



PLANNING ANALYTICS OPTIMIZATION CHECKLIST

Are you getting the most from your investment in Planning Analytics?

OVERVIEW OF THE PLANNING ANALYTICS OPTIMIZATION CHECKLIST

It's time to check the vitals of how your organization is using Planning Analytics! Use this document, checklist and self-assessment link to optimize your organization's use of Planning Analytics and unlock its strategic capability to increase profitability within your organization.

UNLOCK RESULTS BY TAKING A USER FIRST APPROACH

Many implementations are technically sound but lack usability and desire from business users limiting the adoption and potential. Take a user-centric approach when assessing the health of your Planning Analytics environment.

Who are the users? What questions are they trying to answer? How easily can they answer those questions?

Leading with these questions keeps you laser-focused on the desired outcomes you are trying to achieve by using PA. With outcomes front and center you are able to better diagnose the root cause of issues, be it development methodology, gaps in data or an opportunity for more training for your team.

WHAT YOU WILL DO

- Understand user sentiment and satisfaction
- Determine if the foundation can support your vision
- Evaluate Technical Debt (Legacy dev, cube sprawl, web sheets)
- Gain insight on how to increase the return on your investment in Planning Analytics



DO YOU EXPERIENCE ANY OF THESE OBSTACLES?

01.

Low User Satisfaction

Users are not satisfied, can't get the information they need, don't know how to use the tool

02.

Seeking an Expert Opinion

You're curious about what's been built and if it supports where you're going with the platform

03.

Stuck in the Past

You're an early adopter of Planning Analytics, but now you're stuck on old versions and it's holding you back

04.

No clear path from A to B

You know the business problem you're trying to solve, but don't know the steps required to get the answers

OPTIMIZATION CHECKLIST

The below checklist can be used to help you plan and evaluate your Planning Analytics system to ensure that you are taking full advantage of it. If not, this will help you in identifying areas for improvement:

As you go through our checklist feel free to add your answers in the boxes to the right. Treat this checklist like your workbook, and take a deep dive into topics such as people & culture, process and Planning Analytics Models.

Curious about how you are doing relative to your peers? Take this scored self-assessment to grade your PA environment: <https://survey.zohopublic.com/zs/aBCsHy>

PLANNING ANALYTICS - MODEL DESIGN

Use this section to evaluate how your PA architect designed the environment. Understand how the skills and experience of your PA architect impact the users and usage of your Planning Analytics environment.

1

How much consideration is given to the user experience when designing PA Models?

- a. I follow and build models solely based on business requirements
- b. I work with end users to understand their process, compile requirements together and refine the model through a prototyping approach
- c. I work with end users to understand their process, go away and build models then deliver at the end

2

How would you rate yourself and your team when it comes to Architecting and Building PA models?

- a. Developer - I know how to build models but my experience is more geared toward TI development than Rules
- b. Developer - I know how to build models but my experience is more geared toward Rules than TI development
- c. Architect - I know how to construct models and leverage TI & Rules to optimize the user experience and performance
- d. Architect - I am an experienced architect, Translating complex business requirements into enterprise-wide PA Models, I design for the future

3

What is (or was) the background and experience of your PA Architect who designed models (Internal or 3rd Party)?

- a. IT background, mainly a Business Intelligence background. Basic understanding of Finance and Business strategy
- b. IT background, mainly a Business Intelligence background. Good understanding of Finance and Business
- c. Finance / Business background knows the business strategy. Basic knowledge of IT and Data Architecture
- d. Finance / FP&A / Business background knows the business strategy. Good knowledge of IT & Data Architecture
- e. Other....explain

4

How do the skills and experience of your PA Architect impact the use or user adoption of Planning Analytics? Please Comment

PLANNING ANALYTICS - MODEL SETUP

Use this section to evaluate how your PA architect setup the environment. Evaluate how the configuration and design of planning analytics impact use or user adoption.

1

What is the level of system and data integration within your Planning Analytics environment?

- a. We use CSV files to load data and build dimensions
- b. We pull data financial information directly from source financial systems
- c. We pull data financial information directly from centralized repository (data warehouse)
- d. We pull data financial and operational (HR, CRM etc..) information directly from centralized repository (data warehouse)

2

How are Dimensions (and associated hierarchies) maintained within your PA Models?

- a. Dimensions are manually created and adjusted through Architect or PA Workbench
- b. Dimension Builds are done in TI, built off source systems / data warehouse and contain one hierarchy based on fixed levels, any changes require IT involvement
- c. Dimension Builds are done in TI, built off source systems / data warehouse and contain standard and alternate hierarchy rollups, any changes require IT involvement
- d. Dimension Builds are done in TI, sourced from source systems / data warehouse, maintained and constructed off Dimensional Cube Models, providing flexibility and ownership by key business users

3

How are Virtual Hierarchies used in your current planning analytics environment?

- a. We don't know what virtual hierarchies are or haven't implemented them in our environment
- b. We have incorporated virtual hierarchies into PAW / Pafe to create a better user experience
- c. We have incorporated virtual hierarchies into PAW / Pafe to create a better user experience and redesigned our models to improve performance and reduce dims in our models
- d. Other....Explain or Comment

4

How are you using Control Cubes within your planning analytics models?

- a. Not used at all - We don't have control cubes in our models
- b. Limited Use - Store relevant configuration info and use it as a source for some TI processes
- c. Used Extensively - Store relevant configuration info and use it as a source for TI processes including Variance consolidations, user defined consolidations, Report & View Rollovers, Subset builds, element formatting
- d. Other....Explain or Comment

5

How is navigation or workflow set up in your PA Model to assist end users?

- a. We use TM1 Web which contains specific applications folders and action buttons within specified reports
- b. We use TM1 Web and have a menu page and action buttons to navigate through the PA model
- c. We use TM1 Contributor combining Views and Perspective Reports / Templates in a specific sequence
- d. We use PAW books and have specific folders for users to access the PA model
- e. We use PAW books and have a centralized navigation portal and detailed visual outline of the user or administrator workflow

6

How are you using MDX within your planning analytics models?

- a. We don't use MDX or its very limited in scope
- b. We use MDX in our TI Processes or for customized user subsets throughout our models
- b. We use MDX in our TI Processes or for customized user subsets throughout our models and PAW Views to create a better experience for users throughout our models
- d. Other....Explain or Comment

7

How do you report or present data from Planning Analytics? Please select all that apply

- a. We export data into Excel, then design or create reports
- b. We use Perspectives/Pafe for reporting
- c. We import PA data into a BI or Visualization tool (PowerBI, Cognos, Tableau)
- d. We use PA Cubes as a data source in IBM Cognos Analytics (leveraging the existing PA security)
- e. We use PAW dashboards
- f. Other, please explain

8

As it relates to budgeting/forecasting, how much activity is done within excel vs your planning analytics model?

- a. 75-100% Excel - We use our excel models for budgeting/forecasting and transfer the output into planning analytics for consolidations
- b. 50-75% Excel - We use our excel models for budgeting/forecasting for more complex calculations, operational drivers or exceptions
- c. 30% Excel - We have built a lot of drivers, complex logic and process in PA and use excel for more complex calculations or exceptions
- d. 15% Excel - We have a fully integrated planning model that straddles across business functions and has eliminated the majority of our excel models. We use excel models for more dynamic and ever-changing scenarios planning

9

How would you rate the performance of your PA Model?

- a. Majority of users are happy with the performance, the odd situation arises
- b. Majority of users are satisfied with the performance, some infrequent issues arise
- c. Majority of users are not satisfied with the performance, there are usually common issues that arise during critical reporting periods
- d. Majority of users are frustrated with performance and would prefer to use excel or do away with PA altogether

10

How would you rate error logging or notifications when it comes to TI Processes?

- a. We struggle to understand issues and the text files are not very user-friendly
- b. We have some built-in error logging into our TI processes to assist us with debugging
- c. We have custom TI scripts built-in to debug a lot of issues from data loads to dimension builds

11

How does the configuration and design of planning analytics impact use or user adoption? Please Comment

PLANNING ANALYTICS - ROLL OUT & TRAINING STRATEGY

Use this section to evaluate roll out of the environment & how you have managed the training strategy.

1**In your opinion, how successful was the roll out of Planning Analytics?**

- a. Little success - Few users, using it on a regular basis, but the majority are unwilling to move off excel
- b. Moderate success - Majority of users are using it on a regular basis, we are cautious in rolling it out further
- c. Successful - All users are using it regularly, there is a momentum and excitement for future deployments and phases
- d. We are considering dropping it altogether

2**What is your training and enablement strategy to ensure user adoption and promotion of Technology?**

- a. We don't have a plan, we just have training materials provided by vendor or system implementator
- b. We have internal materials, including video's, support documents and series of use cases or examples by job function
- c. We run ongoing or bi-weekly sessions with users to facilitate knowledge sharing, Q&A, tips, tricks and new product features
- d. We benchmark users skill level against skills required by job function to isolate gaps and build out job-specific training plans

PLANNING ANALYTICS - EXISTING MODELS

Please select the types of models you have implemented in your planning analytics environment

- Finance - Income Statement
- Finance - Integrated Financials including Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Cashflow
- Finance - Corporate KPIs
- Finance - Weekly Cashflow including working capital
- Finance - Capital Planning & Utilization
- Finance - Long-Range Planning Model
- Finance - Market / Benchmark Analysis
- Finance - Economic Profit Model

- Sales & Ops - Demand & Resource capacity planning
- Sales & Ops - Weekly Margin Forecasting
- Sales & Ops - Product, Service or Customer Pricing and Profitability

- Sales - Sales & Pipeline Forecasting
- Ops - Weekly Resource planning
- Ops - Operational P&L Forecast
- HR - FTE Forecasting
- HR - Payroll Variance Analysis
- HR - Payroll Allocations
- Marketing - Campaign planning

Other:

TECHNOLOGY & ANALYTICS ECOSYSTEM

Use this section to evaluate how your existing technology & analytics ecosystem impact the use of Planning Analytics.

1**How would you describe the integration of your systems?**

- a. Well-established master data management strategy with Data and Dimension / Reporting Hierarchy Structures are centralized and unified across application platforms (i.e. one definition for Customer)
- b. There are integrations amongst some systems, but there are still many manual intersection points
- c. Each LOB has a system, but they don't talk to one another
- d. Other....Explain or Comment

2**How confident are you in the accuracy of your data?**

- a. We have a robust data and governance practice with clean data readily available
- b. Working towards an established Master Data Management Strategy
- c. We typically spend a long time validating our data
- d. Other....Explain or Comment

3**How do you bring together organizational wide data?**

- a. Combine a bunch of databases and spreadsheets
- b. Centralized Enterprise Data Warehouse with feeds from various applications and excel files
- c. Centralized Enterprise Data Warehouse and Extended Planning & Analysis Solution

4**What is the most common way people share information?**

- a. Spreadsheets & Presentations
- b. Dashboards & Storytelling
- c. We're moving from spreadsheets to dashboards as we get more comfortable

5

How do people access reports in your organization?

- a. Requests - Submit a ticket to IT requesting a new report
- b. Self-Service - use a tool to slice and dice data to view what you want, when you want
- c. Manual - Export a CSV and format the spreadsheet

6

How does your existing technology & analytics ecosystem impact the use of Planning Analytics?

PROCESS

Use this section to evaluate how your business process and organizational frameworks impact your adoption and use of Planning Analytics.

1

How does your organization leverage or use KPI's to drive to performance?

- a. We limit KPIs to what matters and tie operational KPIs to financial metrics
- b. We incentive and hold people accountable to both financial and operational KPIs which are cascaded down the organization
- c. We only have Financial KPIs, do not tie Operational Metrics to them
- d. We are in the process of defining or redefining KPIs

2

When collaborating on plans to increase performance for the business does finance support business operations in analyzing key drivers and KPIs?

- a. Not really, Finance is more of a back office function of the business
- b. Finance and Operations try to collaborate but meetings are often ineffective due to a lack of shared and trustworthy information
- c. Finance and Operations are interconnected with a solid data platform and have a great understanding of key performance drivers for the business

3

What is your organizations appetite for implementing a Finance Business Partner Model?

- a. We had a Finance Business Partner Model in the past, but didn't end well due to ambiguity in the model
- b. Never thought of bringing in a Finance Business Partner Model, but our process needs a lot of help
- c. We have been using a Finance Business Partner Model for years, and it has been successful.

4

What does your budgeting and forecasting process look like today?

- a. Annual Budget Only
- b. Annual Budget Only & Financial Quarterly Forecast
- c. Monthly Rolling Financial Forecast. The budget is just a cut of the forecast
- d. Monthly Operational and Financial Rolling Forecast. Bottom-up is done weekly or monthly. The budget is just a cut of the forecast

5

How long does your forecasting process take to complete

- a. Under 10 days
- b. 10-20 days
- c. 20+ Days
- d. We only have a budget and do not forecast

6

How efficient would you say your month end process is, how long does it take to complete?

- a. 2-4 days - Month-end is completely automated
- b. 5-10 days - Could be better but we get it done
- c. 10+ days - It's a major pain, a lot of stitching together spreadsheets and very error prone

7

How automated is your forecasting process?

- a. Our process is completely automated, and there is little excel modelling required. We are continuously forecasting as a team, always keeping it up-to-date
- b. We have a few manual steps, and as we have a monthly forecasting cadence so it doesn't take long to update it
- c. Are processes are quite manual, with lots of spreadsheets, and the business is not very engaged so it is finance driven
- d. Too much time spent pulling data together, there is a lot of resistance towards it as it is not seen as a valuable exercise

8

How much of your team's time is spent on compiling information versus focusing on analysis to uncover insights to drive actionable plans?

- a. 75% of our time is spent on compiling information, once we get to the analysis it's too late or too rushed to create a plan
- b. 50-50 split - we get to the analysis but lack trust in the numbers making forecasts inaccurate
- c. We spend 75%+ of the time on analysis and collaborating to create plans that drive results

9

Rate your overall satisfaction with how effective your FP&A process is.

- a. 0-3 - Not satisfied, too many hours spent stitching together spreadsheets and no time for analysis. We are in Excel Hell!
- b. 4-6 - It's okay, definitely needs improvement but we are managing.
- c. 7-10 - Great, we automate our financials and spend most of our time on analysis. Lot's of visibility into KPI's and forecasts are accurate

9

What are your biggest challenges and pain points with your current FP&A process? (select all that apply)

- a. Long month-end process and poor data hygiene
- b. Too many spreadsheets and reports that we don't even use
- c. Lack of visibility into KPIs
- d. Lack of trust in numbers that leads to inaccurate forecasts
- e. Siloed departments causing a lack of collaboration and the inability to create a plan to drive performance

10

How does your business process and organizational frameworks impact your adoption and use of Planning Analytics? Comment below.

PEOPLE & CULTURE

Use this section to better understand your organization's mindset around innovating and investing in Planning Analytics. Is your organization getting the most out of this incredibly powerful tool?

1

What is leadership's mindset around innovation?

- a. We strive to be some of the first to implement new innovations
- b. We look to move with the bulk of our peers
- c. We are typically playing catch up to keep up with customer expectations

2

Is your organization proactive in pursuing innovation?

- a. We have a dedicated budget allocated for projects that create value through innovation
- b. We assess the business case for projects on a case-by-case basis
- c. We first sweat assets to realize the greatest return possible. Only then do we innovate

3

When attempting to innovate, which best describes how you feel?

- a. Calculated risk-taking is encouraged, as long as the outcome is learning
- b. Risk-taking comes with the expectation that it will pay off
- c. We've been successful up until now, there's no need to change things up

4

How agile is your organization?

- a. We can respond to unforeseen risks and arising opportunities quickly with an acceptable level of disruption to our daily operations
- b. We are agile in revising our plans but lack the systems & processes to deliver on time
- c. We are susceptible to unforeseen risk and miss out on new opportunities due to a rigid and disconnected structure

5

From a planning perspective, how do different departments in your organization collaborate?

- a. All departments measure KPIs that are complimentary and cohesively aligned to the corporate strategy
- b. Each department has KPIs but there is a gap in collaborating around company-wide planning
- c. There is a challenge with interdepartmental planning often leading to internal fire-fighting
- d. Other.....explain

6

How is Finance viewed within the organization?

- a. A back office function that reports on what happened
- b. A front office function that supports decision-making for profit-generating activities
- c. A forward-looking function that drives strategic outcomes

7

Which best describes the role finance plays in the organization?

- a. Requests come in and reports are built to meet the request
- b. Produce insights that the business still needs to request
- c. Consultative partners with the company to provide guidance for all things finance

8

When thinking about the finance team's skillset, which is most accurate?

- a. We have a team with advanced skills and a modern xP&A solution they're comfortable using
- b. We have a team with advanced skills, yet our systems don't enable them to work to their full potential
- c. We have a team that knows Excel inside and out and are motivated to learn new skills with a modern solution
- d. We have a team that knows Excel inside and out and are content with the current solution

9

In summary, how does the organization as a whole view the adoption of Planning Analytics? How do you think that impacts the rollout of Planning Analytics? Add Comments:

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