BENCHMARK

Features & Tools

You send us the quotes you've already got. We read them, compare them properly, and tell you what each firm actually priced. Your figures stay yours.

Why this exists at all

There is no shortage of price books. There is a shortage of price books that have ever seen the kind of work you do. The published sources are built on repetitive building — estate housing, offices, the same detail a thousand times over. That is what makes them work, and it is what makes them useless the moment somebody asks you for a rate for a hand-made staircase, a stone floor cut to a pattern, or a one-off house where nothing repeats.

The only figures that describe this work are the ones already sitting in the quotes on your desk — yours and everybody else's. They have never been pooled because nobody has been willing to hand theirs over, and quite right too. This is an attempt at the arrangement that makes it safe to.

What would be shared, and what never would

Every firm, figure and address in the example below is invented. Firms are called A, B and C on purpose: a made-up company name is a real company somewhere.

Nothing of yours has gone anywhere yet, and nothing will without you approving it. This is what the exchange would look like.

STEP ONE

A quotation arrives, and most of it never goes anywhere

Take an ordinary quotation. The firm's name, the quotation number, the address, the client, the quantities and the payment terms all identify somebody or their job, and none of it would ever leave your account. What could ever be shared is one line of work, its unit, and what it cost: “Engineered oak flooring, supply and lay · m² · £268.00”. No firm, no job, no address, no quantity.

STEP TWO

One company is not a range

Your row sits on its own. On its own it tells nobody anything — and showing it would tell everybody what you charge. So nothing is shown at all: one company, nothing can be shown. Only when two more firms have priced the same item does a range exist. Three is the floor, and it is not a policy we could quietly drop: with two, anybody who recognises one price has worked out the other.

STEP THREE

Somebody looks it up, and still cannot see you

What a reader gets is the shape of the range — widened, so no edge of it is anybody's actual price. In the invented example above that is £230, £270 and £320 per square metre: low, middle and high. The three rows behind it stay exactly where they were. No name, no job, no date finer than the quarter, and never one firm's figure on its own.

The same thing, as a list

WOULD BE KEPT

- What the item is, in the words it was priced under.
- The unit it was priced by — the square metre, the number, the item.
- The rate itself, in full. It is never shown to anyone, and it exists only so a range can be worked out from it.
- The region. A rate in central London and the same rate two hundred miles away are not the same number.
- The quarter it was priced in — and never a finer date than that.

WOULD NEVER BE

- Your name, and your client's.
- The job, the address, the reference.
- The quantity you priced against.
- Your preliminaries, your terms, your mark-up.
- Anything that would let one figure be traced back to you.

The exact date is the one people are surprised by. A rate stamped to the day, in a trade with a handful of firms in it, is close to a signature. The quarter tells a reader what they actually need — how old the figure is — and tells them nothing else.

You are a code, not a company

When your account is made you are given a contributor code — something like C-4471. Your name opens your account. Your code carries your rates. The two are kept in separate places and nothing puts them side by side. It means the people running this can see that C-4471 has sent in eleven documents, and cannot see what C-4471 charged for anything. There is no screen, no export and no report anywhere that will put a company name next to a figure that company priced.

Why some things will never get a benchmark

Work that is the same job wherever it turns up — a padstone, a square metre of plasterboard, softwood studwork — gets a proper range. Three firms pricing it are pricing the same thing.

Work whose price follows the size of the job rather than the item — demolition, scaffolding, preliminaries — gets a rate of thumb against the size of the building. It is useful for a first sanity check and it is not a rate to price work with.

Bespoke supply — a fireplace, a staircase, fitted joinery — gets a range for the category and no more. Two quotes can differ by a factor of thirty and both be right, because they are not the same object, and anything that averaged them would be inventing a number.

You will meet refusals often, especially early on, and they are the system working rather than failing. A range built on two companies is worse than no range at all — it is a number you might put in a tender.

What you get on the first day, with no pool at all

The ranges need a lot of contributors before they are worth much. The rest does not need any. Send us the quotes for one package and you get them compared item by item instead of on the total: what each firm priced that the others didn't, where the quantities disagree, what each one quietly excluded, where the arithmetic does not add up, and the questions worth putting to each of them before you decide.

That is the comparison the totals hide. Three firms within four per cent of each other on the bottom line, and one of them has left out the scaffold.

What it costs you

Nothing, ever, for your own documents. Not a trial that turns into a subscription, and not a free tier with a paywall behind it. You send quotes, you get them compared, and there is no invoice. The arrangement only works if contributing is free, because the thing being built is the pool and you are the one building it.

Changing your mind

Every document you send has a Remove button next to it for fourteen days. One click takes the document and every rate it held, and the screen tells you how many went. After fourteen days, ask us and we will do it within thirty days.

If a rate of yours ever goes into a range, removing the document takes it back out of the pool as well, and nothing worked out afterwards will include it. There is no version of this where something of yours is stuck because it has already been used.