Budgeting Q&A: How to Step Up
In getting requests approved, it’s not always what you say, but how you say it

It’s budget time, and you know what that means. You need to present your budget requests and get them approved! If you present your case well, your department will have the funds you need to excel. If you don’t, you’ll be left scrambling for creative ways to complete tasks and meet goals. While many people adequately prepare their presentation backed with facts, charts, graphs, and projections, they often forget about the question-and-answer session that follows. In many cases, this is the most important aspect of any budgetary meeting. If you lose control of the question and answer session, you will inevitably lose control of the outcome.

Here are some tips to ensure a successful question and answer session:

TIP 1: Confidence sells
By remaining calm, cool, and in control when taking questions, you will project confidence in yourself and your ideas. Tell yourself, “I deserve this money for my department, and I’m going to get it!” Clear your mind of all the other stresses of your day and focus on this one objective. The more under control you’re able to keep yourself, the more confident you’ll appear, and the better you’ll handle those tough questions.

TIP 2: Be aware of what you say and how you say it
In budget meetings, defensive behavior is a recipe for disaster. Rather than say the first thing that pops into your mind, pause and breathe deeply to give yourself time to formulate a correct and intelligent response. When you implement this technique, the audience will see you as thoughtful, decisive and respectful of the importance of their question. When responding to a tough question, begin your answer by stating a goal of the group. This will help you verbally diffuse the negative tone and communicate a positive response.

TIP 3: Be mindful of your body language
Your physical conduct sends a message to the audience about your confidence level and expertise. Your body language must reflect the same confidence that your words portray.

If you’re standing, stand with your hips and head facing the person you’re speaking to. Keep both feet firmly planted on the ground shoulder width apart. This stance will allow you to gesture naturally and physically connect with the individuals in the audience. If you’re seated, sit upright in your chair with both feet planted firmly on the ground. Avoid slouching in your seat or leaning with your elbows on the table. Keep your hands on the table to allow for natural gestures. Look the other person in the eye to communicate a feeling of confidence.

TIP 4: Balance the energy in the room
Create an environment where everyone feels free to ask questions. Begin your answer speaking directly to the questioner. As you continue, begin to slowly move your eye contact to others in the room. This will help you to appear inclusive of others beyond the questioner. When possible, end your answer with someone other than the questioner. If you find you ended your answer on the person who asked the original question, you’ve given them control and likely invited another question. If you end on someone else, it will keep your energy open to everyone in the room and minimize tough follow-up questions.
from the original questioner. When you finish your answer, turn to the group and ask if they have any more questions. This will encourage others to engage because your body language tells them you are open.

**Show me the money!**

Question and answer sessions can be tough, but when it comes to money matters, the stakes are usually high and questions are usually hard. When you keep these four tips in mind, you can handle any budgetary question and answer session with ease, and get the funding you deserve.

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