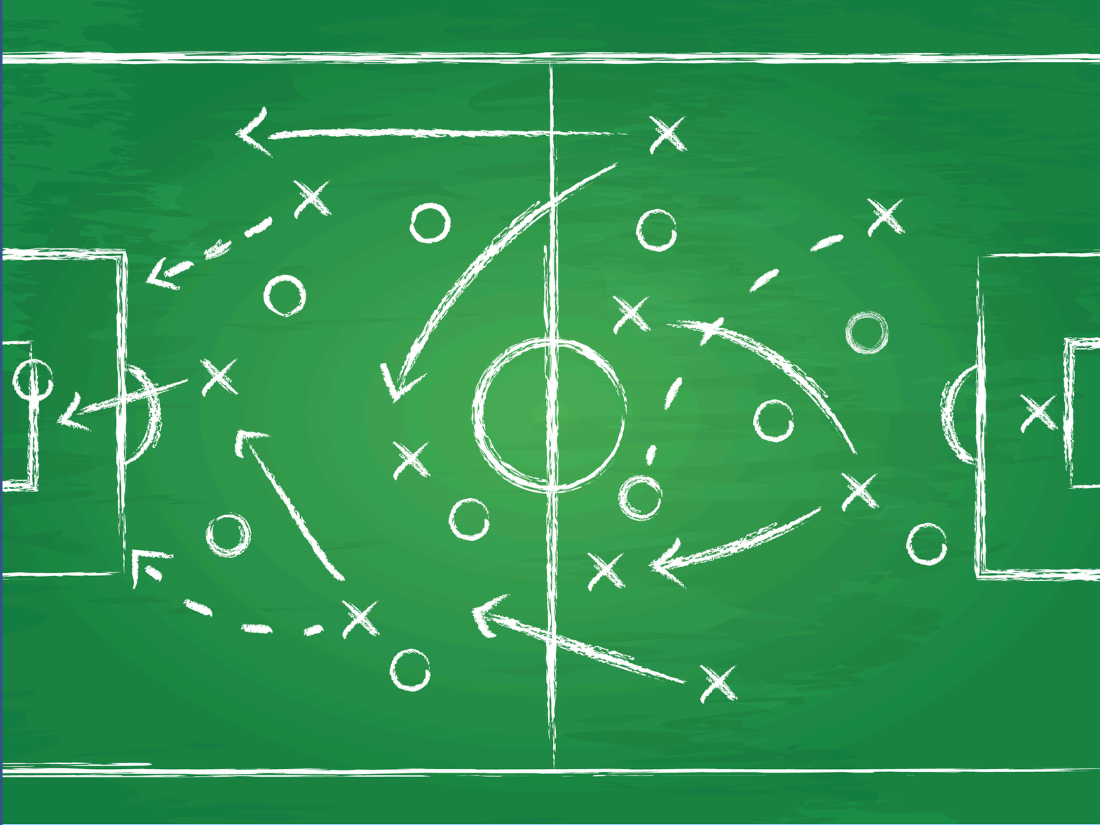

STA International

The Debt Recovery Playbook

Winning strategies for protecting cash flow and recovering overdue debt before the final whistle.

STA International | Commercial debt recovery across 150+ countries

The Tournament Begins

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Most bad debts do not become difficult overnight. They become difficult through delay.

Every four years, the world's best football nations compete in a tournament that is, at its core, a study in preparation, strategy and knowing when to press.

Commercial debt recovery is not so different.

The businesses that protect their cash flow - and recover the most when things go wrong - are rarely the most aggressive. They are the most organised. They have a strategy. They know which stage they are at, what action each stage requires, and when to bring in specialist support.

This playbook maps the stages of a successful debt recovery strategy onto the arc of a tournament - from pre-match preparation through group stage discipline, knockout round decisions, and the moments that demand international expertise.

Written for finance directors, credit managers and CFOs who want to recover more and lose less.

Strengthen Your Defence

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No team walks onto the pitch without a training camp. They study their opponents, set their shape and establish their game plan before a ball is kicked.

The equivalent in credit management is the work done before an invoice is ever raised - and it's where most recovery problems are either prevented or seeded.

Your pre-match checklist:

✅ Credit assessment at onboarding - do you know who you're extending terms to?

✅ Payment terms confirmed in writing before work begins, not assumed

✅ Contractual protections in place, including the right to recover costs if needed

✅ Early monitoring of payment behaviour across your ledger

✅ Clear escalation triggers your whole team understands

Warning signs an account is drifting:

- Increasing excuses or delays in responding
- Broken payment promises - even small ones
- Partial payments with no agreed plan for the balance
- Disputes that appear only after chasing
- Silence after a period of previous responsiveness

The Group Stage:
Control the Ledger, Build the Position

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The group stage is where the tournament is often decided - not by individual brilliance, but by consistency. Teams that win their group without drama have controlled the tempo, managed their energy and built from a position of strength.

The same is true of collections. Most recovery failures are not caused by a lack of effort. They are caused by effort applied inconsistently, too late, or to the wrong accounts.

Group stage thinking - segment before you chase:

- Not every debtor belongs in the same group. High-risk accounts need different treatment than first-time late payers
- Escalate based on behaviour triggers, not instinct or sentiment
- Maintain a consistent collections cadence - regular contact, documented communication, clear next steps
- A debt that reaches 90 days is no longer a collections problem - it is a recovery problem. Treat it differently

Three questions to ask about your process:

- Are we contacting debtors consistently - and documenting it properly?
- Are we escalating at the right point, or letting sentiment delay the call?
- Are our resources allocated to the accounts most likely to respond?

Five Own Goals
That Push Debt Into Extra Time

Own Goal 1: Waiting too long to escalate

Every additional week of delay narrows your options and strengthens the debtor's position. Early escalation is not aggressive - it’s disciplined.

Own Goal 2: Treating every debt the same

A high-value account with broken payment promises needs a different approach than a first-time late payer. Segment by behaviour, not just invoice age.

Own Goal 3: Weak documentation

Disputes are easier to resist when you have a clear paper trail. Confirmed terms, written payment promises and records of all contact are your first line of defence.

Own Goal 4: Assuming international debt is unrecoverable

Cross-border debt is regularly written off on the assumption it is too difficult. With local expertise and the right network, it is far more recoverable than most finance teams assume.

Own Goal 5: Keeping everything in-house past the point of return

Internal resource has limits. Knowing when specialist support improves outcomes - and acting on it early enough - is one of the clearest differentiators between high and low recovery rates.

When to Press, When to Escalate

The knockout rounds change the nature of the game. There are no accumulating points, no safety net of a further fixture. Every decision carries more weight. The teams that thrive are those who recognise the moment - and act on it without hesitation.

Internal debt recovery has its own knockout threshold: the point at which continued in-house effort begins to cost more than it returns.

Signs you may have reached that point:

- The debtor is avoiding contact or has gone silent despite previous engagement
- Two or more payment arrangements have been broken
- The debt is genuinely deadlocked - nothing internal has moved it in weeks
- The debtor is based overseas and local jurisdiction knowledge is needed
- Disproportionate management time is being spent on a single account
- A previously undisputed invoice has been disputed - suggesting deliberate delay tactics

Specialist involvement does not mean litigation. In many cases, professional recovery involvement alone - with a clear mandate and documented approach - is sufficient to prompt payment where internal contact has failed.

In the knockout rounds, the teams that hesitate are the ones that go home.

Know the Pitch
Recovering Debt Across Borders

Few events bring the world together like international football - nations from every inhabited continent competing under one banner. What makes it work is not a single universal rulebook applied uniformly. It is a shared framework, operated by people who understand local conditions on the ground.

International debt recovery works exactly the same way. UK businesses regularly write off cross-border debt not because it is genuinely unrecoverable, but because it feels complex, unfamiliar and far away. The jurisdiction is different, the legal process is unfamiliar. The debtor knows this, and they count on it.

What effective international recovery actually requires:

- Local expertise in the debtor's specific jurisdiction - not general international knowledge
- Understanding of cultural and commercial payment norms that affect debtor behaviour country by country
- In-country networks capable of applying meaningful, credible local pressure
- Early specialist involvement - before the debt ages to the point where recovery becomes genuinely unlikely
- A coordinated strategy that combines local action with UK-side legal backing where needed

STA International operates across more than 150 countries through a global network of vetted local partners. Our international capability is not remote chasing, it is in-country expertise, applied at the right moment.

Rights Most Businesses Never Use

Most businesses know late payment is a problem. Far fewer know they already have a legal right to claim interest, fixed compensation and recovery costs on every overdue commercial invoice - and most never use it.

The Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998 exists precisely because late payment costs UK businesses billions every year. It gives creditors automatic statutory rights the moment a commercial invoice becomes overdue.

What you're entitled to claim, automatically, on every overdue commercial invoice:

- Statutory interest at 8% above the Bank of England base rate, applied from the date the debt falls due
- Fixed compensation per invoice: £40 (debts under £1,000) · £70 (£1,000–£9,999) · £100 (£10,000+)
- Reasonable debt recovery costs on top - the costs of pursuing the debt can themselves be recovered

Why most businesses don't claim:
They don't know they're entitled to
They worry it will damage the relationship
They assume the sums aren't worth the effort

On a £50,000 invoice overdue by six months at current base rates, statutory interest alone exceeds £2,500 - before compensation or recovery costs are even considered. Across a ledger with multiple overdue accounts, the unclaimed entitlement adds up quickly.

The Final

What Winning Credit Teams Do Differently

The teams that reach a final do not get there by accident. They have navigated the group stage, survived the knockout rounds, adapted to opponents from different continents, and made the right call in the moments that mattered most.

1. They act early.
Not aggressively - early. There is a significant difference. Early action preserves options, preserves relationships and costs less. Late action is almost always more expensive and more disruptive.

2. They escalate on triggers, not instinct.
They have defined the point at which action is required - and they follow it, regardless of sentiment or optimism about a particular debtor.

3. They segment intelligently.
Every debtor is not the same. High-risk, high-value accounts receive proportionate attention. Resource is never spread evenly - it is applied where it will have the most impact.

4. They know the rules - and use them.
They claim what they are entitled to under the Late Payment Act. They use legal leverage commercially, not emotionally. They understand that their legal rights are a tool, not a last resort.

5. They treat receivables as a strategic asset.
Cash flow is not an accounting function. It is the fuel for everything else. Protecting it is a commercial priority - not a back-office one.

6. They know when to hand it over.
Internal teams are built for relationships, not recovery. Winners recognise the point at which in-house effort stops adding value and external specialists start and they make the handover without delay.

Tournament winners don't wait to see how the other team plays. They set the terms.

About STA International
We're on the ball

STA International empowers businesses to protect and strengthen their bottom line through tailored, end-to-end credit management solutions. From debt recovery and tracing services to outsourced credit control and dispute resolution, we operate across the UK and internationally with accuracy, professionalism and integrity.

With more than 30 years' experience, we're a trusted partner to organisations ranging from SMEs to FTSE-listed companies. Our expertise spans both commercial and consumer debt recovery, and is underpinned by a strong commitment to ethical and fully compliant practices.

Our core services include:
- Commercial debt recovery
- Consumer debt recovery
- Outsourced credit control
- International collections
- Tracing services (including trace and collect)
- Legal recovery

Our global capability is powered by a network of 80 international partners, a legal panel covering England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and a dedicated consumer contact centre in Glasgow. STA is accredited to ISO 9001 and ISO 27001 standards, authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), and CSA Collector accredited. These accreditations reflect our commitment to high standards, data security and transparency across every aspect of our work.

At STA International our mission remains clear: reduce risk, accelerate cash flow, and build business confidence at every stage of the credit lifecycle.

Full time

Is some of your debt already in extra time?

Whether the challenge is a ledger full of aged UK debt, a cross-border account that has gone quiet, or a collections process you know could be sharper - we can help.

We offer a complimentary recovery review: a practical, no-obligation conversation with our team about where your biggest opportunities are and what the right strategy looks like.

Book your complimentary recovery review:

Call: 03030 030 159

Visit: www.stainternational.com

Start the conversation

Call: 03030 030 159

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