

Fortune 500 Insurance Firm Reclaims 2,000 Hours & Elevates IT's Strategic Position in the Business

Overview

With an annual technology budget of over \$70 million being managed in spreadsheets, a Fortune 500 insurance firm found itself stuck in a frustrating cycle of inefficiency – excessive effort wrangling data and distributing lengthy hardcopy reports, constant confusion and error from miscommunication between budget owners and IT Finance, and thousands of wasted analyst hours spent fielding an endless stream of questions.

But the culmination of these operational inefficiencies resulted in a much bigger problem: a severe lack of trust and strategic alignment between IT and the business.

Despite the firm's incremental efforts to improve the situation, its existing spreadsheet-based planning system was a constant barrier. In response, the firm's leadership opted to implement Nicus as a replacement. This case study details their results.

Key Challenges

The firm sought to address three key challenges by replacing its legacy tools and processes:

- **Lengthy budgeting cycles** – Non-labor planning and budgeting took upwards of three months each year – involving a tedious relay of spreadsheets across various departments, hundreds of manual work hours and careful orchestration between various ERP tools and data sources.
- **Poor communication between IT Finance and stakeholders** – Due to a byzantine system of spreadsheets (many of which were separately owned and maintained), it was difficult to disseminate information in a consistent, accurate manner, which caused ongoing confusion and frustration throughout the organization.
- **Analyst time consumed with low-value tasks** – Another disadvantage of the existing spreadsheet system was the flood of questions and disputes it created for analysts, forcing them to spend more time simply processing data to report basic info rather than analyzing data for value-add insights.



33%
REDUCTION IN NON-LABOR PLANNING PROCESS

2,000 HOURS
IN TIME SAVINGS ANNUALLY

8 WEEKS
ACCELERATION IN PLANNING SCHEDULE

The Solution

To address each of the key problems noted above, the company implemented Nicus IT Planning as a replacement for their existing planning and budgeting system.

After making the transition, the firm shortened its non-labor planning process by 33%, achieved enhanced visibility and communication of budget data, and gained thousands of reclaimed analyst hours, which were instantly redirected to high-value insight discovery and multi-year planning efforts.

Most importantly, the firm's gains in operational efficiency and cost transparency enabled greater trust and communication between IT and leadership – creating new alignment between technology spend and business outcomes to ensure maximum value and impact.

Reclaimed Time to Deliver More Value

The chief benefit of the firm's implementation was the capability it provided to save and redirect analyst time toward

high-value activities – which, in turn, has led to improved relationships and a greater sense of partnership between IT and the business.

“It's freed up time for the analysts to do more of what they're best at: the value-add analytical work,” the firm's ITFM Director said. “We're now delivering a higher level of insight to the business, and that continually improves our relationships with all the various stakeholders and leadership members across the organization. And we're also using that reclaimed time to extend our planning horizon – giving a new level of rigor to the next 2-3 years instead of burning up so many resources on the next 12-24 months. It's really elevated our strategic position in the business.”

Ultimately, this new dynamic of trust and collaboration has driven a big change in how the business perceives IT. And the firm explains Nicus was instrumental in making that happen.

“ Without the burden of our old processes, we have a newfound ability to work more strategically alongside our business partners – to move from a processing and reporting function toward an analysis and insight role. It's been an immensely valuable paradigm shift for us, and it wouldn't have been possible without Nicus.”

“There's a sense of partnership, trust, and credibility that wasn't there before,” the firm's ITFM Director said. “Without the burden of our old processes, we have a newfound ability to work more strategically alongside our business partners – to move from a processing and reporting function toward an analysis and insight role. It's been an immensely valuable paradigm shift for us, and it wouldn't have been possible without Nicus.”

Faster, More Accurate Budgets

The number one complaint about the firm's existing planning process was its heavy reliance on traditional spreadsheets. Every step had to be done manually, and there was constant risk of error.

“We had a lot of manual activities based around spreadsheets that put a hard cap on our speed and efficiency for planning and budgeting,” the firm's ITFM Director said. “And accuracy was

an ongoing issue too. For a single entry, there were 36 lines of data. So, if you made one change, you had to go through manually and make sure all those different lines were accurate too.”

Now, the firm uses Nicus IT Planning to oversee the entire process. And without the need to pass around spreadsheets and perform manual calculations, they're able to complete the planning process in a fraction of the time previously required.

“We were able to accelerate our planning schedule by about eight weeks,” the firm's ITFM Director said. “The Nicus solution cuts out all the manual effort we were expending before to get the budget built out, and it dramatically accelerates the review process. Directors can see us make changes in real-time, and they can instantly see how those changes impact the budget. We have a new level of transparency that stops the back-and-forth and saves everyone a ton of time.”





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From the perspective of IT Finance effort alone, this single operational change nets the company well over 2,000 hours in time savings annually. But it also dramatically reduced errors and variance.

“Beyond just the time savings to get the schedule loaded, what we have now is so much more accurate,” the firm’s ITFM Director explained. “When you make a change, the solution keeps track of all the associated attributes that need to be adjusted. The human error risk is practically zero at this point.”

Fewer Questions, Better Answers

Another drawback of the firm’s previous spreadsheet system was its propensity to both degrade and overload communication channels between IT Finance and its business partners throughout the organization. Since information was stored in multiple formats in multiple locations, it was difficult for decision-makers to find the right numbers when they needed them most.

By centralizing the firm’s data in a single source of record, and making it available on a self-service, role-specific basis, all the company’s directors, budget owners, and other stakeholders now have everything they need on-demand. In turn, there’s now far less questioning and confusion, more efficient communication, and higher quality insight available at their fingertips.

“I can’t stress enough how important it is to have this centralized record,” the firm’s ITFM Director added. “Everyone gets access to exactly what’s relevant to them – and only at the times when they need it. That saves a lot of questioning and confusion by itself. But the next big benefit is that it’s always up-to-date and accurate, which was impossible to accomplish in spreadsheets.” 



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