

## Case Study



# The Saville Group visualises success with OpenPlanning

**Client:** The Savilles Group Ltd

**Sector:** Technology

**Project:** OpenPlanning

## Questioned integrity of Excel points to need for new budgeting and planning tool

The Saville Group Ltd is one of the UK's largest specialist suppliers of audio visual, multimedia and video conferencing technology, with around 300 personnel in fourteen locations. At the forefront of the UK industry for more than forty years, the company specialises in the sales, hire and installation of AV equipment and integrated systems, including LCD projectors, plasma & LCD screens, video conferencing and digital signage networks. As a growing company, Saville had the same problem as a lot of other similarly sized enterprises where they could not trust the integrity of Excel anymore and the business had evolved beyond the capabilities of spreadsheets.

The limitations of Excel had become apparent to Simon Brookshaw, Financial Controller at Saville, after he inherited an Excel budget model from a previous colleague which was 'very time consuming and had the potential for too many errors'. Not only were there doubts over the spreadsheets' integrity but they were becoming too unwieldy, and it had previously taken three to four months to produce the budget. Ultimately the finance team at Saville was not comfortable with the old model and it was felt that a budgeting solution was needed that was not complex to run and could be easily maintained.



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- **Simon Brookshaw, Financial Controller commented:**

## Key Features:

- Use Sage Line 500 as General Ledger System alongside OpenPlanning
- Saville now able to trust integrity of data
- Budgeting Process reduced from 3-4 months number crunching to 2-3 days a month
- Ability to conduct ‘What-If’ Scenario Planning previously never attempted in Excel
- Can change business structure and add new product lines without breaking model
- Potential to create rolling forecasts in the future

Within just a few weeks, Saville purchased OpenPlanning. OpenPlanning ‘fits the bill’, according to Simon, and it was felt that the model could be tailored to Saville’s needs. When deciding on a new system, Saville’s requirement was for a product that wasn’t too big; they had looked at Hyperion but felt they didn’t need a sledgehammer to crack a nut. However, they also looked at an off-the-shelf product and decided they needed something a little more substantial and this is where OpenPlanning excelled, as ‘they appreciated there is a gap in the market, and suited our needs exactly’, says Simon. One of the reasons for the swift purchase of OpenPlanning was that the Saville finance team was very impressed with the presentation of the product. Simon comments, ‘the web demos were fantastic, especially the ease with which it was shown,’ he continues, ‘OpenPlanning showed us things that can’t fail to impress, especially coming from an Excel spreadsheet background!’

## Implementation consulting services

The company’s implementation of OpenPlanning took place during Autumn 2008, and Simon was particularly impressed with the consultant who ‘quickly got his head round how The Saville Group works and went over and above what a normal consultant would do, in my experience’. Completing the implementation of OpenPlanning in December 2008 Simon now feels he has ownership of the company’s model due to the excellent training and support he received. He also notes that there was minimal need for the Saville IT department to be involved in the process - it was, overall, a finance system for the finance team.

Saville’s first budget round in OpenPlanning was delivered for the company to submit to their bank in January 2009. Saville needed individual P&Ls for each of the company’s 18 Cost Centres to feed into a fully integrated P&L, Balance Sheet and Cash Flow across the four divisions of the company, which would in turn roll up to company level. The company certainly now has this; at a click of a button they can switch between looking at the total company and individual Cost Centres or business units. The finance team can make a change anywhere in the model which will then instantly flow through the entire model; top to bottom or vice versa - they can very quickly model different scenarios and change budget figures.

## Clear-cut advantages of OpenPlanning over Excel

Now initial implementation is complete, Simon hopes to cut down on the time taken on the budgeting and forecasting process. ‘It used to take our previous Finance Director three to four months of number crunching and assembling the budget,’ he says, ‘now I will be spending maybe two to three days a month, if that, developing the solution and extracting more management information’. One of the most important

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outcomes of purchasing OpenPlanning is the ability to “create ‘what-if’ scenarios, and to be able to trust the integrity - to be certain that the information is all feeding into the correct fields,” he explains.

So far The Saville Group is satisfied with the outcome of using the OpenPlanning model. As well as having the ability to complete the budget in a significantly reduced time, as mentioned above, Simon states, *‘we can also get much more management information out of this model.’* He continues, *‘I can drag and drop Cost Centres to change the business structure and easily add new product lines without breaking or ruining the integrity of my model, which in Excel would have meant a timely process of rekeying data, changing my structure and manually checking that all the calculations added up!’* OpenPlanning also provides the advantage of giving Saville increased confidence in the numbers produced, and the opportunity to involve more people from the business in the budgeting and forecasting process.

These are early days for Saville and OpenPlanning, and Simon knows there is more to do to have a fully functioning model. Next on his agenda for OpenPlanning is to import actuals into the model and produce a rolling forecast, something they cannot do in Excel. Apart from this, one positive outcome of using the new model is that *‘I no longer dread the budget round, which in Excel was a mammoth task’*. Simon concludes, *with OpenPlanning I am actually quite excited about it’*.

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## For more information

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