7 Ways to Reduce the Time You Spend on Budgeting

The greatest challenge companies face in reducing their time spent on budgeting is well-entrenched processes that are out of step with the needs of a growing business.

Many companies rely heavily on spreadsheets to create their budgets, as well as build their financial processes.

However, because spreadsheets were designed to help businesses organize and adjust data, they are limited when it comes to accomodating growing amounts of increasingly complex data Furthermore, spreadsheets act as an "island" – separate from rigorous workflow processes that meet growing companies' needs for data security, data accuracy, cross-functional integration of data, and remaining nimble in the face of rapid change.

The actions identified in this white paper will help you address this challenge head-on.

Inside this document

Benefits of Reducing the Time You Spend on Budgeting

The benefits of adopting the budgeting best practices outlined in this white paper include:

- Ability to reallocate time to other priorities

- Reduced number of budgeting errors

- Faster and more reliable monthly closes and consolidations

- Greater alignment among departments and/or business units

- Increased accountability and ownership of processes and outcomes

- Improved cross-functional communications

- Ability to conduct more advanced analysis — incorporating financial and non-financial data

7 Ways to Reduce the Time You Spend on Budgeting

1

Define your budgeting process

A well-defined budgeting process allows finance professionals to make better and more informed business decisions because it produces financial documents that accurately capture the complete costs of producing their products and services. At the same time, a budgeting process that is managed efficiently frees up time so that financial professionals can conduct meaningful analyses, improve the ability to forecast, respond quickly to changing needs, and devote time to important non-work related priorities.

Actions

- Identify everyone in your department who is involved in your budgeting processes

- Identify everyone outside of your department who contributes to your budgets

- Conduct a workflow review to see how/when information and data are being gathered, stored, modified, and/or analyzed

2

Identify the infrastructure that supports your budgeting process

A well-honed budgeting process is the outcome of optimizing four key components regardless of the size of your business, or the industry in which your company operates. These components are: employees, financial and project management skills, processes, and technology.

Actions

- Document your current budgeting procedures
- Assess the skill levels of all those involved in the budgeting process
- Identify the financial and project planning tools used throughout the budgeting process
- Identify any gaps in required skills and resources to produce efficient budgets

3

Define your budget parameters

Effective budgets provide enough detail to make long-term resourcing decisions while still providing enough flexibility to modify day-to-day finances as needs change. Defining your budget parameters reduces the time spent on budgeting and reviewing items/activities that have a limited impact on your business.

Actions

- Define the degree of detail required to make your budget practical (i.e. actionable)

- Document these requirements in order to focus data collection, review, and analysis on your current budgeting procedures
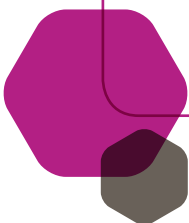
4

Define relevant performance metrics for your budget

By defining key performance indicators (KPIs), the resulting budget, and related processes, will remain focused on your company's most important business drivers. This will be a unique combination of measurements that are common to your specific industry, as well as those used to determine the financial health of organizations such as revenue growth, earnings growth, debt reduction, and EBITDA margin.

Actions

- Review industry analysts' reports to confirm KPIs that are relevant for your industry
- Identify KPIs that are unique to your specific business – given the nature of the business and its stage of evolution
- Establish KPIs for your organization to serve as benchmarks for future performance
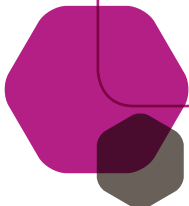
5

Enable and encourage collaboration

When a business structures their budgeting processes to be more collaborative, the resulting budgets are more widely understood, adopted, referenced, and monitored.

Actions

- Identify people within the finance department (and beyond) who should direct, manage, contribute to, and review budgets

- Identify people who should validate the details and the assumptions upon which budgets are being built

- Use managerial meetings and feedback forums to encourage collaborative participation
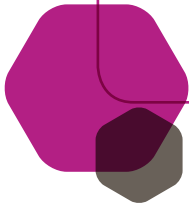
6

Plan for changing conditions

Leading companies use budgeting and planning processes that anticipate and/or adapt to changes within, and external to, the business – changes such as: fluctuations in cash flow, price changes, product line changes, shifting capital allocations, and organizational changes. Building nimble budgeting processes decreases the cost and time spent on analysis while increasing the quality of decision making.

Actions

- Conduct monthly re-forecasts to gauge performance against the budget and competitors

- Conduct rolling forecasts for a forward-looking view that allows management to take remedial action on unexpected changes

- Conduct what-if analyses to test assumptions and play out the benefits, risks, and costs of likely business scenarios
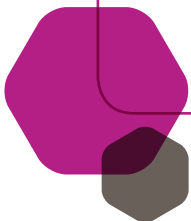
7

Leverage the advantages of budgeting software solutions

Adopting software solutions designed to increase the efficiency, accuracy, and consistency of budgeting processes yields measurable time savings for finance professionals.

Corporate Performance Management (CPM) software is designed to help organizations automate budgeting and planning processes.

Actions

- Choose a solution that automates time-consuming and/or repetitive tasks in your budgeting process

- Choose a software solution that accommodates business intelligence data and insights

- Use the *Choosing the Right Budgeting Software* checklist found in *Next Steps*
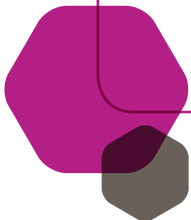
Next Steps

Corporate Performance Management (CPM) software is designed to help organizations reduce the time spent on budgeting by automating time consuming and repetitive processes.

To choose a CPM software solution that helps you reduce the time you spend on budgeting that is appropriate for you, your budgeting goals, and your organization, use the following tool, the *Choosing the Right Budgeting Software* checklist.

Choosing the Right Budgeting Software Checklist

Use this checklist to determine if CPM software can help you improve your annual budgeting process and reduce your reliance on spreadsheets.

Processes in place that suggest your company will benefit from a budgeting automation solution		
Actions	**Look Within Your Company**	**Ask a CPM Vendor**
Identify bottlenecks in your budgeting and/or planning processes	✓	
Identify when budgeting outputs have been compromised because you had incomplete and/or inaccurate data	✓	
Quantify the amount of time spent on manipulating spreadsheets within your finance department	✓	
Confirm your confidence with the outcomes of your forecasting and/or 'what if' analysis conducted in your department	✓	
Identify the quantifiable benefits your organization could achieve if the time required to analyze financial and operational data was reduced by more than 70%	✓	✓

Structures that suggest your organization will benefit from a budgeting software solution

Actions	Look Within Your Company	Ask a CPM Vendor
Confirm your organization has more than one operating unit or operates in more than one geographic location	✓	
Identify if your organization is increasing, or planning to increase, the number of employees or offices in the next 12 to 18 months	✓	
Confirm whether you have multiple stakeholders your business is accountable to	✓	

Planning for implementing a software solution that reduces the time spent on budgeting

Actions	Look Within Your Company	Ask a CPM Vendor
Define immediate/short-term goals that you would like a budgeting software solution to solve	✓	✓
Document the processes that you would like to improve/automate with a budgeting software solution	✓	
Confirm the process for integrating data from your ERP, CRM, HRMS, or payroll system into a budgeting software solution	✓	
Identify the area(s) within your company where you would like to increase collaboration	✓	
Identify people within your finance department that would be initial users of a budgeting software solution	✓	

Building knowledge of software solutions (CPM) that reduce the time spent on budgeting

Actions	Look Within Your Company	Ask a CPM Vendor
Review industry analyst reports about CPM solutions	✓	✓
Speak with colleagues in your industry about their experiences with CPM solutions (including total cost of ownership)	✓	
Attend CPM vendor presentations and product demonstrations	✓	✓
Identify a wish list of qualities and functionalities of a CPM solution that would help you reduce the time spent on budgeting and improve your budgets	✓	✓

About Prophix

Your business is evolving. Your systems should evolve too. Achieve your goals more successfully with Prophix's innovative Corporate Performance Management (CPM) software. Improve profitability and minimize risk when you automate repetitive tasks and focus on what matters. Budget, plan, consolidate and report automatically. Whether in the cloud or on-premise, Prophix supports your future with a platform that flexes to suit your strategic realities, today and tomorrow.

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