Finance Forward: **Business- Led** Transformation for the modern Accounting & Finance Function

Jake Baine

Agenda

- Whitley Penn Overview
- Digital Services Overview
- AI Concepts and Topics
- Data Transformation Case Study
- Key Takeaways

Overview

- Top 34 Revenue Firm in the U.S.
- 9 Offices in 4 Major Geographic Markets
- 97 Partners
- 850+ Employees
    - 60+ Global Talent

Who We Are

For more than 40 years, WhitleyPenn tax, audit, and advisory professionals have been dedicated to the success of our clients. Our mission is to provide transformative solutions that deliver valuable results and develop strong relationships. With an established presence in the Southwest and as an independent member of HLB International, we are strategically positioned to help you grow both locally and globally. At Whitley Penn, your future is our focus.

Overlapping Areas of Focus

- Energy
- Manufacturing, Distribution & Logistics
- Technology
- Private Equity & Investment Funds

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Services

Audit

- Corporate (Private & PCAOB)
- Employee Benefit Plans
- Risk Advisory Services

Tax

- State and Local Tax (SALT)
- Federal
- International
- Benefit Plan (IRS Form 5500)

Consulting

- Strategic Consulting Services
- Deal Advisory Services
- Digital Services
- Forensic, Litigation & Valuation Services (FLVS)
- Wealth Management (WPWealth)
- Client Accounting & Advisory Services (CAAS)

HLB International

Whitley Penn is an independent member of HLB International, a global network of advisory and accounting firms. HLB refers to the HLB International network and/or one or more of its member firms. Through this network we have access to trusted firms both within the United States and globally, to leverage as needed in the event that the fund or portfolio companies require services we are conflicted out of at any time.

COUNTRIES 156

OFFICES 1,128

PEOPLE 40,831

GLOBAL RANKING 8th

HLB WE ARE AN INDEPENDENT MEMBER OF THE GLOBAL ADVISORY AND ACCOUNTING NETWORK

Introduction

Jake Baine
Managing Director, Digital Services Leader

Jake has 12 years of experience in IT and Analytics consulting. Previous experience at EY and KPMG and expertise in digital transformation projects and system implementations.

What is Digital Transformation?

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Operating Model

People (Org)
+
Process
+
Reporting & Analytics
+
Data
+
Systems

Digital transformation is the strategic use of digital technologies to reinvent how organizations operate, deliver value to customers, and stay competitive.

It enables operational excellence, automates processes, and unlocks data-driven insights — helping businesses work smarter, adapt faster, and serve customers better.

Models that Scale

Outcome-Driven Foundation Design

Decision ready data delivered to the right place, at the right time, to the right people

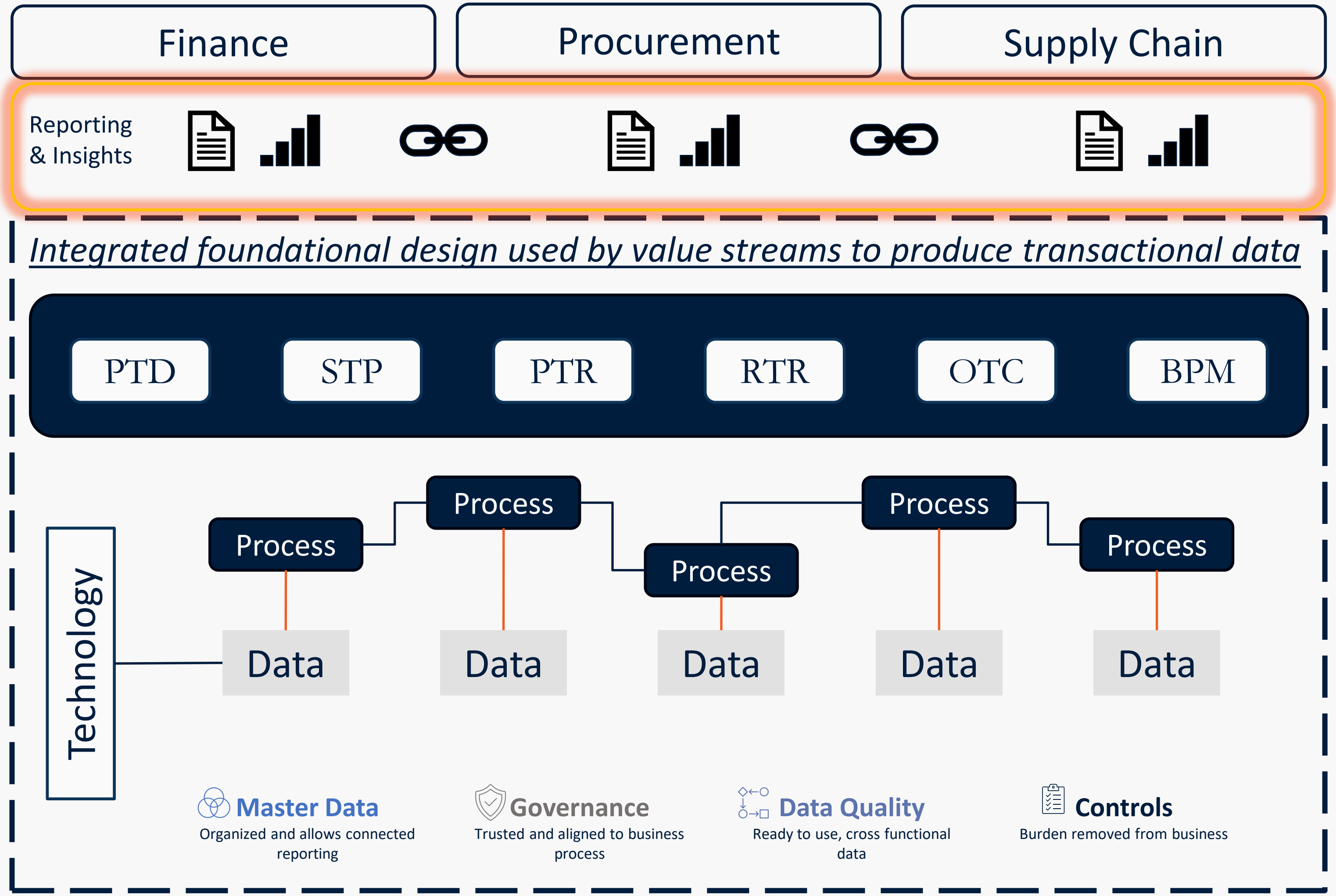
Eliminates foundational work from the functional teams & optimizes the resources

Foundation enables value stream process & functional reporting requirements

Business driven data design based on leading practice process

Governed master data & embedded controls

Informs tech on requirements & data flow



Why Transform?

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- M&A – integrating systems, people, reporting, policies
- **Operational excellence – efficiency, speed, accuracy**
- **Employee experience – privilege of focus, talent development**
- **Enable growth – scalability, decision making insights**
- Compliance – customer demands, banks, gov't agencies

Our Methodology

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Get to know your business

- Org structure, teams
- KPIs, financial and operational reports
- Known pain points

Documentation

- Current state end to end process
- Data model - Dimensions, attributes, hierarchies
- Systems – functionality, capabilities
- Integrations - source-to-target mapping
- Key reports

Solutions

- System configurations
- Data products - enrichment
- Integration – ETL, middleware
- Analytical models – single source of truth
- Process workflow & documentation
- Create new data model

Understand your pain points

- Business objectives & goals
- Scope & timing
- Key personnel
- Known value proposition

Architecture review

- Platform
- Data flow
- ETL
- Integration patterns
- Transport, compute, storage

Identify Gaps

- Prepare Gap Assessment
- Integrated roadmap
- Proposal

Build, test, deploy

- Project management – game plan
- Team involvement in test scripts & testing
- Development teams optimized
- Training
- Self-serve reporting
- Future state process enablement

Our Approach

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Financial & operational reporting are the culmination of all processes – start here

Financial Reports

- P&L
- Accounting Close Control
- Forecast
- Cashflow
- Consolidations

OUTCOME: Systematic, connected reporting that is self-serve by teams across finance & operations – streamline close & forecasting processes

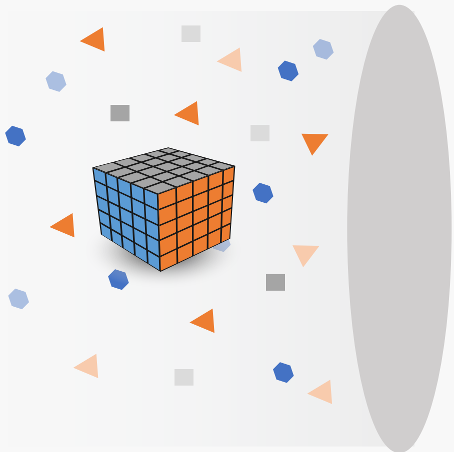
Operational Reports

- Project Profitability
- Operating Metrics
- Close Cycle Time
- Performance Views
- Source Validation Report

- Identify manual processes filling gaps in data & system capabilities.
- Automating nonvalue add tasks – Alteryx gallery

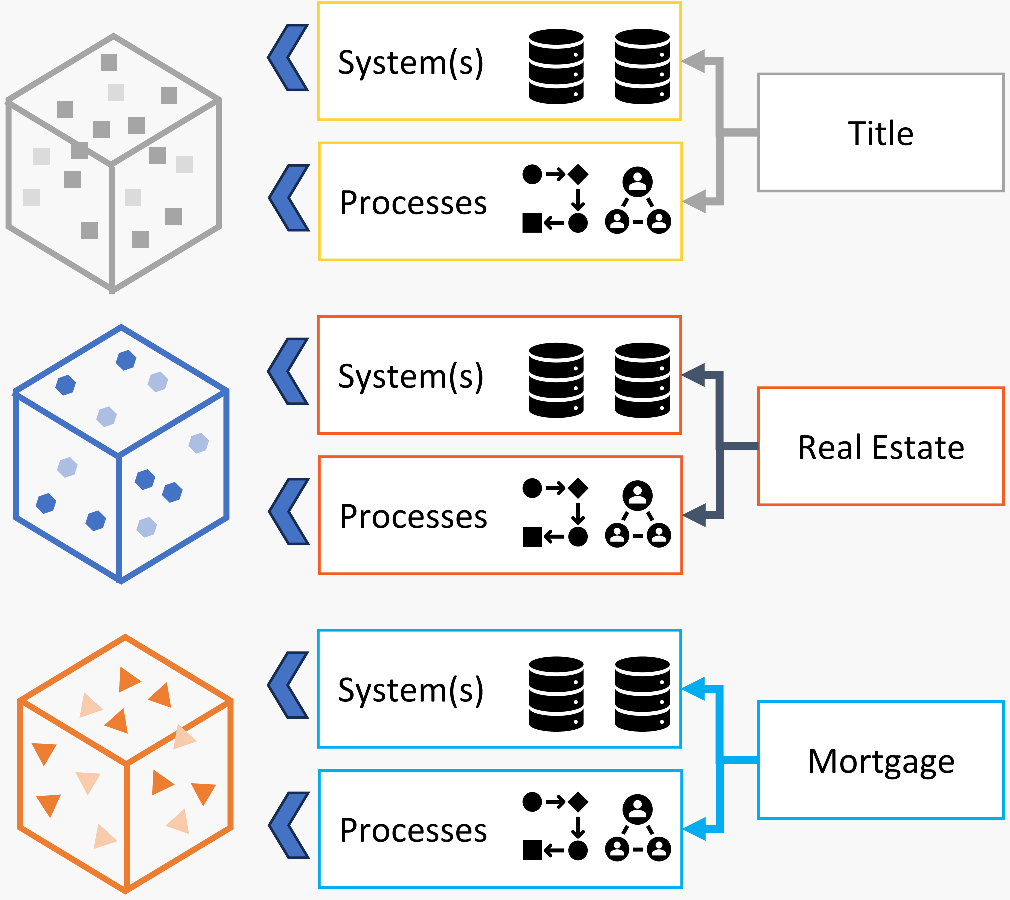
OUTCOME:

- Design enables process automation and scalability
- Serving as the blueprint for system gaps



New data model that simulates one system:

- Aligns dimensions
- Attribute enrichment
- Governance



AI Readiness for the Office of the CFO

The Foundation: ERP Systems and Data Architecture

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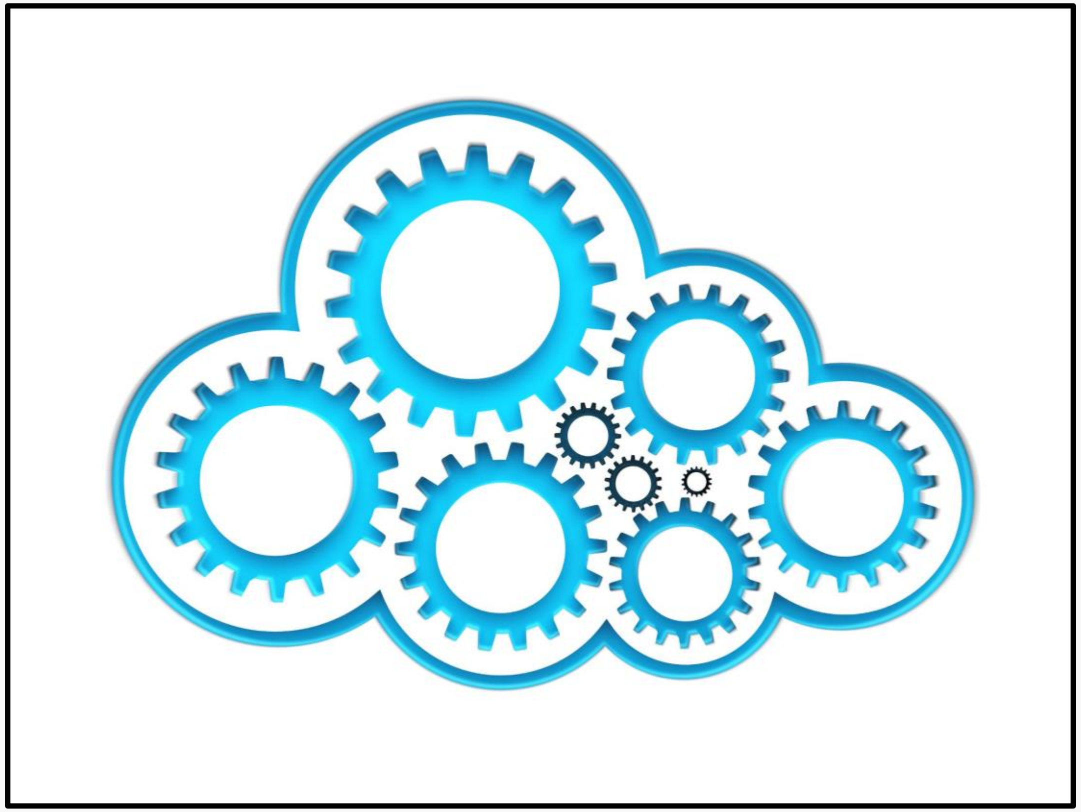
- **ERP as System of Record**
  - ERP systems provide essential stability and integrity for financial transactions, controls, and compliance.
- **Integrating Multiple Data Sources**
  - Data architecture integrates budgeting, CRM, payroll, procurement, and banking data into a unified system.
- **Single Source of Truth**
  - Establishing a trusted, consistent data environment enables reliable reporting and predictive analytics.
- **Foundation for AI Analytics**
  - Optimized ERP and data architecture create conditions for scalable, trustworthy AI-enabled financial analytics.



Building a Practical AI Roadmap

- **Assessment Phase**
  - Evaluate data quality, process maturity, technology, and governance readiness to identify gaps and risks.
- **Preparation Phase**
  - Close gaps through data cleanup, process standardization, and architectural improvements for AI readiness.
- **Pilot Phase**
  - Implement select AI use cases with clear success metrics and active stakeholder engagement.
- **Scaling Phase**
  - Expand successful AI initiatives organization-wide with strong governance and change management support.

Roadblocks to Finance AI Adoption

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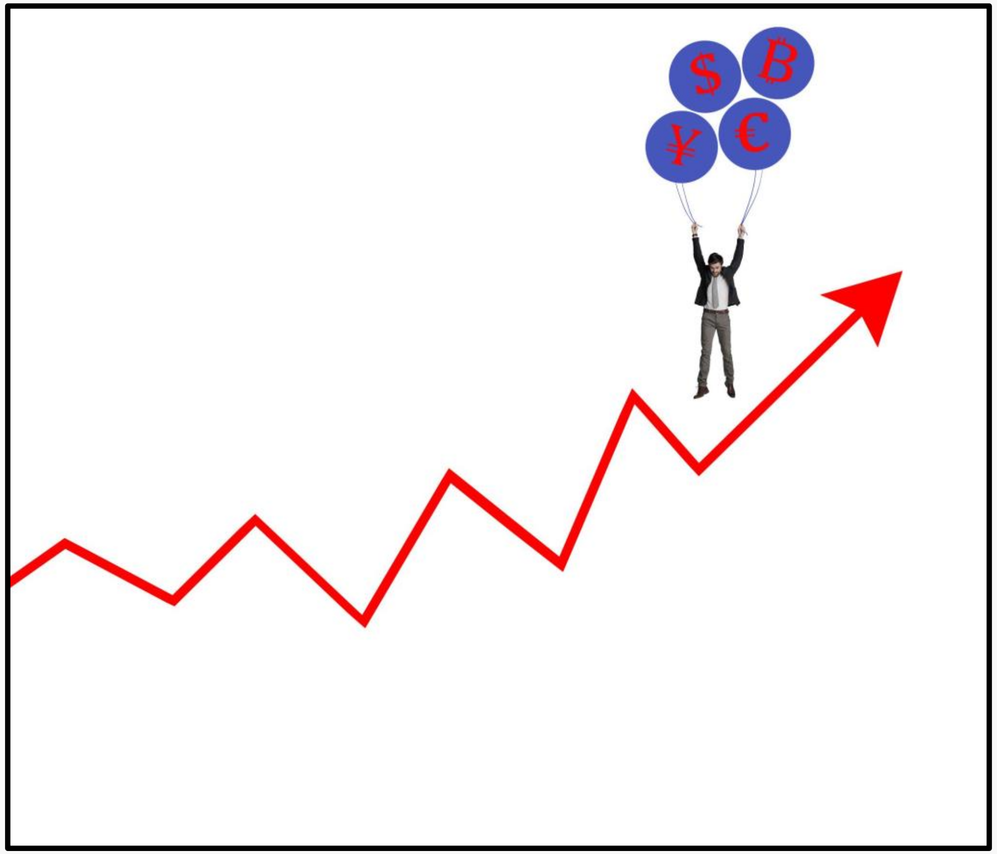
- **Data Challenges**
  - Data inconsistencies, incomplete history, and conflicting versions hinder AI effectiveness in finance.
- **Process Inefficiencies**
  - Manual steps and lack of standardization limit the impact of AI tools in finance workflows.
- **Technology Constraints**
  - Legacy ERP systems and disconnected applications restrict data access and AI scalability.
- **Organizational Resistance**
  - Resistance to change, unclear ownership, and unrealistic expectations undermine AI adoption.



High-Value AI Use Cases in Finance

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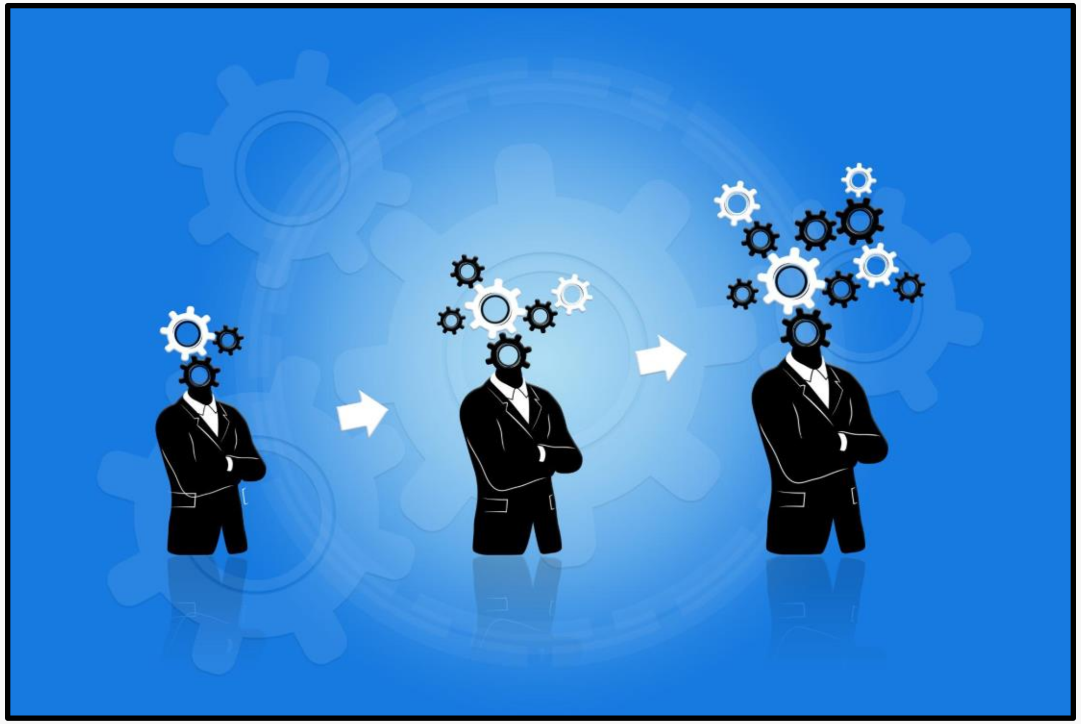
- **Financial Planning and Analysis**
  - AI supports forecasting, scenario modeling, and variance explanations by analyzing historical data and key drivers.
- **AI-Assisted Reporting**
  - Generative AI drafts management discussions, board narratives, and KPI commentary, reducing manual effort and improving consistency.
- **Close Process Optimization**
  - AI-driven anomaly detection and reconciliation help identify issues earlier, minimizing last-minute surprises during financial close.
- **Decision Support Applications**
  - AI highlights risks and opportunities in working capital optimization, cash forecasting, and margin analysis based on complex data.

Key Takeaways for CFOs

- **Foundations Over Tools**
  - AI success relies more on trusted data and standardized processes than on tools alone.
- **Governance and Controls**
  - Strong governance and rigorous controls ensure responsible and effective AI adoption in finance.
- **Strategic AI Application**
  - Leading CFOs apply AI selectively to high-impact finance use cases with clear business outcomes.
- **Future Readiness**
  - Investing in AI readiness today positions CFOs to lead and adapt as capabilities evolve.



Case Study

Value Proposition

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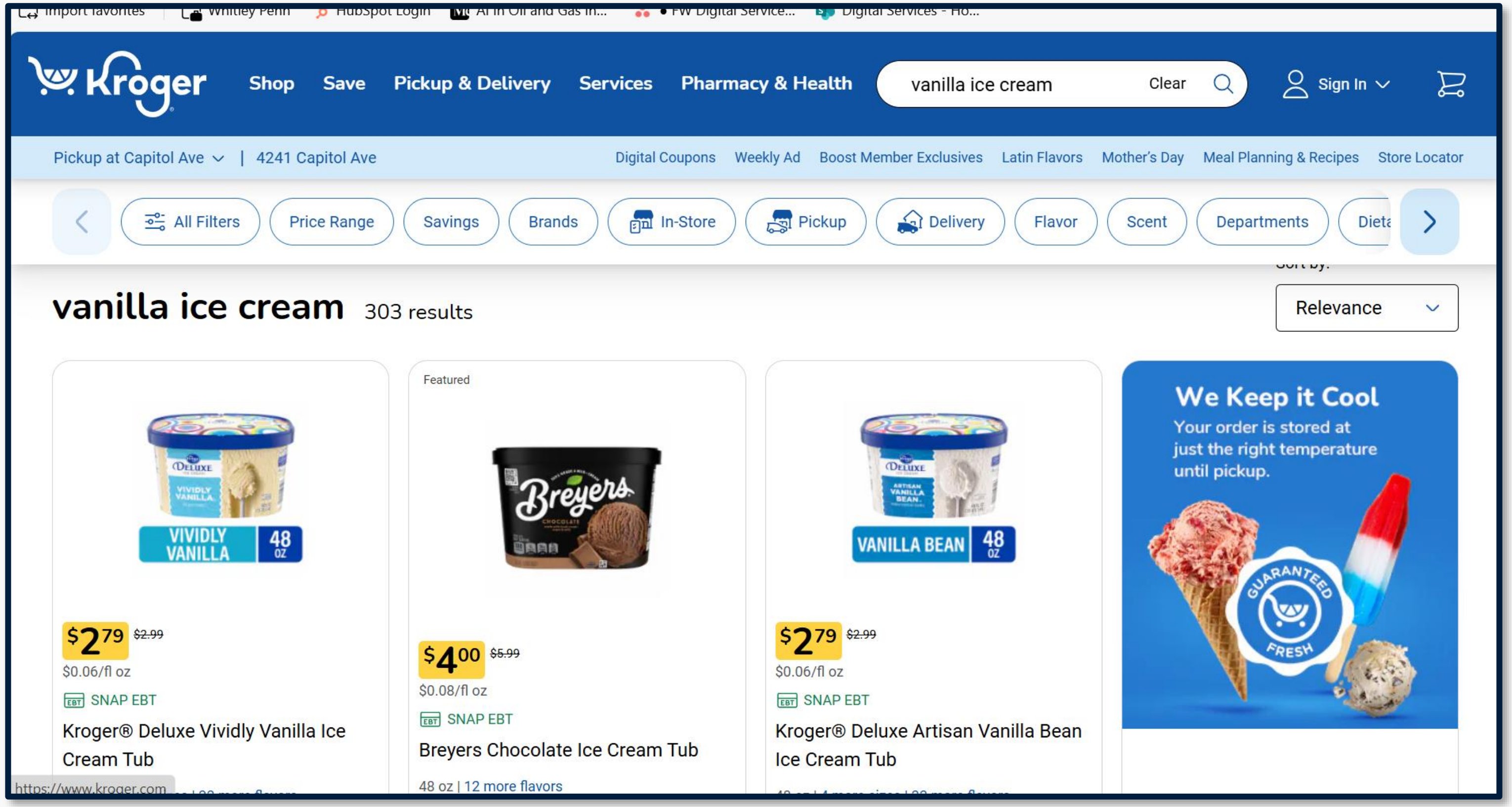
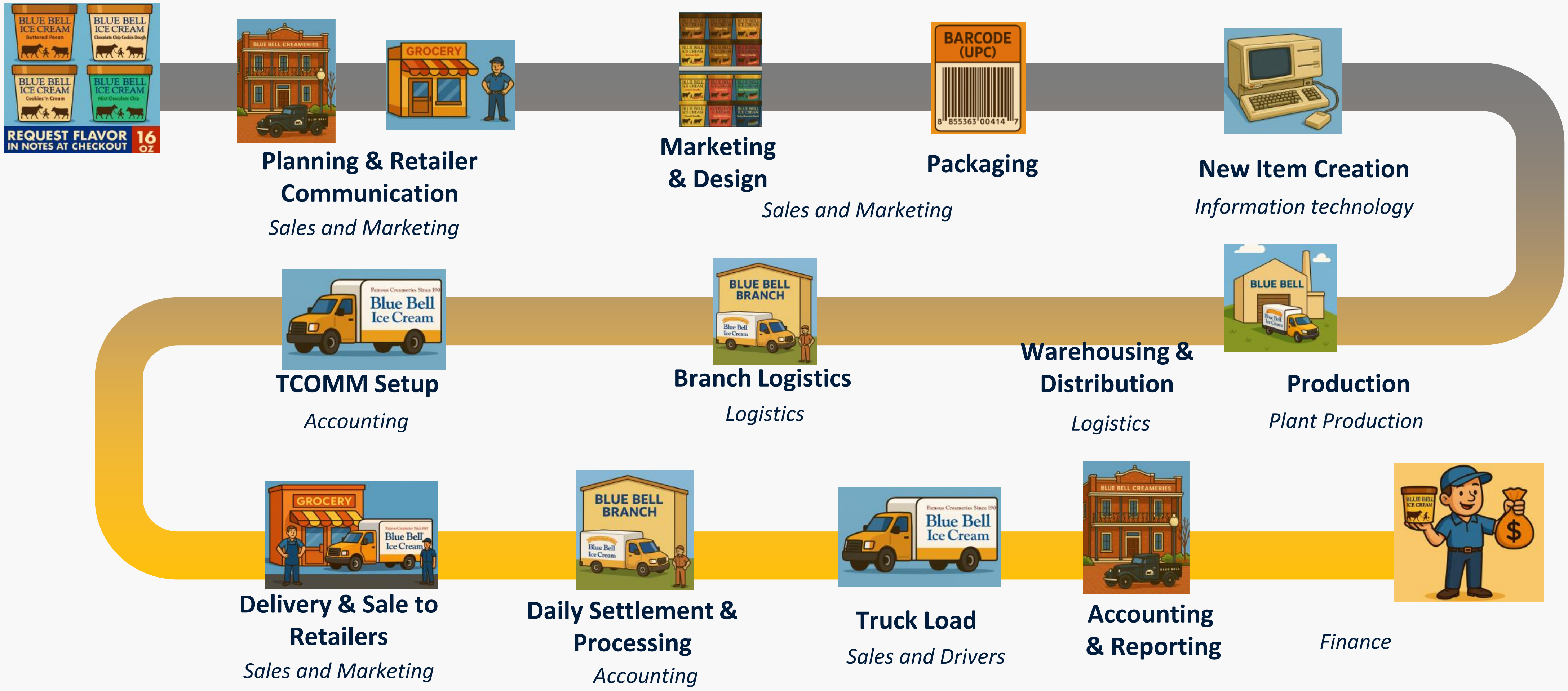


VS

Our Approach

"More than an IT project"



Integrated Roadmap

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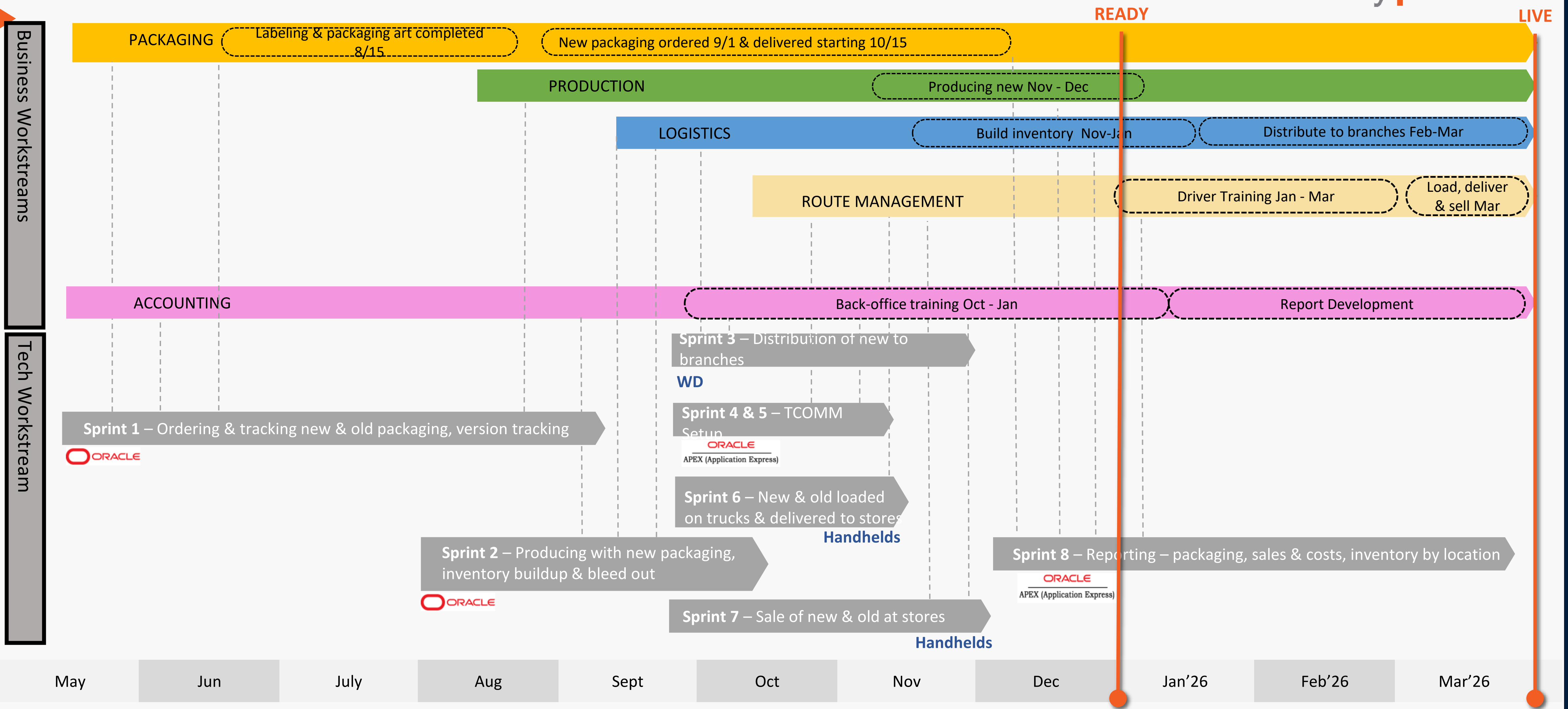

Keys to Success

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- #1 - leadership alignment & support
- access to teams & active participation / ownership
- change management & communication
- governance – steering committee (if across teams/orgs)
- continuous improvement culture

Ensuring Value Delivery

Value Proposition Examples

Reduced cost of IT ownership

- systems, processing, storage, labor
- targeted IT capabilities
- aligned to business objectives

Elimination of waste

- redundancy across teams
- supply chain optimization / vendor mgmt.
- anomaly detection

HR & talent

- streamline onboarding
- centralized performance management
- financial system integration – workforce analytics
- eliminate non-value add tasks
- employee experience & development

Support growth

- strategic transactions – integration & synergies
- market expansion – customer insights
- CRM integration

Connections

- cross-functional end-to-end process design
- single-sources of truth shared across orgs
- development – org interaction
- enable process automation

Our Product Offerings

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Digital transformation

- future state operating model design
- process automation
- SharePoint design
- change management
- project & product management
- data governance
- automation as a service (hosted)
- AI/ML strategy & enablement

Reporting & analytics

- multidimensional analytic models
- analytics as a service (hosted)
- data products – foundational, business & analytic
- Bi dashboards

IT support & capabilities

- managed services
- system requirements - RFP
- implementation support
- integrations

The Root Cause of Implementation Failures

- Most failed implementations aren’t “technology failures” they’re operating model and decision framework failures.
- Service implementors optimize for deployment, not business outcomes.

Success Starts in the Business – Not IT

TYPICAL ERP APPROACH

- IT led
- Configure system
- Go-Live
- Fix Issues
- No value proposition

→

BUSINESS LED APPROACH

- Define outcomes
- Redesign business process
- Align data & reporting
- Implement & enable decisions
- Measure value

Focus on configuring systems instead of redesigning processes

Adoption of "out-of-box" workflows without evaluating business impacts and requirements

Limited engagement from business stakeholders → all IT

Reporting and decision-making needs addressed too late

Business-led definitions of:

- Future state business process
- Decision frameworks
- KPI & reporting requirements

Alignment between operations, finance & technology

Clear ownership of outcomes – not just system functionality