alteryx

The Spreadsheet User's Guide to Modern Finance Analytics

Introduction

As data grows in volume and complexity, financial professionals using spreadsheets for analysis say they are pushing rows and columns to the limit.

They're not alone in their frustration. A recent Nucleus Research survey reveals that 50% of Excel users are considering migrating to more advanced tools.

## 50% of Excel users are considering migrating to advanced analytics tools.

2024 Analytics Buying Intentions Survey, Nucleus Research

If you want to spend more time solving problems and less time cleansing and blending, consider a new way of getting it all done with automated analytics.

In this e-book, you will learn the negative impact of relying on spreadsheets, how modern analytics can accelerate insights to help your finance team and your career thrive, plus real-world examples of how automated solutions are delivering value for the office of finance.

alteryx

Testing the Limits of Spreadsheets — and Your Patience

The challenges of manual spreadsheets in modern business

alteryx
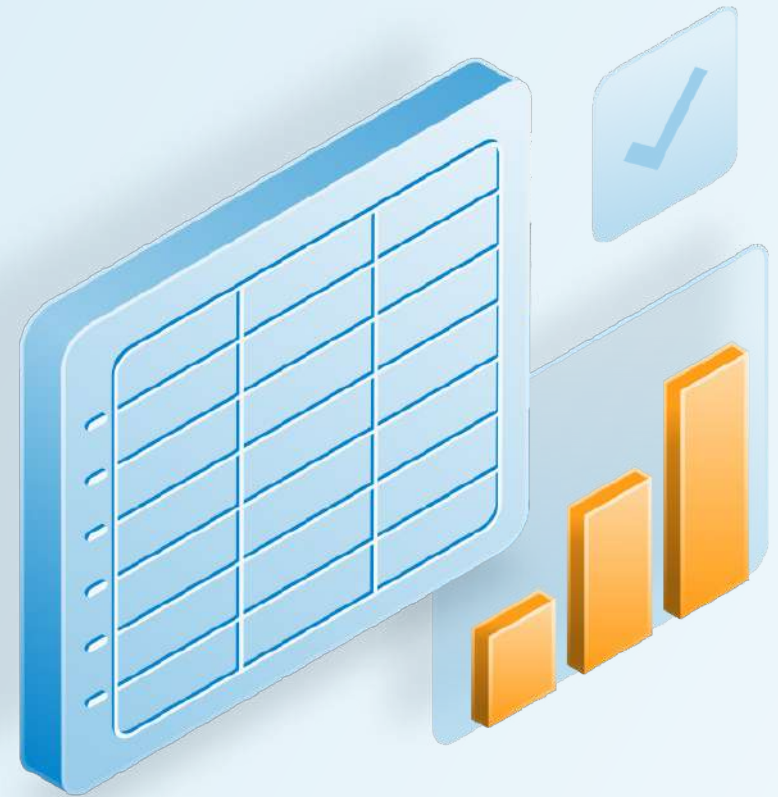
The average analyst spends 26 hours a week using spreadsheets for data preparation and analysis. That's time that could be better spent diving deeper into data insights to uncover business value.

We get it. You've invested months or years perfecting your spreadsheet game. Still, it's important to know how the drawbacks impact your day-to-day work life and the value you deliver to the business.

1. LIMITED SCALABILITY

If you've worked with large files in Excel, chances are you've experienced freezing, crashing, or no response at all. These work-stopping problems are becoming more common as the sheer size and complexity of data grows. It's more than a decades-old tool can handle in today's digital enterprise. Compared to advanced solutions, spreadsheets also lack user-friendly interfaces, and the streamlined, repeatable workflows financial analysts need to improve problem-solving and decision-making.

2. DIFFICULT TO AUTOMATE

If you're faced with the tedious chore of repetitive finance tasks, Excel macros offer a way to automate repeatable processes by recording and saving a set of actions. However, they are difficult to understand for anyone but the person who created them and are not easy to change once they are created unless you have solid programming skills.

3. TIME-CONSUMING

Manual data preparation and transformation in spreadsheets can consume hours in the day of an analyst and often requires advanced knowledge. Spreadsheets that house armies of formulas and duplicate entries can easily become a bottleneck in your workflow. And, as financial data volumes grow, the speed and performance of spreadsheets can diminish, leading to slow calculations, delayed refresh times, and increased risk of crashes.

alteryx

4. COMPLEX DATA INTEGRATION

If you've ever had to bring in data from multiple sources, like a series of CSVs, you know what a pain it can be using spreadsheets. Aggregating and joining data can be overly complicated and time-consuming. And when information is trapped in unusable formats from insulated departments, there is the added worry of duplicating information or missing important data altogether.

5. ERROR-PRONE AND RISKY

The danger of hitting the wrong key or changing a single cell can trigger a chain reaction that alters data output and paralyzes some analysts with fear. For example, a simple Excel formula error once famously cost JP Morgan Chase $6 billion dollars. Simple and unnoticed mistakes can impact everything from financial forecasting to regulatory reporting.
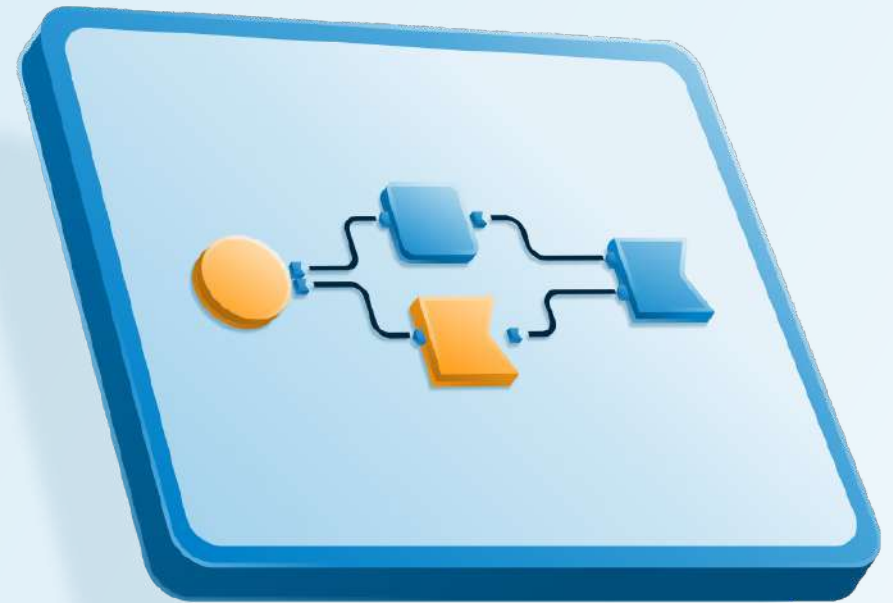
One simple Excel error in Value-at-Risk model at J.P. Morgan Chase cost the financial institution **$6 Billion**

alteryx

From Worksheets to Workflows

The benefits of automated analytics in finance

alteryx

What if you could put the days of cutting and pasting behind you and instead, automate any finance, audit or tax report and repeat it forever?

Moving from worksheets to automated workflows can improve the quality of your day and the trajectory of your career. These are the most common benefits users realize with automated analytics solutions.

1. TIME SAVINGS

Moving from manual spreadsheets to automated workflows significantly reduces time spent wrangling data, building finance reports, and communicating insights. Automated solutions use visual workflows and drag-and-drop features that reduce manual workloads by up to 80%. The time saved can be used to uncover deeper insights that make a tangible business impact.

Automated analytics solutions can reduce manual workloads by up to 80%

2. REPEATABILITY

Free yourself from the tedious task of producing the same financial reports over and over. Automated workflows are reusable and automatable, reducing repetitive tasks and

allowing you to update your data on a consistent schedule with no additional work. Workflows also allow all stakeholders or future analysts to follow the process you created with visual documentation and transparency.

3. HIGH ACCURACY AND LOW RISK

Automation removes the unintentional but inevitable risk involved in manual processes. It can also improve data quality and accuracy with at-scale validation of data performed automatically and visually. This helps users quickly assess possible problems, unusual patterns, and required changes. The ability to validate each step of the data process also helps stakeholders trust every answer.

"Our analysts have gone from report builders to storytellers and problem solvers."

Manager of Enterprise Analytics

alteryx

4. SCALABLE AND FLEXIBLE

Legacy tools like spreadsheets are limited to the compute power of a desktop machine, which can prevent analysts from scaling data insights quickly and effectively, especially if working with large datasets. Modern analytics solutions can take advantage of on-demand cloud computing to process huge datasets quickly without limitations on size or data format.

5. EMPOWERS ALL BUSINESS USERS

Automation is traditionally accomplished through coding, using SQL or Python. While this is a reliable approach to data prep and automation, there aren't enough developers or coders to meet the demand for data, and they lack the business domain expertise to know what needs to be answered and for what problem. That's why most business users revert to the comfort of the spreadsheet.

Automated analytics solutions, on the other hand, are often no-code and self-service, allowing finance professionals to run and modify their own queries and reports, regardless of skill level. The democratization of analytics insights and reporting allows companies to leverage the collective wisdom of the broader organization and achieve better outcomes faster.

"The fact that I could process over 4.5 million rows of data from separate data sets without writing a single line of code was just incredible."

Senior Business Analytics Manager

alteryx

Deliver a lot more in a lot less time

High-impact finance use cases for automated analytics

alteryx

There are many finance use cases for automation, but if you're just getting started, you'll want to make a big first impression. These are the areas where automated solutions offer quick ROI and high impact.

REGULATORY RISK REDUCTION

Manual processes tend to increase risk due to human error, and the level of risk and penalties rise further when the processes involve regulatory compliance. Automating the process of completing regulatory reports improves accuracy and can eliminate missed deadlines by reducing the process from weeks to hours. Automation also reduces repeated data connection and extraction processes by automatically connecting your data.

SALES TAX REPORTING

Accurately calculating sales tax liability is rarely easy. Tax rules are hyper-local, and most companies use labor-intensive spreadsheet models to compute liability. Automated analytics allow you to go beyond top-level figures and reconcile data from all taxable transactions, then apply the correct tax rate for the locality and transaction type. Your team can also produce quality sales tax reports in a fraction of the time it takes using spreadsheets.

RECONCILIATION OF FINANCIAL SYSTEMS

FP&A teams must regularly ensure that financial data is correct and then reconcile it across multiple systems. In most organizations, the structures and applications are inflexible, which slows the reconciliation process. Automation joins all the data required to perform regulatory checks. Using a standardized process to reconcile data, accountants can get in front of issues faster and have more time to follow up on identified outliers.

CONTINUOUS AUDITING

Manual auditing is time-consuming, labor intensive and prone to errors. Depending on the process being audited, it could take 2-6 months. Continuous auditing with automation can significantly improve the efficiency and accuracy of audits. Automated audit processes improve assurance and completeness by checking transactions and detecting weaknesses in a real-time environment.

TAX APPORTIONMENT

Many companies still use spreadsheets for maintaining different methods of tax apportionment to determine how each sale or transaction should be taxed or how to divide income among different states. There's also a higher risk of errors and inconsistencies when the process is done manually. A modern, automated approach to tax apportionment applies enterprise connectivity to entire transaction data sets instead of just sampling. Automation also enables consistent identification of taxable events and can shorten the cycle from multiple days to hours.

"We don't have to work 18 hours just on manipulating tax data. We are freed up to spend the time on value added activities."

Tax Technology Manager

alteryx

A Modern Solution to a Decades-Old Tool

How the Alteryx Analytics Cloud can help you and your finance team

alteryx

AI-powered, self-service analytics platforms that were once a 'nice to have' are becoming a critical tool to help all business users work with large amounts of complex data, automate manual tasks, and reduce the risk posed by spreadsheets.

The Alteryx AI Platform for Enterprise Analytics enables users to profile, prepare, and orchestrate data for analytics and machine learning. Through its no-code/low-code drag-and-drop interface, it can reduce the time, technical skills, and costs required to build and automate data pipelines and analyze data.

Alteryx streamlines the process of connecting to new data sources, making it easier to join and modify data and create visualizations, all within the same platform. This enhances efficiency, usability, and data quality, offering users the potential to experience analytics up to 10x faster.

alteryx

From Pain Points to Possibilities

Real stories from real customers

alteryx

Organizations globally are leveraging the Alteryx AI Platform to improve revenue performance, manage costs, and mitigate risk.

Don't take our word for it. These are just some of the real-world examples of how customers are using Alteryx to increase speed to data insight and free up time to spend on strategic initiatives:

"Alteryx is like Excel but supercharged. A powerhouse tool — it's perfect for managing data without the hassle of crashes. It's about working smarter, not harder."

Senior Manager of Tax Technology

BAKER TILLY

Baker Tilly uses Alteryx to automate data prep, processing, and reporting, reducing time spent on repetitive tasks by 50%, improving accuracy, and saving money for their clients.

50% time savings
in the tax report processing

Read Customer Story

BT COMMUNICATION

BT replaced more than 140 Excel models with Alteryx to automate financial regulatory compliance reporting, reducing the time spent on regulatory model processing by 75%.

75% reduction in time to insight

Read Customer Story

alteryx

RSM

Tax technology teams at global tax and audit firm RSM found themselves on the cutting edge of finance analytics when they developed a solution for using automated analytics to decode millions of cryptocurrency transactions using Alteryx.

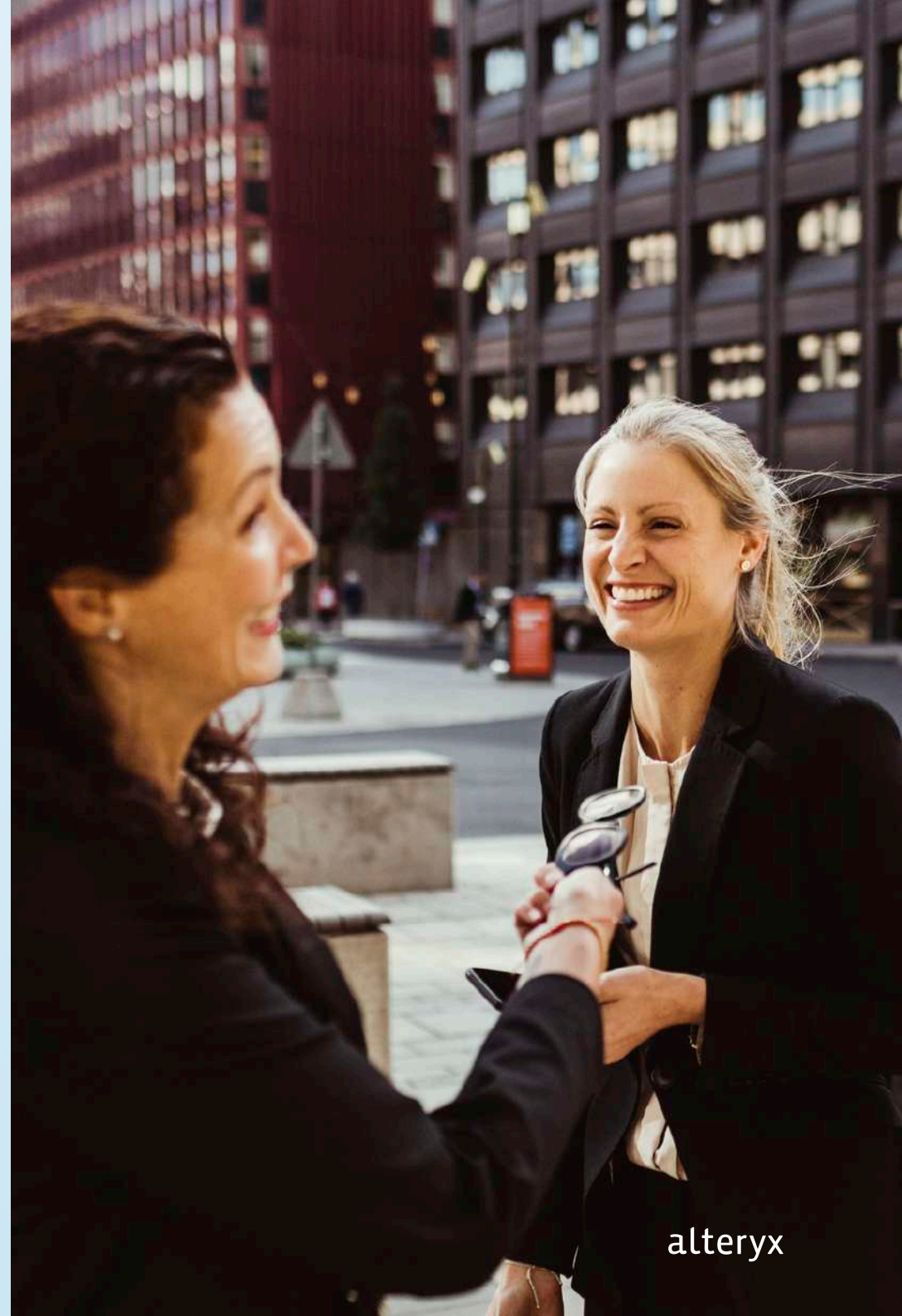## Improved cryptocurrency tax reporting time by **99%**

[Read Customer Story](#)

GLOBAL TAX MANAGEMENT

Global Tax Management replaced its manual sales and use tax compliance process — a repeatable and tedious monthly task that was prime for automation — with automated workflows using Alteryx.

50% improvement in tax compliance processing time

[Read Customer Story](#)

alteryx

It's Your Time to Shine

How to Get Started

With Alteryx, getting started with automation is easy. You can ingest and prepare data from anywhere and upskill yourself with self-service analytics.

Get a 30 day free trial of our no-code, low-code, drag-and-drop workflow solution and get the finance insights you need in just minutes.

Plus, check out The AI Platform for Enterprise Analytics to see how we do automation. And don't forget to search the Maveryx Community to spark new ideas and learn from the best.

alteryx

alteryx | **AI PLATFORM**
FOR ENTERPRISE ANALYTICS

About Alteryx

Alteryx powers actionable insights with the AI Platform for Enterprise Analytics. With Alteryx, organizations can drive smarter, faster decisions with a secure platform deployable in on-prem, hybrid, and cloud environments. More than 8,000 customers globally rely on Alteryx to automate analytics to improve revenue performance, manage costs and mitigate risks across their organizations.

To learn more, visit www.alteryx.com.