

**FINALLY SURFACE**

# The five biggest mistakes new business owners make.

And the five fixes you can use today, each with a tool inside.

## **FIRST, SO WE'RE STRAIGHT WITH EACH OTHER**

This guide will not teach you how to set up a company. Accountants and Companies House have that covered, and they're good at it.

Our lane is what comes after: how to tell your story, sell your thing, and build assets that work while you sleep. That's what we do all day, and that's what these five fixes are about.

From Noel Halligan, founder of Finally Surface and the UK's number one new salon. I made most of these mistakes myself, which is how I know they're the big ones.

## MISTAKE ONE

# You try to do everything.

New business owners become the marketer, the bookkeeper, the salesperson, the deliverer and the tea maker, all before lunch. Everything gets half done, and the thing you're actually brilliant at gets the leftovers.

The fix: draw your business as a team, even though every seat is currently you. The moment the jobs have names, you can see which seat you should keep, which to systemise, and which to hand over first.

### USE THIS TODAY: THE FIVE SEATS

Draw five boxes and write a name in each, even if every name is yours:

1. The Face: who promotes it and gets known for it.
2. The Organiser: who runs the diary, the money in, the follow ups.
3. The Seller: who has the conversations that turn into customers.
4. The Builder: who makes the thing or delivers the service.
5. The Carer: who keeps customers happy enough to come back.

Now circle the one seat only you can sit in. That's your job. Everything else is a seat you'll one day fill.

## MISTAKE TWO

# You don't know what you're actually good at.

Most people build a business around what they think they should sell, not the thing people already thank them for. The gold is usually something you find so easy you don't even count it as a skill.

The fix: stop guessing and get interviewed. You can't read the label from inside the jar, so let someone, or something, ask you the questions.

### USE THIS TODAY: THE TEN QUESTIONS PROMPT

Paste this into ChatGPT or Claude, then answer honestly:

*“Ask me ten questions, one at a time, about my work, what people thank me for, what I find easy that others find hard, and what people always come to me for. Then tell me the three things I'm best at, and the one thing somebody would pay me for first.”*

Ten minutes. Most people learn something about themselves they've never said out loud.

## MISTAKE THREE

# You don't know your numbers.

Not knowing your numbers doesn't make them go away, it just makes them surprise you. Most new businesses don't fail from a bad idea; they fail because nobody worked out how much the idea costs to run.

The fix: you only need three numbers to start, and they fit on the back of an envelope.

### USE THIS TODAY: THE ENVELOPE SUMS

1. **Fixed costs:** what goes out every month whether you sell or not (tools, insurance, subscriptions, any wages).
2. **Money kept per sale:** your price, minus what it costs you to deliver one sale.
3. **Break even:** fixed costs divided by money kept per sale. That's how many sales a month keep the lights on.

If you can't fill in those three numbers yet, that's your homework before you spend another pound.

## MISTAKE FOUR

# Nobody understands what you do.

You know your thing inside out, so you explain it from the inside, and people nod politely and buy nothing. If a stranger can't repeat what you do in one sentence, you don't have a message yet, you have a description.

The fix: tell it like a book. Every business that people understand has the same three parts, and you already own all three.

### USE THIS TODAY: THE COVERS

1. **The front cover:** the problem you solve, in one line a stranger could repeat.
2. **The back cover:** where you came from, what you do, and where you're going. Your origin, your mission, your vision.
3. **The author bio:** who you are, said the way your best customer would say it.

Write all three, badly, today. Badly written is fixable. Unwritten isn't. (Digging these out of people in a single day is literally our job, so we can promise the digging works.)

## MISTAKE FIVE

# You build alone.

Your first customers are not hiding behind an advert. They're sitting in someone else's business: the people who already serve your future customers and don't compete with you. Most new owners never ask, because asking feels like begging. It isn't. Done right, you're offering them something.

The fix: send five messages this week to businesses one step away from yours. Lead with what you'll send them, not what you want.

### USE THIS TODAY: THE PARTNER MESSAGE

*"Hi, I'm [name]. I run a small business doing [your thing]. I think we look after the same kind of people without competing. I'd love to send some of my customers your way, and have a chat about what your customers might need from someone like me. Fancy a coffee?"*

Five messages, one coffee, one partner. Partners send customers for free, forever, and most businesses never ask.

## ONE LAST THING

# The toolkit we actually use.

You don't need expensive software, you need a small kit you actually open. This is ours, the same one that runs Finally Surface:

### THE FINALLY SURFACE KIT

**Notion** for the business book: every decision written down in one place.

**Claude** for thinking, writing and building alongside you.

**Canva** for anything that needs to look good.

**CapCut** for cutting video for socials.

**Netlify** for putting your page on the internet, free to start.

All of it together costs less than a tank of fuel each month.

## Ready to stop circling?

If reading this stirred something, there's a two minute scorecard at [finalysurface.com](https://finalysurface.com). Nine questions, a straight answer about whether you're ready, and no sales call at the end of it, ever. The price is on the website and the story is yours either way.

**It's time to Finally Surface.**