CERVELLO WHITEPAPER

ESSBASE ALLOCATIONS MADE EASIER (WITH ASO AND BSO)

Cervello

When customers deploy an Essbase allocation application, this is often the story: At first, the application is a revelation. It's fast, it allocates correctly, there is minimal downtime, and reporting has never been easier. Users rejoice, and congratulations are bestowed. Then, as time goes on, issues begin to arise as the business inevitably changes.

Allocations start to take longer as the volume of data increases. Users are unable to report results as cube processing begins to creep into business hours. Prior periods cannot be reallocated without manual intervention from both IT and the business. Both the number of dimensions and their structure become limited by the performance constraints of Block Storage. Finally, functional buy-in deteriorates, users lose confidence in the data, and allocations return to Excel.

Allocation and reporting are two integral parts of finance and accounting but they often don't go hand in hand. Often times, finance organizations stick with BSO long after they have outgrown it when the optimal solution is to use the strengths of both technologies. As the old adage says, when you only know how to use a hammer, everything looks like a nail.

Block Storage Option (BSO), widely popular because it was the first Essbase storage option, has "excel-like" calculation language and met the needs of finance, however, it does not scale well to large numbers and sizes of dimensions. The later-introduced Aggregate Storage Option is much faster at organizing and reporting, but has limited calculation abilities.

	BLOCK STORAGE OPTION	AGGREGATE STORAGE OPTION
Benefits	Sophisticated Calculation Abilities	Easily manages many more dimensions than BSO
	Enhanced Export Capabilities	Supports much larger number of dimension members without serious performance issues
	Write-Back at any level	Instantaneous aggregations
	Native Financial Intelligence	
Challenges	Number and size of dimensions can lead to storage and performance issues	Write-back to ASO not as robust as BSO
	Aggregations slower than comparative ASO roll-ups.	No dynamic time series or financial intelligence
	Complex Performance tuning	No procedural calculation language (support for calculations via MDX)

Without combining BSO and ASO together, organizations often find themselves choosing which allocation requirements are most – and least – important. Top of mind are:

Flexibility: Allocation methodologies must be responsive to changing business needs.

Speed: Ability to iterate through multiple drivers and passes daily.

Simplicity: Simple enough to be owned and managed by the business without IT support.

Performance Sustainability: As data volumes grow, performance no longer degrades.

Reporting separate from Allocation: Fewer excess attributes, and dimensionality and allocations run when reporting runs.

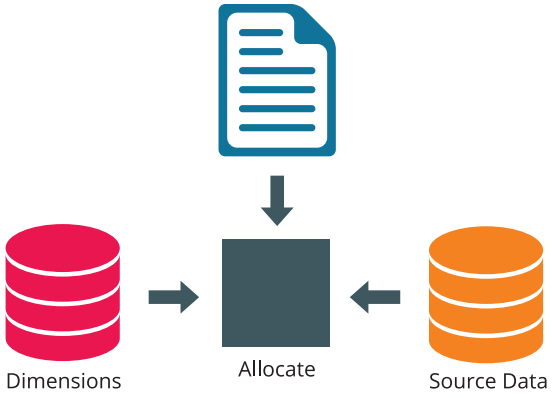
Data Consistency: Need for cohesive data archive strategy, untrusted data becomes Shelfware and all allocated data needs to be traceable.

To give business fast allocation and robust reporting, a leading practice combines both BSO and ASO technologies.

LET'S BREAK IT DOWN TO SEE HOW IT WORKS

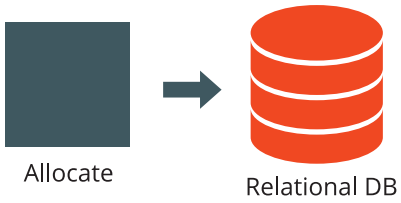
Data/Dimension Feeds

- Users provide drivers, allocation %'s, and variables via flat files.
  - Month, Year, Scenario to allocate
- Text files become variables leveraged by
  - Essbase calculations script
  - Relational DB load/delete process
- Source Data/Dimensions pulled from DB



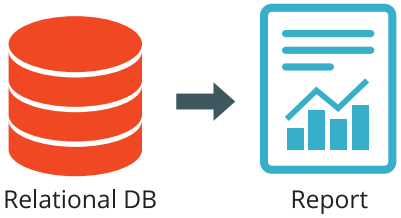
Allocation/Export

- Dimensions are only built for members in the fact table.
- Allocations are run for Month, Year, Scenario as defined by variables.
- Calculate both new data and/or restatements
- No aggs (done in ASO)



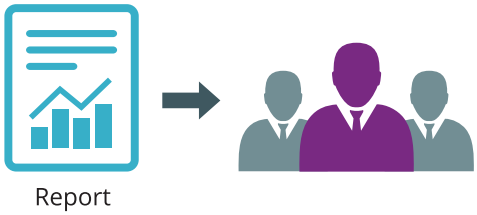
Relational Load and ETL

- Relational DB uses the variables to determine if data is new or a restatement.
  - If a restatement
    - Delete existing records in DB
    - Load new records from export
  - If new
    - Load new records
- Map to additional dimensionality and reporting attributes.



Reporting Layer

- Cube is cleared and rebuilt from scratch
- Cube is built with the full dimensionality
  - All members of every Dimension
  - Reporting Dims not in Allocation cube
- Data Load is a select * from DB



AGGREGATION

The results of this infrastructure are performance improvement, separate reporting and allocation, and consistent data.

Reduced BSO dimensionality begets fewer blocks, allowing for faster calculations and since the aggregations are moved to ASO, they are faster. Because the reporting is separate from allocation, reporting is only down during an ASO cube build, and users define what data needs to be allocated or restated. Data is more consistent because it is archived in two places, the targeted allocations reduces the complexity, and attribution mapping is done in a proper mapping tool.

All of these benefits mean easier, faster, and better financial data for your finance team.

ABOUT CERVELLO

Cervello Inc., is a leading professional services and solutions provider focused on helping companies solve complex data challenges, improve business analytics and optimize business performance. We focus on transformative cloud-based technologies in enterprise performance management, data management and business intelligence and customer relationship management. Cervello works with some of the leading on-premise and cloud software providers such as Oracle, Host Analytics, Salesforce.com and Birst. Our core services include system implementation, advisory services, custom application development and managed services.

CONTACT US

For more information, visit us at www.mycervello.com or contact us at info@mycervello.com.