

Where Do I Start?

Your First Practical Business Step.

01 Name the problem

Start with something you can observe in your business. Use a recent example rather than a broad label such as "marketing" or "organization."

For an owner-operated small service business. Print and write by hand, or use these prompts in your own notes. No account or email required.

1. What is happening?

Finish this sentence: "When _____ happens, I have trouble with _____." Describe one problem you can work on.

2. What do you know so far?

Write one recent example. When did it happen? How often have you noticed it? What did you see or hear? Keep guesses separate from observations.

3. What is the practical effect?

What work gets delayed, repeated, missed, or left uncertain? Who is affected? Choose the effect that matters most to you right now.

Example: "Three estimates I sent last week have no reply. I have not recorded when to follow up, so I keep reopening the same messages." This identifies a follow-up problem; it does not establish why customers have not replied.

If you wrote down several problems, circle one. Leave the others for another worksheet.

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02 Choose a useful next step

Choose an action small enough to finish with the time and resources you have. If a decision is blocked by a missing fact, finding that fact can be the first action.

4. What would useful progress look like?

Describe one visible result. What would be clearer, completed, or easier to check? How will you recognize it? Pick a result you can influence.

5. What is one action you can take?

Write a specific task with a clear finish. What will you do, for which job or customer, and using what you already have?

6. What will make it manageable?

When will you start? How much time will you set aside? What information, person, or permission do you need? If it is too large, shrink the task.

Example: "On Tuesday at 9 a.m., I will spend 20 minutes listing the three open estimates and choosing a next contact date for each. Done means each estimate has a recorded next action."

Check before you act: is this within your authority, and can you try it without creating a cost or commitment you have not considered? If not, make checking that requirement your next action.

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03 Check what changed

Choose the review time before you begin. It should give your action a fair chance to produce something you can observe. For a one-off task, check at completion; for a repeated process, choose a date after the next few relevant jobs.

7. When and how will you check?

Review date or event: _____. What simple evidence will you look at? Use the same kind of observation you wrote on page 1.

8. What happened?

At review time, record what you completed and what changed. If you did not take the action, write what got in the way. One attempt may not explain the cause.

9. What comes next?

Choose: continue the action, change one part, or stop and gather more information. Write your reason and the next review date. If someone else must decide, name the question you will take to them.

Example: "On Friday, I will check whether each open estimate has a next action recorded. If entries are missing, I will check whether the list was hard to find or the task was too large before changing the process."

Leave with one sentence: "On _____, I will _____. I will check _____ on _____. " Write it in the final space above or copy it somewhere you will see it.