REPORTING & REVENUE PLANNING CASE STUDY · SAAS

Sprout Social Makes Smarter Growth Decisions With Reporting and Revenue Planning in Vena

Snapshot: Sprout Social

A social media management and data analytics software platform

The company went public in 2019 and now serves more than 28,000 brands around the world

Integrations: NetSuite for ERP, Salesforce for CRM

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Kristina Bittorf
Senior Manager of Finance, Sprout Social
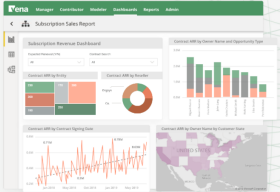
Sprout Social Before Vena

When Kristina Bittorf joined Sprout Social in 2015, she knew she was in for an adventure at the Chicago-based SaaS company. They'd just launched a new product, they were hiring like crazy and the firm was gearing up for another major funding round. The need for rock-solid growth plans had never been more significant—but the finance team just didn't have the capacity to compile their data into actionable insights.

According to Kristina—who now leads the finance team as Senior Manager—data silos were her biggest challenge in the days prior to Vena. In order to come up with a P&L forecast, for example, she'd have to pull pipeline numbers from the CRM, copy transactional details from the ERP and also chase down department heads for their budget to actuals variances. Monthly financial statements (plus any other ad hoc reports, for that matter) would usually take up to three whole days to produce.

"We used Google Sheets for all of our reporting to business leaders, but the data we pulled from our source systems was thrown together manually in Excel," says Kristina. "We spent so much time validating our numbers because there's a lot of room for error when your data is siloed. Everyone always wanted to know how the business was trending, but simplifying our numbers and making them digestible took a lot of effort."

It took a lot more time that it needed to for Sprout's executive leaders to make confident, data-driven decisions about the company's long-term future. Sprout was growing fast with lots of milestones on the horizon, so establishing one source of truth for company-wide KPIs was a top priority.

"Tackling the important questions gets a heck of a lot harder when you don't have a strong data foundation. The decisions about where to spend our money, where to hire and how to grow the business just weren't being made fast enough," says Kristina. "In a dynamic SaaS environment like ours, you need to constantly analyze profitability and look at new metrics to influence your growth decisions. That level of agility was really missing before we had Vena."

The Vena Solution

Kristina partnered with Vena in late 2018 and rolled out **Vena for SaaS**—a pre-configured solution for software companies—a few months later. Vena's integrations with all of Sprout's data sources made it easy to build one system for budgeting, forecasting, reporting and scenario analysis.

"When we broke down our data silos and brought everything right into Vena, it really helped us look at the business from a different perspective," says Kristina. "Revenue is always top-of-mind, but now we can dive even deeper into our expenses and gross margin with KPIs such as efficiency ratios, customer acquisition cost, lifetime value and more. That's the data we need to guide our retention strategy and big go-to-market initiatives."

Instead of spending hours just consolidating data manually in Excel, Kristina has pre-built reporting templates that update automatically based on real-time actuals. And if she wants to make a change or report on some different metrics, Vena's Excel interface gives her the flexibility and ease-of-use she needs. Today, instead of burning three whole days on monthly reporting, Kristina gets up-to-date insights in front of her leaders in less than an hour.

"I can look at our budget in real time and say, 'Okay, if we put this much more into marketing spend, this is how it will affect our profit and our forecast for the rest of the year. Then the team can look at our revenue and see if we can support those changes," she says. "Planning with intention allows us to be more proactive instead of just looking back and analyzing the impact once it's already happened."

Sprout Social With Vena

Monthly reporting times drop from three days to one hour

One source of truth for budgeting, forecasting, reporting and what-if analysis

Reliable revenue planning makes it easy to approach growth objectives with confidence, such as launching an IPO or hiring staff for an overseas office

Key Results

In the two years following their Vena rollout, Sprout Social went public and continued to invest in growth, which included hiring more staff and expanding their new Dublin office. Kristina says executives are empowered to lead confidently down those roads because of the "reliable, timely data our team is delivering with Vena."

"Our sales and marketing initiatives have been crucial in recent years and Vena allows us to focus on the impact those investments really bring for us," she says. "For all of the different metrics and reports we run in Vena, I can easily apply filters so they only show results from our Dublin office, for example. When executives can see those dollars come in and quickly compare that to costs, it gives them a lot of confidence in the models we use to justify our investments."

Another important win has been Sprout's revenue planning model, which is a lot easier to manage thanks to Vena's native Salesforce integration. Today, Sprout's revenue metrics (retention rate, churn, average deal size, etc.) are consistent across their dataset, which means greater confidence for their decision makers as they chart a path forward for the business. The ability to layer financial data over their revenue metrics has made analysis faster—and now Sprout's executive leaders make data-driven decisions with a lot more agility.

"Vena gives us the freedom to envision what our own growth looks like," says Kristina. "We don't have to fit into a 'box' or conform to a rigid reporting structure at all. It's allowed us to get creative with how we look at the business so we can answer the tough questions and really help the company succeed."