

Competitors, Copying and the Real Moat

INTERNAL · what the market actually charges, and why the documents are not the product

Short version. You cannot stop the documents being copied, and you should stop trying. The documents are already a free commodity. What cannot be copied is an entry in your verification database, and that is where the business has to sit.

1. What the market actually charges

Prices checked August 2026. Two of these will be uncomfortable.

Generic documents are free

Peninsula, Protecting, KeyOstas and Health & Safety Zone all give away risk assessment and method statement templates as lead magnets. Etsy sells editable builder RAMS packs for about £9. The market value of a blank template is zero. Nobody is going to pay £49 for a document. That is not what you are selling and the copy must never suggest it is.

E-learning is cheaper than you thought

You assumed £50 a head. The real range is a good deal lower.

Provider	Price	Inc VAT
Echo3	£10 + VAT	£12.00
Boss Training	£15 + VAT	£18.00
Safety Services Direct	£16 + VAT	£19.20
Human Focus	£25 + VAT	£30.00
CST Training	£30 + VAT	£36.00
High Speed Training	£31 + VAT	£37.20
MEDIAN		£24.60

Train the trainer is the closest model to yours

Abertay and PGL Midlands both run two-day abrasive wheel train-the-trainer at £295 + VAT (£354). National Training Services charge £795 + VAT (£954), RoSPA assured. You pay once, then train unlimited staff in house. That is the same promise you are making, at seven to nineteen times the price, plus two days of somebody's time.

2. So is £49 right?

Yes. Hold it. Here is the whole market for getting abrasive wheels sorted in a ten-person garage or engineering shop.

Option	Cost for 10 people	What they actually get
Free generic template	£0	A blank form. No topic content, no assessment, no certificate, no system
Etsy template pack	£9	Generic editable Word. Same gap

E-learning, cheapest	£120	Awareness training and a certificate. Nothing else
E-learning, median	£246	Awareness training and a certificate. Nothing else
E-learning, dearest	£372	Awareness training and a certificate. Nothing else
Train the trainer, cheapest	£354 + two days	Trainer pack, then unlimited in house
Train the trainer, dearest	£954 + two days	Trainer pack, then unlimited in house
PHW PACK	£49	The complete system, unlimited staff, no time cost
PHW pack + 10 verified certificates	£169	All of the above plus ten QR-checkable certificates

£49 flat beats median e-learning at two people. It beats the cheapest e-learning in the country at four people. And it beats the cheapest train-the-trainer by seven times before you count the two days.

Do not go lower. Below about £30 a compliance document starts to read as worthless, and you would be halving revenue to win customers you already win. The pitch is the saving, not the price. Forty-nine pounds for the whole firm against two hundred and forty-six for ten heads is the sentence that sells it.

And the argument that makes e-learning irrelevant

This is the important one, and it is true rather than a sales line. HSE's approved code of practice sets out three stages: basic training, then job-specific training, then familiarisation with the actual machine on the actual site. Authorisation in writing follows.

An e-learning course covers stage one. It does not give them a risk assessment, a safe system of work, an inspection and maintenance regime for the wheels, a record of familiarisation, or a written authorisation. A certificate saying somebody watched a video does not discharge the PUWER duty, and an inspector knows that.

So you are not competing with the £12 course. You are selling the four things it leaves out. Say that plainly and the price comparison stops mattering.

3. The £20 certificate is priced wrong

One number in MKT-05 does not survive the competitor check.

	Price
PHW verified certificate, per head	£20.00
A competitor's ENTIRE course including a certificate	£12.00

Your add-on costs more than somebody else's whole product. That comparison will be made and you will lose it. Reprice with volume breaks:

Band	Per head	10-person firm pays, all in
1 to 9	£15	£49 + £150 = £199

10 to 24	£12	£49 + £120 = £169
25 and over	£10	£49 + £250 = £299 for 25 people

At £169 all in for ten people you are still below median e-learning at £246, and they get the whole compliance system rather than ten video certificates. That is a very easy sale.

4. Copying — the honest position

You cannot protect a document. Any PDF or Word file can be screenshotted, printed to PDF, or simply retyped. Password protection, print restriction and watermark removal are all defeated by free tools in under a minute. **Anybody who sells you document DRM is selling you nothing.** Plan on the assumption that anything you send out can be shared.

That sounds bad and it is not, because of what the documents are worth. They are worth nothing on their own. Peninsula gives equivalents away free. **You are not selling a file. You are selling a system and a verification service, and only one of those can be copied.**

Layer 1 — make copying pointless. This is the real defence.

- At £49 the effort of copying exceeds the saving. Nobody photocopies a fifty pound item and takes on the risk of using a compliance document of unknown provenance.
- Keep it current. Regulations change, HSE campaigns change, prosecutions accumulate. A pack copied in 2026 is out of date in 2027 and the copier has no way to know what changed. **Currency cannot be pirated.**
- Date-stamp and version every document on its face. A firm producing a two-year-old version in an inspection has a worse problem than paying you £49.
- This is the entire argument for keeping the price low. Price IS the anti-piracy strategy.

Layer 2 — make copies traceable

- Watermark every purchase with the buying company's name and an order reference, on the cover and in the footer of every page. Cheap to do, impossible to miss.
- Deliver by a unique expiring download link, never as an email attachment that can be forwarded in one click.
- A leaked copy then names the firm that leaked it, and a firm caught in an HSE inspection using another company's watermarked paperwork has a serious problem. That deters the person receiving the copy, which is the one you actually want to deter.
- Licence wording on the cover: one company, one site, unlimited employees of that company.

Layer 3 — move the value to the thing that cannot be copied

This is the answer to your certificate question, and it is already built.

Anybody can print a certificate. Nobody can create a record in your database. The QR code on a genuine certificate resolves to your verification page and shows the name, the employer, the topic, the assessment date, the expiry and who issued it. A forged one either has no code, a code that returns nothing, or a code that resolves to somebody else's record.

The line is: if it does not scan, it is not ours. Print that on the certificate and on the site verification statement, so the safety officer knows to check.

And a forged certificate is far worse for the holder than no certificate at all. No certificate is a gap. A forged one is deliberate deception, and in a prosecution or an insurance claim that is the difference between a fine and something much worse. The deterrent is not your enforcement, it is their exposure.

Hardening the verification system

- Certificate IDs must be random, not sequential. If they run in order somebody can guess valid ones.
- The verify page must state VALID, EXPIRED or NOT FOUND explicitly. Not a blank page, not a 404. An unambiguous answer a non-technical safety officer can act on.
- Show the expiry date prominently so a stale certificate fails obviously.
- Log every scan with a timestamp. One certificate being scanned repeatedly from very different places is worth a look.
- Never publish the answer keys or marking cribs. Already enforced in the portal build, and it stays enforced.
- The verification page is the authoritative record. The paper certificate is just a pointer to it.

5. What this means for the business

Component	Copyable?	So how does it earn?
The documents	YES, completely	Loss leader. Priced to make copying pointless. They are the reason someone becomes a customer, not the reason they pay again
Being current	No	Reissue when regulations or campaigns change. The copy decays and theirs does not
The verified certificate	NO	Per head, recurring on refresher, and the only thing a third party will actually check
The assessor signature on a machine assessment	NO	The premium tier. Cannot be faked without committing an offence
Your name on the verification page	No	The asset that compounds. The more sites that scan and get a real answer, the more it is worth

Read the right hand column. Every durable revenue line is a service, not a file. The documents get people in. The verification keeps them, and it is the part that still earns in year three.

6. Do this

- Hold £49. Do not discount further. Lead every pitch with the comparison: £49 for the whole firm against £246 for ten heads of e-learning that only covers stage one.
- Reprice certificates to £15 / £12 / £10 by volume, today. £20 loses to a £12 competitor course on a comparison somebody will definitely make.
- Watermark every purchase with the buyer's name and order reference, and deliver by expiring link.
- Put IF IT DOES NOT SCAN, IT IS NOT OURS on every certificate and every site verification statement.
- Randomise certificate IDs and make the verify page say VALID, EXPIRED or NOT FOUND in plain words.
- Version and date every document, and reissue when the law moves. That is the renewal reason and it is honest.
- Stop thinking of the pack as the product. The pack is the sample. The verification is the business.