

SPREADSHEET SKILLS FOR PLANNING, FORECASTING & BUDGETING



GENTEX[®]
TRAINING CENTER



Introduction

Spreadsheet Skills for Planning, Forecasting & Budgeting Training Course builds the practical modelling ability that turns a planning cycle into working numbers. Participants work through spreadsheet structure, financial functions, budget models, forecasting techniques, scenario tools, and dashboard design as one connected skill set. The programme links correct spreadsheet practice with the planning decisions spreadsheets are meant to support. As a result, learners gain models they can trust and explain. Furthermore, the course strengthens formula discipline, error prevention, and the presentation of results that makes models usable by other people.

Spreadsheet Skills for Planning, Forecasting & Budgeting Course Objectives

- Apply spreadsheet structure principles: inputs, calculations, and outputs separated.
- Use absolute and relative referencing correctly in financial models.
- Apply lookup functions (VLOOKUP, INDEX/MATCH, XLOOKUP) for data retrieval.
- Apply logical functions (IF, IFS, SUMIFS, COUNTIFS, IFERROR) in planning models.
- Use financial functions such as NPV, IRR, PMT, and FV for appraisal and budgeting.
- Build driver-based budget models with documented assumptions.
- Apply data tables, goal seek, and scenario manager for sensitivity testing.
- Apply forecast functions such as FORECAST.LINEAR and TREND.
- Build PivotTables and PivotCharts for budget versus actual analysis.
- Apply model controls: checks, error traps, and documentation standards.

Course Methodology

- Interactive sessions built on spreadsheet modelling exercises.

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- Workshops on formula construction, model structure, and forecasting functions.
- Group exercises on scenario building, variance dashboards, and model review.
- Hands-on practice with budget models, data tables, and PivotTables.
- Simulation of a model audit and a budget presentation built from a model.
- Facilitator coaching and peer review on personal modelling standards.

Who Should Take This Course

- Finance analysts and budget officers.
- Management accountants and FP&A professionals.
- Planning and performance specialists.
- Departmental budget coordinators.
- Business partners supporting planning and reporting.
- Professionals who build or review financial models in spreadsheets.

Spreadsheet Skills for Planning, Forecasting & Budgeting Course Outlines

Day 1: Spreadsheet Foundations for Financial Work

- Spreadsheet structure: inputs, calculations, and outputs separated.
- Absolute, relative, and mixed referencing in financial models.
- Named ranges, structured tables, and defined formats.
- Formatting discipline: number formats, units, and dates.
- Keyboard efficiency and navigation techniques for model building.
- Common spreadsheet errors and how to prevent them.
- Exercise: rebuilding a simple budget sheet with clean structure.





Day 2: Core Financial and Lookup Functions

- Lookup functions: VLOOKUP, INDEX/MATCH, and XLOOKUP.
- Logical functions: IF, IFS, AND, OR, and IFERROR.
- Aggregation functions: SUMIFS, COUNTIFS, AVERAGEIFS.
- Text functions for cleaning imported data: TRIM, LEFT, RIGHT, TEXTJOIN.
- Combining functions in a planning calculation.
- Debugging formulas and tracing calculation errors.
- Workshop: building a lookup-driven cost schedule.

Day 3: Budget Models and Financial Functions

- Building an operating budget model with drivers.
- Applying financial functions: NPV, IRR, PMT, PPMT, and FV.
- Depreciation functions: SLN, DB, and DDB in budget models.
- Phasing, spreading, and the S-curve in a spreadsheet.
- Assumption sheets, version control, and documentation.
- Model integrity checks and error traps.
- Exercise: building a driver-based budget model with checks.

Day 4: Forecasting and Scenario Tools

- Forecast functions: FORECAST.LINEAR, TREND, and GROWTH.
- Moving averages and exponential smoothing in a spreadsheet.
- Seasonality handling with INDEX and MOD-based logic.
- Data tables for one-variable and two-variable sensitivity.
- Goal seek and scenario manager for planning decisions.

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- Solver basics for constrained planning problems.
- Simulation: testing a budget model under three scenarios.

Day 5: Dashboards, Analysis, and Model Governance

- PivotTables and PivotCharts for budget versus actual analysis.
- Variance decomposition in a spreadsheet: price, volume, and mix.
- Conditional formatting and dashboard design principles.
- Charting choices for planning and performance reporting.
- Model audit, documentation, and handover standards.
- Presenting results from a model clearly to decision-makers.
- Capstone: presenting a planning and budgeting model with a dashboard.

Conclusion

By successfully completing Spreadsheet Skills for Planning, Forecasting & Budgeting, participants will gain a practical command of spreadsheet structure, financial functions, budget modelling, forecasting tools, and dashboard design. They will acquire skills in lookup and logical functions, driver-based modelling, scenario analysis, and model governance that make planning models reliable and explainable. Gentex Training Center designs the programme to help professionals build spreadsheets they can trust.

FAQs





Q1 What is the "Spreadsheet Skills for Planning, Forecasting & Budgeting" course about?

It builds the practical modelling ability that turns a planning cycle into working numbers. The course spans spreadsheet foundations for financial work, core financial and lookup functions, budget models and financial functions, forecasting and scenario tools, and dashboards, analysis and model governance.

Q2 What are the key benefits of the "Spreadsheet Skills for Planning, Forecasting & Budgeting" course?

You gain models you can trust and explain. The course improves formula accuracy and structure, speeds up budget and forecast building, strengthens scenario and sensitivity testing, and gives you documentation and audit routines that make models usable by colleagues and reviewers.

Q3 What skills will I gain from the "Spreadsheet Skills for Planning, Forecasting & Budgeting" course?

You will develop four core skills: spreadsheet model structure and formula discipline, financial and lookup function application, driver-based budget and forecast modelling, and scenario analysis with dashboard and model governance design.



Q4 What tools, methods, or standards are covered in the "Spreadsheet Skills for Planning, Forecasting & Budgeting" course?

The course covers inputs, calculations and outputs separation, absolute, relative and mixed referencing, named ranges and structured tables, number formatting discipline, lookup functions (VLOOKUP, INDEX/MATCH, XLOOKUP), logical functions (IF, IFS, AND, OR, IFERROR), aggregation functions (SUMIFS, COUNTIFS, AVERAGEIFS), text cleaning functions (TRIM, LEFT, RIGHT, TEXTJOIN), financial functions (NPV, IRR, PMT, PPMT, FV), depreciation functions (SLN, DB, DDB), phasing and S-curve construction, assumption sheets and documentation, model integrity checks and error traps, forecast functions (FORECAST.LINEAR, TREND, GROWTH), moving averages and exponential smoothing, seasonality logic, one and two-variable data tables, goal seek and scenario manager, Solver basics, PivotTables and PivotCharts, variance decomposition, conditional formatting and dashboard design, chart selection, and model audit and handover standards.

Q5 How is the "Spreadsheet Skills for Planning, Forecasting & Budgeting" course applied in real-world practice?

Participants apply it to real work such as building a driver-based budget model with integrity checks, forecasting revenue with FORECAST.LINEAR and TREND, testing a budget under three scenarios with data tables, building a budget versus actual PivotTable dashboard, and presenting model results to decision-makers. The same methods support model audit and handover to colleagues.