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If You Build It ...

BUDGETING HAS EVOLVED BEYOND SIMPLE SPREADSHEETS. HERE'S HOW SOME COMPANIES UPGRADED THEIR BUDGETING TECHNIQUES. BY GAIL PERRY



Whether you're a road-weary budgeter with years of successful experience under your belt, starting out with a new company, or implementing a financial plan, there are myriad options to consider when it comes to

creating and working with a successful budget.

"A lot of companies use budgets, but they don't use them very well," said Milton Marcotte, CPA and managing director for accounting and business advisory firm RSM McGladrey's financial consulting practice.

Aside from varying degrees of effectiveness, others speak to the issue of using spreadsheets versus other approaches to budgeting. Though by far the most popular form of budgeting,

spreadsheets can be cumbersome and problematic, according to Wayne West, vice president at ASE Edge, a Pittsburgh-based provider of consulting and strategic services.

ASE Edge tried using budgeting features in its accounting program (first Peachtree, then QuickBooks), and then evolved to budgeting on spreadsheets in Microsoft Excel. "These spreadsheets kept getting bigger and bigger until they were several megabytes in size. Excel is a very powerful tool, but it really doesn't have any data concept to it; it's based on the cellular model. The spreadsheets were getting so complicated and hard to maintain, and we had several of them that we were using and combining them together," West explained.

He soon began researching other options, and found a number of software companies offering programs specifically designed for budgeting. ASE Edge subsequently chose Quantrix, a software program that includes planning, forecast-

