

Model-driven DSS: What is a good replacement for models built using IFPS?

On December 5, 2000, Hubert Deneault, Hydro-Quebec, wrote *"First, I want to thank you for offering a service like DSSResources.com. It is very helpful and very much appreciated. Here is our problem."*

"For a number of years now, we have been using IFPS, a financial planning package first developed by EXECUCOM, in Austin, and later merged into COMSHARE. Over these years, we have developed a few quite large models, which are linked together though not dynamically. There are mainly 3 such models, the largest containing more than 1500 variables (rows) and approximately 80 columns (time periods)."

"You probably guessed it we are looking for a replacement, i.e. something that will: do what IFPS does in a more friendly and a more modern environment, preferably be based on WINDOWS and VISUAL BASIC, and be able to talk to an OLAP application like Hyperion ESSBASE, or something similar. Can you, or anybody out there, help?"

And my response ... Dear Mr. Deneault --

You mention a number of requirements for a new software package. Based on what you have told me I think you need to try the simplest solution, which is to use Microsoft Excel 2000. This solution is easy to overlook and it does have some limitations. You indicated the largest model contains more than 1500 variables (rows) and approximately 80 columns (time periods). In Microsoft Excel 2000 there are 256 columns and you can have 65,536 rows. So it should handle the data set.

With the built-in functions and add-ins I think you can develop a wide variety of planning models. Excel 2000 is a more friendly and more modern environment and you can work with OLAP and post results as Web documents.

I checked Paul Gray's 1996 book Visual IFPS/PLUS for Business and there will be some issues that need to be addressed in working with simultaneous equations. Perhaps we will get some feedback on this or other alternatives.

Reference

Gray, P. Visual IFPS/PLUS for Business. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996.

The above response is based upon Power, D., What is a good replacement for models built using IFPS? DSS News, Vol. 2, No. 1, January 2, 2001.

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