



Making End\$ Meet
Franchise Operations Manual
by Economist, Founder, Owner, & Author
Kris Freeberg

Table of Contents

I. <u>Introduction & Background</u>	2
II. <u>Important Franchisee Qualities</u>	3
III. <u>Getting Clients and Getting Paid: Marketing, Sales, and Collections</u>	4
IV. <u>Client Records, Organizing & Pacing Yourself</u>	4
V. <u>Creating the Lifetime Savings Plan</u>	6
VI. <u>Presenting the Plan, Closing the Sale</u>	8
VII. <u>The First Couple of Months</u>	9
VIII. <u>After the First Couple of Months</u>	10



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- I. **Introduction & Background.** A Making End\$ Meet Economist is a private sector economic cartographer, navigator, and improvement catalyst.

Making End\$ Meet is an Economics practice designed to serve a market neglected by traditional financial services: the struggling majority. Using an architecture analogy to illustrate this neglect, if we did in architecture what is done in conventional financial services, we would insist that clients build their houses before we draw them a blueprint. The situation is absurd.

We solve this absurdity by giving plans freely to anyone who wants one regardless of their present means or station. We are willing to give plans freely because we know that, just as in architecture, the plan is the first step toward progress; and we are so confident in the value of our work that we know we can afford to risk working for little or nothing in the beginning because most of the time, the early differences we make enable our clients to afford us later.

Business & Personal. A prevalent distinction in the minds of many is between “personal” and “business” as though the two were mutually exclusive. In online social networking, Myspace was “personal” while LinkedIn is “business.” Meanwhile the leader in Social Networking is Facebook, which integrates the two.

So does Making End\$ Meet. It has been, is, and will probably always be a *personal business*.

I began it in 1996 for personal reasons. My life was unraveling, I was the father of an adorable little boy, my wife was leaving me, and I needed a way to earn a living that was flexible enough to cope with the chaos and put family (such as it was - dwindling and in a state of redefinition, but with profound legacy implications) first.

Can you relate? Have you ever had to deal with chaos, uncertainty, and distress? I'll bet you have, and so will most of your future clients, so I suggest getting used to it.

(In my own case, despite stresses like death, birth, separation, divorce, dislocation, relocation, and even war [I served 2001-2006 in the Army National Guard], using this business model, I still managed to make my own ends meet quite handily by helping others do the same. I am confident that if I could succeed as well as I did despite such distractions and disruptions, with the twin benefits of my help and fewer disruptions, you can do even better.)

This business is also personal in the sense that the goals we help people set and achieve are personal: things like affording emergencies, buying a house, raising a family, helping aging parents, home improvements, new cars, vacations, children's educations, sabbaticals, retirement, and so on.

Revenue Model. The revenue model began not as a business model at all, but – believe it or not – as a model for discipleship and pastoral care in churches. The original question was, how can a church afford to lavish intensive care on new members who are typically hurting, broken, under- or unemployed, and least able to pay for such care?

It was also a response to the problem of neglected members who were not new but who still needed care, and were overlooked by leadership because they weren't novel any more and had sort of faded into the crowd, leadership changed or played favorites, or because of a host of other reasons.

Further, it was a response to the problem of crisis management, or of the squeaky wheel getting the grease. I noticed a need to help churches become more proactive, preventive, fair, and thorough in the way they worked, and supposed that a pre-determined plan or schedule of individual discipleship and pastoral care might help.

So the need that I recognized was for a regressive schedule of sustained care: frequent in the beginning to orient people and help them get on their feet, and less frequent later on, but sustained over a considerable period of time, say three to five years, to follow up and build on their initial progress.

Alas, at the time my own church was in such a state of chaos that such suggestions fell on deaf ears. Meanwhile I needed to do something with my Accounting degree and earn a living, so I applied this model in a business context, and Making End\$ Meet was born.

In summary then, the Making End\$ Meet revenue model consists of two phases: regressive in the first three to five years, then linear thereafter, if necessary and as needed. During the regressive phase, the total value of the work, which is based on your income goal, is amortized on an even monthly basis over the presumed term, making it essentially a deferred compensation plan to you and an affordable financing arrangement for your clients. In substance, you invest yourself in them and, if you're successful, they pay you monthly gratuities in thanks for the positive difference you made, make, and will make in their economies.

This deferred compensation plan results in several advantages:

- Competitive price advantage. No other financial professional charges so humanely, reasonably, or affordably.
- Sales advantage: with such low starting cost, there is little or no objection to closing the sale. The service virtually sells itself.
- Low time and performance pressure during the discovery phase of the relationship: because the client is not being charged by the hour and costs are clearly contained, the parties can relax, engage in small talk, build trust and rapport, and get thoroughly acquainted. This thorough acquaintance cements a firm bond of loyalty and trust throughout the working relationship.
- Recurring passive monthly income
- Flexible schedule

To set your annual income goal and rates, [download this worksheet](#) and enter your annual income goal in cell B3.

II. Important Franchisee Qualities. To do well as a Making End\$ Meet franchisee, you must really love and care about people. This is friendly, personal work, providing relief and resolution in an area of life that troubles most people, most of the time. In many cases, you will find yourself being more helpful than your clients' closest friends or family members. Through this work, you will probably make new friends who are closer than the ones you've had, and people will adopt you into their families as a trusted surrogate relative.

Because of the human bonds of gratitude and even affection that result naturally from such friendly work, you must rise to the level of fiduciary duty, which means that you must make your clients' interests more important than your own interests or anyone else's. That is one reason why a Making End\$ Meet Economist does not sell products. In our clients' best interests, we must remain impartial and objective. We research products, but we don't sell them.

Of course if you really love and care about people, you're going to be ethical. [Here is a fairly thorough discussion of my ethics and where I got them.](#)

Beyond love and ethics, a Making End\$ Meet franchisee must know the language of economics: accounting. You must know your way around accounting software and financial statements, because you are the one to whom your clients look for answers.

To provide answers, you must presuppose the existence of Truth, which by its very nature is absolute and objective. Neither Nihilism nor Obscurantism have any place here. Two and two sum to four, differences can be and are reconciled, problems have solutions, and questions have answers. If you have even the faintest streak of Nihilism or Obscurantism in your personality makeup, you'll be of little use to your clients or yourself; a Making End\$ Meet franchise will not be for you.

In summary then, a viable Making End\$ Meet franchisee candidate is a loving, ethical person with strong accounting skills and who is firmly grounded in absolute, objective Truth. One might say that you're in The Truth Business. Indeed, Truth is what people are buying from you, so you had better be willing and able, even eager, to deliver it. If you are, you'll do very well.

- III. **Getting Clients and Getting Paid: Marketing, Sales, and Collections.** [Read the Marketing Plan page](#) and use it as a guide in writing your own Marketing Plan. If you need help writing it, I would be glad to help you. Be sure to check out the link to Seth Godin's blog, "First, Ten."

Use a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) application to track and manage your prospecting activities. I recommend crmpro.com because it's stable, delivers the most bang for the buck, and is best designed to track referral relationships by hyperlinking contact records to each other, enabling you to see at a glance who referred whom. For more CRM discussion, [see the Improve Income page](#). Be sure to ask me for help setting up and using your CRM account, especially if you have a lot of contacts to upload from other sources like your e-mail address book or smart phone.

In my CRM account, I have numerous pre-approach letters and marketing campaigns I have developed and used over the years with varying success that I would be glad to share with you. After you've decided to become a franchisee and paid your fee, we can examine them together, determine which ones would be the most appropriate for your market, and do some campaigns.

But remember this: all marketing does is generate leads. Selling converts leads into paying clients, and that only happens through careful follow-up and excellent people skills.

Your goal in selling is to persuade your prospects to [get a free Lifetime Savings Plan by completing the online questionnaire](#) and, once you deliver the plan, to persuade them to hire you to help them achieve it.

When hired, [send new clients an Engagement Letter](#) that thanks them, lets them know what to expect in the near future, and notifies them that in a little while you will ask to be paid via automatic electronic transfer and will request three referrals. I find that with such advance notice, referrals are easy to get, your schedule will soon fill, and you'll have the pleasant problem of having more leads than you can handle – which is one purpose of the CRM system. It is a sort of "lead bank" that is as good as money in the bank, insofar as money comes from people.

The Engagement Letter links to [the Rates and Payment page](#) where clients authorize recurring electronic collection. It sends me an email which I PDF and upload to their Documents library in the CRM system.

Once you have their permission to collect automatically from them, you can use a vendor like [Netbanx](#) to process the collection. I have been very happy with Netbanx for several years now, both because of the

ease of their automation, and because of their low fee structure. For help working with them, feel free to contact me.

IV. Client Records, Organizing & Pacing Yourself.

The Results Summary tracks where we are each client's Review Schedule. After each review, I email clients a Review Memorandum containing a hyperlink to a PDF Results Summary (generated from a spreadsheet application) that I store in the Documents library of their CRM record. It includes columns for planned and actual review dates, and planned and actual accomplishments. [Here's an example.](#)

The Master Schedule. Once the physical client file & Review Checklist are established, the next task is to [add the client to your Master Schedule](#), the purpose of which is to prevent over-booking, predict operating capacity and income, and pace marketing efforts. For example if you know that over the next two months you only have capacity to serve four more clients, you probably don't want to be spending time, effort, and money on a huge marketing campaign; selective follow-up with your warmest leads should do. On the other hand if you know you have room for fifteen or twenty, then by all means launch an intensive campaign.

The Master Schedule requires a few basic spreadsheet skills to use and adjust as time passes. If you need help working with it, feel free to contact me. It contains three tabs: Work Schedule, Pay Schedule, and Cash Flow.

In the Work Schedule tab, I apply their chosen review schedule by recording a "1" in the column representing the week when their reviews fall (see the above link for examples), and with – believe it or not, a good old pencil – as a cross-reference, I record the corresponding date from row 12 on the Work Schedule to the "Date Planned" column in their Results Summary, to indicate that they have been included in the Master Schedule. The date indicated is the Monday of that week, so that when it's time to schedule their next review I can look at their file and say "I have set aside time the week of ____ for your next review; when would work best for you?"

Furthermore, if their need for help differs from what we expected – either less or more – that difference becomes apparent by comparing the Planned and Actual dates in their file, triggering a renegotiation of their deal.

This technique has been very helpful in keeping client relationships smooth and on track. The record has also been invaluable in collecting deferred compensation when clients curtail work, when they're happy with services rendered but curtail future work due to circumstances beyond the Economist's control.

Briefly, the Work Schedule sheet monitors capacity by summing weekly reviews scheduled on row 33, comparing those sums with the weekly capacity in cell F1, calculating remaining capacity on row 34, and summarizing remaining capacity from row 34 in 60 day, 1 year, and 2 year subtotals on row 7. Forecasts on rows 8-10 are then based on those remaining review capacities.

The Pay Schedule tab simply arranges the same clients by the date of the month they've agreed to pay (versus the order in which they hired you on the Work Schedule), and the Cash Flow tab links to the Pay Schedule to forecast spending and balances. It can be modified to suit your situation.

(Incidentally, this last Cash Flow tab is the same layout provided to the public on the [Budget page](#).)

- V. **Creating the Lifetime Savings Plan.** The Lifetime Savings Plan (LSP) is the core of this work. Your job as a Making End\$ Meet Economist is to do everything you can, legally and ethically, to help your clients realize their plans. You are to the LSP as a cartographer is to a map. For a thorough discussion of the LSP, [see the web page](#).

I invented the LSP for myself when I realized no financial planners or investment advisers would help me because I didn't have enough assets at the time to interest them. At the time I supposed that my plan was inferior to the "professionals" and that, once I accumulated more assets, I would re-approach them and get a "real one", that my home-made LSP would tide me over for the time being, and that it was a temporary work-around.

Later, I made the following discoveries, both about my plan, and about the financial services industry:

- My plan was more thorough than the professionals', addressing around twenty goals versus their handful.
- It was more concise and understandable.
- It was easier to create and could therefore be offered at less or no cost.
- The professionals' real income was derived from commissions on sale of products, not from planning. Thus their titles were often confusing misnomers.
- Usually, despite perception to the contrary, they were neither independent nor impartial. They had favorite products that they promoted that were not necessarily in their clients' best interests.
- Accordingly, they did not rise to the level of fiduciary duty.

From these discoveries I was both discouraged from joining the industry, and inspired to develop Making End\$ Meet.

And while the practice has grown, developed, and changed, I have always kept the LSP at the core. Everything else we do as Economists - whether it is researching investments, writing budgets, teaching accounting, compiling and interpreting financial statements, teaching sales skills, writing business and marketing plans, mediating negotiations, performing SWOT or Pareto Analyses, designing web sites, or making people laugh - is a means toward the end of realizing it.

The procedure for developing the LSP is to have prospective clients participate in an interview in which they answer questions about their goals: amount, timing, frequency, and whether they want life insurance to fund the goal if they don't live to earn it. All of this is laid out both in worksheet form and in the form of a self-explanatory online interview, which you can [examine at the web page](#).

The online interview has worked great. People totally get it, I have never had to hold anyone's hand or draw answers out of them. They blast through it in 15-30 minutes. I receive their answers in the form of an e-mail, which I then study and summarize on the worksheet. Once their answers are arranged on the worksheet, writing the plan is a fairly straightforward, mechanical process using [this template](#) according to the following directions.

Remember, enter all dollar amounts in thousands. In other words, \$50,000 would be entered as 50.

- A) If the client uses the online interview, the resulting answers arrive in the email listed in random order. I don't know why. To cope with this wrinkle I have numbered everything. Read through the e-mail, arranging answers on the [worksheet](#) according to their indicated number. For example Emergencies are 1, Retirement is 7, etc.
- B) The worksheet condenses the *data* in the email into *information*, from several pages to one. Next, from the worksheet, arrange the answers in the [template](#), putting goal names in cells C10-R10, amounts (in thousands) in cells C6-R6, years in cells C7-R7, frequencies in cells C8-R8, and life insurance percentages in cells C9-R9.

- C) Enter the current year in cell D1.
- D) Enter the starting portfolio balance in cell D2.
- E) Enter living expenses in cell D3.
- F) Enter life insurance coverage of pre-retirement living expenses in cell D4. (Presume the same as for Retirement.)
- G) Enter the inflation rate in cell D6.
- H) Enter mortgage data, if applicable, in cells G3-G5. If necessary, use the Payment function to calculate the mortgage payment in cell G4.
- I) Develop age brackets for high, medium, and low rates of Return on Investment (ROI). Absent any other assumption, I divide remaining life span between the present and age 100 into equal thirds, and record them in cells J3-J5, as indicated in the examples.
- J) Enter high, medium, and low ROI goals in cells K3-K5.
- K) Edit the time line in column A so that the final year in the time line is the client's 100th birth year. Insert or delete rows as necessary, taking care to ensure the integrity of all formulae affected, especially totals.
- L) Edit cell B11 so that the year being subtracted from cell A11 is the client's birth year. Then, fill B11 all the way down, listing the client's ages next to the years, through age 100.
- M) In column U, Return on Investment, edit the formulae by filling down (Edit>Fill>Down) so that the right percentages in cells K3-K5 are referenced in the right years in column U.
- N) Arrange planned withdrawals and spending as instructed by copying and pasting the formulae in column C according to the timing and frequency specified by the client. Using absolute and relative addressing, by copying and pasting, these formulae inflate the amounts in row 6 in their respective columns.
- O) In column T (Deposits), fill formulae down to the year before retirement.
- P) When all withdrawals and spending are arranged, the formulae in column S will total all withdrawals by year, and the formulae in column V will compute the running portfolio balance.
- Q) In cell AB13, "echo" the age 100 ending balance by "pointing" to it, by typing an equal sign = in cell AB13, then clicking on the age 100 ending balance in column V, then pressing <enter>. Whatever amount appears in the age 100 cell in column V should also appear in cell AB13.
- R) Our goal is to equip our clients to die broke at age 100, saving as gradually as possible, scheduling deposits driven by a quadratic equation in column AC. The quadratic equation contains a slope and an intercept in cells AB11 and AB12.
- S) By default, set the slope, in cell AB11, to .6.
- T) Place the cursor on cell AB13, the age 100 ending balance.
- U) Use the "Goal Seek" feature in your spreadsheet program to set cell AB13 to zero by changing the intercept in cell AB12.

At this point, you have a first draft plan. How does column V (portfolio balance) look? Do you see any negative numbers because of ambitious early spending? Perhaps you need to finesse the slope or negotiate some early timing to make it more workable.

Perhaps you may want to run two or three “what if” scenarios to demonstrate to your client the difference that an extra half point ROI makes on the total picture, or different retirement standards of living. Once everything is laid out, the what-if possibilities are endless and fun. It's amazing how much better life can be through the slightest improvement in investment acumen.

A complete Lifetime Savings Plan consists of five elements. All elements include the time line in columns A-B.

- 1) The plan itself (columns C-V)
- 2) The Take-Home Pay Schedule (columns AE-AJ)
- 3) Gross Income Conclusions for the next three years (from the Taxes and Tithe tab) that convert the net income figures in cells AG11-AG13 to gross income. Directions for using this tab are in the upper left corner of the Taxes and Tithe sheet. (Contact me with questions.)
- 4) Sample Present-Value Life Insurance Computations (columns AK-BN), and
- 5) Life Insurance Conclusions (columns DH-DM).

Each element is produced by hiding the necessary columns, setting the print area, composing the header, and saving to a pdf. Label each element intelligibly, bundle them all in a zip folder, and you're ready to deliver the plan as an e-mail attachment.

Do not hesitate to contact me with questions about creating the LSP and by all means, before you present what you think is a finished plan to a client, show it to me first. Helpful, experienced oversight is part of the value you receive as a Making End\$ Meet franchisee.

VI. Presenting the Plan, Closing the Sale. When you e-mail the finished plan to your prospect, in the e-mail ask them to suggest a few favorable times to examine the plan together, either in person or by phone. Send them your rate sheet (I like to upload it to my domain and hyperlink to it in the e-mail discussion, but you can send it as an attachment just as easily). They probably won't understand it, but providing it gets you that much nearer to the close and gives them something to wonder about.

At the appointed time, explain the plan to them. By then they'll be so overwhelmed by how much value you have already delivered at no charge that they'll feel slightly obligated to pay you and will be asking about compensation. You don't really need to push the sale at all. In fact, try asking them an open-ended question like, “How would you like to proceed?” or, “So what do you think?”

In this way the conversation will naturally progress toward a discussion of rates and compensation, at which point you can present your rate sheet, either on a computer screen or as a printed document, discuss their options in detail, and invite them to write you a check for a review schedule and payment that they find to be a comfortable fit.

If you are not sure which option to recommend to them, contact me to discuss their situation before you present, and I will offer you my own recommendations based on my experience.

Again, within twenty-four hours after they've hired you, send them an [Engagement Letter](#). Before you deposit their check in your bank account, note their routing and account numbers off the bottom of the check for future reference, when the time comes to request automatic payment. We can establish custom fields in your CRM program to store that information.

VII. The First Couple of Months. The first couple of months of work – usually a series of weekly reviews – is a time of discovery, establishment, and education.

Budget. Typically, the first thing is to build a three-year budget that verifies the annual living expense estimate in the LSP and breaks savings goals down from annual to monthly terms, using the budget template that you can [download from the upper right corner of the Budget page](#). For assistance using this template, feel free to contact me. Usually, completing a three year budget takes two reviews.

If a business is involved, you'll probably want to include in the same budget file, probably as a separate sheet but that is linked to and dependent on the budget, a pro-forma business plan that produces pre-tax profit necessary to afford the budget. For a more thorough discussion about that and a helpful template, [see the Break-Even Analysis & Profit Planning page](#). Once a sales goal is set, a [Marketing Plan](#) and [CRM system](#) are typically needed as well.

Accounting. In either case, whether a business is involved or not, once the budget is set the next task is to establish a way to track it, which almost always involves the use of Intuit accounting products.

Until recently, Intuit's Quicken program worked great for households. However, in around 2010 or 2011 it began to fall apart. As of this writing, the reports don't make sense and I don't recommend using it at all, unless you use an older version. I have CD installation disks of older versions that could be used. If you see the need for them, talk to me and we'll discuss options.

QuickBooks, both for the Mac and the PC, still work great. QuickBooks also has a nifty online version that is comparatively expensive but can make a lot of sense for geographically diffuse enterprises.

Many other cloud-based apps like Freshbooks, You Need a Budget (YNAB), Mvelopes, and Mint have such weak reporting that in my estimation, they are a waste of time.

Regardless which accounting solution you and your clients choose, what's most imperative is to get the budget posted accurately in it. This is often easier said than done. If you get stuck, by all means call on me to prevent embarrassment, frustration, and to otherwise un-stick you.

Financial Statement Design. Once the budget is posted in the accounting system, there are two key financial statements that everyone must have. Think in terms of “cause” and “effect.” The statement that indicates the *cause* of economic change is the income and expense report, or Profit & Loss, budget versus actual.

The statement that indicates the *effect* of economic change is the Balance Sheet Change or Net Worth Change report, which shows how assets and liabilities have changed over the same time period covered in the income & expense report. Many accounting programs can not produce this report – that is, they can not show how assets and liabilities have changed over a certain time period. All they'll show is the balances as of a certain date. But in QuickBooks, this report is easily created through very slight customization and memorization of the standard report.

This report design – income and expenses budget versus actual, and change in assets and liabilities – is one of the unique benefits that sets Making End\$ Meet apart from anyone else. We provide better, clearer explanation of our clients' economic situation than anyone. Once accounting is set up and reports are designed, our clients can know to the penny both the causes and effects of the changes in their economies – and that understanding puts them in as favorable a position as possible to steer their economies in their desired direction: the realization of their LSP.

And when you consider the kind of grief and mischief that have happened across the country in

governments, churches, businesses, and other organizations due to balance sheet confusion, this clarity that we offer is no small thing. Keep your eyes peeled for opportunities to benefit society in some pretty huge ways. Let's talk it up and see how much good we can do.

Cash Flow. Once budgets and accounting are done, your client may want help managing cash flow. I have a couple of solutions for that which you can [explore on the right margin of this page](#). For further help, contact me.

Reconciliations. Depending on their background and experiences, some people have been so lost in a subjective state of delusion for so long that they've become closet nihilists, to whom the concepts of Truth and verification are almost totally foreign. For such people, [special attention in the area of reconciliation](#) is sometimes necessary. You may need to set aside several weeks just coaching them on how to use the reconciliation feature in their accounting software, acquainting them with the concept that the bank may have a different opinion of their account balance than theirs, and that they may be actually wrong, and need to correct their opinion. For some this is a hard lesson and you'll need to be very delicate and tactful. If you encounter a situation like this and feel unsure how to proceed, let me help.

VIII. After the First Couple of Months. Once initial setup work is done, your work consists mainly of Variance Response in which, according to the review schedule chosen by your client, you will meet with them, either in person or virtually (I like Teamviewer and Join.me) to examine financial statements, especially the budget comparison, and respond to the variance between desired and actual results.

If income is less than desired, your job is to help your clients increase it. If expenses are more than desired, your job is to help them either curtail them, or revise the budget and consequential income goals to afford them.

If Return on Investment is less than desired, your job is to improve it by sharing our [investment research](#).

Variance Response can lead in so many interesting directions that I could not begin to list them all. This is where the fun and the adventure, and where your professional expertise apply. Things are always changing.

Often, personalities, quirks, and foibles wreak economic consequences with which you will have to deal. Family members get unexpectedly expensive. People get drunk, they cheat on their spouses, they get divorced, and damage control falls to you.

Unexpected favorable windfalls happen, too: a good year of sales, an exceptionally capable employee, a technological breakthrough, an inheritance, a surprisingly good investment year, a spiritual rebirth. You never know, and that's what always keeps this job fun and interesting.

Regardless what happens though, your focus is to do all you can to help your clients keep their plans up to date and keep them progressing. If you do this, you'll enjoy their esteem, their trust, their long-term business, and you will enjoy a fine living for yourself.

Thanks again very much for your interest in a Making End\$ Meet franchise. It's a fun and rewarding business, both financially and existentially. If you follow these directions, I know from personal experience that you will recoup your fee in the first year and won't even feel the royalties. I hope we can work together.

For your success,

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