

Putting strategy first Speeding financial analysis through data, technology, and process improvements

Abstract

A global organization needed to improve its financial analytics capabilities. The existing environment was hampered by a lack of standardized processes, duplication of effort, lagging controls, and poor data quality. This environment made it difficult to achieve transparency in business operations or use information to plan strategically. Deloitte was engaged to design and implement standardized business processes and systems to help reduce business process cycle-time, establish data structures to support highly relevant analysis, and enable emerging business needs through a scalable IT infrastructure.

Challenge — Analysis bottlenecks hinder performance

A leading global organization found itself facing a complex set of challenges due to a lack of financial insight across the business. First, the company's financial analysis approach was inefficient. A lack of standardized processes resulted in duplicate effort, and weak controls resulted in poor data quality and limited transparency into business drivers. As a result, analysis was a lengthy process, the results of which could not be trusted.

Second, the organization's data was modeled by technologists with little understanding of the business or the kind of financial insights required for effective decision-making. As a result, the data model lacked business context. The business soon realized that the technical data model did not anticipate the evolving need for financial analytics, and this quickly bottlenecked analysis.

Finally, the foundational systems architecture did not consider the global nature of the business. As a "point solution," the environment was not properly architected to scale to a broader audience. In the short-term, cracks in the foundation were patched. However, as the environment was distributed to a broader audience, the resulting solution of patches became overly complex and unmanageable.

Solution — An insight-driven finance analytics roadmap

Deloitte worked with the company over a three-year period to help develop and implement a finance analytics roadmap. This plan focused significant attention on improving business processes, implementing an industry-centric information model, and pragmatically leveraging existing technology investments to enable a scalable yet flexible architecture.

Specifically, Deloitte worked side-by-side with business leaders and analysts to understand the business needs, design business processes, and define the enabling technical architecture. Throughout this process, Deloitte practitioners helped to provide both the technical and financial experience necessary to assess whether the required finance analytics capabilities were embedded in the solution.



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To align the solution with current organizational standards and capabilities, the team proceeded with technology solution that was architected to extend and scale as business needs evolved.

The team leveraged an incremental “prototype, build, and deliver” approach to help manage organizational change and to engage the business community in the evolving solution. With a total of six releases throughout the duration of the engagement, the organization has achieved its business objectives and is satisfied that the resulting platform will support its emerging business needs.

Results — Technology transformed from patching to analysis

From a technology perspective, the organization’s new platform was vastly simplified, easier to support, and more efficient. For example, the business experienced a 20x reduction in applications that required support, and a 50 percent reduction in data integration code. Both of these factors have contributed to improved efficiency and a 99.9 percent scheduled availability record. More importantly, the recommendation enabled a redeployment of IT resources from “supporting and patching” to “value-added” systems enhancements.

From a business perspective, the time required to perform work was reduced and the quality of analysis improved. Financial analysts spent less time solving data challenges and more time delivering analysis linked to the needs of the business. For example, the Financial Planning & Analysis group rapidly realized a 30 percent reduction in business cycle duration and the improvement of many last-mile processes from days to minutes. These improvements were a direct result of business process changes, improved confidence in the information used for analysis, and improved reliability of the underlying technology.

Overall, this initiative streamlined analysis, refocused resources on strategic business objectives, and helped to establish an integrated global business process that drives performance.

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