

# Accounting, Finance & Tax Transformation

June 21, 2023



### **Meet your presenters**



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# Finance Transformation



### Why are we talking about Finance Transformation?

### Stagnant operations result in...

- Bloated cost structure, yielding financial burden
- Over-extended processes with added inefficiencies and complexities
- Manual "work-arounds" solving for legacy technology / processes
- Bottlenecks with certain key / experienced individuals
- Continued compression of timelines
- Low employee job satisfaction and increased turnover

# Over 90%

of companies are using technology to modernize their existing business model vs. transforming it.

Forrester, 2020



"In today's era of volatility, there is **no other way but to re-invent**. The only sustainable advantage you can have over others is **agility**, that's it. Because **nothing else is sustainable...**"

~ Jeff Bezos

# Process Assessment Approach



### Approach to department & process assessment

1

#### **Initiation & Discovery**

Analysis,
Prioritization &
Roadmap Development

- Confirm project approach, goals and objectives
- Refine/finalize work plan, stakeholders and schedule
- Prepare for and conduct project kickoff meeting
- Develop initial request list
- Review discovery documents related to processes, procedures, etc.
- Develop prioritized areas of focus for discussion with leadership

 Perform current state walkthroughs and documentation review to identify areas for improved processes, simplification, efficiency, and / or automation

**Current State Assessment** 

- Assess current state processes for pain points, complexities and routine low value-added activities
- Meet with key stakeholders to confirm challenges and alternative approaches tried
- Develop summary of insights and conduct executive checkpoint

- Facilitate workshops to understand ideal future state of investment accounting department and processes
- Prioritize opportunity areas via assessing value, complexity, and frequency (other criteria as defined)
- Establish ideal sequencing based on process / activity reliance, value and other criteria considered / weighted
- Identify resource needs and align to workstreams / initiatives to execute on opportunity areas
- Develop prioritized recommendation roadmap and anticipate LOE / ROI
- Conduct executive checkpoint



# **bakertilly**

### **Process Assessment – Future State Definition & Strategic Roadmap Creation**

Investment Accounting Process Assessment for Life Insurance company with over \$20B AUM

### **DETAILS**

#### **INDUSTRY**

Insurance / Investment Accounting

#### **COMPANY SIZE**

900+ Employees Member of Multinational Holding Company

#### **TAGS**

Current State Assessment Investment Accounting Vendor Management Process Documentation Technology Assessment Financial Reporting Recommendation Roadmap

#### **CLIENT BACKGROUND:**

A 110+ year-old leading provider of diversified retirement services, life insurance, and employee benefit solutions as a member of a multinational insurance holding company. With over \$8 billion in annual revenue, the client also offers a portfolio of traditional fixed and indexed annuities.

#### **CLIENT BUSINESS CHALLENGE:**

The client need was to assess their investment accounting processes to identify operational and technical bottlenecks and inefficiencies. Our team was tasked with uncovering pain points related to the client's processes, systems, technology, and resource dependencies. The organization has seen significant turnover and operating challenges due to poor data quality, manual processes and conflicting priorities.

#### THE BAKER TILLY APPROACH:

Baker Tilly Digital was tasked with assisting the client understand where pain points existed, determine prioritization, and ultimately responsible for defining the proper strategy and sequence for addressing the opportunity areas through upcoming operating model reorganization and technology initiatives to maximize business value. Emphasis was bifurcated to focus on short-term (quick wins) while also planning for long-term investment through identifying avenues for automation using artificial intelligence (AI). Baker Tilly collaborated with stakeholders across the client organization through several process & business value prioritization workshops to:

- Collaborate with team members to understand core operations and business activities
- Identify the pain points / shortcomings in the current-state processes and brainstorm potential resolutions
- Evaluate future-state technical capabilities and required resources to deliver on the target strategy
- Outline specific project initiatives based on key findings to maximize business impact with an emphasis on return on investment
- Develop long-term strategy for implementing business transformation across multiple initiatives

#### THE BAKER TILLY IMPACT:

The strategy roadmap and project sequencing created for the client focused on providing immediate value where attainable and laying the groundwork for larger future endeavors. The initiatives identified improve day-to-day client operations, while also building toward more efficient, resourceful, and technically leveraged procedures. These efforts will achieve the client leadership goal to secure automation capabilities to improve process efficiency, data availability, and minimize difficulty of organizational transformation.

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Given insights delivered, the client stakeholders determined a deeper dive analysis on the current state operating model, including toolset being used and a time study to understand where process improvements would yield the most value was warranted.

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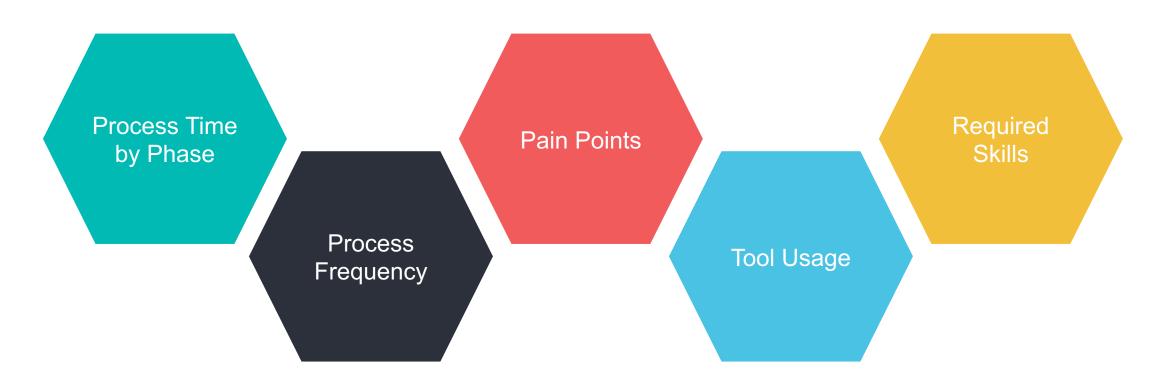
# Operating Model Analysis





# **Shadowing Sessions and a Time Study Gave us Insight Into Efficiency and Team Organization**

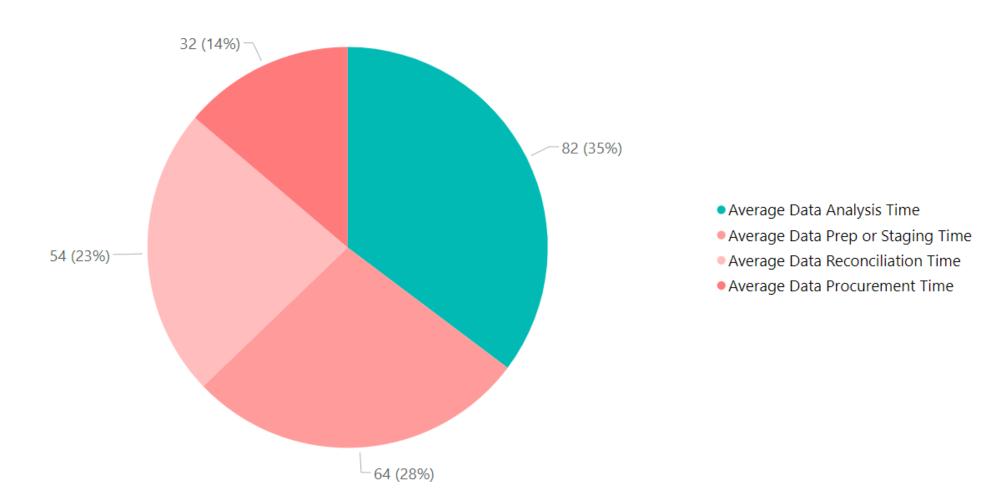
Our team shadowed 17 month-end and quarter-end processes and collected time study data on 22 processes gathering data points like:







# Average process takes 232 minutes (~4 hrs); only 35% is analysis and execution (aka value added)





### Investment Accounting Processes | Value Chain

Avg. Time (Minutes)

32'

64'

**54**′

82'

Data Procurement

Data Preparation

Data Checks / Reconciliation

**Data Analysis** 

**Definition** 

Acquisition of the data

Movement and (including download time) reconfiguration of the data or report

Checks between data sources/locations to ensure accuracy

Value-added insight, JE analysis & creation, etc.

- Clearwater report download
- GL Wand (Oracle) data
- Reference to another report or spreadsheet
- Staging data to be utilized in an existing report template
- Report formatting after loading in data
- Reconciliation between data sets or time periods
- Calculations checks
- Tying out multiple data sources (CW and GL)
- Validation of data

- Investigation into accounts / line items
- Analyzing/identifying reasoning behind account movement up/down
- Impairment analysis
- Impairment reasoning
- Writing of memoranda



# **Investment Accounting's Efficiency is Up Against Limit of Toolset**

In many areas, processes are as automated as they can be with the existing toolset leaving a few options:



#### **Reorganize the Work**

Distribute the work more based on timeframe than by skillset



#### **Improve Prep-Work**

Have reports and data needed to perform processes pre-downloaded to save time acquiring the data



#### **Invest in a New Toolset**

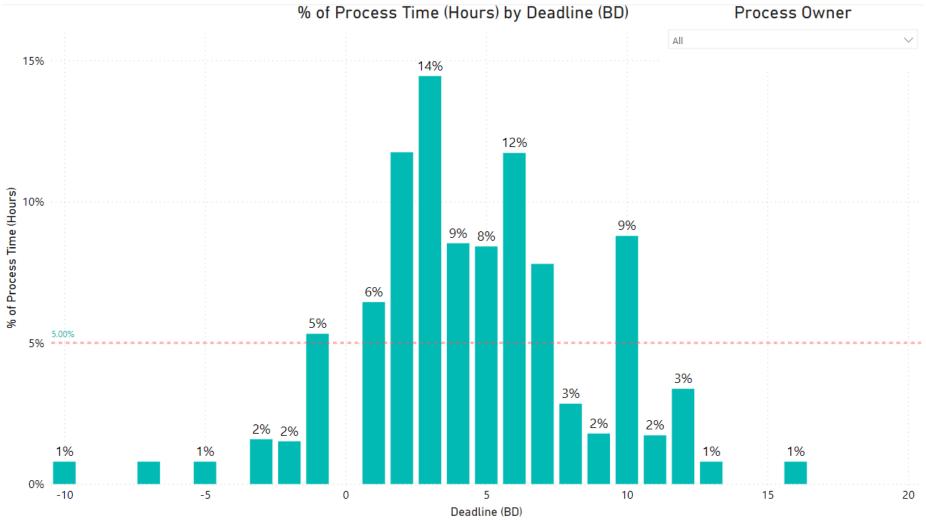
Build tools that automate routine or manual tasks like data procurement, validation, and formula calculation.

**Short-Term** 

**Long-Term** 



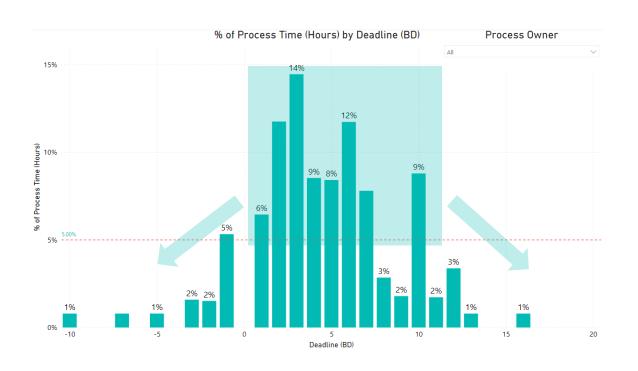
# Process Reorganization is Not a Perfect Fix Given High Workloads Across the Team from BD1 to BD7







# **Smoothing Demand Would Alleviate Symptoms of Peak Periods**



#### **Peak Periods Contribute To:**

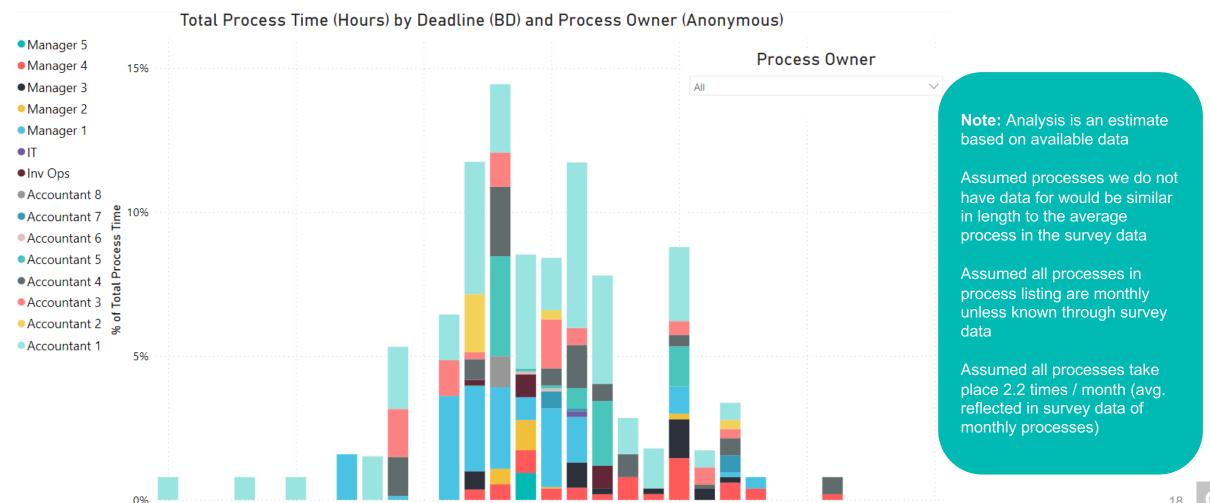
- Employee Stress
- Burnout
- Turnover

### Demand Smoothing May Not Be Possible Given:

- Fixed Reporting Requirements
  - Fixed deadline
- Timelines for Data Locks
  - Fixed start time



### However, Some Employees Are Busy at Different **Times So Reorganization May Alleviate Stress**



Deadline (BD)



PROCESS REORGANIZATION EVALUATION

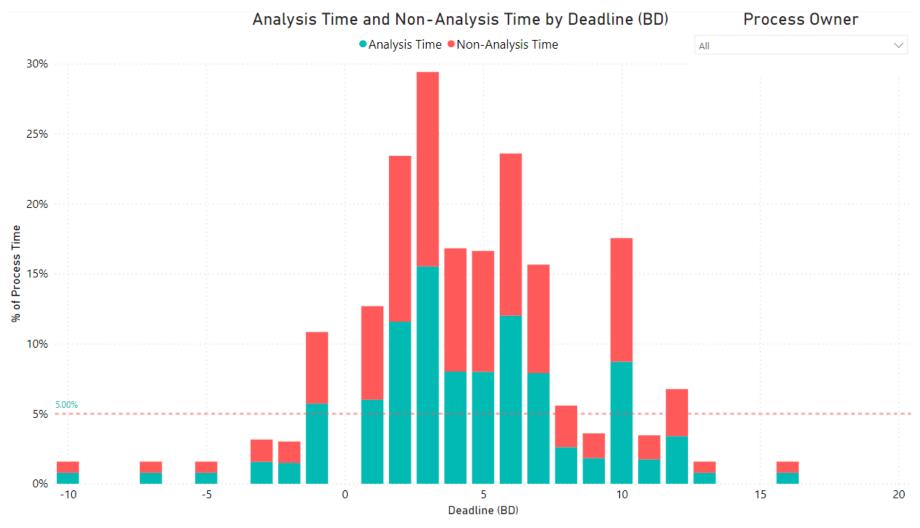
# Demand Smoothing amongst resources may reduce bandwidth constraints in peak times





LONG-TERM OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

# Automation of Non-Analysis Tasks Would Reduce Spikes in Workload





### **Alternative Operating Model Options**

# People & Process

#### **Status Quo**

Status Quo describes the operations as the exist today with a large workload spike, low satisfaction, recurring manual work, but a high degree of accuracy.

## Activity Redistribution

Work is less organized by functional area, and more by timing, capacity, and deadlines to share workload evenly.

#### **Working Pods**

The backlog of work (like agile) is divided up for each pod to complete. Pods are formed by the level of skill/expertise required to complete the pod's backlog.

#### **Agile**

Almost all work can be completed by anyone. Those with capacity grab work off the "stack" to complete.

Training upfront and of new employees is paramount.

# **Technology**& Process

# **Data-Driven Automation**

Automation of data procurement, prep, validation, and Excel calculations. The team analyzes outputs and makes decisions on the data presented.

# End-to-End Automation

Automation of data procurement, prep, validation, and Excel calculations. Business rules review outputs and create and upload journal entries or other output types.

# (Hybrid) People, Process, & Technology

# Activity Redistribution & Automation

Value-added analysis work remains, and processes are shared with team members based on their capacity and the process deadlines.

# Pods & Automation

Pods share groupings of the remaining analysis work after technology completes non-value-added tasks.

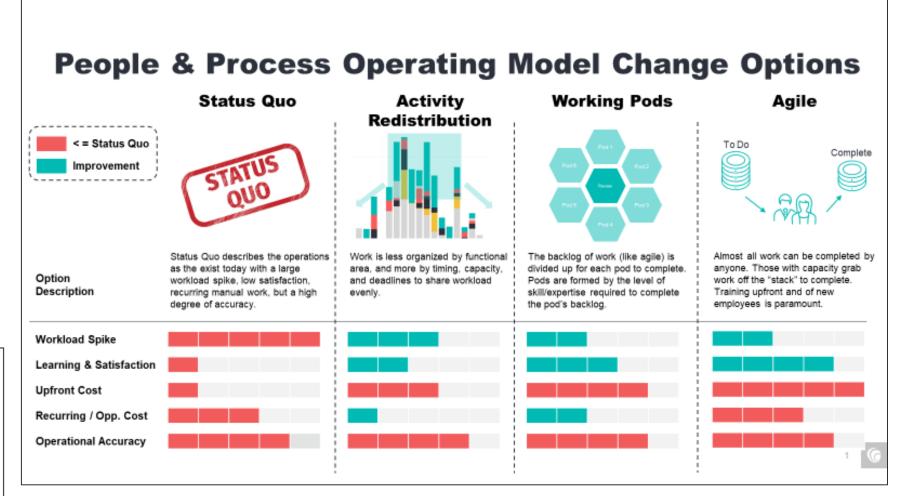
## Agile & Automation

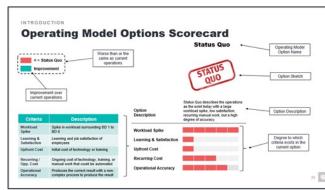
Value-added analysis work remains, and most of the team is trained to perform any task outstanding. Training is a high, ongoing priority.



# Changing the way we work, vs. the work to be done only solves for some of the variables

Case Study Deep Dive

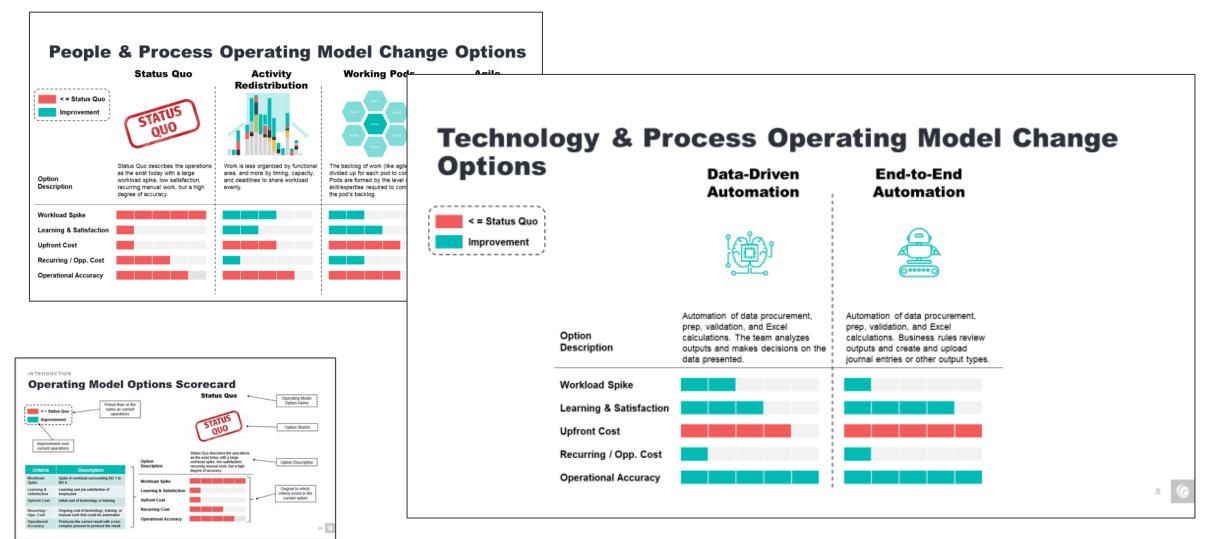






# Automation improves spikes and creates repeatable, scalable operations

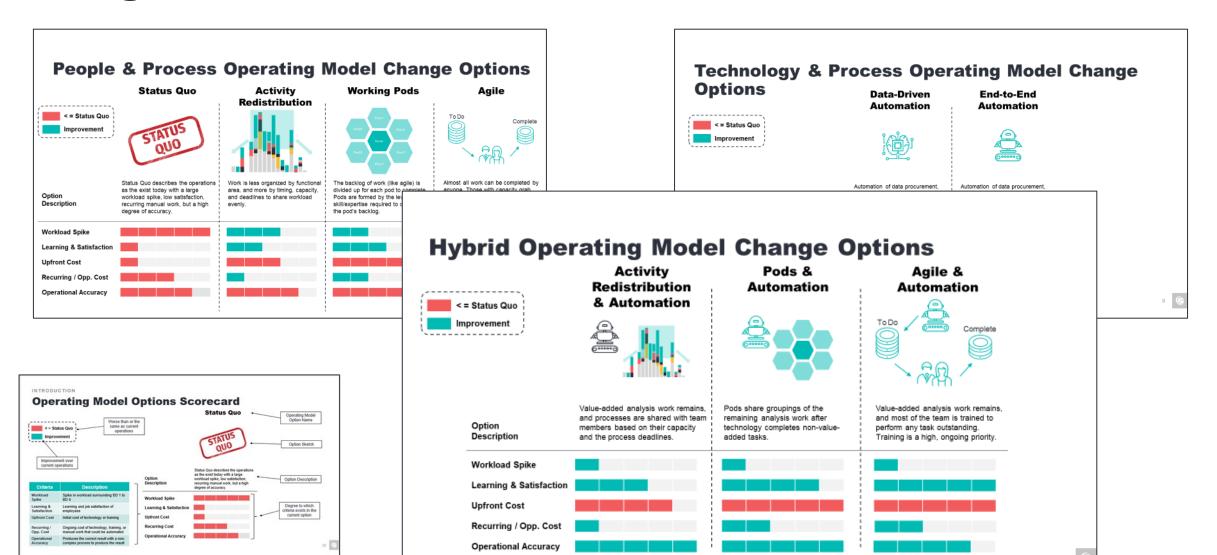
Case Study Deep Dive





# Combining Technology with People & Process change drives the most value.

Case Study Deep Dive

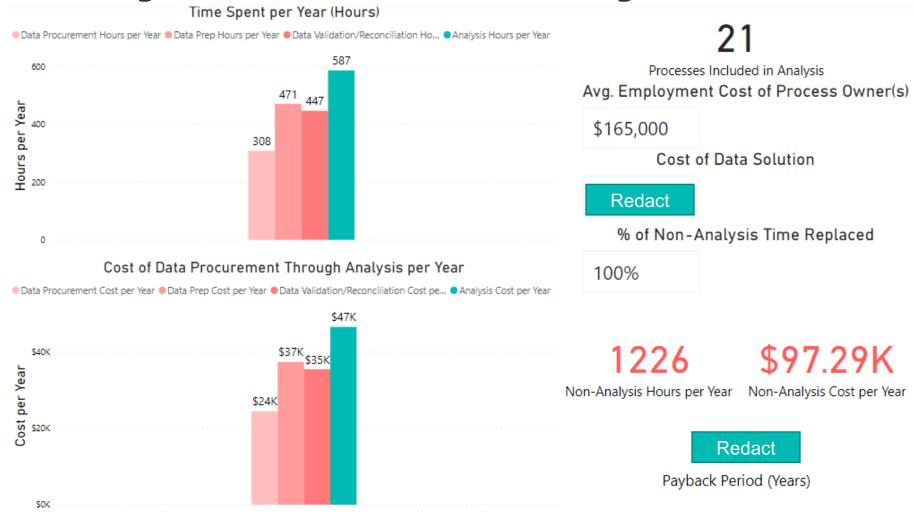


Note: The analysis above assumes process automation. For end-to-end automation, add one box to Learning & Satisfaction, Upfront Cost, and remove one from Workload Spike.



#### **AUTOMATION & LOST TIME MODELING**

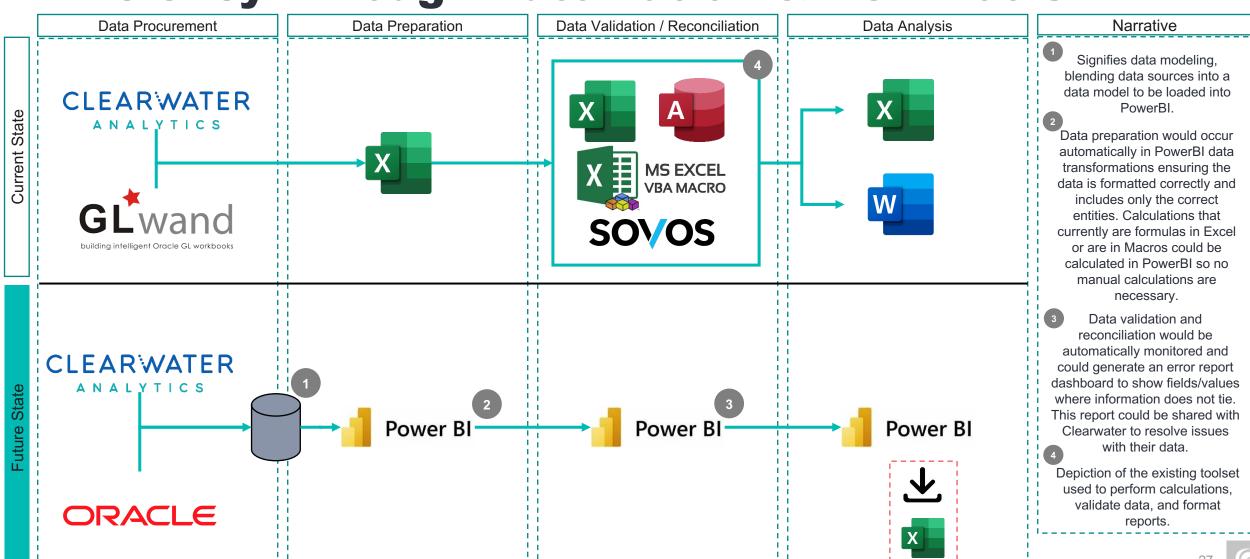
### **Detailed Payback Scenario Analysis**





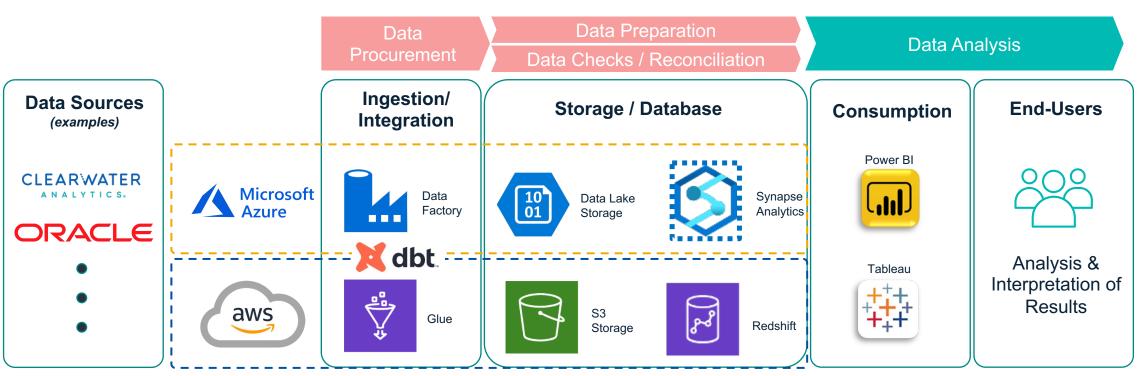
#### LONG-TERM OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

### **Efficiency Through Automation & New Tools**





### **Illustrative Solution Detail in Azure or AWS**



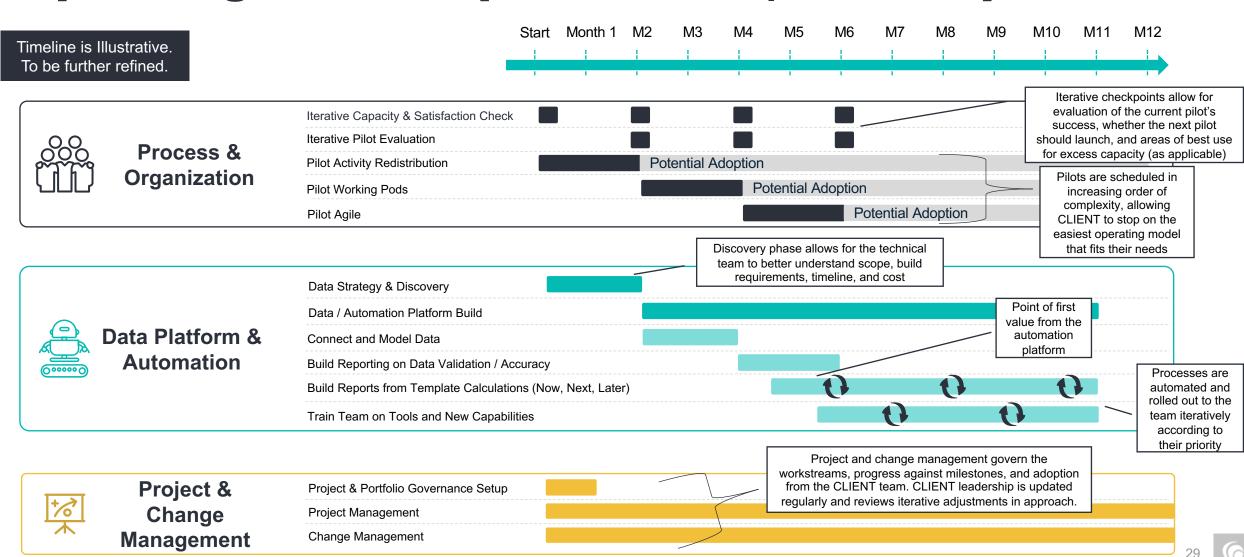
The Ingestion/ Integration layer is where data is integrated from source systems (Clearwater, Oracle, etc.)

In the Storage & Database
layer(s) the data is landed,
business rules / logic transform the
data into needed formats, data is
organized and made available for
query and analysis. Data values
are validated with automated
checks throughout

In the **Consumption layer** through a visualization tool, end users interpret the data, perform analysis and take action based on the presented results. This is direct value-added activity



### **Operating Model Improvements | Roadmap**





tax transformation



# Common factors impacting corporate tax operating models

- Lower growth gross domestic product (GDP) & low interest rate environment led most insurance companies to continuously challenge the internal cost structure year over year, including tax function spending, pressure to avoid increase in headcount – even with new transitions and added business complexity – in order to improve return on equity (ROE) and combined ratios.
- Tax activities continue to become digitized and traditional workpapers are moving to shared sites. Secure collaboration tools, advances in remote access and secure cloudbased technologies are opening new opportunities for efficiencies and maximizing internal resources.
- Major advances in "light grade" tax technology solutions that can be built out rapidly and at a low cost to solve business problems. Examples include Power BI, Tableau and Power Pivot, which are keying off of existing ledger systems including OneSource (provisions), Alteryx and CorpTax provision software.



### **Common data challenges**

- Finance and tax professionals spend more than 50% of their time and effort gathering data that could otherwise be spent on valueadded activities
- Data is housed in multiple places in different formats; i.e., system databases, excel spreadsheets, etc.
- Manually consolidating and reviewing the data is time consuming and prone to risk and errors
- Excel workbooks are the primary technology utilized for core tax calculations/technology, is outdated and/or lacks automation
- Lack of integration between upstream finance applications and downstream direct and indirect tax applications
- Aggregate, manage and translate a large amount of information, increasing large number of formula errors and invalid data sources
- Reconciling data from multiple (10+) source systems
- Lack of controls to perform completeness test and reconciliation of the data population back to its source



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# Data automation and analytics



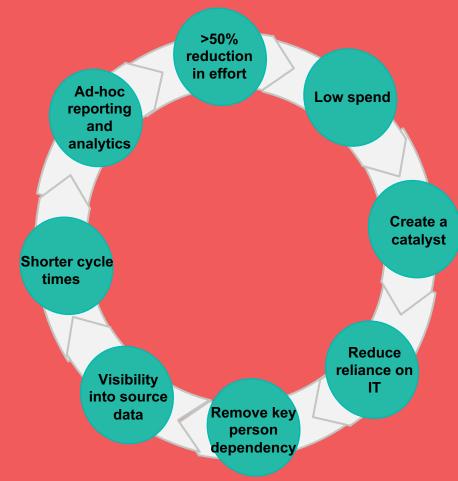




Creates the ability to leverage data and use visualizations to highlight opportunities and bring more value to upper management

Provides
increased level of
insight into data
and reveals
patterns, trends
and associations
in all the data
affecting tax
department

Can be easily customized to include impactful data across all jurisdictions to plan strategically and make sound business decisions





# Factors improving insurance tax function operating model



Upskilling of client personnel in automation trends and identification of practical use cases to promote citizen-led behavior



Review existing processes to identify data gaps and pain points within manually intensive processes



Design process and technology solutions



Enable the rapid deployment of the automation model(s) to eliminate more than 50% of the hours spent on manual data manipulation



Establish a
sustainable/agile
governance model that
formalizes stakeholder
roles and responsibilities,
enables the
review/update of internal
controls, addresses
additional change
management challenges
and monitors
business/legislative
changes



### **Methodology and execution – Lifecycle**

Ongoing project management and quality assurance				
Identify automation candidates	Gather requirements	Design and build	Testing and training	Deployment
<ul> <li>One off vs recurring calculations</li> <li>Structures vs unstructured data</li> <li>Objective vs subjective calculation logic</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Inventory data sources</li> <li>Understanding existing complexities (e.g., data collection and synthetization into the Excel workbook(s)) to then assess potential Excel model enhancement and/or simplifications</li> <li>Review existing process to identify gaps and pain points such as manually intensive processes</li> <li>Identify leading practices and potential opportunities to better leverage existing technology and/or automate component of manually intensive processes</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Develop functional and technical specifications for process</li> <li>Design, develop and configure data source options</li> <li>Build the to-be future process and specify output format</li> <li>Configure applications in your environment with consultation with engagement team to ensure all the requirements have been taken into consideration and document deviations, if any.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Run the inputs through the process to make sure the output matches expectations</li> <li>Prior period replication to compare results of old process and identify anomalies to address</li> <li>Discuss result with internal team</li> <li>Creation of customized enduser training materials and desktop procedures</li> <li>Provide end-user training</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Use automation to replace the old process after the team is comfortable reviewing the automation outputs</li> <li>Perform cutoff procedures</li> <li>Provide go-live support</li> <li>Update business policies and procedures</li> </ul>



### Key points of tax technology implementation

- The scope and design will be led directly by the specialist implementation team, and this will ensure the client receives the best possible service and ensure the smoothest deployment. We have the best relationship with the vendor product team(s) and should we require assistance with software bugs, they will be on hand to prioritize our implementation.
- Our approach is to work together with client engagement teams throughout the project in order to ensure that the end deliverable meets the requirements, and the client engagement team is comfortable with the implemented tools/systems and how it integrates into the overall process



# **Typical timeline**





### **Operating model assessment**

#### Start with an overview of people, processes and systems

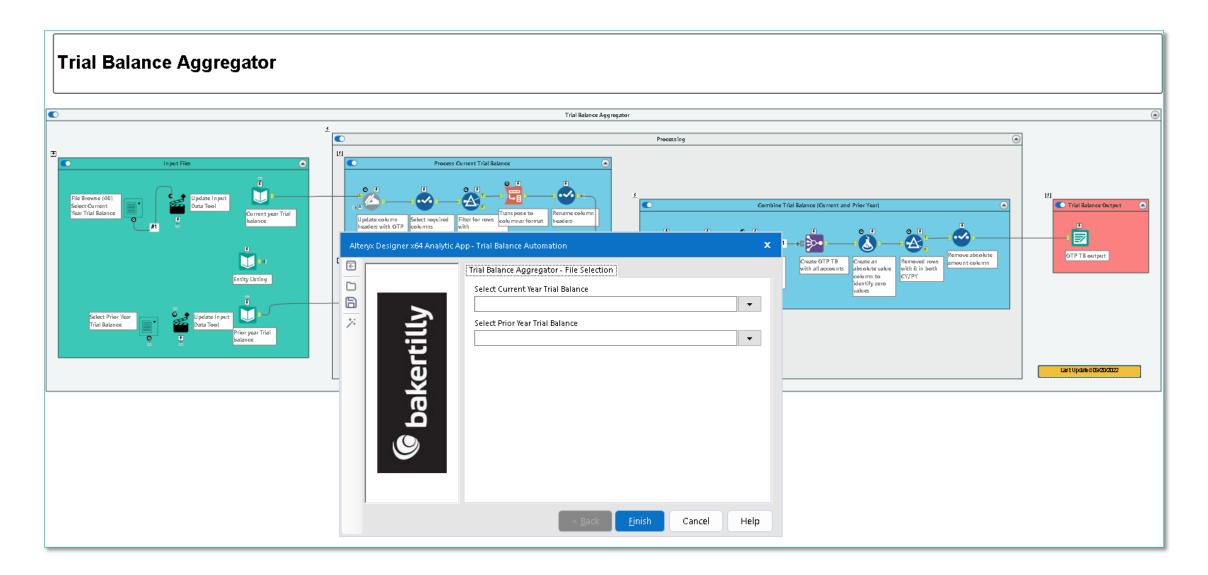
- Co-managed services alternative natural flow from insurance tax transformation
- Full outsource: Future tax department functions outsourced to qualified firm where work is completed and reviewed by subject matter experts
- Retain tax department, maintain current team and grow via incorporating the transformation tax technology tools and enhance and maintain reduced headcount by relying on outside service provider to validate the historical data reported in the tax returns and provision calculations
- Hybrid approach: Third party tax service provider validates the historical tax data and executes on select on-going services, i.e., state tax compliance, premium taxes, K-1 reporting, partnership returns and investment tax support.







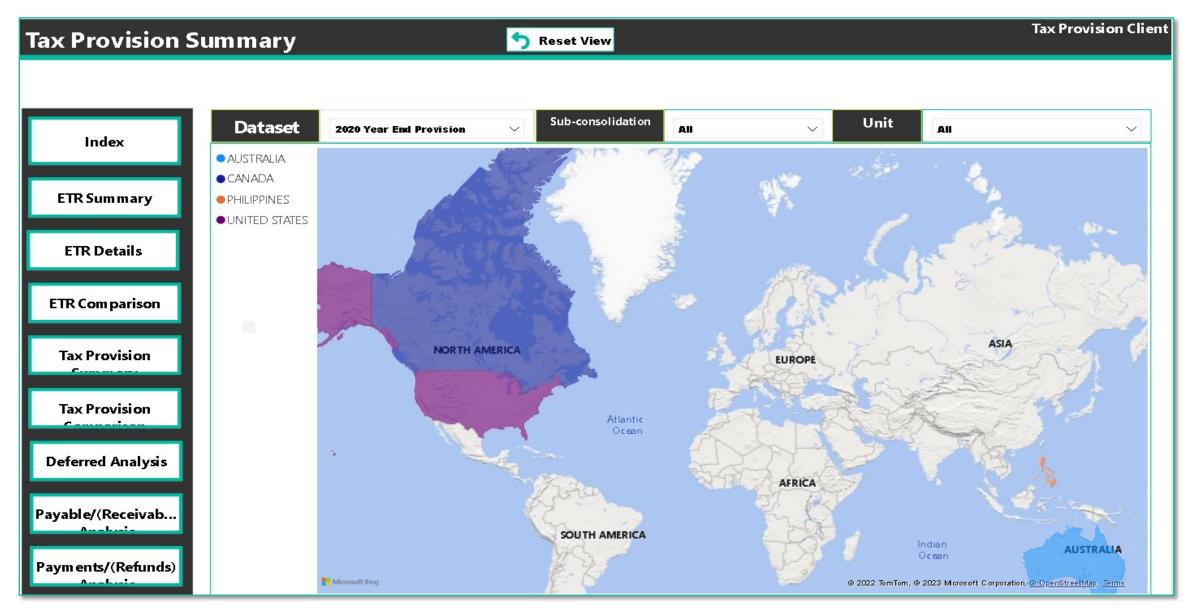




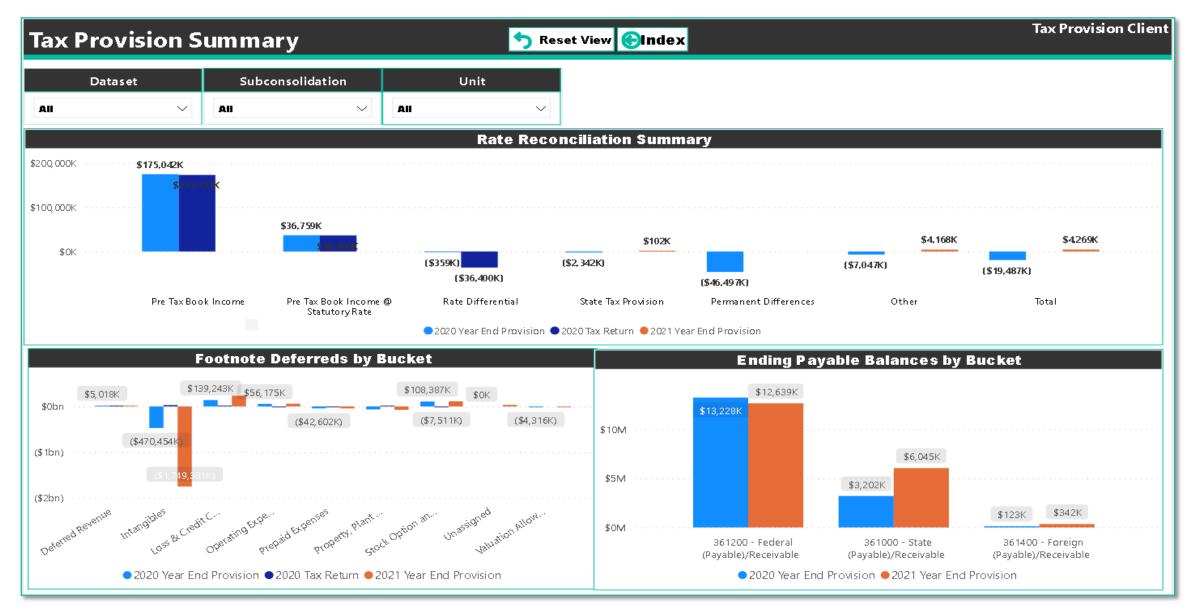


# **Provision analytics**

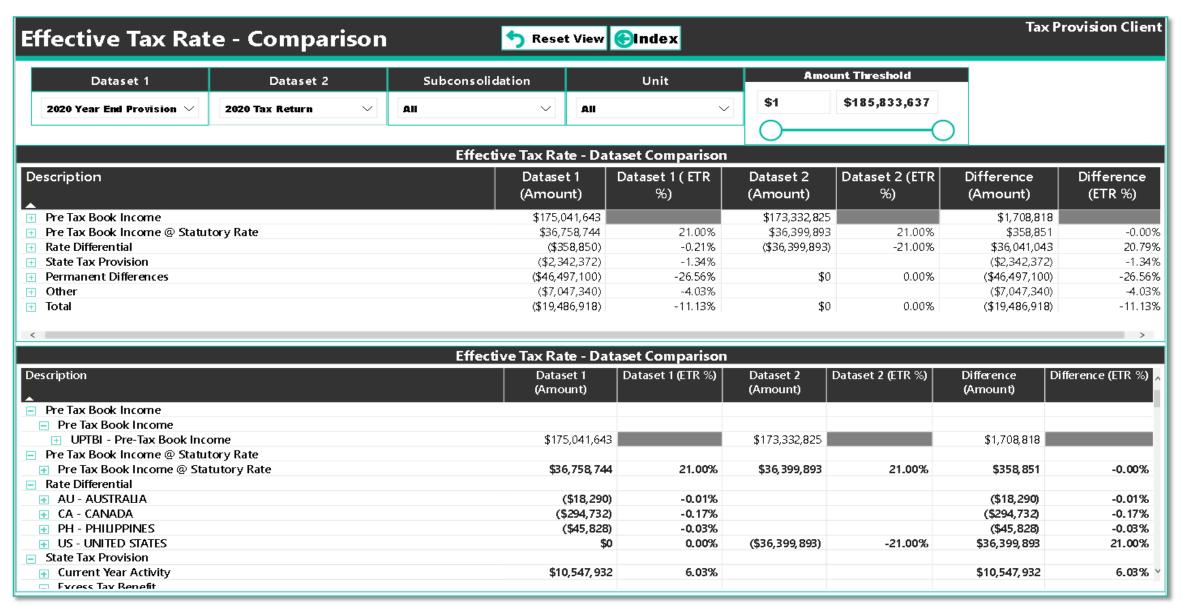




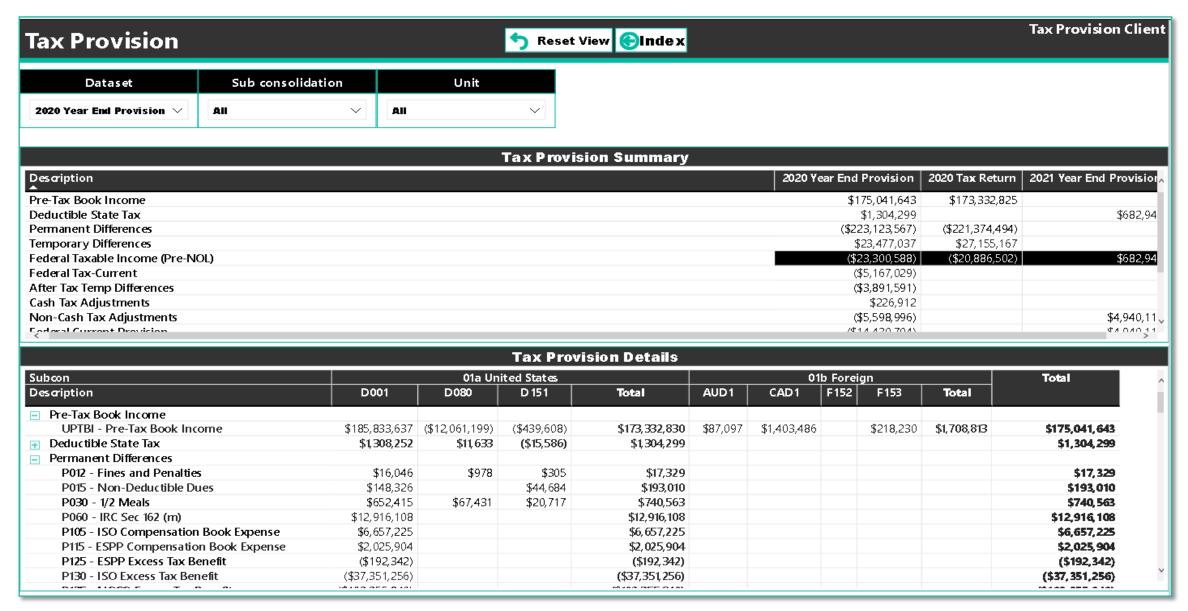




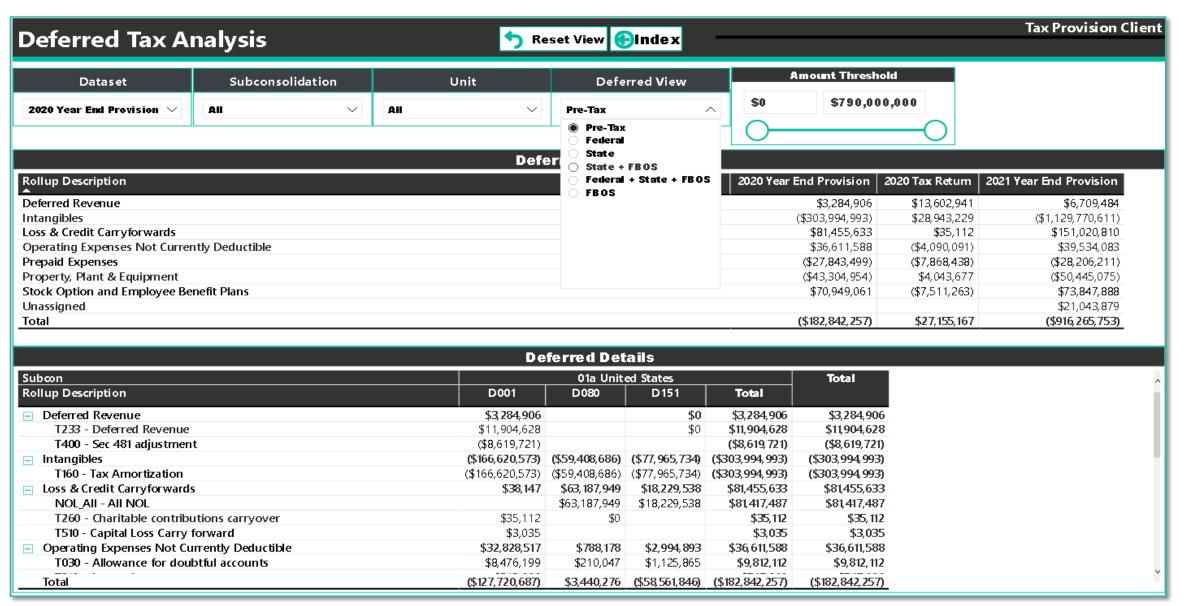




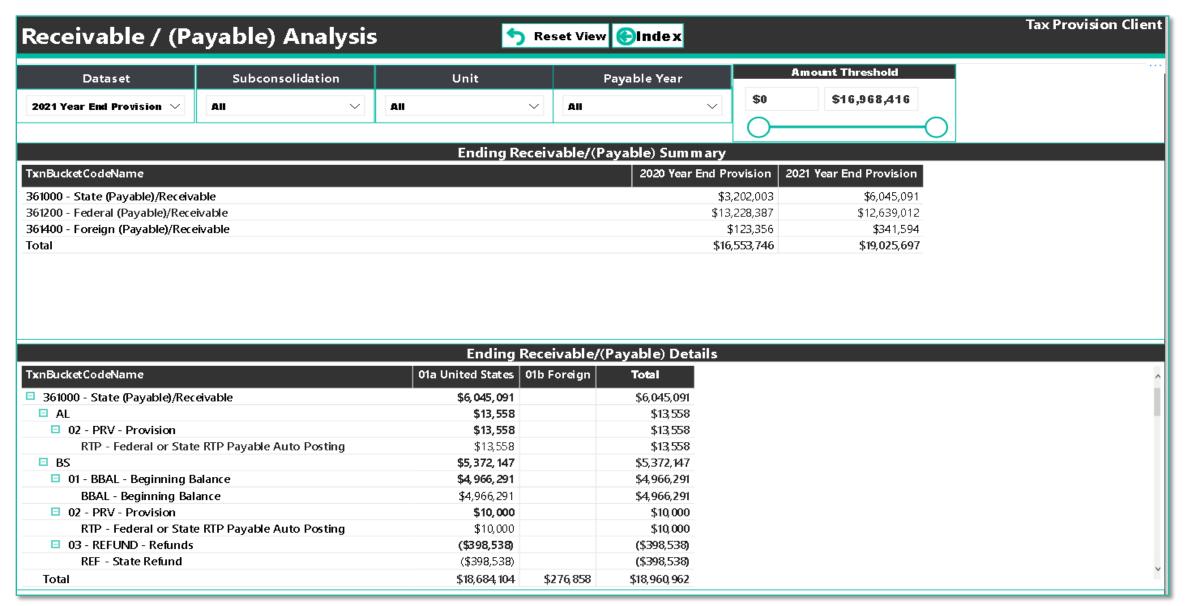








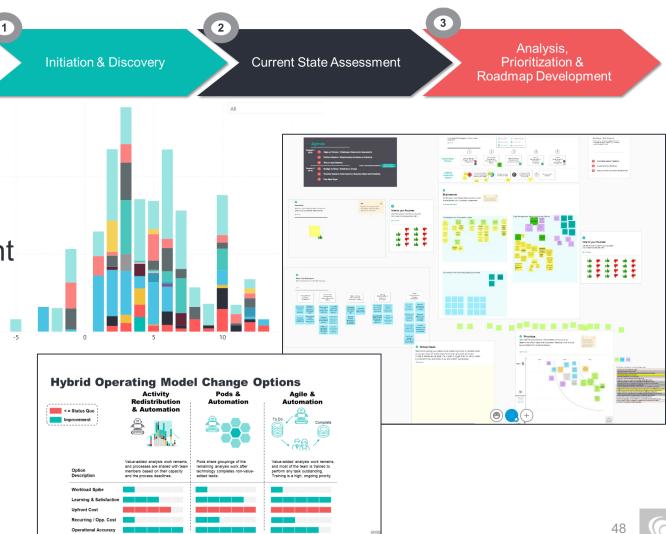




### What now? How do I start?



- Perform Current State **Assessment** 
  - Understand your business (and the pain points that come with it)
- Establish a Future State Vision
  - Define how "transformative" you want to be
- Approach with an unbiased / open mind
  - Many of the lessons learned are typically not anticipated by the business



# **Stay connected**





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