The Numbers Behind a Specialty Coffee Shop

A free field guide from Bytell Press. The figures come from our example financial model for a single urban specialty cafe. They are planning assumptions, not quotes for your market; the worksheet at the end is for your own numbers.

Most new coffee shops do not fail on the coffee. They fail because nobody worked out how many tickets a day the site had to produce before the lease was signed. This guide gives you that arithmetic in two pages.

1. How the work is priced

A cafe sells **tickets**, and the number that matters is the average ticket, not the price of a latte. The example model uses these lines:

Menu line	Model price	Model gross margin
Espresso beverages	$3.75–$6.50	75–85%
Brewed and pour-over coffee	$3.00–$6.00	80–90%
Cold brew, nitro and iced drinks	$4.50–$7.00	70–78%
Pastry and light food	Bought in, resold	45–60%
Retail beans and merchandise	Per item	40–55%
Blended across the mix	**$10.50 average ticket**	**70%**

The lesson is in the mix. Drinks carry the margin. Pastry carries less, but it is what turns a $5 drink into a $10.50 ticket.

2. What it costs to open

The example model opens on **$175,000**: a $130,000 loan and $45,000 of the owner's money.

Use of funds	Amount
Espresso machine and grinders	$32,000
Other equipment	$23,000
Leasehold improvements and buildout	$55,000
Furniture, fixtures and decor	$14,000
Initial inventory	$8,000
Professional and startup fees	$5,000
Pre-opening and launch	$13,000

Use of funds	Amount
Working-capital reserve	$25,000
Total	**$175,000**

The buildout is the largest line and the one that varies most.

3. What it costs to stay open

The model carries **$28,600 a month** in fixed costs, whether or not a single cup is sold:

Monthly fixed cost	Amount
Staff labor	$12,500
Rent and pass-through charges	$5,500
Owner and manager salary	$4,000
Loan payment	$2,192
Marketing	$1,000
Utilities	$850
Repairs and maintenance	$600
Insurance	$500
Point-of-sale and software	$450
Operating supplies	$400
Admin, accounting, miscellaneous	$608
Total	**$28,600**

Rent is locked the day the lease is signed, so the site decision is also the biggest cost decision.

4. The break-even: the one number to know

Break-even revenue = monthly fixed costs ÷ gross margin.

With the model's numbers: $28,600 ÷ 0.70 = about **$40,857 a month**. At a $10.50 ticket over about 30 days, that is roughly **130 tickets a day**, with the owner's $4,000 salary included.

The model's steady month is $48,000, at about 150 tickets a day. That leaves about $5,000 a month, and it sits about 17% above break-even.

5. The ramp and the winter trough

The model does not open at break-even. Its fixed costs start on day one and its sales do not.

Stage	Monthly revenue	Against the $40,857 break-even
First stable month, around month 3 to 4	$30,000	About $7,600 short after costs
Steady state, around month 9 to 12	$48,000	About $5,000 ahead
September to December, 1.15 multiplier	About $55,200	Ahead
January and February, 0.85 multiplier	About $40,800	Right at break-even

The model's first year takes in about $495,000 and shows operating income of only about $3,300.

That is the job of the $25,000 reserve and of the cash held back from the fall peak.

6. Your numbers

Fill this in with real quotes and a real lease proposal before you sign anything.

Question	Model	Yours
Average ticket	$10.50	_____
Gross margin after coffee, milk, food and cups	70%	_____
Monthly rent and pass-through charges	$5,500	_____
Monthly fixed costs including your salary	$28,600	_____
Break-even revenue (fixed costs ÷ margin)	$40,857	_____
Tickets a day to break even	About 130	_____
Working-capital reserve	$25,000	_____

If your break-even needs more tickets a day than the site's foot traffic can supply, fix the plan before you sign the lease: find a cheaper or busier site, raise the average ticket, or cut a fixed cost.

This guide is general business information, not legal, tax, accounting or investment advice. The figures are illustrative assumptions from an example model and are not a forecast or a promise of results. Licensing and insurance requirements vary by state and are not covered here; check yours with the state agency.

Bytell Press publishes the full business plan, the editable financial model behind these numbers, and the operating playbooks for a specialty coffee shop.

Visit us: https://bytellpress.com/guide/specialty-coffee-shop