

Budgeting Tools

It seems like these days everything you read and hear is about budget cuts. It does not matter what your field or how big your corporation; everyone is reducing expenses in some way.

So how do you get what you need to get the job done?

I've spoken with a few Superintendents over the years, and it seems that everyone produces a budget in a different way. I thought I would describe some tools that Superintendents have told me they use to get what they need for their budget. These tools can vary from documentation, to bid proposals, to photos, to videos, to Power Point presentations, to portfolios. They can be applied to labor needs, equipment purchases, and even daily supplies. It doesn't matter how large or small your budget. Everyone has needs. These are some of the ways that other Superintendents go about getting their budgets met.

Documentation has been my strongest asset in getting what I need. I started my budgeting career within the TPC network. We budgeted for everything and documented everything. I have carried a lot of these practices to Rich Harvest Farms, where I am today.

For me, spreadsheets are the most critical part of the process. Document what your staff does on a day-to-day basis. A simple spreadsheet with a list of employees down the side and tasks across the top is the easiest way I've found to track labor. It takes me, or my assistants, five minutes to record this information. At the end of the month you can total what it costs to perform each task. You can add a column with each employee's wage and, with a simple formula, automatically compute the cost of each task for any time frame you choose.

This practice gives you hard evidence of the real cost of what you have been asked to cut. You can send this information to your supervisors. It will give them a much better idea of what it takes to get the job done. When you have been asked to reduce staff, you can leave it to them what they would want to cut. For example, you have documentation that it takes X hours a week to rake bunkers, if it's done every day of the week. If we cut one staff member, we can rake bunkers every other day and it will save Y dollars. This information can be used to budget for equipment also. For example, it takes X hours to spray fairways. I want to purchase a GPS spray unit. The unit will allow me to spray faster, reduce acreage from overlap, and reduce chemical. The new unit will cost Y dollars, but will save

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Z dollars over this period of time. The spreadsheet takes out the fluff in your budget.

Bid proposals are another great tool that I have used to get projects done. For example, a driving range tee has been out of level; complaints from the club have irritated you for years. The club wants it fixed, but they would like you to do it in-house to save some money. Get a few itemized bid proposals for the project from contractors. Then, use those proposals to generate your own proposal for doing the work in-house. You already have every hour of the day documented in your spreadsheets. An in-house project will have to be done on overtime. You will have to rent equipment that you do not have. You will need to allocate extra time, above what it would take a contractor to do the project, because your staff will not be as efficient as a contractor who does that kind of work every day. This bid proposal will allow you to show that a contractor might actually save the club money. Or, it will give your employees some overtime and a new experience. Either way, the project that's been irritating you for years gets done and the golfers will have a better experience.

Photos, videos, portfolios and power point presentations are also valuable tools. Everyone learns better with visuals. It is easier to go into a budget meeting with images than to try to explain with just paper and a bunch of numbers what it is we actually do. Be proactive. Develop these tools now, so that at

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the end of the year when you sit down and start working on your budget you already have the visuals to support it.

I've heard of a Superintendent doing a budget presentation in which he treated the budget as a job he was trying to get. His budget wasn't last year's numbers with 10% knocked off because that was what he was asked to cut. Instead, he went into the budget process with information, pictures of his staff doing jobs, videos of them completing tasks, a portfolio showing projects that they had finished over the past year, all put together into a Power Point presentation. This was the most proactive budget presentation I have ever heard of. It doesn't take much time if you have a video camera or a still camera in your cart and take a few pictures in the course of your normal routine. The budget committee sees that you are organized and that you have hard evidence of what you need. It's harder for a manager to cut hard evidence.

These are budget tools I have encountered. I'm sure there are many more. Fight for what you need to maintain quality. Show them that there is not and never has been fluff in your budget. Lastly, put the ball in their court, and make them decide what to cut. You now have the documentation to prove what you have always done. **-OC**

TGIF SEARCHABLE TOPIC



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Keyword: *Better Budget*

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Highlighted Articles:

- *Go brown and save green: With the conomy down, fuel prices up and the environment on everyone's mind, has there ever been a better time to go brown?*
- *Building a better operating budget*
- *Golf course budgets: Ten steps to better budgeting*

2009 Actual Golf Course Labor September	salary	Scouting, Training, Supervision	Mow Greens	\$/Month	Mow Ranges	\$/Month	Mow Fairways	\$/Month	Bunkers	\$/Month	Banks	\$/Month	Rough	\$/Month
Bob	\$ 12.50	88		\$0.00		\$0.00		\$0.00		\$0.00		\$0.00		\$0.00
Jose	\$ 12.00			\$0.00		\$0.00		\$0.00		\$0.00		\$0.00		\$0.00
Ryan	\$ 11.50	20	5	\$57.50		\$0.00		\$0.00		\$0.00		\$0.00		\$0.00
Alfredo	\$ 11.00		5	\$55.00		\$0.00		\$0.00		\$0.00		\$0.00	40	\$440.00
Aaron	\$ 10.50		5	\$52.50		\$0.00		\$0.00		\$0.00		\$0.00		\$0.00
Elias	\$ 10.00		10	\$100.00		\$0.00		\$0.00		\$0.00		\$0.00		\$0.00
Jon	\$ 9.50		40	\$380.00		\$0.00		\$0.00		\$0.00		\$0.00		\$0.00
Gastavo	\$ 9.00			\$0.00	40	\$360.00		\$0.00		\$0.00		\$0.00		\$0.00
Patrick	\$ 8.50			\$0.00		\$0.00	50	\$425.00		\$0.00	60	\$510.00		\$0.00
Manuel	\$ 8.00			\$0.00		\$0.00		\$0.00	100	\$800.00		\$0.00	40	\$320.00
Totals		108	65	\$645.00	40	\$360.00	50	\$425.00	100	\$800.00	60	\$510.00	80	\$760.00

Tracking man hours takes a few minutes each day and is a valuable document when preparing a budget. This example tracks actual dollars spent monthly on maintenance tasks.



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