

A WORKS CO. MANUAL · NO. 01

The Window Cleaning Works

Starting, running, and growing a window cleaning business in the UK in 2026.

The Window Cleaning Works

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WHAT THIS MANUAL IS — AND IS NOT

This manual is a detailed account of how a window cleaning business works, written with care and published in good faith. It is information, not professional advice. Three things to hold onto:

- **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.
- **The work is physical and carries real risk.** Ladders, water, glass, height and cleaning chemicals all demand care. Follow the safety guidance in this manual, the Health and Safety Executive's published guidance, and your equipment manufacturers' instructions. You are responsible for working safely.

Suppliers and products are named because working operators use and rate them, not as paid endorsements. Where The Works Co. may earn a commission on a recommendation, it costs you nothing and never decides what we recommend.

UPDATES AND THE REFUND PROMISE

Updates and new editions are included in your purchase — the current edition is always at theworksco.co.uk/library. And if this manual is not what you hoped, email hello@theworksco.co.uk and we will refund you in full, the same day. No questions, no friction. Keep the files.

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BEFORE CHAPTER ONE

Your first weekend.

You do not need to read a hundred and seventy pages 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 it.

1 Saturday morning

Read Chapter 2 — the honest gut-check — then the patch section of Chapter 6. Pick three candidate streets.

3 Saturday evening

Set up WhatsApp Business and claim your Google Business Profile (Chapters 6 and 7). An hour, once, free.

5 Sunday afternoon

Knock fifty doors or drop a hundred leaflets, using the scripts in Chapter 6.

2 Saturday afternoon

Order the kit: the £400 water-fed backpack route (Chapter 5) or the £280 traditional kit (Chapter 4).

4 Sunday morning

Walk the patch. Note the house types, and set your base price from Chapter 10 — the worked anchor is £22.

6 Sunday evening

Reply to every enquiry the same day (Chapter 9 shows how speed wins). Book the first cleans.

IF YOU ONLY READ FOUR CHAPTERS

Chapter 2 (is this for you) · Chapter 6 (first customers) · Chapter 10 (pricing) · Chapter 20 (the 90-day plan).
Everything else will be waiting when you need it.

BY SUNDAY NIGHT

A kit on order. A price. A patch. Your first yes — or the fifty conversations that lead to it. Registering with HMRC comes once the money starts (Chapter 3).



PART ONE

Foundations

The trade, the buyer, the setup.



CHAPTER 1 · PART ONE

The Window Cleaning Opportunity

Why this trade. Why now. What is possible.

IN THIS CHAPTER

This chapter shows you why window cleaning is one of the last honest, modern, profitable trades you can start this week — and what the business looks like once it is running.

- What window cleaners across three income brackets actually earn
- Why recurring revenue makes a round an asset that pays out for years
- How the trade compares to a £19,000–£40,000 cleaning franchise
- Who this trade suits, and who it honestly does not
- How to use the rest of this manual, the Toolkit, and the Prompt Library

Somewhere in your town, this morning, a man you've never met cleaned the windows of fourteen houses before lunch. He earned £196. He drove home for a sandwich. He went back out and did seven more. Cash in his account by Friday. No boss. No commute beyond the radius of his van. No timesheet.

He is not a special man. He did not inherit money. He did not go to university. Six years ago he was a delivery driver who'd had enough. What he had was a £400 backpack water-fed pole system, a leaflet drop, and the patience to knock on doors until somebody said yes. That was it. Today his round is worth around £80,000 a year. He works four days a week. He takes August off.

We are telling you about him because everything in this manual flows from one simple idea: window cleaning is one of the last honest, modern, profitable trades you can start this week with the contents of one car boot and the courage to begin.

Why window cleaning, why now

THE OPPORTUNITY

£400 → £80,000

From one starter kit to a mature round

A £400 water-fed backpack system, a leaflet drop, and the patience to knock on doors — the arc this manual is built around.

There are flashier business ideas. AI tools. E-commerce stores. Drop-shipped supplements. Most of them require a marketing budget, a tech stack, a customer acquisition cost, and a year of losses before you find out whether the idea was any good.

Window cleaning requires a bucket and a doorbell. Every house in your area has windows. Roughly one in three of those households would, if asked at the right moment by the right person, happily pay £15 to £25 a month to never have to think about cleaning them again. The job takes you fifteen to forty minutes. There are no inventory costs. There is no shipping. There is no marketplace taking a cut. The customer pays you directly, on the day, and most of them pay forever.

That last word — forever — is the whole secret. Most jobs are paid once. A window cleaning customer, once won, pays you every four to six weeks for years. The average UK domestic customer stays on a round for seven years. Win one customer well and you've built an asset that pays out, on average, around £2,000 of revenue across its life. Win two hundred of them and you have what the trade calls a round — a small, dignified, profitable business that runs on rhythm, weather, and the willingness to show up.

The numbers — what window cleaners actually earn

Most articles online give you averages. Averages are useless. Here are three real income brackets, drawn from the published figures of trade associations, working operators' own accounts, and industry surveys, with what each looks like in practice.

Bracket	Customers	Days worked	Annual revenue	Margin
One: part-time round	40–60 regular customers	1–2 days a week	£8,000–£18,000	70–80%
Two: full-time solo operator	150–250 domestic, plus a handful of commercial	4–5 days a week	£45,000–£75,000	65–75%
Three: small operator with employees	2–4 vans, 3–6 staff, domestic + commercial	—	£150,000–£400,000 (owner take-home £60,000–£140,000)	25–40%

Bracket one: the part-time round

Forty to sixty regular customers, worked one or two days a week. Most operators in this bracket are running the round alongside a job, around childcare, or as a deliberate semi-retirement. Annual revenue lands between £8,000 and £18,000. Margin after kit, fuel, and insurance is typically 70 to 80 percent. This is the bracket most readers of this manual will reach within their first six months. It is not a glamorous number. But it is income the operator controls, paid into an account they own, with no manager to ask permission of.

Bracket two: the full-time solo operator

A hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty domestic customers, plus a handful of commercial accounts. Worked four to five days a week. Annual revenue between £45,000 and £75,000, with the upper end typically reflecting a mature round in an affluent area with strong commercial bolt-ons. Margin remains 65 to 75 percent because at this scale, costs grow more slowly than revenue. This is what the trade quietly considers the sweet spot. A single van, a single operator, work that finishes by mid-afternoon, weekends free, and an income that comfortably exceeds the UK median full-time salary.

Bracket three: the small operator with employees

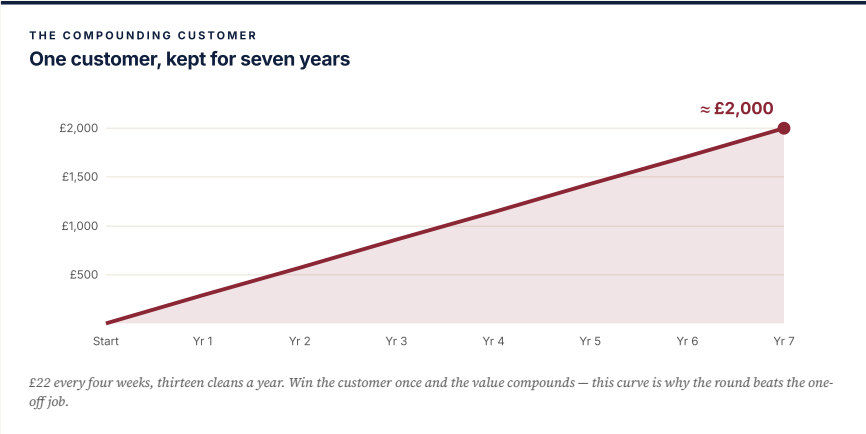
Two to four vans, three to six staff, a mix of domestic rounds and commercial contracts. Annual revenue between £150,000 and £400,000. Margin compresses to 25 to 40 percent because of wages, vehicles, and insurance, but the absolute take-home for the owner is between £60,000 and £140,000 — and crucially, the owner is no longer the person on the pole.

We will show you exactly how to move between these brackets in Chapters 16 and 17. For now, the point is this: you are not entering a trade with a glass ceiling. You are entering one with a clear, well-trodden path from £800 a month to £100,000 a year, and you decide when and whether to walk it.

COACH MOMENT

The number that matters most is not the top one. It's the first one. If, six months from now, you are quietly bringing in £1,200 a month from a part-time round, the rest of this manual becomes a series of choices about how far you want to push it. Most people never get to that first £1,200. Be one of the ones who does.

The recurring revenue advantage



A plumber finishes a boiler installation and goes home. The job is done. To earn next week's money, the plumber has to find next week's customer, quote next week's job, and hope it lands.

A window cleaner finishes a house and adds it to a schedule. Four weeks later, the same house. Six weeks later, the same house. A round, once built, runs itself in cycles. Your job stops being to find customers and starts being to keep them happy, route them efficiently, and add a few more whenever you have capacity.

This is the same business model that makes Netflix a \$200 billion company, Spotify worth \$80 billion, and almost every B2B software business worth more than its hardware competitor. Recurring revenue is the most valuable revenue on earth. It is also, quietly, the model your local window cleaner has been running for forty years without anyone in Silicon Valley noticing.

Practically, what this means for you: every customer you win adds a permanent line of income. Lose your phone, lose your laptop, miss a day to flu — the round is still there. The money still comes in. The customers still expect you next month. It is the closest thing to a self-renewing wage that exists in the world of self-employment.

The franchise comparison

Walk into any high-street bank branch in the United Kingdom and ask for a small business loan to start a domestic cleaning business. They will sit you down with a brochure for a franchise. Molly Maid, perhaps. Or Merry Maids. Or one of half a dozen others. The brochure will be glossy. The pitch will be slick. The total investment, by the time you have finished signing, will be somewhere between £19,000 and £40,000.

For that money, you get a brand, a territory, a manual, a training course, a supplier list, a pricing model, and a phone number on the corporate website. Strip away the brand and the phone number, and 70 percent of what you have just paid for is the manual. The system. The playbook. The thing that takes a smart person who has never done the trade and turns them, within ninety days, into someone who can run it.

We built The Works Co. because we believe that playbook should not cost twenty thousand pounds. It should cost twenty-nine. It should be downloadable in the next ten minutes. It should be specific to the trade you actually want to do, in the country you actually live in, in the year you actually live in. This is that manual.

MENTOR MOMEN

T There is nothing wrong with franchises. For some people, in some trades, the brand recognition pays for itself. But you should know exactly what you are buying when you sign that contract — and you should know that the alternative, the same playbook without the badge, has always existed. We are simply the first to write it down properly.

Who this trade suits — and who it doesn't

We have a rule at The Works Co.: every chapter that promises you something must also tell you the truth about what it costs. Window cleaning is no different. Here is the honest picture.

This trade is for you if

- You are comfortable being outside in weather most people complain about. Not all weather — we will teach you when to call it a day. But most.
- You can talk to a stranger on a doorstep without your voice shaking. Or you are willing to learn — most people who think they can't, can, after about ten doors.
- You like the idea of finishing the working day before three in the afternoon and not thinking about work again until tomorrow.
- You are willing to put your hands into cold water in February. Repeatedly.
- You want a business that produces visible, immediate, satisfying results. A dirty window. A clean window. A nodded thanks. A bank transfer.

This trade is not for you if

- You are looking for a way to make a lot of money without effort. There is no such trade. The people who tell you there is are selling you the dream, not the business.
- You cannot bring yourself to ask a stranger for money in exchange for a service. This is a learnable skill — but it is the core skill, and we will be honest if you find it overwhelming.
- You have a genuine fear of heights that even a water-fed pole, which keeps your feet on the ground, will not solve. Possible, but uncommon.
- You hate the idea of a business that depends on you turning up. This is a hands-on trade for the first one to three years. After that, you can step back. But not on day one.

If you read those lists and felt yourself nodding through the first set and shaking your head through the second — keep reading. You are exactly the person this manual was written for. If you read them and felt the opposite, we owe you the next sentence: stop here, ask for a refund, and we will return your money the same day, no questions asked. We would rather you spent the £47 on a coffee with someone you love than on a manual for a trade that wasn't yours.

How to use the rest of this manual

This manual is roughly 180 pages long. You will not read it in one sitting, and we do not expect you to. Read it in two passes.

The first pass: front to back, fast

Two evenings, maybe three. Don't take notes. Don't action anything yet. Just read it through and let the shape of the business form in your head. You will finish that first pass with a clear sense of whether you want to do this — and which version of the business (part-time, full-time, eventual employer) is the one you're aiming for.

The second pass: chapter by chapter, slow

Now we work. Chapter 3 is where you set up the business legally. Chapters 4 and 5 are where you buy your kit. Chapter 6 is the make-or-break chapter — getting your first twenty customers — and we have built it as the longest chapter in the manual for a reason. Spend a week on Chapter 6. Maybe two. It is the difference between a hobby and a livelihood.

From Chapter 10 onwards, the manual becomes a reference. Open it when you need it:

- Pricing question? Chapter 10.
- First commercial enquiry? Chapter 14.
- Thinking about a second van? Chapter 16.
- Curious about drones? Chapter 21.

Throughout the manual, you will see two repeating signposts. Mentor moments are where we step back and give you the perspective we wish someone had given us. Coach moments are where we push you forward. Read them both. They are not filler. They are the bits we would have circled in highlighter if this were a textbook.

The Toolkit and the Prompt Library

Your purchase did not come with just this manual. It came with two companions.

The Toolkit is a set of fifteen editable templates — a pricing calculator, an itemised quote, a P&L, a customer database, a payment tracker, a 90-day action plan, and more. Each is referenced at the moment it becomes useful in the chapter that introduces it. Download them now, before you start. They are listed in Appendix A.

The Prompt Library is a curated set of ninety-five AI prompts. Each one is written so you can copy it into ChatGPT or Claude and use it to do something specific: draft a Google Business Profile description, write a polite payment chase, generate ten Facebook community posts, write a one-paragraph email to a facilities manager. The Library is delivered as a separate document in your bundle, organised by chapter.

We want to be clear: you do not need AI to run a window cleaning business. People have done it for centuries without it. What AI does is compress the time it takes to do every non-cleaning task — quoting, marketing, admin, customer comms — from hours to minutes. The operator who uses the Prompt Library effectively will, on average, find themselves with one extra cleaning day per week. Use it.

What success looks like, in one year

Close your eyes for a second. Picture yourself, twelve months from now. The version of you who took this seriously, did the work, made the mistakes the manual warned about, and recovered from them faster because we warned about them.

It is a Tuesday in February. You have been up since six. By eight you were on the road. By two you have cleaned eleven houses and been paid for eight by direct debit — the others will come in by Friday. You are home for lunch. The kettle is on. Your phone pings with a fresh review on Google. A new enquiry came in on Sunday and you have already booked them for next week. You sit down. You add up the morning. You have made £214 today.

That is a real Tuesday. It is the Tuesday of a working window cleaner with a settled round in 2026. The work is genuine, the income is genuine, the freedom is genuine. None of it is mysterious. All of it is reachable from where you are sitting right now. We are going to walk you there.

THE SHORT VERSION

- Window cleaning starts with a bucket and a doorbell — no marketing budget, no tech stack, no marketplace cut.
- Customers pay forever: the average UK round lasts seven years and one customer is worth around £2,000 over its life.
- Three honest brackets — part-time (£8,000–£18,000), full-time solo (£45,000–£75,000), small employer (£150,000–£400,000) — and no glass ceiling between them.
- The same playbook a franchise charges £19,000–£40,000 for is the thing you are holding now.
- Read it twice: fast front-to-back first, then slow chapter by chapter — and live on Chapter 6.

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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