

BUDGETING REIMAGINED

Making GL Budget Prep Faster, Easier, and Even Enjoyable

Inside ActivityHD

Marvin Crossnoe | Project Development | InterActiv 2026





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Stockholm, 1628

The king kept changing the ship. She was lengthened; a second gun deck went on.

Thirty men ran back and forth across the deck to test her. The admiral stopped it after three passes - she was heeling badly enough to go over at the quay.

She sailed anyway. The king was waiting.

1,300 metres.

Sydney, 1957

Estimated **A\$ 7 million**

Actually cost **A\$ 102 million**

Estimated to open **1963**

Actually opened **1973**

Fourteen times over. Ten years late.

Utzon resigned in 1966 and never came back to see it finished.



Sydney Opera House. Photo Dietmar Rabich, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

Both of them found out too late.

Being wrong was survivable - both are now the most visited attraction in their city. Finding out too late was the expensive part.

47.9%

come in on budget

8.5%

on budget AND on time

0.5%

on budget, on time, and
delivered what was promised

Flyvbjerg, 16,000+ projects across 20+ countries.

"On time and under budget" is rare enough that we treat it as a story rather than an expectation.

The company we are budgeting

An opera company. Everything about the money follows the performance calendar.

Event-driven

Two or three productions a year. Revenue and most costs arrive in bursts, not monthly.

Chart of accounts

Natural account + Program + Ledger. Program is the budget owner.

Fiscal year

July 1 to June 30.

Eight budget owners: Production, Artistic, Education, Guest Services, Marketing, Exhibits, Administrative, Foundation.

And the date is awkward

It is late February 2025. We are budgeting FY2026, which starts on 1 July.

The current year is only eight periods in.

Every projection therefore has to extrapolate the rest of FY2025 before it can say anything useful about FY2026. Eight months of actual, four months that have not happened yet.

Nobody budgets with a complete year in hand. This is the normal case, and the tooling has to handle it rather than pretend.

8 of 12 periods actual -> annualise -> then project forward

Stage 1 - one workbook per budget owner

LIVE DEMO

Baseline

Seasonality

Driver / Follower

Budget Group

1

Every account from the chart that this owner is responsible for

2

Three years of history, plus the current year to date

3

The current budget, for comparison

4

A workspace for next year - by period, and a total

It is an Excel financial design. No new application to learn, no export and re-import - the numbers are live against ActivityHD.

Where the suggested number comes from

Baseline

Seasonality

Driver / Follower

Budget Group

Linear regression

Fits the trend across the years of history.

Weighted average

Averages the years, weighting recent ones more heavily.

Suggested

Takes the regression when the trend is consistent; falls back to the average when the two disagree by more than 20%.

A trend is only worth following when it is actually a trend. When regression and average disagree sharply, the regression is being dragged by one odd year - so the workbook says so and uses the average instead.

Send it out, get it back, post it

LIVE DEMO

Baseline

Seasonality

Driver / Follower

Budget Group

1

Distribute

The Financial Tree Reporting bot bursts one workbook per program owner.

2

Interrogate

Chart an account. Compare two. Drill into anything that looks wrong.

3

Decide

Type the number you actually want in the yellow column.

4

Post

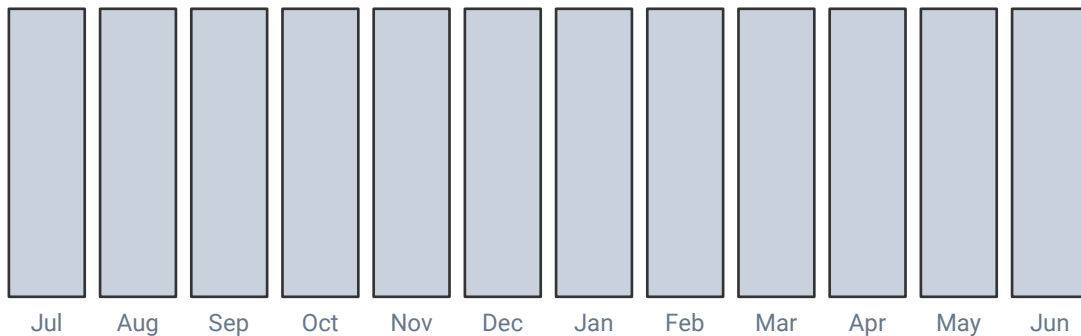
One button writes a journal entry to the budget ledger in ActivityHD.

Change the total and the periods refill underneath it, evenly, on their own.

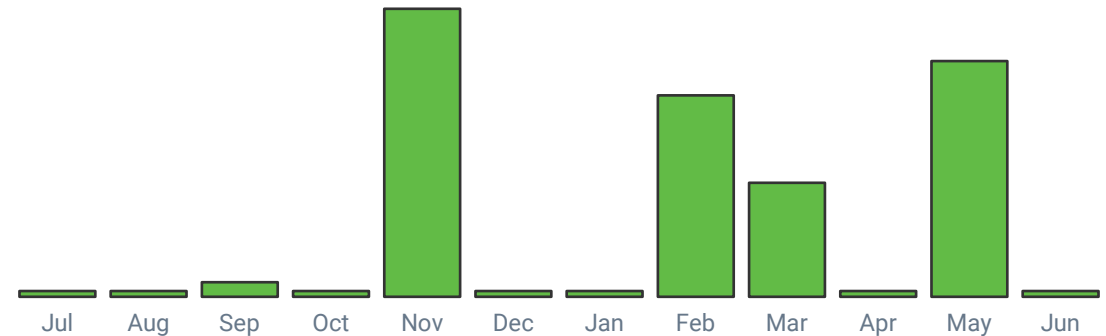
But we just divided an opera by twelve

The baseline spreads every account evenly across the year. For this company that is wrong in a way anyone in the building could tell you.

What the baseline budget says



What ticket revenue actually does



Three months carry most of the year. Four months are essentially zero.

Derived by the bot from four years of ticket-revenue recognition - not typed in by anyone.

A budget that is right for the year and wrong every month is not much use in month three.

So we built a second workbook

It looks at your accounts and your history and works out how each one behaves. Statistics where statistics are the right tool, AI where judgement is.

1

Seasonality

When does this account actually spend?

Statistical - amplitude and correlation against the performance calendar

2

Driver / Follower

Which accounts move because another one moved?

AI proposes the pairs, ratio maths validates every one

3

Budget Group

How should this account be budgeted at all?

Statistical clustering, refined by keyword

It proposes. It never decides. Nothing reaches the ledger until a person has approved it.

Efficiency 1 - Seasonality

LIVE DEMO

Baseline

Seasonality

Driver / Follower

Budget Group

Every account is sorted into one of three shapes.

Event

Follows the performance calendar

Seasonal

Has its own repeating shape

Fixed

Genuinely level - stays at one twelfth

Approve it, regenerate the workbooks, send them out again - and the periods now follow the season instead of the calendar.

The amplitude test keeps a flat account flat even when its noise happens to line up with the calendar.

Efficiency 2 - Driver and Follower

LIVE DEMO

Baseline

Seasonality

Driver / Follower

Budget Group

Salaried Wages



Salaried Payroll Taxes

Budget the wages. The tax account follows at its own historical ratio - you never budget it twice.

1

AI reads the account names and proposes the pairs

2

Pooled ratio maths validates every proposal against four years of history

3

Proposals that do not hold up are rejected before you ever see them

4

You approve what survives - and the relationship is stored on the account

On the last run the AI proposed 85 pairs and the maths threw out 39 of them.

Efficiency 3 - Budget Group

LIVE DEMO

- Baseline
- Seasonality
- Driver / Follower
- Budget Group**

Not every account deserves the same amount of your attention.

Fixed / recurring	Building leases and the like. Last year plus a little.
Sporadic / event-based	Zero-based. Needs a decision every year.
Payroll-driven	A percentage of wages.
Revenue-driven	A percentage of income.
Everything else	Case by case - this is where your judgement is actually worth spending.

Clustering finds the behaviour; a keyword pass sharpens the edges; you approve the answer.

What you just watched, four times over



The loop never changed. What changed each time was how much the machine already knew before the owner opened the file.

Baseline	Every account divided by twelve
+ Seasonality	Periods follow the season
+ Driver / Follower	Followers budget themselves
+ Budget Group	Each account gets the treatment it deserves

What this is actually worth

1

The owner opens a file that already looks right

Most of the work is the machine restating what your own history already says.

2

The decisions are kept, not re-made

Approve a driver once and it is on the account. Next year it is already there.

3

Wrong shows up in the month it happens

A budget shaped like the year means a variance means something in March, not in June.

It proposes. You decide. The account remembers.

Both of them found out too late.

A budget is not a prediction. It is a shape you agree on in advance, so that the month it goes wrong, you find out in that month.

**The machine narrows it down.
The person decides.
The system remembers.**

What is your budget assuming about time that simply is not true?





Thank You!

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