

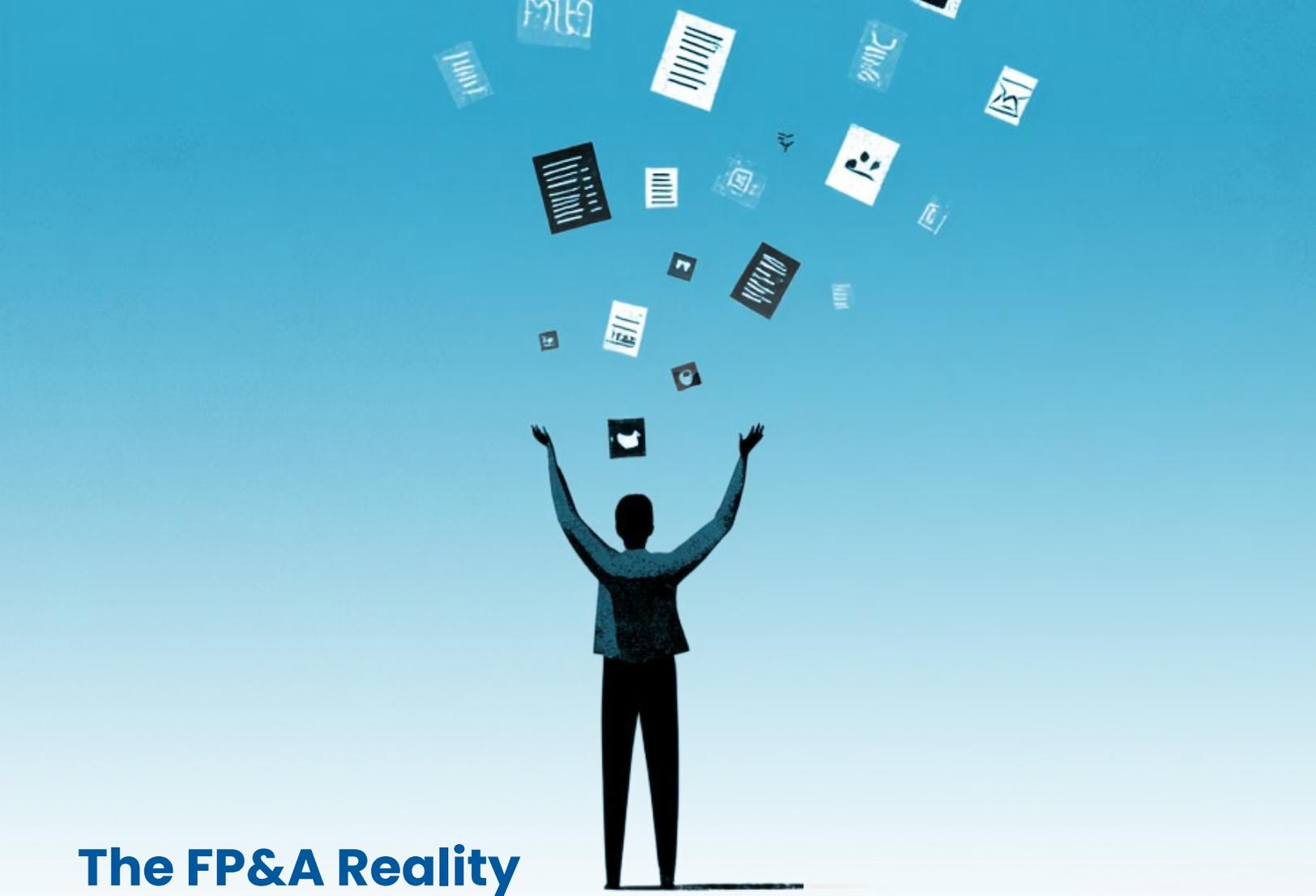
4 Months to 4 Weeks: How NorthRiver Compressed Their Budget Cycle with SAP-Native Planning

How a midstream energy company transformed their FP&A team from data managers back into strategic analysts.



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The FP&A Reality

If you work in FP&A, you know the pattern.

Budget season arrives. For the next four months, your job becomes data wrangling. You're pulling numbers from disconnected sources, reconciling across business units, chasing down version after version of the same spreadsheet. By the time you consolidate everything, you've spent more time managing the process than actually analyzing what the numbers mean.

And when leadership asks a question you weren't expecting? You're back in the spreadsheets, rebuilding the answer from scratch.

This was life at NorthRiver Midstream. A growing midstream energy company with approximately 1,000 employees. Their finance team had the skills to deliver real analysis, but their planning infrastructure kept them trapped in data management.

BUDGET CYCLE DURATION

4+ months

PRIMARY PLANNING TOOL

Excel with manual consolidation

TIME ALLOCATION

70% data prep, 30% analysis

The Problem

NorthRiver was running a legacy SAP planning system (BPC) that hadn't kept pace with the business and couldn't scale with their operations. Its rigidity forced the finance team into offline processes and spreadsheet workarounds that were completely disconnected from their transactional data.

The symptoms were familiar to many FP&A team:

- Multiple business units maintained separate planning models
- Data lived in disconnected spreadsheets with no single source of truth
- Every consolidation required manual reconciliation
- Version control was a constant battle
- Scenario planning was theoretically possible but practically impossible given the time required

The finance team made it work. They always do. But "making it work" meant a 4-month budget cycle that consumed the team and left no capacity for the analysis and insight that leadership actually needed.

The problem wasn't effort or talent. It was architecture. NorthRiver's FP&A team was spending 70% of their time preparing data and only 30% analyzing it. That ratio needed to flip.

The Solution

NorthRiver implemented Improving's xi.Planning Packages on SAP Analytics Cloud. Rather than another multi-year transformation program, they deployed five pre-built planning modules that integrated directly with their SAP transactional data.



What changed: The modules replaced the fragmented spreadsheet environment with a unified platform. Data flowed directly from SAP transactions into planning models. Consolidation became automatic. Version control became irrelevant because everyone worked from the same source.

But the real transformation was in how the team spent their time.



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

The Result

BUDGET CYCLE

4 months → ~4 weeks

DATA VS. ANALYSIS

Flipped from 70/30 to analysis-first

TIME ALLOCATION

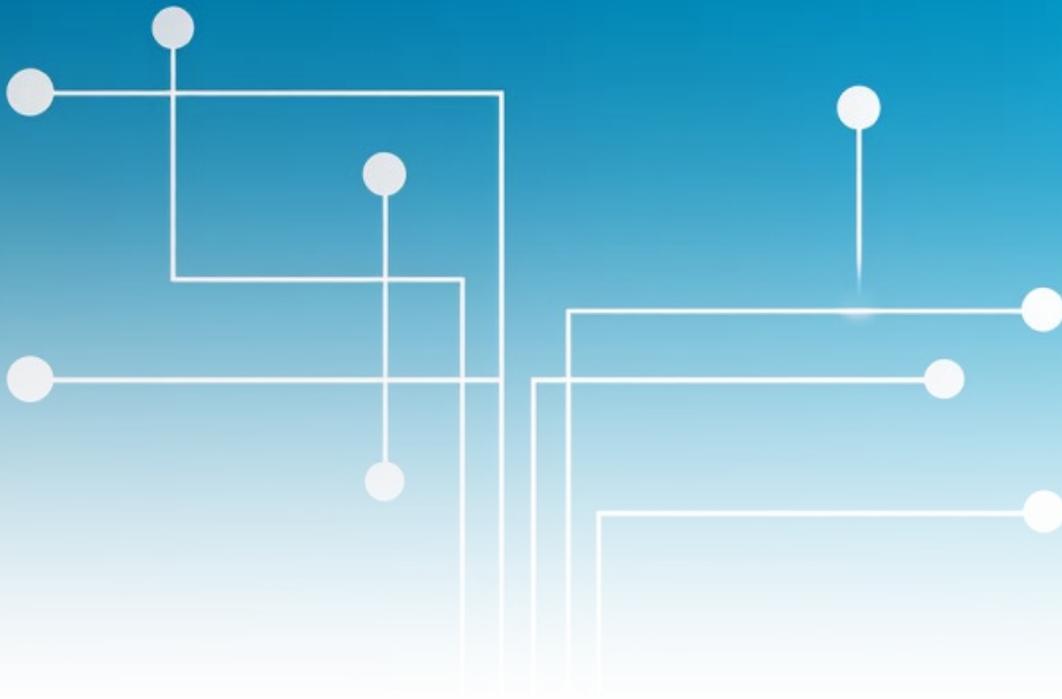
From data collection to governance and review

The accounting team's work fundamentally changed. Instead of spending weeks preparing Excel files for consolidation, they shifted to value-added activities: governance, review, exception handling, and actual analysis.

Scenario planning became practical. When leadership asked "what if" questions, the team could run scenarios in hours instead of days. Variance analysis moved from "we'll get back to you" to explainable on demand.

"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) when collaborating with stakeholders."

— Brady Virostek, Director of Accounting, NorthRiver Midstream



Why SAP-Native Matters

NorthRiver had looked at third-party planning tools like Anaplan, OneStream, and Adaptive. The challenge: those tools require rebuilding data connections from scratch. Every integration point becomes a maintenance burden. Every change in SAP requires a corresponding change in the planning tool.

That's where our team at Improving came in with our pre-built planning accelerators, xi.Planning Packages.

What Are xi.Planning Packages?

xi.Planning Packages run natively on SAP Analytics Cloud. Unlike third-party planning tools that require rebuilding data connections, xi.Planning Packages integrate directly with SAP transactional data.

Each module comes pre-configured with planning logic, workflows, and reporting. Implementation focuses on configuration and business rules rather than building from scratch.

The result: faster implementation, lower maintenance, and planning models that stay synchronized with your ERP without manual intervention.

For NorthRiver, the difference between “rebuild your data layer” and “connect to what you have” was the difference between a multi-year project and a solution that delivered value in months.



Recognize This Pattern?

If your FP&A team:

- Spends more time reconciling data than analyzing it
- Dreads budget season because it consumes months of capacity
- Maintains separate spreadsheets across business units
- Can't run scenarios because rebuilding the model takes too long
- Knows the numbers are probably right but can't be certain

You've hit the wall that NorthRiver hit. The good news: the solution exists. Improving makes it accessible.

Ready to give your FP&A team their time back?
Schedule a conversation about your planning environment.

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