

## QUICK FACTS

**Industry:** Entertainment & Media  
**Headquarters:** San Francisco, CA  
**Website:** www.ncpb.com  
**Revenues:** \$60 million  
**Employees:** 275  
**SAP® Solution(s) and Services:**  
 SAP BusinessObjects Planning & Consolidation (BPC)  
**Implementation Partner:**  
 Column5 Consulting  
 www.column5.com



## Creating a performance-based culture

Northern California Public Broadcasting (NCPB) needed a system to replace 600 Excel spreadsheets that comprised its budgeting system and required up to 6 weeks to consolidate. Using SAP BusinessObjects Planning & Consolidation (SAP BPC), NCPB reduced that time to a matter of seconds, allowing for timely, informed decision making.

### Key Challenges

- 5 month Planning Cycle consumed management and staff
- 600 Excel spreadsheets, from nearly 200 business units, were used to prepare budgets
- Could budget only 12 months of upcoming fiscal year, with no easy access to comparative historical data within budget spreadsheets
- Consolidation took approximately 6 weeks and included painstaking manual intercompany balancing
- No visibility into company-wide costs during review (e.g., travel)
- Projects span fiscal years and may include government funding (i.e., stringent reporting requirements)
- Only one high level forecast was done after 6 months of Actuals
- Actual vs Budget performance comparison was backwardlooking; too late to modify course as conditions changed

### Implementation Best Practices

- Monthly periodic forecasts with YTD Actuals
- Aggregated data across axes of department as well as projects
- Automated balancing of interdepartmental charges
- Online access to summary reports, detailed requests and justifications including written commentary
- Designed for ease of use to facilitate culture change – moving a paper-based user population to an online system (eliminated budget binders)
- Minimized staff resources for implementation

### Financial & Strategic Benefits

- Payback within three months, due to ability to react to market, cutting costs and generating more revenue ahead of downturn
- Visibility into plans and actuals improved immeasurably
- Payroll forecast accuracy was increased, to within 0.1%
- Analysts freed up to do analysis
- Forecasts are now part of a new performance culture
- Can now make decisions and act, with credible data and sufficient lead time over multi-year horizon

### Operational Benefits

- Consolidation cycle time reduced from 6 weeks to a few seconds
- Kept spreadsheet front end, but locked and controlled to maintain integrity of data input template/process

### Why SAP Was Selected

- Ability to budget multiple line items for individual accounts
- Ability to add comments by line item to document assumptions
- Good negotiating partner on terms and conditions

### Why Column5 Was Selected

- Able to meet tight deadlines
- Provided fixed price bid to enable reliable project budgeting
- Dedicated senior staff to focus nearly 100% of time to project in order to deliver fast-track schedule on time and on budget



## Northern California Public Broadcasting

(NCPB) is the most-watched public television and most-listened-to public radio broadcaster in the country.

It has extremely complex financials, due to projectbased accounting where projects and departments intertwine, projects span multiple fiscal years, government funding can create added reporting requirements, timing of revenue and expense recognition for large projects has a dramatic impact on financial results, and a nonprofit's lack of margin leaves no room for error.

Add to this scenario the fact that forecasting was a timeconsuming and labor-intensive process. It involved manually consolidating some 600 Excel spreadsheets from nearly 200 business units. After the initial plan, only one high level forecast was produced during the year, after six months of actuals. By the time management could compare results to the plan, it was too late to make adjustments.

## New Programming for Performance Management

SAP BusinessObjects Planning & Consolidation was chosen as the solution, with some clear goals in mind:

- Better decision making: To improve operational results by juxtaposing historical and forecast financials to inform managers before they make key decisions.
- One version of the truth: To provide managers with a consistent, accessible tool to communicate plan changes from the bottom up, so that an accurate picture could be seen.

- Very current outlook: To provide all stakeholders with an updated snapshot of current YTD activity and the revised outlook for the next 36+ months, each and every month – within 3 days of accounting close.
- Minimize effort: To minimize cycle time and effort involved in developing, reviewing and approving “budgets” – reduced to one hour of analysis and update each month.

## ImMEDIATE Payback

NCPB business managers now have updated data each month so they can review actual results, assess the impact, and develop more accurate forecasts for the next 36-48 months. As a result, executives are able to make timely decisions, based on solid information.

Payback? That came within 3 months, when thanks to the new visibility, they could see that revenues were behind budget and could take steps quickly to get back on track.

*“[With SAP BPC] we’ve cut many weeks off our budgeting and forecasting process, providing important time for value-added analysis. I would estimate the software provided a four-fold ROI.”*

- NCPB

## About Column5

Column5 is one of the fastest growing consulting organizations in the U.S., and provides top expertise in business performance management. Founded in 2005, Column5 consultants have implemented SAP BusinessObjects Planning and Consolidation (formerly OutlookSoft) for over 300 customers across the Globe.

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