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CAS Today



The current state of Client Advisory Services is defined by a transformative vision to provide higher value, deeper insights, and a more trusted advisory relationship.

Why CPA Firms Need to Prioritize CAS

Client Advisory Services (CAS) have transformed from a traditional compliance-focused approach to a dynamic, proactive strategy, helping clients navigate complexities in their business.

In it's recent <u>Client Advisory Services Benchmark Survey</u>," the AICPA (American Institute of Certified Public Accounts) asserts that "The vision of CAS is to provide higher value to clients and deepen the trusted advisor relationship, allowing clients to focus on their core competencies and deliver on their value proposition to customers."

This underscores the fundamental shift in the role of CPA firms. CAS is no longer just about crunching numbers and preparing financial statements; it's about empowering clients with timely data and providing them with deeper business insights to inform strategy and decision-making. It's about becoming a strategic

partner, a trusted advisor who guides clients through the maze of financial intricacies, helping them not only survive but thrive in a competitive landscape.

To gain a deeper understanding of the state of CAS, we turn our attention to the top CAS performers identified in the benchmark survey. These firms are setting the pace for the profession, showcasing the transformative power of CAS.

So what sets them apart?

Top CAS performers dedicate a significant portion of their team to offering Client Advisory Services. In fact, a remarkable 67% of their staff are entirely dedicated to CAS. This commitment underscores the importance they place on this service line and its impact on their clients.

Longevity in providing CAS also plays a pivotal role in enhancing performance. The survey reveals that 90% of top performers have been offering client advisory services for more than four years. This longevity contributes to higher performance levels, driven by factors such as an established client base and streamlined CAS practices. It's evident that CAS is not a quick fix; it's a long-term commitment that yields substantial benefits.

Additionally, a significant portion of the respondent to the survey experienced organic growth in their CAS practices by providing services to existing firm clients. This growth not only solidifies client relationships but also showcases the increasing demand for CAS among clients who value strategic financial guidance.

When we explore the composition of CAS offerings, we see a shift towards real-time or almost real-time outsourced accounting. 60% of the respondents' total offerings were CAS, highlighting the trend towards proactive, data-driven advisory services rather than the traditional after-the-fact bookkeeping and write-up work.

A closer look at the services offered within CAS shows the breadth of value that progressive CPA firms bring to their clients. These services include CFO/Controller Advisory services, offered by an impressive 88% of top firms, and consulting services encompassing financial planning and modeling, provided by 83% of top performers. Forecasting and budgeting, critical for effective business planning, also feature prominently, with 83% of top firms offering these services.

"67% of their staff are entirely dedicated to CAS"

Finally, when we consider the financial impact of CAS, it becomes clear that top performers are reaping significant rewards. CAS Net Client Fees (NCF) and CAS Net Client Fees Per Professional (NCFPP) for top performers have seen substantial growth, with **a median NCFPP increase of 25%**, reaching over \$230k.

Top CAS performers provide higher value, deeper insights, and a trusted advisory relationship. They offer a comprehensive suite of services that go beyond compliance, and their financial performance underscores the value they deliver. As we continue to explore the realm of CAS, it is clear that this is not a stagnant profession but a dynamic force driving the accounting profession forward.

CAS Leaders

How the Leading CAS Firms are Successfully Implementing and Offering Their Services

Client Accounting Services firms are experiencing a significant transformation.

To stay ahead of the curve and meet client demands, top-performing CAS firms have implemented a range of best practices that enhance the value of their offerings. These practices not only strengthen their position in the market but also pave the way for sustainable growth. In this section, we will explore best practices and highlight key insights from the profession.

RAISE PRICES TO REFLECT VALUE

Leading CAS firms understand the importance of aligning their pricing with the value they provide to clients. As <u>Thomson Reuters</u> Institute report suggests, "Efficiency can be improved in a number of different ways, including making investments in the latest technology or simply training employees to make better use of the technology they already have." This allows CAS firms to raise their prices confidently, recognizing that their services contribute to clients' success.

USE DEDICATED CAS STAFF

The top-performing CAS practices have realized the significance of having a dedicated team that is solely focused on CAS. As the CAS Benchmarking Survey indicates, CAS staff can be more effective when they do not divide their time between advisory and other areas of the firm. This commitment ensures that CAS services receive the attention and expertise they require.

3

STANDARDIZE PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

Standardization is a cornerstone of CAS success. By streamlining their processes and procedures, firms can consistently deliver high-quality services to their clients. This not only improves efficiency but also enhances client trust and loyalty. Standardization also plays a pivotal role in effective automation, a critical component of modern practices.

4

COMMUNICATE THE VALUE OF CAS SERVICES

One of the key challenges facing CAS firms is communicating the value of their services, both internally and externally. <u>Thomson Reuters</u> report reveals that many clients are seeking business advisory services and tax planning, but they often lack awareness of the value that CAS can provide. CAS leaders must craft a compelling value proposition and consistently communicate it to clients and internal stakeholders to overcome the friction.

5

PACKAGE AND BUNDLE SERVICES

By giving options, you can equip your clients to tailor their services to their specific needs while demonstrating the value they will receive. Additionally, package pricing enhances transparency and simplifies the billing process.

6

CROSS-SELL CAS SERVICES TO EXISTING CLIENTS

Building client relationships is essential for CAS firms. Cross-selling to existing clients not only expands the range of services offered but also deepens the client-firm relationship. Clients who have experienced the value of CAS in one area are more likely to engage with additional services.

7

OFFBOARD LOW-VALUE OR HIGH-MAINTENANCE CLIENTS

Some clients may not fit the firm's preferred niche, service model or software systems. Leading CAS firms are transparent with prospects about their services and pricing, ensuring that clients who are not an ideal fit are identified early. This strategic approach allows CAS firms to focus their resources on clients where they can deliver the most value.

8

UPGRADE TO A TECH STACK THAT PROMOTES AUTOMATION AND EFFICIENCY

For CAS firms looking to enhance efficiency and deliver value can take advantage of modern tools, process automation and artificial intelligence to streamline CAS operations, reduce manual labor, and improve accuracy. CAS firms must continuously evaluate and invest in their technology stack to stay competitive in the market.

9

INVEST IN LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The commitment to ongoing training and education is a hallmark of top-performing CAS firms. These firms prioritize staff training, deepening their expertise and skill sets. They also explore non-traditional talent options, including remote team members, to bolster their capacity for growth.

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FOCUS ON KPIS OTHER THAN UTILIZATION AND REALIZATION

Leading firms recognize the need to look beyond traditional KPIs, such as utilization and realization rates, to measure CAS success accurately. Metrics like revenue per client and net client fees per professional offer a more holistic view of CAS performance and align more closely with the value-driven approach that CAS firms aim to deliver.

The evolution of CAS offerings represents an exciting opportunity for firms to thrive and innovate. By implementing these best practices and embracing the insights, CAS firms can position themselves as leaders in the profession and continue to meet the evolving needs of their clients effectively.

As one prominent quote from the "8 insights from top-performing CAS practices" report aptly summarizes:

"CAS can be 'a growth engine for the profession,' offering a pathway to sustained success in a rapidly evolving business environment."



An Inside Look at CAS Clients and What They Value

It's All About the Client

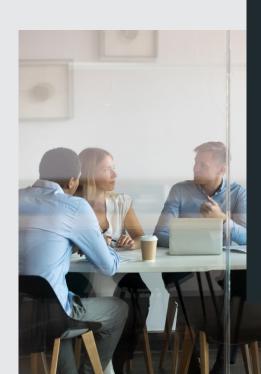
In the realm of Client Accounting Services (CAS), understanding your client's needs and priorities is paramount.

It's not just about offering financial services; it's about providing value that resonates with businesses seeking to not only survive but thrive. In this section, we will explore three key opportunities that are mission-critical to your clients success.

Opportunity #1

Cash Flow Forecasting - A Lifeline for Business Survival

The adage "cash is king" holds true for businesses of all sizes. According to the stats, more than 80% of business failures are attributed to a lack of cash. Shockingly, 20% of small businesses fail within their first year, with half succumbing to financial pressures within five years. This sobering reality underscores the critical importance of cash flow forecasting in business operations.



1. Cash Flow Forecasting

Why Businesses Need a Cash Flow Forecast

Improve Cash Management:

A weekly cash flow forecast is instrumental in optimizing cash management. By having a clear picture of expected cash inflows and outflows, businesses can minimize or even eliminate the need for borrowed funds. Predictability in cash flow reduces reliance on loans, freeing up reserve cash that can be strategically reinvested to pay dividends, manage credit arrangements, and cover operational expenses more efficiently.

Identify Business Growth Needs:

Weekly cash flow forecasting unveils the nuances of a business's accounts payable and receivable cycles. Unlike monthly or quarterly forecasts, weekly forecasts offer a granular view, enabling the rapid detection of financial setbacks or unexpected fluctuations in cash flow. This proactive approach empowers businesses to maintain control over payments, identify potential rough patches, and rectify errors.

Understand Client and Supplier Financial Behavior:

For instance, slow-paying suppliers or clients who prefer installment payments can disrupt a business's cash flow. Weekly cash flow forecasts provide invaluable insights into these payment dynamics, enabling businesses to stay organized, negotiate contracts effectively, and communicate with stakeholders regarding discounts, extensions, and payment terms.

Businesses Seek Trusted Advisors

While cash flow forecasting is crucial, not all businesses have the internal resources or expertise to manage it effectively. This is where the role of a trusted advisor comes into play. Businesses can benefit from different types of financial experts, each offering unique advantages:

Financial professionals, such as CPAs or fractional CFOs may both excel in managing financial data, identifying and rectifying discrepancies in budgets, payments, and cash flow, contributing to financial stability.

They may also look further into the future by creating financial insights, strategies, and business forecasts. Leveraging industry expertise, they monitor expenses, profitability, and historical cash flow trends. Based on this data, they craft long-term financial forecasts and action plans that align with a company's operations, performance, and goals.

Advisors also leverage weekly cash flow forecasts to facilitate well-informed decision-making regarding cash management and overall business growth. Their expertise enables them to delve deep into a company's financial health, offering solutions to critical questions related to collection, payments, and optimizing returns on assets, both current and future.

Why Cash Flow Forecasts are Essential

Cash flow forecasts offer multifaceted benefits to businesses, shedding light on the intricate relationship between financial decisions and cash flow dynamics. Here are some compelling reasons why an accurate cash flow forecast is essential:

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF DECISIONS

Cash flow forecasts enable businesses to gauge how their decisions affect cash flow and vice versa. By identifying red flags like negative balances early on, companies can take corrective action. Additionally, forecasts help in planning short-term financing needs and aligning investments effectively.

9 BURN RATE INSIGHTS

For businesses in growth mode, understanding their burn rate is critical. Accurate cash flow forecasts provide a clear overview of the runway at the current burn rate, helping companies make informed decisions to extend their runway when needed.



3

BUILDING TRUST WITH INVESTORS AND LENDERS

Regular, accurate cash flow forecasting instills confidence in investors and lenders. It demonstrates the business's commitment to financial transparency and management. This trust can lead to improved investment terms and more favorable lending arrangements.

4

OPTIMIZING CASH USE

In cases where cash is limited, or burn rates are higher than anticipated, precise cash flow forecasts allow businesses to prioritize creditor payments strategically. This prevents scenarios where critical creditors go unpaid, and funding is jeopardized. Accurate forecasts also aid in minimizing interest payments while maintaining liquidity.

5

ENHANCING WORKING CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

Cash flow forecasts highlight the impact of working capital on cash positions, enabling businesses to assess the need for working capital reduction. This, in turn, reduces the reliance on cash reserves and allows for a more efficient allocation of funds.



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2. Sales Projections

Today's Sales Pipeline Leads to Tomorrow's Cash Flow

Resource Allocation:

Sales forecasting empowers businesses to allocate resources efficiently. By anticipating future sales, companies can optimize inventory levels, production schedules, and staffing requirements. This proactive approach ensures that resources are utilized judiciously and in alignment with their capacity.

Financial Planning and Budgeting:

Sales projections are integral to financial planning and budgeting. They provide the foundation for setting revenue targets, establishing budgets, and allocating resources effectively. With accurate sales forecasts, businesses can make data-driven decisions that enhance their overall financial performance.

Types of Sales Forecasting

Total Revenue Forecasting:

This method predicts the total revenue a business will generate over a specific period. It encompasses all revenue sources, including product sales, service fees, subscriptions, and any other income streams. Total revenue forecasting aids in planning for growth, resource allocation, and strategic decisions regarding pricing, marketing, and product development.

ARR (Annual Recurring Revenue) and MRR (Monthly Recurring Revenue):

ARR measures the annual revenue generated by subscription-based business models, while MRR measures monthly recurring revenue. ARR forecasting predicts annual revenue from subscriptions over a given period, enabling businesses to plan for consistent income from subscription-based services. MRR, on the other hand, focuses on monthly income, providing insights into short-term revenue trends.

One-Time Sales Forecasting:

This method predicts revenue generated from one-time sales, such as product purchases or service fees. Many businesses rely on customer relationship management (CRM) systems to track potential deals in their pipeline, assess conversion probabilities, and estimate closing dates. Integrating CRM data with cash flow forecasting tools, such as Dryrun, ensures that one-time revenue projections are incorporated into the overall cash flow forecast.

Product Line Forecasting:

Businesses often offer multiple products or product lines. Product line forecasting predicts revenue for each product or product line individually. This approach helps businesses identify which products are driving revenue growth, allowing for informed decisions regarding product development, marketing strategies, and resource allocation.

Advise Your Clients on Their Future Revenue

Client Accounting Services (CAS) firms can leverage sales forecast data to provide invaluable insights and guidance to their clients. Here are some ways CAS can harness this data effectively:

1

CONNECT FORECASTS WITH BUSINESS PLANNING

CAS can establish a direct link between sales forecasts and business planning models, aligning with key performance indicators. This integration allows sales managers to calculate quota attainment, project compensation payouts, optimize territories, and consider quota relief strategies based on data-driven projections and real-time market conditions.

2

REAL-TIME EFFICIENCY

Sales forecasting software enables real-time adjustments, a crucial feature for staying agile in response to evolving market dynamics. CAS teams can rapidly reallocate resources to more productive areas, adapt sales targets to reflect changing market realities and adjust marketing, advertising and sales activities as required.

3

ALIGNING SALES STRATEGIES WITH BUSINESS GOALS

CAS can ensure that sales strategies are closely aligned with a company's overarching goals and objectives. This alignment ensures that sales efforts contribute directly to achieving broader business objectives.



PROVIDING INSIGHTS

By analyzing sales forecast data, CAS firms can offer their clients a comprehensive view of their sales landscape. This enables clients to identify trends, patterns, and anomalies that might otherwise go unnoticed.

5

INFORMING STRATEGIC PLANNING

A deep understanding of sales forecast patterns and trends enables CAS clients to make more accurate forecasts. Beyond improving predictive accuracy, this understanding informs strategic planning. CAS clients can identify high-potential leads, optimize sales tactics, and adapt their approach based on anticipated market trends.

6

TRANSFORMING DATA INTO ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS

Sales forecasting software allows organizations to transform raw data into actionable insights. These insights empower CAS clients to make informed, strategic decisions that drive growth, boost sales, and enhance their overall financial performance.

'Lumpy' Cash Flow

One of the most significant challenges businesses face is the variability in their sales cycles, which can lead to erratic cash flow patterns. This unpredictability often results in "peaks" and "valleys" in cash flow, with the potential to disrupt a company's financial stability.

Businesses often miss the opportunity to address the "valleys" or slow sales periods well in advance. However, CAS firms can play a vital role in equipping their clients to take proactive actions and boost sales activities ahead of a downturn.

Consider this startling fact discovered by Dryrun's algorithms: When businesses bring their below-average months up to an average level, they can potentially generate an additional 21% in revenue. This impressive figure underscores the importance of identifying and mitigating low sales periods, which, if left unaddressed, can result in missed revenue and decreased profitability.

By providing clients with advanced insights into their cash flow patterns and helping them identify potential "valleys," CAS firms enable businesses to take timely actions. These actions can include marketing campaigns, promotions, and strategic adjustments to smooth out the sales pipeline. In doing so, businesses not only increase their revenue but also experience a significant boost in profit margins.

The challenge of variable sales cycles and 'lumpy cash flow' is prevalent across various business types. However, it is often more pronounced in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). SMEs typically have fewer financial resources, limited access to credit, and a smaller customer base.

"When businesses bring their below-average months up to an average level, they can potentially generate an additional 21% in revenue." Project-based businesses, in particular, grapple with cash flow issues when projects extend over several months. These businesses must allocate working capital carefully, as prolonged projects can strain available financial resources. Additionally, project-based businesses may encounter cost overruns and scope creep, which further exacerbate cash flow challenges.

SMEs face distinct cash flow obstacles due to their limited financial reserves and restricted access to bank loans or lines of credit. Banks often perceive SMEs as high-risk borrowers, making it challenging for these businesses to secure financing.

Furthermore, SMEs frequently rely on a small number of key customers for a significant portion of their revenue. Late payments or the loss of a key customer can trigger major cash flow problems.

Variable cash flow is a universal challenge, but its impact is particularly pronounced in SMEs and project-based businesses. CAS firms can play a pivotal role in helping clients navigate these challenges by providing proactive insights and strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of cash flow volatility.





3. Modeling Scenarios

Empowers Businesses to Anticipate and Plan

Risk Mitigation:

Scenario planning involves creating backup plans and identifying potential risks. This proactive approach allows organizations to integrate risk mitigation into their financial planning, reducing the impact of unforeseen challenges.

Improved Decision-Making

Scenario planning presents multiple options to business leaders, enabling more informed and strategic decision-making. By exploring various scenarios, organizations can choose the most suitable path forward based on data-driven insights.

Flexibility and Adaptability

Having multiple plans in place makes it easier for organizations to pivot and adapt when necessary. This flexibility ensures that businesses can respond to changing circumstances without starting from scratch.

Strategic Alignment

Scenario planning helps business leaders closely monitor the causeand-effect relationships of alternative scenarios. This alignment ensures that the chosen plans are in harmony with the overall business strategy.

Contingency Planning

With a clear understanding of potential risks across different scenarios, organizations can develop contingency plans to address disruptions or unforeseen events more effectively.

Communication and Collaboration

Scenario planning necessitates input and insights from various stakeholders within the organization. This fosters a collaborative environment and encourages a holistic approach to financial planning.

What's Preventing Regular Scenario Modeling?

While scenario modeling offers significant benefits, it hasn't always been a common practice in businesses. Several factors have hindered its adoption:

TIME AND RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS

Scenario planning can be time-consuming and resource-intensive, particularly before the emergence of scenario planning tools. Creating and evaluating multiple hypothetical scenarios often requires extensive manual effort, proving inefficient, even for spreadsheet experts.

OMPLEXITY OF SPREADSHEET MODELING

Many businesses rely on spreadsheets for scenario modeling, which can be cumbersome and challenging to manage. Even with scenario planning templates, modeling scenarios in a spreadsheet proves daunting for all but the most proficient users.

HIGH ERROR RATES

Spreadsheets are prone to errors, with studies showing that a staggering 88% of spreadsheets contain mistakes. These errors can have significant consequences for decision-making.



TIME WASTAGE

Managing scenarios in spreadsheets can lead to significant time wastage. Constant updates and the need to provide recommendations to stakeholders repeatedly can slow down decision-making processes.

5

DATA STALENESS

Spreadsheets do not update automatically, requiring manual updates. This results in organizations constantly playing catch-up with outdated data.

6

LIMITATIONS OF SPREADSHEET MODELING

Traditional spreadsheet-based scenario modeling limits the number of assumptions that can be effectively visualized simultaneously. This restricts analysts to addressing only a few questions at a time.

"To address these challenges, businesses need modern scenario modeling solutions that offer efficiency, accuracy, and flexibility."



The Role of CAS in Promoting and Aiding in Scenario Modeling

Client Accounting Services (CAS) firms can play a crucial role in promoting the adoption of scenario modeling among their clients. By advocating for modern scenario modeling tools like Dryrun, CAS firms empower businesses to harness the full potential of scenario planning.

Dryrun offers several advantages over traditional spreadsheet-based modeling:

TIME SAVINGS

Users have reported saving over 20 hours per week per staff member by transitioning from spreadsheets to Dryrun for scenario modeling.

PERROR REDUCTION

Dryrun's intuitive interface minimizes the risk of errors, enhancing the accuracy of financial planning.

REAL-TIME UPDATES

Unlike spreadsheets, Dryrun automatically updates data, ensuring that stakeholders have access to the latest information.

ENHANCED FLEXIBILITY

Dryrun allows analysts to test a multitude of assumptions simultaneously, providing a comprehensive view of potential scenarios.

CLEAR VISUALIZATIONS AND COMMUNICATION

From the graph to simplified scenario visuals, Dryrun is easy to understand at a glance.

"Scenario modeling is no longer a luxury but a necessity for businesses"

CAS firms can highlight the transformative impact of modern scenario modeling tools like Dryrun. By educating their clients about the advantages of efficient, accurate, and flexible scenario planning, CAS firms contribute to informed decision–making and improved financial resilience.

Scenario modeling is no longer a luxury but a necessity for businesses seeking to thrive in an increasingly dynamic and uncertain environment. CAS firms can serve as valuable partners in guiding their clients toward the adoption of modern scenario modeling practices, ultimately enhancing financial stability and strategic decision-making.



Why Firms Need to Prioritize Their Client Advisory Services

Client Advisory Services (CAS) have undergone a remarkable evolution, shifting from a traditional compliance-focused approach to a dynamic and proactive strategy that empowers clients to navigate the complexities of their businesses and fostering trusted advisor relationships.

CAS emphasizes delivering exceptional value, providing profound insights, and nurturing enduring advisory relationships. Top CAS performers demonstrate the benefits of dedication, longevity, and organic growth in their firms. They offer a comprehensive suite of services that extends beyond compliance, and prove highly valuable to their clients.

"It's not just about offering financial services; it's about providing value that resonates with businesses."

Client Accounting Services (CAS) firms find themselves at the forefront of a significant transformation. To remain at the forefront and meet the evolving demands of clients, top-performing CAS firms have adopted a range of best practices that amplify the value of their CAS offerings. These practices not only fortify their position in the market but also pave the way for sustainable growth.

The evolution of CAS offerings presents an exciting opportunity for firms to thrive and innovate. By implementing these best practices and embracing the insights shared, CAS firms can position themselves as leaders in the profession, continuing to meet the evolving needs of their clients.

In the realm of Client Accounting Services (CAS), understanding the unique needs and priorities of clients is paramount. It's not just about offering financial services; it's about providing value that resonates with businesses seeking not only to survive but to thrive.

In the sections above, we have explored three key opportunities that businesses require to navigate these challenges successfully, with a specific focus on:

1. Cash flow forecasting

2. Sales projections

3. Scenario modeling

These opportunities represent essential elements in the arsenal of CAS firms. By harnessing the power of cash flow forecasting, CAS firms can help clients safeguard their financial stability and plan for growth. Sales projections enable businesses to foresee future demand, identify opportunities, and proactively address challenges, enhancing their competitiveness. Lastly, scenario modeling empowers organizations to make informed decisions promoting resilience and strategic agility.

As CAS firms continue to evolve and adapt, they remain indispensable partners to businesses seeking financial clarity, growth, and success.



Take Your Advisory to the Next Level

Have meaningful conversations with your clients through crystal clear cash flow and sales forecasts built in minutes, not hours.

Make the Shift to Dryrun.

1 WORK WITH LIVE DATA

Connect your accounting files for immediate insights.

2 SAVE TIME AND EFFORT

Automated set-up that will turn 3 days of work into 3 minutes.

CLEAR VISIBILITY

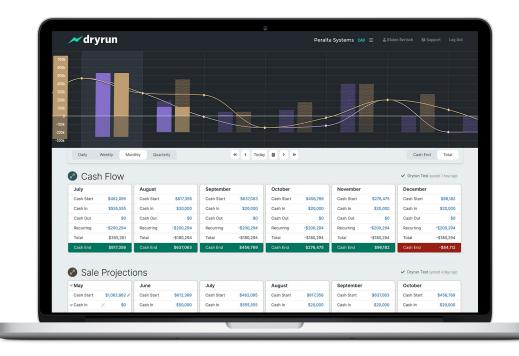
Your clients will be able to visualize any decision.

SINGLE SOURCE OF TRUTH

Present a complete picture that includes sales forecasts.

TAKE THE WHEEL

Manage and model with unbeatable flexibility



See for yourself at dryrun.com

Book your guided tour, start your free trial or chat with the Dryrun team.



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