



| SPECIAL ISSUE: TIME-DRIVEN ACTIVITY-BASED COSTING |

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New tools

Don't you, as a financial, wish to make a real contribution to the achievement of your company's strategic objectives? Wouldn't you want to develop into a real co-pilot and change-agent together with your team; away from the 'bean counter'. Are you sure though? I don't believe a bit of it!

That is, I can't see it happening. I am happy to take the words in the annual plans of the finance office for granted. But what do I actually see being performed? What does it yield? Which discussions are you having?

I recently spoke to a control manager from a considerably large organisation and was astounded. His organisation was in full swing to acquire market share.

The creed was to acquire clients. Together we came to the conclusion that in order to do so, it is of paramount importance to acquire those clients who really provide value to the business. It was therefore essential to, at least, have an idea of which clients contributed to profits and which didn't. Only in that way we would know what activities were required.

In summary, there was work to be done. Wouldn't you think? Because there is nothing better than helping keen marketeers to utilise their tools. To help them focus on real effectiveness and not on efficiency. That job is cut out for the co-pilot.

However... none of this. This control manager explained to me that his staff really didn't have the time for this kind of luxury. The monthly activities, the various legislations – it absorbed all of their attention. They don't have any time for this sort of frippery since the introduction IFRS and SOx. Even worse: would I be so kind as to not bother the marketing guys with these ideas. Soon they would be on his doorstep, and then his staff would have to deal with it after all.

Frippery? Luxury? Must? I cannot believe this! Each and every research tells us that we provide added value. We are fed up with all the standard stuff, we want to help thinking with. Or so we say. But do we? Or are we en masse creating a fantasy world that we subsequently evade?

I am sure you feel that it doesn't concern you, that you will not turn away from these fantastic opportunities and will take up the challenge. Especially for you in this issue: new tools to specify your role as a co-pilot. Enjoy reading!

Wim Heuvelman





Robert S. Kaplan



Time-Driven Activity-Based Costing

Robert S. Kaplan:

'Better information with less effort'

By: Jan-Willem Hudig

Robert S. Kaplan and Steven R. Anderson wrote the book *Time-Driven Activity-Based Costing*. What is *Time-Driven Activity-Based Costing (TDABC)* and what are the advantages of this method in comparison with traditional *Activity-Based Costing (ABC)*? Kaplan and Anderson explain.

TDABC is a derivative of traditional ABC and recognizes that most business processes rarely change. 'They can thus be modeled by a 'static' time equation. It also recognizes that the transaction data being in a company's ERP does a good job of tracking', explains Steve Anderson. 'When you marry static detailed process time equations and dynamic enterprise transaction data, you have a dynamic process model for your entire company.'

Time and capacity as unifying concepts

The idea of developing TDABC originated in the late 1990's. Steven R. Anderson and his company Acorn Systems began experimenting with the use of time equations and average time estimates to more accurately and efficiently model processes. These equations could be automatically fed with driver and attribute data from transaction files of an ERP system. Almost simultaneously Robert S. Kaplan started to think about capacity and time as unifying concepts for ABC Systems. Kaplan: 'In a chapter of the book *Cost & Effect*, written by me and Robin Cooper, it was described how an entire cost system could be built on two parameters: the cost rate for supplying capacity and the capacity used by each transaction.' By marrying Anderson's process time equations with Kaplan's capacity planning vision, a company could now have a full view of historical and future performance. Anderson explains: 'With the new TDABC methodology that Bob and I had pioneered, we were able to build large enterprise models within a week or two, capture order/transaction details on the ERP and give visibility where people spend their time. The approach

enabled us to model large complex organizations that reconciled financially and could estimate capacity utilization.'

Main benefits of TDABC versus ABC

The first advantage of TDABC is its accuracy, claims Anderson. 'The time equations fed by actual transaction data shows objectively what people have done, instead of measuring what they say they did.' Secondly, besides the actual transaction data resulting in higher accuracy, 'you no longer need regular surveys', says Kaplan. Time spent on updating the models is one of the big disadvantages of traditional ABC. According to Anderson, 'a third benefit is the greater organizational buy-in. Besides that TDABC provides greater insights in opportunities. Through the time equations, a company can identify inefficient steps and calculate capacity utilization and do what-ifs.'

Not just for big enterprises

TDABC is not just for big enterprises. Even small enterprises can gain considerable value, being able to implement ABC in a simple and powerful manner. 'But,' states Kaplan, 'the biggest incremental benefit with TDABC will occur for large, complex organizations. They can get an enterprise-wide view of the cost and profitability of their individual products, customers and even transactions. Also, companies with excellent ERP systems will benefit by being able to link their transactional data directly to the Acorn TDABC software in a simple way. TDABC is now running for companies with multi-terabyte sized databases with millions of customers.'





Key factors for success

In order to implement TDABC successfully, some factors are essential. Anderson: 'TDABC models need reliable data since they depend on it. Besides that it benefits from executive leadership support. Given their wider scope and broader findings, the available opportunities become more powerful.' But not just the executives need to be involved: 'the department personnel need to be involved too', continues Anderson. 'To get the time equation right, input from front-line personnel increases accuracy and buy-in. If a company lacks good data, management support, departmental involvement, and repeatable processes, then the company may not be ready for TDABC.'

From door to door with TDABC

Not all organizations and departments within organizations are suitable for TDABC. In some cases very little standard activities are carried out. Kaplan: 'Those companies now have ways of measuring the duration of events electronically. For example, truck drivers for distribution companies use electronic wands to record when they depart the warehouse, arrive at a customer's location, and depart for the next location. Companies use electronic data entry to monitor control and performance. The TDABC system easily accepts and processes actual transaction times, as captured by these bar code readers and other automatic sensing devices.'

Future developments in performance management

According to Kaplan, the basic building blocks for effective performance management, Balanced Scorecard (BSC) and TDABC are in place. Kaplan: 'The future will see continued enhancements of both concepts and better integration between them. We describe in the book one such integration, where the TDABC model serves as the bridge between the strategic plan, articulated in the Balanced Scorecard, and the operational budget, which authorizes the supply of resources required to carry out the strategic plan.'

Anderson continues: 'A major development in performance management will be a 'democratization' of the results. It will be relevant to all parts of an organization. One of the pitfalls is that the audience is often at too high of a level to affect real change.'



Steve Anderson

Predictive analysis

Another major development according to Anderson is the ability to perform predictive analytics. 'TDABC enhances this capability through time equations which enable a more accurate estimate of the impact that change can have on an organization in terms of both cost and time. By using TDABC to model process capacity, a company can understand their resource limitations and strategize a solution based on that information.'

TDABC provides much better information that makes BSC, Strategy Maps, Target Costing, and Lifecycle Management more powerful. At the end of the day, the results of these initiatives are only as good as the data that feeds it. Kaplan: 'With TDABC, a company can have a BSC that measures profitability information more accurately and with more granularity. They also will have capacity analysis and predictive analytics. Finally, they will have a way to provide the results to all levels of the organization.'

Dr. Kaplan is the Baker Foundation Professor of Leadership Development at Harvard Business School and is a leading world authority on strategy execution. Dr. Kaplan is the father of ABC and the co-creator of the Balanced Scorecard methodology.

Steve Anderson is founder and chairman of Acorn Systems, the software solution supporting the TDABC methodology. In addition to his work on TDABC, Steve is a prolific writer on management and accounting approaches and methodologies.





'Time-Driven ABC acknowledges the gut feeling'

By: [Mattijs Schrijver](#)

In 2005, business-travel organisation BCD Travel started the 'Conscious Commercial Entrepreneurship' project. The objective is to have all the departments shift their focus from cost reduction to an increase of profits. Staff should ask themselves with respect to each client whether the client is sufficiently profitable. BCD opted for the Time-Driven Activity-Based Costing method to establish this. fiNext assisted in the implementation.

The business-travel industry is a highly competitive market. This compels organisations such as BCD Travel to find out where to improve their processes. The efficiency level obtained by BCD Travel makes it difficult to achieve cost savings. "That is why we particularly wanted to increase our profits", says Fred ten Hoeve, the Finance & Control director with BCD Travel. "Which was the reason to set up the 'Conscious Commercial Entrepreneurship' project. The objects of the project are to obtain a higher customer satisfaction level and to outline the profitability of our activities. And in particular the profitability for each client. The Time-Driven Activity-Based Costing method is cut out for this."

Costs based on time

Activities and costs are not only the focal point in traditional Activity-Based Costing (ABC), but also in Time-Driven ABC (TDABC). The difference is that the latter method uses two parameters: the cost per time unit of supplying resource capacity and the unit times of consumption of resources by products, services, and customers. Esther van den Anker, Control Manager: "With TDABC we substantiate our costs based on time. An additional effect is that it gives an explanation: why do we spend more time on the transaction at client A than at client B? With this method you find out that the transaction at client B is more complex."

Conscious choice

In its choice for TDABC BCD Travel did not take any chances. Van den Anker: "Once we had decided to verify the profitability of all of our clients, lots of questions were raised for the Control department. Exactly which information is available? How do we retrieve all the required information? How do we integrate data from the various systems? We have spent a great deal of time on finding the right system." BCD Travel initially started in the present ERP application, but was faced with technical issues. "The system appeared to be inadequate. We started to use fiNext and they made a selection of two packages: Prodacapo and Acorn Systems. The latter package is based on TDABC. The two software packages made a good impression. In particular the TDABC concept of Acorn Systems appealed to us. Based on this difference and the fact that Prodacapo did not yet have a web-based application, we opted for Acorn Systems."

Selecting cost drivers

In consultation with BCD Travel, fiNext first decided to select cost drivers. "We obviously had already defined all the cost drivers", says Ten Hoeve. "As they are an absolute requirement to determine your prices. But in order to make the system operable, we made a choice together with fiNext. The cost drivers that we will specifically be using are 'transaction', 'customer contact' and 'sales and





account management'. Subsequently we decided how to link information to the cost drivers. For example: for the 'customer contact' cost driver we use telephone times in minutes." Then BCDTravel and fiNext jointly established the design of the model. Ten Hoeve: "Our basic principle was: we have to be able to add cost drivers at any time. This will make the model last for the future."

Fully prepared

BCDTravel is happy with the choice for TDABC. "Many data were available within our company, but we can now convert these into specific information on a customer level", says Van den Anker. "We now know for example how long a telephone conversation takes and how long a person is actually working on a certain type of booking. We had some idea, but we now have real knowledge.

The figures show reality – an acknowledgement of the gut feeling." This moreover displays the added value of the Control department. "We are no longer only the 'difficult people of the figures', the staff can actually work with them." Van den Anker illustrates this with a recent development. "Clients are increasingly more often making their own bookings through the Internet. Also in the business travel industry. So what is left for our telephone operators? Only the 'difficult cases'. If we ask a higher rate we will need to show why that is. Also when we adjust the rate for a certain client because we spend more time on that client as a standard, we will need to be able to explain this. This is possible with TDABC. Based on figures we can now say: 'But you call four times per booking'. In general we come fully prepared in negotiations thanks to TDABC. We know better beforehand which service scenarios to offer the client."

Change of mentality

BCDTravel is just as happy with the cooperation with fiNext as with the method itself. Ten Hoeve: "The consultants of fiNext knew exactly what course to follow. They used a practical method, everybody knew what had to be done. We made regular evaluations: Where are we? Will we be able to stick to the planning? That worked really well." BCD Travel is now rolling out TDABC. Van den Anker says that this has implications for all the company's disciplines. "It does not stop at the report. The intention is that the disciplines will come together to discuss them. And to take measures when it appears for example that a certain client appears to be insufficiently profitable. We call this 'Activity-Based Management'. We will moreover start using targets in order to let people bear responsibility. It is a change of mentality."

Also international

Ten Hoeve says that BCD Travel even has plans with TDABC. "We have now implemented the system in the Netherlands as a control instrument. But we will also introduce 'Conscious Commercial Entrepreneurship' in other European countries, with TDABC as the supporting method. Esther has already made a presentation on this subject at a CFO meeting, where they were still a little reticent: 'First show us how it works'. A quite logical reaction, also because you will need to gather a great deal of information – e.g. on telephone traffic – in order to make TDABC a success. This information is not yet available everywhere." They do however have two valuable tips for those interested. Ten Hoeve: "Define your objective. That is the only way to lead the project in the right direction. Accurately define the result to be achieved: what do you want to specifically see when TDABC is implemented? We could have done to define our object better. We should for example only have acquired the top 10 or top 50 of our clients, or a certain segment." Van den Anker adds: "I would advise to incorporate the IT manager right from the onset of the project. We underestimated the technical implementation, which affected our planning. We could have prevented this by not only focusing on the application, but also on the system where it runs on. But these are mere details compared to the profits we make with this method."



Esther van den Anker



Fred ten Hoeve

On BCD Travel

BCD Travel is the Dutch market leader in business travel management. With the alignment and simplification of the travel process, BCD Travel is offering its clients maximum savings on costs for business travels. BCD Travel helps companies to navigate through the complex business travel landscape of products, services and suppliers. The organisation operates in more than ninety countries on five continents. BCD Travel has a sales volume of US\$ 12 billion employing more than twelve thousand staff members throughout the world. The business is a division of BCD Holdings N.V. Please visit the website www.bcdtravel.nl

fiNext advises BCD Travel with various projects in the area of Financial Accounting, Performance Management, and Profitability Management. Recently a Customer Profitability Management project has been carried out, based on Time-Driven Activity-Based Costing.

ABC: In for a penny, in for a pound

By: Mattijs Schrijver

Increasingly more organisations are gaining experience with Activity-Based Costing (ABC) as a control instrument. They often use ABC in order to have a specific insight into the structure and causes of costs. Few organisations have integrated ABC into the daily operational management. Which is regrettable, because proper integration will result in a more self-controlling organisation so that the management will be less inclined to take action.

ABC is sometimes partially integrated into the daily operational management, which often involves internal arrangements with regard to the hourly rates to be used. This is not useful as it is difficult to negotiate on the number of hours charged by an internal supplier, if they cannot be related to the services purchased. Yet, the agreed hourly rate is often the only control tool for departments that work with 'end customers'.

Results

ABC implementations obviously do lead to specific results. The information from ABC models is often used for reports and analyses to the management. The management takes strategic decisions based on this information, which may result in specific expenditure cuts, the shift of focus on a certain product or client groups, or even in a reorganisation. Such measures, however, are usually not taken until there is an immediate need for them. And in view of the frequency in which ABC models are charged on, an undesirable or suboptimum situation may continue for at least a quarter of a year, and in some cases even more than a year. In short: many ABC implementations are not completed yet! The organisation is not yet self-controlling.

Stimuli to change behaviour

Two measures are effectively required to create a more pro-active organisation:

- Define services that can be clearly assigned and agree on a cost price.
- Give everyone the responsibility to influence the task that fits into his organisational role (and remunerate accordingly).

Examples

The following two examples clarify these measures:

Example 1

An offset-printing department is responsible for delivering printed matter. The department usually makes several proofs of a folder created by the marketing department. It subsequently prints a certain number of folders. For example, the offset-printing department uses hourly rates for its services. The marketing department receives a specification of the number of hours used times the agreed rate at the end of a period. Marketing cannot directly influence this number of hours. Let us assume that the offset-printing department uses fixed prices for each proof and for each definite print based on hours per proof/print. In that way the

PLANNED ACTIVITY-BASED MANAGEMENT



marketing department can lower the costs by reducing the number of proofs or by printing in larger batches. This will result in cost-effective behaviour. Particularly when the marketing department receives a bonus that depends on factors such as saved purchase costs. Also the offset-printing department can be encouraged to work more efficiently. For example when their bonus is linked to lower cost prices by more efficient offset-printing processes. Or by reducing the purchase costs.

Observant readers will note that the marketing department should not just be focused on cost savings, but mainly concentrate on effective marketing campaigns. That is exactly why this example is given here. Because only the marketing department can control its own conduct cost-effectively. If the same goal is achieved with fewer means, and the result is translated into the rewards for the marketing department, which will lead to a natural, and especially creative self-improvement.

Example 2

In many organisations the sales department receives a bonus based on the generated sales.

The thought behind this is that a sales representative should not interfere with the costs. A sales representative is however the key factor in some cost-price increasing aspects, such as the extent of the order, the complexity of an order or the payment behaviour of a client. When the sales representative's bonus is also subjected to the costs caused by one of these factors, then he or she will allow for this, which will eventually result in higher profits.

Self-controlling organisation

With the implementation of these two measures, a more self-controlling organisation will be created, which will continue to operate as lean and mean as possible, without far-reaching measures from the top. It is obviously not easy to change remuneration methods for better control. This will mainly require boldness and decisiveness in the top management and proper assistance in the change process. But if I had the choice: to set up a re-organisation or implement these measures? I wouldn't need to think twice.

Mattijs Schrijver is a consultant for fiNext, where he specialises as an ABC consultant.



Wasting time costs money



By: [Alexander Berkhoff](#) en [Arnoud Moraal](#)

Time-Driven Activity-Based Costing (TDABC) bridges the gap to primary processes, says Peter Geelen, the director of CPM Partners. "And this is where money is to be made.

Peter Geelen believes that Corporate Performance Management (CPM) – as has Balanced Scorecard (BSC) – has got too much stuck into the control layer of the organisation. "The BSC uses a wide approach based on a financial, client, internal and innovative perspective, makes connections between these fields of special interest and also indicates objectives for the improvement of processes. But the conversion from the top BSC to the lower echelons, which is usually functional, is inadequate. Performance is not achieved for each function or department, but throughout the chain, in your process."

Focus on processes

Geelen feels that with TDABC, Kaplan and Anderson have found a suitable addition to BSC. "It fits in with

my vision of integral performance management (iPM): the clear translation from strategy to recognisable indicators in primary processes, the link of the entire procedure. TDABC zooms into the processes from the point of view of the chain. With the development of TDABC, Kaplan and Anderson explicitly indicate that a specific conversion process to the shopfloor is required in order to effectively implement performance management. They recognise that tools such as ABC and BSC are inadequate."

From client to client

The process method is underdeveloped in organisations, says Geelen. "How processes are developed, how they are controlled, who the owner is of the process, are in itself not complex issues.

Our mindset, however, is not client-to-client focused and we tend to see functions only as a link in the chain. Although that is where money is to be made, or to be lost." Geelen mentions numerous recognisable examples of snags: the sales department that is unable to translate the client's demand, the non-performing department or staff member delaying the process, information missing from the order sheet. "Chains have to be made transparent from client to client: how much time and therefore money is lost with ineffective or inefficient processes? For example: how often does that order sheet need to go back to the beginning? How much time is wasted on this and how does this affect a waiting customer? These are the matters to be measured in order to improve performance, and this is where TDABC proves its worth. The financial performance is usually a derivative according to cause and effect relations."

Lack of 'quality and logistics'

Performance management means a clear, measurable translation from strategy to primary processes. And with a fast and specific feedback from practice to strategy. Process management tools constitute increasingly more often a tool to unlatch and analyse ERP data through a process. TDABC is such a tool, but has its limitations says Geelen.

"In order to assess and improve processes, I base myself on three points of view: in addition to productivity – the time – and cost aspects of Kaplan and Anderson, quality and logistics are key factors. Those are still lacking from TDABC. To put it simply: activities may be carried out quickly, but if you need to do them three times because the quality is insufficient, this will have implications for the total process. And when the activities do not link up well, time in the chain will be lost."

Financial back on the shopfloor

Whereas corporate performance management still tends to be a KPI and report celebration, Geelen encourages daily (for the shopfloor), weekly (for chains) and monthly (for strategy) evaluations in practice. Which role is cut out for financials?

"In order to improve processes, they need modelling, work instructions need to be linked to processes, time waste in the daily process needs to be avoided with practical KPIs. This means that the financial will have a significant role in the business,



instead of above the business. Only in this way, the financial will have the much desired position of sparring partner of the business." According to Geelen, the financial will do this in close cooperation with the general manager because of the commitment needed for integral performance management, but also with the process owner in an end-to-end chain and even with those responsible for tasks within the chain. "Each employee is responsible for his own role in the chain. His contribution to the strategy must be measurable; and consequently prone to improvement."

Peter Geelen is the director of CPM Partners and the author of three books in the field of performance management: 'Corporate Performance Management, control in a dynamic market', 'Integral Performance Management' (together with co-author Rob van de Coevering), and 'Door Planning in Control' (together with co-authors Patrick Tullemans and Freek Aertsen). fiNext regularly uses Peter Geelen as a sparring partner and advisor in control issues.



Moderation for sustained change

By: Pim van der Tas

Moderation methods are increasingly more often used for the implementation of projects. The key idea is that participants are not auditors, but actively participate and share ideas. This makes moderation an effective method for sustained change.

	Traditional method	Moderation Method
Initiative for change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Top imposes the direction Lower levels take care of implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From within the team concerned Thinking and doing in one hand
Change vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structure first, culture next Designing and implementing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working on structure and culture go hand in hand Development and testing
Line of reasoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analytic Atomic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creative and intuitive Integral
Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on expertise Focus on tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on processes Focus on people or relationships



How the moderation approach works

In moderation methods, participants are not the auditors in a workshop for example, but active participants. Through the exchange of knowledge, experience and ideas they contribute to the analysis and solution of the respective issue. The plus-point is that the organisation better utilises the knowledge that is present. Working in teams moreover ensures the creation of supported results from a workshop, and that subsequently the implementation of an idea or decision stands a better chance of success.

The difference with traditional methods

The moderation method provides an alternative to the more traditional tools to accomplish changes in an organisation. A traditional method tends to be associated with research, blueprints and reports. The moderation method includes brainstorming, teamwork and creativity. The difference is shown in figure 1.

When to apply the moderation method

In the fiNext practice, we use moderation methods for:

- The development of financial models, such as costing and budget models
- The accomplishment of crucial changes in the financial function.
- Drawing up annual plans.
- The evaluation of implemented projects.

Further to this, the moderation method is used as a tool for advice. fiNext assists the client's team in finding solutions to management issues.

Our consultant organises the problem-solution process, the client team solves the jointly defined issue. During the procedure, the consultant therefore adopts less the position of an expert and more that of a process-guiding advisor.

Pim van der Tas works as a senior management consultant and interim manager with fiNext. He works for fiNext Dialogues and one of the twenty consultants within fiNext who work with the moderation method of Metaplan®.

Literature: The team as a problem solver, Frans van Kwakman and Albert Postema.



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fiNext acknowledges individual lines of thinking and the company respects different views. The opinions in this magazine may therefore not always reflect fiNext's vision.

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News and events

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Learning Community 'Spiegelhuis voor sturingsvraagstukken'

September 2007

Annual fiNext Congress

Please visit www.finext.nl or info@finext.nl for more information. You may also sign up for events through this site.

fiNext Dialogues

Listening to each other and sharing experience are encouragements to effectively accomplish changes. That is to say, if you talk with each other, instead of talking at each other. fiNext Dialogues assists - through dialogues - in sustained change processes in and from the financial pillar of our clients. This is how we will bring back the spirit into your organisation.

fiNext Dialogues believes that sustained change can only be achieved through creating room for innovative thinking and doing, specific choices and actions.

1 to 150 persons

We assist 1 to 150 persons. Individual professionals, groups including departments, (management) teams and project teams. We connect people to each other and to the essential issues that they believe in. This will bring the power to make real improvements

back into the organisation. Some of the fields we assist in are issues on control, risk management, transparency and improvement of efficiency.

In fiNext Dialogues we compile the knowledge and experience from our management consultants. If you wish to have more information, please visit our website www.dedialogen.nl.

fiNext is moving

The villa Park de Werve is situated in Voorburg. From March 1st, fiNext will establish in this state monument.

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fiNext portfolio

