

MEREDITH CORPORATION For more than 115 years Meredith Corporation has been a cornerstone of American service journalism. The leader in creating and distributing content across platforms in key consumer interest areas such as food, home, parenting and health. Meredith is best known through its wide array of well known print and digital brands including Better Homes and Gardens, Parents, SHAPE and Allrecipes.



## RESULTS

- Improved tracking of key operational metrics
- Improved system performance
- Time and cost savings through improved production input revisions
- Ability to better consolidate and aggregate data

## BUSINESS CHALLENGE

With over 30 subscriber-based magazine titles and over 100 newsstand titles in their portfolio, Meredith's Print Production team has the large task of working with their publishers to schedule the printing of over 30,000,000 magazines each month and distributing them to their subscribers and retail outlets.

The magazine production team needed to retire their current planning and budgeting tool which was the department's primary method for predicting the print, paper, and distribution costs associated with the monthly magazine production within a targeted accuracy of +/-1%. Annually, these costs exceed \$250,000,000.

Magazine production is a highly complex process, requiring considerable planning and insight to get right. Costs are derived from operational KPI's such as: printer contracts, paper procurement, and the USPS. Planning inputs are used to drive multiple calculations which estimate overall cost. These cost calculations drive production and business decisions affecting magazine page size and potential advertiser business. Inaccurate inputs or calculations could adversely affect those decisions potentially costing Meredith tens (if not hundreds) of thousands of dollars on any given magazine issue.

Besides simply replacing outdated technology, Meredith was also looking for performance improvements. Significantly reducing the amount of time it took to change production inputs and the ability to better consolidate and aggregate data across time and magazines was a requirement.

Beginning with our first project in 2012, we were not only looking for a solution to our challenges but a partner that could support our evolving environment. Now, years later, it's a comfort knowing that no matter what arises we can count on eCapital to help. That combined with our enhanced environment means we no longer simply focus on keeping the system functioning, but rather on challenging ourselves to find what more we can do strategically.

**KAREN JOHNSON**  
*Director of Financial Reporting*  
Meredith Corporation





## APPROACH

Ever since Meredith's initial success with the first implementation of Hyperion Planning, Meredith's user base had come to recognize its value and had become increasingly reliant on the operational insights derived from the data. There was recognition that the Oracle Planning and Budgeting Cloud Service leveraged the power and versatility of the Hyperion Planning analytics model in a service that mapped well to Meredith's overall planning architecture and long-term platform strategy.

Following an evaluation, Meredith's Print Planning group concluded that Oracle's cloud services was the best fit to meet the calculation and aggregations needs for the operational model. These improvements helped to greatly reduce time Production Managers needs to spend entering data in the system and instead could focus on producing efficient magazines error free. Simultaneously eCapital was selected to develop and implement a new Operational Planning Model using Oracle's PBCS.

## STRATEGY

The first step focused on eCapital and Meredith working together to develop a new Operational Planning Model for use by the production group. Meredith provided insights related to the current process and worked with eCapital to identify opportunities to get the data they needed via enhanced reporting designed to facilitate the best decisioning.

The project progressed with a focus on finding and defining user-friendly processes for capturing the planning inputs while also mapping to Meredith's existing business processes. Meredith system administrators worked alongside eCapital during the build to ensure the transparent implementation of functionality.

## IMPACT

Within 3 months the new system was live. During the final stages of development the Meredith team participated in an array of training including eCapital University designed to enable them to immediately get the value out of the new system.

Starting the first day after implementation they were able to see improved system performance, and simplified end user and administration processes. Within weeks they used the new system for their mid-year estimating cycle. The alignment between Meredith's business processes and the flow of data input in the system and the reporting was very helpful for the new users. In addition, actual results are loaded into the system allowing for a process that gets smarter over time.

Our new system offers a more comprehensive and granular view to our data in real-time allowing us to make more informed decisions that positively impact our company.

The eCapital team immersed themselves in our business to better understand the project's requirements and then put forth a customized solution that was designed to get the Print Production team up and running quickly.

eCapital exceeded all of my expectations and delivered our project on time and under budget.

**CHAD SCHUMACHER**  
Executive Director of Production  
Meredith Corporation

### About eCapital Advisors

eCapital Advisors is a management consulting firm headquartered in Minneapolis, MN. Since 2001, we have helped our clients understand and implement industry leading analytics solutions to better use their data resulting in superior business decisions. We partner with our clients, Post Cereals, Bunzl Distribution, Medtronic, Michigan State University, to solve problems including: management of disparate data systems, disconnected manual processes and out-of-date reporting platforms.

The company has been frequently recognized with numerous awards including Inc. magazine's 5000 fastest growing companies.

*Contact us today to discuss how we can help you meet your goals.*