



Covenant Logistics Group transforms its Financial Planning and Summary Reporting with IBM Planning Analytics



The Challenge:

Like many companies, Covenant Logistics Group's lead-time to complete their financial forecasts was long and tedious. Fast and accurate forecasting is essential to properly plan for the future of their business, but long outdated business planning processes were a roadblock to achieving the best possible results.

The Solution:

The **IBM Planning Analytics** Financial Planning and Summary Reporting solution seamlessly integrated the business forecasting and summary reporting needs necessary to deliver essential business information directly to the executives in a more timely and accurate manner than ever before.

The Benefit:

Workforce automation has significantly reduced the workload while increasing system accuracy throughout the planning process. The finance team can now rely on having one source of truth for the data.



About the Customer

Covenant Logistics Group relies on accurate financial planning to predict the costs necessary to successfully run their 2,550-truck/6,600-trailer fleet through its subsidiaries.

Covenant Logistics Group is a publicly traded 30-year-old truckload carrying company operating mainly in the southern United States. Through its subsidiaries, Covenant offers dedicated, expedited trucking operations, warehousing, and managed freight services.

Business Challenge

Like many companies, Covenant Logistics Groups' lead-time to complete their financial forecasts were long and tedious. Fast and accurate forecasting is essential to properly plan for the future of their business, but long outdated business planning processes were a roadblock to achieving the best possible results.

Forecast accuracy is important to Covenant, but the forecasting process before QueBIT's solution was a serious challenge due to heavy reliance on spreadsheets, manual inputs, weak version tracking, and practically non-existent security. Over time the process had become increasingly more difficult to manage, while the

company's executives expected more and more sophisticated and accurate financial reporting and analysis. The manual effort required just to collect, clean, and validate data severely compressed the time left for doing analysis and creating reports. As the need for richer analyses grew, it was clear that the existing systems could not keep up.

QueBIT's Introduction

QueBIT was selected as the IBM business partner to help Covenant Logistics Group transform its Enterprise Financial Planning and Summary Reporting solution on the IBM Planning Analytics platform. QueBIT is a multiple year recipient of the IBM Business Partner of the Year award and has deep expertise in delivering analytically driven solutions. QueBIT has delivered hundreds of successful enterprise-level implementations on IBM analytics platforms including IBM Planning Analytics, SPSS Modeler and Cognos Analytics.

At Covenant, as with all QueBIT's clients, the QueBIT team implemented its CARE [Collaborative Agile Rapid Enablement] methodology to enable Covenant to be active participants in the development and deployment of the solution. This matched up nicely with Covenant's own CARE [Communication, Attitude, Respect, and Excellence] methodology! The approach included hands-on training in their own model and deep team collaboration throughout the implementation.

By the end of the implementation, the Covenant Financial Planning & Analysis (FP&A) team was able to manage and extend their Enterprise Financial Planning and Summary solution themselves, without IT or QueBIT support.

"IBM Planning Analytics has given us the ability to update our financial reporting at the fast pace our business and management requires. While we are still just scratching the surface of what is possible, we can now report in much greater detail, using processes that are sustainable in the long-term."

John Wright, Expedited Controller

Solution Overview

The QueBIT Enterprise Financial Planning and Summary Reporting solution is configured on the IBM Planning Analytics Cloud platform, utilizing Planning Analytics Workspace (PAW) and Planning Analytics for Excel (PAfE). Additionally, the solution leverages IBM's Secure Gateway technology to connect directly to source databases and Active Directory integration for Single-Sign-On user authentication. These products are platform based and allowed QueBIT to create a solution that was fully customized to fit Covenant Logistics Groups' exact business needs. The solution seamlessly integrated the business forecasting and summary reporting needs necessary to deliver essential business information directly to the executives in a timelier and more accurate manner than ever before.



Enterprise Financial Planning and Summary Reporting

IBM PAW provides an intuitive browser-based user-experience for reporting, dashboard creation and data collection, while the back-end IBM Planning Analytics TM1 server takes care of serving up “one source of the truth” for both data and calculation formulas. Using IBM's Planning Analytics TM1 Server to track one source of the truth for Covenant Logistics Group financial planning. This empowers key business users to enter their forecast data, and to perform ad-hoc data analysis immediately, on a self-service basis! Moreover, data inputs such as the Department of Energy Price per Gallon of Gasoline and seasonal workforce hiring are used to drive predictive figures on the cost of running Covenant's varied business lines.

In addition to the main reporting structures, the solution includes the ability to modify company, division, department, and account combinations to report on various slices of the business for tax, SEC, and other purposes. These ad-hoc combinations can be controlled by the end users and are endlessly valuable resources for executives needing new views of their data on the fly. The drastically improved planning timeline has also freed members of the finance department to perform more value-added analysis of their own; gaining new insights and improving the way they plan in the future.

User Interface and Experience

The combination of PAW and PAfE that are the basis for the QueBIT Enterprise Planning and Summary Reporting solution delivers a rich user interface with the ability to customize user interactions and visualizations. These customizations can be completed privately by users in personal folders, or they can be pushed out publicly to users by the system administrators.

IBM Planning Analytics security authorization is configured in one place, and applied uniformly in PAW as well as in directly-connected PAfE spreadsheets. This enabled Covenant to create familiar-looking web templates based on their existing interfaces, while adding centralized and secure version control. These features, together with the powerful underlying TM1 server, provide a strong and extensible foundation for the financial planning processes.

Benefits

The QueBIT Enterprise Financial Planning and Summary Reporting solution represents a significant change in the forecasting business process for Covenant Logistics Group. Finance team members have experienced a significant reduction in workload throughout the planning process due to workflow automation. System accuracy has increased significantly not only by providing one source of the truth for data, but also by enabling users to now plan at divisional and departmental levels that were previously too granular to be done by hand in Microsoft Excel. Finance users and executives now have a wealth of information available that serves to validate and improve forecasts. Covenant can now deliver the fast and accurate forecasts they need to successfully run their business for years to come.

Products Used

- IBM Planning Analytics
- IBM Planning Analytics Workspace (PAW)
- IBM Planning Analytics for Excel (PAx)
- IBM Secure Gateway



About QueBIT

QueBIT enables organizations to achieve a business-focused integration of Financial and Operational Planning and Analysis, extended with Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML). This area of expertise is known as Extended Planning and Analysis (xP&A). The goal of every xP&A transformation is to infuse more intelligent and agile decision making throughout the business, resulting in Revenue and Profit maximization, while increasing competitive advantages. QueBIT's collaborative, incremental and business-driven approach is driven by over twenty years of experience in delivering successful xP&A solutions to hundreds of mid-market and large companies across all industry sectors and lines of business. For more information on how your organization can Analyze, Plan and Achieve your own xP&A journey, please check us out at www.quebit.com

