



IS IT TIME TO  
**RETIRE YOUR**  
**EXCEL** ROI MODEL?

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## EXCEL IS SO 10 YEARS AGO

More and more B2B professionals are recognizing that the best approach to effectively launch a value selling capability across the organization is to marry value and ROI calculations with discovery and presentation in a way that leaves Excel's capabilities (and Google Sheets!) in the dust.

They're seeing that Excel-based ROI models which may have been useful five, ten, or fifteen years ago aren't cutting it in today's world where highly functional cloud-based applications are required to compete successfully.

SALES AND MARKETING PROFESSIONALS WHO, LIKE ME, GREW UP WITH EXCEL, NEED TO CONSIDER THIS TRANSFORMATION FROM AT LEAST THREE PERSPECTIVES:

1

What functionality will I lose? What (if anything) can we or are we doing with Excel that we might not be able to accomplish with a cloud-based solution? For example, our current models rely heavily on nesting, or complex functions such as "if" Statements, NPV, and IRR.

2

What functionality will I gain? What do the best the cloud platforms offer that would be difficult or impossible to build in Excel? More on this below..

3

Will I become more productive? Closely related to (2), why are we spending all this time (expended and elapsed), money, and management distraction trying to build and maintain complex functionality in a generic tool like Excel, when we could buy, fine-tune, and deploy it now on a cloud platform?

Surveying the current crop of cloud-based ROI offerings reveals a range of products - from simple tools that are indeed more limited than Excel to highly functional and sophisticated platforms that go far beyond Excel's capabilities. These platforms support reps throughout the sales cycle from qualification and discovery through

presentations, proposals, and closing. As you evaluate cloud-based ROI solutions, it will be important to keep this distinction between a "tool" or "toolset" on the one hand, and a full-featured platform on the other in mind.



MOST OF THE ROI CALCULATORS BEING USED BY B2B SALES PROFESSIONALS TODAY ARE STILL BUILT IN MICROSOFT EXCEL. NOW THAT'S CHANGING – FOR GOOD REASONS. EXCEL WAS AND IS A GREAT TOOL FOR BUILDING ROI MODELS. BUT EXCEL FALLS SHORT AS SOON AS YOU WANT TO USE THE ROI MODEL ON A REGULAR BASIS, AT SCALE.



SIMPLE THINGS  
ARE EASY,  
COMPLICATED  
THINGS ARE  
HARD.

## SOFTWARE-AS-A-SERVICE (SAAS) ADVANTAGES VS. EXCEL

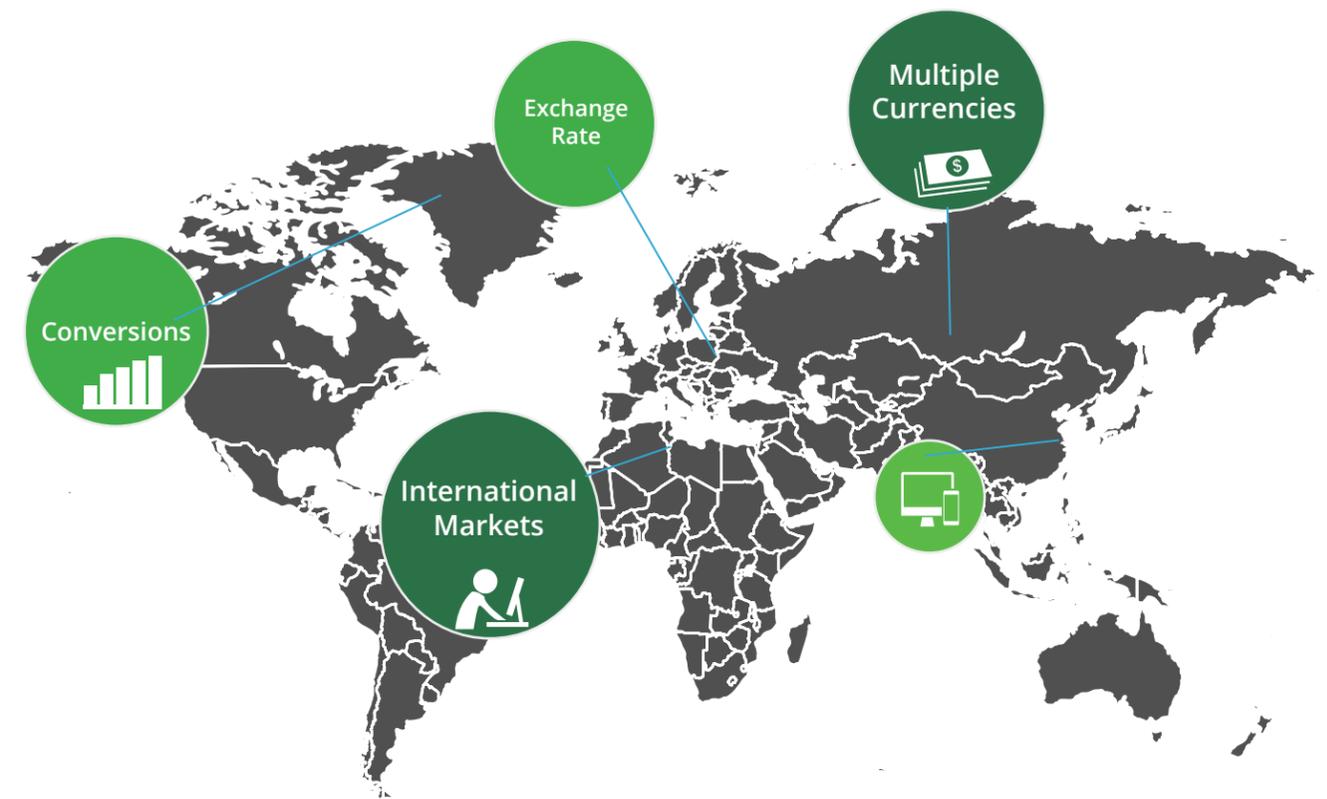
One thing people like (or think they like) about Excel models is that they are easy to build and change. This is true to an extent, but this flexibility can become a double-edged sword. As experienced software developers say, regardless of the tool, "Simple things are easy, complicated things are hard." How many internal development projects have you seen that started as, "We just need this. Build something and show it to me on Friday," only to have that simple tool evolve through a series of seemingly innocuous little "just add this," "just add that" projects into a multi-headed beast for which maintenance and upgrades became like whack-a-mole games: "Push down here and something pops up over there." Excel's flexibility also raises the risk of someone down the line tinkering with your model without appropriate oversight.

And who maintains these monsters? Usually, it's either the rare, talented employees in a company who understand both the business needs and the technology, or it's an outside consultancy. Both of these scenarios present challenges. Using an internal person virtually always presents one or both of two issues:

**A VALUABLE COMPANY RESOURCE IS DIVERTED FROM HIS OR HER PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES TO AN INCREASING FOCUS ON DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING A TOOL**

**THAT UNIQUE PERSON LEAVES, OR RETIRES, OR WALKS IN FRONT OF THE PROVERBIAL BUS, LEAVING THE COMPANY WITHOUT SUPPORT FOR WHAT MAY HAVE BECOME A MISSION-CRITICAL APPLICATION.**

The downside with consultants, which is well-documented, is they tend to execute an initial project, provide a deliverable, and then leave. Who provides support and bug fixes? They are happy to come back, but they're often pricey and you may have no guarantee of getting the same team members that worked on your application initially.



Evolution and capability extension can also be challenging with Excel. What happens when your business changes? Expanding from the US into international markets is a good example. You might have a wonderful Excel model painstakingly built over years to do everything you need. Suddenly, the ability to perform currency conversions

throughout the model becomes essential. This can mean adding fields for multiple currencies and exchange rates, updating lots (if not all!) of your formulas, and rechecking all of the results. If you've ever encountered a situation like this, you'll know what we mean when we say, "complicated things are hard!"



# FOR ALL THESE REASONS, IT IS ESSENTIAL TO LOOK FOR AN ROI SAAS PLATFORM THAT IS DESIGNED, BUILT AND SUPPORTED...

1

By an established, visionary, reputable vendor who will be there to support your ongoing use through changes in your business and markets. Plus, continuously and seamlessly add functionality based on input from their customers, the market, and technical advances like AI.

2

Using the appropriate software development tools, libraries, and architecture that enable substantially more functionality than what can be found in spreadsheets.

3

To be used safely and securely online and interact with other applications and databases, including rigorous controls over who can change what in your data and formulas, mitigating the risk of your model being altered by sales, marketing, or even the prospect.



WITH THE BUSINESS OF COMPANIES LIKE YOURS TOP-OF-MIND



## MOVING BEYOND EXCEL THROUGHOUT THE CUSTOMER LIFECYCLE

Collecting and sharing data throughout the sales journey is a critical part of the customer lifecycle. If your prospect understands and provides the underlying data in your models, and sees and accepts how the calculations work, they will likely be on your side. Therefore, as you advance prospects from discovery to demo to proposal to close, the ability to easily import and export data in multiple formats to share, confirm, and collaborate is invaluable.

On the front end, the quality of the information you gather drives the validity of your value hypotheses, ROI models, and business cases. The right platform gives you tools to collaboratively assemble this information with your prospect, showing results and obtaining their buy-in from the start.

As the sales cycle proceeds, it's not unusual to need multiple presentations, proposals, and comprehensive business cases for a single prospect. You're likely to want PowerPoints, PDFs, Word documents, charts, and graphics that all are driven by the same data and can all be updated from a single source as deals evolve and you modify the discovery information accordingly.

Of course, Excel and even basic cloud tools advertise the ability to upload and export information to and from other databases and applications. But we all know from bitter experience that making it happen and keeping everything in sync takes a lot of work and introduces opportunities for error. When using a product that was designed and built for the cloud, interoperability, integration, and output are simply parts of the platform whether your team embraces Google, Apple, or Microsoft.

### AND SPEAKING OF CUSTOMER BUY-IN...

**HAVE YOUR PROSPECTS EVER ASKED TO MAKE THEIR OWN CHANGES TO ROI INPUTS AND SEE THE RESULTS?** WITH THE VALUECORE PLATFORM YOUR SALES PROFESSIONALS CAN IMMEDIATELY SHARE A LINK WHILE IN A VIRTUAL MEETING OR BY EMAIL. THE BUYER CAN MAKE UPDATES AND PLAY "WHAT IF" WITH THE ASSUMPTIONS AND INPUTS IN YOUR MODEL. ALL ONLINE, AND ALL CAPTURED IN A RELATIONAL DATABASE. YOUR RISK IS MITIGATED, AND YOUR SALES PROFESSIONAL CAN COLLABORATE SAFELY WITH THEIR PROSPECT.





In today's selling environment, we expect our ROI Selling tools to provide more than just value estimation. An effective tool can also provide statistics that drive bigger-picture analytics. The data collected during discovery and throughout the sales process should be stored in a central location to enable statistical calculations that can help determine the probability of closing a given opportunity (more on this in a future article). This includes aggregating all the data from all the ROI models you've created leveraging outside sources like ZoomInfo, D&B, etc.

In summary, using a spreadsheet to design an ROI model can still help to work out and test the logic. But in the long run, moving that model to a cloud ROI platform is the future of ROI-based selling. Today, ValueCore offers integration, visualization, flexibility, support for complex algorithms, and total control of your own destiny.

**BOOK A DEMONSTRATION OF THE VALUECORE PLATFORM**  
**WWW.VALUECORE.AI OR CALL 415.669.8086**



Michael Nick is Vice President of Growth and Strategy for ValueCore. He has published several bestselling books including ROI Selling (©2008 Dearborn), Why Johnny Can't Sell (©2011 Kaplan), Amazon top 10 Business book, The Key to the C-Suite (©2013 Harper Collins).

Michael has been mentioned and published in Selling Power, The Huffington Post, Sales & Marketing Magazine, and featured in Top Sales World magazine. Michael was named for four straight years in a row as a top 50 "Most Influential" people in sales and marketing in the world by TSW. In addition, Michael ranks in the top 50 top sales gurus from Sales Guru.