CORE CONCEPT

Finance for Non-Finance Managers: Financial Statements, Budgets and Decisions

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Technical depth: Practitioner · **Practical mode:** Case study

Introduction

Managers outside finance approve spending, build business cases and answer for budgets, yet many cannot read a balance sheet or explain why a profitable unit is short of cash. Decisions then rest on incomplete figures, and finance teams spend their time translating rather than advising. This Core Concept course gives non-finance managers a working command of financial statements, ratios, costing, investment appraisal and budget control. Participants apply each tool to case material from several sectors and leave with a Financial Decision Brief for a proposal or budget in their own area.

Course Objectives

- Read an income statement, balance sheet and cash flow statement and explain what each reveals about performance and financial position
- Diagnose profitability, liquidity, efficiency and gearing using ratio analysis and the DuPont model
- Analyse cost behaviour and break-even points to support pricing, volume and make-or-buy decisions
- Appraise a capital request using payback, net present value and internal rate of return
- Prepare a departmental budget and explain variances against it to finance and senior management
- Produce a Financial Decision Brief that sets out the numbers, risks and recommendation behind a proposal

Target Audience

- Department and functional managers who hold budgets and approve expenditure
- Operations, engineering and technical managers accountable for cost and asset performance
- Sales, marketing and commercial managers responsible for margins, pricing and revenue targets
- Project and programme managers who prepare business cases and track project spend
- HR, IT and support-service managers who negotiate budgets and justify headcount or investment

Course Outline

Day 1: Financial Foundations and the Language of Finance

- Accounting Equation and Double-Entry Logic for Non-Accountants
- Accrual Versus Cash Accounting and the Revenue Recognition Principle
- IFRS Conceptual Framework: Elements of Financial Statements
- Annual Report Anatomy: Auditor's Report, Primary Statements and Notes
- Finance Function Map: Controllership, Treasury, FP&A and the Budget Holder

Day 2: Financial Statements and the Standards Behind Them

- Income Statement Structure Under IFRS 18: Operating, Investing and Financing Categories
- Balance Sheet Reading: Assets, Liabilities, Equity and Working Capital
- Cash Flow Statement Under IAS 7: Operating, Investing and Financing Cash Flows
- Depreciation, Amortisation and Right-of-Use Assets Under IFRS 16
- Profit-to-Cash Reconciliation and Free Cash Flow Calculation

Day 3: Analysing Performance and Making Cost Decisions

- Ratio Analysis Toolkit: Profitability, Liquidity, Efficiency and Gearing
- DuPont Analysis of Return on Equity
- Cash Conversion Cycle: Receivable, Inventory and Payable Days
- Cost-Volume-Profit Analysis and Break-Even Charts
- Relevant Costing for Make-or-Buy and Special Order Decisions

Day 4: Investment Appraisal, Budget Control and Financial Risk

- Time Value of Money and Discount Rate Selection Using WACC
- Payback, NPV and IRR Appraisal of Capital Requests
- Sensitivity and Scenario Analysis of Business Case Assumptions
- Flexible Budgets and Price, Volume and Efficiency Variances
- Spend Approval Controls Under the COSO Internal Control Framework

Day 5: Case Work and the Financial Decision Brief

- Retail Chain Case Study: Profitable but Short of Cash
- Hospital Equipment Case Study: Lease or Buy Appraisal
- Departmental Budget and Variance Commentary Build for an Own Area
- Financial Decision Brief Drafting
- Peer Challenge Panel and Brief Defence

Skills You Will Gain

- Financial Statement Literacy
- Ratio Analysis
- Working Capital Management
- Cost-Volume-Profit Analysis
- Capital Investment Appraisal
- Budget Management
- Financial Risk Awareness
- Commercial Judgement

Why Attend This Course

- Return to work with a Financial Decision Brief for a live proposal or budget, already tested against peer challenge
- Hold a confident conversation with finance colleagues about margins, cash and returns without relying on them to translate
- Spot the warning signs in a set of accounts before they surface as a funding or cash problem
- Compare how managers in other sectors and countries use financial information to win approval for their plans

Conclusion

Managers who understand the numbers build stronger cases, spend more carefully and earn greater trust from finance and senior leadership. This course moves from the language of accounting and the structure of financial statements, through ratio analysis, costing and investment appraisal, to the controls and variances that keep budgets on track. The final day brings that material together in a Financial Decision Brief that participants take back to work, giving them a disciplined way to present, question and defend the financial side of every decision they own.