

UNIT4

In Business for You

**MAKE YOUR MOVE FROM PLANNER TO
TRUSTED ADVISOR – TRANSFORMING FP&A**

UNIT4 FP&A WHITE PAPER



Introduction

Benefitting from transformation

There are powerful new ways to change financial planning and analysis (FP&A) so you gain competitive edge and cut costs.

Finding a better way

You want to find a better way to work. That means spending more time on meaningful tasks and understanding business-critical data.

Delivering better planning and analysis is exciting and challenging. It's exciting because of the transformative impact of sophisticated new tools that use data analytics and the power of online collaboration. But it's challenging because old business habits are hard to break.

This white paper offers you a moment of calm reflection in a fast-changing and often uncertain working environment. A time to stop, re-think and reassess how you and the finance team want to operate.

Could do better

You know that Excel falls short of many requirements. It's not an effective analytics tool, especially when you're communicating and collaborating with several other people. And thinking about your current working practices, you may have doubts about data quality and the time spent on data reconciliation and cleansing.

New tools make budgeting, planning, forecasting, reporting and analysis easier and you'll use fewer resources. Everyone can share information, busting down organizational silos. Your data will be more coherent, which encourages joined-up thinking, and you'll have single-source clarity around this information.

Why Excel lets you down

Say you're a retailer and you want to understand employee profitability. If everyone works at different pay levels, your finance team will struggle to provide a clear picture using a tool like Excel or Google Sheets. Whatever you're working on, speed and accuracy can also be challenging because spreadsheets can't deliver the dimensionality and interactivity needed for effective business analysis.

Confidence required

Today you can choose from an array of sophisticated digital tools which can radically improve the services you offer to senior executives. Many offer out-of-the-box capabilities so you're up and running in a very short space of time. And often these new tools have an Excel-like look and feel – they'll seem instantly familiar, reducing your training needs.

Make your case

Instead of continuing to labor under 20th-century FP&A limitations, your finance department can transform. You need a new approach to staffing, resourcing and directing the team and you can take the first step by convincing your organization about the added value this will bring.

Gaining competitive edge and cutting costs are two highly compelling reasons for adopting specialist tools. In October 2020, the BARC Topical Survey: Sound Decisions in Dynamic Times found 56% of organizations are actively looking to introduce or modernize their software for planning and forecasting purposes, and as many as 76% of leading organizations intend to use specialist software for corporate planning, simulations and scenario analyses.



Emerging technologies and approaches

Using new tools in new ways

Over the past five years, FP&A functions have been enhanced by significant technology advances.

Multidimensional technology has evolved, increasing the maturity and sophistication of digital tools available to the finance department. You can use these tools to analyze data from different perspectives, identify time-series trends and set up alerts when values exceed set parameters. And of course analytics technology is developing all the time – statistical techniques are now embedded into applications that allow simple forms of correlation and you can use these to build predictive driver-based models.

Accessing more data

Today your finance team is likely gathering, accessing and analyzing more data than ever before:

- Internal data that covers all aspects of organizational performance
- External data that describes the business and economic environment in detail

A vast amount of this data is likely to be unstructured. Valuable information comes in email messages, word documents, audio files, video, photos, presentations, web pages and in many other shapes and formats. Not only are you handling this variability but you're also getting familiar with relational and multidimensional databases. The days are gone when you could expect all data to fit into a pre-defined set of fields and records.

Boosting your insights

Using new tools you can discover patterns in your data better than ever before. With sophisticated statistics-based data mining algorithms, you can spot trends in all kinds of data – in your text and numerical information and now also across every information source. And when you apply artificial intelligence and machine learning capabilities, you can boost your data-driven insights and achieve powers of prediction you never had before.

Accelerating decisions

So you can achieve real-time data analysis, your corporate performance management (CPM) system may be using powerful parallel computing machines to process terabytes of information in seconds. And when your senior executives need to make an important decision within just a small window of opportunity, this can be enabled by automated FP&A workflows and supported by machine-identified market opportunities.

Shrinking the world

Your organization may span different geographies and time zones but all of this can be bridged with the right cloud-based analytics solution. Added to this, your finance team and the people you serve can use the latest technology on any device, in any location and in any language.

Leveraging new capabilities

Are you ready to use new tools in new ways? Imagine being able to achieve the following without manual effort:

- Embrace continuous planning beyond budgeting and rolling forecasts to consider new ways of steering the ship during times of extreme uncertainty
- Develop self-adjusting value-based models for budgets and forecasts
- Provide automated alerts and reports to managers

Transforming reports

There's a long tradition of producing budget-related reports from the general ledger but these usually focus on finance along with supporting data that shows even deeper levels of financial detail. You can see why this happens. Ledgers tend to only hold financial transactions but of course this isn't sufficient for management decision making.

Now, with new technology tools, your finance team is empowered to deliver data that's aligned with corporate strategy. By using new FP&A tools, your finance team will be able to evolve your reports, analytics, and other key deliverables. You will be able to transform these from pure measurement records into powerful knowledge assets.

How to transform a report

To ensure the utility of a report, first establish its purpose. Why is it needed? What decisions should it be able to support? And how does this decision making align with strategy? This last question is particularly important. For example, a report might prioritize sticking to the budget and therefore encourage expenditure cuts. But if this negatively impacts some key aspect of the business, it could have the unintended consequence of eventually damaging sales and future profitability.

Creating a roadmap

Influencing strategic decision making

With the latest digital tools, you can make your move from financial planner to trusted adviser.

Having real impact

To have real impact, your finance team must be able to influence strategic decision making. A true FP&A influencer considers and presents facts that affect both financial perspectives and technical perspectives. You should address the needs of your organization in a holistic way and align financial services with the organizational structure, culture and stakeholder sensitivities.

When you bring data together in your corporate management system and you are able to model different scenarios – putting information in a form that is easily understood – you help senior executives to assess the value of change in the short, medium and long term. And by holding a neutral position while referring to what the data reveals, you're capable of becoming a trusted advisor to these executives. They will seek out your support before making the right decisions for the organization.

The rewards will be smarter, more innovative decision making throughout the organization, with a keen focus on the things that directly impact performance both now and in the future.

Achieving this transformation

“With Unit4, we experienced a 90% reduction in the time to produce reports as well as provide significantly more value to management, and ultimately, our clients. We can now quickly access critical information and immediate insights that our projects depend on.” Kim Sammut, General Manager, Operational Excellence at WSP

WSP is one of the world's leading professional services firms, providing engineering and design services to its clients.

Starting your journey

Whenever you are ready to start your journey, we can help. We care about creating solutions that give you the best experience at work. Talk to us today.



About Unit4

In business for people

Unit4 is a leading provider of next-generation enterprise applications. Its self-driving, adaptive and intuitive software transforms the way people work by intelligently automating administrative tasks and providing easy access to the answers they need. Unit4's portfolio includes Unit4 Financial Planning & Analysis (FP&A), a solution for dynamic business planning, budgeting, forecasting, dashboarding and reporting. This easy-to-use corporate performance management (CPM) software with integrated business intelligence (BI) allows companies to take full control of their business processes and supports them with advanced analytics capabilities – all in a single solution.



For more information go to:

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