

Buffini & Company

Client Appreciation Program™

Your clients will really appreciate this month's Item of Value—it has everything they need to help them create a budget for their summer vacation or next winter's ski trip. You can add more value by following up with one or more of these suggestions:

- Visit area travel agencies to collect literature on upcoming cruises and package trips. Prepare a "Dream Vacation" basket by filling a straw sunhat with the travel brochures, a pair of fun sunglasses, a travel magazine, and a beach toy.
- Compile a list of bed & breakfasts within an hour's drive of your location. Contact them to see if they can offer your clients a special discount.
- Pop-By with one of the following:
 - > A book on budgeting or vacation journal with a travel-themed cover.
 - > A road atlas of your state or the United States.

CLIENT APPRECIATION PROGRAM (CAP)

The CAP is a tool to help you cultivate the client relationships that will produce a steady stream of referrals.

THE GOALS OF THE CAP

The CAP provides a reason to stay in touch with clients and puts you in a comfortable position to ask for a referral. Your clients will appreciate receiving the same level of excellent service every month.

TIP

We suggest you personalize your cover letters* using a computerized mail merge—but it's more important to mail them than to wait until you fully understand mail merge techniques. If necessary, photocopy and send as is.

*You can download the cover letter from our website.

CONSISTENCY

This will be something that makes you unique—and your business as well! It will produce results with your clients. The key to the CAP is giving something of value each and every month and following up with voice-to-voice or face-to-face contact with your "A" clients.

USE THE "BIG 3" DIALOG FOR FOLLOW-UP

It is seven times more effective when you follow up with a call or Pop-By, than when you don't. You will be amazed at the number of referrals received from this process. With the "BIG 3" there are three things you should always weave into the conversation:

1. **Can I help you in any way?** Let them know they shouldn't hesitate to call your office.
2. **I want you to know the value you represent to me as a client.** "John, I just want to make sure you know how much I value you as a client. It was a pleasure for me to serve you, and I look forward to doing it again for you and your family in the future. My business is built by working with people like you and taking care of you, your family, friends and associates..."
3. **Oh, by the way™** ... "John, if you know of someone who is looking for the personal attention that I provide and who would appreciate this kind of service, I'd love to help them. So when you come across these people, just give me a call with their name and business number and I'll be happy to follow up and take good care of them for you..."

Theme for next month's CAP is:
Landscaping

Want to Plan an Affordable Vacation?

Dear Friend,

Do you know what the most relaxing vacation is? The one you've already got money for! Nothing can ease away workday concerns like knowing your fun family getaway is covered. A vacation doesn't have to take a big chunk out of your pocketbook. What it does take is some advance planning.

For this month's Client Appreciation Program I am sending you information about how to create your vacation budget. This Item of Value will tell you why charging a vacation is almost never a good idea. It will also help you choose the right kind of budget, depending on whether you need to save for a vacation, or already have funds set aside. Furthermore, this piece provides excellent online resources that help you evaluate travel products and services, make travel arrangements, and track costs.

The reverse side gives you valuable worksheets—one to help you estimate vacation expenses for everything from airfare to tips, and another to help you create a savings plan for your trip. Alongside the worksheets you'll find useful tips for everyday household budgeting as well as for vacation planning.

With a good budget you'll be able to relax not only while you're on vacation, but also when you return!

Sincerely,

Oh, by the way™... if you know of someone who would appreciate the level of service I provide, please call me with their name and business number and I will be happy to follow-up and take great care of them.



Budget the Best Vacation Ever

Vacationing costs more this year than last. But you can make your money travel farther by planning ahead.

First Things First

It is a good idea to include vacation plans as part of your annual budget. Budgeting for vacations can go in two directions. For the destination vacation, meaning you know where you want to go, budgeting involves estimating the costs of the trip and then devising a plan for saving between now and departure. For the fund-focused vacation, you have a set amount of money already—perhaps from a bonus check, tax return, or vacation savings account—so planning goes toward researching locations and packages and then comparing deals.

For either kind of vacation, you'll want to construct your budget by making informed cost estimates of big items such as airfare, hotels, car rentals, and dining. You must also estimate small or unexpected expenses, such as tipping, souvenirs, snacks, shopping, host gifts, and parking. Travel literature (Web sites, magazines, books), travel email lists, and travel agents can help you pinpoint cost items specific to locations.

When saving for a vacation, sock away funds every month or pay period. Consider having your employer make a direct deposit out of each paycheck to a savings account, certificate of deposit or money-market account. For vacations a few years away, consider investing in a higher-return vehicle, such as a balanced mutual fund.

Credit Where Credit is Due

The cost of a typical weeklong summer vacation in 2004 ranged from \$1,000 to \$2,250. Lacking a budget, however, many vacationers paid off their trip months after the fun ended. Three out of four people planned to use credit cards for some or all vacation expenses. A 2004 survey by Myvesta.org revealed, and more than a quarter of those polled admitted they would need three months or more to pay off the charges.

While cautioning against credit-funded vacations, travel experts allow for the use of credit when it offers concrete savings. For example, cards may offer frequent-flier rewards, savings on car rentals, and better exchange rates overseas. In these situations, have the money saved and ready to pay off the credit card in the first billing.

Last Words

Borrowing money for a vacation violates every sound money management principle in the universe, one financial analyst warned. So when you sit down to make a vacation budget, make sure it's just one part of your larger annual household budget.

Vacations that last a lifetime

If you charge your \$2,250 vacation to a credit card with 18% interest and pay only the minimum 2% payments, you will pay an extra \$5,687 in interest by the time you pay off the vacation—in 33 years! *Myvesta.org news release, May 20, 2004*

Internet Traveling

Four out of ten travelers said they make all of their reservations online, according to the Travel Industry Association, this is up from three in ten the year before. Internet resources make armchair traveling, bargain hunting, and price comparing, as well as finding help with budgets, easier than ever before. Here are some Web sites to try:

www.consumerreports.org

The travel section has reports on a broad range of travel products, services and news. This subscription service has some useful free material.

www.consumersearch.com

For vacation planners, this site has a useful review of travel reservation Web sites, as well as consumer reviews.

www.budgettravel.about.com

About.com's Budget Travel library includes authored and edited articles on current travel info and planning tools, as well as links to message boards for live "chats."

www.aaa.com

The American Automobile Association's best planning features are reserved for members, but some tools—notably, the Daily Fuel Gauge Report on gas prices nationwide and the Fuel Cost Calculator—are available for free.

www.travel.state.gov

The U.S. Department of State lets you search by destination to ensure you have all required paperwork. This site also provides a list of travel warnings.



Tomorrow's Vacations

The following are expected trends for travelers:

- > Bigger, pricier vacations, especially cruises and European destinations.
- > All-inclusive vacation packages.
- > "Togetherness," or reunions of extended families or groups of friends, with a central location and planned accommodations, meals, activities, memorabilia, and more.
- > Generation X-style vacations, with exotic add-ons, Wi-Fi (wireless internet capability), adventure offerings, and hip hotels.
- > Space travel — Virgin Galactic announced its \$100 million VSS Enterprise will be launched in spring 2008. After health checkups, waiver signings, and several days of simulator training, passengers will experience the wild yonder for about three hours.

Vacation Budget Worksheet

It is helpful to include a vacation budget as part of your annual household or personal budget. Generally it's considered a discretionary expense and a short-term savings goal. A special vacation, however—one that lasts longer and/or costs more money—may be a long-term savings goal, therefore putting aside money for this trip is essential. A well-planned vacation budget has its own incoming and outgoing columns. Added up, the income should be greater than the expenses.

The Basic Budget

Monthly income: List sources and amounts.

Include salary, overtime, bonuses, commissions, and income from freelance work, pensions, insurance, investments, alimony or child support, and real estate.

Monthly costs: List sources and amounts.

Include mortgage or rent, taxes (property, income), utilities, subscriptions, loan payments, insurance (life, medical, car, homeowners), groceries, entertainment, transportation (gas, parking, bus), child care, veterinary bills, charity, gifts, repairs, retirement, vacations.

Add each column. Average three months of income and expenses to balance monthly variations. Then subtract expenses from income. The amount left over can be used to increase the vacation fund or provide a cushion for unexpected expenses.

EXPENSES

BEFORE GOING	EST. AMT.
Passport	
Personal care (haircut, manicure, etc.)	
Health care (shots, motion sickness pills, extra medication)	
Child care	
Pet and house care	
If driving: Car tune-up	
Special wardrobe (swimsuit, ski suit, etc.)	
Accessories (sunglasses, alarm clock, suntan lotion, film, etc.)	
Special luggage	
Other	
GOING	EST. AMT.
By Car: Gas and oil	
Tolls	
Meals & snacks x travel days	
Lodging x travel nights	
By Air, Rail, Bus: Tickets	
Travel to/from terminal	
Long-term parking	
Meals & snacks	
THERE	EST. AMT.
Car rental	
Car rental fuel	
Lodging x number of nights	
Lodging taxes x number of nights	
Breakfast x number of days	
Lunch x number of days	
Dinner x number of days	
Cocktails x number of days	
Snacks and beverages x number of days	
Activities (attractions, admissions, eqpt. rentals)	
Souvenirs	
Postage (postcards, mailing packages)	
Transportation (shuttle, taxi, subway, tour bus)	
Tips (baggage, concierge, maids, transportation)	
Shopping (clothing, furnishings, gifts, equipment)	
Other	

VACATION INCOME/SAVINGS

FUND SOURCE	EST. AMT.
Savings deposits x number of months/pay periods	
Other savings/investments	
Bonus/commission	
Gifts	
Tax return	
Other	

