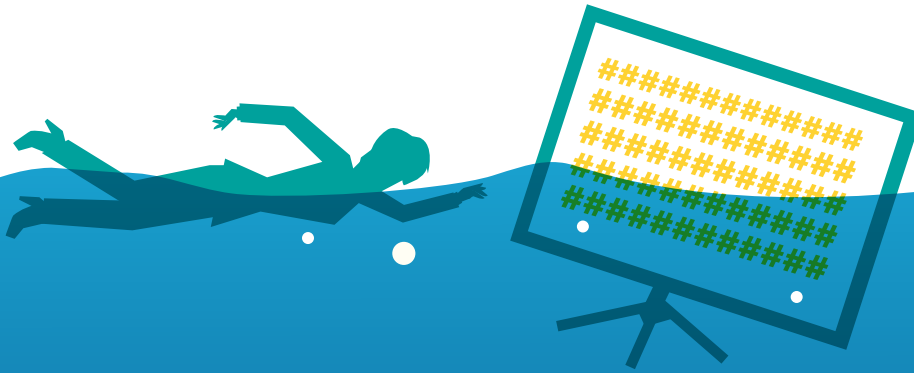


# Shark Tank Strategies for Better Board Reporting

8 Steps FP&A can take to help CFOs  
deliver killer board presentations





# Welcome to the Shark Tank

When your CFO goes before the board of directors each quarter, it can sometimes feel like he or she is wading into a shark tank.

Experienced board directors are busy, successful professionals. And they have no patience for the unprepared presenter or numbers that don't add up. Showcasing tons of data but precious few insights and a weak narrative can spark a feeding frenzy.

**So how can you help ensure that your CFO ends up swimming with the sharks instead of getting devoured by them?**

This eBook provides the path to getting there, in eight easy steps.



## Step #1 Think like a shark ... er, board member

The quickest way to spark a shark attack? Lack a compelling story that quickly connects with your board.

To best prepare your CFO, you should spend a few minutes considering what it's like to be in a board member's shoes. Remember, they don't work at your company every day and are extremely busy—often sitting on more than one board. Odds are, they show up on-site only once a quarter.

Now, in that context, think about what information and insights your CFO needs to connect effectively with those board members, to provide the right clarity, context, and guidance to help them better understand where your company stands—and where it's headed.

Considering the above reality, sending your CFO into the boardroom with a 60-slide deck surely doesn't cut it. You need a streamlined presentation that's focused on telling the story behind the numbers.



## Step #2 Swim away from your desk

Board members want to know more than what's on your balance sheet.

Maybe that's a big reason 76% of CFOs said their teams are tracking nonfinancial KPIs, according to the Adaptive Insights CFO Indicator Q3 2016 report.\*

Clearly, CFOs, along with board members, are looking for insights beyond traditional financials. Capturing the right KPIs—and the story behind them—requires some legwork, talking with business line leaders about the many operational metrics that drive your company's success.

You should take time to meet with leaders and managers throughout the company to understand their priorities and the metrics they use to measure results. Partner with them to identify what information is most relevant. Then make sure you set clear expectations around what information they can provide and how frequently reports are needed.



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of CFOs said their teams are tracking **non-financial key performance indicators**

\*<https://www.adaptiveinsights.com/cfo-indicator/cfo-indicator-q3-2016-report>

## Step #3 Nail down metrics that matter

Too often, CFOs stumble at a board meeting because they lack the right data points and financials to back up their presentation.

Crafting the right story for your CFO requires that you grasp the complete picture of your company. That way, you can include the most relevant proof points to support a strong and compelling narrative.

After you gather information and insights from business leaders, get your FP&A team together to brainstorm all the metrics that can help provide a comprehensive and ongoing picture of your company. At some software-as-a-service companies, you might end up tracking more than 200 metrics, ranging from bookings and sales pipeline to regional market data and headcount.

**Once metrics are identified, the key is to house all this data in one place—a single source of truth that at any given time can provide an accessible overview of every relevant metric for your company.**

After this exercise, you will be in a much better position to craft a more meaningful and succinct board presentation and narrative.



## Step #4 Take a bite out of spreadsheets

Of course, once all those metrics are identified, the prospect of tracking them can make your head spin. Trying to update and manage Excel spreadsheets won't cut it. You need a technology solution that not only consolidates the data in one place, but also updates the information automatically.

OfficeConnect does just that. Once set up, OfficeConnect automatically pulls fresh data from Excel and presents it in easy-to-digest formats that can be shared via dashboards.

Data that in the past may have taken you days to manually enter and verify can be updated in a couple of hours or less. That frees the precious time you need to craft the story behind the numbers that is easy for your CFO to present and for the board to digest.



## Step #5

### Sharpen your focus

Time is short when presenting to the sharks.

Your comprehensive list of metrics provides every chapter of the book about your business. The board presentation needs to be more like CliffsNotes—the most relevant, meaningful information presented in an easy-to-understand format.

For this, consider: What story does our CFO want to tell? And what are the most relevant and insightful metrics or KPIs that can help support that narrative?

**The result: You can create a manageable presentation that likely will include 10 slides or fewer, featuring no more than 20 key metrics.**

This approach helps you simplify the narrative, while also making it more relevant because it highlights the data and analytics that will truly show the board where your company is, where it's been, and where it's likely headed.

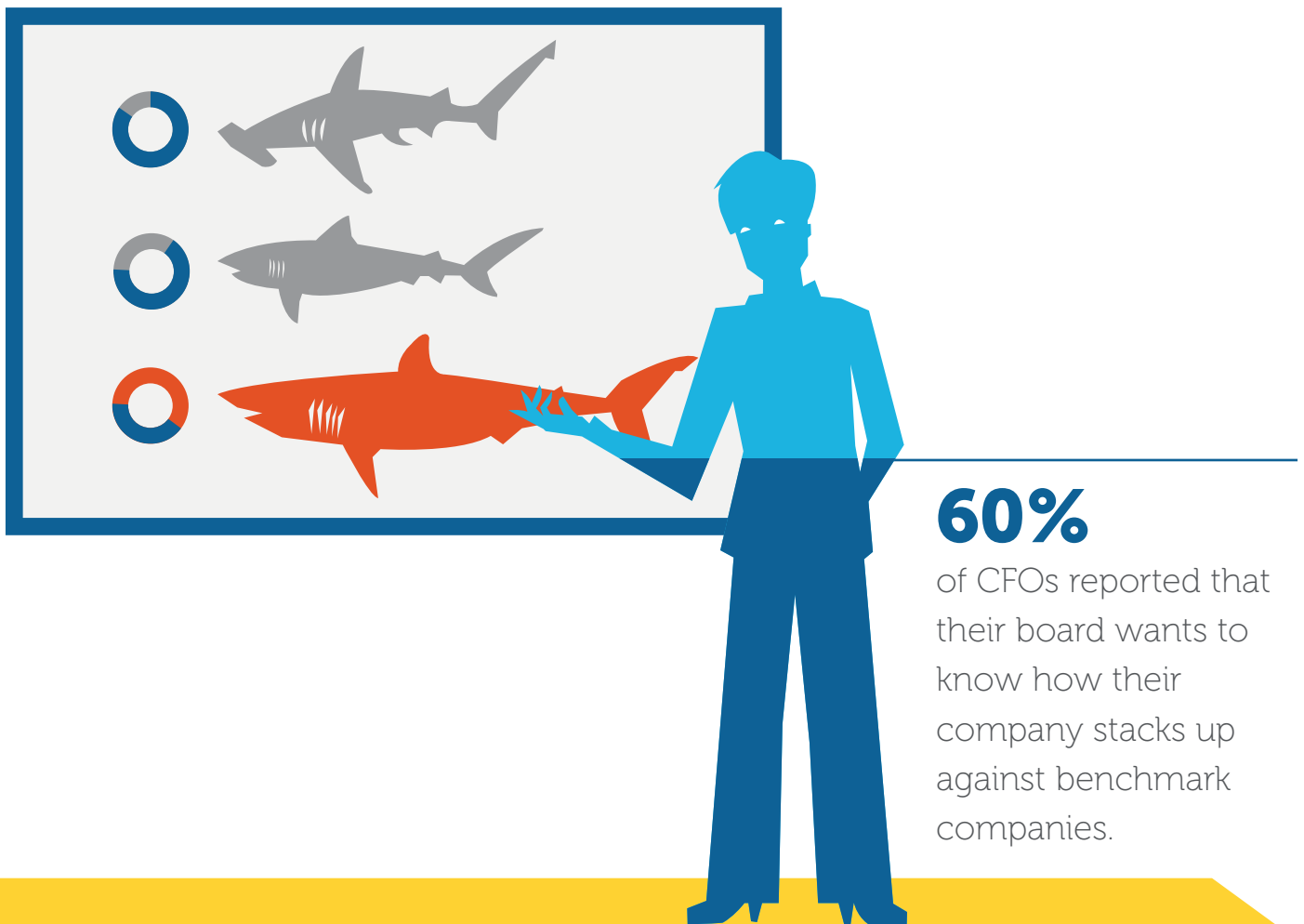
## Step #6

### Offer analysis, anticipate questions

Now that you have clarity on what metrics and key points you should share, turn your focus to doing some key analysis that will prepare your CFO to present an engaging narrative with confidence, transparency, and context.

Look for changing data that may raise a flag or prompt a question, and then provide insight on what drove the change. Did a new competitor enter the market? Did a regulatory shift impact revenues? Did a project delay lead to lower headcount than anticipated?

Also, anticipate what board members might want to know more about. For instance, in the Adaptive Insights Q1 2017 CFO Indicator report\*, nearly 60% of CFOs reported that their board wants to know how their company stacks up against benchmark companies.



\*<https://www.adaptiveinsights.com/cfo-indicator/dangerzone>



## Step #7 Don't reinvent the wheel

Sharks are creatures of habit. They thrive when they are in familiar territory.

With that in mind, the quickest way to agitate board members—and increase your workload—is to completely change your presentation's data points from quarter to quarter. When it comes to best-practice board reporting, consistency counts.

**Focus on formatting and sharing information the same way—every time. If you keep presentations consistent, you can quickly and painlessly update materials from one quarter to the next.**

Of course, consistent doesn't have to mean boring. Look for ways you can present information in engaging ways. For instance, visualizations such as bar charts, waterfall charts, and compelling images help board members see the story that the numbers tell.

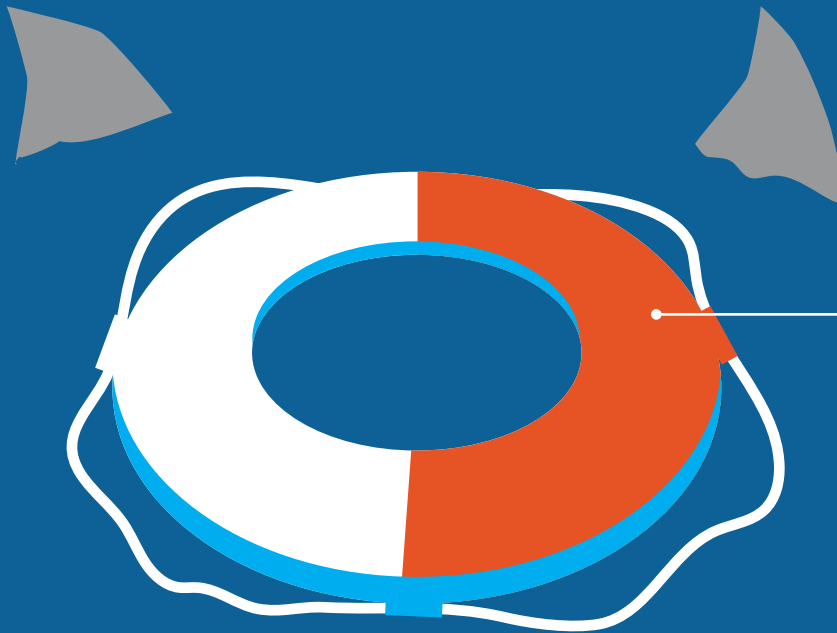


## Step #8 Do a post-mortem

Thankfully, your CFO gets more than one shot to wow the board. Each quarter provides a new opportunity.

So to keep getting better, suggest a follow-up with your CFO and FP&A team after each board meeting as part of your routine process.

There, you can discuss what worked, what didn't, and how you can build on success moving forward. These meetings can also help identify any skills gaps on your team that might be filled with training or new hires. This is particularly relevant when you consider that an Ernst and Young survey\* found that 52% of CFOs say they can't focus on strategic priorities because the finance teams lack necessary skills.



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\*<https://www.financialdirector.co.uk/2016/06/16/cfos-unable-to-delegate-due-to-failing-finance-team/>

# Start swimming with the sharks

There's a reason board members are sometimes compared to cunning sharks. They are typically accomplished investors, business leaders, and entrepreneurs who know who to attack challenges. And they have the expertise and experience to guide a business to new heights.

The same goes for a good, engaged board of directors.

A good board can serve a key role in driving your company's performance. But it can't do it alone. By following this step-by-step process for better board reporting, you put your CFO in great position to share the most relevant data and insights to help spark the right conversations and guide better decision-making.

Instead of droning through endless slides, your CFO can tell the story behind the numbers—and help write the next chapter in your company's success.

To learn how Adaptive Insights can help you take your board and external reporting to the next level, visit [our website](#).