

# STOP. THINK. SYSTEM.

A Practical Guide for Trade Operations  
Choosing, Implementing, and Mastering the  
Systems Your Business Needs to Thrive

**ERIKA ENTZ**



## ABOUT THIS SAMPLE

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This is a free sample from *Stop. Think. System. — A Practical Guide for Trade Operations*, by Erika Entz. It contains the full Preface and the opening of Chapter 1.

*Stop. Think. System.* is for trade business owners who know their software should be doing more — and aren't sure why it isn't. The problem is almost never the software. It's the thinking that happens before you buy it, implement it, and ask your team to use it.

*You don't know what you don't know. This book  
fixes that.*

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## WHAT'S IN THE FULL BOOK

### **Preface — Before We Begin**

Why this book exists and who it's for

### **Chapter 1 — The \$9 Billion Wake-Up Call**

Why software implementation fails — and it's not the software

### **Chapter 2 — Why 70% Fail**

The real reasons most businesses never get full value from their systems

### **Chapter 3 — Fox vs Hedgehog**

The case for depth over breadth — and why trying everything fails

### **Chapter 4 — Know What You've Got**

Before you buy anything else — audit what you already have

### **Chapter 5 — Map Your Reality**

The treasure hunt you didn't know you needed

**Chapter 6 — The People Side**

Because software doesn't use itself

**Chapter 7 — Choosing the Right System**

A decision you'll live with for years

**Chapter 8 — Implementation That Sticks**

From 'we bought software' to 'this is how we work'

**Chapter 9 — Keeping It Alive**

Because systems are like gardens, not statues

**Chapter 10 — The AI Reality Check**

Neither saviour nor threat — a practical guide

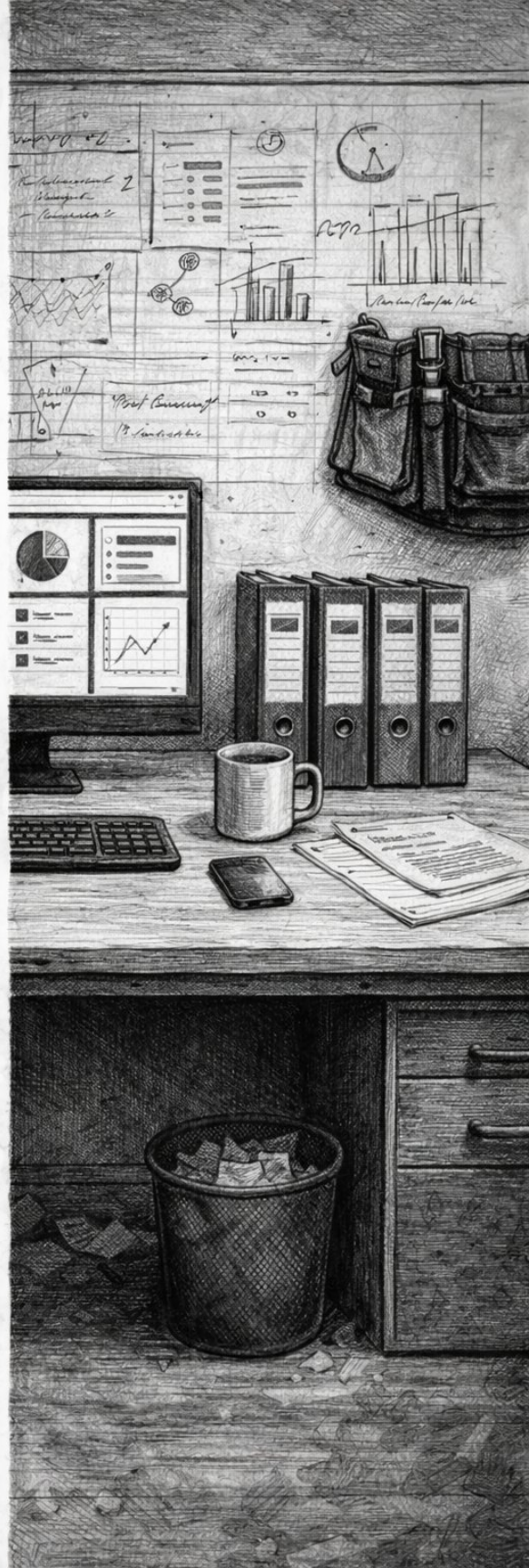
**Conclusion — Stop. Think. System.**

The three words that change everything

PREFACE

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**Before We Begin**



By the time you read this, some of the statistics in this book will already be out of date.

I'm not being pessimistic—I'm being realistic. That's how fast things are moving right now. The software market is evolving monthly. AI capabilities that seemed like science fiction twelve months ago are now standard features. New tools launch every week, each one promising to revolutionise how you run your business.

And that's exactly why I wrote this book.

Not to give you a snapshot of today's technology landscape—that would be outdated before the ink dried. But to give you something far more valuable: a way of thinking about systems, technology, and change that will serve you regardless of what new shiny tool launches next month.

Over the past twenty years, I've worked with trade businesses across Australia, New Zealand, the United States, the United Kingdom and Ireland. Plumbers, electricians, HVAC specialists, fire protection companies—businesses of every size, from solo operators to companies with fifty-plus staff. I've seen the same patterns repeat across different countries, different trades, and different decades.

The businesses that thrive aren't the ones with the newest technology. They're the ones who understand why they're implementing something before they worry about what to implement.

Here's the central question this book will help you answer:

In a world that's changing faster than ever, how do you build systems that last—without getting swept up in every new wave, implementing

something new every year, and exhausting yourself and your team in the process?

The answer isn't to ignore technology. And it's not to chase every new tool either.

The answer is to slow down just enough to speed up. To think before you buy. To master what you have before adding more. To build an ecosystem, not collect a pile of disconnected tools.

That's what this book is about. And while the specific statistics might shift, the principles won't. They're based on how humans actually work, how businesses actually operate, and how change actually sticks.

So yes—by the time you read this, the market might be closer to \$12 billion than \$9 billion. AI might have learned three new tricks. Some software company might have launched something that everyone's talking about.

But the fundamentals? The thinking? The approach that separates businesses that thrive from those that drown in complexity?

That stays the same.

Let's get into it.

— Erika

CHAPTER 1

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**The \$9 Billion  
Wake-Up Call**

*And Why Most Businesses Will Sleep Right Through It*



It's early morning. Still dark outside. You're already in the ute (or pickup, or van—wherever you're reading this from), coffee going cold in the cupholder, mentally running through the day ahead. Three jobs booked. One quote to follow up. That invoice from last week that still hasn't been paid. And somewhere in the back of your mind, a nagging feeling that you're working harder than ever but the business isn't getting any easier to run.

Sound familiar?

Here's the thing: you're not imagining it. The world of trade businesses is shifting under our feet right now, faster than at any point in the last fifty years. And while some businesses are riding this wave to record growth and profitability, others are quietly drowning in complexity, chaos, and tools that promised to help but somehow made everything harder.

This book is about making sure you're in the first group, not the second.

### The Numbers That Should Make You Sit Up

The field service management software market—that's the fancy term for the systems trade businesses use to schedule jobs, manage teams, and keep customers happy—is exploding. We're talking billions of dollars globally, growing at over 12% per year. That's not just growth; that's a gold rush.

And here's what's driving it: trade businesses everywhere are waking up to the fact that the old way—sticky notes, spreadsheets, and keeping everything in the boss's head—simply doesn't scale anymore.

But here's the number that really matters: 70% of system implementations fail to meet their objectives.

Let that sink in for a moment. Seven out of ten businesses that invest time, money, and hope into a new system don't get what they were promised. The software vendors won't tell you this. The consultants who sold you the system definitely won't mention it. But McKinsey's research on digital transformation consistently shows that 70% of change programs fail to meet their objectives—and that number hasn't improved in decades, despite better tools.

Not because the software was bad. Not because the business owners were stupid. But because of how the change was approached.

That's what this book is really about. Not software. Not technology. But the thinking that makes systems stick—or makes them become another expensive disappointment gathering digital dust.

### The Opportunity Hiding in the Chaos

Now, before you think this is all doom and gloom, let me flip the script.

The trades are booming. Seriously booming. Demand for electricians, HVAC technicians, and plumbers is projected to grow significantly faster than average over the next decade. The construction industry needs hundreds of thousands of new workers just to keep up with current demand.

And here's the kicker: there's a skilled labour shortage across the trades right now. That means if you can run an efficient operation, attract good people, and actually deliver on your promises—you're not just surviving, you're winning.

The businesses that figure out how to work smarter (not just harder) are pulling ahead. They're completing more jobs per day. They're keeping their best tradies (I use that term throughout this book—wherever you are, you know who I mean) instead of losing them to competitors. They're actually taking holidays—imagine that.

And they're getting paid faster. The average trade business is owed around \$17,500 in unpaid invoices at any given moment. The businesses that close that gap aren't the ones chasing hardest—they're the ones whose systems make invoicing automatic, immediate, and impossible to ignore.

And here's what I've noticed after twenty years working with trade businesses across five countries: the gap between the businesses that thrive and those that barely survive isn't talent. It isn't luck. It isn't even the specific software they use.

It's systems. And more specifically, it's systems that actually stick.

### The World Is Moving Fast (Are You?)

Here's something that might blow your mind: the vast majority of businesses have already adopted or are planning a digital-first strategy. Global spending on digital transformation is measured in trillions of dollars—and climbing every year.

The software industry is throwing new tools at us faster than ever. AI-powered this. Automated that. 'Revolutionary' solutions that promise to solve all your problems if you just sign up for another monthly subscription.

And this is where most business owners make their first mistake: they get swept up in the wave.

They see a shiny new tool. They buy it. They implement it (sort of). They add another login, another subscription, another thing to manage. Six months later, their tech stack looks like a junk drawer—full of stuff that seemed useful at the time but doesn't actually work together.

Meanwhile, the smart operators are doing something different. They're slowing down to speed up. They're asking better questions before reaching for their credit card. They're building ecosystems instead of collecting tools.

And that's exactly what you're going to learn in this book.

### What This Book Is (And What It Isn't)

Let me be straight with you—I respect your time too much to waffle.

This book isn't going to tell you which software to buy. I'm not sponsored by anyone, and honestly, the specific tool matters way less than how you use it. I've seen businesses succeed brilliantly with simple systems and fail spectacularly with expensive ones.

This book isn't going to give you a magic formula that transforms your business overnight. Anyone who promises that is lying to you. Real change takes time—but it doesn't have to be painful if you approach it right.

What this book will do is give you a framework for thinking about systems that actually works. A way to evaluate what you've already got before you buy more. A method for bringing your team along instead of dragging them kicking and screaming. And a reality check on where AI fits in—because it's neither the saviour nor the threat that most people think it is.

Most importantly, this book is about building a business that feels as good to run as it looks on paper. Because what's the point of growing revenue if you're exhausted, your team is frustrated, and you've forgotten why you started this thing in the first place?

### A Different Way Forward

Imagine this: Six months from now, you walk into your business and things just... work. Jobs are scheduled without drama. Your team knows what they're doing and why. Information flows where it needs to go. You're not chasing invoices or apologising to customers for dropped balls.

Not because you bought some magical software. But because you built something better: a system that fits **YOUR** business, that your people actually use, and that grows with you instead of holding you back.

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*Chapter 1 continues in the full book...*

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## **Want to Read More?**

Stop. Think. System. is the complete practical guide for trade business owners who are ready to stop guessing about software and start building systems that actually work — for their business, their team and their life.

**COMING SOON**

Register your interest and be first to know when it launches.

[erikaentz.com](http://erikaentz.com)

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