

# hostanalytics

## Customer Case Study: Zep Inc.

Zep is a leading provider of specialty chemical products to a wide variety of industrial, institutional and retail customers. They offer top-quality products with superior personal service and professional support to over 300,000 customers, with a reach into every major city in North America and countries on five continents.

### Host Analytics eases Zep's transition

Approaching a new fiscal planning cycle, finance professionals at Zep Inc. discovered that Hyperion Pillar, their long-time budgeting and planning software, had outlasted its technology lifecycle. They had to do something fast. Initially, they pursued an upgrade to their on-premises vendor's newer offering.

Quickly, however, they realized they needed an alternative when their vendor said the upgrade could take more than a year, according to Sydney Tucker, Director of Reporting for Zep, which makes commercial cleaning and maintenance products. The systems also were expensive and would require a dedicated administrator on staff. "So expense, implementation time and ownership by the finance group were the big decision drivers."

The team found that the cloud-based application from Host Analytics could replace the on-premises system without disrupting work for the business units and executives. It addressed Zep's business requirements, plus added new functionality like Advanced Workforce Planning. "Our goal was to use Host Analytics to complete our fiscal year 2013 budget and we were able to meet that goal without disruption for our users and that was a win for us," says Tucker.

Host Analytics gave users additional functionality. "The reporting capabilities allowed users to immediately see their results without assistance from an administrator," Tucker points out. "With Host Analytics templates, business unit managers get enhanced reporting that they use to manage their business. Being able to input their plan and see the results also gives them a stronger sense of ownership."

### Expands to consolidation and reporting

And that was just the beginning. The search "started primarily for a planning tool and it grew into a reporting and consolidation project as well. We were intrigued by the potential of having the plan and consolidated actual data on one platform."

Having them on one platform has paid off. In the past, analysis was a bottleneck during the close process. Analysts waiting for accountants to answer questions about transactional data could take an hour or more; now users drill into the details they need in minutes. "It's a much more efficient process," says Tucker. Plus automatic data loading into Close Management Cloud frees up time, shortening financial updates significantly. She adds that Host Analytics automates conversion of multiple currencies in the consolidation process, a new feature for Zep that saves time and minimizes risk.



**"The Host Analytics cloud based consolidation and reporting application makes it easier for us to respond to change."**

**—Sydney Tucker, Director of Reporting, Zep Inc.**

**Zep Inc**

In addition, more people, including accounting and business leaders, are able to manage the new system themselves. “We’ve spread the administrative role around to multiple people,” she explains, “so there’s no longer a single point of failure if the only knowledgeable person should leave the company.”

Zep now has about 60 active users. “Host Analytics is user-friendly and we’ve been able to get buy-in from new users,” says Tucker. Using the cloud to access the application, employees across the U.S. and in foreign subsidiaries can easily log into Host Analytics through their web browsers whenever they wish.

## Facilitating growth and change

As a result, Finance adds more value to the business. Daily sales reporting, for instance, is significantly easier since implementing Host Analytics. Most importantly, Host Analytics helps executives reach Zep’s business goals. “Host Analytics makes it easier for us to respond to change,” Tucker says. It facilitates management’s aggressive growth strategy, which completed four acquisitions within a year. That included two foreign entity acquisitions during the implementation of Host Analytics. Despite that, the team was able to report financial results during the first month of ownership. “It’s no problem to integrate new businesses into Host Analytics,” she notes.

Zep plans to implement new processes that were unavailable in its on-premises system. Rolling forecasts, which provide visibility into the future, are at the top of the list. Faster updating will enable business units to access results, and the impact of those changes will be visible at the business and corporate level immediately.

Overall, Tucker says, “Host Analytics brought us a user-friendly, standardized application for planning, close management, and reporting on a unified platform.” Zep already has realized greater benefits than expected in replacing its legacy budgeting tool, and more are on the horizon. Cervello, a technology consulting company specializing in EPM and analytics assisted with the implementation. The experts at Cervello were able to quickly assess Zep’s needs and deliver the solution in a way that provided tactical and strategic benefits.

## challenges

- Zep’s on-premises planning, consolidation and reporting software tools had outlasted their technology lifecycle
- Multiple systems led to slower than desired response times to questions during the month-end close cycle
- A replacement had to be ready to handle the fast-approaching planning process

## solution

- Zep adopted the Host Analytics Cloud EPM Suite to meet their complex and fast changing planning, close management, and reporting needs
- Implemented the Close Management Cloud and Reporting Cloud applications to meet management reporting requirements and adapt to business acquisitions
- The Host Analytics application stored budget and actual data in a single place which eliminated the need to copy and reconcile data between systems and will enable new functionality including rolling forecasts

## results

- Zep was able to implement Host Analytics for planning without disrupting its planning cycle
- The team was able to support management’s aggressive growth strategy by seamlessly incorporating four acquisitions within a year and delivering complete information in the month of acquisition
- More efficient financial planning and close processes enabled by one platform sharing common data