

The Boardwalk Collaboration Platform (BCP) For Sales & Operations Planning

The most important challenge facing manufacturers today within their sales & operations planning (S&OP) process is how to proactively manage gross margin performance in support of profitability. To meet this challenge, companies must focus on four key areas:

- **Planning** – how to efficiently optimize demand planning cycles and productivity
- **Collaboration** – how to automate and enable effective communication between all functional silos
- **Visibility** – how to gain detailed, real-time visibility into manufacturing & supply chain operations
- **Control** – how to monitor and continually optimize plans to drive profitability

Addressing these challenges is no easy task. After years of effort and millions of dollars invested in traditional enterprise applications, most companies continue to struggle with these challenges. That's why, by some estimates, 72% of companies continue to run their S&OP processes manually in spreadsheets.

This is happening because traditional enterprise applications are unable to deliver the S&OP capabilities necessary to meet the needs of the dynamic, rapidly changing business environment facing manufacturing companies today — that's not what these systems were designed for; they were designed to manage large numbers of transactions like POs and sales orders. Since effective S&OP demands concurrent, cross-functional collaboration, and enormous flexibility, companies are looking towards emerging enterprise 2.0 applications to help them meet the challenges of managing gross margin performance in support of profitability.

The Boardwalk Collaboration Platform (BCP) for S&OP

Boardwalktech has developed an enterprise 2.0 technology which has the flexibility, cross-functional collaboration capabilities, and the enterprise scalability needed to drive your entire S&OP processes. The BCP S&OP solution is driven by a “cell-server” database breakthrough that collaboratively manages data at a cell level between a spreadsheet and backend systems. This patented tabular data management technology is unique in the industry and beyond the functional reach of traditional relational databases. BCP extends the web application model to enable the use of native Excel as a collaborative application front-end, but the data is centrally controlled and managed. You can still leverage Excel's capability as a business process modeling environment where you're able to relate business data through formulas and positional references—just like you do today. The BCP database requires no programming—the data model is managed entirely through the spreadsheet interface.

BCP enables multiple S&OP participants to collaborate on the same set of data at the same time, making updates and then sharing changes with others all at the click of a button. Users can even work off-line, syncing up next time they connect. All this is done using BCP's intelligent spreadsheet user interface which means training costs are near zero and user adoption rates are 100%.

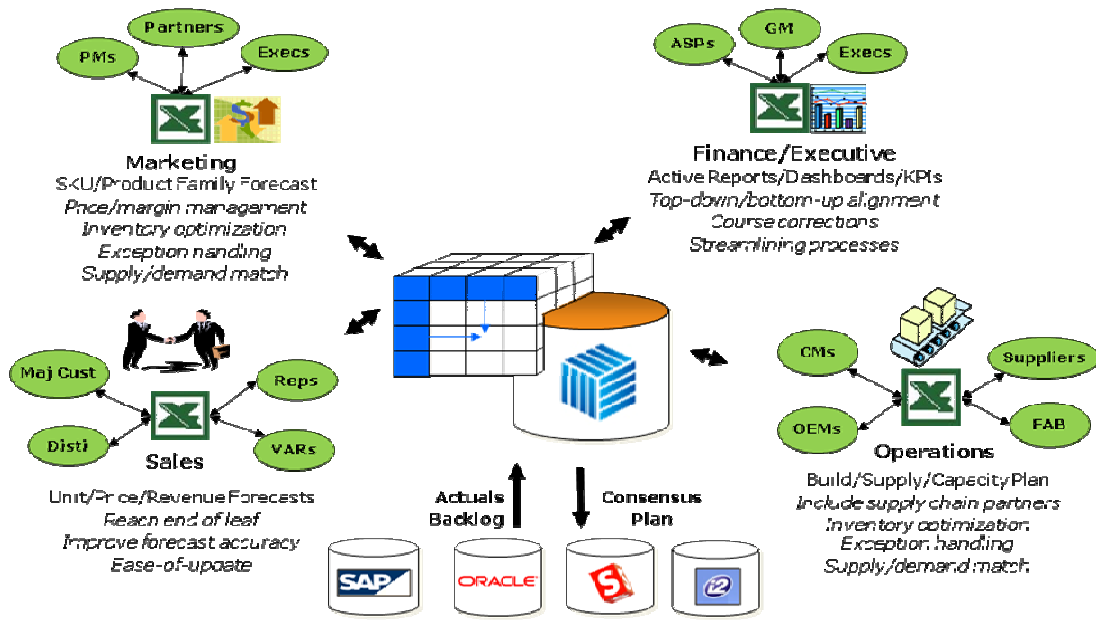
And, with the local computing power of the desktop PC, you're able to extend concurrent S&OP out to many desktops rather than trying to drive them through a massive central server. Finally, BCP's unique versioned database captures all changes by all users so out of the box you're able to meet today's change management and audit requirements.

BCP enterprise 2.0 technology finally mitigates the traditional problems with “disconnected” Excel desktops and enables an intelligent connection between the enterprise and the desktop—spreadsheets without the chaos. With the BCP S&OP solution, you can now have a single version of the truth for your collaborative S&OP data along with enterprise-class access control, audit trail, and versioning – *all at the cell level.*

BCP has been adopted by companies from \$10M to over \$20B in areas including direct sales forecasting & demand planning, distribution channel forecasting and inventory management, CPFR, and supply/demand matching. And although these are companies with deployed solutions from vendors such as SAP, Oracle, i2 and others, they have chosen to solve their S&OP challenges with a solution from Boardwalktech.

The BCP S&OP Solution

With the BCP S&OP solution, data from ERP, SCM, CRM and other enterprise systems can be pulled into the BCP S&OP environment enabling controlled access to this data, *also at a cell level*, so users can collaborate as part of workflows used to collect and “mature” the data before it is ready for input back into the systems of record.



The BCP S&OP enterprise 2.0 solution supports cross functional collaboration between sales, marketing, finance and operations through an intelligent spreadsheet interface. You can also leverage BCP to enable collaboration with external partners rather than using static web-portals. Imagine exchanging S&OP data with your partners using a spreadsheet without emailing back & forth—instead sharing data at the cell level with the click of a mouse.

Realizing the Benefits of BCP S&OP

The BCP S&OP solution delivers advantages over traditional enterprise applications in three key areas; superior usability, rapid speed of deployment, and flexibility in managing change.

Usability: Ultimately, usability is the critical success factor for deployed enterprise applications. Without it, you end up with a handful of “expert” users and everyone else is on spreadsheets. With BCP, you have superior usability and a better fit to your business process through its spreadsheet interface. Because of the design of the BCP platform, BCP can be molded to your desired process rather than you changing your process to the way the system solution works. Some of the key usability features of BCP include:

- **Use Excel not a web-form** – The spreadsheet interface is simply a better fit for S&OP processes involving many products, customers and SKUs. BCP’s spreadsheet interface means it’s easy to use right out of the gate, your training costs are near zero, and user adoption is 100%. This is especially critical for collaborating with external partners.
- **Work Off-line without “check-out”**– BCP provides intelligent cell-level connectivity between the BCP server and the Excel front-end, not a hard-coded Excel extension of the back-end system. This is a critical distinction. Users can work in isolation on their spreadsheet until they are ready to share their data; submit and refresh data to BCP at the click of a button; and then the system syncs the changes providing change review mechanisms since all changes are captured and presented to all collaborating users. With BCP, users can even keep personal data that isn’t shared with others.
- **Work with “Live” reports** – Invariably, whatever system companies deploy, they end up dumping data to spreadsheets. With BCP, you have an “intelligent” reporting environment that dynamically refreshes changes in all of the attached spreadsheets rather than overwriting the existing report data. Furthermore, with BCP server reports, all of the changes are tracked, so you can always see how critical information is changing over time. Finally, BCP provides entitlement management down to the cell level, solving the management problem of controlling *who* can access *what* data.

Rapid Deployment: Applications created with BCP are driven by the spreadsheet models that users have created already. Much of the “application” has already been created in those spreadsheets. BCP is able to leverage that work and use it to create the database backend on the fly, delivering applications very rapidly.

- **Implement in weeks rather than months** – BCP can be deployed in a fraction of the time required to adopt or build a new enterprise software point solution.

Flexibility: The BCP architecture enables customers to continuously improve their processes and make corresponding changes to the system to support them.

- **Accommodate process change “on the fly” without programming** – process owners can make changes to data dimensions like product groupings or organizational structures; or can add new measures to the process - all without programming. These changes are dynamically published to all users.
- **User-process-driven rapid application deployment** (versus vendor-application-driven process mismatch) – BCP closes the gap between the desired process and the deployed system. Customization of an enterprise application is expensive and only goes so far. With BCP, you can take advantage of user driven process innovation. BCP’s flexible architecture enables you to modify the system as your business process demands it.

Underlying the superior usability, speed and flexibility of the BCP offering is the “enterprise class” data management, security and integration that you’d expect from an enterprise application.

- **Centrally manage and secure your S&OP data** – BCP delivers centrally managed access control and entitlement management. Centrally manage shared data including product lists, pricing, and user privileges. All changes are dynamically configured and pushed on a “net change” basis eliminating the risks of emailing spreadsheets.
- **Integrate data with backend systems** – pull data into the BCP environment “in-line” to the spreadsheet interface with other S&OP data and make that available to entitled users anywhere in the extended enterprise; push consensus decisions back to drive operations and manufacturing.

Who is getting results?

The following examples are from companies with deployed solutions from SAP, Oracle, i2 and others. These companies were unable to solve critical business problems in S&OP by using these traditional enterprise applications.

- **A \$1B+ hand-held manufacturer** is using BCP S&OP to improve their demand signal from the field around the world. In addition to the improved forecast accuracy benefits, the company expects to increase inventory turns by 30%.
- **A \$1B+ PC peripherals manufacturer** is using BCP S&OP to improve their CPFR process to reduce stock outs, stock rotations, and associated penalties as well as to increase customer satisfaction by improving on-time shipments.
- **A \$20B+ networking equipment manufacturer** has deployed BCP to increase visibility into distribution channel fill rates in order to cut weeks of on-hand inventory in half.
- **A \$1.5B semiconductor company** is using BCP to optimize supply/demand matching levels to meet order fulfillment targets for high revenue customers.

In one company that deployed BCP, the first phase deployment timeframe from requirements definition to “go-live” was seven weeks. This is what the business champion had to say:

“With most systems I’ve seen deployed, all of the initial focus is on getting the system to work. With BCP, we were able to focus on getting the business value right away....it is amazing.”

Director S&OP, \$20B+ Networking Company

Let Boardwalktech help you address the challenges facing your company in its sales & operations planning (S&OP) process. Contact Boardwalktech sales at 650-965-2430 or through info@boardwalktech.com