

From Cognos Planning to IBM Planning Analytics: **FINANCIAL REPORTING TRANSFORMATION**

When our client was acquired in 2015, it became clear that they needed to evolve their financial reporting - and fast. Although they had been using Cognos Planning effectively for many years, it simply wasn't scalable enough to meet the increased requirements of the larger, merged organisation.

We worked with them to upgrade their reporting models from Cognos Planning to IBM Planning Analytics, in record-breaking time. Improved scalability and flexibility has enabled our client to evolve their financial reporting to a new level; paving the way for organisational transformation.

KEY OUTCOMES:

- 1 Upgrading from Cognos Planning to Planning Analytics has enabled the Finance team to take control of budgeting, planning and forecasting.
- 2 Moving to Planning Analytics means the team can run reports in US dollars, in multiple currencies and across multiple countries.
- 3 Improved scalability and fewer restrictions make it easier to introduce and report on new products.
- 4 The capacity for real time reporting in Planning Analytics has saved significant effort, resource and cost right across the organisation.
- 5 Sempre enabled the team to become self-sufficient in the new technology, in record-breaking time.

INTRODUCING OUR CLIENT:

Our client is a global education technologies company that develops, integrates and implements learning environments.

They provide interactive whiteboards, student response systems for personalised learning and digital teaching resources for the education, business and government sectors. In addition, they deliver professional development, consulting, and implementation services.

WHAT WAS THE CHALLENGE?

When our client was acquired in 2015, it became clear that in order to meet the increased requirements of a larger, merged organisation they would need to evolve their management reporting.

The team had originally used an Excel based financial forecasting model, but this was a restrictively manual process that was prone to error. As a global company, with users in all parts of the world, managing and manually consolidating multiple financial Excel spreadsheets would have been impossible.

By contrast, when they upgraded to Cognos Planning five years ago they'd found it incredibly effective and reliable. However now that the business was changing so rapidly, this platform had now also reached its limits.

Cognos Planning was no longer scalable, flexible or fast enough to run reports in multiple currencies or to deliver information rapidly during a budget cycle.

It was time for another upgrade.

HOW DID SEMPRE BECOME INVOLVED?

After interviewing a number of prospective partners, Sempre stood head and shoulders above the rest.

“Sempre were very keen on actually working with us as opposed to for us.

Rather than simply developing a solution, it felt as if we would be working alongside a partner. They were keen to transfer their skills, so that when we'd completed the project we would be geared up to support, scale and adapt the solution as necessary, all without being reliant upon someone else.”

Head of BI, global education technologies company

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WHAT HAPPENED?

Having considered all the options, our client decided to adopt an entirely new technology – IBM Planning Analytics. They explain why;

“We went with Planning Analytics for our financial forecasting because we already used Cognos BI, so it seemed a good fit. Some of the key benefits of Planning Analytics are increased scalability, speed and real-time reporting, which fit perfectly with our needs, because those were the things we were struggling with around Cognos Planning.”

Although they were already working to an incredibly tight three month timeframe, things got tougher when the technology requirements were changed halfway through the project and the deadline was brought forward.

Thankfully, Sempre hit the ground running.

“We made significant progress really, really quickly. The consultants we worked with were so knowledgeable that never at any moment did I doubt we’d hit our deadline. We took everything one step at a time, but I always felt confident that anything that was thrown at us, working with Sempre, we’d be able to resolve it.”

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Sempre made sure to not only implement the upgrade on time, but to also transfer skills to our client’s team throughout the process so that at the end of the project, they’d be equipped to manage it themselves.

WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME OF THE PROJECT?

The improved scalability and flexibility of Planning Analytics over Cognos Planning means that our client can now run all internal reports in US dollars, but also in multiple currencies, across multiple global locations.

Additionally, there are no restrictions to how many versions they have during a budget process which gives them more flexibility when it comes to introducing new products.

One of the key benefits of Planning Analytics for our client is the ability to report in real time. They explain;

“If we make any changes in the model we can immediately run a BI report that reflects that data.”

With Cognos Planning, we had to execute a time-consuming process in the background. The real-time reporting is a real benefit.

We’ve also managed to reduce the number of planning models so an analyst doesn’t have to go into several applications; they can just go into the one.”

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This has saved significant effort, resource and cost right across the organisation.

Now, our client is looking for new ways to use Planning Analytics, including automating the commission process and pulling together different data sources in a more user-friendly way for different business functions.



WHAT WAS IT LIKE WORKING WITH SEMPRE?

“They partnered with us, as opposed to just acting as a consultant. They worked with us as equals; spending time training us up and transferring their knowledge.

Everyone we’ve met has been really enthusiastic about the work that they’re doing and the products that they’re working with. From the sales down to the consultants and the support, we’ve always experienced nothing but enthusiasm.”

Head of BI, global education technologies company

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