



PLAN FOR ANYTHING:

The Definitive CPM Software Buyer's Guide

Proven best practices for strategic finance professionals.
Evaluate your needs, approach the market with
confidence and transform your business planning
processes with a CPM solution that's right for you.



Table of Contents



03 **INTRODUCTION:** CPM Software 101



05 **STEP 1:** Evaluating Your Need for CPM Software



11 **STEP 2:** Vena Complete Planning: The Right Formula for Forward-Thinking Finance Teams



17 **STEP 3:** Navigating the Market for CPM Software Vendors



23 **STEP 4:** Implementing Your New CPM Software



25 **STEP 5:** Partnering With Your Vendor and Laying the Foundation for Success



27 **STEP 6:** Expanding Your Use Cases With CPM Software



29 **CONCLUSION:** It's Time for Your Finance Team To Invest in Itself and Your Business



INTRODUCTION:

CPM Software 101

“Final” budget version 26.5. Countless hours wasted consolidating and re-consolidating data in Excel. Reports based on outdated actuals and no visibility into real-time business performance. Disengaged department heads.

If your finance team is struggling with any or all of these challenges, it might be time to start thinking about making your financial and operational planning less cumbersome. After all, your business can't effectively adapt to change or plan for any situation without a strategic mindset, and your leaders are counting on you to deliver timely, actionable insights that inform their decision making in the face of dynamic business conditions. That's pretty hard to do if you're too busy chasing down budget owners for numbers, working across data silos and reworking templates.

CPM (corporate performance management) software can help you automate and connect your planning processes across departments and disparate systems so you can empower your stakeholders to make strategic and proactive agile planning decisions with reliable, up-to-date data. That way, instead of just serving as number crunchers, your finance team will evolve into your company's strategic powerhouse—business challengers who, equipped with the right insights, partner with every function across the organization to help them respond to unique challenges and opportunities, mitigate risk and build agility and resilience into financial and operational and planning.

If you're in need of a CPM solution to streamline your planning processes—from FP&A to business-wide planning and beyond—it's important to remember that not all solutions are created equal. This guide has everything you need to know to select the right solution for your organization and start thriving.

Read on to discover best practices for each step of the buyer's journey—from your first day exploring the market, all the way through to solution implementation and beyond.

What Is CPM Software and What Does It Actually Do?

CPM software leverages cloud-native database technology to deliver secure, user-friendly applications that power business planning processes and track, manage and optimize performance—including budgeting, forecasting, reporting and analytics, revenue planning, workforce planning, scenario analysis and more. In some cases, it might also facilitate complex spreadsheet-reliant business processes such as financial close management, incentive compensation management and others.

By integrating with and connecting source systems in a central database that consolidates company-wide data, CPM software bridges the gap between financial and operational data. This gives your decision makers a holistic view of how your business is performing with the ability to report on KPIs against organizational objectives and strategic goals.

Automation is a crucial component of CPM software. It helps you streamline workflows and manual tasks such as data consolidation, report generation, forecast updates and scenario analysis. It also creates an accurate and real-time view of business performance.

Ideally, the CPM software you choose should be easy to use, save you time to focus on business priorities and performance, enable effective cross-departmental collaboration, decentralize decision making and give you the flexibility to create data models quickly and without restrictions.

This is key to increasing user adoption and keeping your business growing.

Through 2025

7 in 10 organizations

will migrate on-premises workloads to cloud data platforms, shifting focus to solving business needs rather than maintaining systems.



By 2024

6 in 10 organizations

will use cloud-based technology as their primary analytic data platform, making it easier to adopt and scale operations as necessary.



By 2024

only 1/4 of organizations

will have deployed a continuous business planning process on a common platform to support a collaborative and agile process across the enterprise.



Source: Ventana Research



STEP 1:

Evaluating Your Need for CPM Software

Your business is on its own unique journey, so it's important to take stock of your finance team's maturity and readiness for CPM software. In order to truly understand how a CPM solution will help transform your business, you need to look honestly at your existing business planning processes and determine what needs improvement.

Here are some helpful tips you can use to evaluate your need for CPM software—after all, you can't repair an engine if you don't know what isn't working.

Answer These 6 Questions To Find the Gaps in Your Current Planning Processes



1 How Long Do Planning Processes Typically Take?

Does your budget cycle feel like it's never going to end? Is your month-end close process taking ten days or more? Is your team spending too much time consolidating data in spreadsheets, fixing errors and tracking down the latest template versions from budget owners? Figure out how many hours are spent on each part of the planning process and consider what your team could achieve if they were given a chunk of that time back.

2 Is Your Finance Team Proactive (Looking Forward) or Reactive (Looking Back)?

If the last few years have taught us anything, it's that your finance team needs to be prepared for anything. You need to be able to look forward and model a variety of **potential business scenarios** with confidence. But if you're spending most of your time just validating last month's actuals, you won't have much bandwidth for analysis before the next planning or reporting cycle creeps up on you. Consider how much time you spend looking backward rather than forward. CPM software will empower you to think and act like an analyst—diving deep into your data to understand how, why and what-if.

3 Are Your Business Leaders Making Decisions Based on Accurate, Up-to-Date Numbers?

If the reports you deliver are out of date by the time they're completed, you're not fulfilling your role as a strategic partner to the business. Take some time to consider how well you trust the numbers, how timely your reporting is and how effectively you are surfacing data and actionable insights to your stakeholders. Are you able to tell compelling stories around your data? If there's any hesitation at all, CPM software should be on the table for you.

4 What Does Your Process Structure and Workflow Look Like?

Who's responsible for what? Who rolls up to whom? What approvals are required before finalizing the budget or sending an executive report? Where do you need more control and where do you need greater agility? If there are any obvious bottlenecks—or if you don't have a workflow at all—CPM software will help you redesign your processes altogether so synergies exist and automation and accountability are brought back to the process.

5 How Are You Collaborating With Stakeholders in Other Departments?

In order to ensure your business plans meet the needs of the entire organization, you need to collaborate closely with stakeholders across your business. Budget owners won't contribute much if your planning cycle is siloed in finance, so identify the internal roadblocks that make collaboration harder to facilitate. CPM software will help you decrease data silos. It will also increase collaboration and autonomy while ensuring accountability.

6 Are There Any Other Solutions Your Team Is Dependent on Now?

Which ERP or GL are you using? Do you already have a legacy system in place? Is your finance team pulling numbers from an HRIS, CRM, inventory management tool or any other data source? The best CPM tools out there will integrate seamlessly with all your source systems, so don't forget to document where your data currently lives.





The Hard Choice: Flexibility vs. Control

Finance departments have depended on Excel to manage planning and reporting for years. Most still do. The interface is familiar, it's easy to use and it's intuitive because, well, it's always been done that way. It's the grid your team knows. It's flexible. It's agile. And Microsoft is continually innovating to ensure Excel remains best-of-breed. However, Excel does have its limitations when used as an enterprise application.

Offline, Excel on its own isn't meant to function like a database. That becomes a bigger problem as your business planning processes evolve with more data, people, complexity and frequent reporting. You run the risk of insecure templates and disconnected data. Therefore, it's critical to look for a CPM solution that uses Excel intelligently to unlock its full potential—

embracing the countless benefits and innovations of Excel with the necessary controls in place to maintain a high degree of data integrity, connections back to a central analytical database and automated, collaborative workflows with full auditability.

This will give you the best of both worlds—no drawbacks, no hard choice.







Empower Your Team To Excel With Excel

Excel might have its drawbacks, but let's be honest: It's hard not to love. It's flexible, familiar and easy to use with strong modeling capabilities, powerful calculations, rich presentation and high user adoption. That's why you should look for a CPM solution with a native Excel interface.

If your CPM tool centralizes your data without forcing you to abandon Excel, you'll be able to solve any existing challenges you may have with Excel without sacrificing Excel's usability and power. You won't have to learn an unfamiliar interface, waste time on manual aggregations or create new reports and budgeting templates from scratch.

Instead, you'll be able to leverage the Excel infrastructure you already have and ensure a smoother transition to agile, more reliable business planning.

When exploring your options, take some time to consider if you have any of the following Excel issues:

-  Version control, i.e. multiple versions of the same spreadsheet floating around via email or on shared drives
-  Days or even weeks spent on manual spreadsheet consolidation
-  Data integrity problems caused by human error, broken links, etc.
-  No method for auditing or validating any new inputs or edits
-  Copying and pasting numbers from a number of siloed source systems
-  Single person or team ownership; no automated workflow management

If any of the above sounds familiar, Excel spreadsheets on their own just won't cut it anymore. It's time for you to explore how CPM software can fill that void.





Rank Your Most Pressing Process Fixes and Focus on Those First

Now that you've put in the work to properly gauge your planning processes, it's time to use what you've learned to develop a step-by-step plan for improvement. It might seem daunting at first, but don't try to do everything at once. When you know what you need to prioritize and what the impact will be for your business, the entire process gets easier because you're not trying to boil the ocean.

If you need to shave weeks off your budgeting cycle, for example, focus on that first before looping in accounting folks to **streamline the financial close process**.

A phased approach is a great way to learn even more about how your company operates—especially if it's your first time evaluating a new CPM solution.



STEP 2:

Vena Complete Planning: The Right Formula for Forward-Thinking Finance Teams

There's an evolution taking place in the office of finance and many organizations are investing in digital transformation to drive it. Enabled by digital, cloud-based CPM solutions, FP&A teams are taking steps to move from static, back-office processes into strategic business partnering roles that see them collaborating across departments with a seat at the heart of strategy.

Gartner **describes** this as extended planning and analysis (xP&A), "the evolution of planning, combining financial and operational planning on a single composable platform." And they state that this approach will "require organizations to plan in a more consistent, cross-functionally aligned, collaborative, agile and accurate manner as they seek to pivot quickly and gain competitive advantage."

According to Gartner, xP&A “extends” traditional FP&A solutions focused solely on finance into other planning domains—such as workforce, sales, operations and marketing. CPM solutions that enable xP&A help organizations exploit the challenges faced when introducing new cloud-based business processes and navigating economic uncertainties. In other words, this tech-powered planning approach enables finance teams to build agility, resilience and alignment into financial, strategic and operational planning.

But it doesn’t have to stop there. With a CPM platform buoyed by the right technology, you can go beyond extended planning.

Powered by a secure, cloud-based solution that is device agnostic, leverages automation, connected systems, data intersections in a multidimensional, analytical database, powerful calculations, robust data modeling and collaborative workflows, you’ll be able to drive any complex, spreadsheet-reliant business process—such as account reconciliations, tax provisioning, incentive compensation management, project management and more—enabling real-time data, actionable insights and results. This solution will fit to the exact specifications that your unique business challenges demand, with the ability to build out multiple use cases over time across finance, extended teams and other areas of the business where data is most critical. **And it will leverage the familiarity and flexibility of a native Excel interface and embedded business intelligence to facilitate all of the above. We refer to this approach as “Vena Complete Planning”—the formula that will empower you to plan for anything.**



Introducing Vena Complete Planning

Vena Complete Planning is agile, intuitive, connected, flexible, collaborative and easy to use. This creates “cognitive comfort” and gives you the ability to work the way you think, using your own insights from your organizational data to connect the dots across your business, drive informed and proactive decisions, mitigate risk, overcome your unique business challenges, respond to opportunities and achieve your organizational objectives.



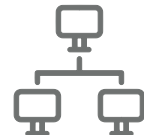
The benefits of Vena Complete Planning include:



The ability to be owned and operated by finance—as the linchpin for business-wide collaboration and decision making



A library of pre-configured solutions by industry and business use cases to further extend planning across the organization



Connecting disparate financial and operational source systems in a secure, analytical database that ensures high data integrity, provides a real-time, holistic view of business performance and ensures accurate reporting and analytics



Enabling instant, actionable insights with advanced analytics and AI-driven analysis delivered through guided business intelligence using Power BI Embedded



Automating manual processes to free up time for value-added analysis and collaborative workflows to drive alignment and accountability around shared goals and objectives



Connecting financial and operational planning processes and enabling teams to work anywhere from any device at any time to enable agility and better collaboration across the business



An intuitive, code-free data infrastructure and native Excel interface that enables flexibility and dynamic modeling to power rapid scenario planning and strategic analysis



Using solutions that are familiar and easy to use to drive rapid adoption across the business with facilitation by finance



High extensibility that enables you to drive more efficiencies and derive more insights to optimize business decision making



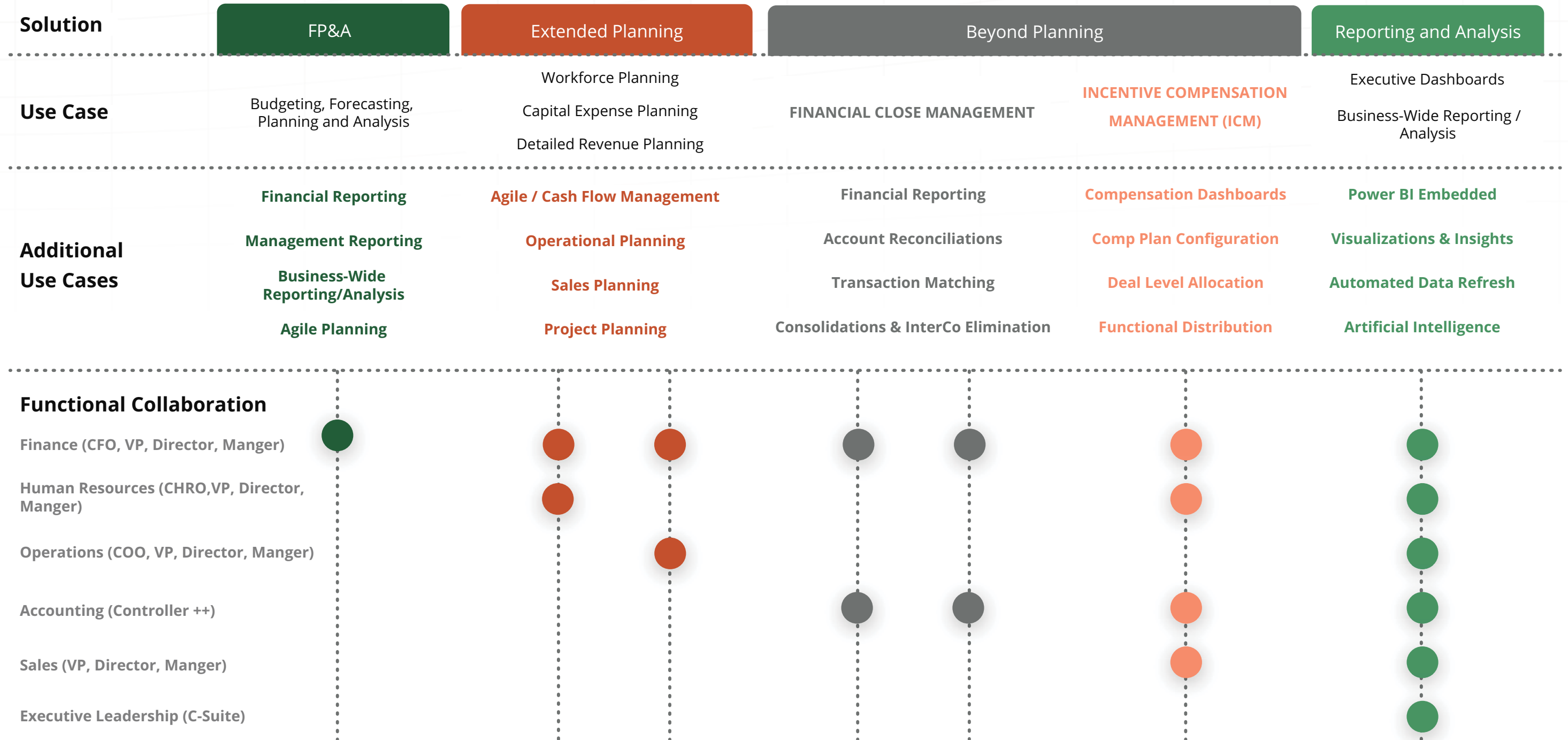
Plan For Anything: Complete Planning Summed Up

For growth-minded businesses who are dissatisfied with complex, rigid planning platforms, it's critical to look for a transformative business and technology partner that provides industry expertise and integrated, tailored solutions that enable your business to pivot fast—unlike inflexible, single point solutions that keep you focused just on “today.”

So how can you empower your finance team to transition from back-office support to strategic business partners?

The key is empowering multiple departments, including finance, operations, sales and HR, with Complete Planning—FP&A, xP&A and beyond.

The Dimensions of Vena Complete Planning



Vena Complete Planning: Recap

What is Vena Complete Planning?

Vena Complete Planning is a technology-driven solution for financial, operational, strategic planning and scenario analysis. It provides strategic value by facilitating any complex, spreadsheet-reliant business planning process in a single, analytical, collaborative platform that is highly extensible—the more processes users implement, sources they connect and data they collect, the more efficiencies they can drive and insights they can derive to optimize business decision making.

Vena Complete Planning is enabled by the only native Excel cloud-based CPM software that brings people, processes and systems together in a controlled, secure, database-centric application environment. The platform leverages Excel's flexibility and familiarity and embedded business intelligence so teams can model, analyze, leverage AI-powered business insights at scale, report, work the way they think and plan for anything.

How Can Complete Planning Help My Organization?

Vena Complete Planning will allow you to plan wider and extend deeper into your data, empowering your organization to respond to unique business challenges and opportunities with agility, resilience, confidence and the ability to easily build out multiple use cases over time.





STEP 3:

Navigating the Market for CPM Software Vendors

The market for planning software can get a little blurry at times. From CPM planning platforms to enterprise resource planning (ERP) accounting systems, each solution provides unique—but sometimes similar—offerings. Confusion can occur when these solutions start to blend features and functionalities and it becomes unclear where one offering starts and the other ends. The key to avoiding this blurring of lines is to invest in solutions that are distinct in these areas, but remain connected through powerful integrations.

ERP systems are operational systems built on relational database technology and are optimized for transactional processing—such as sales orders and journal entries. Transactional ERP systems are used to run the business in the day-to-day sense. In contrast, leading-edge CPM software is built on analytical database technologies—or OLAP—combined with relational database technologies

which are optimized not for transaction processing, but for analysis. It's about aggregating lots of detailed data quickly and defining calculations across a multi-dimensional space. Leading CPM software solutions bring together financial and operational planning, reporting, financial close and consolidation and visual analytics into one platform.



The platform should:



Keep your data centralized and secure



Streamline your budgeting and planning processes



Give your budget owners more confidence in their numbers and more ownership over their budgets



Provide that elusive “single source of truth” that gives finance an unmatched, holistic view of the business

**What else should you keep in mind as you explore the market for a CPM solution?
Let's take a closer look at nine core features for CPM software. →**

9 Features To Expect From CPM Software Leaders



1. A Native Excel Interface

We already know that Excel is the universal language of business, so look for vendors who embrace this reality rather than fight it. From its strong modeling capabilities, powerful calculations and rich presentation, it's easy to see why you might run into user adoption issues if you introduce a new and unfamiliar software solution. So why not leverage the flexibility and familiarity of an environment that already feels comfortable for you and your users?

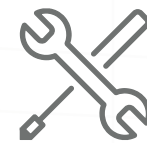
When evaluating CPM technology vendors, be sure to look for a solution that boasts a solid Excel integration—one that is synchronized across the entire planning platform and that will allow you and your team to enjoy the Excel interface you've always loved, with the kind of unbreakable, scalable planning engine your business needs. If your team's comfort zone lies within Excel, look for a solution that provides a completely native Excel interface—not just a browser, read-only add-in to Excel.



2. An Analytical Cloud Database That Can Integrate With All of Your Source Systems

CPM software should be able to house both financial and operational data, so make sure the vendors you engage with can support data loads from all of your source systems. Ideally, those loads are automatic on a schedule that makes sense for your needs. Just ask vendors what they can integrate with and make it clear what your

data requirements are, from GLs/ERPs, HRIS, CRM, flat files and any other external data source that's critical to your business. There should be no data bias in the solution you choose.



3. The Ability To Slice and Dice Your Data Model for More Flexible Reporting and Analysis

Change is constant in business and the pace of change is ever increasing, which means your analysis efforts will have to adapt. But as you start exploring the CPM software market, you might come across solutions that try to lock you into a pre-set reporting and analysis hierarchy. That makes it a whole lot harder to tweak your modeling and analysis as your business needs evolve, so look for CPM solutions that prioritize flexibility and enable ad hoc analysis and reporting.



4. A Collaborative Workflow Builder To Drive Alignment and Accountability

This will help you assign tasks to users and then track the status of those tasks in real time. You'll also be able to tweak your workflow structure as your planning needs change over time. Ensure the workflow designer allows you to identify bottlenecks, maintain accountability and meet your deadlines. Visual workflow designers have an undeniable advantage here.



5. Automated Reporting

Let's face it, nobody wants to spend hours keying in numbers manually. Once a vendor has proved they can handle your workflow and data requirements, confirm that report generation—and also distribution—will be fully automated. This will help you achieve a holistic view of your business, but without all the manual effort that you might have been struggling with in the past.



6. Security, Governance and Control for Administrators

This includes data validation measures, user-based security permissions, audit trails and other security features. This is especially crucial if you're dealing with payroll or sensitive financial information—or if you're in a highly-regulated industry with strict compliance reporting requirements.



7. Data Visualization With Business Intelligence Dashboards and Advanced Analytics

This makes it easy to create compelling visual narratives with your numbers. Built-in dashboards let you communicate trends in a format that everyone across your business can easily understand. Make sure the dashboards and visualizations enable actionable insights with capabilities such as drill through to transactions, ad hoc analysis and BI/AI functionality.

Look for solutions that have self-serve, AI-powered business intelligence tools such as Microsoft Power BI Embedded directly in the platform. This will make it easy for your teams to leverage advanced, end-to-end data and analytics capabilities—predictive modeling, for example—to deliver deep and timely AI-powered insights at scale with greater speed and visibility. You'll empower your stakeholders to dig deeper into the complex questions that are top of mind for them and level up your ability to influence proactive and connected decision making with an unbiased, business-wide approach to data analysis and strategy.



8. Pre-Configured Solutions That Drive Time-to-Value

For a seamless implementation when onboarding new CPM software, look for a solution that comes with pre-configured industry and use case solutions. These will provide templates, data models, connectors and business logic that can be customized to meet specific financial and operational planning, business and industry requirements. Not only will this help you to get up and running quickly, it will also ensure that the solution you choose can scale and adapt with your organization.



9. Growth Potential Beyond Basic Budgeting, Forecasting and Reporting

Your priority might be to tackle your core financial processes, but make sure the solutions you evaluate have the potential to evolve with your business needs. For example, ask vendors how they've handled new use cases—such as operational planning, long-term strategic planning, financial close management and more—with their customers.

5 Helpful Tips for Establishing Your Planning Software Shortlist

If you follow this advice during your initial discovery and demo cycles, you won't waste your time engaging with vendors who just aren't the right fit. Here are five tips to help you develop your planning software shortlist.

Don't Commit to a Demo Without Doing Proper Discovery First

It might take a couple of phone calls or some time spent exploring marketing content, but you need to take the time to get to know vendors before a demo. Ask questions about company culture, strategic priorities and product outlook to get the assurance you are investing in the right company. Don't hold back when they ask about you as well—because with a firmer understanding of exactly what your business needs are, the vendor will be better equipped to show you something relevant during the demo.

Ask for a Workshop and Let the Vendor Create a Demo Tailored to Your Business

Ask for a demo to gauge how carefully the vendor was listening to you. It'll also help you build some trust in them as a potential partner for your business. Workshops are a key step in the evaluation process. Vendors need to prove their worth to you, so don't be afraid to ask for a proof of concept as it relates to your specific industry and/or use case. And if they have a pre-configured solution that already meets your unique requirements, even better.

Gather Feedback Internally From Stakeholders Across Your Business

Even though your finance team is leading the search for a planning solution, users from other departments will probably use the software as well. Check in with cross-functional leaders, listen to their requirements and make sure the vendors you shortlist can meet those needs completely.

Hone in on the Software's Flexibility and Ease of Use

Bells and whistles are meaningless if the software isn't easy to use. Make sure you're feeling confident about usability before taking the next step.

Make a List of Questions

You'll probably address these questions during your discovery calls and demos, but make sure you're not missing anything here before selecting your vendor of choice. Here are 10 questions that should be on your list.

10 Questions To Ask Shortlisted Vendors Before Making a Decision

1 How have you helped other companies with needs like mine and what results have you delivered for them?

2 What's the typical adoption rate for your software and how do you measure it?

3 What is your competitive differentiator? How do you think your customers or third-party analysts would answer that question?

4 What's on your product roadmap? Have you implemented any new features recently as a result of customer feedback?

5 How does your software integrate with different data sources, both financial and operational? Do you use third-party integration tools or custom integrations you've developed in house?

6 How are customers using your software beyond standard FP&A? Can you show me any examples of a customer's use case growing and evolving beyond their initial implementation? For example, expanding from budgeting and forecasting to workforce planning or financial close management.

7 How much training do you anticipate our end users will need?

8 Will we need to involve IT or any external consultants for our implementation or can your solution be owned and operated by finance? Is there any documentation you can share on your approach to implementations?

9 Tell me about your support network. Will I have access to the proper resources if I need help troubleshooting any issues?

10 Help me understand the total cost of ownership here. Do your customers have to pay more for implementation, maintenance, training and ongoing support? Will we have access to dedicated customer success representatives to help us navigate through all the stages?

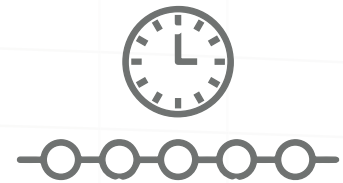


STEP 4:

Implementing Your New CPM Software

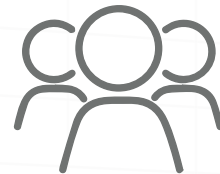
You've signed the contract, your teammates are aligned and you're finally able to sleep at night knowing your business planning will soon be more agile, efficient and resilient. Now it's time to implement your new CPM software. Here are three best practices you can use to ensure the process is successful.

3 Best Practices for a Smooth CPM Software Implementation



Stick to Your Established Timelines and Expectations for the Project

At this point, you and your vendor will have decided on a plan for your implementation. But as your project gets underway, you need to hold each other accountable for your respective deliverables and timelines. This will help you maintain an open line of communication and ensure it all runs smoothly from day one to the day you go live.



Ensure Cross-Functional Stakeholders Are Involved Early and Often

Check in with your colleagues to ensure they're happy with where the implementation is headed. If any adjustments are required to support the needs of your business users, make sure your vendor is informed and ready to give you some help.



Don't Lose Sight of Your Success Criteria

These are big projects. If you're finding yourself overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of your implementation, take a step back and do a pulse check with your vendor. Remember how all the work you're doing will transform your business for the better. Vendors who keep you aligned with that vision are the ones who stand out from the crowd.



STEP 5:

Partnering With Your Vendor and Laying the Foundation for Success

The best CPM software vendors are a lot more than just vendors—they're partners who are invested in your company's long-term success. In order to lay the foundation for a long and productive relationship, follow these tips and make the most of your new partnership.

How To Make the Most of Your CPM Software Partnership



Establish a Strong Working Relationship With Your Customer Success Team From the Get-Go

Customer success representatives go through rigorous training to stay ahead of the technology you use and the business demands that drive the work you do. They are committed to ensuring you have what you need to succeed with the software you use every day, and are just as invested in your success as you are.



Always Keep Track of Any New Product Updates or Releases

The last thing you want to say during a status call with your customer success rep is, “What’s this product update and why didn’t I hear about it?” Avoid this by subscribing to your vendor’s blog, newsletter or email list. Maintain regular communication so you don’t miss out on anything.



Take Advantage of Product Training and User Enablement Opportunities

This will ensure your users are comfortable with the software right away. If there are any customer workshops or opportunities to learn down the road, take the time to attend them so you can continue to refine your skills.



Identify Any Shortcomings and Work To Resolve Them Quickly

If your experience with your new software vendor isn’t meeting your expectations, bring those concerns forward right away. Remember that vendors are there to serve you. Your success is their success. Make yourself available for regular check-ins so you can work together to overcome any problems before they even arise.



STEP 6:

Expanding Your Use Cases With CPM Software

Building business agility and resilience is about adaptability. Working with the CPM software will help you make smarter, more data-driven decisions so you can pivot as business conditions change—but the right solution will also be adaptable as your business needs evolve.

Earlier on in this guide, we talked about why your software's potential to extend into other areas of the business beyond basic FP&A is important. Now it's time to discuss how to approach that confidently so you can continue to expand your use cases and achieve even more with your software of choice.

4 Best Practices for Expanding Your CPM Software Use Cases

1 Ask Your Vendor for Help With Executing New Ideas

Is there an alternate template you need to make inputs easier for a new user group? Do you want to set up a data integration with your HRIS to accommodate headcount planning? If you've chosen a user-friendly planning software, you can probably do this yourself. Your vendor can always provide support though, so remember they are your business partner and ask them for help if you need it.

2 Focus On Use Cases That Encourage Cross-Functional Collaboration and Alignment

Financial consolidation. Sales and revenue forecasting. Operational planning and incentive compensation management. All of these processes extend beyond standard FP&A and usually require input from stakeholders outside of finance. If you focus on collaboration and alignment as you expand your CPM software use cases, everyone across the business will start working from the same source of truth. Your planning cycle as a whole will be better off for it as well because everyone will have greater trust in the numbers your finance team delivers.

3 Rely On the Customer Community for Expertise and Inspiration

The best way to learn about innovative use cases with your CPM solution is to hear from other customers who have implemented those use cases themselves. Take advantage of customer meetups, conferences and online community forums. This will open your eyes to a new world of possibilities with your planning solution.

4 Challenge Yourself—and Your Vendor—to Think Outside the Box

Always give your vendor feedback on some of the features and use cases you'd like to see. The best vendors out there are always listening to their customers, so don't be afraid to inquire about your solution's long-term roadmap. If you've come up with a use case internally that might benefit other customers, let your vendor know and show them what you've accomplished. These vendors are your strategic business partners—success means you're working together effectively.



CONCLUSION:

It's Time for Your Finance Team To Invest in Itself and Your Business

Become the Strategic Partner Your Business Needs You To Be

The fundamental requirements of finance—such as gathering data, closing the books and building financial plans and reports—can be automated and accelerated through the use of CPM software to compress cycle times and free your finance team from the manual, laborious work that consumes so much of its day-to-day efforts.

Through the use of automation, data integration and artificial intelligence, you have the power to eliminate routine and recurring tasks and errors—condensing weeks of work into minutes. This will free up your team to focus on strategy, leadership,

supporting connected planning and decision making and addressing critical business priorities.

Consequently, every other facet of your organization gets to reap the rewards too. These include instantaneous access to relevant data at the very moment it's needed, the ability to collaborate for faster, more efficient financial and operational planning and analysis and the intelligence required to solve unique business challenges, answer complex business questions and respond proactively to unforeseen opportunities.

The Essence of Vena Complete Planning

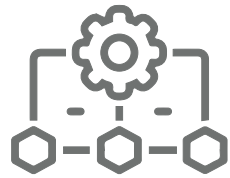
It starts by recognizing the needs of today's finance teams while resetting the organization's expectations on what true finance transformation—and business-wide collaboration, decision-making and agile planning—can look like.

Starting with the right foundation is key to success. Vena Complete Planning is a cloud-based CPM software solution that automates and connects processes across departments and systems in a collaborative and analytical platform that leverages the flexibility and familiarity of a native Excel interface and embedded business intelligence. It can be owned and operated by finance, it's intuitive for the entire business and accessible to everyone, anytime and from anywhere, enabling you to focus your time where it matters most—on value-adding activities such as analysis, building relationships, advising your key stakeholders, driving better strategic decisions and focusing on critical business priorities.

Remember: All change management programs start at the top and the CFO must champion the digital transformation from the very beginning. Don't be afraid to be ambitious. Make it your finance department's mission to drive the right strategic choices for the company. Changing an organization's culture and expectations is no easy feat. In order to effectively achieve this transformation, you need to address the mindset, people, processes and technology that drive the actions of FP&A, extended planning and beyond.



Final Takeaways



Vena Complete Planning is a technology-driven solution that enables any complex, spreadsheet-reliant business planning process in a single platform with a native Excel interface, embedded business intelligence and high extensibility.

Owned and operated by finance, it puts the finance function at the epicenter of strategy, innovation and collaboration within your organization. Teams can model, analyze, leverage AI-powered business insights at scale, report and work the way they think. And it facilitates increased business agility and resilience, enabling teams to plan for anything.



The CPM software you choose should be secure and easy to use. It should automate manual tasks to save you time to focus on business priorities, enable effective cross-departmental collaboration, bridge the gap between financial and operational data and decentralize decision making.

It should also give you the flexibility to create data models quickly and without restrictions, enabling you to track, report on and manage performance against KPIs using advanced data analytics capabilities, data visualizations, interactive dashboards and embedded business intelligence.



Excel is the language your finance team knows. Look for a CPM solution that unlocks its full potential—combining its inherent flexibility, powerful modeling capabilities, strong calculations and rich presentation.

All with the structure of a controlled application environment that delivers high data integrity, connections back to a central database, automated collaborative workflows and full auditability.

Final Takeaways (continued)



Look for CPM platforms that can address your unique business needs with pre-configured solutions that maximize usability and time-to-value.

Pre-configured solutions make your implementation easier with templates, business logic and workflows that are tailored to specific processes—such as workforce planning, cash flow modeling, CapEx planning, incentive compensation management, demand planning, account reconciliation—and specific industry requirements and specifications.



Even if you don't need all of this right away, it's important to pick a vendor that's equipped to scale and adapt to your organization as you grow.

Check in with your colleagues to ensure they're happy with where the implementation is headed. If any adjustments are required to support the needs of your business users, make sure your vendor is informed and ready to give you some help.





Want To Empower Your Team To Excel at More? We Can Help.

Business Expertise Is the Key to Outstanding Financial Leadership

As you strive to give everyone in every corner of your business the insights they need to work smarter and make better decisions, Vena Complete Planning can help—in financial, operational, strategic planning and beyond. Starting your journey requires an honest reflection on your current capabilities and gaps along with the creation of a collaborative vision on where you want it to take you.

Our goal at Vena is to provide finance departments and business leaders with the resources and technology needed to make agile and impactful financial and operational decisions as they plan for any situation, and empower the office of finance to sit at the heart of strategy as the most trusted advisor to the business. Vena's cloud-based CPM solution is the only native

Excel Complete Planning platform built for Microsoft 365 with Power BI Embedded.

If you have questions about how your finance team can leverage CPM software to build agility, efficiency and resilience into your financial, operational and strategic planning, our experts would love to show you how Vena Complete Planning can help.

Try the Free Vena Preview and Experience the Power of Complete Planning Today.

[SEE VENA IN ACTION](#)