

What should you be doing in Q4?

A practical checklist to refocus your business and finish the year strong



Q4 is just around the corner

Many business owners waste September.

They drift back from summer holidays, spend weeks catching up on emails, and suddenly find themselves in November wondering where their year went.

September is when you decide whether you're going to control your Q4 or let it control you. Once October hits, you're mostly reacting to whatever's already in motion.



Step 1: Take stock of where you are

Start September with an honest assessment of your team. The problems you can see now will only get worse as year-end pressure builds.



Look for these warning signs:

- Who's struggling to get back into their stride after summer?
- Who picked up extra work during holidays and is now burnt out?
- Which projects got dropped or delayed because people were away?
- Are there tensions that built up over the summer months?

Reality check questions:

- Is your team energised and focused or still mentally on holiday?
- What's the general mood in your team?
- Which deadlines are you already behind on?

Get a realistic picture of where you actually are, not where you hoped you'd be.

Step 2: Check your key HR metrics

Your people data tells you what's happening, even when people won't. Most small businesses can get everything they need from simple HR software that tracks the basics.



Absence patterns to watch:

- More sick days than usual (often signals stress or disengagement)
- Random single days off (usually personal issues affecting work)
- Issues across your team (indicates wider problems)

Turnover risks:

- Who's left recently or seems restless?
- September is prime job-hunting season
- Have you asked your key people what they want from their role?

Holiday balance problems:

- Who still has weeks of leave to take?
- When do they plan to take it?
- How will you cover essential work in November and December?

Workload distribution:

- Who's still carrying extra from summer cover arrangements?
- Are your high performers picking up slack for others?
- Which team members consistently deliver vs those who don't?



Step 3: Align your people with business goals

Your team can't deliver results if they don't know what you're trying to achieve.

Be specific about success:

- What revenue do you need to hit by December?
- Which products or services are you launching when?
- What customer satisfaction or operational targets matter?

Make individual contributions clear:

- Sales targets for the sales team
- Customer service standards for client-facing staff
- Delivery deadlines for operations
- Quality standards for support roles

Have the conversation:

- Lay out your Q4 priorities in plain language
- Check everyone understands their role
- Ask what support they need to deliver

A straightforward conversation in early September will do more for your business than any team-building exercise.



Step 4: Light-touch 2026 planning

Think ahead about people to prevent problems later.

Hiring timeline:

- When will you need new people for 2026 growth?
- Good people take 3-6 months to find and get up to speed
- Start recruitment conversations in October for January starts

Internal development:

- Who's ready for more responsibility?
- Which roles could you promote into rather than hire for?
- What training or support do they need?

Succession planning:

- Who are your flight risks?
- If you lost key people tomorrow, how would you replace them?
- Even informal backup plans give you options

Keep this practical. You're thinking ahead so you're not caught off guard.

Why Q4 planning pays off

The businesses we work with that plan their Q4 in September consistently outperform those that wait until October. They take control early instead of reacting to problems.

If you'd like help with working through any of these steps for your business next month, let's have a conversation about what Q4 success looks like for you.

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