

5 Levers for Cutting Costs Without Cutting Growth

A Strategic Alternative to Across-the-Board Cuts

By **Christian Liu, CPA, CMA, MBA** — Founder, RampUp Growth Advisors | Contract Instructor, Sprott School of Business, Carleton University

A flat 10% cut across every department is the least strategic way to save money — it punishes efficient teams and under-cuts inefficient ones equally. These five levers target the spend that's actually flexible, in the order that does the least damage to growth.

Zero-Based Review

1

Question every line item's necessity from a blank page, not last year's budget plus a percentage. Forces owners to justify spend on its own merits, not its history.

Not: an across-the-board percentage cut applied to every department equally.

Vendor Consolidation

2

Fewer vendors, larger volume per vendor, and real negotiating leverage. Redundant tools and overlapping service contracts are often the easiest, least visible savings available.

Not: renewing every contract individually without ever comparing them side by side.

Process Automation

3

Remove manual, repetitive, low-judgment work before removing the people doing it. Automation targeted at the task protects institutional knowledge that a layoff would erase.

Not: cutting headcount first and hoping the remaining team absorbs the work manually.

Strategic Outsourcing

4

Convert fixed costs to variable costs for genuinely non-core functions, freeing internal capacity to focus on what actually differentiates the business.

Not: outsourcing core functions just because they look expensive on paper.

Demand Management

5

Govern discretionary spend at the point of request — approval thresholds, budget owners, pre-purchase review — rather than discovering it after the fact in the monthly close.

Not: reviewing discretionary spend only once a quarter, after it's already been committed.

"The goal isn't to spend less. It's to make sure every dollar you keep spending is still earning its place."