



From 4 Months to 4 Weeks

The Native Path to SAP Planning That
Doesn't Require Starting Over





The Pain Is Fresh

It's December. You just finished your budget cycle. Four months of spreadsheet chaos. Version control nightmares. Numbers you're not confident are accurate.

This is the reality for finance teams at mid-market SAP companies. According to SAP research, 52% of companies don't have a specialized planning and budget solution. That means half of finance teams are running their business on spreadsheets, hoping nothing breaks.

The pain shows up differently depending on where you sit. For the CFO, it's defending numbers to the board that you're not sure you trust. For the Controller or FP&A Director, it's spending four months as a data manager instead of a strategic partner. For the CHRO, it's labor cost surprises that nobody saw coming because HR and Finance weren't working from the same numbers.

**And in three months, the board will ask you to explain the variance.
What's your answer?**

CFOs & Senior Finance Executives: The Data Trust & Credibility Problem

You struggle to get timely, accurate data to present to the board or to answer difficult questions. You can't give confident explanations because nobody trusts the data. The consolidation process takes so long that by the time you have numbers, they're already stale.

When the business shifts mid-year, there's no time for re-forecasts. Your team is buried in the current cycle, so you're flying blind. You're hoping to land where you planned but have limited capability to course-correct when market conditions change or operations don't track to plan. By the time you realize you're off track, your options are limited.

Meanwhile your team is stuck doing manual data entry and reconciliation instead of being a strategic asset that supports your efforts. The people you hired to analyze the business spend their time hunting down spreadsheet versions or explaining why reports don't match.

FP&A, Controllers, & Finance Teams: The Spreadsheet Trap

You spent four months building the budget. Version 47 of the master spreadsheet. Chasing down inputs from department heads. Reconciling numbers that never quite match. The CFO presents it to the board, gets questioned on variance drivers, and comes back to you for answers.

You can't explain it. Not with confidence. You don't trust your own consolidation because you know how many manual steps went into it. You know where the formulas might have broken. You know which department sent you last year's template by mistake. But you can't tell the CFO that.

You're supposed to be a strategic finance partner. The person who helps leadership make decisions about where to invest, where to optimize, which opportunities to chase. Instead, you're stuck manually building spreadsheets, reconciling versions, and inputting data. Your team spends their time hunting down numbers, not analyzing what those numbers mean.

And when the next cycle starts, you'll do it all over again.

HR Leadership: The Alignment Gap

Labor costs surprise you and your leadership. Your HR plan doesn't align with Finance because the systems don't talk to each other. You planned headcount based on operational needs, Finance budgeted based on their models, and the disconnect didn't surface until actuals came in.

Now HR and Finance are pointing fingers. Finance says you overspent on labor. You say their budget assumptions were unrealistic. Neither of you has a single source of truth to work from, so you're stuck going in circles. Meanwhile, leadership sees two departments that can't get their act together.

You look like you can't manage your own workforce costs. When the CFO presents labor variance to the board and can't explain it, you're the one who takes the heat.

Why Bolt-Ons Make It Worse

You're an SAP customer. Your transactional data lives in ECC or S/4HANA. Non-SAP planning tools like Adaptive, Anaplan, and OneStream require you to rebuild your data foundation from scratch. You're not solving the problem. You're creating a second system to reconcile.

The result? Data silos. Manual processes. Limited collaboration. Inefficient reporting.

These aren't just operational headaches. For CFOs, they're the reason you end up defending numbers you don't trust. For Controllers and FP&A Directors, they're why you can't break out of the data prep trap to demonstrate strategic value. For CHROs, they're why workforce planning and financial planning never quite match, and why you take the heat when labor costs miss budget.

SAP Terminology Boxes

SAC

SAP Analytics Cloud. Cloud-based platform for planning, budgeting, forecasting, and analytics. Supports collaborative planning with data input templates, task management, and automated workflows.

BDC

Business Data Cloud. SAP's unified data platform that includes SAC, Datasphere, and SAP Databricks. Enables native integration with S/4HANA transactional data

S/4HANA

SAP's current-generation ERP system. The transactional backbone where financial data lives. Direct connection to SAC eliminates the need to rebuild data foundations.

A Better Path Forward

The native SAP path is fundamentally better for SAP customers. SAC planning with BDC connects directly to your S/4HANA data. No rebuilding. No reconciliation. One source of truth.

“The first consultant was talking about the tool. Nobody cared. We talked about the business problem and we got the attention. Because what leadership needed was confidence in the numbers and speed to act.”

Rodrigo Zanichelli, Principal | SAP BTP & SAP BDC, Improving

Pre-built planning packages cover the core financial planning areas:

Revenue

Revenue modeling

Financial Statements

Balance sheet & P&L

The difference isn't just technical. When you plan where your data already exists, changes flow through automatically. A new cost center in S/4HANA appears in your planning model without 12 manual steps. IT doesn't have to stand up another data pipeline. Security and governance stay consistent.



01

Integration Capability

- Connects S/4HANA & non-SAP data
- One source of truth
- Eliminates need for data reconciliation



02

User-friendly & Collaborative Planning

- Real-time collaboration across teams
- Interactive planning sessions
- Everyone works from the same numbers



03

Advanced Analytics & AI

- Built-in predictive forecasting
- AI-powered trend analysis
- Faster, data-driven decisions



04

Cloud-Based Agility

- Access planning from anywhere
- Scales with your business
- No IT infrastructure overhead

What Changes

- **For Senior Finance:**

When the board asks questions, you have answers. Numbers you can defend with confidence. Real-time visibility into how the business is tracking to plan. The ability to re-forecast when conditions change, not after it's too late.

- **For Functional Finance:**

Your team stops being data preparers and starts doing actual analysis. Budget timelines compress. Variance reporting becomes automatic. You spend your time understanding what the numbers mean, not hunting them down.

- **For HR Leadership:**

Workforce plans and financial plans speak the same language. Labor cost projections align with business goals. No more finger-pointing when actuals come in.

- **NorthRiver Midstream: From 4 Months to 4 Weeks**

NorthRiver Midstream is an energy infrastructure company with approximately 1,000 employees. Their planning process took four months and relied heavily on Excel worksheets being passed around the organization. Version control issues. No security. A process where the CFO couldn't see results until everything was combined into one giant spreadsheet.

After implementing SAC planning with pre-built packages covering OPEX, CAPEX, labor, revenue, and financial statements, they compressed their budget cycle from over four months to approximately four weeks.

“The biggest improvement we’ve noticed is in how our accounting team and stakeholders utilize their time. Previously, we spent a significant amount of effort preparing Excel files, presenting them to stakeholders, and then inputting the data into BPC. Now, with a built-in system solution that includes analytics, we can focus on value-added activities such as rationalization, strategy, and prioritizing work for the business.”

Brady Virostek, Director, Accounting, NorthRiver Midstream

- **New York Power Authority: Replacing Legacy Processes**

NYPA, the largest state public power utility in the US, faced similar challenges with a legacy 10-Year Operating Forecast and Excel-based processes. After implementing SAC, they automated regulatory and variance reporting across eight core business groups. By normalizing data across the organization, they enabled cross-collaboration between business units that wasn't possible before.

Three Moves for the Next 12 Months

- **Move 1: Audit your current planning process.**

Start with a simple question: how much time does your team spend preparing data versus actually analyzing it? Map where version control breaks down. Identify the reconciliation steps that eat up cycles. If 70% of your finance team's planning effort goes into getting the numbers versus understanding what they mean, then that's the gap you're trying to close.

- **Move 2: Map your SAP data landscape.**

Document what transactional data you need for planning. Where does it live today? How does it get from S/4HANA into your planning models? If the answer involves exports, spreadsheets, and manual uploads, you've found the friction. Native integration means that when a cost center changes in S/4, it shows up in your planning model automatically.

- **Move 3: Talk to someone who's done it.**

Before committing to another 18-month implementation, understand what's possible with pre-built accelerators. The goal isn't a massive transformation. It's fixing the worst 20% of your current process so next year doesn't look like this year. Start with the area that hurts most, whether that's OPEX, revenue, or workforce planning, and build from there.

Is This You?

- Is your finance team spending more time preparing data than analyzing it?
- Does budget season feel like four months of fire drills?
- Are you defending numbers to the board that you're not confident are accurate?
- Do HR and Finance point fingers when labor costs surprise leadership?

If you're ready to change, we're here to help.

Ready for a better way?

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