

What does Microsoft Fabric mean for a Finance/Business Analyst?

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Financial Reporting with Power BI Course:
www.powerplatformfinance.com



The state of Data Analytics in the Finance function today

CFOs have **fragmented data & IT landscapes** with a multitude of spreadsheets, which adds significant cost, lower productivity, higher restrictions when adopting AI, weak collaboration, duplicated finance processes and overall reduced ROI

- Finance teams spend on average 14 hours a month on creating ad hoc reporting or visuals, with an average of 42% of that time spent on data preparation and cleansing - lost time that could be spent on analysis
- 41% of the work in the Financial Planning and Analysis (FP&A) team is done manually, with an average of 23 people (in companies of 500 employees or more) involved in the budgeting process.
- 70% of companies are using Excel for financial budgeting and forecasting, with 92% of CFOs frustrated with the budget process
- 81% of CFOs believe they suffer from the most intensive manual work on a daily basis in comparison to any other role in the C-suite

Hours Spent Creating Ad Hoc Reporting or Visuals (Average)

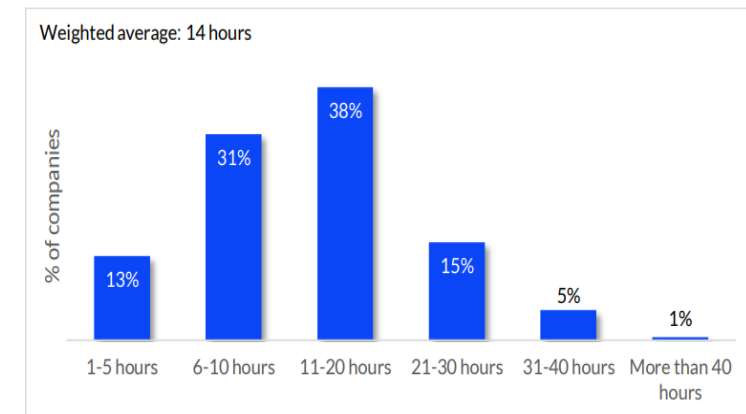
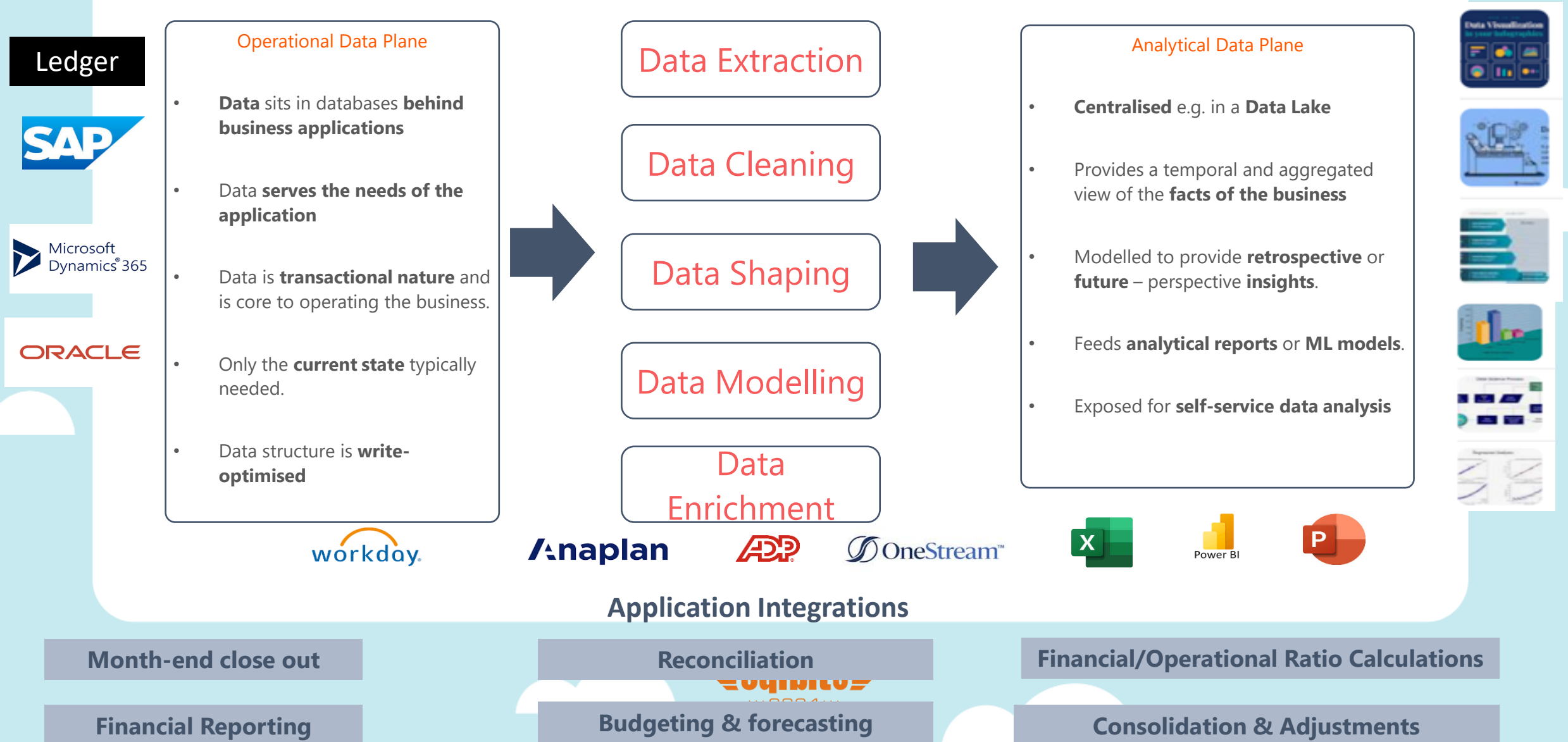


Figure 2 Hours Spent Creating Ad Hoc Reporting or Visuals (Average)

(Source: DataRails: **CFOs – No way Home** - A survey of 200 CFOs from across US/UK)

Why is Financial Analytics so complex?

Finance Data is almost never just “ready to use” for analytics!



The Data Operating Model

Data Engineers

Creators of Enterprise Data Solutions with software engineering principles applied – e.g. custom data integrations/pipelines and Data Warehousing solutions in Azure

Data Analysts/Data Scientists

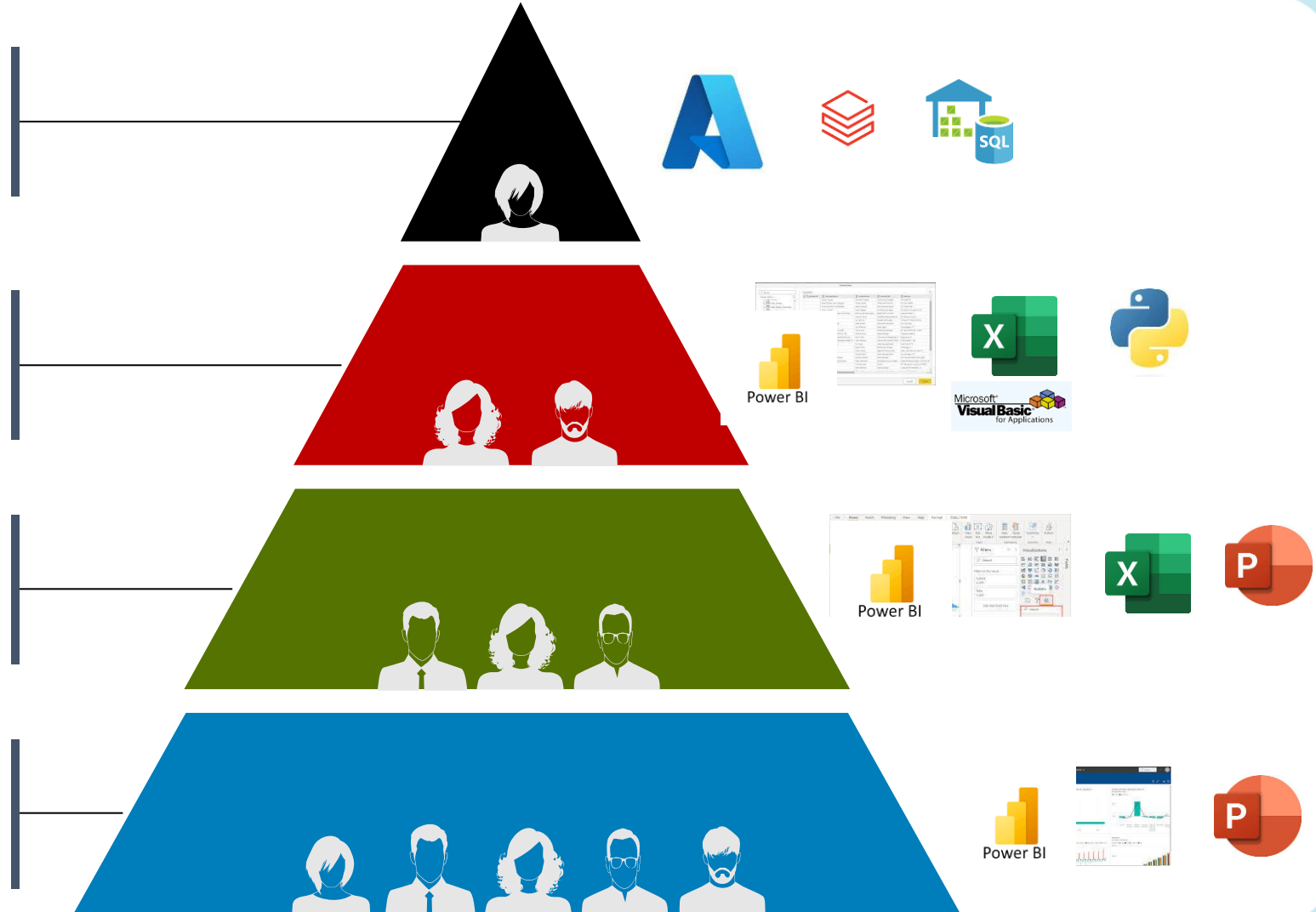
Consumers of Enterprise Data solutions and responsible for developing their own ad-hoc solutions for specific use cases

Data Explorers

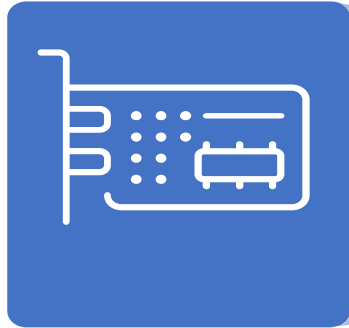
Creators of standard output reports. Work with stakeholders to generate insights

Data Consumers

Extended users with standard output with role specific detail.

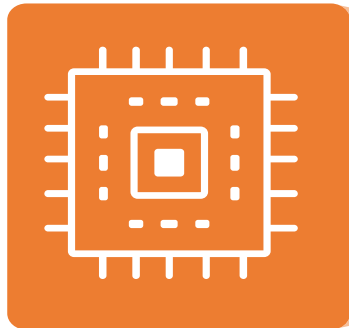


CHALLENGES



Data Silos

Data is duplicated between different environments for the different roles and tools; difficult to manage permissions and ensure consistency/accuracy across them



High Complexity

The complexity of an enterprise data platform makes it difficult to find skills, increases the cost of operations and creates bottlenecks in the analytics process



Time to Insights

Disconnect and dependencies between teams means it takes a long time to go through the analytics cycle!





Citizen and Pro Development in One UI,
enable the 35x Power BI user base

Game changing accelerated delivery and
intuitive consumption through Generative AI

Remove the technical boundaries to building a
Data Mesh

7 interfaces all natively access the same data in
one place.

One Lake / One Copy of the data stored in
open formats – no vendor lock-in

Data Virtualization enables multi-cloud

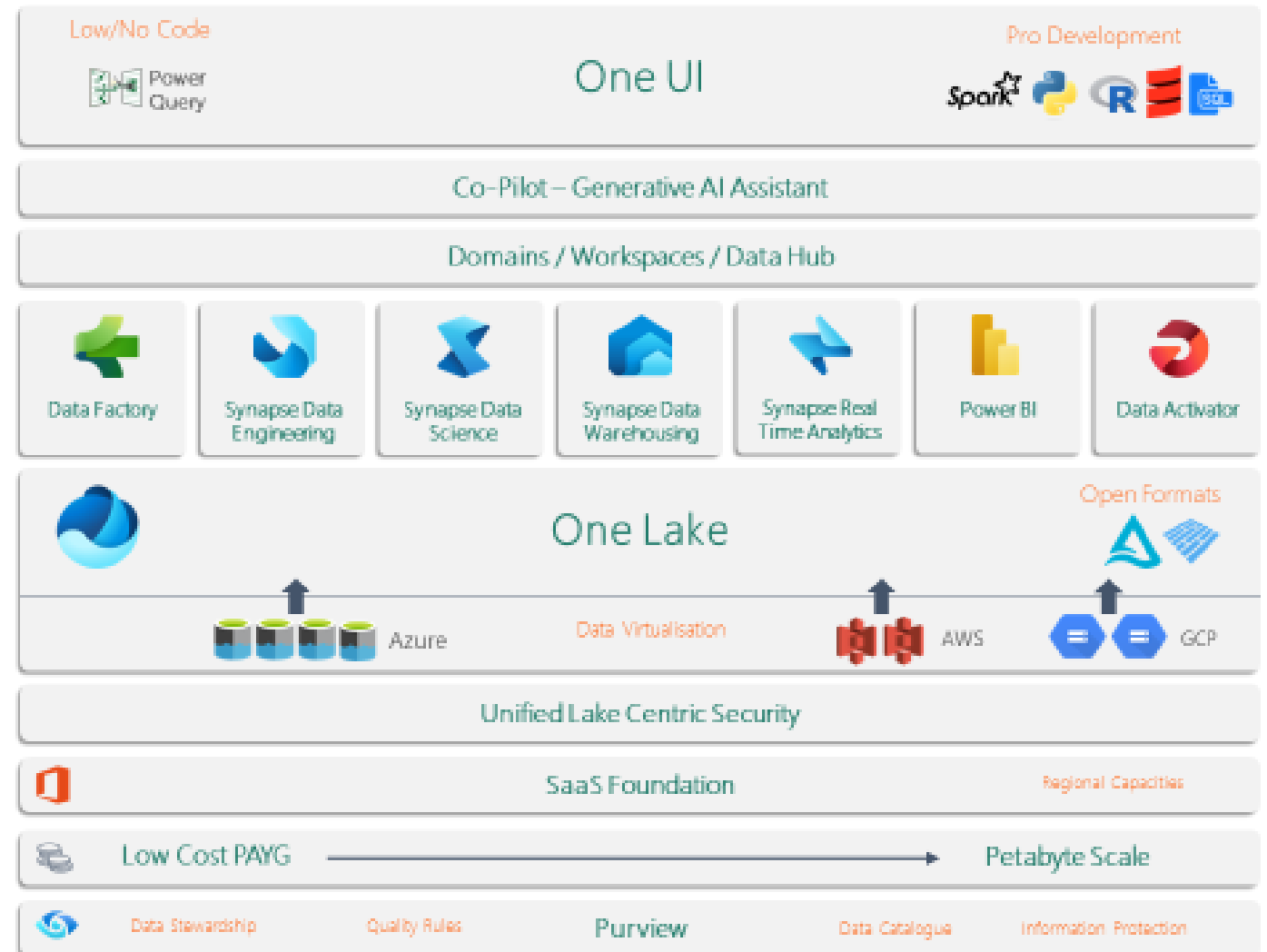
Unified security, apply once across all layers

Built on a SaaS foundation as part of Office 365

One platform from very small to petabyte scale.

Integration with Purview coming...

Microsoft Fabric On a Page



Understanding the toolbelt



Data Integration

- ❑ Combines the simplicity of Power Query with the scale and power of Azure Data Factory. You can use more than 200 native connectors to connect to data sources on-premises and in the cloud.



Data Engineering

- ❑ A world class Spark platform with great authoring experiences, enabling data engineers to perform large scale data transformation and democratize data through the lake house.



Data Warehouse

- ❑ Industry leading SQL performance and scale. It fully separates compute from storage, enabling independent scaling of both the components. Additionally, it natively stores data in the open Delta Lake format.



Data Science

- ❑ Enables you to build, deploy, and operationalize machine learning models seamlessly within your Fabric experience



Real Time Analytics

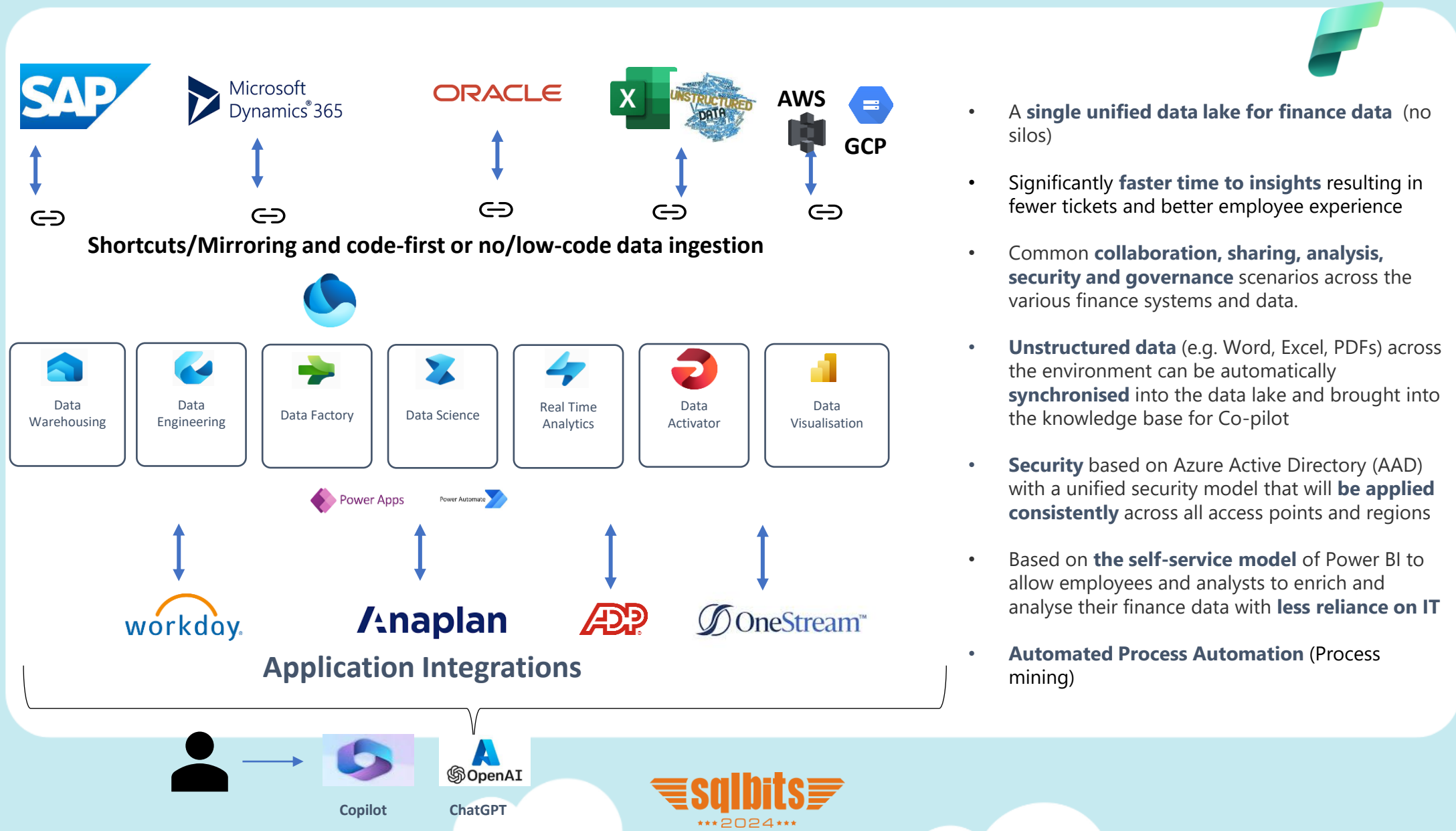
- ❑ Observational data, which is collected from various sources such as apps, IoT devices, human interactions, and so many more. It's currently the fastest growing data category



Business Intelligence

- ❑ The world's leading Business Intelligence platform. It ensures that business owners can access all the data in Fabric quickly and intuitively to make better decisions with data

Example Finance “Architecture”



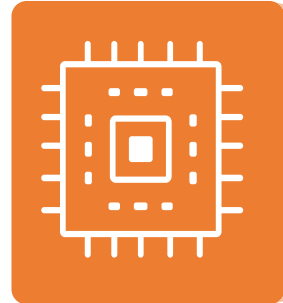
How Microsoft Fabric solves the Data Challenges

CHALLENGES



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OneLake

A single physical/logical data lake across the entire tenant ("OneDrive for data")



Software as a Service

Complexity of data platform abstracted away with no and low code tools available to work with



Unified Data/Experiences

All product experiences work off the same data + can be queried by any co-pilot experience!



SOLUTIONS

The Data Operating Model with Fabric + Copilot

Analytics Engineer

Provide clean, curated data ready for analysis, applying software engineering best practices to analytics code (e.g. version control, testing, monitoring/logging)

Data Explorers/Consumers

Uses business-friendly Data and AI tools to generate analytics and insights as required. Leverages these KPIs and insights to inform strategic/operational business decisions

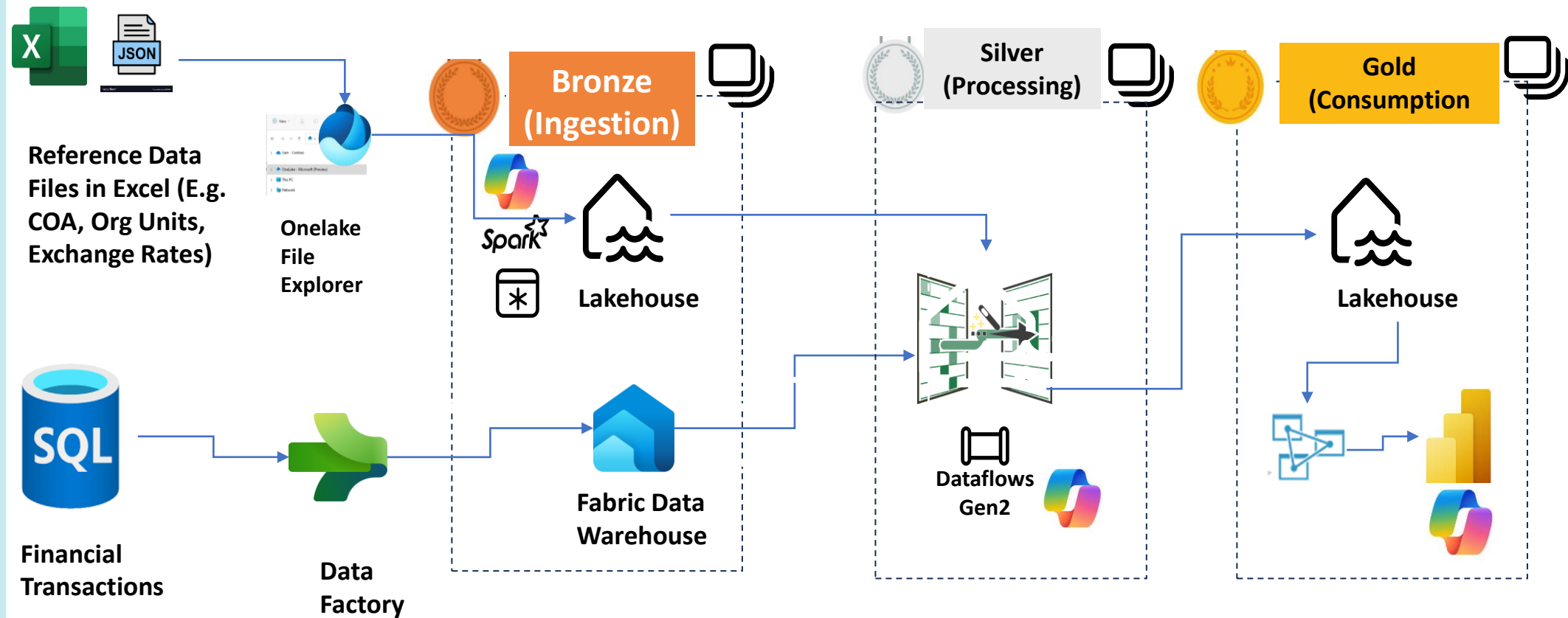




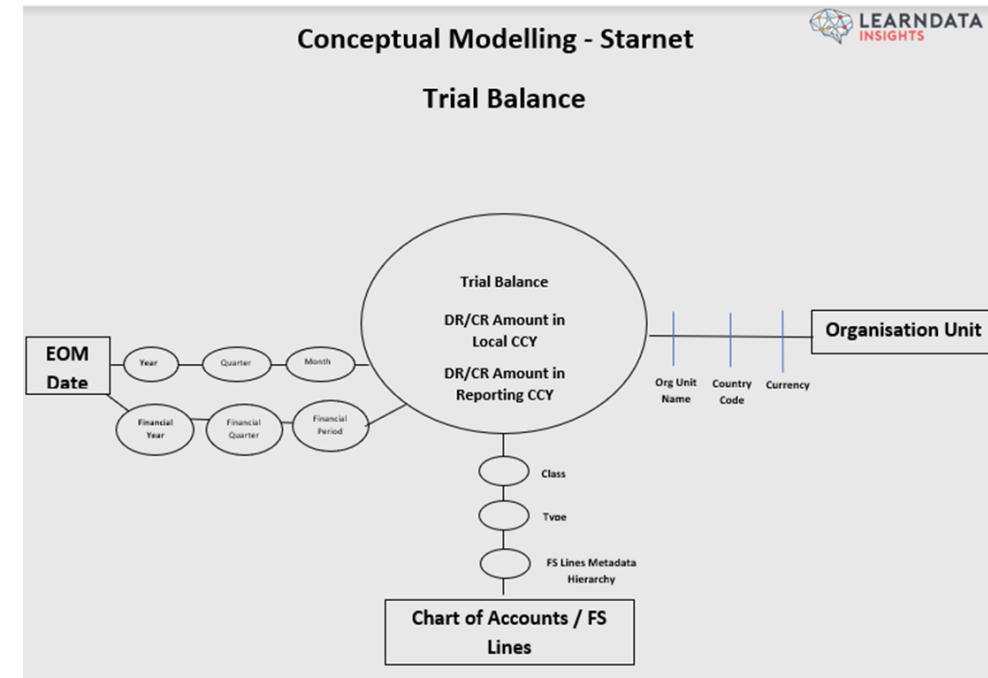
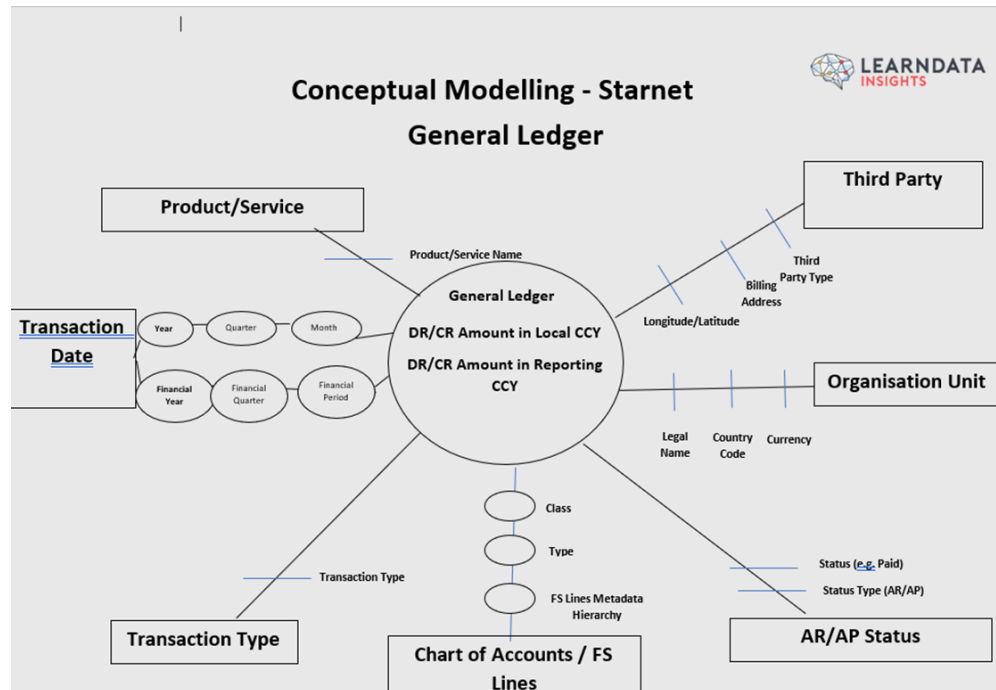
Demo



Financial Reporting Demo - Architecture



Silver-> Gold Layer: What we need to end up with



Unlocking the value in the Finance function



Lower Time to
Insight - Reduced
data movement



Reduction of non
-value add
activity and data
duplication



Single Pane of
glass across the
Enterprise (multi-
cloud/on-
premise)



Discoverability
and accessibility
of finance data



Copilot
enabled by
default



Data seamlessly
Integrated into
workflows and
monitoring/
alerting

Limitless possibilities for Modern Finance

Use **Fabric co-pilot** to quickly analyze data and identify trends and potential issues, so leaders can act fast to mitigate risks and exploit opportunities

Streamline workflows with **Data Activator** and free up Finance professionals to focus on higher-value work

Improve collaboration by having a **single user interface** for all Finance, Business and IT professionals.

Reduce silos and democratize data through self-service and enabling a **data mesh** architecture

What will change

Before Microsoft Fabric

Data **only accessible** to Finance users/analysts through a front-end/self-service layer such as **Power BI**

Low/No-code developers (e.g. Power Platform/Excel developers) to “Pro” developers **work in a different environment** (e.g. Azure); Finance are not close to the raw data & rely on IT or data team for curated data

Data is duplicated as it is re-shaped and cleaned through the various stages (Data Lake -> Data Warehouse -> Power BI); time-consuming & IT reliant

Data silos as **teams work on their own copy of data for analysis** (many of our clients have hundreds of Power BI workspaces & Excel reconciliations with thousands of reports!); no data lineage & one-version of the truth reporting



How exactly will Finance operations change?

Microsoft Fabric empowering Finance

The Finance department moves from being IT-reliant to IT-enabled (IT pipeline development time reduced by 50%)

Finance professionals can **access data at any layer** through Power BI workspaces

All data & Finance practitioners work in a **single environment** with no handover or transfer of datasets required

No data duplication – all data (SAP, Dynamics, non-GL, etc.) is stored (or virtualised) in a single OneLake platform which can be directly accessed via a data warehouse front end (SQL Endpoint), Power BI or Data Science notebooks

A single version of the data is able to be **referenced** across different workspaces, with **clear data lineage visibility**; this allows for a data mesh architecture with data products used across different domains

How Copilot can completely change the Finance landscape

Month-end close out

- **Automated reconciliation:** Fabric/Copilot can assist in automating reconciliation processes by analyzing and matching transactions across different accounts, identifying discrepancies, and suggesting corrective actions.
- **Journal entry assistance:** Copilot can help generate accurate journal entries by understanding historical data patterns and accounting principles, suggesting adjustments or entries based on the provided information.
- **Financial statement preparation:** Fabric can use Copilot's assistance to compile financial statements by generating templates and providing guidance on structuring and presenting data in compliance with accounting standards.

Budgeting & forecasting

- **Smart data analysis and forecasting:** Copilot can assist in analyzing historical financial data, identifying trends, and generating forecasts based on various scenarios and assumptions provided by financial analysts or managers.
- **Intelligent modeling support:** Fabric can utilize Copilot to aid in creating financial models by suggesting formulas, performing calculations, and refining models based on specific parameters and inputs.

Understand customer data (eg D365)

- **Data analysis and customer insights:** Utilizing Fabric and Copilot to automatically extract, analyze, and interpret customer sales data within Dynamics 365.
- **Customer segmentation:** Using AI-powered insights from Copilot to segment customers based on buying patterns, preferences, and historical sales data to create targeted marketing strategies.
- **Predictive analytics:** Leveraging Copilot to perform predictive analytics on customer behavior, suggesting potential future sales trends or customer needs based on historical data analysis.
- **Recommendation engine:** Fabric can employ Copilot to create a recommendation engine, suggesting products or services to customers based on their past purchases or browsing behavior within D365.
- **Performance tracking:** Using AI-powered analytics from Copilot to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of sales strategies, identifying top-performing customer segments and areas for improvement.

How Copilot can completely change the Finance landscape...

Financial reporting & compliance

- **Regulatory compliance assistance:** Copilot can provide guidance on regulatory requirements and assist in ensuring financial activities and reports comply with relevant standards by flagging potential compliance issues.
- **Automated reporting:** Fabric can leverage Copilot to automate the generation of financial reports by suggesting templates, formatting data, and offering insights to improve the accuracy and relevance of reports.

Risk management internal controls

- **Risk assessment support:** Copilot can assist in identifying potential financial risks by analyzing data patterns, suggesting risk mitigation strategies, and recommending actions to strengthen internal controls.
- **Internal controls enhancement:** Fabric can utilize Copilot to refine and improve internal control procedures by suggesting control measures and evaluating their effectiveness based on historical data and industry best practices.

Cash flow management

- **Intelligent cash flow analysis:** Copilot can help analyze cash flow patterns, predict future cash needs, and optimize cash management strategies by providing insights based on historical data and market trends.
- **Smart working capital optimization:** Fabric can use Copilot to suggest strategies for optimizing working capital, such as managing inventory levels or improving accounts receivable/payable cycles based on data analysis.

The Finance Fabric Analytics Engineer



About

John, a member of the finance team, is dedicated to financial accuracy, compliance, and guiding strategic decisions through data analysis, precise reporting, and dynamic presentations.

“Microsoft Fabric and Copilot allows me to have a single governed location for all my finance data which Power BI, copilot and automated processes/workflows can sit directly on top of!”

Top Fabric/Copilot behaviors

Assist

Ideate

Evaluate

Transcribe

Summarize

Top M365 applications used today



Level of time spent in M365 applications



M365 Copilot & Fabric integration

Modern Finance use case examples

- Month-end close out
- Budgeting & forecasting
- Cash flow management
- Financial reporting & compliance
- Risk management internal controls

Key capabilities for Finance

- Streamlining data management
- Automated reporting & analysis
- Workflow automation
- Enhanced decision-making
- Compliance & risk management

	Integrate	Analyze	Govern	Optimise and Monitor
Goals	Clean and combine transactional ledger data with other sources from across the business.	Automate error-free financial reporting and presentations to enhance stakeholder communication.	Maintain full financial compliance with regulations and internal policies to mitigate risks.	Optimize financial processes for efficiency and cost reduction.
Fabric + Copilot	Notebooks, Data Factory Pipelines and Dataflows Gen2 allow for Data cleaning, shaping and transformation at scale.	Automatically analyze Financial data using Power BI, SQL, Excel and PowerPoint (all directly connected to OneLake)	Microsoft Purview (built into Fabric) allows for classification, data loss prevention and lineage.	Automate budgeting/forecasting with Data Science (notebooks can connect directly to Semantic models) with Data Activator to automatically monitor and act on data
	Copilot allows for these pipelines and activities to be automatically generated with natural language and helps with monitoring them.	Copilot automatically generates accurate queries, reports and presentations, reducing errors and enhancing stakeholder communication.	Copilot is able to automate compliance checks and helps maintain consistent records.	Copilot is able to automatically identify bottlenecks and suggest process improvements.



But it requires an organizational/cultural shift!

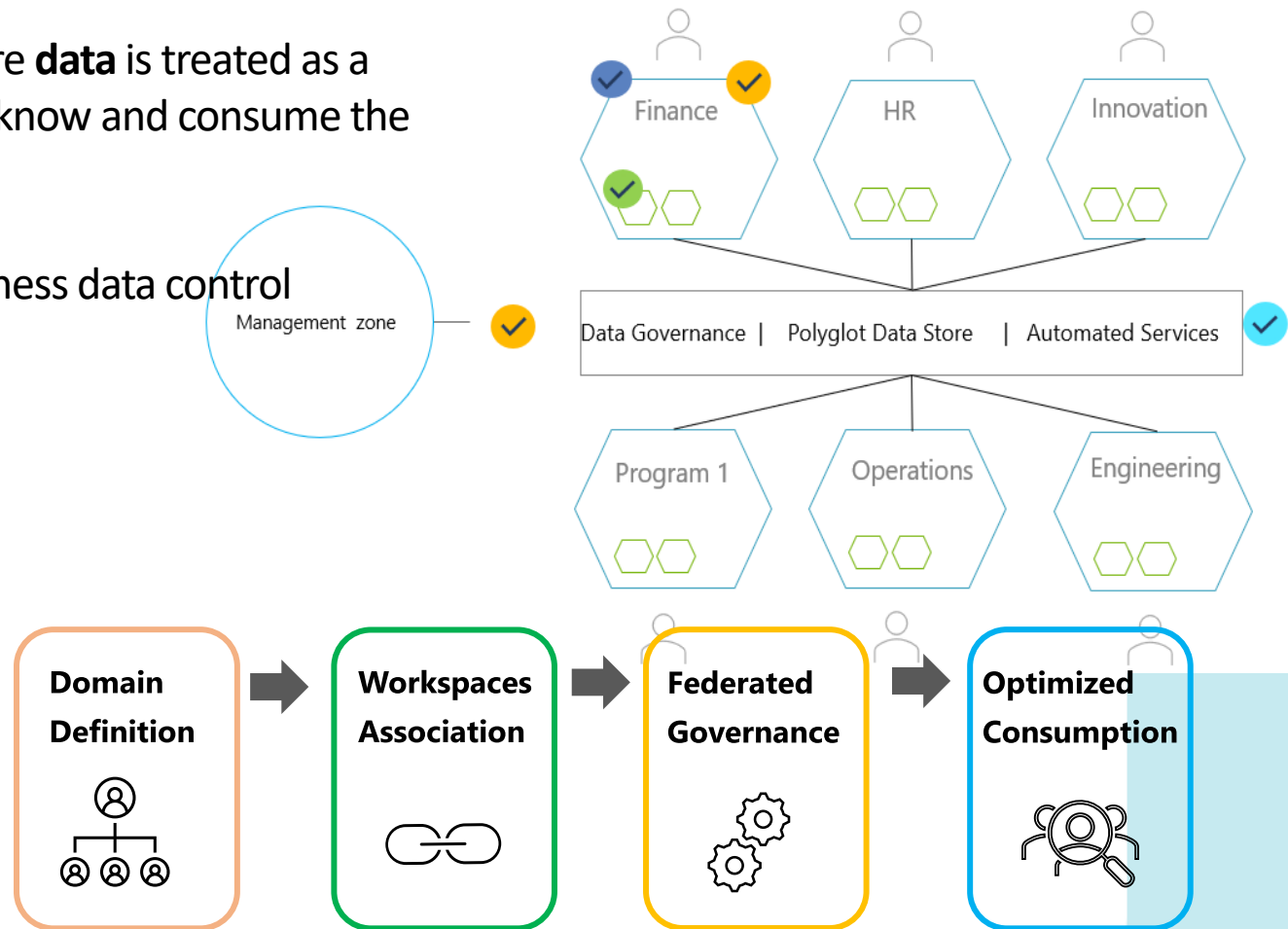
What is **Data Mesh**:

“A **domain-driven** analytical **data architecture** where **data** is treated as a **product** and owned by teams that most intimately know and consume the data.” [Zhamak Dehghani \(founder\)](#)

Moving from central architecture to federated business data control

Introducing ‘Domains’ in Fabric to enables organizations to align to Data Mesh core fundamentals:

- ✓ Structure the organization per business needs
- ✓ Domain **Ownership**
- ✓ **Federated governance** with granular control per domain
- ✓ Provide the infrastructure to start treating **data as a product**



1 Data as a **Product**

2 Domain Orientated Ownership

sqlbits
2024

3 Self-Service Data Infrastructure

4 Federated Computational Governance

And a continuous cycle of learning & development!



Foster Growth Mindset (learning paths)

Innovate (new projects)

US Payroll – Automating Payment Requests

CHALLENGE

US Payroll processed 2.5B off cycle payments each year with a net pay of \$20B. These payments are made outside the normal payroll system and require a manual request, approval and repeat into the system line of a time. There is no tracking system on requests so they are managed through email or paper, which can be lost or delayed.

SOLUTION

United Payroll implemented a new system to automate the request and approval process. The system is now fully automated and can process requests in under 24 hours.

RESULTS

- Requests can be processed in under 24 hours - 100% faster
- Digitalized request and documentation - streamlined process
- Ability to track requests, improved controls, and secure privacy
- Expanded solution to United Kingdom and Australia

TECHNOLOGY

Power Apps, Azure SQL DB, Power Automate, SharePoint, Microsoft Word, Power BI

TIME TAKEN

12 Months



Share best practices (Modern Finance portal)

Create sharable content (solutions)

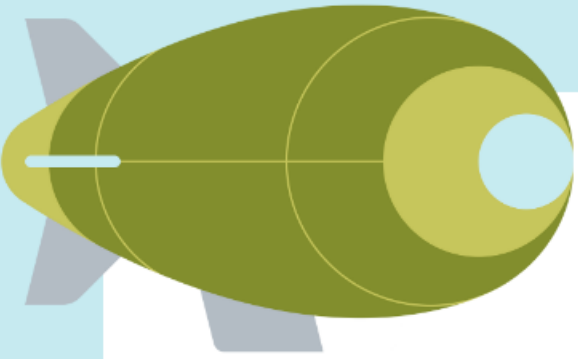


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Questions?





Thank you!

