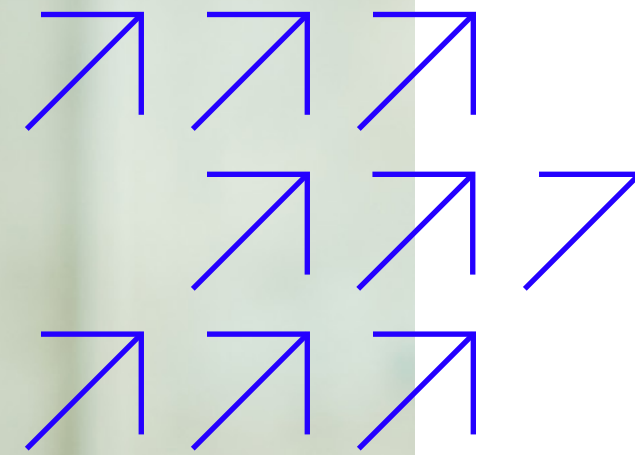


A case study by **Fidenda** + **Entain**

One trusted version of the truth

How Entain achieved a consolidated view of
financial data across 30 different markets
that's robust enough to base decisions on



SUMMARY

“We were running a global, data-driven business with planning processes that belonged to a much smaller organisation. Too much effort went into reconciling numbers, and not enough into understanding what they were telling us.”

Fidenda have been working with Entain on a multiphase Anaplan implementation that has transformed how the business reports, plans and makes decisions. By replacing fragmented, spreadsheet-based FP&A processes with a single, shared platform, Entain has laid the foundations for faster reporting, better insight and more confident decision-making across its business. “We were running a global, data-driven business with planning processes that belonged to a much smaller organisation. Too much effort went into reconciling numbers, and not enough into understanding what they were telling us.” That’s how Nghia Nguyen, Head of FP&A Transformation at Entain, explains why the company embarked on a multi-year journey to implement Anaplan across the business, with Fidenda as implementation partner.

A business defined by complexity

Entain is a global sports-betting and gaming group operating across 38 markets, with brands including Ladbrokes and Coral in the UK. Having grown through acquisition, the company operates a mix of online, bricks-and-mortar and franchise models.

“There are a lot of regional and cultural differences when it comes to betting,” says David Sexton, Entain’s Director of Finance Systems. “In the UK, the group owns and operates thousands of retail betting shops. In Italy, much of it is franchise-based, embedded within other stores. Many markets are online-only, each with different regulatory, tax and reporting requirements.” To complicate

things, Finance teams across regions historically worked in slightly different ways, using different definitions and spreadsheets models tailored to local needs.

And, critically for FP&A, near-real time data is crucial for Entain. “In a gambling business, margins can swing sharply from day to day. That makes daily reporting business-critical. You need to keep your finger on the pulse. Margins can move very quickly, and that guides decisions on things like marketing or promotions,” says Nghia.

Before Anaplan, that daily visibility came at a cost.



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THE PROBLEM

Spreadsheets, bottlenecks and risk

In the past, Entain's FP&A and reporting processes were heavily Excel-based. Finance professionals had to manually consolidate weekly and monthly reports – a time-consuming and error-prone process. Or, as David puts it:

“No matter how good you are at Excel, if you're adding up spreadsheets, there will be mistakes.”

Also: Excel forced teams to work at a lower level of granularity than they wanted. Large datasets had to be cut down so spreadsheets would cope, which limited analysis and insight. “We also had different definitions of certain numbers across regions. Those definitions were hidden inside spreadsheets and could change without anyone really knowing,” adds Nghia. It goes without saying that all of this ran counter to Entain's need for speed, accuracy and trust in their data.

A finance-led initiative with board-level backing

The push to change came from Finance, but it was not an isolated effort. Multiple regional teams had begun to independently explore planning tools. Entain chose Anaplan because of its robust capabilities: it could support enterprise-scale complexity while still allowing for regional variation. It provided the dimensionality Excel lacked and could later become the foundation for connected planning across the business. The CFO took on the role of board-level sponsor, making Anaplan delivery a strategic priority.

Choosing the right implementation partner proved just as important. “We initially went with a different company, but we soon felt that they couldn’t deliver what we needed. When we started working with Fidenda, the collaboration was so much better. They’re a real business partner, not just a technical implementer,” says David. Entain values Fidenda’s availability, pragmatism and willingness to work alongside the team during delivery.

“When you’re doing a systems rollout, you need to know someone is there when things go wrong. We really felt that with Fidenda.”



LEARNINGS

“It’s not just the build. It’s who you’re building it for”

That partnership mindset mattered throughout the multi-phase programme – which inevitably came with a few challenges:

Standards vs local regulation

Building models that can work across owned retail, franchise retail and online, while still accommodating local regulation, tax and reporting differences, was non-trivial. A one-size-fits-all approach was never going to work. The solution was to build a central model for each business type that each region could then adapt to their market.

Ambitious timelines

Like many transformation programmes, the initial timelines proposed by the business proved optimistic.

“If there’s one thing I’ve learned,” says David, “it’s that everything takes longer than you think.” Most delays weren’t actually to do with technology, but with testing, iteration, and change management – all factors that are hard to plan for when you’re doing this for the first time. “Fidenda helped us navigate these steps and train the teams on the new tool.”

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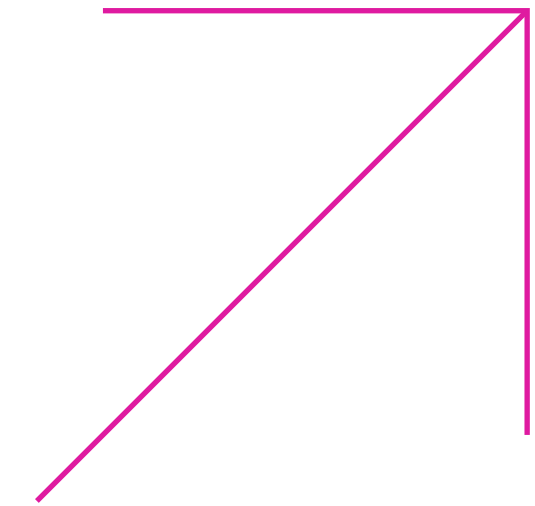
“Don’t let price-driven procurement teams skimp on training cost. It’s adoption that drives the value of the tool. And your ROI will see a boost when people actually use it.”

The people factor

Even though people generally understood the need for a new planning tool, adoption proved harder than anticipated. “On day one, everyone wanted to be a model builder,” recalls Nghia. In reality, some people found it challenging to complete self-guided training alongside their day jobs. There was a whole range of attitudes from enthusiastic early adopters to teams that needed reassurance and explanation before trusting the outputs.”

“This was a big lesson for us. It’s not just the build. It’s who you’re building it for. You’ve really got to take the time to bring people on board.” In Entain’s case that actually meant running Anaplan alongside legacy spreadsheet-based processes for a while. “It may feel redundant - but it was essential. It helps people build confidence in the tool,” says Nghia. “If there’s one piece of advice I’d give teams implementing Anaplan, it’s this: don’t let price-driven procurement teams skimp on training cost. It’s adoption that drives the value of the tool. And your ROI will see a boost when people actually use it.”

One trusted version of the truth



After successive implementation phases covering reporting, consolidation, budgeting and forecasting, Entain is seeing the value: “We finally have one set of numbers that we can agree on - in Anaplan, not in someone’s spreadsheet.” And for David, the benefits also include:

A single, authoritative view of financial performance across markets

The ability to ingest data at the level of granularity the business needs, without compromise

Less time and effort needed for manual consolidation and reconciliation

Automated daily, weekly, monthly and flash reporting

Improved transparency, traceability and confidence in the numbers

Crucially, teams across the business are now working from the same numbers, defined the same way, enabling faster and more meaningful conversations and better decisions.

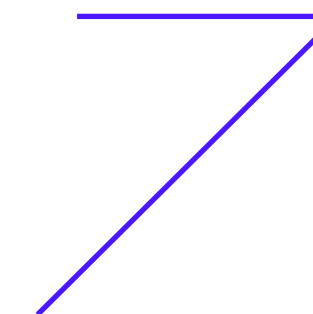
“We can now drill from the final number all the way back to source transactions and understand exactly how it’s built.”

From reporting to insight and foresight



WHAT'S NEXT

“We’re still only scratching the surface of what the platform can do.”



But the team isn’t stopping here. With the core foundations in place, Nghia is keen to go beyond historical reporting. He is currently working with Fidenda on a live forecasting capability. This will enable executives to do scenario planning and assess the impact of their decisions in near-real time. David is expanding into predictive and automated planning. He also wants to move into proper Connected Planning that includes headcount and resource planning: “if this project is a real success, it never really ends. We’re still only scratching the surface of what the platform can do.”

►Fidenda

We help ambitious, complex organisations like Entain harness the power of cross-department, integrated business planning with Anaplan: for faster insight and better, more informed decisions.

If your organisation is struggling with disconnected insight and planning processes, we'd love to help.

Get in touch - info@fidenda.com

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