

A 147-year-old manufacturing leader cuts planning time by 75%

Steering Foundation

Integrated Planning & Reporting

AI-Enhanced Forecasting

Continuous Optimization

Founded in 1879, Lechler GmbH is Europe's leading spray technology manufacturer, serving customers across more than 50 countries from offices on five continents. As the business expanded across multiple countries, business units, and functions, its planning processes struggled to keep pace. That left decision-makers dependent on slow, manual cycles that ran once a year and delivered answers weeks too late.

The challenge

Planning at Lechler ran on 50+ Excel spreadsheets spanning 12 countries, multiple currencies, and more than 80 contributors. Collecting, consolidating, and validating data for each cycle was manual, error-prone, and slow: the full Sales Planning process took four to five weeks and happened only once a year.

The approach

Lechler wanted to build on its Microsoft Power BI investment rather than replace its technology landscape. Searching for planning capability within the Microsoft ecosystem, the company found Centida, a partner that understood the connection between business processes and technology implementation. Within three to four days, Centida delivered a working Sales Planning prototype. Three months later, Lechler launched Sales and Order Intake Forecasting across 12 business units, integrating data from SAP, Salesforce, and internal operational databases into a single planning environment.

The outcome

The Sales Planning cycle dropped from four to five weeks to four to five days - a 75% reduction. Forecasting moved from once per year to quarterly. Controlling then modernized Cost Planning and P&L Reporting on the same platform, followed by Operations; Logistics and Purchasing subsequently adopted the same approach. What started as a Sales Planning initiative became an integrated planning environment across the business.

At a glance

BEFORE

- 50+ spreadsheets across 12 countries
- 4–5 week Sales Planning cycle
- Planning once per year
- Manual data collection and consolidation
- Disconnected planning across departments

AFTER

- Integrated planning across Sales, Controlling, and Operations
- 4–5 day planning cycle (75% faster)
- Quarterly Sales Forecasting (4x per year)
- Data from SAP, Salesforce, and operational databases
- One planning environment across functions

"The way Centida approached the process - how they asked questions, involved stakeholders, and implemented the technology - they have a proficiency we had not seen before."

Andreas Macht, Business Intelligence Project Leader, Lechler

What improved

1. Planning cycle cut by 75%

Lechler's Sales Planning cycle ran on 50+ spreadsheets across 12 countries, with more than 80 contributors spending four to five weeks collecting, consolidating, and validating data. Centida replaced this with an integrated planning environment, and the cycle now runs in four to five days. Management receives planning outcomes weeks sooner, and teams are freed from manual data work every cycle

2. Forecasting moved from annual to quarterly

A single annual planning round meant Lechler had one opportunity per year to reassess assumptions, update forecasts, and respond to market changes. Centida introduced quarterly Sales Forecasting, giving the business four planning cycles a year. More frequent reviews allowed the business to improve forecast accuracy over time and act on demand signals before they became issues.

3. Data connected across systems

Planning had relied on manually entered spreadsheet data that was slow to collect and hard to validate. Centida integrated SAP, Salesforce, and internal operational databases into a single planning environment, giving planners a complete and consistent data foundation for every cycle. The fragmented, error-prone consolidation process that had slowed every planning round was eliminated.

4. Planning expanded across business functions

The initial Sales Planning model became a template the business applied across functions. Controlling modernised Cost Planning and P&L Reporting using the same platform and approach, followed by Operations. The improvements were clear enough that Logistics and Purchasing subsequently requested the same capability. As a result, they extended consistent integrated planning across the entire organization.

5. Planning became a continuous business capability

What had been a once-a-year budgeting exercise became an active, ongoing process. Teams now update plans as demand shifts, supply chain conditions change, or new information emerges, without waiting for the next annual cycle. Operational and financial planning stay aligned in near real time, reducing the gap between what the business knows and what it can act on.

Centida Consulting helps companies build reliable planning and decision systems - spanning steering foundation, integrated planning & reporting, AI-enhanced forecasting, and continuous optimization - translating strategy into a steering architecture that leadership teams use every day.

Facing a similar challenge?

Let's discuss how a structured steering approach could work for your organization.