

Use cases

- Project profitability tracking
- Cash flow forecasting and reporting
- Currency hedging
- Ad hoc reporting

Challenge

- Inability to track profitability by project across customers and monitor results in existing financial systems
- Lack of insight into incoming cash flows from customers across countries compromised currency hedging strategy

Solution

- Rapid integration with core financial enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems
- Single data repository in Anaplan for planning and tracking individual projects and payment history across customers, countries, projects, and currencies
- Finance team able to own and maintain Anaplan without IT or external consultant support

Results at a glance

- Improved accuracy in cash flow forecasting gives greater control over currency hedging and reduces the risks inherent in foreign exchange
- Greater transparency into the profitability of projects across customers and various stages of project delivery cycle
- Reduced cycle times and improved productivity for FP&A and IT teams



Dimension Data improves project planning, cash flow forecasting, and currency hedging with Anaplan

Introduction

Johannesburg-based Dimension Data, a major subsidiary of Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation, provides specialist IT infrastructure solutions across networking, data center, unified communications, security, desktop, and contact center technologies for more than 6,000 clients from all major industry verticals. The company is consistently positioned in the Leaders Quadrant of the Gartner Communications Outsourcing and Professional Services Magic Quadrant (COPS) and the Gartner Cloud Infrastructure as a

Service Magic Quadrant, and provides services to many of the world's leading companies, including 72 percent of the Fortune 100 and 60 percent of the Fortune 500 companies. With more than 28,000 highly skilled employees spread across 58 countries and partners in a further 103 countries involved in supporting existing customers and implementing services for new clients—all of which need to be budgeted as individual projects—financial planning and analysis is clearly complex.

Before Anaplan

While the company's existing financial ERP system accurately tracked revenues and expenditures across multiple dimensions such as currencies and projects, Wayne Lo, Senior Director of Financial Operations, and his team experienced extreme difficulties in extracting and manipulating data from the system for analysis. These difficulties compromised their ability to track the financial profitability of major projects, limiting the visibility of service delivery teams and the senior management team directly responsible for the timely delivery of projects.

Why Anaplan?

Lo and his colleagues knew they needed a solution that allowed them to report and plan across multiple dimensions. They also were aware that it needed to be a flexible solution that could easily accommodate their evolving needs, and one they could eventually manage themselves without specialist skills from either inside or outside the company. "I think it's mainly the ease of use," says Lo. "Initially, we were heavily reliant on Anaplan's consultants to help implement the system. But along the way, we picked up the details of how to maintain it in fairly short time. We are also picking up and learning from your consultants on how to build new models for other purposes."

Implementation and deployment

Rapid data integration with the core ERP financials meant the implementation progressed quickly, and Dimension Data's professional services were soon able to track and monitor projects at the level of detail they required. Users eventually wanted dashboards to include additional information, such as whether various stages of a project had been invoiced and paid. Since the Anaplan platform is



With Anaplan, we can now do cash flow forecasting and hedging forecasting; it's a new area we couldn't do before, [but] we can do easily now.

Wayne Lo, Sr. Director, Financial Ops, Dimension Data



flexible and has built-in intelligence, these changes were added iteratively without compromising final delivery times.

Better visibility of each customer's invoicing and payment record commitment also led to Dimension Data's treasury function developing a new Anaplan module for cash flow planning and reporting.

Benefits

Having better visibility into when customers are committing to pay for various outstanding invoices has improved the accuracy of forecasts of future incoming cash flows for each of the many currencies in use. When combined with forecasts of outgoing cash flows, this gives Dimension Data's treasury team a more accurate forecast of future currency needs, allowing them to develop hedging strategies that minimize foreign exchange risk.

Being able to accurately predict when to buy and sell currencies gives Dimension Data financial savings that go straight to the bottom line. But there have been other benefits, too—for instance, the ability to quickly extract and manipulate project data in Anaplan instead of spreadsheets means Lo and his team can produce reports and do ad-hoc inquiries into individual customers far quicker than before, helping improve their personal productivity.

What's next?

The benefits that Lo and his colleagues delivered in Asia caused the corporate finance team in Johannesburg to evaluate how Anaplan can benefit the organization's core financial and operational processes. The team based in Asia is also looking to grow its use of Anaplan to embrace sales compensation planning—a complex, rules-driven process that is continually changing and increasingly difficult to manage in spreadsheets—as well as sales forecasting, which would benefit from assimilation on a single planning platform.

About Us

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