

# Automic<sup>®</sup> Workload Automation

## How to Solve Six Common Oracle Financial Management Problems

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### Introduction

Oracle Hyperion Financial Management (HFM) is a financial consolidation and reporting application built with advanced Web technology. It provides financial managers the ability to rapidly consolidate and report financial results, meet global regulatory requirements, reduce the cost of compliance and deliver confidence in the numbers.

HFM is a fantastic solution for the finance department, but, as with a lot of technology, there are problems pushed to operations teams who have to live with the technology every day. The challenges are significant, impacting both the finance department and the wider business. These problems, as is often the case, revolve around how to deal with abnormal behavior.

This white paper highlights these challenges and their impact. It then discusses solutions from CA Technologies, A Broadcom Company, that automate and provide day-to-day operational excellence for HFM environments and beyond.

### Limitations of HFM Scheduling Facilities

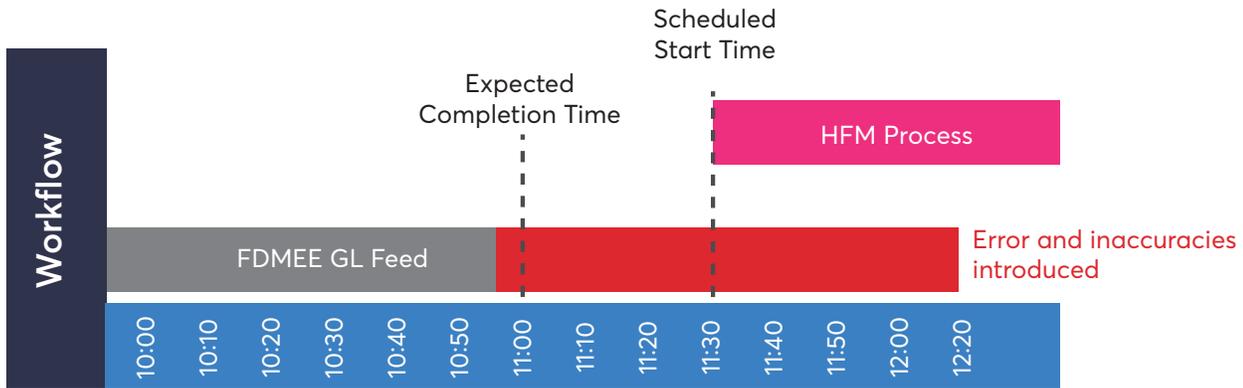
HFM is an excellent solution built within the enterprise performance management (EPM) framework. Like many Oracle solutions, it successfully executes individual components but is myopic in the wider context of IT operations, and this causes many challenges.

### Multiple Islands of Execution

One drawback to HFM scheduling is that while each component is supplied with a basic facility to cause execution, they work independently of one another.

Before processing can occur, HFM requires the successful acquisition of General Ledger (GL) data through Oracle Hyperion Financial Data Quality Management, Enterprise Edition (FDMEE), combined with data loads through HFM (such as exchange rates). Any disconnect produces inaccuracies in the final results, which is why a high level of human activity is often needed to make the system work properly.

**Figure 1: Example of Executing Steps in Different Components**



In this example, “time-fence scheduling” is used to execute steps in the different components. You have to guess how long each step will take and leave buffers between them to handle any issues or overruns. So if you schedule step one to start at 10 p.m. and think it will take an hour to complete, you may need to schedule step two to start at 11:30 p.m., leaving a 30-minute buffer to handle any overrun or issues in the first step.

Such an approach is not only inefficient, but may generate unpredictable results in cases where the buffer wasn’t long enough. The steps themselves are successful; it is just the result that was wrong, which means we create many more human sanity checkpoints.

## No Event Detection Capabilities

We typically schedule regular feeds of data from GL into HFM, for instance every 10 minutes, every hour, or every day. We schedule processing of this information through HFM, with additional loads of external data through the same system independently. The supplied systems have no visibility of the business events or accounting milestones, but frequently we want to run these processing streams after the initial soft close of GL or post-payroll. In these instances, we rely on users and manual instigation of defined processing. This methodology delays business processes and greatly increases the potential for human error, impacting the fidelity of the outcomes. The subsequent reprocessing causes large delays in publication. If the organization operates across multiple time zones, even with the same source finance system, this imposes significant delays, as we require human intervention, resulting in processing starting on the next business day at the earliest.

## Limited Audit and Compliance Facilities

We have to be able to prove how we came by the financial results produced. With information stored in multiple locations, it can take days to assemble the information and prove business processes were executed in the correct order with the correct source information.

The storage of this information is also in a changeable format—logs can be edited unless external software is used to safeguard important operating system information. This makes it harder to prove how the results for any activity during the year were produced.

## No Dynamic Response Capabilities

When we rely on users instigating workloads as well as scheduled activities, there is potential for a clash of resources. EPM does not provide intelligent queue and process management to ensure completion of urgent work at finance milestones (such as period end) and so is adversely impacted by the day-to-day workload of other users. Such a clash results in impacted service delivery and breaches of SLAs agreed upon with the business.

Managing this aspect doesn't just concern execution volume and types of jobs, but also the impact on the compute resources available to execute the workload. Without control, we can overwhelm these resources and delay all processing and results delivery.

## No Conditional Execution Capabilities

The inability to perform anything other than the execution of an isolated task causes delays in processing and forces more manual checking of outcomes. Typically, these concern the creation of expected files, the fidelity of the information processed and the confidence/sanity of the final results.

Operational management in HFM is also manual, meaning:

- A lack of alerting on excessive runtime
- The inability to set predictive SLAs for delivery
- If a process registers as completed successfully in just a few seconds, it's likely that no information was present and the final result is likely to be incorrect

Another area of manual activity that creates more potential for error is the maintenance of the parameters (point of view) we wish to process. These parameters change as we move through the financial year, but not on an absolutely predictable path.

Failure to synchronize these changes will produce an incorrect result, and although users can detect this, the changes cause significant delays while re-runs are arranged and executed, typically impacting the availability of systems.

## No Business Outcome Checking

Both FDMEE and HFM processing typically execute to completion without error. Problems with mapping can cause transactional information failure, which will cause the execution to fail, although typically, processes will complete normally.

When processing typically succeeds from an IT perspective, we must check the business outcome of the process—did we get what we expected? If not, we need to alert users but also stop downstream processing, as the published result will be incorrect.

EPM scheduling facilities lack the ability to check the business outcome, which creates far greater potential for undetected issues to occur. We then rely on accounting staff to detect something unusual, creating more manual steps within our process to trap the potential issue. This causes a delay in delivering results and also directs our valuable accounting resources away from their primary duties.

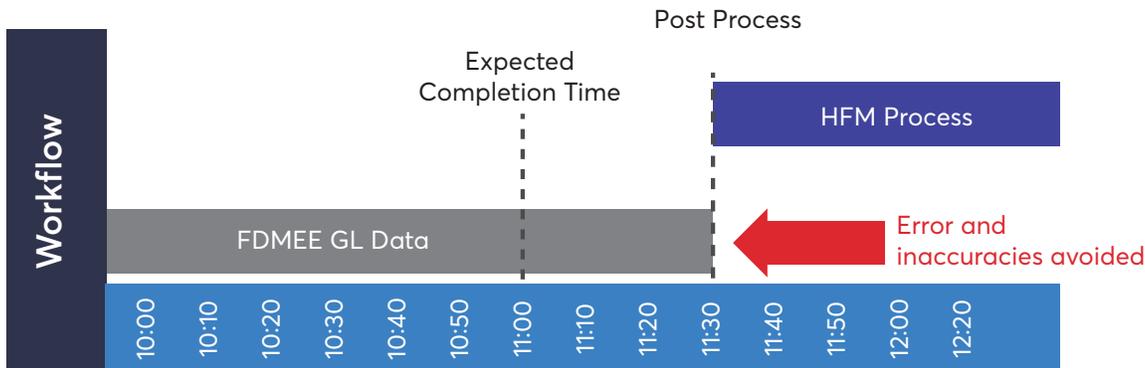
## Automic<sup>®</sup> Workload Automation for Hyperion Financial Management

CA Technologies provides vital integrations to all the components required for Hyperion Financial Management. With over 40 years of experience in operational excellence and unparalleled integration to core finance systems, the solution for HFM provides the deep level of automation needed to eradicate the problems outlined above.

## Single Control Point for EPM and the Wider Landscape

Automic Workload Automation enables all aspects of HFM processing to be controlled from a single solution. It provides the ability to define the activities that need to succeed before execution and allows them to be modeled as a flow of activities in an end-to-end business process. It includes FDMEE processing, HFM data loads and HFM processing, as well as source finance system activities and necessary manual activities.

Figure 2: Example of Enabling All Aspects of HFM Processing



This workflow eliminates time-fence scheduling and guarantees processing occurs when the business requires it. It results in shortened delivery time frames and removes many of the manual sanity checks required from accounting, while also increasing the quality of results.

## Event Detection and Automation

CA Technologies solutions enable customers to cause event-based executions in core finance systems. This could be the soft close of an accounting period or the reception of GL accounting data from a payroll run. Event-based execution:

- Removes the need for users to determine when the activity should run
- Saves time
- Eliminates the potential for human error
- Enables earlier processing of information
- Enables processing outside of business hours

Events can be detected from multiple financial and corporate systems, which is essential for timely, consistent, and accurate consolidation processing.

## Audit and Compliance Facilities

Controlling execution with Automic Workload Automation means all the necessary information for auditory and regulatory compliance is instantly documented and provided. Maintaining a history of processing, execution and results (including extracting logs) as well as any approval or manual activity associated with the process. This makes proof of audit available at the click of a button or scheduled as a report.

## Dynamic Response Capabilities

In contrast to the EPM's rigid, inflexible queuing mechanism, Automic Workload Automation offers dynamic queuing. Dynamic queuing enables you to change processing priorities on the fly. For example, during the quarter end the CFO may need a consolidation process immediately rather than at the scheduled time. With this dynamic queuing, you can put that request at the front of the line for immediate processing.

You can also prevent process clashing by dynamically controlling access to physical resources, either reserving a resource or allowing access on a first-come, first-served basis. This allows operations to run smoothly and maintains business priorities.

## Conditional Execution Capabilities

Automic Workload Automation offers a broad variety of conditional operations and checks. It can check the existence and content of generated files through reconciling results with database queries or extracts from other corporate systems. This significantly reduces the number of manual checks needed to give accurate results.

Dynamically determining the inputs (parameters) to EPM processing at runtime removes the need for regular changes to the schedule. This means the components of the "point of view" can be retrieved from the accounting systems to guarantee the correct periods are processed at all times.

And it's not only about executing workload, where there is still a need for an accounting expert to perform a check; you can model that human activity within the workflow. The relevant staff are informed of the required activity through your corporate systems, their response is monitored and escalated in the event of no action and, once confirmed, the process completes. Not only does this make for a seamlessly documented process, it also makes this information available for service level management and auditory compliance.

Certain tasks may be defined to occur optionally, based on information from databases or other external locations. Enabling optional tasks to be included within the workflow, along with standard definitions of the variability required for legal entities, geographic locations or product lines, means you only have one definition of the process. One definition guarantees consistency and also reduces maintenance.

## Business Outcome Checking

Automic Workload Automation provides automated alerting to your monitoring solution, as well as traditional email notifications. After processes have been executed, it also enables you to check for the correct business outcome. This check removes a large amount of the human capital typically directed at managing an HFM environment. It checks:

- Was the result of this process as the business expected?
- Was the volume of information within the desired range?
- Did a process run too quickly to be accurate?

In addition to checking within the EPM, it provides the ability to reconcile across systems and data sources to guarantee HFM receives all expected data before processing. This reconciliation relieves much of the manual burden of operations and speeds up the delivery of high-quality results to the business.

## Conclusion

Although HFM customers can operate their systems without external automation, they often direct a significant amount of high-value resources to mundane activities to maintain the fidelity and accuracy of the results. They also tend to deliver the results to the business later in the business cycle and have significantly more processing cycles to complete the consolidation effort.

The world of automation has changed dramatically over the past five years. Gone are the days of it simply causing execution. True workload automation now enables consumers of applications to maximize the value of these applications to their business.

Applying Automic Workload Automation to HFM streamlines all aspects of consolidation, eliminates most of the unnecessary manual activities to guarantee fidelity and accuracy of results, and interconnects HFM with the broader enterprise landscape. It enhances the quality of service by optimizing IT processing to ensure end users get the information they need to do their jobs, consistently and at the right time.

Establishing a unified workload automation solution at the heart of an IT operations environment will yield immediate returns by creating agility for the business, reducing costs, and broadening automation policies deeper into the business. In the longer term, it becomes the foundation on which major innovations within and beyond the EPM system can be made.

For more information, please visit [ca.com/automation](https://ca.com/automation).

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