arcscribe

CASE STUDY

Stop renting your operations.

Own them.

A UK field-service business replaced ServiceM8 with a custom platform it owns outright. Here is what the numbers actually look like, and why the same maths applies to you.

44 mo	£15k+	0%
to break even	saved by year 10	payment surcharge

The argument in one line

If your business runs on off-the-shelf field-service software, you are paying every month for a tool you will never own, that takes a cut of every payment you process, and that forces your team to work the way it wants rather than the way you do. There is a better model, and below it is costed honestly using a real build as the worked example.

The problem with renting your operations

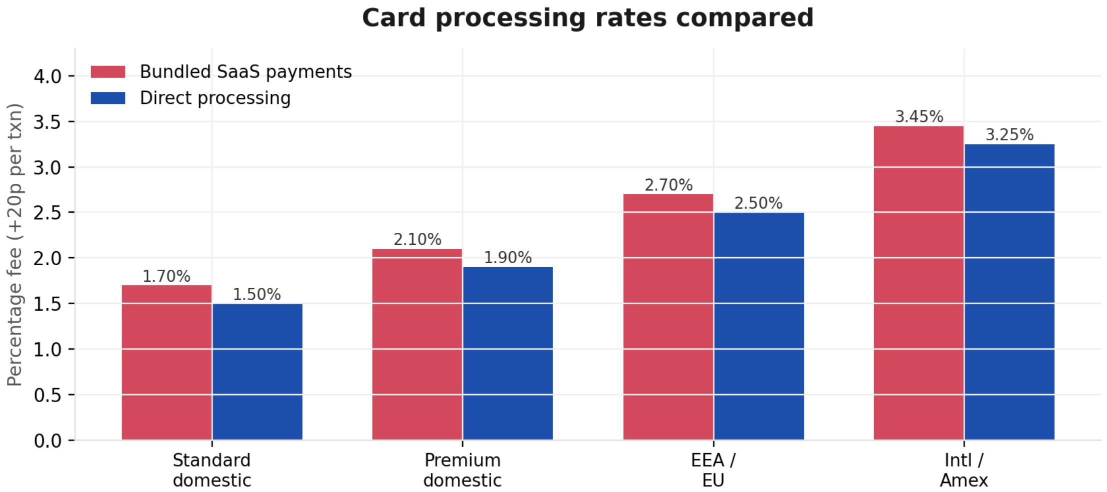
Platforms like ServiceM8, Jobber and Tradify are genuinely useful, and for a new business they are often the right call. The problem arrives later, once the software has become the backbone of daily operations. At that point three costs quietly compound.

1. The subscription never stops

An established operator typically pays around £2,000 a year for the subscription alone. That figure buys access, not ownership. Stop paying and the backbone of the business switches off. Over a decade that is £20,000 spent renting something you never get to keep.

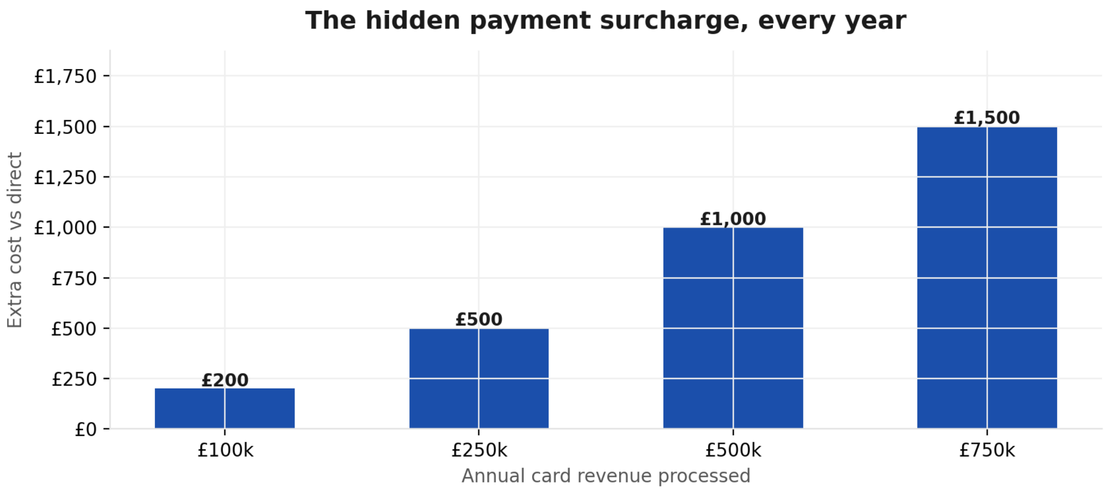
2. The payment surcharge you may not have noticed

Bundled payment products sit on top of standard card processing and add a margin to every transaction. The published ServiceM8 Pay rate for a standard UK card is 1.70% plus 20p. Processing the same card directly through Stripe costs 1.50% plus 20p. That 0.20% gap looks trivial until it is charged on every invoice the business raises, all year, every year.



Published rates. The 20p per transaction is identical on both sides; the percentage is where the bundled product takes its margin.

On a business processing £250,000 of card payments a year, that 0.20% gap alone is an extra £500 every year, on top of the subscription, simply for having payments bundled into software you do not own. The faster the business grows, the larger the surcharge becomes.



The surcharge scales directly with revenue. Growth is penalised.

3. The workflow is not yours

Off-the-shelf software is built for the average of thousands of businesses, never for one. Every business ends up bending its process to fit the tool. Tasks that should take one click take several, and features the business actually wants sit in a vendor backlog with no delivery date. The team adapts to the software instead of the software adapting to the team.

> *Renting software means paying forever for a tool you cannot own, cannot fully control, and cannot leave without rebuilding from scratch.*

The alternative: build once, own forever

The model is simple. Instead of renting a platform indefinitely, a business commissions one built around its actual workflow, pays for it once, and owns it outright. No per-seat licences, no payment surcharge, and no vendor deciding what gets built next. Optional hosting and maintenance is available, but the software belongs to the business.

As a worked example, this is what was delivered for a Norfolk-based cleaning company. The build replaced ServiceM8 in full and was engineered around how the team already worked. The point of the example is not the company, it is the economics, which apply to any field-service operator in the same position.

What was built

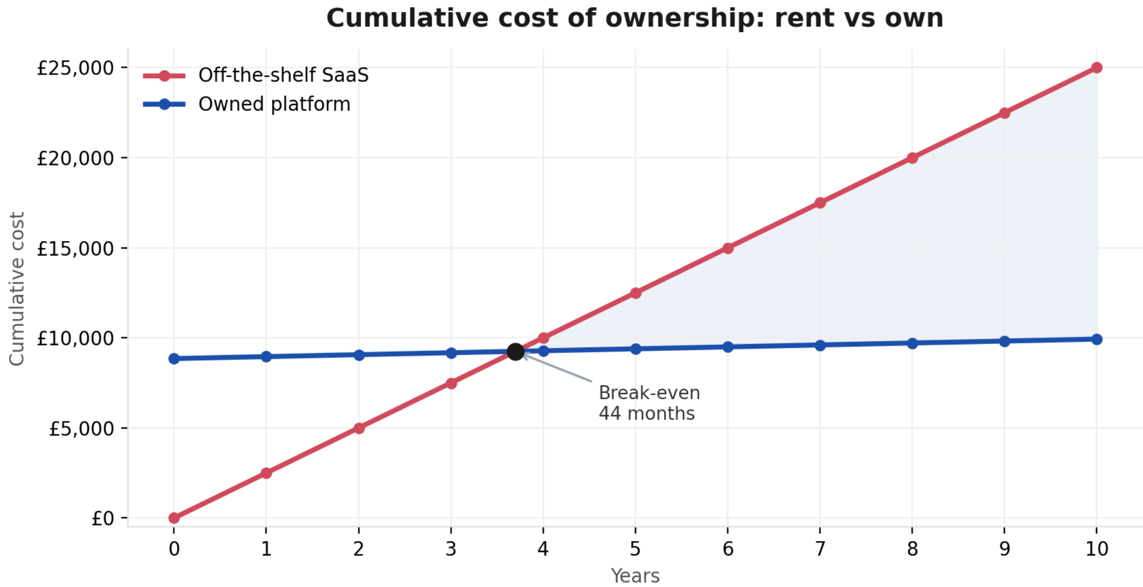
- Centralised dispatch and scheduling: a drag-and-drop dashboard for assigning jobs, managing rosters and overseeing daily progress, with an unscheduled-work queue, auto-scheduling and a geographic map view.
- Mobile field portal: a responsive portal giving each cleaner their own login, daily schedule, property access notes and digital job checklists.
- Automated client communications: booking confirmations, reminders and on-the-way updates sent automatically by email and SMS, triggered by live job status.
- Automated invoicing and CRM: a secure client database wired into billing, generating invoices the moment a job is marked complete, built around the company's real approval and reconciliation process.

It was built on a modern, mainstream technology stack, so the software is maintainable by any competent developer and the client is never locked to a single supplier. The ownership is real, not nominal.

The numbers, honestly

Here is the part most software pitches avoid. A custom build is not cheaper on day one. It is an investment that pays back over time, and being straight about when it pays back is the entire point.

This build cost £8,850 plus optional hosting at £9 a month. Against an off-the-shelf cost of roughly £2,500 a year (a £2,000 subscription plus around £500 of payment surcharge on £250,000 of card revenue), the two cost curves cross at 44 months.



Cumulative cost over ten years. The owned platform costs more up front and far less for the rest of its life. The shaded area is cumulative saving after break-even.

What that means over time

Horizon	Rented SaaS	Owned platform	Net position
3 years	£7,500	£9,174	Still investing
5 years	£12,500	£9,390	£3,110 saved
10 years	£25,000	£9,930	£15,070 saved

These figures are deliberately conservative. They count only the subscription and the payment surcharge on one revenue scenario. They do not price in the staff time saved by a workflow that fits, the jobs won by faster and more professional client communication, or the fact that at the end the business owns an asset rather than a stack of cancelled receipts. For a higher-revenue operator, break-even arrives sooner and the savings run deeper.

When your tool becomes a product

Everything above treats the platform as a cost to be recovered. There is a second story that off-the-shelf software can never tell, and it is the one that turns the whole equation around. When a platform is built well, it solves a problem shared by every other business in the sector. The business that owns it does not have to keep that advantage to itself. It can sell it.

This is the part most owners never consider, because when you rent software you have nothing to sell. You cannot resell a ServiceM8 subscription. But when you own the platform outright, you own an asset, and a good asset can be put to work. The build that cost money on day one can become a product that makes money every month after.

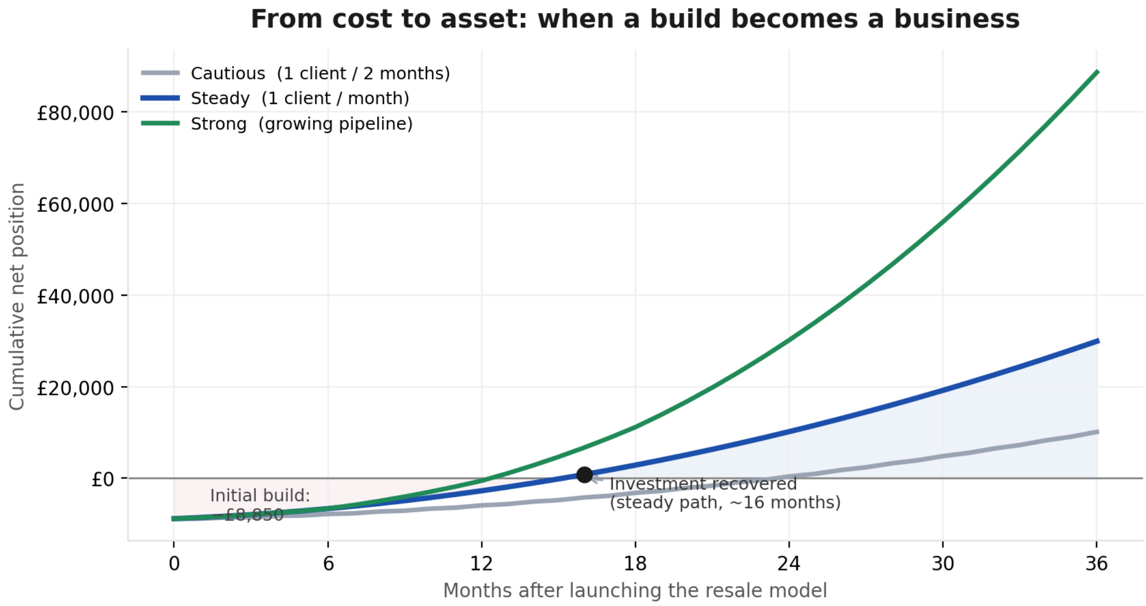
How the resale model works

The model is simple and low-effort for the owner. The platform is offered to other businesses in the same sector under a monthly subscription. Arcscribe handles everything technical: hosting, maintenance, updates and support. The owner focuses only on relationships and sales, the part they already understand because they live in the industry. Each business that signs up pays a monthly fee, split between the owner and Arcscribe, plus a small one-off onboarding fee.

- End customer pays a monthly subscription (illustratively around £79 per month for a mid-tier plan).
- The owner keeps the majority share of that fee as recurring income.
- Arcscribe takes a share to cover all hosting, maintenance and support, so the owner never touches the technical side.
- A one-off onboarding fee covers each new client's setup.

The investment flips into profit

Here is what that does to the original numbers. The build is a one-time cost, shown below as the starting position underwater. From the moment the first resale client signs, recurring income begins to climb back toward zero and then into profit. The chart models three honest adoption rates, from cautious to strong.

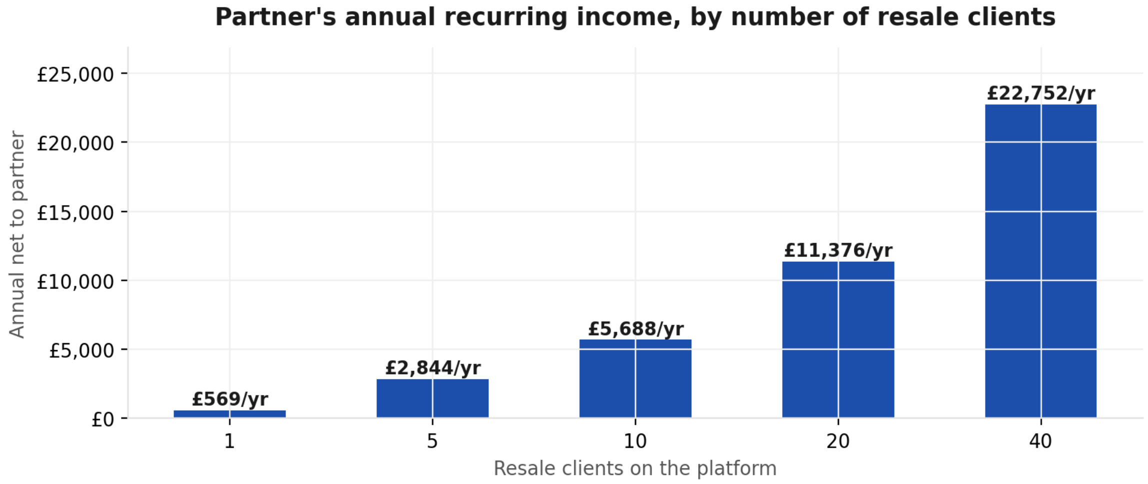


Cumulative net position after launching the resale model. Even the cautious path, a new client only every two months, recovers the build cost and turns profitable. The steady path recovers it in around 16 months.

On a steady path of roughly one new client a month, the original £8,850 build is fully recovered in about sixteen months and goes on to generate close to £30,000 of net income over three years. On a stronger path it is far more. The exact figures will always depend on price, split and pace, but the shape never changes: a cost becomes an asset, and the asset starts to pay.

Recurring income that compounds

The reason the curves bend upward rather than running flat is the nature of recurring revenue. Every client added does not replace the last one, it stacks on top. Five clients pay five times over, every month, with almost no extra work once the platform is built. This is the same economic engine that makes software businesses valuable, now working for an operator in the trades rather than a software company in a city.



Annual recurring income to the owner, by number of resale clients. Each client added compounds the last.

> *Off-the-shelf software is a cost that never ends. Owned software is an asset that can be sold, and recurring revenue is an asset that compounds.*

This is already happening

This is not a hypothetical. In the worked example, the client recognised the opportunity in their own platform and a white-label model is now being explored exactly along these lines. The tool built to run one business is being prepared to serve many, with Arcscribe as the technical engine behind it. The bill that used to leave the business every month is being turned into income that comes in.

Not a project. A partnership.

Software that runs a business is never finished, because the business keeps moving. This work is delivered as an ongoing partnership: the platform is refined continuously against real daily use, and the client has a direct line to the engineers who built it whenever something needs to change. That is the model serious operational software demands, and it is the opposite of filing a ticket into a vendor queue and hoping.

Run the numbers for your business

If you run a cleaning, trades or field-service business on ServiceM8, Jobber, Tradify or anything similar, the same maths applies to you, and the inputs are your numbers, not ours. We will map your current subscription and payment costs, model your break-even, and show you exactly what owning your platform would look like.

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