



Asset Management Challenges in Fusion Cloud ERP

High-volume data entry methods compared

The Challenge of Asset Management

Maintaining an asset register, like adding new assets and maintaining existing ones, is a continuous, time-consuming, and resource-heavy task for your Finance team, particularly when asset volumes creep up. As the number of assets grows, tracking their status, depreciation, and compliance requirements becomes increasingly complex. This task can become burdensome to your Finance team and require you to devote significant resources to it. Without an efficient system in place, errors and inefficiencies can lead to financial discrepancies and operational disruptions.



Maintaining Assets in Oracle Fusion Cloud ERP

In Oracle Fusion Cloud ERP the register is managed via front-end forms that provide a significant amount of functionality at your fingertips, and it has a messaging system that gives nice feedback after the event for additions, adjustments, and so on. The problem is that it's a piecemeal approach—each asset in the forms needs to be individually entered and maintained, manually, one by one. This works fine for a handful of assets at a time but is not time efficient. The question then arises, “How do we scale it up when we need to handle tens, hundreds, or even thousands of assets together?”

This is a perennial problem with forms-based data entry and, in recognition of that, Oracle Fusion Cloud ERP provides two approaches to data entry.

Data Loading Approaches in Oracle Fusion Cloud ERP

Forms

The first approach is great for low volumes of Asset data. The front end is extremely feature rich and there's nothing you can't achieve there. The problem is the amount of time it takes to manipulate these forms. There's a navigation time-cost in clicking in and out of forms, and each asset must be processed individually. With increasing volumes, this approach quickly becomes impractical.

Spreadsheet Loading

The basic premise of this approach is to populate large volumes of data within a spreadsheet and from there, upload the data en masse to Oracle. This approach strips out the navigation time-cost (that we're burdened with in the front end) and allows data to be populated and manipulated in chunks, leveraging features like Copy & Paste to speed up the data-entry process.

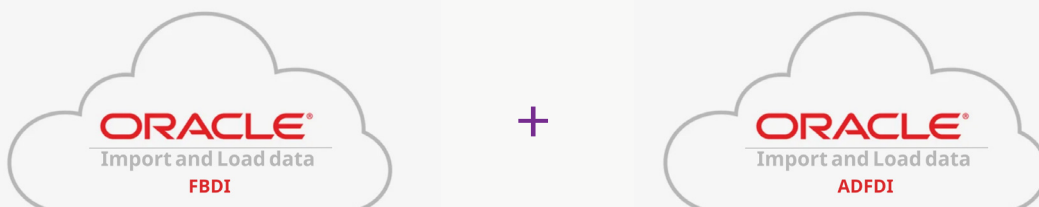
With the right tools, spreadsheet loading is a game-changing approach for data-entry outcomes.

An increasing number of companies are adopting this approach and using it in a wide range of scenarios, because of its relatively low cost of implementation (especially compared to bespoke IT-driven interface solutions) and because the user base is already familiar with the most common spreadsheet tools and pre-equipped with the required operational skills. This keeps user training and the associated costs to a minimum.



Spreadsheet Loading in Oracle Fusion Cloud ERP

Oracle has been quite forthcoming with providing spreadsheet solutions for Fixed Assets, and there are two seeded methods within Oracle Fusion Cloud ERP to leverage this approach against your Asset Register, **File-Based Data Import (FBDI)** and **Application Development Framework Desktop Integration (ADFdi)**.



FBDI

Oracle's blanket data-entry tool for static data-loading from a spreadsheet. Data files are prepopulated in a spreadsheet but then transferred to the Fusion front end to be manipulated, loaded, and reconciled. Technical expertise is required to use this tool.



ADFdi

A tool that allows users to prepare their data in a spreadsheet, with data-entry aids and messaging/feedback, and perform the data load from within the spreadsheet itself.

Although FBDI support is comprehensive (with 11 separate FBDI templates for Fixed Assets), the complicated FBDI workflow limits their usefulness for everyday business as usual (BAU) tasks. FBDI templates are rigid and provide no live data validation or upload feedback, complicating data entry. Even more, the complicated back-end processes that drive FBDI are not suited to regular, non-technical users, and so error reconciliation is very demanding.

ADFdi is a much more user-focused approach, and it's a pleasant surprise to see the Asset Management area so well-catered to with ADFdi templates. You'll find about 7 or 8 ADFdi templates at your disposal, which cover the staple tasks. However, Oracle has not been so generous in other areas of the business.

All that Glitters is Not Gold

On the face of it, with all that at your fingertips, it might seem that your Asset Management data entry needs are taken care of. However, a closer inspection reveals significant shortcomings.

Unless you intend to maintain a high degree of IT involvement in your data-entry processes, you can rule out using FBDI for everyday data loading tasks. The technical demands for its operation are just too extreme for a regular end-user. It was never designed for BAU, and those that argue for its suitability for this purpose are not being honest with you.

On the other hand, ADFdi provides a much more comfortable user interaction and is in principle well-suited to BAU use. Pre-validation Lists of Values (LOVs) can be used to record a clean data set, there is "live" upload validation, and feedback is returned to the sheet to detail what happened to each loaded element.

But ADFdi is far from perfect.

Before we use ADFdi, we need to be aware of several shortcomings.

- **Limited Uploads.** ADFdi limits uploads to 5000 rows per spreadsheet, so large loads cannot be processed in one step.
- **Rigid Layouts.** Columns cannot be reordered or removed without breaking the template. There are also hidden columns which record metadata, particularly when Copy & Pasting loaded data into new rows for replication purposes.
- **Limited Excel Features.** Although operated within Microsoft Excel, ADFdi impacts and limits the standard features available, so actions like Undo/Redo no longer work, forcing users to somewhat change their habits.
- **Too Many Spreadsheets.** Because ADFdi templates are generated out of the Oracle front end, users face the prospect of becoming overwhelmed by the sheer number of spreadsheet files they have to maintain. Also, these files tend to have the same default filename despite having different purposes, so managing them all can be a real challenge.



The Adjustments templates within Asset Management are a prime example of this limitation. There are 7 ADFdi spreadsheets to choose from, each with their own set of columns. But 6 of these spreadsheets default to the same filename, creating the risk of accidentally overwriting existing files with empty templates.

Other problems exist when using ADFdi for Asset Management:

- **Single Set of Books.** Each of these 7 templates is tied to a predetermined set of books, so multiple copies are needed to maintain the entire asset register. Piles of spreadsheet files stack up all over the place and it can be difficult to distinguish between them all.
- **Inconsistencies.** The differences between how the individual templates work can make life challenging; for example, when working in the Mass Additions template, the Preparer column expects an email address, whereas the same column in the Adjustment templates wants a combination of Lastname, Firstname.
- **Unexpected Results.** ADFdi can be buggy. Data uploaded doesn't always appear as expected when it hits the Oracle side. Key Flexfields in particular can come through un-populated despite your best efforts.
- **Manual Steps.** Although the focus with ADFdi is spreadsheet loading, there is a major manual element to the process. Error reconciliation tasks are very laborious, requiring separate spreadsheets and lots of manual intervention (see Figure 1.0).

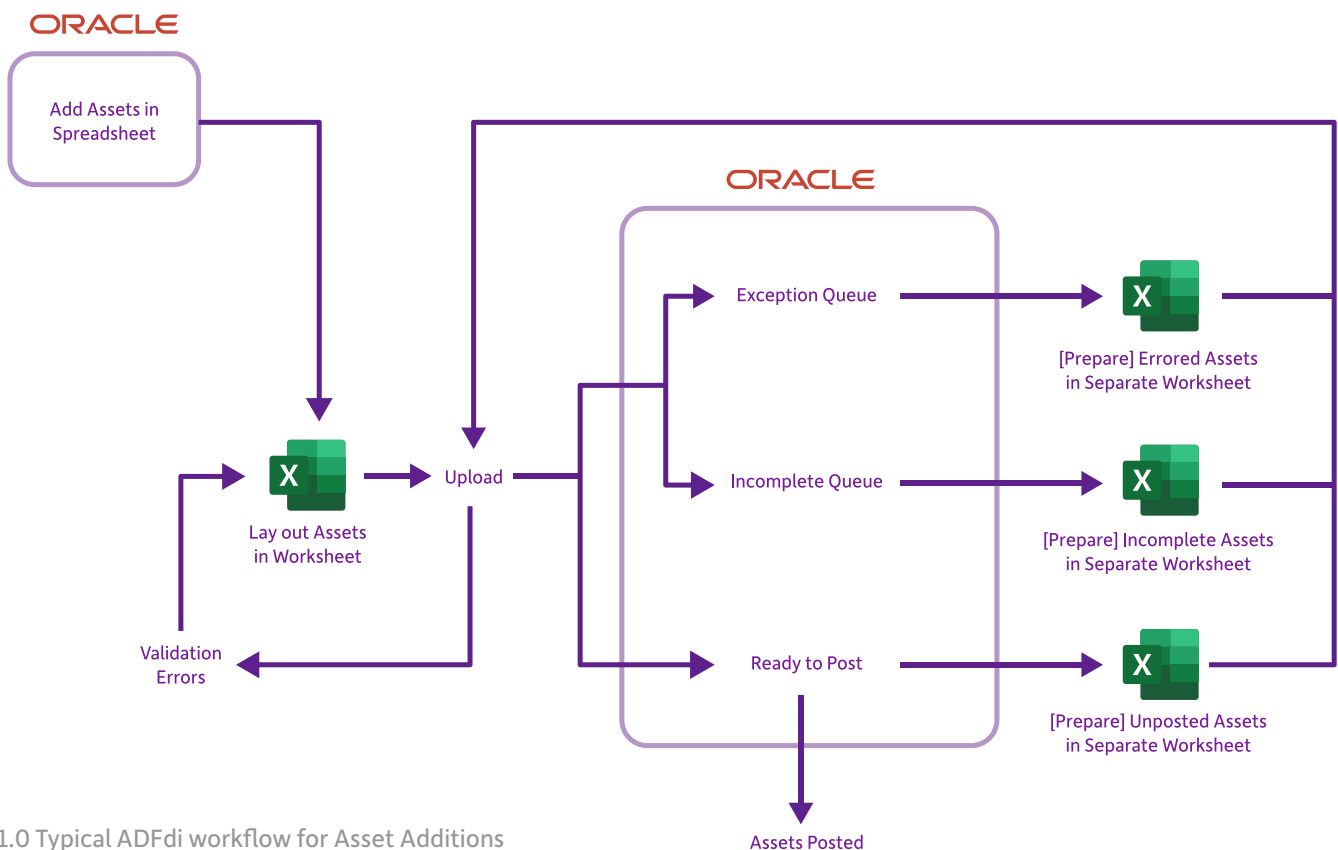


Fig 1.0 Typical ADFdi workflow for Asset Additions

- Row inserted successfully
- Insert failed



7

The content of the messages also has issues, with no guarantee of being decipherable. For example, with Asset Transfers, we see some very unhelpful messages like the one in the screenshot. While getting upload feedback in the spreadsheet is a useful feature to have, this feedback needs to be understandable.

You might be tempted to believe that where a row returns **Row inserted successfully**, an Asset has been created or successfully transacted, but unfortunately this result does not reflect the full picture.

Asset Additions are a good example of that. In this template, **Row inserted successfully** merely means it has been loaded into the asset system. Once an Asset lands there, however, a number of different scenarios might play out. It may indeed be created, but the Asset is equally likely to be sitting in the Incomplete, Exception, or Ready to Post queues; and reviewing and responding to that is a manual task.

This is a problem with the ADFdi approach in general—there are multiple stages where an asset can be rejected, and a user needs to go different places to review each of them.

- Initial Spreadsheet (Status Column and Status Panel)
- Incomplete Asset Queue
- Additions Exception Queue
- Asset Inquiry form (to confirm asset creation)

Assets that fall into the Incomplete or Exception queue can be corrected in an ADFdi spreadsheet, but not the one in which the upload was initially performed. Users are required to generate a new version of the Mass Additions template with the Prepare button. This version is then populated with the rejected records and the exception detail, but it would've been handy if that information had been returned to the original copy!

High-volume Asset uploads tend to loop through this process a number of times, which means a lot of spreadsheet files to manage.

What's more, the layout that is most sensible for Mass Additions is less user friendly for error corrections. The Exception column (with the rejection reason) is miles over to the right (Column DK), and because the layouts can't be changed, a considerable amount of time is lost navigating around the document to address each problem.

Add to that the 5000-row limit for ADFdi, and it becomes quite a lengthy process of juggling a large number of files.

At the end of the process, when things go well, the assets will have been created in the Oracle system, but the Mass Additions template leaves us a bit in the dark about that, because we never see the Asset Numbers generated. We can find these only in the Asset Inquiry form at the front end, which becomes a problem in the later steps of the Asset Lifecycle because other ADFdi templates require this number. How then do we populate those spreadsheets without knowing the Asset Numbers?



A Better Solution

Ideally, we'd like to do without these problems.

We'd want a spreadsheet solution that allows us to manage all our Asset Management tasks in one place, one simple and reusable spreadsheet file, with no limits on the number of assets we can work with.

We want to be able to handle all our books at the same time, and when we need to adjust them we need a facility to bring those assets into our spreadsheet so we can manage and maintain them.

With a complete spreadsheet solution, we can trust that we never need to visit the front end at all.

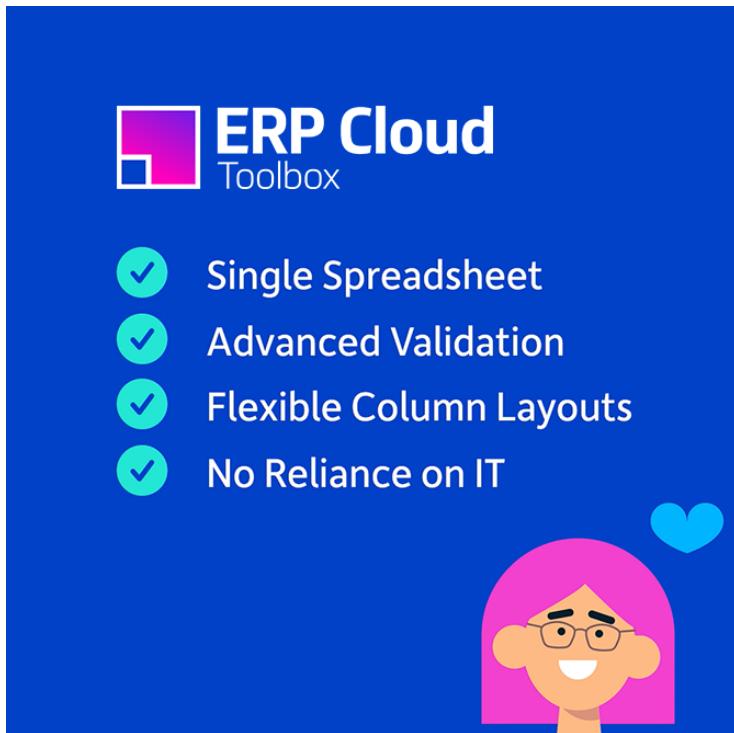
Luckily, such a solution is available.

Introducing the More4apps ERP Cloud Toolbox

More4apps understands all these issues and has built the ERP Cloud Toolbox Finance Module to enable your Finance team to manage your asset portfolio in the most effective and time-efficient way.

This tool comes complete with preconfigured loading templates for managing all aspects of financial data, including Asset Additions, Adjustments, and Transfers.

Just pick the template needed and proceed with the task at hand, completely from within Excel. You don't need to use the front end at all.



More4apps gives you complete control of your spreadsheet layouts—at any time, you can move or rearrange columns based on your task, and unwanted columns can be removed completely without any adverse side effects. The entire gamut of Excel's functionality (including Copy & Paste and formulas) is at your disposal to speed up data entry. There is also no limit on the number of assets or books you can work with, so you can complete your Asset Management tasks easily and in one place.

You can save and reopen the spreadsheets at any time and the data from any previous session will be preserved. Want a new work area? Just open a new tab and start afresh.

The ERP Cloud Toolbox comes with powerful download features that allow you to download and manage your assets from Oracle within the spreadsheet. To ensure a clean dataset, the tool also has powerful advanced validation that includes data-entry forms with the Oracle lists and validation rules behind each column.

The whole Asset Management process is performed within the spreadsheet itself, with buttons in the ribbon for validation checks, as well as uploading and downloading data. Uploads return feedback and messages for each uploaded asset directly into the spreadsheet cells, right next to the data itself.

The tool uses the Oracle public (REST) webservices, meaning that the uploads are performed immediately. Further, because nothing gets loaded unless it's correct, there's never any need to scrutinize the Additions Exception list or post the assets after the fact.

Asset Numbers for newly added assets are returned into the spreadsheet right away, and it's easy to manipulate those assets immediately without needing to use the front-end Asset Inquiry form. In fact, there's no need to go into the front end at all.

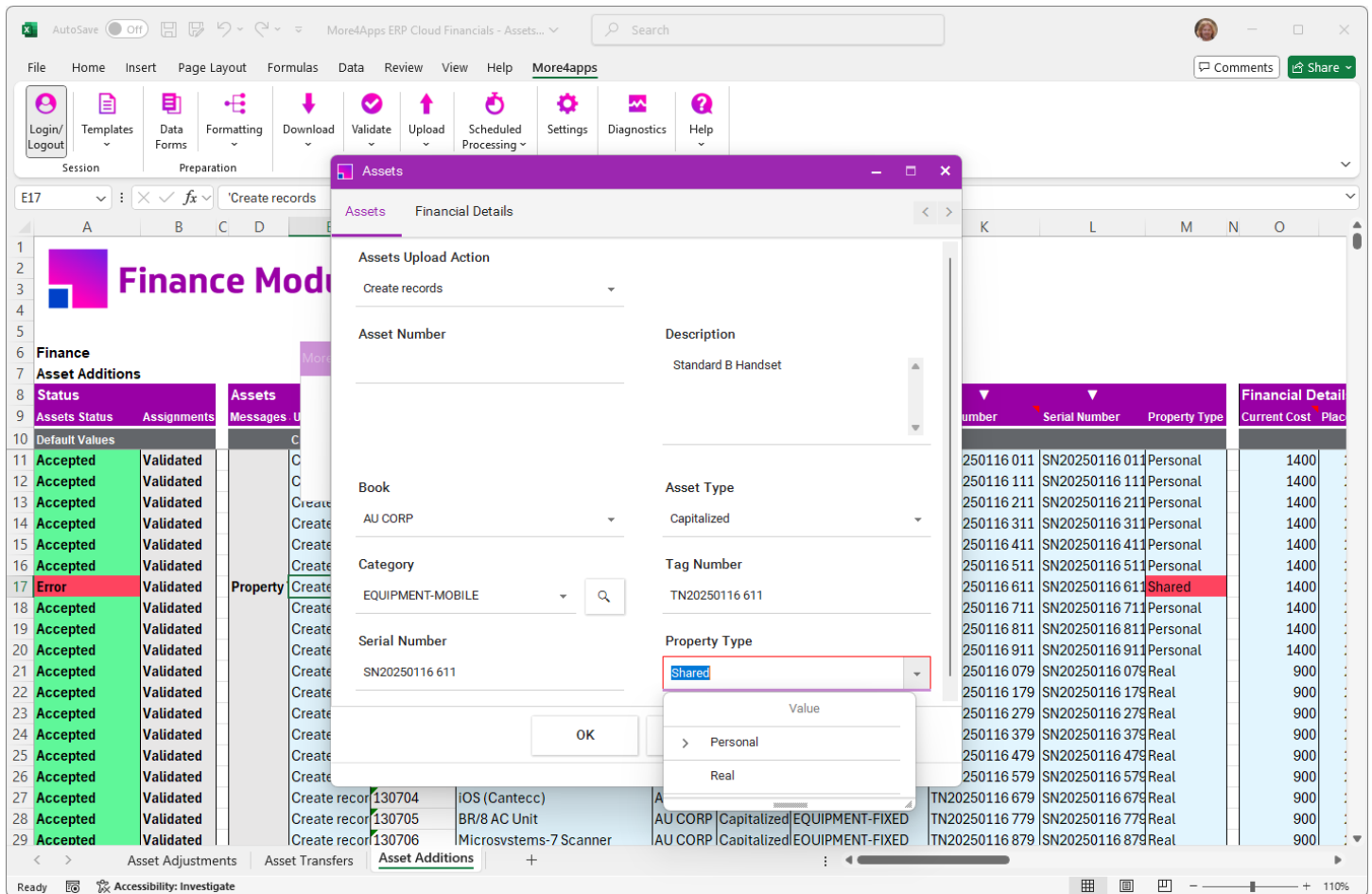


Fig 1.2 The More4apps Finance Module showing Asset Additions Integrator

The ERP Cloud Toolbox’s Finance Module is a real game changer for spreadsheet-based Asset Management in Oracle Fusion Cloud ERP. It strips away all the layers of confusion from the process— instead, you have one reusable spreadsheet file for all your tasks, immediate feedback in one place, and just a more intuitive way to go about things.

Try it out for just a few minutes and there’s no doubt you’ll agree yourself.

[CLICK HERE FOR THE SELF-GUIDED DEMO](#)

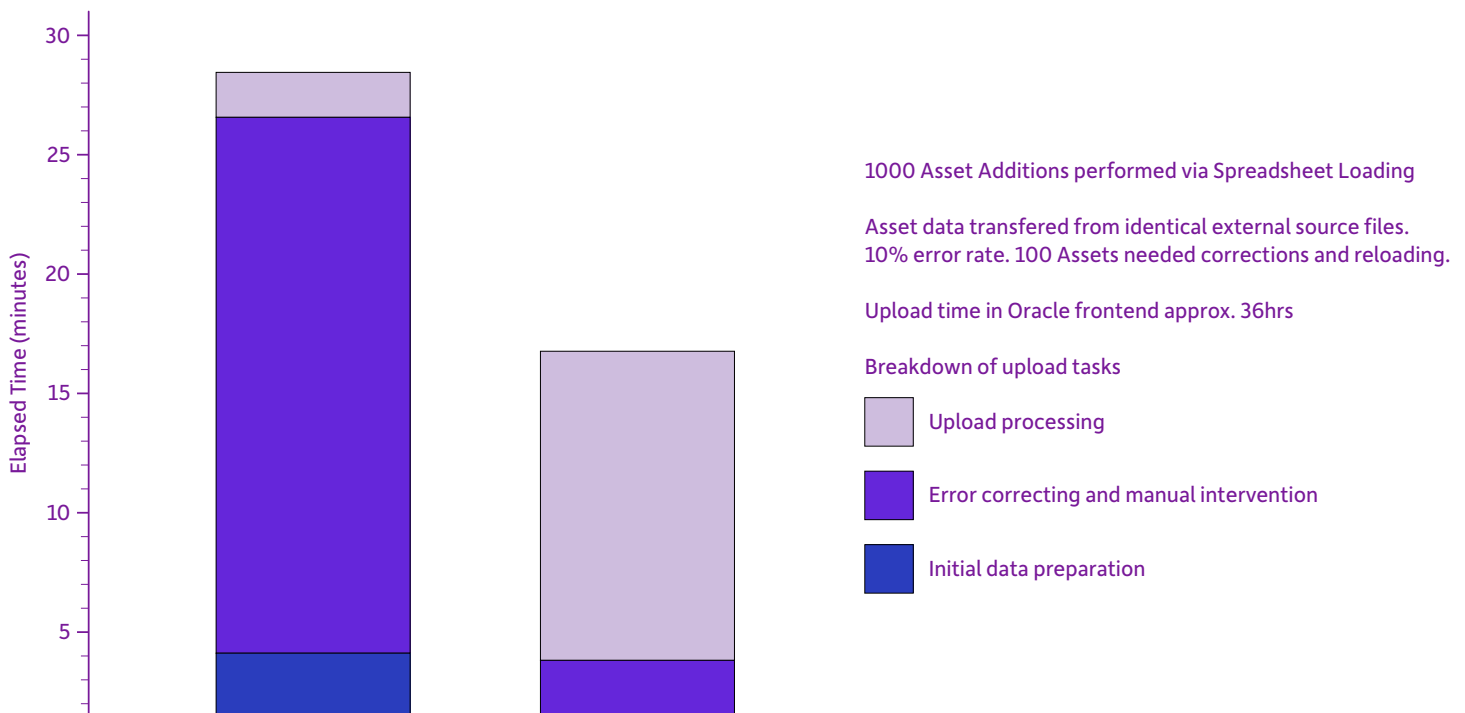
The Bottom Line

It's difficult to provide detailed statistics on investment returns (ROI) with an area as complicated as Asset Management, since every organization handles their information differently and some details are more important to one company than to another. However, a simple comparison between the More4apps ERP Cloud Toolbox and ADFdi sheds light on the significant differences in time and effort between the tools.

In a typical scenario of creating 1000 simple Assets with the simplest information, including 10% data errors*, we see the following results.

Asset Additions

ADFDI v More4apps



ADFDi uses the back-end interface so raw data upload speeds are quicker than the REST services used by the More4apps product (the lighter shaded portion of the graph). However, even accounting for that, the ERP Cloud Toolbox comes out ahead in total process time.

What's most illuminating is the difference in manual effort required for each method (see the darker shaded portions of the graph).

With More4apps, you are only required to manually intervene to prepare data or correct errors for 3m 53s.

On the other hand, ADFdi is much harder work—19m 37s of the effort is hands on, or 87% of the total process time!

Uploading 1000 Asset Additions incl. 10% errors (100)

More4apps ECT Finance Module (Asset Additions Integrator)

Data Preparation 1m29s

Error Correction 2m24s

Upload (2 steps) 15m07s

Total 19m 01s

ADFdi Additions + Preparation (Additions with Exceptions downloaded)

Data Preparation (1) 3m 59s

Sheet Corrections (1) 5m 37s

Sheet Corrections (2) 2m 56s

Sheet Corrections (3) 1m 37s

Sheet Corrections (4) 3m 52s

Sheet Corrections (5) 1m 06s

Check results (6 steps) 32s

Upload Time (9 steps) 2m 57s

Total 22m 34s

Frontend Forms

1000 Manual Asset entries 2153m 20s = 35h 53m 20s

Further, this is challenging work that requires a lot of switching between the front end and the spreadsheet, viewing scheduled jobs, and performing multiple log-ins—and it uses no less than 5 spreadsheet files!

Comparing the two spreadsheet-loading tools, the conclusion becomes obvious—the More4apps ERP Cloud Toolbox is not just easier to use, it saves you time and money.



Even without the significant savings in time and effort, the sheer simplicity of using the ERP Cloud Toolbox compared to the alternatives is enough of a reason to roll it out at your company—feedback that we’ve consistently received from our customers. The More4apps ERP Cloud Toolbox was exactly the spreadsheet-loading solution they’d imagined when they set out to improve their processes and overcome the barriers with Oracle data entry. It is perfectly aligned with the skillsets of their data entry operators, with no fiddly processes, unforeseen obstacles, or reliance on IT experts.

If you’re serious about managing your asset portfolio in the most effective, time-efficient, and reliable way, get in touch with More4apps today.

Connect with us on our social networks

