![Solver logo]

Quick Time to Value with Solver

How to Achieve Modern Budgeting, Forecasting, and Financial Reporting Deployed in One Day

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About This White Paper

Many mid-sized businesses are evaluating tools to help automate and improve their corporate performance management (CPM) processes. Our experience is that finance and accounting teams first try to handle their budgeting and financial reporting within their ERP system and, when that is not flexible enough, they then move many of these processes to home-grown Excel models. Once the Excel models grow too large and complex, they start looking for CPM software to support their decision-making and ultimately help drive growth for the business. Such a move typically means a significant time and cost investment to evaluate, buy, and implement the CPM software.

This document will go into detail about driving business outcomes with Solver, a new type of cloud-based CPM solution that offers pre-configured ERP integrations and hundreds of pre-built reports, dashboards, and planning templates that can be deployed in as little as one day. Solver provides an easy way to immediately use, modify, and create your own reports, input forms, and dashboards when you have budget and time.

Introduction

New and turbulent economic times are calling for business software like Solver to deliver quick time to value so managers and information workers can get the answers they need to make faster and better decisions.

Here are a few changes driving that need:

- With the shift from on-premises technologies managed in house to modern subscription-based cloud platforms, there is an expectation for a higher return on investment (ROI) than legacy apps can offer.

- Everyone has grown accustomed to easily downloading an app on their smartphone and other devices. They expect similar simplicity from the budgeting, forecasting, reporting, and analysis functionality delivered by CPM software.

- It is difficult and costly for mid-market companies to recruit, train, and retain the in-house talent expected to become expert power users of the organization's business applications. Therefore, the more out-of-the-box and ready-to-use an application is — and the less customized it is — the easier it will be for other staff to take ownership if the key power user leaves and new users are onboarded.

- Typical financial software projects often take months of consulting to implement before they are completed. All the while, software-as-a-service (SaaS) subscription fees are being paid, making it costly and risky to get started.

To solve these issues, the Solver CPM platform includes the QuickStart (patented) technology with the Solver Marketplace full of ready-to-use financial reports, planning input forms, and Power BI dashboards.

Getting to "One Version of the Truth" with a Unified Financial Analytics Platform

Professional monthly financial reports are considered a "must have" in almost all companies and these are usually a relatively easy task for a good ERP report writer or CPM solution to handle. However, managers and executives also need operational data and budgets to get a more detailed picture of the factors that drive performance. This means that data must be collected from the general ledger and subledgers, as well as external systems like CRM and payroll.
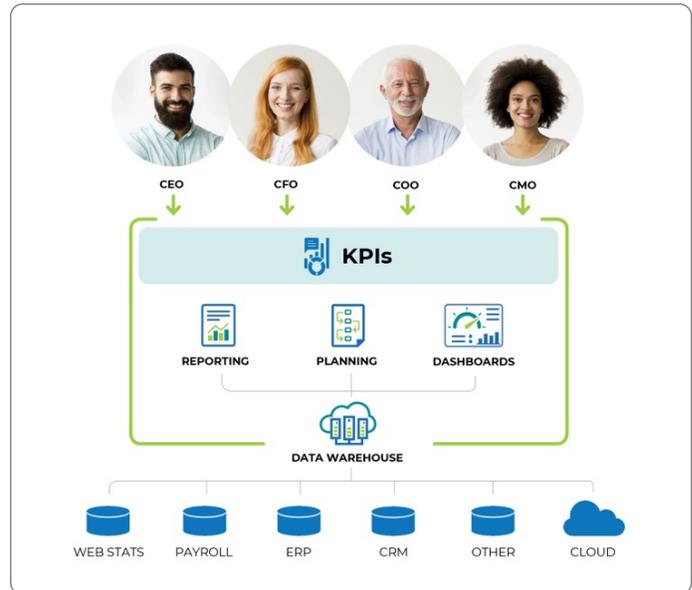
Typically, adding data requires someone to compile data from several report writers and repopulate the data in Excel spreadsheets, then add formatting and provide their compilations to managers. This process is often complex, error prone, and lacks a drill-down for contextual or transactional detail – delaying important decision-making. Even worse, the siloed data can produce different results, leading to conflicting interpretations between executives and operational leaders, depending on which systems and reporting tools they look at.

Modern CPM solutions are designed to solve these major issues. At the same time, they deliver many advantages that help drive automation, control, and improved decision-making.

The key is that they automatically import data to a central cloud database from the ERP system, as well as other operational data sources. This centralized database is sometimes referred to as a "data warehouse," "data mart," "data store," or "data hub." Combining the data in a single database allows for reconciliation to make sure users get reports and dashboards that represent "One Version of the Truth."

For example, with Solver's cloud platform, key financial and operational data that drives management decision making is unified in a central, secure database. End users can access reports and enter budgets and forecasts in planning input templates within a single web portal, all the time knowing that they are looking at the same data, which is updated and reconciled as part of a formal corporate process typically owned by the Office of Finance.

In the next section, we will look at how to avoid lengthy and costly CPM software implementations, so you can more quickly reach the ultimate goal of a CPM solution: faster and better decisions.

Business Questions Answered on Day One

CPM software has been around since the 1990s and has evolved from on-premises to best-of-breed cloud solutions. However, one thing that hasn't changed much is their lengthy and costly implementations. Almost always, you will deal with a mix of integration consultants, functional consultants, and project managers before the solution is fully deployed.

Because the end result your users will see is a collection of reports, dashboards, and planning models built by or with external consultants, there is a good chance that what you will get is either what you instructed the consultants to build based on your old model (spreadsheets?) or what those consultants thought you were looking for. This means there is a good chance that you will miss out on the latest "best practice" reports, dashboards, and planning input forms.

Worst of all, it is pretty typical for this process to take 30 days or more before you start seeing a good number of completed templates.

What If You Could Be Up and Running within a Single Day?

Solver has worked with thousands of mid-sized organizations and, for years, we have seen the pains described above. That is why we developed our patented QuickStart technology. QuickStart provides pre-built integrations that get you up and running in record time, so you can immediately access the Solver Marketplace to download any of the more than 100 free, ready-to-use reports, planning input forms, and dashboards available to you.

All of this activity takes place on Day One of your implementation. In other words, while custom reports or additional data-source integrations are being configured for your business, your users will already have self-service access to the Solver Cloud portal and hundreds of templates.

With Solver, on Day One your company can start making faster and better decisions by:

- Monitoring the performance of KPIs
- Discovering trends in financial and operational metrics
- Finding variances between actual data and budgets/forecasts and historical periods
- Detecting exceptions and anomalies
- Optimizing planning by creating budgets and forecasts

With users having immediate access to professional reports and dashboards on the first day of the Solver deployment, they will find answers to their business questions and have the power to make **more informed decisions** – *without having to wait for a lengthy implementation*.

Integrations That Work Immediately and with No Technical Skills Required

Most CPM solutions start their projects with technical consultants who configure integrations that load historical financial data from the ERP system. Depending on the number of data sources and if the data needs any transformation, this work can take anywhere from a few days to a few weeks and often includes back-and-forth communication between users, IT, and consultants. It is typically one of the more painful and sometimes frustrating phases of an implementation.

That is why Solver developed our QuickStart (patented) technology. Within hours of the start of the implementation, your first dataset will be fully loaded, and users can start running reports or entering planning data.

How Does QuickStart Work to Speed Up an Implementation?

QuickStart is the name of the integration wizard that vastly simplifies and speeds up implementations of the Solver CPM platform.

QuickStart includes the following:

1. Pre-built endpoint configuration in the ERP system that enables validated data extraction and preparation
2. Secure connection from your Solver Cloud tenant to your ERP
3. Data mapping to a pre-configured financial data model that enables ready-to-use reports, dashboards, and planning input forms
4. Data loading and scheduling of regular data refreshes

The QuickStart integration tool is non-technical. The session with the 4 steps listed above takes a few hours and can be performed by a Solver Certified Consultant.

The table below illustrates how the initial setup of a new CPM solution with Solver is significantly simpler, lower risk, and faster compared to other alternatives:

Functionality	solver with QuickStart	Other CPM Tools
ERP API configuration and related know-how	None to minimal (depending on ERP)	Manual → 1-2 days
Selecting ERP data fields and dimensions to transfer to target tables in CPM tool	None (pre-mapped)	Manual → 5-8 hours*
Data labeling and mapping to enable use of pre-built financial reports, dashboards, and forms	30 minutes to a few hours	Usually not an available functionality
Data loading, scheduling, and data validation**	30 minutes	1-2 days
Subledger integrations	None (pre-mapped) Manual Mapping***	Manual mapping
Pre-built Report templates	Yes, Ready-to-use	No (can modify examples)
Pre-built Budget/Forecast input templates	Yes, Ready-to-use	No (can modify examples)
Pre-built Power BI templates	Yes, Ready-to-use	No (can modify examples)

*) Configuration Time: Varies dependent on consultant ERP/API skills, as well as ERP system and the number of ERP tables/ modules in integration

**) Labor time, not including waiting time for data itself to transfer

***) Contact Solver for availability of QuickStart subledger connectors – manual mapping is always available

While most CPM tools require your power users or consultants to spend time and effort configuring additional integrations and reports, Solver's QuickStart functionality is in continuous development so that, with minimal effort, you can enjoy an ever-increasing library of pre-built, pre-mapped integrations.

However, the biggest value of QuickStart is not that it reduces a typical 3- to 5-day technical integration process down to a few hours, but that QuickStart includes a unique data labeling system (part of step 3 above) that enables immediate download of 100+ ready-to-use reports, dashboards, and budget templates that are available from Solver's Marketplace. We will describe this in more detail next.

Improved Decisions with Ready-to-Use Reports, Dashboards, and Planning Forms

An increasing number of modern cloud platforms include marketplaces with apps. You might be most familiar with this concept from your smartphone where, with very little effort, you can download and use both free and fee-based apps. Marketplaces have also arrived in the CPM industry.

Because most CPM solutions are sold as "empty boxes" in the cloud, it typically takes from 1 to many months of implementation effort, depending on the scope and complexity of integrations and the data model, to "populate the box" with data and get it ready to use. Most of the time and cost of a CPM implementation comes from the design process for reports, dashboards, and planning input forms.

In other words, between consultants and your own power users, you can expect anywhere from 160 to 400 hours of effort (more with larger, more complex models) just to design the key templates you need.

How Can You Dramatically Reduce Your CPM Implementation Time?

With decades of experience working with finance and accounting teams on CPM implementations, Solver has seen the painful time delays firsthand that companies often experience before they can get up and running to the point where they can place their first dozen professional reports and dashboards into the hands of their business users.

That is why the Solver platform includes the QuickStart integration technology with "financially intelligent" data labeling. This enables you to access Solver's Marketplace where you download and immediately use free financial reports and graphical dashboards, as well as budget and forecast input forms on DAY ONE of your Solver implementation.

100+ FREE Templates

Financial Reports

Budget and Forecast Input Forms
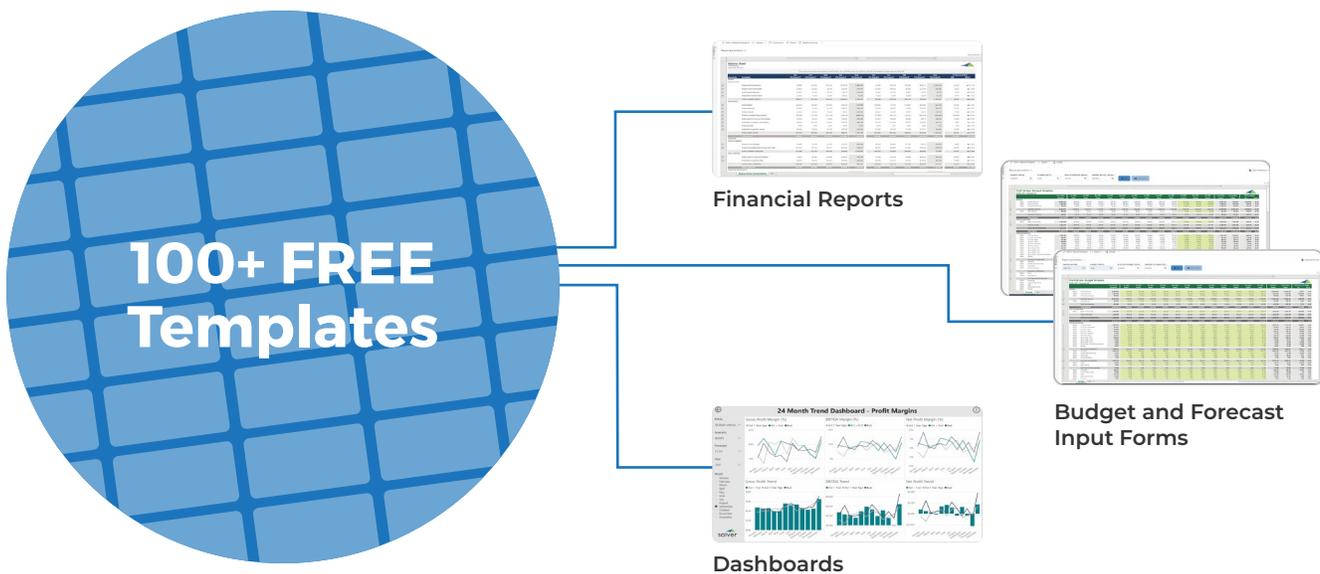
Dashboards

The Solver Marketplace has different categories of ready-to-use templates that maximize the immediate benefits you and your users will get from your new CPM. New reports, dashboards, and planning forms are added to the Marketplace several times per month and all of them can be downloaded for free, so they are immediately available for your company to drive faster and better decisions.

Marketplace templates can be copied and modified with your own logos and formulas. You can design new ones from scratch as well. This ever-expanding reservoir of dashboards, reports, and forms brings continuous value to your company as it grows. From Day One, the Marketplace offers $100k+ value in ready-to-use templates.

The following are categories of ready-to-use templates available in the Marketplace:

- Asset & Liability Analysis Reports
- Budget Input Forms
- Consolidation Reports
- Control Reports
- Expense Analysis Reports
- Financial Dashboards
- Financial Statements

- Forecast Input Forms
- KPI Reports
- PowerPoint Financial Presentation Templates
- Profitability & Margin Analysis Reports
- Receivables & Payables Analysis Reports
- Revenue Analysis Reports
- Sales Analysis Reports

To see a detailed image of each of the 100+ templates, explore the Solver Marketplace.
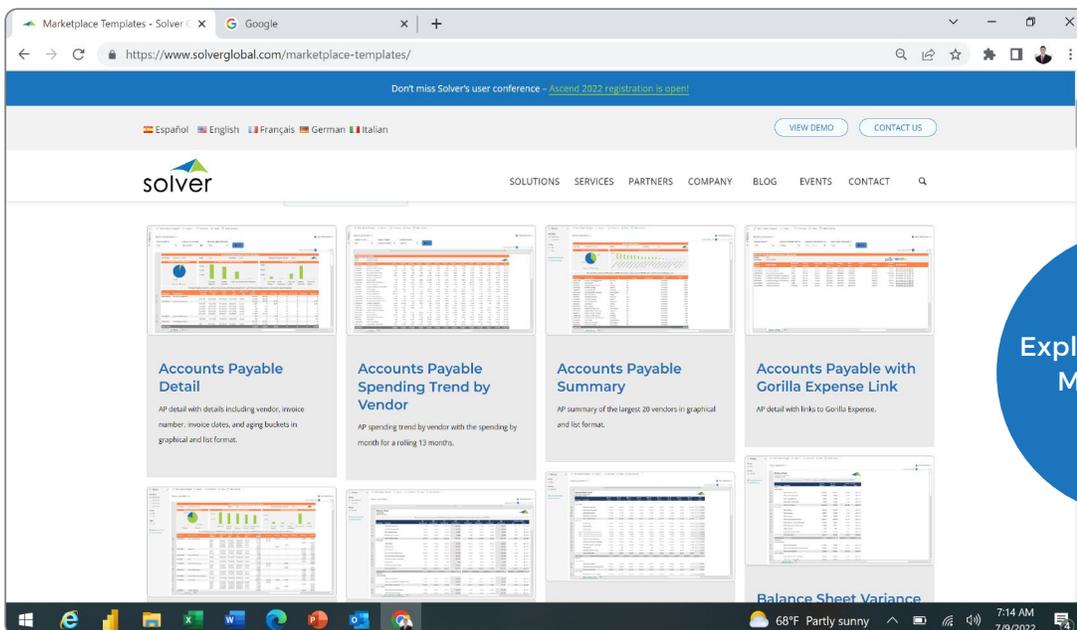
Core CPM Functionality That Drives Automation in Reporting and Planning Processes

CPM tools inherently drive time and cost savings by improving planning and reporting processes, while also supporting the organization's growth by enabling faster and better decisions.

Solver's CPM platform provides the flexibility and scalability you need by combining the best of two worlds: A cloud-connected Excel report designer and a user-friendly web portal where end users securely access reports on demand or enter budgets and forecasts guided by workflows and an approval process. This setup drives One Version of the Truth and enables rich analysis by combining data from your various data sources into the flexible Solver Cloud platform.

With the QuickStart integration technology and ready-to-use templates from the Marketplace, you can get up and running in a single day to enable faster and better decisions across your organization.

Of course, Solver also has the advanced functionality you would expect from a modern CPM platform, including:

- Budgeting and Forecasting workflows
- Checklists for the month-end close and other processes
- Automated report distribution, as well as on-demand access with drill-down
- Multi-company consolidation and multi-currency reporting
- Power BI and PowerPoint integration
- Detailed user administration and security

Summary – A New Era to Drive Faster and Better Decisions

As your company grows, relying on your ERP system or homegrown Excel models for analytics will become quite painful at some point. This can also be costly, as accountants will have to burn the midnight oil to produce necessary reports or finish a budget process. Meanwhile, managers will be left with sub-optimal information and lacking in timely data to make critical decisions.

As we have discussed in this white paper, modern cloud CPM platforms like Solver are the next logical step when ERP report writers and Excel models no longer do the job. The only thing that has been missing in the CPM industry is rapid deployment technologies like Solver's QuickStart and the Solver Marketplace that empower you to deliver value to your end users on the first day of your implementation instead of after 1, 2, or 3 months. The direct benefits of this are, of course, better business decisions right away, but also lower implementation risk, higher ROI, and quicker time to value.

At this point, we have all experienced firsthand that Everything Can Change in a Day – will you be prepared to keep up with the changes that may arrive tomorrow?

Take the Next Step

To learn more about Solver, please take advantage of our free, self-directed software tour on the Solver website.

We also encourage you to request your free trial that leverages your own data, or a personalized demo. Please contact your Solver partner or complete this form to speak with a representative about these opportunities.

Appendix 1 – Sample One-Day Rapid Deployment Agenda

Work hand-in-hand with a Solver expert to get up and running with Solver's QuickStart and Template Marketplace in one day. The following list provides a sample of the topics covered in a typical QuickStart deployment and training. Content may vary based on specific project requirements, software purchased, and ERP.

Sample agenda for One-Day Rapid Deployment and Mini Training:

- Preparation Steps & Checklist
- Software Overview & Orientation
- User Settings & Notifications
- QuickStart Configuration & Mapping
- Accessing Marketplace Templates
- Running and Distributing Report Templates
- Creating Report Packages
- Setup of Workflows
- Deploying Budgeting & Forecasting Models
- Enabling Power BI Dashboards
- System Administration & Security
- Online Learning Resources
- Recommended Next Steps

Appendix 2 – Other Solver Resources

- Global Partner Network & Solver Offices
- Partner Portal
- Helpdesk with Community
- Academy - Online Training and Certifications
- Monthly Cloud Updates
- Marketplace Additions