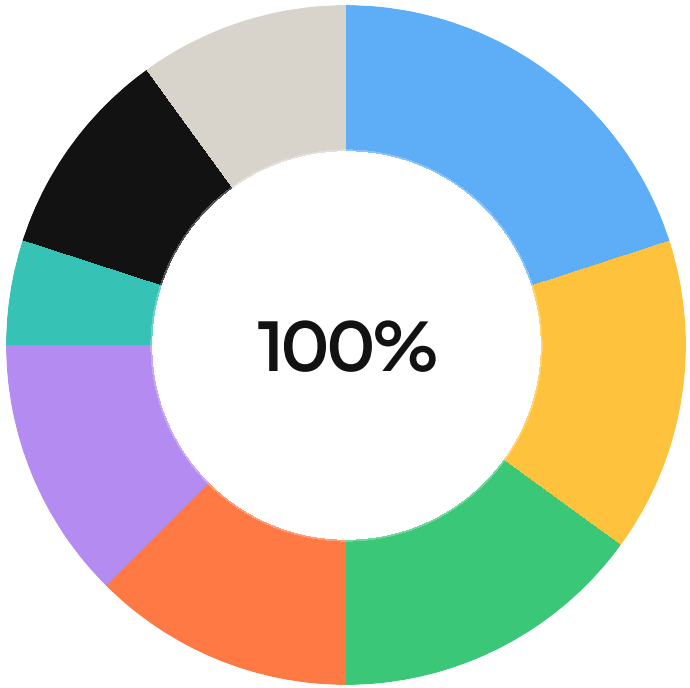
Marketing budget

Where every dollar goes, month by month and channel by channel, and how the spend compares with the plan each quarter. The Excel file does the sums for you.



Company or team

Budget owner

Period

Total budget

Plan in the Excel file: it totals every row and month, works out each channel's share and flags any quarter that runs over. Print this PDF for the approval meeting or fill it by hand.

Inside

- Plan by channel and month 2
- Planned against actual, by quarter 3

01 What each channel has to do 4

02 Rules for changes 4

- Worked example 5
- Three ways to split it 6
- Before it goes for approval 6

Plan by channel and month

Every channel gets a line, including people and tools. Keep 5 to 10% back as contingency so a good idea in June has somewhere to come from.

Channel	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Paid search													
Paid social													
Display and programmatic													
Content and SEO													
Video and creative													
Events and sponsorships													
Email and CRM													
PR													
Partners and affiliates													
Tools and software													
People and freelancers													
Contingency													
Monthly total													

Planned against actual, by quarter

Fill the plan columns from page 2 at the start of the year and the actual columns at the end of each quarter. The last column is the difference: actual minus plan.

Channel	Q1 plan	Q1 actual	Q2 plan	Q2 actual	Q3 plan	Q3 actual	Q4 plan	Q4 actual	Year plan	Year actual	Difference
Paid search											
Paid social											
Display and programmatic											
Content and SEO											
Video and creative											
Events and sponsorships											
Email and CRM											
PR											
Partners and affiliates											
Tools and software											
People and freelancers											
Contingency											
Total											

01 What each channel has to do

Money with no job attached is the first thing cut in a review. Give each line a goal and a number you will check.

Channel	What it has to do	What we expect back	How we measure it	Owner

02 Rules for changes

Agree these up front so moving money mid-year is a decision, not an argument.

Who can move money between channels

When we review the plan

What happens to money not spent

Worked example

A $240,000 year for a software company

Illustrative. A business-to-business software team with one marketer, an outside creative team and a sales team that wants demo requests.

01 Where the money goes

Channel	Year	Share	Why
Paid search	$48,000	20%	Buyers already search for the category. This line catches demand that exists today.
Paid social	$36,000	15%	Reaches the job titles on the target account list before they start searching.
Content and SEO	$36,000	15%	Slow to start, cheapest per visit by the end of the year.
Video and creative	$30,000	12.5%	One product film, ad variations each quarter and the sales deck.
Events	$30,000	12.5%	Two trade shows where the target accounts actually go.
Email and CRM	$12,000	5%	Nurture for the leads the other lines bring in.
Tools and software	$24,000	10%	The CRM, the email tool and analytics.
Contingency	$24,000	10%	Held back for whatever works better than planned.
Total	**$240,000**	**100%**	

Every line has a reason. The reason is what gets defended in the quarterly review.

02 Rules for changes

The marketing lead can move up to 10% between channels. Anything bigger goes to the finance lead.

The first week of each quarter, with the actual spend filled in first.

It goes back into contingency for the next quarter, not back to finance.

Written down before the year starts, so a mid-year change takes one email.

Three ways to split it

Common starting points, not rules. Pick one, then adjust it to what your own numbers say.

Method	How it works	Good when
70 / 20 / 10	70% on channels that already work, 20% on promising ones, 10% on experiments	You have a year of results to judge what works
By goal	Split first between building the brand and capturing demand, then by channel	Leadership asks for growth next year and leads this quarter
By stage	Split by awareness, consideration and conversion, then fill each with channels	The funnel has one clear weak spot

Before it goes for approval

Six checks the person signing it will make anyway.

- [ ] **Every row and month adds up to the total.**
  The Excel file checks this for you.
- [ ] **People, tools and production are in it.**
  Not only media. They are often the biggest lines.
- [ ] **Each channel has a job and a number.**
  Page 4 is the page that survives a budget cut.
- [ ] **There is a contingency line.**
  5 to 10% is a common size.
- [ ] **The months match the campaigns.**
  Spend lands when the campaigns run, not in twelve equal slices.
- [ ] **Review dates are in the calendar.**
  One per quarter, with the actuals filled in before the meeting.