

CASE STUDY: FORTUNE 500 ENERGY COMPANY

Key Contact:

A Global Marketing Performance Manager

Implemented Hive9: 2019

Previously Used: Spreadsheets

Major Pain Points Before Hive9: Lack of visibility into plans; difficulty reconciling actuals vs. plans

Hive9 Modules In Use: Planning; Financial; Performance (Fall 2020)

Start with a very large energy provider and add a significant marketing budget, multiple product lines and marketing teams spread across 40 countries, and you'll land on so many moving parts of which it's difficult to keep track. For this organization, spreadsheets just weren't cutting it.

According to our subject, a **global marketing performance manager for a major energy supplier**, they were seeking to improve marketing planning and financial management: time-consuming and headache-inducing tasks when performed in Excel.

Now, having used the Hive9 platform for more than a year on a global scale, their teams have improved collaboration and visibility around planning, as well as more effectively managed and reconciled budgets and expenses with finance.



Along the way, according to our contact, they've been able to save substantial time, reduce red tape and react more quickly to changes effected by the pandemic.

What's more, thanks to the close collaboration between Hive9 and the energy provider, they're even playing a role in increasing the value inside the future Hive9 solution.

PLANNING IN SPREADSHEETS

When it came time for planning season, the company's former process was based on spreadsheets.

With Excel, regional planning managers would manually enter data and send different versions of their spreadsheets back and forth among teams in different countries.

However, they found it "very hard to consolidate" all their respective information, which they centrally collated annually for the upcoming year's planning season, according to our contact.



Calling this "highly manual process" essentially "a nightmare," he details some of the problems they'd face: data inaccuracies, time delays and out-of-date numbers, preventing clear visibility of plans and how they tied to budgets.

"We didn't really know what was going on in the various teams and regions," he explains.

In addition, they tried another major marketing planning software solution that didn't work for them. Specifically, they didn't find the other system flexible enough to meet their needs; it required too many process changes and forced limitations that would reduce the value they were trying to capture.

PLANNING IN HIVE9

Since using Hive9, the energy company has seen improvements in two areas of planning:

(1) IT'S EASIER TO UNDERSTAND HOW PLANS HAVE CHANGED.

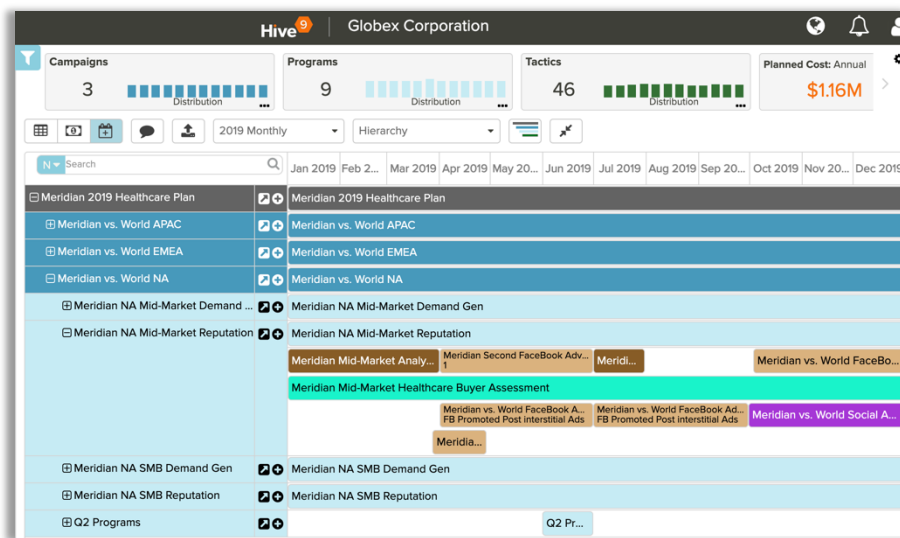
A big part of the reason the company wanted to get out of spreadsheets was that they lacked visibility into

"It takes a lot less time for the marketers to plan now."

changing marketing plans and budgets throughout the year.

“Before, I would know what the plans are globally once a year,” he says. “So, in Q4, I would know what the plan is for next year, but I would have zero visibility during the year of how plans changed.”

Now, teams are able to clearly see what’s been happening throughout the year in the context of their overall strategy—a particularly welcome change for 2020, especially. When the pandemic necessitated sudden budget alterations, the marketing and finance leaders, in turn, had to “rework all their plans,” he explains.



“Local and regional teams were able to do that a lot more quickly,” the contact says, “and then, centrally, we were able to pull together a complete overview for the business, saying, ‘This is what the new balance looks like.’”

Hive9's collaborative planning solution
 (Note: This Hive9 demo data has no association with our customer.)

Additionally, with the use of scenario planning, he notes, a team in one region was able to link their plans up with two types of potential budgets in the future—a “base budget” or a “rebound budget”—and have a clear visualization of either scenario.

“Being able to do that helped us prepare for a rebound,” he says.

Using Hive9, everyone was able to get on the same page, budget- and plan-wise, despite some unexpected changes along the way.

(2) IT'S EASIER TO UNDERSTAND WHAT'S PLANNED FOR THE NEXT YEAR.

With everyone now planning in the same place, everyone has access to the same data in real time, with all plans tied to budgets.

In fact, in a recent survey conducted with their Hive9 users, the majority said that access to data was the most beneficial part of their switch to Hive9, while access to reporting and a simplified planning process came in second and third, respectively.

Furthermore, they've discovered increased time-savings, with about half of the respondents reducing an estimated 30 minutes to 2 hours spent each week on marketing planning, tracking and analyzing.

Not only are the teams around the world able to more easily see what's planned—more than just once a year—but they're able to do it more quickly, too.

"It takes a lot less time for the marketers to plan now," he says.

MANAGING FINANCES IN SPREADSHEETS



When it came time to reconcile what they had spent with what they had planned to spend—i.e., actuals vs. plans—they found the task “very difficult” to manage in Excel.

“There were always different versions [of spreadsheets] when it came to collating on a regional level, let alone on a global level,” he explains.

That made it “very hard to know what was what,” he continues, “and how much we planned to spend versus how much we actually spent”—particularly because the actuals were housed separately in SAP. In turn, for them to effectively reconcile actuals vs. plans, they needed a smooth and timely integration with SAP.

MANAGING FINANCES IN HIVE9

Having swiftly connected Hive9 to SAP, their teams were then able to see an improvement in cost management, gaining a better understanding of exactly how much was being spent, and in which areas.

Through the integration, their actuals flow daily from SAP and then get allocated to their marketing plans in Hive9, which—especially in light of pandemic-related changes—helps them gain “much better control over the budget,” he says.

When finance leaders at the regional level make any budget changes, he explains, those changes can then immediately be seen from a “central perspective” in Hive9, enabling everyone to gain visibility into spending down to the tactic level, and how that spending aligns with plans.

For example, if they want to check up on how much money is being spent in relation to “strategic priorities” or “various customer segments,” he adds, they can see the information in one place and know all their numbers are the same, no matter where they are in the world.

“Having all of that in one easily accessible tool has helped enormously,” he says, adding that they no longer have to send around templates for everyone to fill out, either.

“You always use the same tool, but you can actually update your parameters—i.e., attributes—to understand a lot better how you budget or how your plans are split.”

Importantly, being able to reconcile plans vs. actuals also gives the company the ability to immediately flag any imbalances in the budget: for example, if they’ve spent more or less than they had planned in certain areas.

“It gives regional [marketing] reps the ability to act a lot quicker on driving actions when it comes to budget savings or investing more in other areas,” the contact says.



“Having all of that in one easily accessible tool has helped enormously.”

Additionally, further enhancing their financial management capabilities, the company has transformed their GL code integration from a months-long process into an overnight job.

Previously, the task required teams to manually enter numbers in SAP, send multiple spreadsheets back and forth across time zones, and reconcile all the data—a process taking as long as one to two months. Now, because of the Hive9-SAP connection, they have access to the GL codes the very next day.

This automation of “unnecessary manual work,” our contact says, is another way to further reduce red tape.

Finally, to close the loop on automated financial reporting, the company is in the process of adding Hive9’s Purchase Support Module, which will create Purchase Requests (PRs) from Hive9 and automatically report on Purchase Order status and consumption for the marketing team inside Hive9. They believe the error rate for PRs will be eliminated and anticipate additional time-savings with the new process, to be implemented fall 2020.

COLLABORATION



To kick off the project, the energy provider benefited from Hive9’s consultative workshops, launched with the Hive9 Customer Success team. This process helped Hive9 understand exactly what they needed from the solution at global, regional and local

levels, according to our contact, and in what sequence.

“It was good to have these workshops right from the beginning,” he explains, “where we got together to be clear on requirements to really spell out what it is that we want.”

From the initial workshops to validation of their setup decisions and regularly scheduled check points, the close collaboration “has made a big difference,” he adds.

MORE TO COME

Having reduced headaches, wasted time, and confusion surrounding important data across many operating units, the company is on a path to continuous marketing performance management improvement.

As a marketing manager recently said in a testimonial, the tool “has totally changed the game” for the the company.

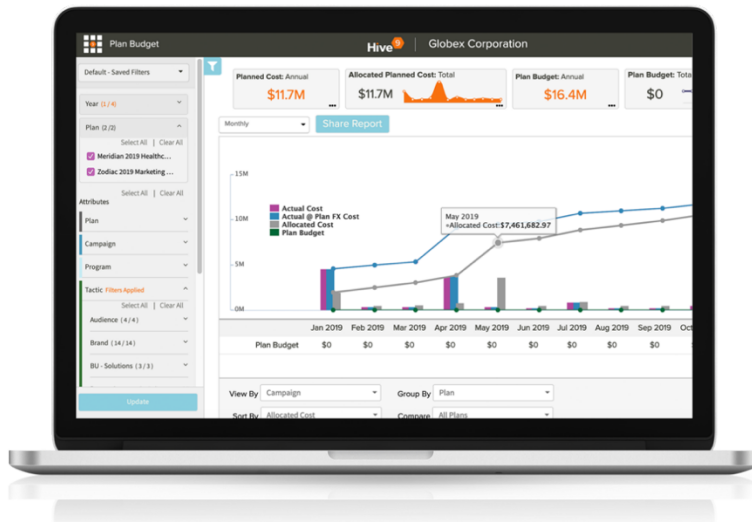
With the Hive9 planning module implemented last year and the financial integration completed this year, what’s next for the energy provider is turning on Hive9 Performance, which includes revenue attribution, waterfall attribution and reporting actuals compared to goals, as well as predicting future performance.

With Hive9 collecting all performance data in aggregate—and in the context of the plan—everything will come “full circle,” the contact says, “further improving the business impact of our marketing plans.”



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ABOUT HIVE9



A look at Hive9's financial management module, with budgets clearly aligned to plans.

(Note: This Hive9 demo data has no association with our customer.)

Hive9 brings your entire marketing **plan** into an intelligent calendar, providing immediate visibility, insights and better collaboration to ensure your plan is aligned with your strategy.

We connect your plan automatically to your **budget** and actual expenses to ensure no surprises with your CFO and provide better knowledge of your spending by vendor, region, product, target audience and much more.

Finally, we clearly show you what is working and what is not. Hive9 **performance** reports don't only look backward. We use the foundation of your total plan to predict the business impact for the year and constantly compare with actual results. This forward-looking approach highlights problems in time to implement solutions and produces dashboards that drive action to improve your plan.

Hive9 is a solution **built by marketers** who have been in your shoes. We provide the white glove treatment to ensure your success, and we help our clients with best practices over time based on their marketing maturity and specific objectives.

IS HIVE9 IS THE RIGHT FIT FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION? [SCHEDULE A DEMO](#), OR GET IN TOUCH WITH US: INFO@HIVE9.COM OR 512.354.7751.