Sage Intacct Planning

8 Signs Your Nonprofit Has Outgrown Excel for Budgeting and Planning

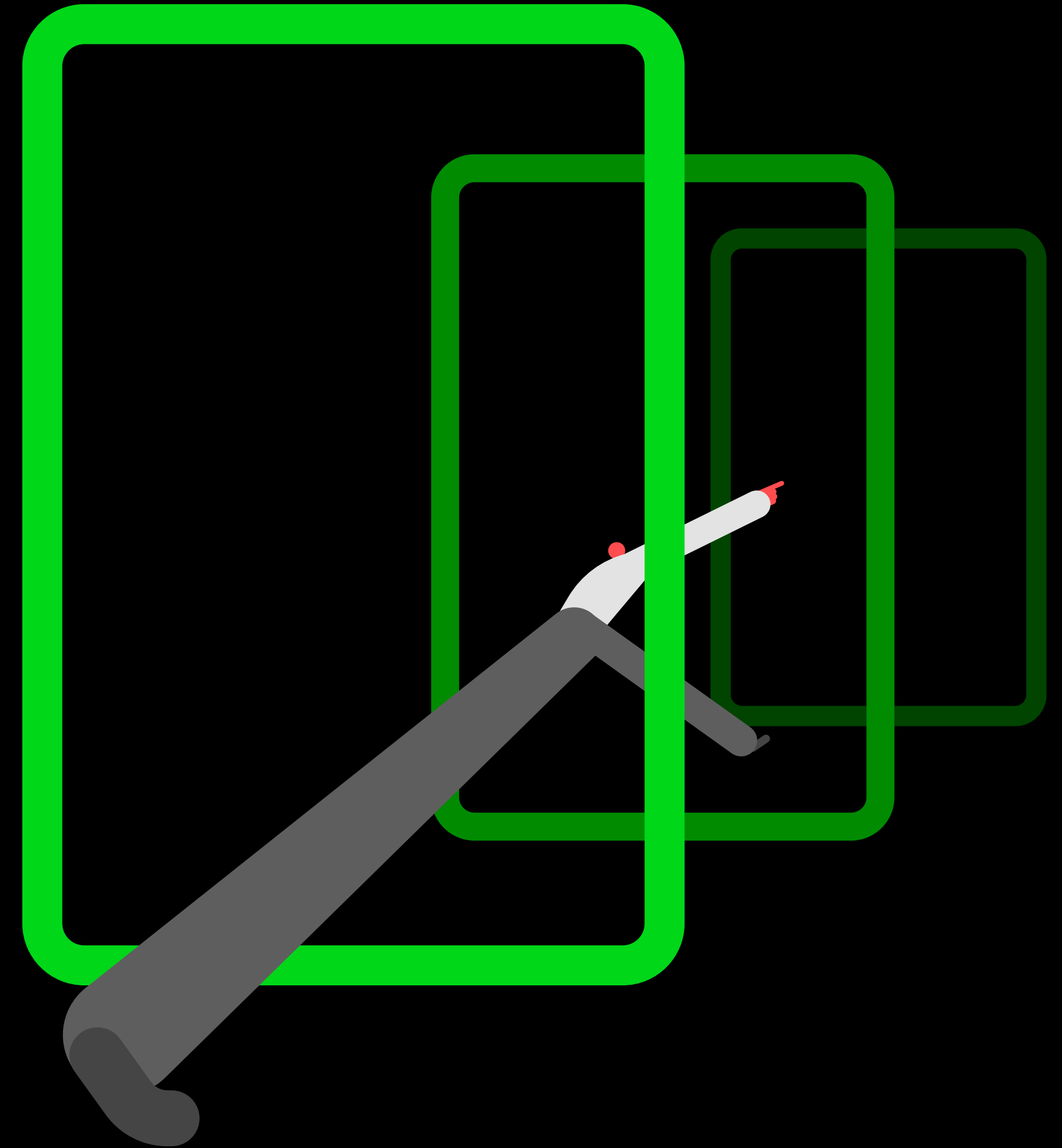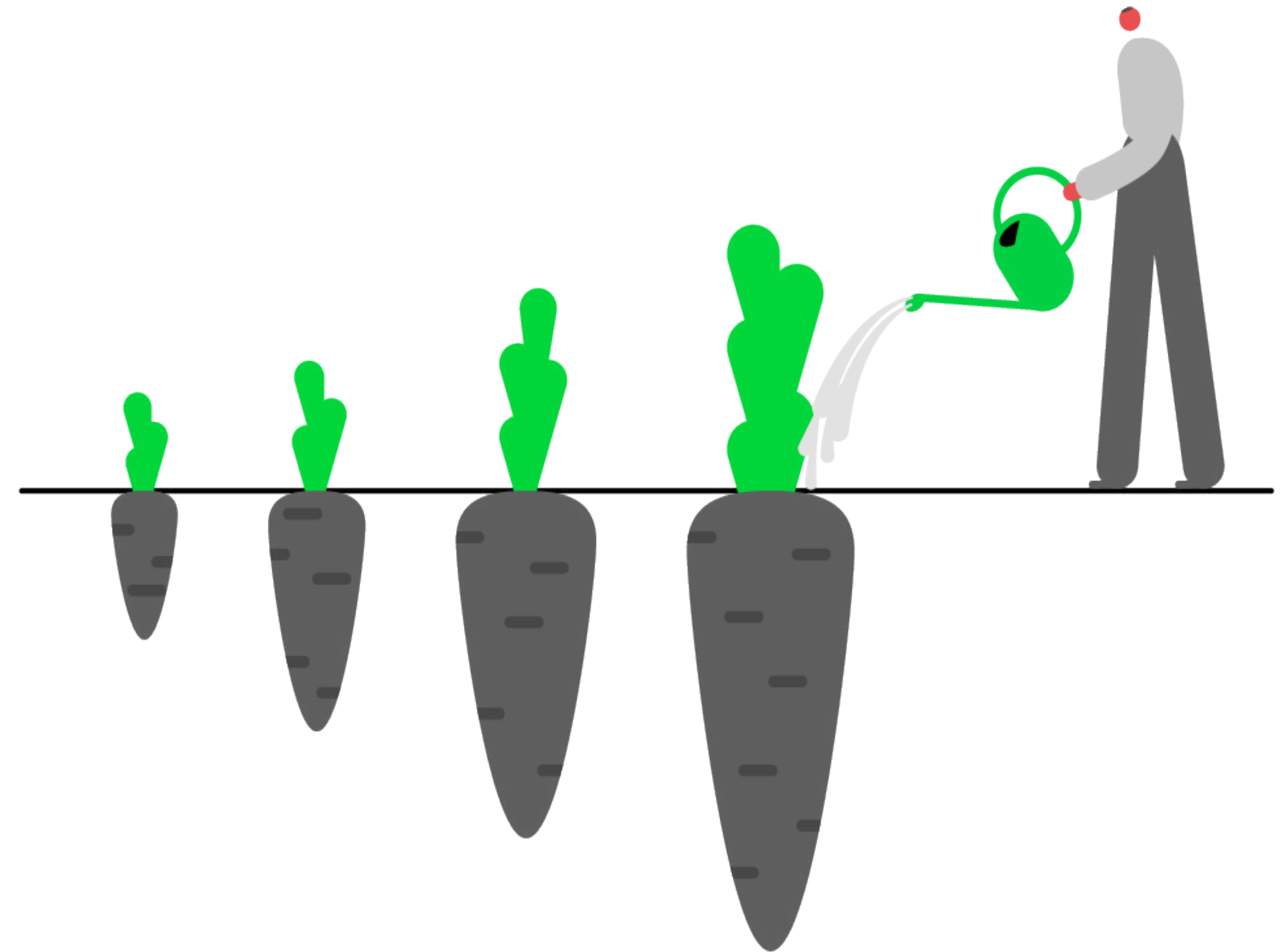Sage

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Growing beyond the capabilities of spreadsheet planning

If using Microsoft Excel for budgeting and planning the growth of your nonprofit has become painful, you're not alone.

In a recent survey of over 900 nonprofit finance leaders[1], more than one-third listed budgeting and planning as a frustration. When you are a small nonprofit, it's easy to use spreadsheets to manage budgets, but when your organization grows in complexity—or you need to quickly shift direction due to world events—Excel becomes a problem that only a true budgeting and planning solution can solve.

Is it time to move off Excel? Read on to learn the eight signs that you've outgrown Excel for budgeting and planning.

1 Sage Intacct Nonprofit Technology Trends Report, 2022

"I just pulled an all-nighter again to prep for the board meeting."

Managing budgets in Excel requires a lot of tactical work.

Downloading CSV files, cutting and pasting, rolling up data, emailing files, building and updating forecasts and models, and updating formulas and links. If you're consumed with these tasks, or worse, having to spend your nights and weekends managing plans and budgets, an easy-to-use budgeting and planning solution can streamline the process and help you get your life back!

"Joe is the only one who understands the model!"

When you've got complex forecasting and what-if models and only one person in your organization knows how it works, you are exposing your organization to risk if that person moves on.

What are the cost and ramifications to having someone new diagnose, understand, and update the models if he leaves? You can ensure your continuity with a budgeting and planning solution that enables you to define models that consistently operate on the data you pull in from your plans, budgets, and actuals.

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"Oops, sorry, that's a formula error."

We've all been there. You thought you double-checked everything, but you got that last-minute change and forgot to update the link in your formula before the presentation to management or (yikes!) the board.

Your constituents and stakeholders depend on you to get the numbers right, and errors reduce their confidence and could lead to misguided decisions if not caught. With a budgeting and planning solution, you can easily calculate metrics such as cash flow or model headcount expenses—without spreadsheet errors.

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"Oh no! Did I just send the one with the salary info?"

Budgets usually include sensitive data such as salary information. Because of this, you will need the ability to limit access to specific budgets and budget information.

Storing or sending unprotected budget files around via email or on shared drives risks access by unauthorized people. A true budgeting and planning solution enables you to secures plans, budgets, and sensitive information with internal controls that protect you from the risks of inappropriate access.

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"Wait, that's not the version I've been managing to."

Changes are often made to budgets throughout the year to realign to changing priorities and conditions.

Version control issues can have significant consequences beyond just confusion. That means that key parts of the organization can be operating from the wrong information, making decisions and spending money in ways that aren't aligned to your nonprofit's goals.

A budgeting and planning solution provides one source of truth for everyone. You know who updated the budget and when. Everyone is bought in and aligned to the same plans, budgets, and forecasts.

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"When did you send it out? I can't find the email."

Using Excel and email to send out spreadsheets means maintaining distribution lists and digging through email to find budgets.

It makes you the go-to person for even the smallest things because department heads don't trust that they have the right data, can't find what they need, or need you to make an update.

With a budgeting and planning solution, everyone has one place to go to find their data. You can easily invite department heads to enter and update their own plans, budgets, forecasts, and scenarios. You are no longer the bottleneck for everything budget-related.

"It's halfway through the month and I don't have last month's data yet."

If you budget like many nonprofits, every month you download the actuals to a CSV file and cut and paste them into Excel.

Or maybe you are more sophisticated and have lookups that pull your data in from the CSV file, but then you have to chase down errors before rolling it up. In the meantime, everyone is waiting on their reports to see what the actuals were from the last period, potentially delaying operational and strategic decisions. A budgeting and planning solution that integrates with your financial solution can update that information with a couple of clicks, providing immediate access to stakeholders.

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"I have no time for analysis and strategy."

If managing budgeting is so time-consuming that you're only focused on looking backward, you're missing the value of budgeting and planning for your nonprofit.

The real value is in looking forward and figuring out how to strategically meet your short-, medium-, and long-term goals. Budgeting and planning solutions automate everyday budget, plan management, and forecasting. They provide templates for what-if analyses that can help you shift your focus to strategy and contribute to growth and mission achievement.

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Have you outgrown Excel for budgeting and planning?

Any one of these eight signs might be enough to cause you to consider moving away from Excel for your budgeting. But if you're experiencing three or more of these signs, it's time to consider a true budgeting and planning solution.

"Isn't budgeting and planning software difficult to deploy and integrate, not to mention too expensive, for a nonprofit organization of my size?"

Until now, most budgeting and planning solutions have been built to handle the needs of large nonprofits. They simply weren't a good fit for most smaller nonprofits like yours. They required big budgets and resources to deploy, integrate, and maintain. Turn the page for good news...

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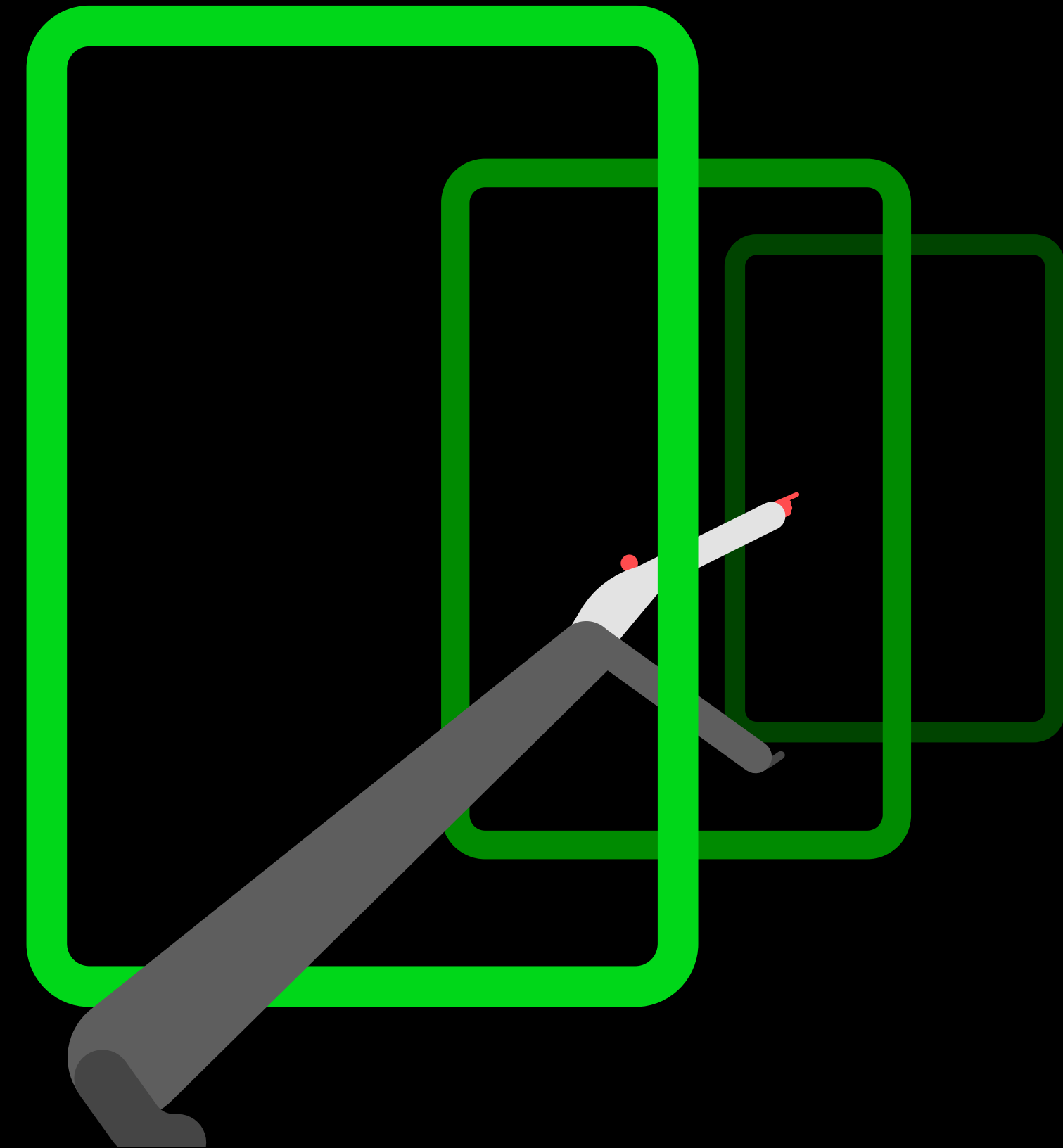
Make the move to Sage Intacct Planning

If you've been holding back for those reasons, here's some good news for you.

Sage Intacct Planning is a powerful, yet easy-to-use budgeting and planning solution built for smaller organizations.

- **Fast deployment** - Pull in your chart of accounts, dimensions, and actuals from Sage Intacct and get up and running in a few days.

- **Collaborate across the organization** - Easily share budgets v. actuals with department heads on their budgets.

- **Seamless workflow with financials** - Get actuals from your financials into your budgets for one quote-to-financial forecast process.

- **Fast ROI** - Sage Intacct Planning is priced for growing organizations like yours.

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FoodCorps improves budgeting efficiency by 85%

"We're able to budget more efficiently with Sage Intacct Planning and invest our time savings into analytics and strategy so senior management can make more informed decisions. The improved transparency and collaboration we have across the organization is proving to be extremely valuable."

~ Michelle Emeh, Senior Director of Finance, FoodCorps

Hope Human Services cuts budgeting time by 50% and adopts rolling forecasts

"I'm cutting my budgeting time in half with Sage Intacct Planning, and we're able to do rolling forecasts to adapt to any changes. We have real-time information at our fingertips to make decisions quickly, and a great deal of flexibility as we continue to grow and shape our organziation."

~ Shelton Horton, Director of Finance, Hope Human Services

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About
Sage Intacct

Sage Intacct is the AICPA's preferred provider of cloud financial applications.

Specializing in helping nonprofits of all types—including health and human services, NGOs, charities, trade and membership associations, cultural institutions, and faith-based organizations—Sage Intacct streamlines grant, fund, project, and donor accounting, while delivering real-time visibility into the metrics that matter.

Our modern, true cloud solution, with open APIs, gives nonprofits the connectivity, visibility, and efficiency they need to do more with less. At Sage Intacct, we help nonprofits strengthen stewardship, build influence, grow funding, and achieve mission success.

In addition to intuitive software solutions, Sage Membership provides members with access to actionable human advice from experts and peers through exclusive content and tools to help you make even better mission-critical decisions.

AICPA Business Solutions
Preferred Provider of Financial Applications

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Quick links
to educational resources

Looking to move your nonprofit budgeting and planning to a new system? Here are some additional resources to help you make the right decision.
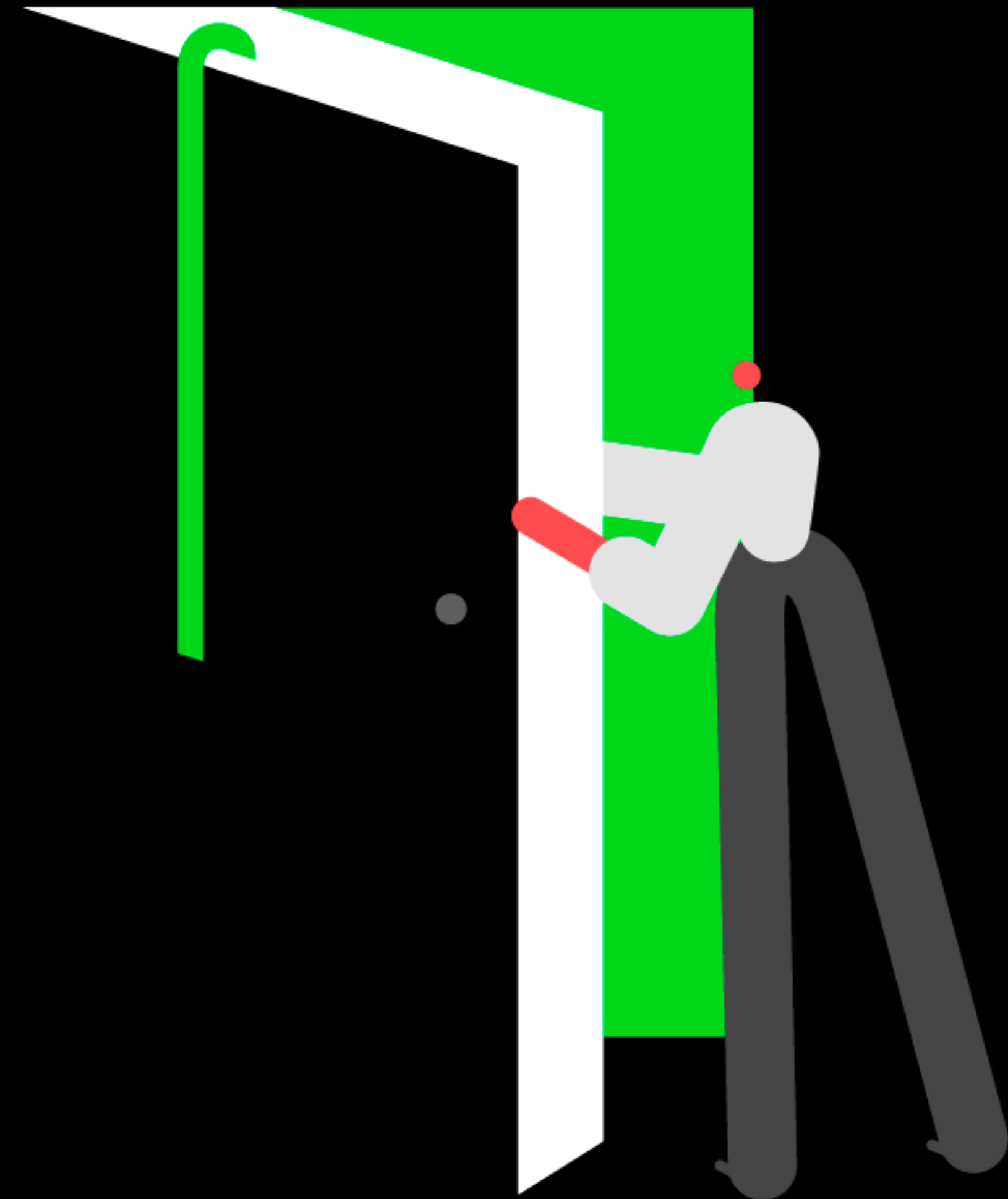
Product Overview Video
Sage Intacct Planning Product Demo

Website
Sage Intacct Planning

More Resources
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