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YEARS AHEAD



# AGILE DEMAND PLANNING

IN THE FMCG INDUSTRY

AN EYEON WHITE PAPER

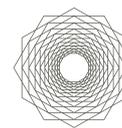
SEPTEMBER 2015



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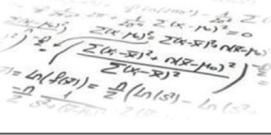
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# 1

## INTRODUCTION

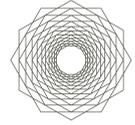
Over the last years forecasting and planning in the food and FMCG industry has become even more challenging. Companies are spending considerable time and resources improving the quality of their forecasting and planning processes.

With this in mind EyeOn since 2006 hosts a knowledge network in which over 50 leading FMCG companies share experiences and best practices on planning and forecasting. One of the focus areas is how to implement an agile demand planning process that really captures and deals with the specific FMCG dynamics. Based on EyeOn research in this network throughout the years and extensive EyeOn experience in (demand) planning improvement projects, we like to share a number of building blocks for such an agile demand planning process. First we will elaborate on the main trends in the FMCG industry that have significant impact on forecasting and planning set-up.

 <b>TIMELY DECISIONS</b>	 <b>REGULAR PROCESS</b>	 <b>STATISTICS</b>
 <b>FOCUS ENRICHMENT</b>	 <b>EVENT PLANNING</b>	 <b>EFFECTIVE NPI &amp; EOL</b>
 <b>FIT FOR USE TOOLS</b>	 <b>PLANNING SKILLS</b>	 <b>IMPROVEMENT</b>

# 2

## FMCG DYNAMICS



Over the last decades the FMCG industry went through big changes. The main trends on both the demand as well as the supply side are mentioned below.

### DEMAND TRENDS

#### More demanding consumers

Consumers get more demanding on aspects like availability, freshness, price and service. Consumer behavior is becoming less predictable. We all know that ‘the’ customer doesn’t exist and that wishes and demands depend on lifestyle but also clearly depend on situations and events. Customers cannot be just categorized into customer groups. They make up their mind depending on a situation and not always in a rational way. A random customer can go out shopping and can easily combine micro wave food for Monday evening with an extensive shopping list for homemade haute cuisine dinner consisting of e.g. Southern Spanish olive oil, Parma ham and a freshly made (or ready-to-go) tiramisu.

#### Promotional pressure & events impact

Traditionally the FMCG industry experiences a severe impact from promotions on sales volumes. To differentiate from competition account management more and more agrees on detailed promotion plans with customers. Marketing increasingly invests in customer intimacy and tries to capture and measure the impact of promotions and price sensitivity. The last turbulent years caused higher promotional pressure all over Europe to keep or maintain market share (average promotional pressure was over 20% in Q1 2015 in the Netherlands, with some categories exceeding 50%). In Belgium the number of rebate coupons exceeded 85 million in 2014! Despite these developments, a big challenge in forecasting the real effect of a promotion still exists. Price-offs, multibuy & special packs are seen in many forms and varieties. Consequence of this increased frequency and variety of promotions is a requirement for more supply chain flexibility. Next to this margin management is more crucial than ever to survive and make sure promotion plans compel with business targets.

Next to ‘standard’ promotions events like Olympic Games, Christmas, World Cup Soccer, Eastern have considerable and difficult to predict demand impact for various products.

#### Short product life cycles and more new product introductions

Retailer competition leads to high price erosion at retailers and pressure on suppliers to lower their prices. One of the ways to increase margins is the introduction of new products with higher margins. Every A-Brand that invests in introductions tries to

generate return on its investments as fast as possible. But private labels react fast. As a consequence, innovations have shorter pay-back periods and the demand patterns are difficult to predict. Private labels even start their own innovations, sometimes even faster than A-brands.

Due to above trends, in combination with the rise of private labels, increased move to omni-channel strategies and global market developments, many FMCG companies face difficulties in predicting their products demand.

### SUPPLY TRENDS

Next to the demand trends the following supply dynamics in the FMCG industry can be distinguished:

- Pressure on capacity utilization
- Suppliers consolidation
- Raw materials & energy cost pressure
- Inventory reduction in the value chain
- Waste reduction
- From supply/capacity driven to demand driven
- Global manufacturing transfer
- Time-to-market and time-to-volume pressure

### IMPACT ON DEMAND PLANNING

Above pressure on both demand as supply side can only be managed by a high quality forecasting and planning process. This process all starts with an accurate demand plan.

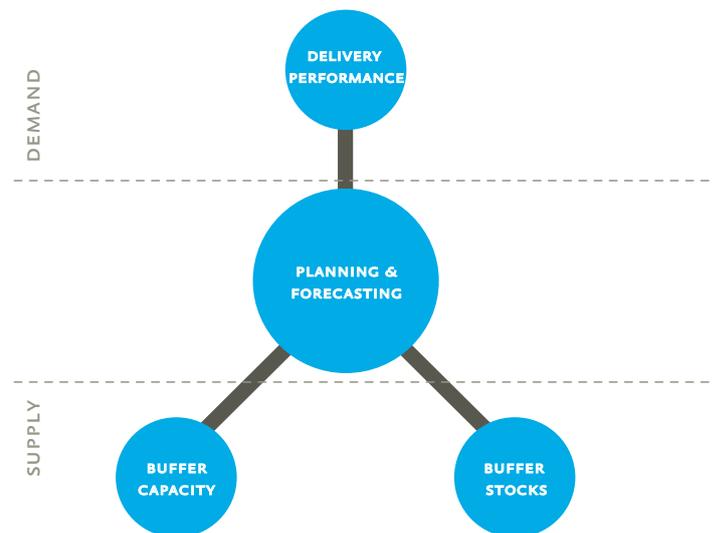


Figure 2: The role of forecasting and planning.

# 3 BUILDING BLOCK: TIMELY DECISIONS

## SET CLEAR PLANNING OBJECTIVES AND DETERMINE WHICH DECISIONS TO MAKE, WHEN.

Why is demand forecast necessary at all? The primary objective of planning is to take accurate decisions. The process must be arranged in such a way that relevant information can be shared rapidly, efficiently and transparently within the organization.

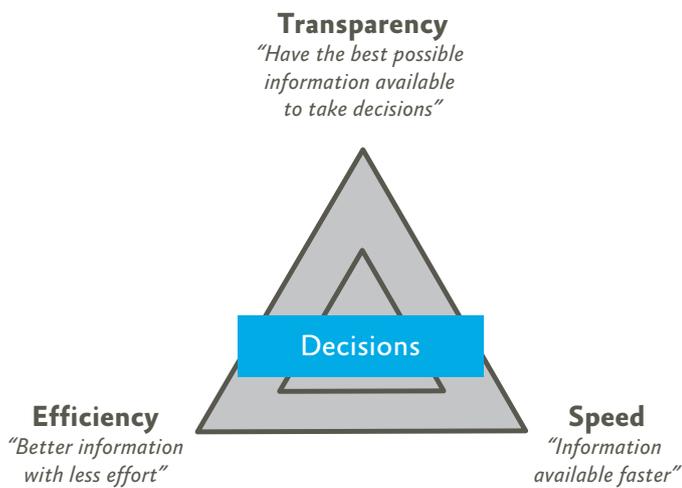


Figure 3: Planning is about making decisions.

Decisions therefore should be the starting point for designing the planning process. The key questions to be addressed are:

- What decisions have to be made?
- Where will these decisions be made?
- What information is required to make these decisions?
- Who is doing what and when?

Planning meetings often become discussions about data and its validity, so automate as much as possible. Make sure that data collection is final and complete when decision-making starts, which should be as close as possible to the moment of the decision-making meeting.

When it is known what decisions need to be made, the source of the information and who is assigned to provide it, the detailed process can be designed.

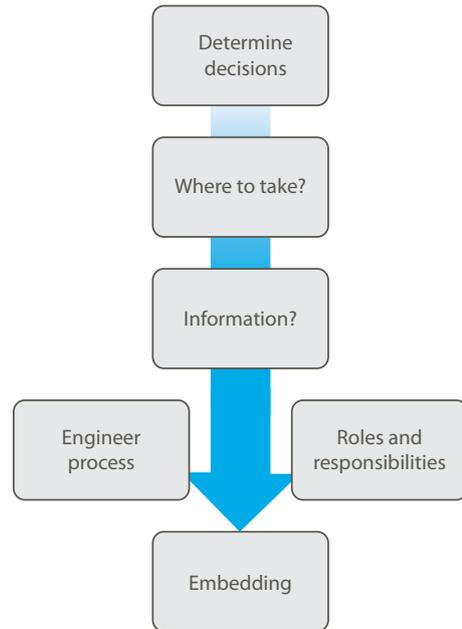
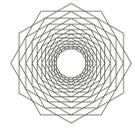


Figure 4: Demand planning process implementation model.

# 4 BUILDING BLOCK: REGULAR PROCESS



## REGULAR PROCESS WITH PREDEFINED STEPS, STANDARDIZED DECISION MEETINGS AND MARKETING & SALES INVOLVEMENT

To achieve a high-quality decision-making process, it is important to fix the decision-making structure and incorporate it into a routine, periodic, cross-functional process that clearly indicates WHO does WHAT WHEN (see figure). To break through the buffers (silo effect) between operations and sales, best-in-class companies set up multi-disciplinary teams to manage the cross-functional processes that they have created.

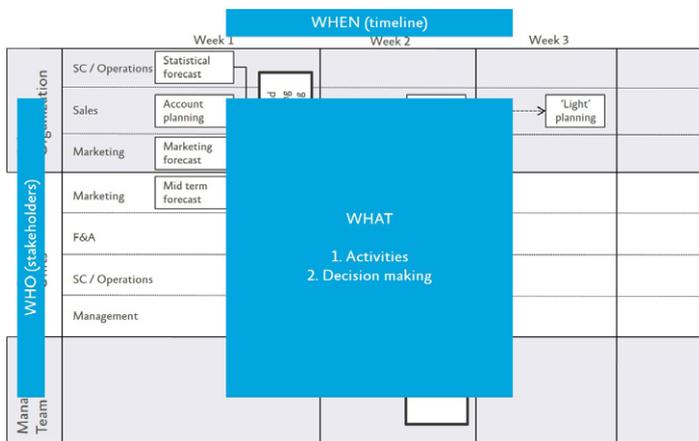


Figure 5: S&OP process predefined steps.

A major challenge experienced by many companies is how to engage sales & marketing in the forecasting process and have them take ownership of the forecast (EyeOn 2012). Involving them in the forecasting process is often regarded as challenging, but is a prerequisite to generating high-quality forecasts. Frequent Statements such as, “My job is selling, not forecasting,” show that not all sales & marketing people feel that forecasting is simply not part of their job. Lack of familiarity with Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) or advanced forecasting systems makes it even less likely that sales & marketing produce a good forecast. Requesting a stock-keeping-unit (SKU) forecast six months ahead would already be difficult. Locating a dedicated demand planner/coordinator in the marketing & sales office is a proven critical success factor, to support and challenge marketing & sales regarding their forecast input.

The picture below depicts some best practices to involve Marketing & Sales.

Process tactics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define right responsibilities &amp; job description</li> <li>Create a separate post</li> <li>involve sales in the costs of stock</li> <li>Focus on the right drivers</li> <li>Embed learnings</li> <li>Measre process adherence</li> </ul>
Motivators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create awareness</li> <li>Give training</li> <li>Walk the talk</li> <li>Reward high forecast accuracy</li> <li>Organize forecast competition</li> </ul>
Supporters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of statistical forecasting</li> <li>Top down confrontation &amp; understand market trends</li> <li>Shape demand</li> <li>Synchronized demand and supply agreements</li> <li>Speak the same language</li> <li>Supply chain improvement programs</li> <li>Easy data entry</li> </ul>

Figure 6: Involving sales & marketing in the forecasting process.

As a general rule, it is important that participants use the language of business and reach value-based instead of volume-based decisions. Sales & marketing should only be encouraged to provide input when and where it really adds value. Moreover, the focus should be on exceptions, issues and risks.

# 5 BUILDING BLOCK: STATISTICS

## USE STATISTICS TO GENERATE BASELINE DEMAND FORECAST EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE

Forecasting is an essential part of business planning and involves a wide range of functional areas, such as marketing & sales, finance and logistics. A good forecast not only drives an efficient supply chain, it improves service levels and cash flow, and ultimately profitability. Forecasts can be generated using statistics and/or judgement. A statistical forecast bases its projection of the future on results realized in the past by identifying trends, patterns and business drivers within the historic data. Judgmental forecasts, on the other hand, rely on intuitive judgements, opinions and probability estimates. The use of a statistical baseline makes the forecasting process reliable, efficient, transparent, fast and objective. Depending on the possibility to centralize the planning process, a statistical forecast can be prepared very efficiently and eventually leads to a large decrease in planning-organization costs.

Statistical forecasting offers the following benefits:

- Objectivity.
- Insights from the past.
- Fast generation of different forecasts (see below).
- Scenario analysis and comparison.

Typically organizations that adopt statistical forecasting go through the stages depicted below. First step normally is to use basic statistics in which e.g. moving average is used to predict sales for all products. In the next stage the company realizes that a one-size-fits-all model is not optimal, so products are segmented according to e.g. business value and variability of demand and different statistical approach used per segment. Companies that advance further will use advanced modelling, e.g. also taking big data (e.g. from social media) into account and applying statistics not only on mature items but also to predict impact of promotions and sales of new product introductions.

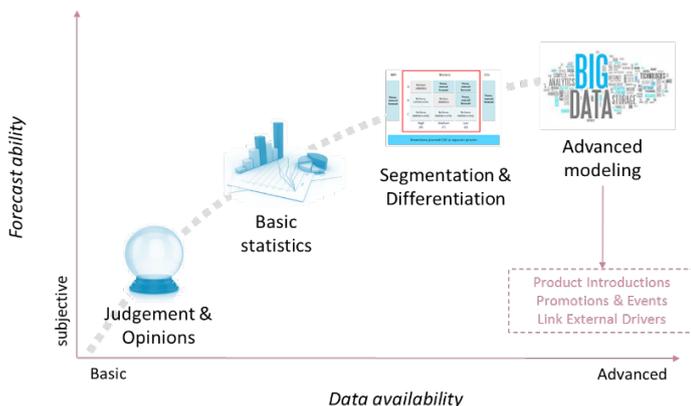


Figure 7: Statistical forecasting maturity.

To generate a high-quality forecast, the demand signal for a specific product can be differentiated according to the phase in the product life cycle (new, mature and end-of-life) and the distinction made between whether the sales demand was normal or part of a spike due to promotions or events.

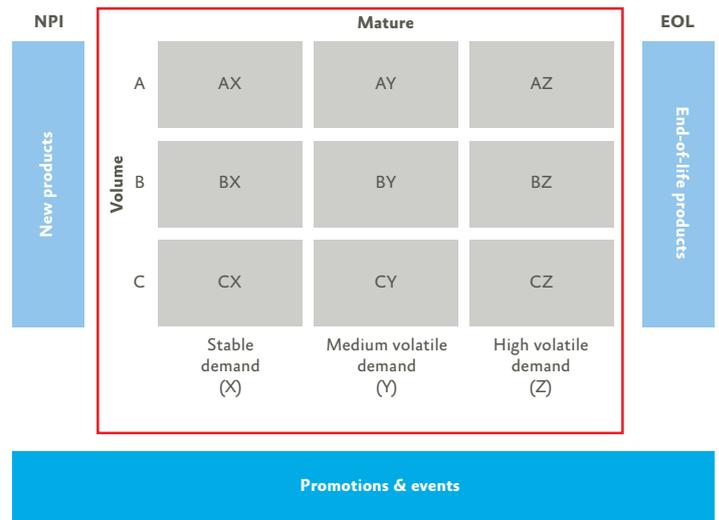


Figure 8: Demand differentiation.

Baseline forecasting for mature products is based on historical sales data and often uses trend and seasonal models. A high-quality statistical baseline forecast allows companies to focus the enrichment process on those elements that really add value.

Promotion forecasting is based on historical sales and point-of-sales data, and promotion characteristics. A high-quality promotion forecast (generally using regression models) provides a powerful tool for retailers and their suppliers to improve promotion effectiveness.

New-product forecasting is based on several internal and external data sources, historical introductions, volumes and characteristics, or social-media data. A high-quality new-product forecast can be used to improve the effectiveness of new-product introductions. Statistics (often multinomial logic) regression models can be used to forecast the full life cycle quantity, the initial launch quantity and the ramp-up profile.

# 5 BUILDING BLOCK: STATISTICS

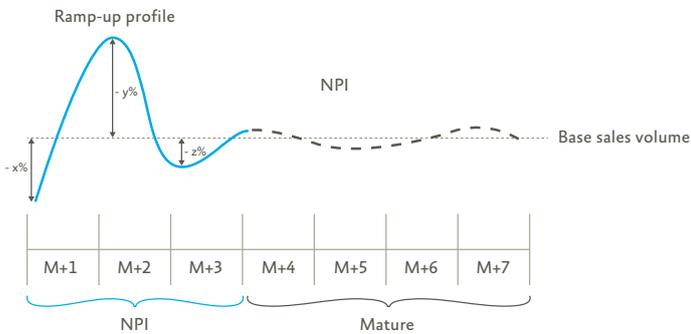
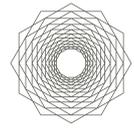


Figure 9: New product forecasting.

Statistically generated forecasts very often show performance that can match or even outperform manually generated forecasts. If required for decision making, a statistical forecast is generated for all SKUs and markets.

Outsourcing of the forecasting function is proving to be an increasingly popular option as companies continue to seek ways of improving their forecasting accuracy. There are multiple advantages to forecast outsourcing:

- Availability of specialized knowledge.
- Fast implementation – shortens time to value.
- Eliminates implementation risks.
- Economies of scale means lower costs.
- Continuous improvement due to investment in new technologies and skills.
- True, collaborative forecasting due to independent information broker.
- Best practice sharing.

The bottom line is that a specialist outsider delivers the best possible forecast in terms of accuracy, efficiency and speed.

# 6 BUILDING BLOCK: FOCUS ENRICHMENT

## ENRICH THE BASELINE DEMAND FORECAST: FOCUS ONLY ON WHERE IT ADDS VALUE

When products are forecasted in several different ways, good product categorization is essential to provide the right focus, namely, where it adds the most value. This is the key to increasing planning efficiency and effectiveness – by spending available time and resources in the best way possible.

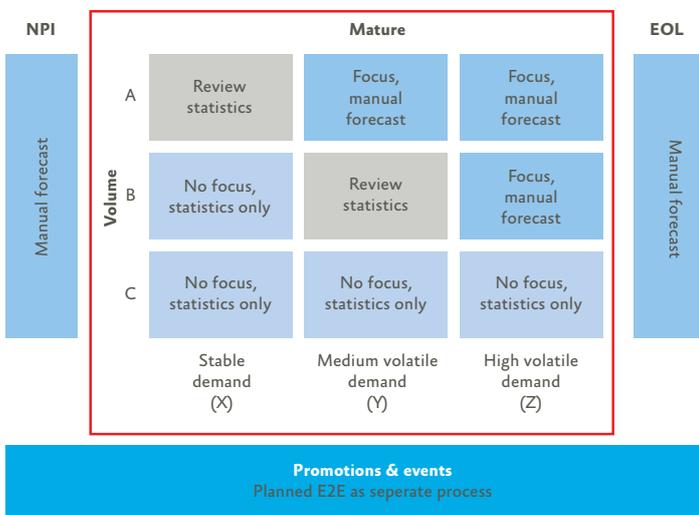
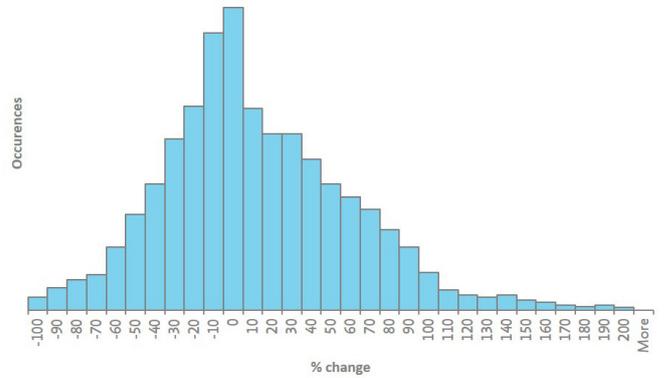


Figure 10: Forecast approach differentiation.

For instance, high volume products with high volatile demand will be very difficult to forecast statistically, but they still require focus in order to ensure that demand is met.

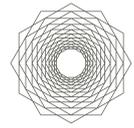


Many small adjustments, very few large adjustments

Figure 11: Many small adjustments - very few large adjustments (Goodwin 2010).

A differentiated approach supports demand planners in focusing their planning activities where it adds most value. Research (by Goodwin, 2010) has revealed that in many companies, planners spend the majority of their time on small (and often irrelevant) plan adjustments. By making use of product characterisation, they can focus their efforts on those products where human judgement is required, as the use of statistics will most likely not result in an accurate forecast.

# 7 BUILDING BLOCK: EVENT PLANNING



## ENRICH DEMAND PLAN WITH DATA-DRIVEN PROMOTIONAL IMPACT PREDICTIONS

Within FMCG promotions have a severe impact on demand and business planning. But the impact of these promotions on sales seems also to be very hard to predict. As the frequency and depth of promotions is steadily increasing in many different product categories, the need for a more professional promotion planning process is inevitable. It will help organizations to better anticipate on upcoming promotions and achieve a higher service level. For marketing & sales, a promotion forecasting model allows for better insights in the effect of various promotion drivers (such as price discounts) on the sales uplift effect.

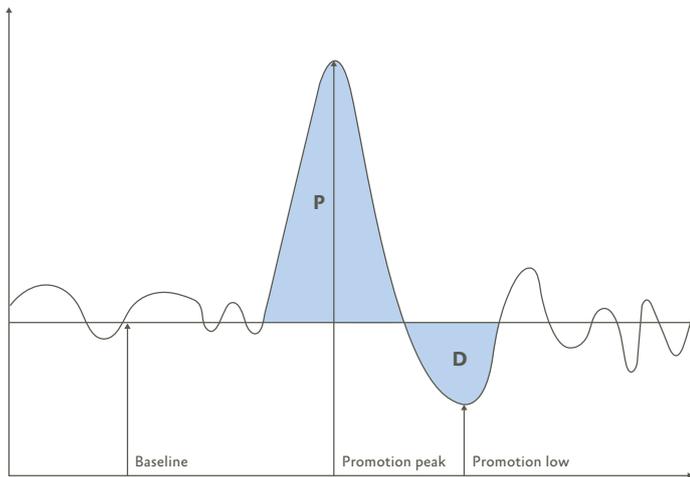


Figure 12: Promotion uplift and dip.

In getting a grip on promotions a few basic steps can be followed:

1. Understand the types of promotions that your organization applies, trends in promotion tactics and assess the impact and way of working in existing Demand Planning processes.
2. Identify promotional drivers, which variables really have impact?
  - a. To be able to deal with uncertainty you should start with knowing and understanding consumer profiles: what has the biggest impact on consumer behavior Price, TV, 2nd placing or is it something else?
  - b. Are weather conditions and seasonal impact playing an important role?
  - c. What are the consequences in the chain? How is the behavior of the retailer influencing demand?
3. Data collection: Determine & collect available promotional data, format it for analyzing purposes.

4. Analyze promotional impact
  - a. Determine the significance of the listed promotional drivers and calculate correlations with the promotional effect as a whole and the timing (peak and dip) for the significant promotional drivers.
  - b. Are there big fluctuations in lift factors?
  - c. How important is it to get it right (Analyze on Value / Waste Risk / Availability).
5. Determine how to structurally improve your promotion forecast using models:
  - a. Set up a specialized process and refresh your capabilities and roles.
  - b. Specify the needs for the supporting promotion planning tool (variables for promotional drivers, forecasting models etc).
6. Set up and maintain the database agree on data collection and the responsibility of maintaining promotional driver information.
7. Agree on the demand planning process for promotion including the embedding of the promotion planning tool within the integral demand planning process.

Best-in-class company's link volume based promo planning to trade promotion management. The ability to forecast promotions enables better commercial decision making on selecting the right mechanisms which optimize integral profitability

Depending on the category major events can also really impact sales, in fresh categories weather can make the difference between a very successful and a losing promotion. But also for non-promotional sales a period of extreme high or low temperatures can have a significant impact on the sales. Best-of-class companies therefore analyze the weather impact and use this in their (mostly short-term) forecasting.

A complicating factor are New Product Introductions (see also next chapter). Sometimes there is an extra focus on NPIs and relaunches to gain margin and volume avoiding the pressure for high promotion pressure. In many cases the combination of new products and promotions is made to really shake up the market.

# 8 BUILDING BLOCK: EFFECTIVE NPI & EOL

## ANTICIPATE PRODUCT PORTFOLIO CHANGES WITH DIFFERENTIATED FORECASTING TACTICS

Growth is one of the most undeniable company goals. For most the introduction of new products is a primary engine for growth. With the ever increasing pace in which new products are introduced, forecasting of these introductions is a major challenge, the good news is that not all products are brand new! New products can be differentiated in (1) products that are completely new to the world and the company (innovations), (2) replacement products and (3) special offers for specific customers /and or regions. Also the moment in time for generating a supply chain forecast is different. At the moment a new product is conceived an indication of the expected sales quantities are required for the (a) business plan to judge the feasibility of the product. Just before launch of the new product the (b) initial launch quantities are required to order supplies at the manufacturing site. For all these different categories specific tactics apply.

	Characteristics	Business plan Q	Launch quantity
New	New to the company New technology ....	Bottom up / top down	Human enrichment Fast follow up via Point of sales, too much / too little
Replacement	Extension of product range with successor / predecessor relation	Top Down driven by business group.	Auto pilot / statistics Quantities distributed to Sales organizations
Specials	Upon request of specific country / customer	Bottom up	Make to order. Plan – commit – delivery

Figure 13: New products differentiated with different tactics.

A main challenge is the forecast around the transition moment where the forecast of the demand for the successor has to be aligned with the demand for the predecessor. Since the number of introductions is often large and portfolio management is a key value driver, forecasting and planning is often integrated in the normal sales and operations planning processes. If this process is not managed correctly the launch window can be missed hence lost sales or stock can become obsolete.

Earlier research has revealed that forecasting sales volumes and values in the different stages of the product life cycle is perceived to be the most compelling challenge (Aertsen and Versteijnen, 2005). In practice as well as in theory, a great deal of attention has been paid to the shape of product life cycles (PLC), but the PLC concept as such has limited practical use. What are the forecasting techniques that provide the best possible insight into future demand for new products?

A large part of the literature on forecasting and planning product life cycles focuses on the use of sophisticated statistical forecasting techniques for mature products (McBruney et al., 2002). However, research suggests that the practical use of statistical techniques for new product forecasting is relatively limited (Aertsen, 2007). A main reason is that traditional time series and correlation forecasting methods require a significant amount of demand history, and thus these existing forecasting methods may not be appropriate for new product forecasting. Alternative statistical techniques like diffusion or so-called S-curve models are practiced but scarcely used.

Because of lacking or insufficient historical data most companies rely on the use of human knowledge to forecast the launch quantities for the new products. Using human created forecasts is not undisputed. The use of judgment introduces individual and functional biases in the forecast process that potentially decreases the quality of the forecast. This really holds in the area of new product forecasting where the vast majority of the input for the forecasts is provided by the inventor of the new product; the Product Manager (Olivia et al., 2009). The uncertainty associated with forecasting new product sales leads very often to mood swinging, i.e., feelings of optimism and pessimism, by forecasters. There are strong forces that will lead to a biased outcome of the process. To abandon bias from the process more objective forecast techniques, like the above mentioned S-curves, have to be applied.

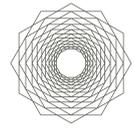
To predict the success of a replacement product statistical forecasting using the data of the predecessor can be used. This 'looks-like' approach requires a very strict data maintenance on the successor – predecessor relation.

Companies have accepted advance purchase orders over the last decades. As a result, pre-order information may serve as a key input in developing a sales forecast for a new product. Also with the rise of omni-channel sales, the sell-out via the direct e-commerce channel can be a very good indicator of the success of a new product, and as such this signal should be picked up as soon as possible.

Increasingly, consumers post their opinions on social media like Twitter and Facebook commenting on their experiences with products and services (Dijkman et al., 2014). Evidence on the use of social media to predict movie sales and book sales is already building up. However, no direct evidence on the use of Facebook data to forecast sales for new products exists. Forecasting techniques to be explored include predictive analytics using social media data ('big data').

# 9 BUILDING BLOCK: FIT FOR USE TOOLS

## 10 BUILDING BLOCK: PLANNING SKILLS



### 9 BUILDING BLOCK: FIT FOR USE TOOLS

#### SUPPORT PLANNING PROCESSES WITH IT TOOLS THAT SUIT BUSINESS DYNAMICS AND COMPLEXITY

A planning benchmark survey (EyeOn) shows that the majority of companies still use Excel-based planning applications. In some instances, a low supply chain complexity doesn't require advanced planning tools, but their use in other cases offers many benefits, one of which is mathematical models to optimize supply plans and assess planning scenarios in case of demand or supply uncertainties. Advanced planning tools also allow companies to integrate various demand and supply plans across the supply chain, increasing transparency and resulting in significant cost reductions.

Although decision-supportive tools and advanced planning tools are high on the agendas of supply chain professionals, these tools must have added value to support S&OP and demand-planning processes. In this dynamic industry, advanced planning tools add value to decision-making efficiency. Today, a wide variety of planning tools is offered to support forecasting & planning processes. The planning & forecasting wheel (see figure) provides an overview of forecasting and planning tools. It is certainly not exhaustive, but the tools in the outer circle currently represent, or will soon represent the future main Forecasting and Planning tool offering. Key challenge for each company is to select the tool that is fit-for-purpose for its business dynamics and complexity.

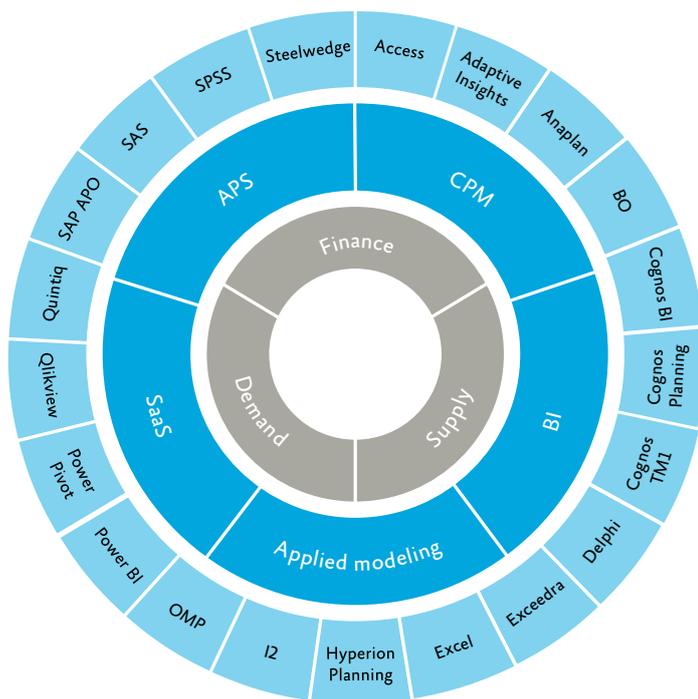


Figure 14: Forecasting & planning tools.

### 10 BUILDING BLOCK: PLANNING SKILLS

#### PLANNERS' SKILLS ARE KEY TO IMPROVING PLANNING ACCURACY

Although the right planning tools certainly can help, the people who operate the tools really can make the difference. In the past decade the skills required from planners have changed significantly, as a consequence of increased complexity, dynamics and uncertainties in the planning process. Based on extensive EyeOn benchmark, the relevant skills of planners were identified that contribute most to improving plan accuracy (see figure).

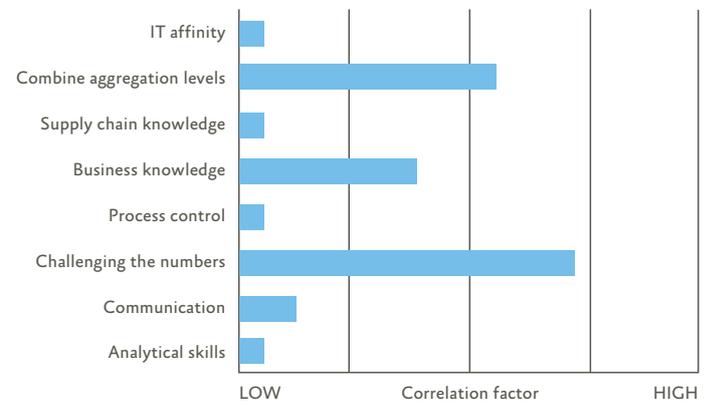


Figure 15: The importance of planning skills.

Skilled planners are generally graduates of higher education with at least a bachelor's degree. Planning calls for an analytical mind and solid grounding in maths and statistical skills. But more important, a good planner must also be able to communicate well across all levels and silos of an organization and dare to challenge the inputs they get from other people. A deep business understanding of the requirements and specific interests of manufacturing, logistics, marketing, sales and finance. They are also able to reach outside a company's walls to suppliers and customers, to ensure that all parties are in agreement about what the plan should be. So, planners need to have strong leadership qualities, the ability to influence people and to lead by collaboration.

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# 11

## BUILDING BLOCK: IMPROVEMENT

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### CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT HAS THE STRONGEST RELATION WITH FORECAST ACCURACY

The essence of continuous improvement lies in active reflection on the effectiveness of actions taken in the past and identifying improvements for future improvement. The improvement process is essentially about learning rather than blaming. True learning occurs when the real root causes of issues are identified, understood and managed in a step-by-step improvement process. Although this seems to be a relatively straightforward matter, achieving it often proves to be quite a different experience, as shown in the figure below.

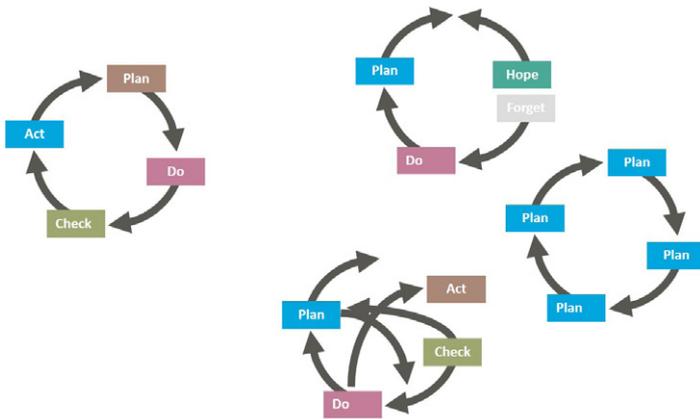
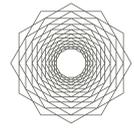


Figure 16: Three 'wrong' Deming circles.

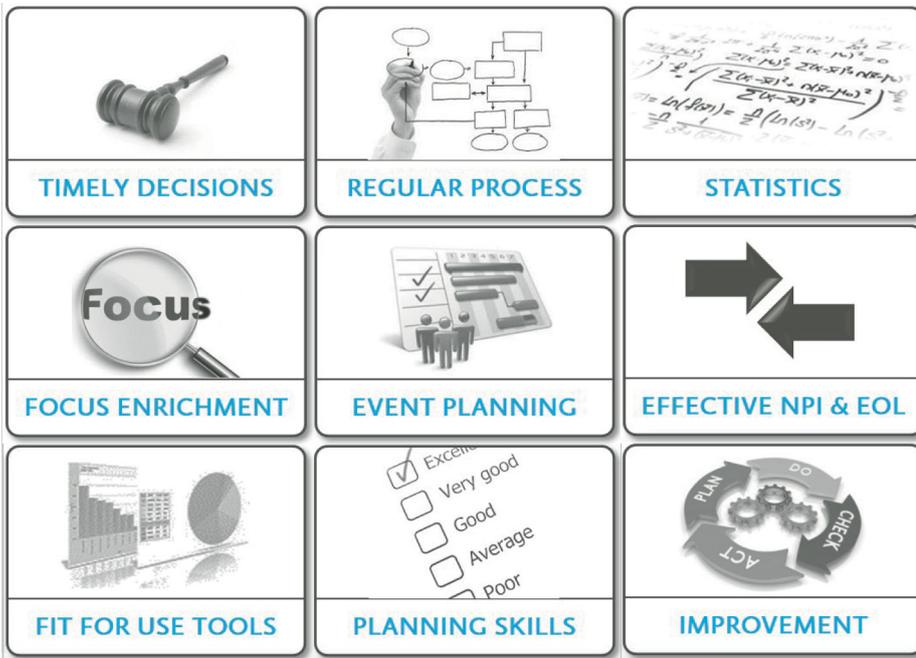
Dr. J. Edward Deming, the famous quality guru, provided a simple yet highly effective technique that serves as a practical tool to carry out continuous improvement in the workplace. This technique - PDCA (Plan, Do, Check and Action) Cycle or simply Deming Cycle - provides conceptual as well as practical framework for continuous improvement. Research by EyeOn revealed that a well-structured continuous improvement process makes the strongest contribution to forecast accuracy improvement. The application of the PDCA cycle helps an organization to become agile or incorporate closed-loop management with speed. The process helps integrate the functioning of demand management, supply management, fulfillment management, rapid business reconfiguration, and IT systems within an organization.

# 12 AGILE DEMAND PLANNING: BUILDING BLOCKS OVERVIEW



In this whitepaper the main building blocks are elaborated on that should be taken into account when setting up an agile demand planning process that really copes with the dynamics in the FMCG industry. To summarize:

1. Set clear planning objectives and determine which decisions to make, when.
2. Regular process with predefined steps, standardized decision meetings and marketing & sales involvement.
3. Use statistics to generate baseline demand forecast efficient and effective.
4. Enrich the baseline demand forecast: focus only on where it adds value.
5. Enrich demand plan with data-driven promotional impact predictions.
6. Anticipate product portfolio changes with differentiated forecasting tactics.
7. Support planning processes with IT tools that suit business dynamics and complexity.
8. Planners' skills are key to improving planning accuracy.
9. Continuous improvement has the strongest relation with forecast accuracy.



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# ABOUT

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## ABOUT EYEON

In striving for success, large companies have to continuously struggle against growing internal complexity. We help our clients manage this complexity by designing, implementing and executing excellent planning processes as a discriminating factor for this success. In order to achieve this, we develop and share knowledge about top level planning and forecasting, with constantly demonstrable return on investment for our clients.

## ABOUT THE FMCG INDUSTRY PLANNING AND FORECASTING KNOWLEDGE NETWORK

We all know the congresses and workshops where you listen to a speaker or discuss with other managers not really touching your business environment. This knowledge network focuses specifically on the FMCG industry and the planning and forecasting issues in this industry.

The objective of the knowledge network is to share experiences and best practices. The network also facilitates plenty of networking opportunities between planning professionals, a.o. through Round Table sessions organized by EyeOn.

For more information: [www.eyeon.nl](http://www.eyeon.nl).







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