

13-Week Cash Flow Forecast

Quick Start Guide

Why this matters

Your P&L tells you if you're profitable. This template tells you if you can pay the bills. Profitable businesses go broke every day because they confuse 'profit on the books' with 'cash in the account.' The 13-week cash flow forecast is the single most valuable financial tool a small business owner can use — and the most ignored.

Open the Excel file. Two tabs:

Read Me First — instructions (you're holding the printed version of these).

Forecast — the actual model.

Fill it out in 4 steps

- 1 Enter your starting cash balance (cell C8, yellow highlight). That's the cash in your bank account today.
- 2 Fill in expected cash IN for the next 13 weeks. Customer payments, cash sales, new financing, refunds. Be conservative.
- 3 Fill in expected cash OUT for the next 13 weeks. Payroll, rent, materials, taxes, loan payments, owner draws. Pull the trigger.
- 4 The forecast auto-calculates net cash flow and ending balance for each week. Look at the bottom row (ENDING CASH BALANCE).

What to look for

■ Red flags	Any week where ENDING BALANCE goes below zero, or below your safety threshold (we recommend \$10,000).
■ Recurring deficits	Weeks where cash OUT exceeds cash IN — even if the total balance stays positive, you're running on credit.
■ Patterns	Do certain weeks always tighten? Mondays after payroll? Quarter-ends when taxes are due? That's why you need a forecast.
■ Buffer	How many weeks of operating costs sit in your ending balance? If it's less than 4, you have a cash runway problem.

What to do when you spot a problem

Cash gap in 2-4 weeks	Call your largest past-due customers today. Most cash crises are AR problems, not P&L problems.
Cash gap in 4-8 weeks	Tighten outflows: defer non-critical equipment purchases, renegotiate vendor payment terms (if possible).
Cash gap in 8-13 weeks	You have time. Open a line of credit BEFORE you need it (banks don't lend to businesses already in crisis).
No gaps but margins are thin	You're solvent but vulnerable. One bad month and you're in crisis. This is when CFO advisory services are most valuable.

Common mistakes to avoid

Forecasting revenue too optimistically. Your sales pipeline is not your cash forecast. Only count what's actually going to hit the bank.

Forgetting non-monthly outflows. Quarterly taxes, annual insurance premiums, equipment replacements — they don't show up in your monthly P&L; but they do show up in your bank account.

Not updating it weekly. A 13-week forecast that's 6 weeks stale is worse than no forecast at all. Pick a day each week (we recommend Monday morning) and update actuals against forecast.

Confusing revenue with cash. Net 30 invoice on a job means you get paid in 30+ days — not today. The forecast tracks when money lands, not when it's earned.

Want yours built for your actual business — and kept current?

A working 13-week cash flow forecast pulls live from your bookkeeping, updates weekly, and gets reviewed against actuals. That's what we build for our CFO advisory clients at Tradepoint CFOs.

Schedule a free 30-minute consultation
rdbookkeepingsolutions.com/contact/
(401) 264-8828