HAF

THE HAF COURIER PLAYBOOK

Your first 3–5 customers

Five short lessons for new couriers and owner-drivers.

BUILT BY COURIERS, FOR COURIERS.

START HERE

YOU DON'T NEED 100 CUSTOMERS

Here's the truth most people won't tell you: you don't need 100 customers. You need 3 to 5 good ones who book you every week. That's what turns a van into a business.

This course is five short lessons. Each one gives you one job to do. Work through them over two weeks, and tick things off on your checklist as you go.

1. **Get set up properly** — so you can actually take paid work
2. **Price it properly** — so you get paid for every mile
3. **Your top 50** — who to go after, an AI prompt to build your list, what to say, and how to show them online
4. **The first job is an audition** — turning one job into ten
5. **From one-offs to regulars** — your 3–5 weekly customers

YOUR SET-UP CHECKLIST

Every step in this course is on one tick-off list, with links to everything you need — HMRC, DVLA, insurance documents, your HAF account and more. It remembers your progress.

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LESSON 1

GET SET UP PROPERLY

TODAY'S JOB

Make sure you can actually take paid work before you chase a single customer.

Paid deliveries need the right cover. Ordinary van insurance won't pay out if something goes wrong on a paid job. You need:

- **Hire & reward insurance** — covers you driving for money
- **Goods in transit** — covers what you're carrying
- **Public liability** — covers damage or injury to other people or property

Then sort your business. Most couriers start as a sole trader registered with HMRC; some set up a limited company. Either way, open a separate bank account for courier money and keep your receipts and mileage from day one.

Know your van: its size, load length and payload (the weight it can legally carry). If it's over 3.5 tonnes, you need an operator's licence too.

And get your kit together: ratchet straps, blankets, a sack truck, gloves, hi-vis, boots, a phone mount and charger.

It's all on your checklist, section by section, with the links you need.

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LESSON 2

PRICE IT PROPERLY OR DON'T TAKE IT

The fastest way to go broke as a courier is to be busy and cheap.

> **TODAY'S JOB**
> **Work out what a mile actually costs you.**

Here's an example. **Use your own numbers** — yours will be different.

Diesel at £1.45 a litre, van doing 30 miles per gallon	**22p a mile**
Tyres, servicing and wear	**10p a mile**
Insurance and van finance: £400 a month over 2,000 miles	**20p a mile**
Cost per mile, before you've paid yourself	**52p a mile**

So a 40-mile job costs about **£20.80** just to run the van. If it takes two hours and you want £15 an hour for your time, that's another **£30**. You're at **£50.80** before any profit.

Now set three numbers and stick to them:

1. **A minimum job price** — no job goes out below it
2. **A per-mile rate** for longer runs
3. **Waiting time** — agree how long is free (say 15 minutes) and what you charge after

Add extra for urgent, evening and weekend work.

If a job doesn't cover the miles home, it isn't priced. It's guessed.

LESSON 3

YOUR TOP 50: WHO MOVES THINGS?

Customers don't come from hoping. They come from a list. And the best customers are often the ones other couriers never think of.

TODAY'S JOB

Build a list of 50 local businesses that move things every week.

MANUFACTURERS

Engineering and machine shops, metal fabricators, joiners, plastics and packaging makers. When a part is late, a whole line stops, and they'll pay to get it there today.

TRADE & BUILDING

Builders' merchants, plumbing and electrical wholesalers, tool hire, glass and glazing firms, kitchen, bathroom and flooring showrooms.

MOTOR TRADE

Motor factors, garages, body shops, tyre centres and car dealers. They're always waiting on parts.

FOOD & DRINK

Bakeries, caterers, butchers, breweries, distilleries and food producers supplying cafés and shops.

SHOPS & ONLINE SELLERS

Furniture and bed shops, appliance stores, independent shops and online sellers who post every day.

PRINT & EVENTS

Printers, sign makers, exhibition stand builders and event companies. Their deadlines are fixed, and their hours are often odd.

Think outside the box. Ask yourself who loses money when something is late. Then look at the ones most couriers miss:

- **Dental and optical labs**: small, urgent work going back and forth every day
- **Auction houses and antique dealers**: buyers need items collected and delivered
- **Letting agents and property developers**: keys, furniture and flat-pack jobs
- **Garden centres and plant nurseries**: bulky, seasonal deliveries
- **IT repair and office suppliers**: kit going out to businesses fast
- **Removal firms and other couriers**: overflow work they can't fit in

LET AI BUILD YOUR LIST

You don't have to find 50 businesses by hand. A free AI assistant like ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot or Claude can do the first draft in a couple of minutes. Turn on its web search if it has one.

Copy the prompt below, fill in the **orange bits**, and paste it in:

YOUR AI PROMPT

I'm a self-employed courier with a **[your van, e.g. medium van]** based in **[your town or postcode]**. I want to win regular local delivery work.

Find me the top 50 real businesses within **[10]** miles of **[your town or postcode]** that are most likely to need same-day or regular deliveries. Include a mix of manufacturers, engineering firms, trade and builders' merchants, wholesalers, showrooms, the motor trade, food and drink producers, printers, labs and event companies, plus a few less obvious ones most couriers would miss.

For each business give me: name, type of business, area or street, website or phone number, what they probably need moving, and a score from 1 to 5 for how often they're likely to need a courier.

Only include businesses you can find online. Sort the list from highest score to lowest, put it in a table I can copy into a spreadsheet, and flag any you're not sure are still trading.

Then try these follow-ups:

- "Give me 10 more that are less obvious."
- "Which of these are on the same industrial estate, so I can visit them in one morning?"
- "Write me a short, friendly message to introduce myself to [business name]."

Check before you go. AI gets things wrong, and some businesses will have moved or closed. Look each one up on Google Maps before you visit, and cross off any that don't look right.

FIVE A DAY

TODAY'S JOB

Contact 5 businesses from your list today, and 5 more every day after.

Start with the ones scored 4 or 5 that sit inside your patch, so you're not burning miles to get there. Walking in beats emailing every time. Here's what to say:

> *"Hi, I'm [your name], a local courier with my own van. When you've got something that needs to go today — a part, an order, a delivery the big carriers can't do quick enough — I can collect within the hour. Can I leave you my number?"*

Leave your number or your PLNA booking link, so they can book you in seconds.

Keep your list in a spreadsheet or notebook. Next to each business, write the date you contacted them, who you spoke to and what they said. Anyone who says "not right now" goes back on the list for a month's time.

Five a day for two weeks is 50 businesses. That's where your first regulars come from.

SHOW THEM ONLINE HOW YOU HELP

Before a business books you, most will look you up. Your social media is your shop window. Use it to show the jobs you do and the problems you solve, not just that you own a van.

TODAY'S JOB

Set up your pages, and post one job you're proud of this week.

GOOGLE BUSINESS PROFILE

Free, and it's what people see when they search "courier near me". Add photos, your area and hours, and ask happy customers for a review.

FACEBOOK

Make a business page, then join your local business and trades groups. When someone asks "anyone know a man with a van?", be the first to reply.

INSTAGRAM & TIKTOK

Short videos: loading up properly, an early-morning run, a delivery the big carriers couldn't do the same day.

LINKEDIN

Where the managers and buyers are. Connect with people at the businesses on your top 50 list.

What to post:

- **The problem you solved:** "Engineering firm needed a part across town by 2pm. Collected at 12:40, delivered at 1:25."
- **Proof you take care:** the load strapped and protected, and your proof-of-delivery photo
- **Thank-yous:** share a customer's kind words or review, and tag them so their followers see you
- **What you can do for them:** "Same day, local, collected within the hour. Message me."

Ask first. Never post a customer's name, logo, address or goods without their OK. Keep house numbers and number plates out of shot.

Let AI help: ask it for "a week of short posts for a local courier in [your town] that show how I help businesses, with a photo idea for each".

LESSON 4

THE FIRST JOB IS AN AUDITION

Your first job for a new customer isn't really a delivery. It's an audition for the next ten.

> **TODAY'S JOB**
> **Nail the first job, then ask for the next one.**

- Confirm the time window in the morning
- Message before you arrive, and flag any delay early. Customers forgive delays they hear about, not the ones they discover
- Strap and protect the load properly
- Take proof of delivery: a photo of the goods where you left them, plus a name or signature
- Send the customer the proof the moment you drop

Then, the same day, ask:

> *"Thanks for using me today. Is this something you send regularly? I can hold a slot for you every week."*

Most couriers never ask. That's why most couriers never get regulars.

LESSON 5

FROM ONE-OFFS TO 3–5 REGULARS

TODAY'S JOB

Turn your best customers into regulars.

- Look at who booked you more than once. They're your future regulars
- Offer them a set day or time slot each week
- Make booking easy: send them your PLNA booking link, so they can book you without a phone call
- Keep a simple record of every job — miles, time, money. At the end of each week, look at which customers actually paid well. Keep those, and replace the ones that don't

Three to five customers like that, and you've got a business.

When you've got more work than one van can do — or quiet days you want to fill — that's what the HAF network is for. Drivers on HAF KNECT share jobs, cover each other and keep their vans moving.

TICK IT OFF

Go back to your checklist and finish section 7. You've earned it.

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