



# OPERATIONAL PROPERTY PLANNING IN THE REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY

ALSTRIA AND BDG DEVELOP A SOLUTION  
FOR OPERATIONAL PLANNING OF LEASING  
ASSUMPTIONS, ACTION PLANNING  
AND P&L IN BOARD.



With the introduction of Board, we have a much more efficient and transparent building planning process. The manual effort and thus the susceptibility to errors are reduced to a minimum, which results in a high-quality reporting structure. Due to automated planning steps and the dynamic creation of analyses, the time required is very low and the tool has a high level of acceptance among colleagues in the operational area.

- alstria

## INITIAL SITUATION

The alstria office REIT-PLC previously used Excel data-sheets for operational planning: There was a separate Excel template for each of the more than 100 real estate properties, which was manually filled with the planning inputs. In addition, access to master data (e.g. portfolio contracts, vacancies), which serve as basic information for the planners, was only possible through exports from the previous systems. The enormous manual effort in Excel led to a high error rate, and combining and evaluating the data of all properties was enormously time-consuming. As a REIT (Real Estate Investment Trust), alstria is also subject to strict regulations in planning and reporting – the Controlling department therefore discussed the introduction of a modern BI solution.

To support the project, alstria engaged external consultants (PwC). Together they developed an initial catalogue of requirements and began the selection process. In the process, the software board with bdg as implementation partner was compelling – the decisive factors were the software's possibilities in the area of self-service BI, its flexibility and speed of evaluation as well as bdg's references from successfully completed projects in the housing industry.

## PROJECT OBJECTIVE

The primary goal of the project was to completely replace Excel as a planning tool with a solution in Board in order to reduce the manual effort and error-prone media breaks to a minimum and to generally simplify the work of the operative planners. The reporting for the areas of letting assumptions, action planning and P&L was also to be made more dynamic and clearer.

## About alstria

alstria office REIT-PLC is a German public limited company with its registered office in Hamburg. The company has been operating under the legal form of a REIT (Real Estate Investment Trust) since 2007 and was the first PLC of its kind in Germany. alstria owns and manages a high-quality portfolio of office properties in major German office centres. As a long-term oriented company, alstria manages the properties over their entire life cycle: from acquisition to leasing, ongoing management, modernisation and possible sale. A detailed concept is developed for each individual building, and modernising the properties is an essential part of the business model in order to create consistent value.

## Overview

Client	alstria office REIT-PLC
Headquarters	Hamburg, Germany
Industry	Real Estate
employees	90
Department	Controlling/Real Estate Operations
Software	Board
System environment	Board Azure Cloud
Interfaces	Microsoft Dynamics NAV, Pandora

## Executive Summary

- ▶ Agile development of an operational planning solution
- ▶ Five input templates replace over one hundred Excel datasheets
- ▶ Improved quality of planning, reporting and analysis with a significant reduction in time expenditure
- ▶ Cooperative collaboration and high commitment to the success of the project



The planning of letting assumptions (extended and new tenancy agreements), the necessary construction measures (refurbishment, modernisation, maintenance) with the associated costs and the associated data from contracts were first to be collected and then integrated at a higher level. The next objective was to map all data in a profit and loss account and to prepare it for financial analysis for each property.

## APPROACH AND SERVICES PROVIDED

In a kick-off workshop, all parties initially agreed on the respective areas of responsibility, the scope of the project and the development method. The choice was made for agile development with periodic sprints and subsequent evaluation – this approach corresponds to the best practices of bdg. Particularly important in BI projects: The requirements profile and the selection of planning categories – both were discussed and recorded in an initial meeting. Together, bdg and alstria then put together the project team. The core team consisted of a project manager and two developers from bdg as well as three people from the customer's specialist departments; the IT department at alstria also provided active support.

As a first step, a data model was conceptualised by the bdg developers in accordance with the requirements profile. The focus here is the definition of the dimensions, hierarchies, and the multidimensional data cubes to be formed from them. The dimensions are linked and the data are stored in the cubes. They form the medium in which the various data dimensions and the relationships of the layers to each other – i.e. the architecture of the application – are stored. In the next step, the first integrations were carried out and the existing upstream systems were connected – in this case Microsoft Dynamics NAV (Navision) as well as Pandora, an internal system developed by alstria. It is typical for BI tools'

architecture to be "grafted" onto existing systems (usually relational databases) in a separate application. For integration to Board, data must be transformed to fit the previously defined data model. In the board environment, an SQL server is usually used as an intermediate layer.

One challenge was the allocation of data levels. Because business intelligence and planning systems are built on data aggregation, the correct identification and definition of the lowest levels is crucial – because that is where the data is stored.

In the first kick-off workshop, the property level was defined as the lowest planning level. In alstria's case, this means the individual buildings – not their floors or individual spaces.

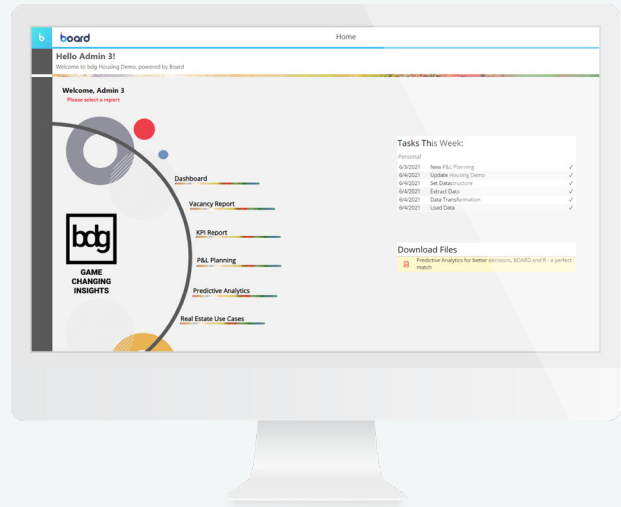
In the course of the development, however, it turned out that instead of objects, areas had to be taken into account as the lowest data level and thus a change to the originally defined data model and project plan became necessary.

How much effort a new planning level makes depends on where it is inserted. At the end, i.e. at the "top" of the aggregation, the already ordered data set is only reduced further – so inserting a new level here is quite easy. If, on the other hand, a new level is added to the beginning, i.e. the "base" of the aggregation, the total amount of data processed increases exponentially. In order for the integration logics used and the data model to be able to support the new lowest level, the bdg developers had to adapt them – this was achieved in record time, so that the originally planned project duration was extended by only one week.



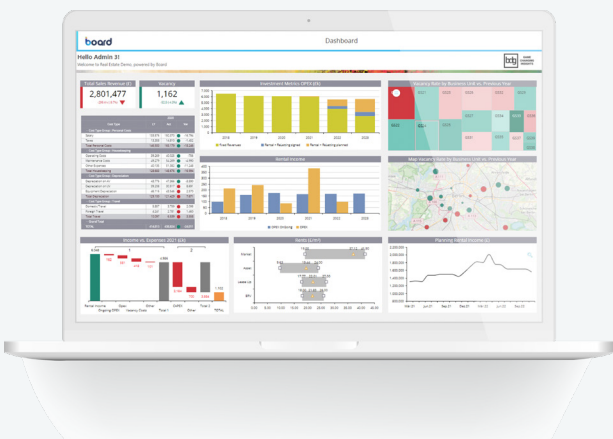
## CLOSE COOPERATION BETWEEN BDG AND ALSTRIA IN THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS AS AN IMPORTANT SUCCESS FACTOR

The excellent cooperation of the whole project team enabled high speed development – so the first data integrations were already carried out two weeks after the kick-off workshop. The IT department of alstria provided the SQL server needed for the transformation and participated in the data integration. Part of bdg's best practice approach is to involve subsequent users during development with a coaching element. The team at alstria showed a lot of commitment and in the course of this project it also became clear: participation in the initial development brings great added value for later projects and the continuation as a self-service platform. The later adminsim coaching approaches took over some tasks in the development – this worked very well and contributed significantly to the quick success of the project.



## THE CONCLUSION

Goal achieved: The countless Excel data sheets for each property have been replaced by a total of five clear input templates for action planning, letting assumptions and the P&L. The templates are complemented by two overview screens. This not only makes data entry much easier – and eliminates the risk of errors caused by manual entry – but also makes the analysis and validation of data for reporting uncomplicated and quick. The application was excellently accepted by the team – the users have since set up some dashboards and logics in their own development, so that in addition to the plan data, the actual data can also be validated via the platform. Overall, the response was so good that other departments also expressed interest in a comparable solution – as an all-in-one platform for integrated corporate planning, the software board is ideally suited for this. Further joint projects between alstria and bdg are therefore being planned.



The logo for 'board' is presented on a white document-like shape with a folded top-right corner. The word 'board' is written in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font. A small vertical bar is positioned to the left of the letter 'o', and a small horizontal bar is positioned above the letter 'a'.

**board**

## About Board

Board is a business intelligence and corporate performance management platform for all analysis, reporting and planning tasks in the company. Due to its user-friendliness, the tool is very well suited for self-service applications by users in the specialist departments. Whether for management or for individual areas such as finance, sales or logistics, controlling and planning tasks take place in a uniform CPM and BI system, based on uniform data. In addition to the analysis options, which mainly evaluate historical data, the tool also contains functions for predictive and advanced analytics. The CPM and BI platform is also available on a mobile basis and can be used on tablets and smartphones.

## The better decisions group

bdg is an international consultancy for Corporate Performance Management (CPM) and Business Intelligence (BI) solutions based in Germany and the UK. We are a long-standing partner of various CPM and BI software providers and implement flexible solutions for planning, reporting and analysis. Medium-sized companies as well as large corporations and public organisations are among our satisfied customers. It is our mission to create a solid data and information resource for our customers as a basis for better decisions.



**better decisions group**  
Berlin ● Cologne ● Dortmund ●  
Munich ● Norwich ●  
Peterborough ● Preston

---

**Email:** [info@bdg.io](mailto:info@bdg.io)

---

**Web:** [www.bdg.io](http://www.bdg.io)

#gamechanginginsights | #betterdecisionsgroup