

WORKSHEET · FREE RESOURCE LIBRARY · DIRT WORK BID SCHOOL

The Bid Worksheet

A blank one page structure for pricing a dirt job: scope, quantities, machine hours, labour, haul, materials, subs, the costs everybody forgets, and the arithmetic that turns a cost into a bid. Nothing is filled in, because the numbers are yours.

Who it is for. An owner-operator who prices off feel, off a competitor's number, or off whatever the customer said the last guy charged, and wants the same lines in front of him on every single job.

Why a worksheet and not a calculator

Estimating software returns a confident number whatever you feed it. That is the problem with it. It cannot tell you that you never priced the mobilisation, because you never told it there was one.

A worksheet does a different job. It makes you name every cost before you total anything, so the thing you missed shows up as a blank line instead of disappearing into a rounded guess. Fill this in the same order every time and your bids start being comparable to each other. That is the only way you ever learn anything from them.

Print it. Write on it. Keep it with the job file, because in four months when you want to know where the money went, the bid sheet is the only document that says what you thought was going to happen.

Job header

Fill this in before you price a single line. Half the arguments on a job start here.

JOB NAME

CUSTOMER, OWNER OR GENERAL CONTRACTOR

SITE ADDRESS

DATE YOU WALKED IT

BID DUE DATE AND TIME

HOW THE BID GETS DELIVERED

PLAN SET DATE AND REVISION NUMBER

ADDENDA RECEIVED, WITH NUMBERS AND DATES

CONTRACT FORM YOU WILL BE SIGNING

WHO PRICED IT

Scope, in your own words

Write this before you write a number. If you cannot describe the job in six lines, you do not understand it well enough to price it.

WHAT YOU ARE DOING

WHAT YOU ARE SPECIFICALLY NOT DOING

WHO SUPPLIES WHAT

SITE ACCESS AND ALLOWED WORKING HOURS

WHO OWNS THE SPOIL, AND WHERE IT GOES

WHO INSTALLS AND MAINTAINS EROSION CONTROL

WHO PAYS FOR COMPACTION TESTING

WHAT HAS TO BE TRUE FOR YOUR NUMBER TO HOLD

Quantities

One line per item. The last column is not optional.

ITEM	UNIT	QUANTITY	WHERE THE QUANTITY CAME FROM	NOTES

Write down where every quantity came from: plan sheet number, your own field measure, or your own takeoff. A quantity with no source is the one that moves on you, and when it moves you will have no way to tell whether the plan changed or you were wrong.

Machine hours

Hours on this job, at your cost per hour.

MACHINE OR ATTACHMENT	HOURS	YOUR COST PER HOUR	COST

Your cost per hour comes off your own ownership and operating cost worksheet. It is not a rental rate, it is not the rate the guy down the road charges, and it is not a number you remember from somewhere. If you have never built it, build it before you use this sheet again.

Labour

Hours by role, at a burdened rate.

ROLE	HOURS	BURDENED RATE PER HOUR	COST

Burdened means the wage plus every cent that rides on it: payroll taxes, workers compensation, unemployment, and any benefit you actually pay. The gap between a wage and a burdened rate is large, and pricing off the wage is one of the quietest ways to lose money on a job you ran perfectly.

Haul and trucking

Round trip time is the number that decides this, not distance.

MATERIAL	LOADS	ROUND TRIP TIME	RATE BASIS: HOUR, LOAD, TON OR YARD	COST

Price the cycle, not the mile. Load time, drive out, queue at the gate, dump, drive back, and the wait at your end all belong in the round trip. If the dump is forty minutes out, the truck is doing well to turn two loads an hour and you need to have written that down before you quoted a per load price.

Materials

Every material, with the specification the plans actually call for.

MATERIAL	SPEC OR STANDARD CALLED FOR	QUANTITY	UNIT PRICE	SUPPLIER	QUOTE DATE	COST

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A material price with no quote date is not a price, it is a memory. Write the standard down too, because SDR 35 and SDR 26 are not the same pipe and the difference is your money once the truck is on site.

Subcontractors

What they carry, in writing, before you carry it for them.

TRADE	SCOPE THEY CARRY	QUOTED AMOUNT	QUOTE RECEIVED	INSURANCE ON FILE

An uninsured sub is your liability, not theirs. If the certificate is not on file, the quote is not usable.

The costs that get left off

Go down this list on every bid. Tick the ones that do not apply, price the ones that do. The point is that every one of them gets a decision instead of being forgotten.

- ☐ Mobilisation and demobilisation, both ways, for every machine
- ☐ Permits, plan review and inspection fees
- ☐ Utility locate: the ticket, the wait, the re-marks, and a private locate if there are unmarked lines
- ☐ Hand digging inside the tolerance zone around marked utilities
- ☐ Trench protection: the shield, the shoring, or the extra excavation and backfill that sloping costs you
- ☐ Dewatering, pumps, hose and the time somebody spends running them
- ☐ Traffic control, flaggers, plates and signage
- ☐ Erosion control installation, inspection and maintenance for the life of the job
- ☐ Compaction testing and the standby time while you wait for the tech
- ☐ Survey, layout and as-built
- ☐ Temporary fencing and site security
- ☐ Dust control and street sweeping
- ☐ Rock: what you will do and who pays if you hit it
- ☐ Restoration, topsoil, seed, straw and the return trip to fix the wash
- ☐ Weather and winter contingency
- ☐ Bond premium
- ☐ Fuel, if the job runs long enough for the price to move
- ☐ Your own time on the job, and your own time in the office on the job

The total, step by step

Do it in this order every time. Skipping a step is how a bid ends up being a cost with hope added to it.

DIRECT COST SUBTOTAL

OVERHEAD RECOVERY, ON YOUR OWN BASIS

COST BEFORE MARGIN

MARGIN, APPLIED AS MARGIN AND NOT AS MARKUP

CONTINGENCY FOR THE SPECIFIC RISK ON THIS JOB

BID TOTAL

Margin and markup are not the same arithmetic

If you want twenty percent margin on a ten thousand dollar cost, you do not add twenty percent.

Ten thousand plus twenty percent is twelve thousand, and two thousand out of twelve thousand is 16.7 percent. To actually get twenty percent margin you divide the cost by 0.80, which is twelve thousand five hundred.

That gap is 3.3 points of margin on every job, every week, all year. Nobody catches it, because the bid still looks like a bid. Check which one you have been doing before you fill this sheet in again.

Before you send it

- ☐ Every quantity has a source written next to it
- ☐ Every material price has a quote date
- ☐ Every sub quote is in writing and their certificate of insurance is on file
- ☐ You have read the contract form, not just the plans
- ☐ You know what the retainage is and when it gets released
- ☐ You know what the liquidated damages are per day
- ☐ You have priced the exclusions list you are attaching
- ☐ The exclusions list is attached to the bid, not kept in a drawer
- ☐ You have written down the one thing most likely to go wrong on this job
- ☐ You have decided what you will do if it does

What is not on this sheet, and why

There is no filled in example here, and no suggested rate, margin or production figure. This sheet is the structure. The numbers are yours and they have to be, because your payment, your fuel bill, your ground and your overhead are not anybody else's.

A worked example, filled in against a real Checkered Flag job with the bid, the final cost, and the gap between the two, is part of Dirt Work Bid School and is still being filmed. We are not going to invent one to make this page look finished.

Where this comes from

Every code, standard and statute this sheet leans on. Check them.

29 CFR 1926.652, Requirements for protective systems

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-29/subtitle-B/chapter-XVII/part-1926/subpart-P/section-1926.652>

Sets when cave-in protection is required and the four ways a sloping or benching system may be designed.

29 CFR 1926.651, Specific excavation requirements

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-29/subtitle-B/chapter-XVII/part-1926/subpart-P/section-1926.651>

OSHA construction standards, Subpart P. Current text on the electronic Code of Federal Regulations.

Ladders into module 01, Read the Site Before You Price It.

Checkered Flag Excavation, Inc. De Soto and Festus, Missouri. Founded 2000. Free to print, copy and hand to anybody.

Not legal, tax or engineering advice.

<https://dirtworkbusiness.com/library/bid-worksheet>