

CHAPTER 1

MEMORIES OF THE FIRST BUILD



Looking back, I see how all these issues were interconnected. The chaos in the back office spilled over into the field, creating a ripple effect that touched every part of the business. Poor financial management led to cash flow problems, which made it harder to pay vendors and meet deadlines. Missed deadlines eroded trust with clients, which made it harder to win new jobs. It was a vicious cycle, and I was too inexperienced to break it.

The final blow came when I couldn't make payroll. I had always promised myself I'd take care of my team, but that week, I couldn't deliver. Watching them walk away, knowing I had let them down, was one of the hardest moments of my life.

That was the day I knew the business needed a complete overhaul. But it was also the day I realized something had to change—starting with me.

When I think back on that remodel job, I can still feel the sting of failure. What started as a simple kitchen renovation spiraled into a mess of delays and extra costs. The client had asked for a few changes—moving the sink to a different wall, adding recessed lighting in the living room—and I naively said, “Sure, no problem.” I didn’t charge for the changes up front because, honestly, I didn’t know how. I was afraid they’d think I was nickel-and-diming them, so I told myself I’d “figure it out later.”

Later never came. Instead, my crew was left scrambling to implement last-minute changes without a clear plan, while I was busy trying to juggle materials we didn’t budget for and subcontractors who were annoyed about the shifting schedule. The homeowner, understandably, grew frustrated. By the time the project wrapped up, they were so fed up they refused to refer me to anyone. They even posted a scathing review online.

But the biggest hit wasn’t my reputation—it was my finances. That job ended up costing me \$8,000 out of pocket, money I didn’t have to lose. And the kicker? I didn’t even know how bad it was until weeks later, when my bookkeeper—a part-time one I’d hired through a friend—sent me an email asking if I’d forgotten to send her some receipts. Turns out, I wasn’t just bad at tracking expenses—I was completely flying blind. I was signing checks and approving purchases without any clue where the business stood financially.

These weren’t isolated incidents. The more I look back, the more I see how the small, day-to-day oversights snowballed

into something bigger. Take my crew, for example. They were hard workers, but I didn't always have the right people in the right roles. I had one guy I'd hired because he was cheap, but his mistakes on-site cost me triple what I saved on his hourly rate. And then there was the time I lost a bid on a project I really wanted because I'd priced it so low, the client assumed there was no way we could do quality work. At the time, I thought I was "being competitive." Now I know I was just desperate.

What I didn't understand then—and what took me years to realize—is how deeply these failures affected me. It wasn't just about the money or the reputation; it was about how much of myself I had tied to this business. This wasn't just my job—it was part of my *identity*. So, when things started falling apart, it felt like I was falling apart *with* them.

There were nights I couldn't sleep, lying in bed with my mind racing over every mistake. I'd replay conversations with angry clients, mentally rewriting them to go differently. I'd think about my crew and the families who depended on those paychecks. And worst of all, I'd think about my own family—the wife and kids who were counting on me to make this work.

But no matter how hard I worked, it felt like I was running in quicksand. Every step forward was swallowed by another problem. I didn't know how to fix it, but I also didn't know how to admit that I couldn't. Instead, I buried myself in more work, thinking if I just pushed harder, I could dig my way out. Spoiler alert: *that's not how it works*.

It all came to a head one Friday afternoon. Payroll was due once more, and I didn't have enough in the account to cover it. I spent the morning on the phone, trying to get

payments from clients who were late, but most of them had valid reasons for holding off. One guy said his bank was closed for a holiday. Another said he was waiting on a draw from his lender. A couple just didn't answer the phone.

By noon, it was clear: I couldn't make payroll. I had to face my crew and tell them the checks would be late. I'll never forget the look on their faces. Disappointment. Frustration. A couple of them didn't even bother to hide their anger. One guy, who'd been with me since the beginning, shook his head and said, "I can't do this anymore." He walked out, and three others followed him.

That was it. The dam had finally burst. I stood there in the middle of the job site, staring at the ground, feeling completely hollow. For years, I'd been telling myself I could fix things if I just worked harder, but at that moment, I knew (and understood) the truth: *the business was broken, and so was I.*

For weeks after, I avoided phone calls from vendors and clients. I just didn't have answers for them, and I didn't want to face their disappointment. I felt like a failure, not just as a business owner, but as a husband, a father, and a leader.

But in the midst of that failure, clarity began to grow. I realized that this wasn't just about bad circumstances or tough breaks. I had made choices—choices that led me *here*. I'd underbid jobs because I was afraid of losing work. I'd hired the wrong people because I wanted to save money. I'd ignored my finances because I didn't know where to start, and I was too proud to ask for help.

Admitting those things wasn't easy, but it was certainly necessary. I didn't just need to fix my business—I needed to fix the way I *thought* about running a business.

It was around this time that I heard about Timothy. A mutual acquaintance mentioned him and his consulting services during a conversation about my situation, describing him as “the guy who tells construction business owners what they don’t want to hear—but need to.” At first, I wasn’t sure I could handle more hard truths. I felt like I’d already been hit with enough of them. But the more I thought about it, the more I realized I didn’t have much left to lose.

When I finally sat down with Timothy, I’ll admit, I was skeptical. He didn’t sugarcoat anything. “You’ve been in business for years without a plan,” he said. “That’s like building a house without a set of blueprints. You have no idea if you’re building it right.” His words stung, but I knew he was right. What surprised me, though, was the relief I felt hearing them. For the first time in a long time, I didn’t feel like I was carrying the weight of my mistakes alone.

“You can rebuild,” he said. “But you have to start with a blueprint. And this time, you have to stick to it.”