



# PERFECT HOW YOU PROJECT

Assessing Diligence and Discipline in the Planning Process

Delivered by

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Forum

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Planning

## Introduction

More than ever, we live in uncertain financial times. Reports of impending recession, a declining real estate market and shrinking consumer spending make every company question what the future holds. Yet many business categories are thriving, and global expansion continues. Companies in the small and mid-size categories are still able to achieve meteoric growth. And big mergers, acquisitions and venture funding stories abound.

So what does this all mean to today's business? It adds up to an environment of change, dynamics and opportunity—one in which companies must be agile, adaptive and aggressive. They must be fiscally responsible and responsive to changing environments, particularly in times of downturn, when smart companies can capitalize on uncertain times to leapfrog competitors.

The unfortunate truth is that most companies are ill-prepared for this constant flux and flow. They are not nimble and dynamic in their fiscal processes to deal with the changing landscape. In fact, two-thirds of companies are not highly adaptive in their financial planning processes, according to a recent study by the BPM Forum on budgeting, forecasting and reporting. They currently lack the means and tools to deliver the predictive and prescriptive processes to manage through the tough times.

Yet these companies understand that budgeting, forecasting, and reporting are critical to business success, and they are striving to improve processes that are frustrating, time consuming and inaccurate. Regular budgeting is fraught with frustration and hassles that make dynamic reporting and rolling forecasts a real challenge.

The need for change is very real. Part of the problem lies in the fact that 75 percent of businesses still rely on simple spreadsheets to handle increasingly complex financial scenarios. Many of these companies are using hundreds or thousands of static Excel spreadsheets to track and manage budgets and forecasts. These organizations struggle with engaging the appropriate level of resources in the process, according to the study. In fact, those still dependent on spreadsheets report much more anguish and wasted time associated with financial processes than those who are not tied to spreadsheets.

A look at the larger company segments of mid-sized businesses (100–1,000 employees) and large businesses (more than 1,000 employees) reveals that they are even more dependent (78 percent) on spreadsheets, are less adaptive and have bigger concerns around a lack of collaboration in the financial process. Fast, well-focused financial planning becomes a competitive advantage helping propel companies into leadership positions. This means financial pros need something far more effective than slow, error-prone spreadsheets to involve business-wide participation in the planning and budgeting process and develop solid plans. They also need tools they can adopt and put to work immediately, not those that require months and millions of dollars to bring up to speed before some financial intelligence comes out the other end. Running what-if scenarios and financial models lets them prepare for what's coming, good or bad.

The Perfect How You Project survey of over 340 financial professionals, conducted by the BPM Forum and sponsored by Adaptive Planning, revealed that executives and financial staff, from a broad industry spectrum of small, medium and large companies, unanimously agreed that budgeting, forecasting and reporting are essential or very important to their business success. However, over 65 percent admitted they are not agile or adaptive in their financial practices, and even more significantly, 60 percent were not confident of hitting their 2008 expense and revenue plans. Half of those surveyed agreed that they spend too much time and too many resources on the budgeting process. Lack of automation, difficulty collaborating and the speed of business change are cited as the key factors derailing, delaying or disrupting the budgeting process—which makes sense given the fact that over 75 percent are entirely dependent on Excel for budgeting. Companies are putting more effort into budgeting practices in order to dynamically respond to economic change, manage growth, improve inefficient processes and fulfill executive mandates, according to the respondents. Change is imminent. Seventy-three percent of respondents plan to make changes to underlying technology and financial processes this year, and nearly a quarter of midsized and larger companies will move beyond spreadsheets for a purpose-built solution in 2008.

## Top-Level Findings

### **Budgeting, forecasting and reporting are critical to business success**

- 86 percent say these processes are very important or essential to their business
- 45 percent say they are essential

### **Yet a vast majority are not very nimble and dynamic in these processes**

- Two thirds of respondents are either not or only somewhat adaptive and agile in their budgeting, forecasting, reporting and analysis

### **Resource challenges and frustrations are significant**

- Almost half say there are either too many or not enough staff involved in budgeting and forecasting within their company
- More than 50 percent report that the budgeting process is too burdensome and time consuming (20 percent say hugely so); less than 30 percent of respondents believe that they are spending the right amount of time and resources on the process
- More than a third point to lack of information availability, collaboration challenges, and rapid business change as the top pitfalls derailing the budgeting process
- Other top-rated challenges include a lack of an automated budgeting solution and poor cross-departmental communication

### **Spreadsheet sprain is a big problem**

- 76 percent of respondents are still dependent upon Excel spreadsheets for their budgets—an astonishing number given the complexities and dynamic nature of business that drive the need for automation
- Over a third use more than 25 Excel spreadsheets as part of their budget, and nearly 20 percent use hundreds or thousands!
- Cumbersome spreadsheets are cited as one of the top six pitfalls that derail, delay or disrupt the budgeting process
- This widespread “spreadsheet sprain” is causing huge levels of anxiety and resource drain—50 percent more of those dependent on spreadsheets report anguish in the process and four times more say it’s a huge time drain than those that are not dependent on spreadsheets

### **As a result, budgeting and forecasting has been a hit or miss (mostly miss) process on the wrong side of both revenue and expense targets**

- More than 40 percent said actual 2007 expenses came in over budget
- A mere 16 percent hit their expense targets in budgeting
- Only 11 percent hit their revenue forecasts on the head last year
- 41 percent missed the mark on the down side, coming in short of forecast revenue numbers

**Predictions are that this year's budgets will not be highly accurate either**

- Nearly 60 percent are only somewhat or not confident that their company will hit their expense and revenue plans
- The other 40 percent is very or absolutely confident that they will hit their mark—about three times the number that actually came in on budget for 2007

**Despite these challenges, most organizations rate their financial IQ relatively highly**

- About two thirds grade their companies a B or better
- 25 percent give their company a C or D
- 10 percent rate their companies as a failure in financial IQ

**A majority of organizations forecast more than once a year, but only about 25 percent do so more than once per quarter, presenting a challenge to keep up in dynamic business climate**

- 44 percent set formal budgets or re-forecast once every six months at most, and nearly a third only do it once a year
- A mere nine percent conduct forecasting on a rolling basis

**Budgeting blues are peaking**

- 40 percent say their anguish and frustration levels associated with budgeting are somewhat or very high

**Mid-sized and large businesses acutely feeling the pain**

- Three-fourths said financial planning processes are not highly adaptive
- Difficulty collaborating was the number one pitfall
- One-third more respondents in this category said the budgeting process is a huge time and resource drain than did overall respondents
- Fifty percent more said anguish and frustration around the process is high

**Need for change is very real**

- Top plans for changing the budgeting, forecasting, and reporting processes in 2008 include improving the efficiency of processes, involving more people and departments, and formalizing processes
- Companies will put more effort into budgeting and planning because they see the need to respond to dynamic market conditions, manage growth effectively, and improve broken or inefficient processes
- Seventy-three percent of respondents plan to make changes to underlying technology and financial processes in 2008
- Twenty-three percent of midsized and larger companies plan to move beyond spreadsheets for a purpose-built solution in 2008

**Particularly in an economy that is predicted to be weak or recessionary this year**

- 45 percent expect the economy to be somewhat or very weak this year
- Only 18 percent estimate a strong or very strong economy in 2008

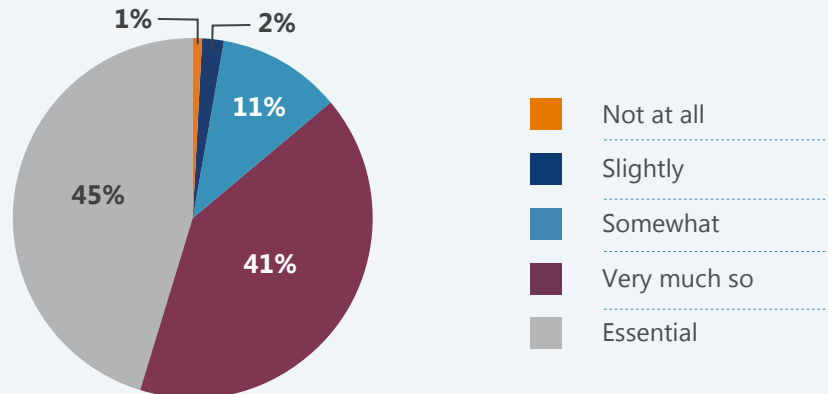
**Executives, healthy cross-section of industries and businesses well represented**

- Two thirds of respondents described themselves as executive level budget participants
- More than 25 different industries made up the pool, with financial services and manufacturing as the largest concentrations
- There was a relatively even distribution of company sizes. Sixty percent were mid-sized or large businesses.
- Thirty percent of companies describe themselves as on the fast track, and 75 percent are growing at some level

## Detailed Survey Findings

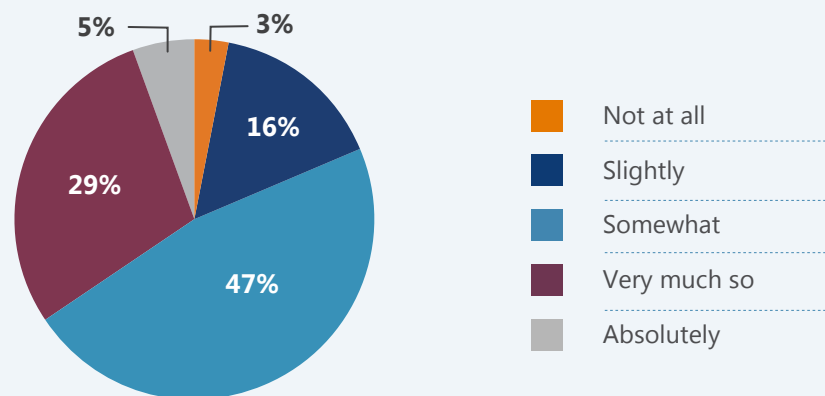
Respondents almost unanimously rated financial disciplines as critical to the business. Over 85 percent agreed on budgeting, forecasting and reporting's significance to success. Just 13 percent described these financial processes as somewhat or slightly important. Yet, further results will reveal that despite the importance of such practices, financial professionals need to improve their processes in several key areas.

### 1 How important are budgeting, forecasting and reporting to the success of your business?



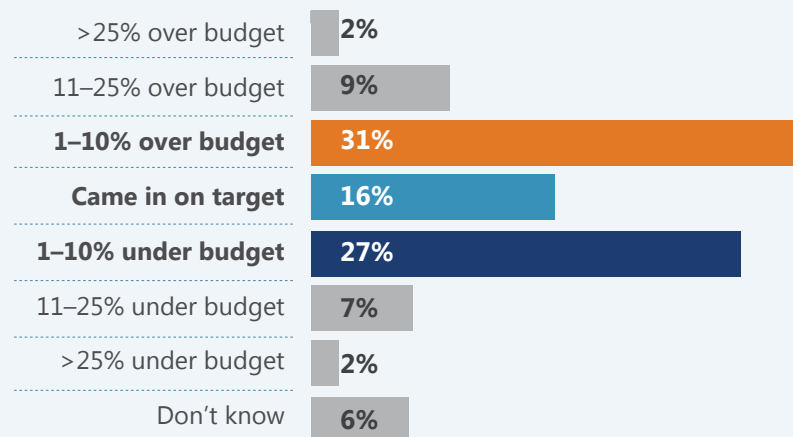
Business agility wasn't given particularly high marks by most respondents. Somewhat agile was given by about half (47 percent) contrasting with only 29 percent saying their companies are "very agile" as a result of financial management processes. A somewhat disturbing finding given the need for dynamic action in the midst of market uncertainties, challenged economies, and rapidly changing business environments.

**2** *How agile and adaptive are your budgeting forecasting, reporting, and analysis?*



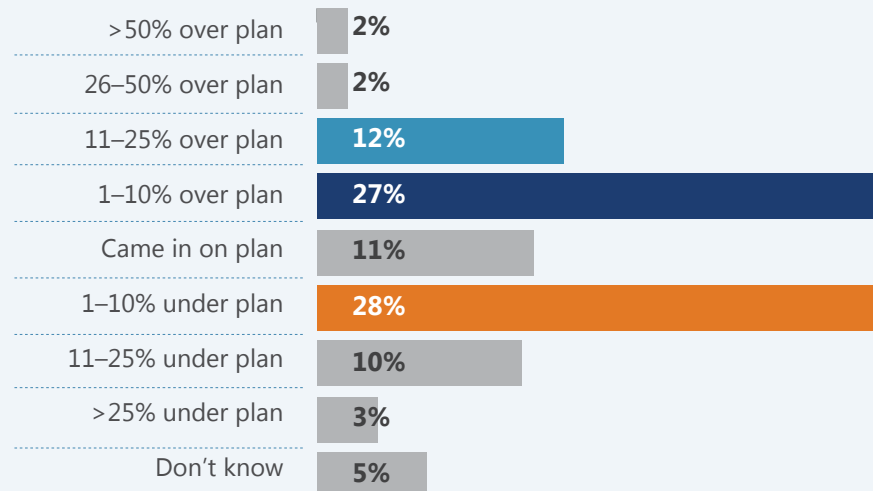
Accuracy of financial metrics didn't fare well either in the survey. The combination of companies that were either under or over projected budgets, totaled nearly 80 percent. Just 16 percent reported hitting their expense targets, and even fewer landed on their revenue marks. Given the resources, frustration and pain involved in developing the budgets and forecasts in the first place, this is a disappointing hit rate for the vast majority.

### 3 How do your actual 2007 expenses compare with your 2007 budget?



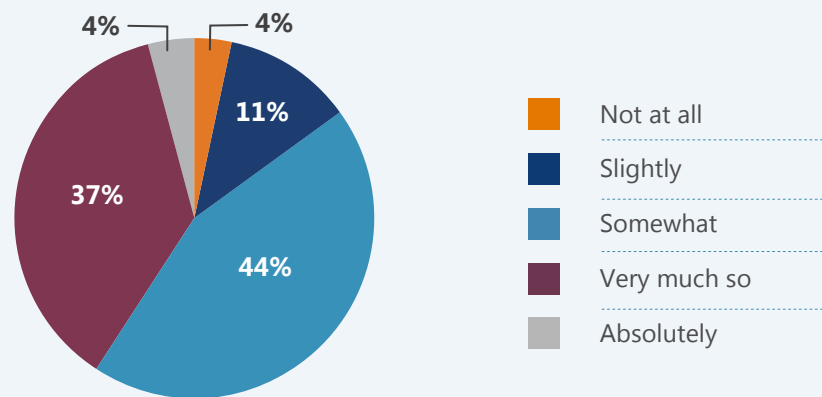
Again a small number (11 percent) came in on plan with a fairly equal distribution (43 percent vs. 41 percent) coming in under or over their revenue plans. This points to poor accuracy in terms of revenue predictions as well—a dangerous prospect, especially given that two-fifths of companies were off-target on the negative side.

#### 4 How do your actual 2007 revenues compare with your 2007 plan?



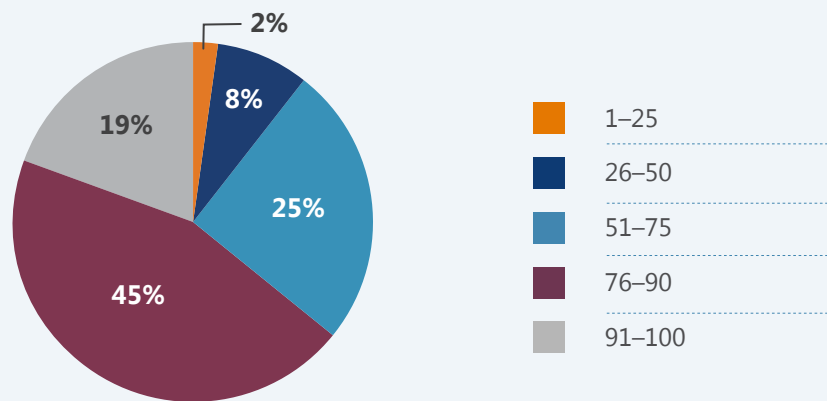
Nearly two-thirds are only somewhat or not confident that their company will hit their expense and revenue plans in 2008. Combined with a poor outlook in the overall economy, that makes for a challenging business environment. Financial pros are clearly looking for ways to improve accuracy and effectiveness in forecasting.

**5** *How confident are you that your company will hit your 2008 expense and revenue plans?*



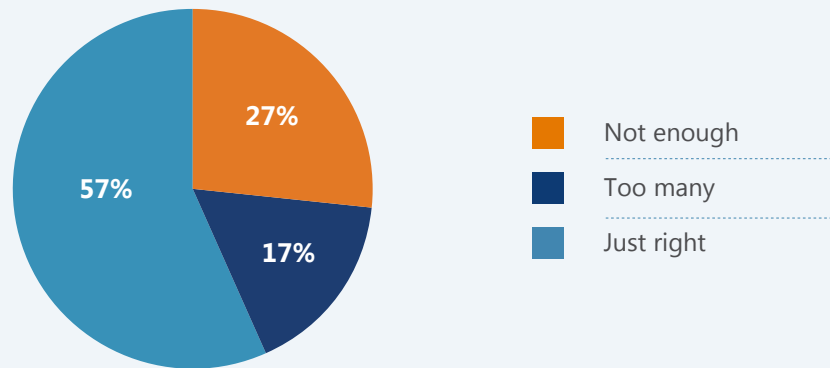
Financial pros rated themselves well in the financial IQ category, with most grading themselves in the high 70s to about a 90 in their financial grade. A quarter of respondents felt they were in the mid range of 51 to 75 with just 11 percent checking in as sub-par. These findings are somewhat surprising given the fact that many respondents don't feel their companies are very accurate with budgets and they aren't employing solutions beyond Excel to handle the task.

**6** *On a scale of 0 to 100, where 100 is the best, how do you rate the financial IQ of your company or organization?*



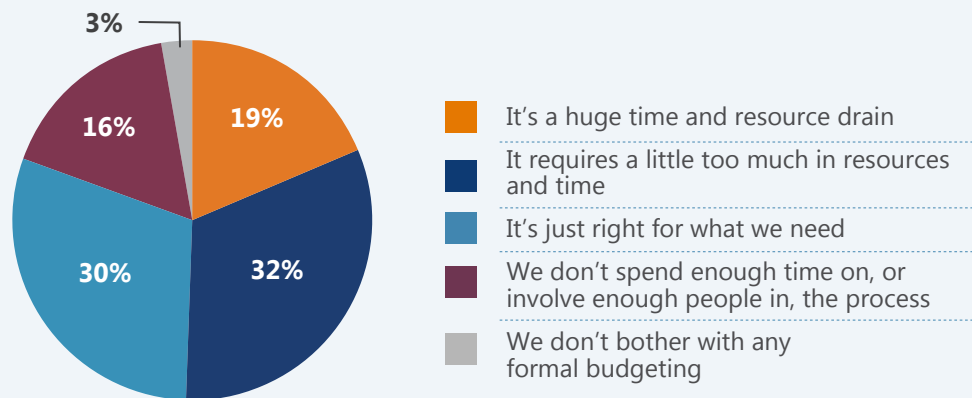
A little over half thought the number of people involved in key financial processes is just right. Of the other half, many more thought there aren't enough people involved and some felt there are too many contributing to this complex process.

**7** *How many people are involved in budgeting and forecasting within your organization?*



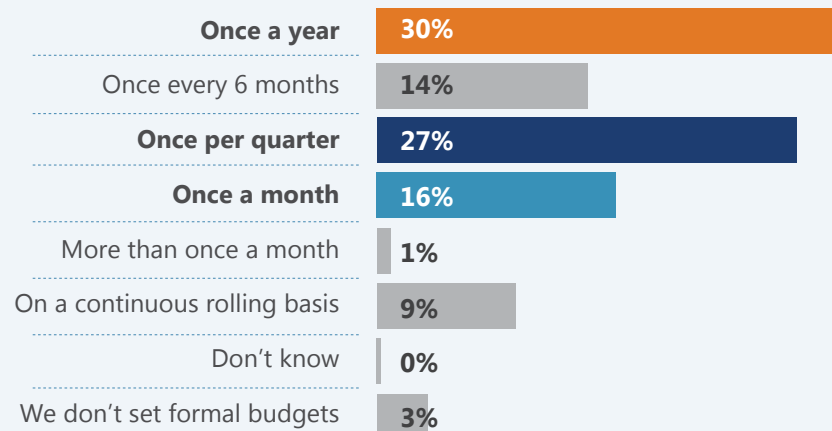
When combining related responses to the question, slightly over half agree that either a little too much or a huge amount of time and resources are required to get the job done. Either way, 70 percent of respondents overall are not spending the right amount of time or resources either way on the problem. These findings combined with the inaccuracies of the final result suggest that there are some serious inefficiencies and headaches associated with the budgeting process.

#### 8 *How burdensome/time-consuming is the budgeting process currently?*



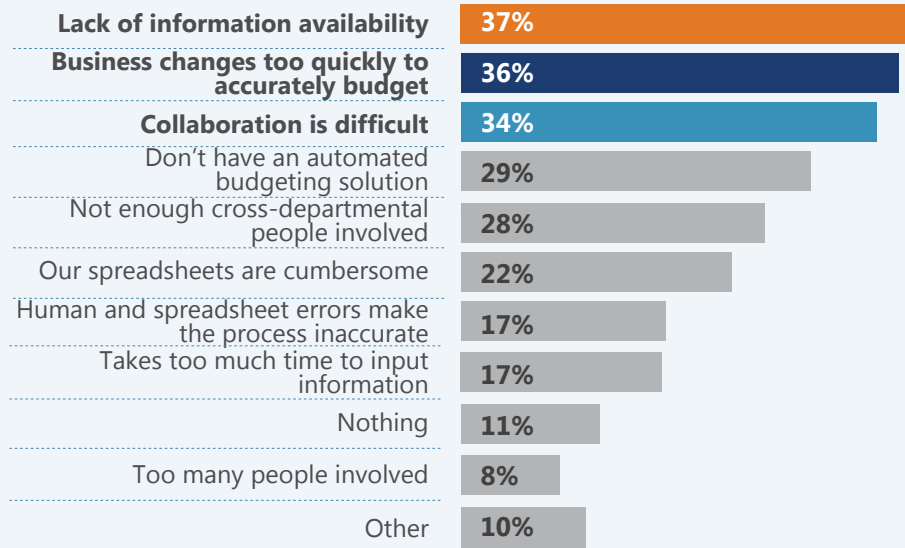
Annual budgeting is standard practice for about a third, while about 40 percent do it semi-annually or quarterly. Monthly forecasts are conducted by just 15 percent of the companies or organizations, and only 10 percent conduct rolling forecasts. This points to a workforce overall that is not agile enough to adapt to rapidly changing market conditions and business scenarios.

**9** *How often do you set formal budgets and/or re-forecast?*



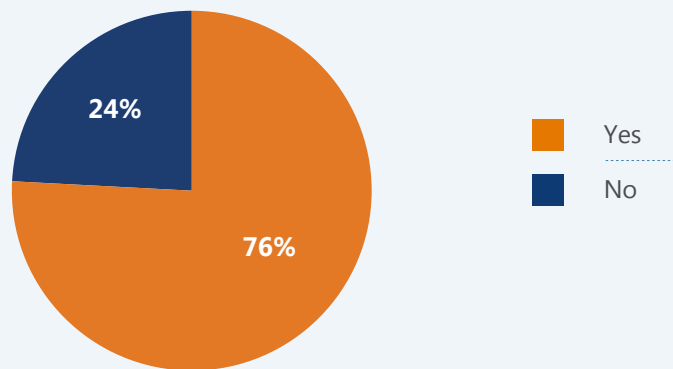
The top three pain points identified clustered around availability of information, the need for speed, and a lack of collaboration. These three areas point to fundamental flaws in the current widespread use of simple spreadsheets to conduct vital financial activities. Lack of cross-departmental participation, complaints of cumbersome spreadsheets, and lack of budget automation were all cited as substantial pitfalls as well, arguing further the point that financial professionals are ill-equipped to deal with the complex information and communication needs in budgeting.

**10** *What are the top three pitfalls that derail, delay or disrupt your budgeting process? (Select three below.)*



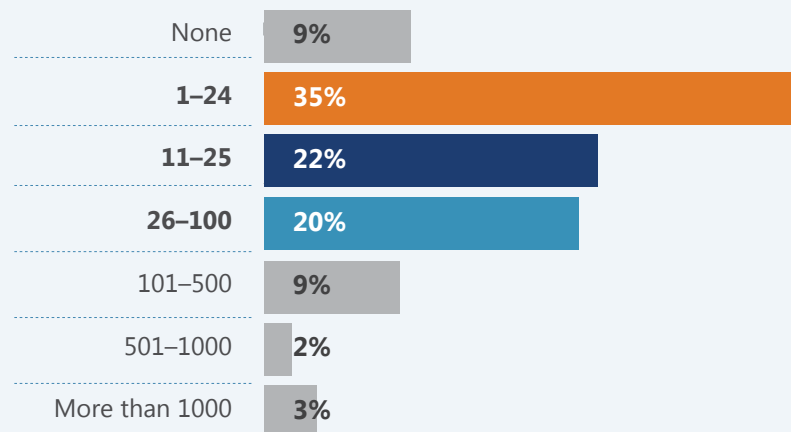
This simple question speaks for itself and is consistent with market data that a three quarters majority are still strapped with spreadsheet sprain that can lead to errors, cumbersome communication and collaboration, and an overwhelming number of worksheets to manage and maintain. Surprisingly, mid-size and large businesses are even more dependent upon spreadsheets, with 78 percent reporting that they rely on the inadequate tool. For those that are dependent upon spreadsheets, 50 percent more report anguish and four times more have huge time drains in financial processes than those who don't depend on spreadsheets.

### 11 *Are you dependent on Excel spreadsheets for your budgets?*



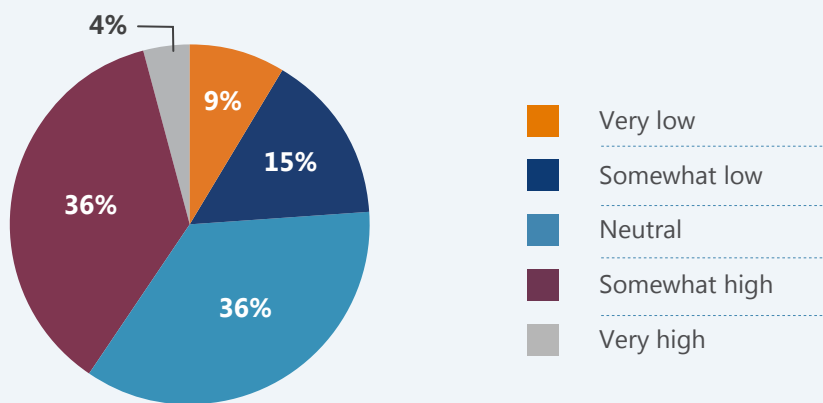
Diving deeper into use of this application, an aggregate of slightly more than half of Excel users have between 11 and 500 sheets, and 14 percent of companies deal with preparing, modifying and sharing hundreds or thousands of spreadsheets in regular budget cycles. Among mid-size and large companies, almost twice as many companies have more than 1,000 spreadsheets than the respondent pool at large.

**12** *How many spreadsheets or tabs does your company currently use as part of the budget?*



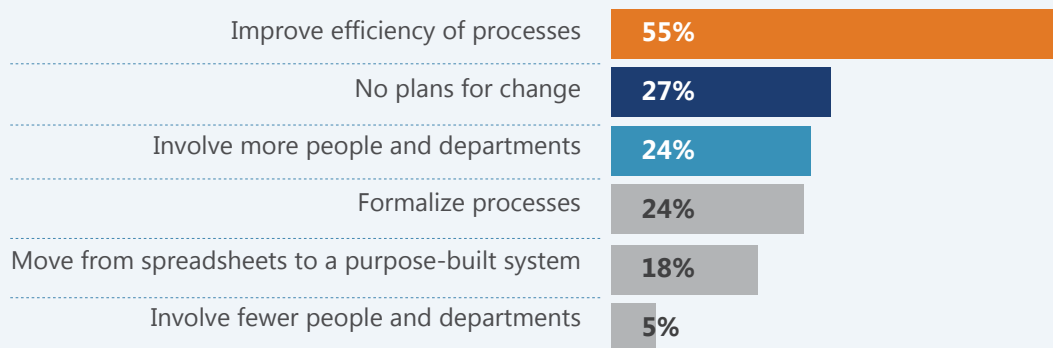
A large percentage (40 percent) report a high or somewhat high degree of pain involved with developing the budget. Apparently, many of the previously identified pitfalls in the process are weighing financial managers down and they need to ease the resulting stress by improving how they get budgets done.

**13** *What is the level of anguish and frustration associated with budgeting in your organization?*



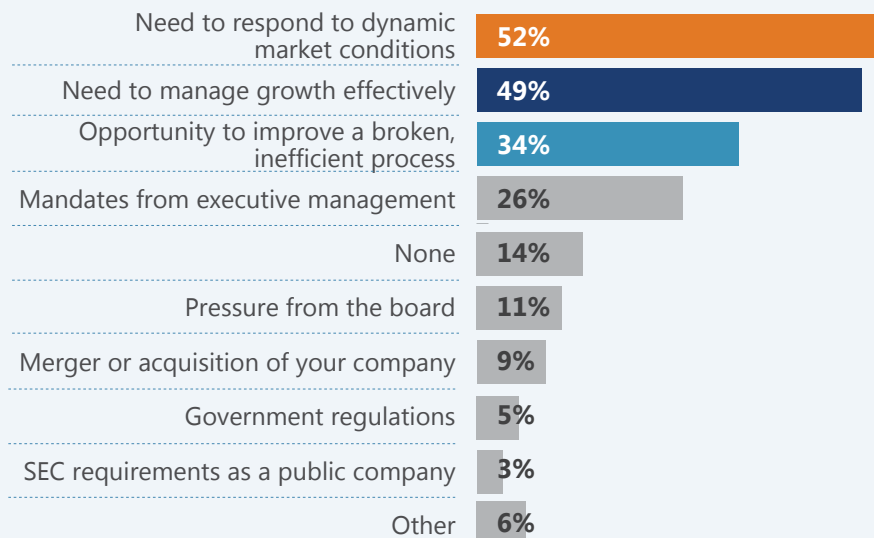
How do financial pros expect to relieve the pressure? Over half of the responses are aiming to improve efficiency of processes. A combined 65 percent are looking at change by formalizing processes, moving from spreadsheets to a purpose-built system and involving more people and departments. Surprisingly, given the high pain levels expressed elsewhere, 27 percent plan on making no changes.

**14** *What are your plans for changing your budgeting, forecasting and reporting processes in 2008? (Check all that apply.)*



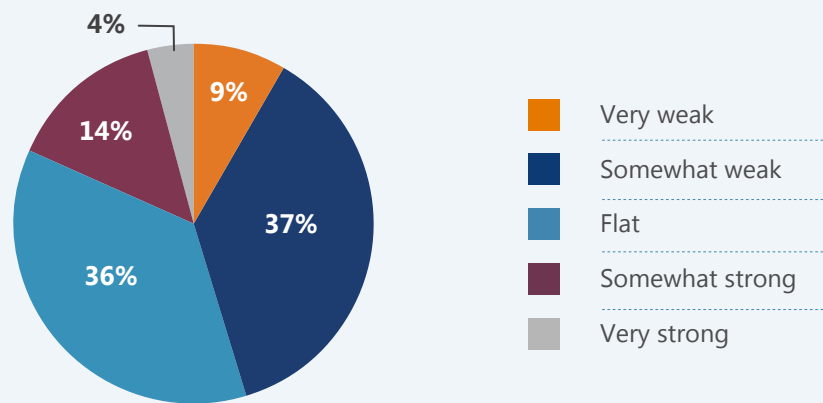
When asked for insight into intended behavior and financial process changes, respondents pointed most to the need to react to dynamic market conditions, more effectively manage growth and adopt more efficient practices (again). Companies need help in streamlining and preparing for what could be a bumpy ride ahead.

**15** *What are the reasons you will put more effort into budgeting and planning in 2008? (Check all that apply.)*



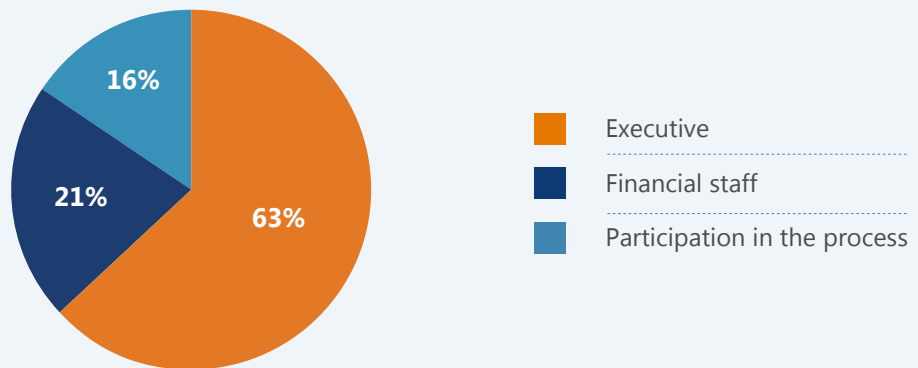
Nearly half point to a weakening economy as something to watch out for. Surprisingly, over a third see the economy remaining constant from last year. Only time will tell whether these respondents are good forecasters or not, but the fact remains that organizations need to be prepared for substantial fluctuations in the economy which could force the need for more disciplined and regular financial forecasting and reporting.

**16** *What is the overall outlook for the economy for 2008?*



Nearly two-thirds identified themselves as “executive” decision-makers. “Financial staff” and financial process “participants” made up the remainder.

**17** *What best describes your role in the budgeting process?*



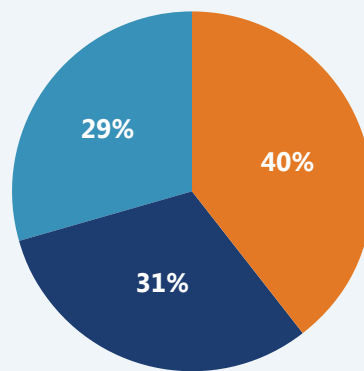
Survey respondents represented a cross section of North American business finance management professionals from an approximately equal number of small, medium and large companies and organizations. These people are employed in a wide range of business including manufacturing, technology, services industries in business-to-business and consumer markets, government, and construction to name a few. In all there were 25 categories with the highest concentration in manufacturing and financial services.

**18** Which industry sector best describes your company's focus?

12%	Financial Services
11%	Manufacturing
7%	Professional Services
5%	Construction
4%	Education
4%	Information Technology
4%	Electronics and Miscellaneous Technology
4%	Retail
3%	Government
3%	Transportation
3%	Entertainment
3%	Insurance
2%	Food and Beverages
2%	Chemicals
2%	Energy
2%	Life Sciences
2%	Wholesale/distribution
2%	Automotive
2%	Media and Publishing
2%	Travel and Hospitality
1%	Pharmaceuticals
1%	Telecommunications
1%	Packaged Goods
0.5%	Consumer Durables
0.5%	Utilities
17%	Other

There was a nearly equal distribution of companies under 100 employees (Small), 100 to 1000 employees (Mid-size) and over 1000 employees (Large).

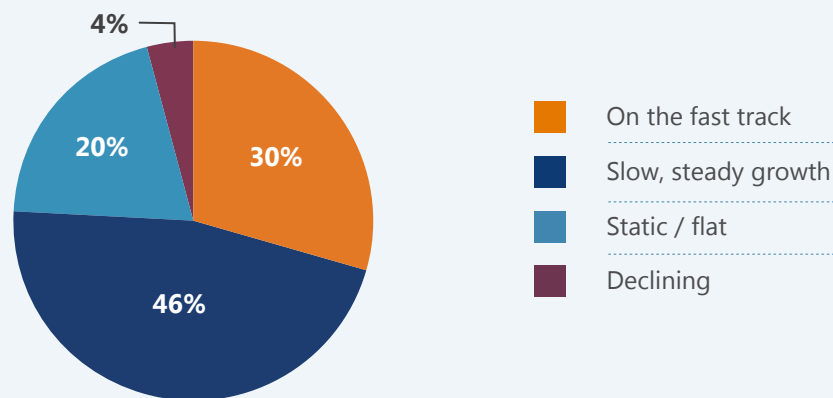
**19** *What is the size of your business?*



- Small**—Less than 100 employees
- Midsize**—100–1000 employees
- Large**—More than 1000 employees

Nearly half of the businesses identified themselves as being in a slow, steady growth mode. Almost a third stated they are on a fast growth track. This suggests that growing companies have a particular vested interest in improving budgeting, forecasting, and reporting processes, particularly since one of the top areas of change was identified as better managing a growing business. Companies are looking to ease their growing pains.

**20** Which statement best describes your business currently?



## Case Studies



**American Red Cross in  
Greater New York**

**New York, NY**

Non-Profit

### Challenges:

- Increase the efficiency and flexibility of the budgeting process
- Minimize opportunities for human error in budgeting activities
- Expand budgeting capabilities to enable long-range forecasting

### Why Adaptive Planning:

- Shares data easily with accounting systems
- Provides an easy-to-use interface for finance personnel and business users alike
- Delivers robust functionality at a reasonable cost for non-profit organizations activities
- Expand budgeting capabilities to enable long-range forecasting

## Red Cross Responds to Spreadsheet Emergency with Adaptive Planning

### Introduction

For more than 100 years, the American Red Cross has provided disaster relief services and educational programs in the Greater New York area. Today, the American Red Cross in Greater New York Chapter helps nine million people prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies. With 200 full-time employees and thousands of volunteers, the Chapter provides immediate aid to more than 100,000 people affected by more than 3,000 emergencies per year. The Chapter's essential programs and services are funded by gifts from individuals and companies, proceeds from special events and grants from foundations and the government.

### The Challenge

When disaster strikes, the American Red Cross in Greater New York Chapter must be ready to provide timely, compassionate assistance. That's why the Chapter strives for the utmost efficiency in its back-office operations—and recently sought to replace a spreadsheet-driven budgeting process. "It was exceptionally difficult to manage our budget spreadsheets and control how they were used," recalls Paul Vitale, Senior Director, Finance, American Red Cross in Greater New York. "They weren't customizable to each department, which meant we had greater potential for error with line items. People would save spreadsheets under the wrong name, or make a copy and then send back the copy rather than the original. And there was no way to track project status."

### The Solution

The Greater New York Chapter began to look for a budgeting solution that could easily share data with its Great Plains accounting system. The Chapter's requirements also included ease of use, flexibility and affordability.

"Adaptive Planning compared favorably against alternatives such as Microsoft Forecaster, and had the advantage of being web-based," says Vitale. "That meant we didn't need to involve IT or buy extra servers. We also liked the intuitive look and feel of the program. Hearing positive references from a few other companies clinched the deal."

Because the Chapter took advantage of the Adaptive Planning Quick Start program, its implementation in early 2007 took less than six weeks. Adaptive Planning's web-based delivery model enabled the Chapter's business users to begin creating budgets even before the Finance staff had loaded salary data and fringe benefit programs into the system.

***"The Quick Start program was extremely helpful in getting us moving quickly. We got tremendous support from Adaptive Planning—they wrote reports, answered questions, and were completely accessible to us."***

**— Paul Vitale, Senior Director, Finance**

## Red Cross Responds to Spreadsheet Emergency with Adaptive Planning

### Results:

- Saved two days per month by eliminating printing and manual distribution of actual results
- Enabled a geographically dispersed team to participate in the budgeting process from anywhere at any time
- Gave department heads easier access to information, enabling better business decisions
- Avoided the need to install, upgrade and maintain a budgeting solution

***“Routing spreadsheets across the company was always a nightmare. Adaptive Planning makes it much easier to distribute and collect budget information. We’ve even eliminated the need to print and distribute actuals reports, which saves us two days per month.”***

— Paul Vitale,  
Senior Director, Finance

### The Results

With Adaptive Planning, the Greater New York Chapter has moved its annual budgeting process and mid-year forecast online. Business users at satellite offices can log on wherever and whenever they want. Freed of the burden of distributing spreadsheets, the Finance department can use the system’s hierarchical approvals to monitor budget approvals by executives.

“Routing spreadsheets across the company was always a nightmare,” says Vitale. “Adaptive Planning makes it much easier to distribute and collect budget information. We’ve even eliminated the need to print and distribute actuals reports, which saves us two days per month.”

As a non-profit organization that must find ways to plan for the unexpected, the Chapter relies on Adaptive Planning’s flexibility. The Chapter can use broad estimates or detailed assumptions as it builds its annual budget—and the results are more accurate than ever.

“We used to budget monthly payroll based on one-twelfth of the annual salary for a department,” Vitale explains. “But the actual days worked per month can vary from 20 to 23, which can create significant variances. With Adaptive Planning, we can budget based on the salaries in every department and the number of work days in each month. We have now aligned our budgets to our expected actual results.”

Having gained easier access to information through Adaptive Planning, the Chapter’s leadership can now make more effective planning decisions. An intuitive user interface lets department managers log on and add comments or line items within the budget, giving their colleagues more insight into their thought processes.

“Our managers find Adaptive Planning much more enjoyable to work with than a clumsy spreadsheet that’s not customized to their needs,” says Vitale. “Every time I go into the system to look something up, I can find it much more quickly and easily than if I were to try to get reports out of our accounting system.”

As Adaptive Planning’s solution continues to evolve, there is no need for the Chapter’s IT staff to install software or convert data. Users can take advantage of new functionality simply by logging on.

“When Adaptive Planning upgrades its solution, we log on today and see version 1, then log on tomorrow and see version 2,” says Vitale. “We don’t have to move our data or download any patches. It’s a seamless process.”

***“Our managers find Adaptive Planning much more enjoyable to work with than a clumsy spreadsheet that’s not customized to their needs. Every time I go into the system to look something up, I can find it much more quickly and easily than if I were to try to get reports out of our accounting system.”***

— Paul Vitale, Senior Director, Finance



AIM Healthcare Services

Franklin, TN

Healthcare Services

#### Challenges:

- Decrease reliance on linked spreadsheets in the budgeting process
- Allow easy roll-ups of financial data for a more timely view of the organization's finances
- Deliver intuitive ad-hoc reporting capabilities to executives and managers

#### Why Adaptive Planning:

- Was highly recommended by another company in the same industry
- Provides tree-style roll-ups that eliminate the need for intermediary spreadsheets
- Delivers constant functionality enhancements that are easy to learn and incorporate

## AIM Healthcare Eliminates 200 Spreadsheets with Adaptive Planning

### Introduction

Based in Franklin, Tennessee, AIM Healthcare Services (AIM) is one of the fastest growing companies in the Southeast. Since beginning with three employees in 1995, AIM has become the leading provider of claims cost management services for government and commercial payors of healthcare benefits. AIM performs specialized, on-site audits for health insurance companies with the goal of reducing the cost of healthcare and simplifying healthcare information management. AIM has 1,600 employees, including resident employees who live and work on-site at providers and payors in all 50 states as well as Puerto Rico.

### The Challenge

Wherever medical providers and insurance companies interact, AIM serves as an intermediary to help both sides minimize waste and save money. Recently, AIM applied this same focus to its budgeting process and identified plenty of room for improvement.

"Our budgeting process used to be a spreadsheet nightmare, with about 200 spreadsheets that had to be linked so we could create our comprehensive budget and roll-up into the financial statement," says Shelly Skelton, Manager, Financial Analysis and Reporting, AIM. "So we began to research budgeting solutions that would allow us to use a tree structure to do the roll-ups without all the interlinking spreadsheets."

AIM needed its new solution to provide executives and managers with intuitive reporting capabilities and an ad-hoc view of the company's budget.

***"By being able to forecast more frequently and more easily, and to see how data rolls up across the enterprise, our finance department has dramatically improved its information sharing and gained a more complete picture of our financial health."***

***—Shelly Skelton, Manager, Financial Analysis and Reporting***

### The Solution

AIM considered several solutions before evaluating Adaptive Planning at the recommendation of another local healthcare company. This evaluation convinced AIM to roll out Adaptive Planning to its six-member financial analysis and reporting team, plus its controller. Today, AIM's finance team receives budget and forecast data from business owners in Excel format and imports it into Adaptive Planning. The system allows AIM to import a wide variety of data beyond typical profit and loss items, and to perform all necessary calculations.

"With Adaptive Planning, nothing we do has to be linked through spreadsheets anymore," says Skelton. "We can now use Excel strictly as a data manipulation tool because we do our calculations right in Adaptive Planning."

As Adaptive Planning continues to enhance its solution, AIM makes sure to take advantage of new functionality. Adaptive Planning personnel regularly e-mail the company about new releases and summarize the new features that will be most helpful.

## AIM Healthcare Eliminates 200 Spreadsheets with Adaptive Planning

### Results:

- Eliminated 200 linked spreadsheets from the budgeting process
- Saved time and dramatically reduced errors related to preparing and maintaining spreadsheets
- Easily rolled up data to the aggregate level for manipulation
- Enabled executives to drill down for an intuitive view of individual lines of business
- Implemented a quarterly forecasting system, enabling more proactive planning

***“The Adaptive Planning system is menu-driven, so it’s very easy to navigate. If someone didn’t know anything about the system but landed on the main page, they could basically figure out what to do from the names of the tabs. It’s quite intuitive.”***

— Shelly Skelton,  
Manager, Financial,  
Analysis and Reporting

“Adaptive Planning makes it easy for us to learn to use new features, and any questions we have can usually be resolved in one phone call,” says Skelton. “They’ve also been very responsive to the requests we’ve made for product enhancements.”

### The Results

Since choosing Adaptive Planning, AIM has benefited most from the ability to roll up data to the aggregate level and manipulate it as needed. Now that data is in one convenient place, AIM’s leadership can look at employee or headcount data for the whole company, or drill down to individual lines of business. Executives can examine the current forecast period or compare actuals to budget.

“The ability to roll up data to different levels and manipulate it in Adaptive Planning has been huge for us,” says Skelton. “It has dramatically reduced the potential for error that came from using 200 linked spreadsheets. We’ve also saved considerable time by not having to produce all the spreadsheets and ensure their accuracy. With Adaptive Planning, when we plug in a formula, we don’t have to go back and check it anywhere else.”

Adaptive Planning has also enhanced collaboration at AIM by providing a vehicle for the company’s managers to work together online. Through the system, managers can make sure they are in sync on global assumptions or allocation numbers. Adaptive Planning’s intuitive interface helps make this kind of collaboration possible.

“The Adaptive Planning system is menu-driven, so it’s very easy to navigate,” says Skelton. “If someone didn’t know anything about the system but landed on the main page, they could basically figure out what to do from the names of the tabs. It’s quite intuitive.”

Before turning to Adaptive Planning, AIM created an annual budget. Since then, the company has begun creating quarterly forecasts—enabling the company to plan more proactively for better overall results.

“Adaptive Planning lets us look at scenarios such as, ‘If we increased headcount by 20 in a particular department, what would happen to our overall financial statement?’” says Skelton. “By being able to forecast more frequently and more easily, and to see how data rolls up across the enterprise, our finance department has dramatically improved its information sharing and gained a more complete picture of our financial health.”

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— Shelly Skelton, Manager, Financial Analysis and Reporting

## Authority Leader



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Adaptive Planning is the worldwide leader in on-demand financial planning and reporting solutions that increase efficiencies and drive agile decision making in mid-sized companies and divisions of corporations. Adaptive Planning makes it easy to move beyond spreadsheets and automate budgeting, forecasting, and reporting, without the cost and complexity associated with traditional business intelligence and BPM software. With free software, free trials, and both on-demand and on-premise deployment options, Adaptive Planning provides the fastest and easiest approach to streamlining and elevating your financial management. Adaptive Planning is headquartered in Mountain View, California and can be reached at **650-528-7500** or [www.adaptiveplanning.com](http://www.adaptiveplanning.com).