For Small Business Owners & Entrepreneurs

JANUARY BUSINESS KICKOFF Checklist

1. START YOUR 2026 BOOKS

A clean file now prevents a mess in December.

- [ ] Create a fresh 2026 bookkeeping file (or close out 2025).
- [ ] Archive last year's invoices and receipts to a separate folder.
- [ ] Link your bank feeds to the new year's file.
- [ ] Reconcile your first January deposit to ensure the connection works.
- [ ] Review your chart of accounts & hide categories you don't use.

2. RESET YOUR MILEAGE & SUBSCRIPTIONS

Stop paying for things you forgot about.

- [ ] Record odometer reading Jan 1. (This is required for the deduction)
- [ ] Reset your mileage tracking app for the new year.
- [ ] Audit your recurring subscriptions (software, tools, memberships).
- [ ] Cancel any "free trials" that quietly turned into paid monthly fees.
- [ ] Update payment for critical auto-drafts to avoid interruptions.

3. CONTRACTOR & 1099 PREP

The deadline is January 31. Don't panic.

- [ ] Verify you have a Form W-9 for every contractor paid in 2025.
- [ ] Confirm total payments for anyone you paid over $600.
- [ ] Order your 1099-NEC forms or choose an e-filing service.
- [ ] Verify contractor addresses and emails are current.
- [ ] Flag any new contractors starting in January to get W-9s before you pay them.

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4. SET YOUR ESTIMATED TAX SCHEDULE

Put these dates on your calendar today.

- [ ] Mark April 15, 2026, for your Q1 payment.
- [ ] Mark June 15, 2026, for Q2.
- [ ] Mark September 15, 2026, for Q3.
- [ ] Mark January 15, 2027, for Q4.
- [ ] Set a reminder to calculate profit two weeks before each date.

5. REVIEW PRICING & INVOICING

Inflation happens. Make sure you aren't eating the cost.

- [ ] Review your margins. Did your costs go up last year?
- [ ] Update your invoice templates with 2026 pricing.
- [ ] Test your payment gateway to ensure fees haven't spiked.
- [ ] Follow up on any unpaid invoices from late 2025.
- [ ] Send "Rate Update" notices to clients if applicable.

6. EARLY-YEAR DEDUCTION PLANNING

Plan the big purchases now.

- [ ] List any major equipment you need to buy in Q1.
- [ ] Check the current Section 179 limits for 2026 expensing.
- [ ] Set a budget for professional development or conferences.
- [ ] Create a digital folder specifically for "2026 Tax Docs."
- [ ] Schedule a Q1 check-in with your tax pro.

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