clear, and every rung is built on the same thing: safe, honest, well-reviewed work.

It helps to do the arithmetic on a single full-time week. Say Brett does three jobs at an average of £400. That is £1,200 in a week, before costs. Take out fuel, biocide, insurance spread across the year, equipment wear and tax, and the take-home is still a respectable wage for a job he controls entirely. Now picture the better weeks in high season, where four jobs and a couple of softwash treatments push the week well past £1,500. The season is not year-round, and bad weather costs you days, which is why the annual figures land where they do rather than higher. But the per-job value is what makes the maths work even on a short week.

The method: moss removal, softwash, and treatment

There are two core ways to clean a roof, and you will use both. It is worth understanding them properly now, because the whole craft chapter (Chapter 5) builds on this.

Manual moss removal is exactly what it sounds like. You physically scrape and brush the moss off the tiles by hand, working from safe access, then clear all the debris and the gutters it has filled. It is labour-intensive and it is worked at height, which is why it commands the prices it does. When a roof is thick with moss, this is where you start.

Softwashing is the modern, lower-risk treatment. You apply a biocide, usually sodium-hypochlorite-based, at low pressure. It kills the moss, algae and lichen, and the roof continues to clear over the following weeks and months as the weather works on it. It is kinder to the tiles than scraping, often better value, and it is what lets you offer a treatment that keeps working after you have driven away. On many jobs you will do both: scrape off the heavy growth, then softwash to treat what remains and slow its return.

Two firm rules sit underneath all of this, and you should say them plainly to every customer.

Never high-pressure jet wash a roof. Ever. High pressure strips the protective granules off the tiles and forces water underneath them, causing damage and leaks. Some operators do it because it looks dramatic and fast. It wrecks the roof. The fact that you do not do this is a trust point worth making out loud.

Be honest about roof coatings. A coating or sealant is a high-ticket upsell, often £1,500 to £4,000 and more, and the trade has a reputation problem because some firms push them on people who do not need them and sell benefits that do not hold up. There are jobs where a coating is genuinely worthwhile, and you will learn to spot them. There are many more where it is not. Your reputation is your business, so you sell a coating only when it honestly helps. Chapter 5 and Chapter 12 go deeper on both.

MENTOR MOMENT Years in, the operators who last are not the ones who were cleverest with a pressure washer or boldest on a roof. They are the ones who never had an accident and never sold something a customer did not need. Working at height is the defining risk of this trade. A fall can end your business and your life in a second. Treat every roof as a thing that can hurt you, plan the access before you plan anything else, and you will still be working, and trusted, in ten years. That discipline is the whole moat.

Who this suits, and who it does not

This is honest-list territory, because the wrong fit here is dangerous, not just unprofitable.

It suits you if you are comfortable and disciplined working at height, you are methodical, you are happy to invest in proper access equipment rather than chancing it, you like visible results, and you would rather lose a sale than mis-sell a coating. Physical fitness helps. A steady temperament helps more.

It does not suit you if you are uneasy on a roof, if you would be tempted to skip the harness "just for a quick one", if part of you likes the idea of jet-washing a roof because it looks impressive, or if you are careless with chemicals. None of those are character flaws. They simply mean this particular trade is not for you, and it is far cheaper to know that now than to find out forty feet up.

We mean that. Chapter 2 is a full self-assessment to help you decide honestly, with a scorecard in the Toolkit. There is no shame in deciding this is not your trade.

One more thing on fit, because people get it wrong. You do not need to be fearless on a roof. Fearlessness is dangerous. What you need is respect for the height and the discipline to plan for it every single time. The best operators are not the ones who scramble up without a harness to save five minutes. They are the ones who set the tower up properly, clip on,

and work calmly because they have removed the risk rather than ignored it. If that sounds like a temperament you have, this trade will reward it.

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

What you have bought is three things working together.

This manual is the knowledge: the method, the safety, the pricing, the customers, the growth. Read it in order the first time. Part One sets you up legally and safely. Part Two teaches the craft. Part Three wins the customers. The later parts take you from your first job to a real business.

The 10-file Excel Toolkit is the doing. The self-assessment scorecard (Toolkit 01), the accounting tracker (Toolkit 02), the job database (Toolkit 03), the pricing calculator (Toolkit 04), the quote template (Toolkit 08), the 90-day checklist (Toolkit 10) and more. Where a chapter points you to a Toolkit file, use it. They save you building everything from scratch.

The 60-prompt AI Library does the writing and thinking work: drafting quotes, writing the honest coating explainer for a customer, approaching estate agents, producing your social posts. Chapter 13 shows you how to get the most from it.

Use all three together and the manual stops being something you read and becomes something you run a business with.

What success looks like in one year

Picture Brett twelve months on from that Monday in Stafford.

He is registered, insured with proper working-at-height cover, and properly equipped. He has a scaffold tower, roof ladders, a harness system, a softwash setup and a van that carries it all. He has a folder of more than a hundred before-and-after photos and a Google profile thick with five-star reviews from people whose roofs went from green to clean.

Through spring, summer and autumn he is rarely short of work. A good week is three or four jobs averaging £400 each. He has a handful of softwash re-treatment customers booked to come back. Two local estate agents send him pre-sale roofs because his photos make their listings look better. He has cleared his start-up costs many times over and is deciding whether to take on his first employee, which means thinking hard about training someone to work safely at height.

He has never had an accident. He has turned down two coating jobs that were not worth doing, and one of those customers became his best source of referrals precisely because he was honest.

That is a realistic year, built on the safe, honest, well-reviewed work this whole manual is about.

A fair word before we go on. 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. If by the end of Chapter 2 you know this is not your trade, email refunds@theworksco.co.uk for a same-day refund and keep the materials with our blessing.

But if you looked at Brett's two photos and thought "I could do that, and I could do it properly", then keep reading. Chapter 2 helps you decide for certain whether this is for you. Then we set the business up safely, and we get you on your first roof.

Is This For You?

It is a Wednesday morning in Telford, and Yvette is standing on the pavement of a quiet close, looking up at a semi-detached roof she has agreed to clean. The north-facing slope is furred green and black with moss, the way they always are around here. The job is a good one. The homeowner has agreed £380 for a manual moss removal and a softwash treatment, and Yvette knows she can do it well.

But she is not on the roof yet. She is on the ground, looking. She is checking where her ladder will foot, whether the gutter will take a roof ladder's weight, where the power cable runs, and what the drop is on the far side. She has done this hundreds of times. She still does it every single time, because the day she stops looking is the day something goes wrong. The work pays £380. A fall pays nothing and can take everything.

That pause on the pavement is the whole job, really. This chapter is about whether you are the kind of person who takes that pause seriously, or the kind who is already halfway up the ladder in their head. One of those people builds a roof-cleaning business that lasts. The other gets hurt, or gets a reputation, or both.

Let us be honest with each other about which one you are.

The one thing this trade is really about

Most trade manuals open with a list of qualities: hard-working, organised, good with people. Those things matter, and we will get to them. But this trade has one quality that sits above all the others, and pretending otherwise would be dishonest.

You will spend your working life at height.

Roof cleaning means being on, beside, or above a roof — most of a domestic property's two or three storeys up — for hours at a time, in changing weather, often alone. Falls from height are a leading cause of workplace deaths in the UK. That is not a scare tactic; it is the plain fact that shapes everything in this business, and it is why the law (the **Work at Height Regulations 2005**, which we cover properly in Chapter 3) treats this work the way it does.

So before we talk about whether you are organised or good at marketing, we have to talk about this. A fall can end you. Not "set you back", not "cost you a few weeks" — end you. The operators who last in this trade are the ones who hold that thought close and let it make them careful, every roof, every day. The ones who get hurt are usually the ones who got comfortable and stopped looking.

If reading that makes you more determined to do it properly, good. If it makes you uneasy in a way you cannot shake, that is worth listening to as well. Neither answer is wrong. But you need to know which one is yours before you spend a penny on kit.

Green lights: who this suits

Here are the markers that say this trade could genuinely be for you. You do not need every one. But the first should be non-negotiable.

You are comfortable and disciplined at height. Not reckless — disciplined. There is a difference between someone who is happy to climb and someone who is happy to climb *and* still checks the ladder foot, still clips the harness, still refuses the roof that is too wet. The trade needs the second person. If you have worked on roofs, scaffolds, or towers before and found you respected the height without being paralysed by it, that is the strongest green light there is.

You are safety-minded by temperament. Some people read a risk assessment as a box-ticking chore. Others read it as a genuinely useful list of ways to not die. If you are the second kind — if you naturally think "what is the worst that could happen here, and how do I stop it" — you have the single most valuable instinct in this business.

You are methodical. Roof cleaning rewards patience. Manual moss removal is slow, repetitive scraping and brushing. Softwashing is about correct dilution, even application, and letting the biocide do its work over weeks. Rushing either of them either gets you hurt or gets you a poor result. If you like doing a job thoroughly and in order, you will do well.

You are an honest seller. This trade has two well-known temptations to mis-sell, and we will name them plainly in the red flags below. The operators who build a reputation worth having are the ones who tell a customer the truth even when a lie would earn more today. If that is how you already deal with people, it is a real asset here, because reviews and word of mouth drive this business.

You are reasonably fit. You will be carrying ladders and tower sections, climbing, kneeling on slopes, and working with your arms above your head. None of it requires you to be an athlete, but a bad back or a fear of physical work will wear you down quickly.

You can work alone and make your own decisions. A lot of roof cleaning is solo. The weather call — is it too wet, too windy, too icy to be up there safely — is yours to make, and no one is checking. People who can hold a standard when nobody is watching thrive in this trade.

COACH MOMENT

Take ten minutes today and do one honest thing. Find a flat-roofed garage, a sturdy stepladder, or a single-storey extension you can safely reach, and just stand at the edge of that modest height for a few minutes. Notice how your body feels. Are you steady and thinking clearly, or is your stomach turning and your mind already wanting to come down? This is not a test you pass or fail. It is information. Working at two or three storeys for hours is a different thing again, but how you feel at a small height is a useful early signal about how you will feel at a real one. Trust what your body tells you more than what you wish were true.

Red flags: who this does not suit

This is the part most manuals soften. We will not, because in this trade the wrong fit is dangerous, not just disappointing.

You are uneasy with heights and hoping it will pass. Some fears fade with exposure and good training. Others do not, and there is no shame in that. But a person who is genuinely frightened on a roof is a danger to themselves — fear makes you freeze, grip wrong, and make poor decisions in the exact moments you need to be calm. If heights frighten you in a deep way, this is not the trade for you, and we would far rather tell you now than after you have spent thousands on equipment.

You are tempted to cut safety corners to save time or money. Proper access equipment is slower to set up and more expensive than a single ladder propped against a gutter. If your instinct when you read that is "I will just be careful and skip the tower" — stop. That instinct is the one that kills people in this trade. Every shortcut at height is a bet with your life as the stake, and the odds are worse than they look because the day it goes wrong is rarely the day you expected.

You would high-pressure jet wash a roof. It looks fast and dramatic, and a customer who does not know better might even ask for it. But blasting a roof with a pressure washer strips the protective granules off the tiles and forces water underneath them, causing damage and leaks. A proper operator never does this. If you would reach for the pressure washer because it is quicker and the customer is happy, you do not yet have the standards this trade needs. (We cover the right methods — manual removal and softwashing — in Chapter 5.)

You would mis-sell a roof coating. Roof coatings and sealants are the big-ticket upsell of this industry, often £1,500 to £4,000 and up. Some are genuinely worthwhile; many add little real value, and some firms push them hard on customers who do not need them. If the size of that number tempts you to sell a coating you would not buy for your own mum's roof, this trade will reward you for a while and then ruin your name. Reputation is the asset in roof cleaning. Mis-selling spends it.

You are careless with chemicals. Softwashing uses a sodium-hypochlorite-based biocide. Handled correctly, it is a safe and effective treatment. Handled carelessly, it harms plants, pets, people, and drains, and it ruins your relationship with the customer whose borders you have killed. If you are the sort to skip the gloves, eyeball the dilution, and not think about where the runoff goes, you will cause harm. COSHH (covered in Chapter 3) exists for a reason.

If two or more of these red flags feel like you, please read the refund paragraph at the end of this chapter before you read any further.

MENTOR MOMENT

I want to tell you about the operator I respect most in this trade, and it is not the one with the most jobs or the flashiest van. It is the one who has worked roofs for eleven years and never had an accident and never had a complaint upheld against him. When you ask him his secret, he says something that sounds boring: "I turn down about one job in twenty." He turns down the roofs where the access is genuinely unsafe, the days when the weather is wrong, and the coating jobs where the customer does not need it. Every one of those refusals cost him money on the day. Together, over eleven years, they built the only thing that actually compounds in this business — a clean record and a name people trust. The cowboys are loud and busy for a season or two. The careful, honest operators are still here a decade later, fully booked on referrals, and sleeping fine. Decide now which of those you want to be, because the choice is made one roof at a time.

The honest middle ground

Most people reading this will not be a perfect green light or a clear red flag. You might be fit, methodical, and honest, but you have never worked at height and do not yet know how you will feel up there. That is a completely reasonable place to be.

Here is the honest answer for you: you can find out, but find out safely and find out before you commit fully. Get proper working-at-height training (Chapter 3 and Chapter 14 cover this). Spend time on a tower and a roof ladder under instruction. Start with single-storey and low, simple roofs before you take on a steep two-storey. Pay close attention to how you actually feel and perform once the novelty has worn off and it is just you, the height, and a long afternoon's scraping.

Comfort at height can be built. A respect for the danger should never be lost. The people who do best are the ones who become calm and capable up there *without* ever becoming casual about it.

The self-assessment scorecard

To make this concrete, the toolkit includes a self-assessment scorecard (**Toolkit 01**). It walks you honestly through the questions this chapter raises — your comfort and discipline at height, your temperament around safety, your fitness, your honesty as a seller, your tolerance for working alone and making weather calls, and your willingness to invest properly in access equipment rather than cutting corners.

Score yourself truthfully. The scorecard is not there to flatter you into buying kit. It is there to give you a clear, private read on whether this is a trade you should build, build with some training first, or walk away from with no hard feelings. Use it before you spend serious money. The half hour it takes is the cheapest risk assessment you will ever do.

A rough guide to reading your score:

Where you land	What it suggests
Strong on height, safety and honesty	A genuine green light — read on and start planning
Strong on most, untested at height	Promising — get trained, start low, reassess honestly
Two or more red flags	Be very cautious; this may not be your trade
Frightened of heights or drawn to corner-cutting	This is not the right trade for you, and that is fine

What the money looks like, honestly

Because you are weighing this up, you deserve the real numbers, not a fantasy. Roof cleaning is a high-value, visible-result trade, which means fewer jobs at a higher price than most cleaning work.

Run part-time, around other commitments, this trade realistically earns **£12,000 to £25,000 a year**. Full-time as a solo operator, you are looking at **£30,000 to £60,000 a year** — the high price per job offsets the fact that you do fewer of them. Build a team with proper access equipment, and revenue can reach **£80,000 to £200,000 and beyond**.

Starting costs run **£1,000 to £4,000**, weighted heavily towards the access and safety kit that keeps you alive — roof ladders, a scaffold tower or a proper fall-protection system, plus a softwash sprayer, biocide, scrapers, brushes, poles, PPE, and a vehicle to carry it. We break the kit down in Chapter 4. The thing to take from it now is that the safety equipment is not the corner to save money on. It is the reason you go home each night.

Those numbers are real and they are good. But notice that every bracket assumes you are working at height safely and often. The money in this trade is inseparable from the risk. That is exactly why this chapter exists.

The refund paragraph, and we mean it

If, reading this, you have realised this is not your trade — perhaps heights unsettle you, perhaps the safety discipline feels like more than you want to take on — then we have done our job, and you should not spend another minute feeling you have wasted £47.

We offer a same-day, no-friction refund. Email refunds@theworksco.co.uk and the £47 comes back, no questions, no forms, no hard feelings. Keep the manual, the toolkit, and the prompt library — they are yours regardless. And honestly, 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.

We say that because the worst outcome for everyone is a person who is uneasy at height talking themselves into a trade that needs people who are not. That serves no one. A clear, early "this is not for me" is a good result, and a brave one.

But if you have read all of this — the height, the discipline, the honesty, the real money and the real risk — and you find yourself more sure rather than less, then you may well be exactly the kind of operator this trade is short of: safe, methodical, honest, and ready to do it properly.

If that is you, good. Let us get you set up legally and safely. In Chapter 3, we build the foundations — the business structure, the Work at Height Regulations that govern everything you do, COSHH for your biocide, the insurance that protects you, and the honest standards that will become your reputation. The pause on the pavement starts here.

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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