SUCCESS STORIES OF THE DIGITAL NOW

Merz S&OP transformation: driving scalable planning, process improvement & real-time decision-making

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About Merz Aesthetics

Further information can be found on the Merz company website.

Merz Aesthetics is a global, family-owned leader in medical aesthetics, dedicated to helping patients and healthcare professionals achieve natural-looking, confident results. As an internationally active company in aesthetic medicine with a strong focus on hyaluronic acid and botulinum toxin (Botox) products, Merz Aesthetics combines more than a century of scientific heritage with a deep commitment to innovation, safety, and long-term partnerships with physicians.

The company operates production sites in Germany, Switzerland, and the USA, suppor-ted by a global distribution network with more than 20 warehouse locations and 2 central hubs. With annual revenues exceeding €1.0 billion and over 1,500 employees worldwide, Merz Aesthetics is one of the key players in the global aesthetics market.

From its US location in Sturtevant, Wisconsin, Merz Aesthetics North America manages a broad and expanding portfolio of injectable, skincare, and device-based treatments. Operating in one of the most dynamic and competitive healthcare markets in the world, the organization must continuously adapt to evolving customer needs, regulatory requi-rements, and market trends—while maintaining the agility and long-term perspective of a family-owned business.

The challenge

Breaking free from fragmented S&OP and Demand Planning

Merz Aesthetics was reaching the limits of its existing Sales & Operations Planning (S&OP) and Demand Planning landscape. What once worked well could no longer keep pace with:

- Growing business complexity and rising data volumes
- The need to align demand, supply, and financial perspectives across business units

Manual workflows, legacy tools, and fragmented planning approaches made data consolidation cumbersome, slowed planning cycles, and hindered cross-functional collaboration—ultimately impacting the speed and quality of decision-making. The existing setup had become a barrier to Merz Aesthetics' growth ambitions in North America.

To address these challenges, Merz Aesthetics decided to modernize its planning environment with a clear and focused scope: implement a pre-defined S&OP and Demand Planning process on a modern platform, rather than redesigning processes from scratch.

Demand Planning – key objectives

- Replace the existing Demand Planning solution (EPS BA GPP) with a modern, scalable platform
- Introduce statistical forecasting to complement planner expertise
- Establish a structured workflow for Local, Regional, and Global Planning
- Embed a robust Demand Review as part of the S&OP cycle
- Systematically measure forecast accuracy as a basis for continuous improvement

Supply Planning – key objectives

- Optimize capacity allocation based on defined scenarios
- Adjust purchase requisitions (PREQs) in line with capacity and supply constraints
- Enable structured Supply Review, Pre-S&OP, and S&OP steps to create a consistent, end-to-end planning cadence

By focusing on the implementation of a clearly defined process, Merz Aesthetics laid a solid foundation for a scalable, data driven planning environment and moved quickly away from fragmented tools and manual work.

From vision to reality: Merz S&OP transformation

Merz turned its planning vision into reality through a focused journey with valantic and Anaplan – from an initial idea and Proof of Concept (PoC) to a fully integrated S&OP and Demand Planning platform.

From PoC to platform decision

The initiative started in June 2022 with a PoC built by valantic. It showed that Anaplan could:

- Support Merz's pre-defined S&OP and Demand Planning processes
- Handle large data volumes and complex hierarchies
- Enable integrated Demand and Supply Planning

Based on the PoC, Merz:

1. Selected Anaplan as the strategic S&OP and Demand Planning platform
2. Chose valantic as implementation partner to operationalize the pre-defined processes

The project started in May 2023 with a planned go-live in December 2023 – a timeline that was achieved. Weekly project alignments between Merz and valantic ensured transparency and rapid issue resolution throughout.

In a relatively short timeframe, Merz moved from a validated concept to a live, scalable S&OP and Demand Planning platform – laying the groundwork for more transparent, data-driven, and future-proof planning.

Choosing excellence: Why Merz trusted Anaplan & valantic

Merz needed more than just a new tool: it needed a platform that could handle global complexity and a partner who understood both business and implementation.

Why Anaplan?

- Scalable for a global business – capable of handling large data volumes, complex hierarchies, and a growing portfolio across regions and channels
- Connected planning – supports Demand Planning, Supply Planning, and financial views in one model, linking volume, capacity, inventory, and financial impact
- Advanced analytics – statistical forecasting, scenario modeling, and optimizer functionality for Rough Cut Capacity Planning
- Robust integration & governance – SAP CPI–based integration into the existing SAP landscape, ensuring data consistency and a single source of truth

Michael Kennamann,

Global Supply Chain Systems Director,
Merz Aesthetics

„The collaboration between Merz Aesthetics and valantic demonstrates how leading organizations can modernize planning processes with Anaplan. By integrating demand and supply planning within a unified ecosystem, Merz Aesthetics has built a scalable foundation for sustained growth and operational excellence."

Why valantic?

- Deep S&OP and Demand Planning expertise – proven experience with integrated Demand and Supply Planning, including Demand Review, Supply Review, Pre-S&OP, and S&OP
- Proven Anaplan competence – the PoC (built by valantic, lead: Matthias Siller) demonstrated early how Merz's processes could be mapped into Anaplan
- Pragmatic, delivery-focused approach – ambitious timeline (May to December 2023) met through phased rollout, parallel runs, and a train the trainer approach
- Fit with Merz's operating model – clear focus on implementing a pre-defined process, clean data integration, and sustainable enablement, without unnecessary process redesign

Together, Anaplan as a flexible, enterprise-grade platform and valantic as a specialized implementation partner formed the optimal combination:

- A future-proof technology foundation for connected planning
- A trusted partner translating Merz's vision into a working, scalable solution

Building the future: the agile path to S&OP success – a project overview

Merz's S&OP transformation was not about replacing its legacy landscape, but about smartly complementing it with a modern planning layer. With Anaplan as the new planning backbone and SAP ECC as the transactional core, Merz moved from manual, Excel-based tools to a dynamic, automated platform—while preserving the strengths of its existing systems.

- SAP continues to manage MRP, master data, and transactional processes
- Anaplan drives Demand and Supply Planning, inventory projections, and the monthly S&OP cycle (including S&OE)

The project followed a phased, agile implementation approach aligned with Anaplan best practices:

1. Kickoff & alignment: initial workshops in Frankfurt set objectives, scope, and a realistic roadmap from May 2023 to December 2023.

2. Data integration & foundations: SAP CPI was used to bring customer and product master data, COGS, past order intake, and MD04 (incl. PREQs) into Anaplan, with transparent tracking of requirements (e.g., via Smartsheet).

3. Iterative model building: Demand and Supply Planning models were developed iteratively, including configurable planning boards, monthly statistical forecasting with predecessor/successor logic, Rough Cut Capacity Planning, and constrained/unconstrained inventory projections.

4. Governance, testing & parallel run: regular sprint reviews, weekly PM alignments, phased deployments, and two full parallel cycles in Demand Planning before switching off the legacy solution built trust and minimized risk.

5. Training, rollout & hypercare: a train the trainer concept (Regional Local Planners), phased rollout starting with pilot Sales Organizations, and focused hypercare after go-live ensured adoption and stability.

S&OP that works: transforming processes and delivering tangible results for Merz

Together, Merz and valantic have moved S&OP and Demand Planning from fragmented, Excel-based processes to an integrated, data-driven planning framework on Anaplan. While the transformation is still evolving, several concrete benefits are already visible.

Smarter Demand Planning and forecasting

By replacing the legacy Demand Planning solution and Excel-based tools with Anaplan, Merz has:

- Established a single, integrated Demand Planning environment, reducing manual effort and reconciliation
- Introduced statistical forecasting with predecessor/successor logic, improving forecast robustness and consistency
- Enabled structured Local, Regional, and Global Planning workflows with a formal Demand Review and systematic forecast accuracy measurement

Planners can now focus on value-adding forecast adjustments instead of data wrangling. This leads to more reliable demand signals, closer alignment of supply with market needs, and faster, fact based decision-making, creating a solid foundation for sustainable growth and responsiveness.

Efficient Rough Cut Capacity Planning

With Rough Cut Capacity Planning in Anaplan, Merz has strengthened the link between demand and production capabilities:

- Capacity constraints are applied directly in the model, enabling scenario-based allocation and prioritization
- An embedded optimizer supports planners in comparing scenarios and choosing the best capacity allocation

This reduces manual effort in capacity planning, improves utilization of production resources, and increases the agility of manufacturing sites. Merz is better equipped to respond to demand shifts, protect service levels, and support growth through efficient, transparent capacity management.

Stronger execution with S&OE Order Board

The introduction of a Sales & Operations Execution (S&OE) Order Board has created a single source of truth for short-term planning and execution across regions and countries:

- Orders, priorities, and constraints are visible in one place, embedded into the broader S&OP framework
- A transparent prioritization logic supports faster, aligned operational decisions

This has streamlined day to day execution, reduced ambiguity, and accelerated decision-making, ensuring that operational actions consistently reflect strategic S&OP decisions.

End-to-end supply chain framework and inventory excellence

Beyond Demand and Supply Planning, Merz and valantic have built a comprehensive end to end planning framework:

- Inventory rightsizing across all global stocking locations, with constrained and unconstrained projections
- Globally aligned packaging and production planning processes in the plants
- Continuous alignment of demand, supply, and financial plans, supported by ASP, COGS, and budget integration

By steering optimal inventory levels for finished and semi-finished goods and streamlining production and replenishment processes, Merz has strengthened both cost-effectiveness and service levels, supporting sustained demand growth for its core brands while maintaining financial discipline and operational resilience.

Pascal Räber

Senior Manager
valantic

„Shaping Merz's operational and strategic supply chain growth together with a dedicated joint team was highly rewarding. Together, we implemented end to end planning capabilities that improved transparency, sped up decisions, and created a scalable, resilient planning system."

Beyond transformation: Merz journey to continuous innovation

Merz Aesthetics' S&OP program is more than a successful Anaplan implementation – it is a showcase of how valantic brings together multiple competencies to deliver sustained, end to end value. What began as a focused S&OP and Demand Planning project evolved into a broader supply chain transformation because valantic could seamlessly combine technical delivery and strategic supply chain consulting within one trusted partnership.

Once the initial digital foundation in Anaplan was established, Merz moved beyond a "one time optimization" mindset toward continuous, end to end supply chain improvement. At this point, valantic's Supply Chain Consulting practice joined the existing team—not as a separate track, but as a natural extension of the Anaplan engagement.

The joint Merz–valantic team elevated the solution from "tool implementation" to a strategic planning framework with two core design elements:

1. Strategic definition of the decoupling point
valantic's supply chain experts worked with Merz to define the Decoupling Point as a central strategic lever—pinpointing exactly where forecast driven planning transitions into order driven execution and embedding this logic into governance and Anaplan workflows. In a pharmaceutical environment, where batch sizes, shelf-life constraints, and quality release cycles shape inventory strategy, this precision was essential for Anaplan to reach its full potential.

2. Blueprint for a digital twin of the supply chain
In parallel, valantic developed the blueprint for a digital twin of Merz Aesthetics' supply chain—enabling simulation-based scenario planning and making the downstream impact of operational decisions visible across the value chain. A detailed assessment of planning constraints and capacity restrictions across production and packaging was co engineered with the Anaplan delivery team, ensuring that the final model reflects the real-world complexity of Merz's operations.

This tight integration of process consulting and technical implementation is a hallmark of valantic's approach. Instead of designing processes in isolation and then "handing them over" to IT, process logic and system design evolved together within one coordinated team.

The impact is substantial:

- The systematic repositioning of the decoupling point, combined with coherent end to end planning logic, enables a significant reduction in working capital tied up in inventory
- For make to stock products, lead times can be reduced by up to 40%, strengthening service levels, responsiveness, and competitiveness

Outlook: unlocking the next level with AI in Anaplan

With this strategy and target picture in place, Merz Aesthetics North America has laid the groundwork for a truly connected, future ready supply chain.

In 2026, the next stage of this journey is already taking shape: Merz is now exploring the AI functionalities of Anaplan—for example, to further enhance statistical forecasting, support intelligent exception handling, and enable even more powerful scenario simulations. Built on the solid process and data foundation created together with valantic, these AI capabilities are set to unlock an additional wave of planning excellence and innovation.

Gereon Küpper

Partner
valantic

„At Merz Aesthetics, repositioning the decoupling point was the prerequisite for everything that followed. Without that process clarity, neither the Anaplan model nor the digital twin could unlock their full potential."

About us

Our Competence Center valantic Extended Planning & Analysis (vXPA), headquartered in Zurich, delivers comprehensive end-to-end (E2E) transformation services for enterprise planning. Our proficiency in Connected Planning and the integration of Data & Artificial Intelligence (AI) enable us to assist a broad range of industries in refining their planning strategies in areas like Supply Chain, Finance, HR, and Sales. In collaboration with premier planning software providers such as Anaplan, Board, and Pigment, we ensure that our solutions remain at the technological forefront.

vXPA is part of the valantic Group (www.valantic.com). valantic is a market leader in digital transformation and one of the top digital solutions, consulting, and software companies, with more than 4,000 developers and consultants around the world (Q2/24).

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