

NETFLIX

SAMPLE WORK

# PRODUCTION FINANCE DATA WORKFLOW: REDUCING AD HOC ANALYSIS TURNAROUND TIME

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## CONTEXT

Netflix Production Finance manages **~\$17B in cash content spend** (2024, growing to ~\$18B in 2025) across major production markets including the UK (Shepperton Studios), Spain (Tres Cantos), Mexico, and 50+ other countries.

**The Data Challenge:** Production spend data lives in three separate systems—Global Spend Report (aggregated spend), Payroll Accounting Systems (crew costs), and the Production Finance HUB (production-level details). When executives need insights like "Which vendors are we spending >\$5M with globally?" or "What's our cost-per-crew-member in Location X vs Y?", analysts must manually pull from all three sources, reconcile mismatches, and aggregate.

**Current State:** Analysts spend **2–3 days per request** on data prep before analysis can begin. The insight might take 2 hours, but getting the data takes 2 days. The bottleneck isn't technical complexity—it's that data definitions don't match across systems (vendor names differ, production IDs don't align, spend categories overlap).

**Why This Matters:** In the Q4 2024 earnings call, leadership emphasized allocating "the next billion dollars in the most impactful way" with discipline tied to growth and margin targets. When Production Finance can't deliver insights quickly, allocation decisions either get delayed or get made with incomplete data. *"Quick turnaround"* in this context means same-day (within 8 hours), not next week.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

How can Production Finance O&I reduce ad hoc analysis turnaround from **2-3 days to same-day** without requiring a 6-month data engineering project or disrupting existing reporting workflows?

OPTIONS ANALYZED

Option A: SQL Template Library + Excel Front-End

FAST TRACK

**Approach:** Build 5–7 parameterized SQL queries for the most common executive requests. Create Excel templates where analysts input parameters (date range, production ID, location) and run pre-built queries against the three core systems.

PROS

- First template in 5–7 days, full library in 4–6 weeks
- Handles ~60% of current ad hoc volume immediately
- Low investment (\$15K) with quick ROI
- Leverages existing SQL + Excel skills

CONS

- Data quality issues persist (manual cleanup required)
- Won't scale 10x volume increases
- Minimal documentation risks
- Still requires analyst involvement

IMPACT

50%

Reduction in turnaround

4-6 Weeks

Timeline

\$15K

Investment

Option B: Unified Production Finance Dashboard

LONG-TERM

**Approach:** Data engineering project to integrate all three systems into a unified data model. Build comprehensive dashboard with pre-aggregated metrics and self-service capabilities.

PROS

- Single source of truth
- Scalable & self-service
- Standardized definitions
- Professional executive UX

CONS

- 6+ month build time
- High investment (\$300K+)
- Zero value delivered during build
- Risk of over-engineering

IMPACT

80%+

Reduction eventually

6-9 Months

Timeline

\$300K

Investment

Option C: Hybrid Approach — Templates Now, Dashboard Later

RECOMMENDED

**Approach:** Deploy SQL template library immediately to handle top 5 recurring requests while gathering requirements for targeted dashboard. Use template usage data to validate which metrics executives actually need vs. what they say they need.



## RECOMMENDATION

### Option C: Hybrid Approach (Templates + Phased Dashboard)

Leadership needs answers now, not perfect tools later. A hybrid approach delivers immediate value while ensuring we don't overbuild dashboards that don't match real usage.

I've seen this pattern before—the business needed decisions immediately, and a lightweight solution answered the question well enough. What started as a "quick fix" ran for 6 months while the "proper" dashboard project got deprioritized. **The lesson:** speed and clarity matter more than perfection for early-stage decision support.

### Implementation Plan

Week 1	Map top 5 recurring ad hoc questions. Validate data definitions across three systems. Document mismatches (vendor names, production IDs, categories).
Weeks 2-4	Build first 3 SQL templates (vendor spend, location cost, crew trends) with Excel front-ends. Pilot with 2 executive users.
Weeks 5-6	Iterate based on feedback. Add 2 more templates (show-level spend, data quality validation). Full rollout to Production Finance exec team.
Weeks 7-12	Track usage analytics—which templates used weekly vs monthly vs never. Survey users on gaps and friction points.
Month 4+	Scope Dashboard Module 1 based on usage data. If vendor spend templates run 3x/week, that's Module 1 priority. If crew trends never get used, deprioritize.

**Key Decision Point (Week 8):** If template adoption is <50%, pivot to "standardized request forms" that analysts run—still saves 30–40% time through reduced scoping ambiguity.

## RISKS & MITIGATION STRATEGIES

### Risk 1: Early Template Shortcuts Become Permanent

Likelihood: High | Impact: Process Debt

**Mitigation:** Hard deadline (Month 6) to either sunset templates or formalize with documentation + governance. Don't let "temporary" become "permanent" by default.

### Risk 2: Data Quality Issues Erode Executive Trust

Likelihood: Medium | Impact: Credibility Loss

**Mitigation:** Build data quality validation as Template #5—flags anomalies before they reach executives. Run validation weekly, fix systemic issues in source systems.

### Risk 3: Dashboard Scope Creep

Likelihood: High | Impact: Delayed Delivery

**Mitigation:** Lock Module 1 to single use case (vendor spend only). Create "parking lot" for Phase 2+ requests. Resist urge to add "just one more metric."

### Risk 4: Low Template Adoption (<50%)

Likelihood: Medium | Impact: Wasted Investment

**Mitigation:** Reframe as "standardized request forms" rather than self-service. Analysts still run queries, but input gathering is structured.

## SUCCESS METRICS

### 4-Week Checkpoint (Template Pilot)

- 3/5 SQL templates deployed and tested with pilot users
- Baseline established: current turnaround time for top 5 request types
- At least 5 template runs completed (validates basic usability)

### 8-Week Checkpoint (Full Rollout)

- **50%+** of top-request-type volume handled via templates

- Average turnaround reduced from 2–3 days to same-day
- User satisfaction: >4/5 on "speed of insights"
- Usage data collected: frequency analysis by template type

## 6-Month Checkpoint (Dashboard Launch)

- Dashboard Module 1 (vendor analytics) in beta with 5+ executive users
- **75% reduction** in manual vendor spend analysis time
- Template library still covering 60%+ of non-vendor requests

## WHAT I'M LIKELY WRONG ABOUT

I used to believe we needed data engineering to build the pipeline first before delivering any analysis value. The business needed decisions immediately, and a lightweight solution answered the question well enough—that quick fix ended up running for months.

**Current belief:** Speed and clarity matter more than perfection for early-stage decision support.

**What could prove me wrong:** If poor data quality from quick templates led to a materially wrong decision (e.g., vendor spend numbers off by \$2M, budget allocated to wrong location), the "fast and good enough" approach backfires.

**The test:** The data quality validation template (Template #5) flags anomalies before they reach decision-makers. If validation catches issues early, risk is managed. If it doesn't, I'll have been wrong about acceptable tradeoffs between speed and accuracy.

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Sample Analysis for Netflix Production Finance Data Analyst Role