

Adaptive Live 2019: All Systems Go



Source: Adaptive Insights

Last week, I spent several days at Adaptive Live 2019 in Las Vegas. Overall, I was very impressed with Adaptive Insights evolution and focus, post-acquisition, as it continues to support existing customers while quickly aligning to Workday's broader technology and go-to-market strategy.

Even though Adaptive launched its' Sales Planning and Workforce Planning offerings this past year, not surprisingly ninety percent of the 1,600+ conference attendees were there to celebrate the firm's well-respected Financial Planning heritage and tools.

The event had a number of useful customer panels, and guest-speaker keynotes. For me, however, the highlight of the event was spending time with the leadership team in a series of small group analyst briefings, as well as hearing what's coming next.

For some time now, I've been very impressed with the team that Tom Bogan assembled after becoming CEO in early 2015. This includes, but is not limited to, Bhaskar Himatsingka, Adaptive's Chief Product Officer, who has done a great job laying the groundwork over the past couple of years for what could potentially be some game changing analytic offerings.

In July 2018, just prior to its aborted IPO, Adaptive announced that it had fundamentally rearchitected its planning, reporting and analytics engine, leveraging what it called "Elastic Hypercube Technology." Essentially, this new approach provides for unlimited dimensions, dimension values and versions – and does so in a manner that is highly efficient (especially in sparse data scenarios).

A year later, Bhaskar shared that virtually all customers are now on this platform – with many leveraging the new hypercubes at significant scale. While the new platform provides a significant improvement in performance, it also sets the stage for Adaptive to layer in a range of artificial intelligence (AI) and advanced machine learning (ML) technologies, both of which will likely help transform

the Finance function over the next decade.

AI and ML Initiatives

Bhaskar highlighted several key initiatives in what Adaptive is calling its “Intelligent Planning Roadmap.” In the short-run, the focus appears to be around automating often mundane processes – such as its soon to be released “Anomaly Detection” offering. Mid-term, the firm emphasized that it will also focus on more strategic initiatives such as the development of “Augmented Analytics” – which, I would presume, could be a basket of capabilities that harnesses data and predictive analytics, supporting and enhancing, rather than replacing, work activity.

It will be interesting to see how the new Data Access Layer that Workday has been developing will not only connect all three of its engines (Workday’s core in-memory database, Prism and the Adaptive hypercube) – but also support its broader ML plans (see [Workday Innovation Summit: Key Takeaways](#)).

Based on a series of one-on-one side discussions with nearly a dozen attendees (both existing customers and some prospects), it appears that Adaptive is poised for continued growth – not only organically within its own suite of offerings, but some cross-sell into the broader HCM and Financial Management offerings of its parent Workday.

Emerging Skills Crisis in Finance Real

I walked away from the event even more convinced that Finance is in for a significant restructuring – and we are not talking decades away. While yesteryear's layering of new, more strategic roles and responsibilities will no doubt continue to have a transformative impact – AI-driven process automation and the emergence of ML-led workflow augmentations will demand a new, more analytics-focused workforce. The coming skills crisis in Finance is real.