DXC TECHNOLOGY | ORACLE

Queensland University
of Technology overhauls
budgeting practices

CUSTOMER
**Queensland University
of Technology**

LOCATION
Australia

INDUSTRY
Education

Challenge

- Streamline the budgeting process to allow the management accounting team (MAT) to draw together university-wide budgets faster to offer greater decision-making support

- Ensure financial staff across the University apply the same budgeting practices while retaining a decentralised budgeting model

- Meet end user requirements for a familiar Excel-style interface, while offering greater back-end flexibility

Solution

- Oracle® Hyperion
- Oracle Essbase
- Oracle Data Integrator

Results

- Standardised budgeting practices and reduced the time taken to consolidate budgets across the University

- Improved financial management and retained an Excel-style interface to assist with change management

- Addressed financial queries from the University's management team and planning and resources committee with confidence

Queensland University of Technology overhauls budgeting practices

Queensland University of Technology consolidates budgets within a day, instead of a week, and overhauls budgeting practices

"After implementing Oracle Hyperion, the focus has changed to analysing outputs, rather than the process of data collection, and that in itself is an immeasurable benefit."

— **Patricia Alner**
Director of planning and budget,
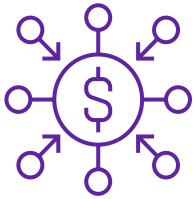Queensland University of Technology

Queensland University of Technology (QUT) is a selectively research-focused Australian university, catering to 45,000 students, including 7,000 international students. The University employs more than 4,000 permanent staff and over 7,000 casual staff, and consists of six faculties, six divisions, and a number of research institutes spread across two Brisbane city campuses, as well as Caboolture to the north.

Challenge

QUT relies on a decentralised budgeting process, providing university faculties, divisions, and institutes with a high level of input into, and control over, how their allocated funds are spent. This allows these organisational areas to spend funds where they need them most, such as on employing academic staff and supporting student learning and teaching priorities.

However, this decentralised budgeting process created difficulties for the University's management accounting team (MAT), as compiling a university-wide budget required input from numerous staff throughout the institution. In addition, the process was made even more complex by a lack of standard budgeting tools across the university, as well as limited access to detailed workforce expenditure.

"We could respond to high-level decision-making requests, but we couldn't see the fine detail that underpinned the budgeting process," said Patricia Alner, director of planning and budget, Queensland University of Technology. "This meant I found it difficult to provide detailed answers to some complicated financial questions in a timely fashion."

Hyperion improved financial management by allowing the MAT to analyse, investigate, and follow up on issues, rather than just simply reporting.

"Employment costs are a major part of our expenditure, so we really needed a detailed picture of our workforce, and a system that allowed us to plan budgets down to the individual employee level," she said. "Independent consultants had also recommended to our governance committee that we needed to address the automation of our budgetary process and accelerate our decision-making."

Why Oracle

QUT was already using Oracle products such as Oracle Financials, which meant it had a high level of in-house Oracle experience and expertise. When it came to choosing a new budgeting platform, Alner said it was the Oracle Hyperion product's flexibility, robustness, and ability to integrate with Oracle Financials that was appealing.

"Oracle's Hyperion solutions granted end users the interface they desired while meeting the financial team's back-end requirements," she said. "Hyperion's proven track record in the budgeting and financial management space was also a key factor in our decision."

"There are often a lot of hyperbolic statements made about technology products, but I want to see it working. When we saw how the Oracle Hyperion system was performing in other organisations, we were very impressed."

Why DXC

After an open tender process, QUT engaged DXC to implement Oracle Hyperion Planning Essbase across the university.

QUT was implementing a new student administration system at the same time as the Oracle Hyperion budgeting system, so access to internal resources was limited. This made the choice of DXC as an implementation partner a significant factor in the project's success.

"We needed a partner that specialised in Oracle and Hyperion, and who could accommodate the complexities of the university's requirements," said Alner. "DXC has the large-scale implementation experience to tackle a project like this. We didn't just take the company at face value; we went to some of its implementation sites, so we could ask the hard questions about the tools and DXC's work.

"Our confidence in DXC was well-founded, and we'd still be struggling with the deployment without the team onboard. It would have taken significantly longer to develop the solution in-house," she said.

Solution

QUT deployed Oracle Hyperion Planning and Oracle Essbase across the university. It used Oracle Data Integrator to integrate the Hyperion system with Oracle Financials and the University's ALESCO v12 human resources system.

The move to Oracle Hyperion provides a central portal to integrate financial data from all faculties, divisions, and institutes, making it easier for the MAT to bring together the decentralised budgeting process and standardise budgeting practices across the University. The project involved an extended consultation with end users from various organisational areas, resulting in comprehensive business and technical requirement statements, which contain user expectations for functionality and technical capabilities that best fit the university's IT environment.

"The staff that were developing the budgets in the faculties, divisions, and institutes already had their own, very established systems—many of them Excel-based—so the move to Hyperion wasn't just a technical project but also a change-management exercise," said Alner.

"As our financial staff was comfortable using these Excel spreadsheets, Hyperion was a good fit because it could offer end users an Excel-style experience while still giving us the flexibility and strength we needed at the back end," she said. "Thanks to Hyperion, we could make sure everyone is budgeting for their organisational areas using the same standards and applying the same rates and cost increments, rather than using different calculations in separate spreadsheets. We've prescribed these set rates in the Hyperion system and they can't be overridden, so we're all on the same page."

When it came to choosing a new budgeting platform, Alner said it was the Oracle Hyperion product's flexibility, robustness, and ability to integrate with Oracle Financials that was appealing.

Result

Oracle Hyperion allows QUT to draw budgets from across the University much faster, significantly reducing the time required to produce a consolidated budget report. MAT also has much greater assurance in the accuracy of the data, giving the team more confidence in helping the University to make better informed decisions.

"In the past it took a significant amount of time and effort to prepare the budget," said Alner. "We can now produce a consolidated budget in less than a day, whereas it previously took at least a week of trawling through spreadsheets to produce, balance, and check figures. Oracle Hyperion has helped transform us into a more efficient and effective management accounting team, because it frees up time to analyse, investigate, and follow up on issues rather than just simply reporting.

"After implementing Oracle Hyperion, the focus has changed to analysing outputs, rather than the process of data collection, and that in itself is an immeasurable benefit," added Alner. "I can also answer financial queries from senior managers and the planning and resources committee with confidence, knowing that I'm drawing on the most accurate and up-to-date budget data from across the University."

In addition to retaining an Excel-style interface to assist with change management, Hyperion improved financial management by allowing the MAT to analyse, investigate, and follow up on issues, rather than just simply reporting.

The productivity gains from moving to Hyperion allow QUT to consider deploying rolling forecasts and monthly reporting, as well as expanding the university's financial planning using Hyperion costing modules.

Implementation process

QUT opted for a soft launch of the Oracle Hyperion products, running the new system side by side with the previous budgeting approach during 2011 to allow MAT to meet its compliance and governance requirements, which involved updating the budget during the year.

"We had to stage the implementation around those budget reviews so we could comply with our requirements to submit a budget on time," Alner said.

"The soft launch meant end users could prepare an Excel version of their budgets as usual at the start of the year, but they were required to do all the preparations for the midyear budget review in Hyperion.

"There is usually some resistance to change, but the fact that the vice-chancellor was a champion of this project greatly helped with the implementation process," added Alner. "In fact, he was adamant that all the financial staff would use the new system for budgeting."

Learn more at
dxc.com/au/practices/oracle

Get the insights that matter.
Opt-in to DXC's Oracle Practice

f **y** **in**

About DXC Technology

DXC Technology (NYSE: DXC) helps global companies run their mission critical systems and operations while modernizing IT, optimizing data architectures, and ensuring security and scalability across public, private and hybrid clouds. The world's largest companies and public sector organizations trust DXC to deploy services across the Enterprise Technology Stack to drive new levels of performance, competitiveness, and customer experience. Learn more about how we deliver excellence for our customers and colleagues at **DXC.com**.