

Project Failure Prevention Pocket Guide

How to save €20k+ by spotting red flags early.

The "Cost of Waiting" Calculator

Most founders wait too long to fire a bad vendor. Here is the actual cost of hesitation.

If you decide to cut losses at...	You've paid	Restart Cost	Total Loss
Week 2 (Early Warning)	€500-2k	€5k	€5-7k
Week 4 (Missed Deadline)	€2-5k	€8k	€10-13k
Week 8 (Sunk Cost)	€10k	€15k	€25k+
Month 3+ (Hostage)	€15k+	€20k+	€35k+

Lesson: Firing at Week 2 is 5x cheaper than firing at Month 3.

The 6 Rules to Prevent Failure

1. Define "Done" in Writing

Never start without a list of deliverables. "A website" is not a deliverable. "5 pages, mobile responsive, with CMS setup" is.

2. Milestone Payments Only

- 30% Upfront
- 30% First Draft (Proof of Competence)
- 40% Final Delivery

Never pay 100% upfront.

3. The "Week 4" Checkpoint

Set a hard rule: "If X isn't working by Week 4, we terminate." Write it down. Stick to it.

4. Weekly Demos (No Async Hiding)

Require a 15-minute video demo every Friday. If they "didn't have time" to demo, they didn't do the work.

5. Reference Checks are Mandatory

Call 2 past clients. Ask: "Did they deliver on the original timeline?" The answer is rarely "Yes" for bad vendors.

6. The "Small Trial" Rule

For projects >€10k, pay for a €500 paid trial first (e.g., "Design one screen"). If that goes badly, you saved €9,500.

The 7 Red Flags of Doom

If you see 3+ of these, **STOP**.

1. **Vague Scope:** "We'll figure it out as we go."
2. **Yes-Man:** Agrees to impossible deadlines without pushback.
3. **Ghosting:** Takes >24h to reply during the sales process.
4. **No Portfolio Links:** "I can't show it due to NDA" (usually a lie).
5. **Too Cheap:** Rates are 50% below market average.
6. **No Questions:** Doesn't ask about your business goals.
7. **Immediate Start:** "I can start tomorrow" (Why are they empty?).