

A photograph of a pilot in a cockpit, looking out through the window at a sunset over a body of water. The pilot is wearing a white flight helmet and a communication device. The scene is framed by a white border.

Gartner for Supply Chain

Piloting Supply Chain Technology

Five pilot models and how to
select the right one for you

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Introduction

Supply chain leaders evaluating supply chain planning technology are looking for guidance on how to introduce and select a pilot and make it successful. Including a pilot as part of a software vendor assessment is not a new concept. However, in conversations with both supply chain leaders and vendors, Gartner analysts have observed that pilots are gaining traction as a means for verifying, validating and testing that a technology can meet business and technical requirements, as well as use cases, now and in the future. Pilots mitigate risk and uncertainty when evaluating technology.

Gartner has identified five distinct pilot models available in the supply chain planning technology market, each supporting distinct business objectives.

-  **Lightweight custom demo**
-  **Forecast accuracy competition**
-  **Feasibility study and evaluation workshop**
-  **Quick start blueprint**
-  **Classical pilot**

Following is an overview of each pilot model (structure, timeline and cost) and a scorecard to align your objectives to the right pilot model for your organization.

Overview of 5 supply chain technology pilot models

The table below describes how each pilot model is structured.

| Pilot Model | Engagement Description | Duration Period* |
|---|--|-------------------------|
| Lightweight Custom Demo  | Lightweight custom demos typically are an extension of the vendor demo during the sales cycle. The vendor will use the data provided and build a lightweight custom demo. The purpose is to view sample scenarios with the organization's data, test a couple of calculations and see how the data and planning decisions would be made in the solution. | 2 to 3 weeks |
| Forecast Accuracy Competition  | A forecast accuracy competition engagement focuses on testing demand-planning capabilities. Typically, prospective vendors are tested against each other and/or against the organization's internal demand-planning solution through simulations. Through this engagement, key requirements can be validated, and capabilities can be measured and scored. | 4 to 16 weeks |
| Feasibility Study and Evaluation Workshop  | Feasibility study and evaluation workshops evaluate supply chain performance. They identify and quantify ROI, determine financial benefits, translate the improvement potential into financial impact, and provide recommendations on which areas to focus on to capture the most value. | 4 to 10 weeks |
| Quick Start Blueprint  | A quick start blueprint engagement is a smaller, quicker version of a classical pilot engagement. These engagements focus on experimenting, learning and simulating the future state of the supply chain planning solution. This is done through a combination of workshops, light business process and solution design work, and technical demos. Typically, this type of model is used when a vendor is on a shortlist. | 8 weeks to 4 months |
| Classical Pilot  | Classical pilots lay the groundwork for broader implementation to prove the technology will work live with the organization's own data. This is done through a combination of workshops, process and design work, and change management. The scope for these engagements is broader with multiple capabilities/functions being tested across one or many region(s) or business unit(s). Typically, this type of model is used postselection. | 3 to 6 months (or more) |

* Varies by organization, scope and complexity of project

Supply chain technology pilot scorecard

The scorecard below is designed to help you determine which of the five pilot models is best to test your unique technical and business requirements.

| Pilot Model | Business Objectives | Cost* |
|---|---|--|
| Lightweight Custom Demo  | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Gain confidence in the solution and move to final vendor selectionShowcase the solution with the organization's data to key stakeholdersRally key stakeholders toward making a next step or final decision | No cost |
| Forecast Accuracy Competition  | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Evaluate demand-planning technology functionalityAssess forecast accuracy of prospective vendor solutions |  Low cost |
| Feasibility Study and Evaluation Workshop  | <ul style="list-style-type: none">A financial business case for changeValidation of applicability the vendor can deliver quantitative/qualitative benefitsHelp translate and verify the improvement potential into financial impact |  Low cost |
| Quick Start Blueprint  | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Agility in the vendor selection processFast path to shorten the vendor selection process |  Medium cost |
| Classical Pilot  | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Lay the groundwork for the broader implementation"Stress-test" the organization's internal environment by interconnecting people, process, data and technologyTest the overall quality of supply chain planning decisions and how planning trade-offs are made in the solution in real time across various business functions |  High cost |

About Gartner

Gartner is the world's leading research and advisory company and a member of the S&P 500. We equip business leaders with indispensable insights, advice and tools to achieve their mission-critical priorities today and build the successful organizations of tomorrow.

Our unmatched combination of expert-led, practitioner-sourced and data-driven research steers clients toward the right decisions on the issues that matter most. We are a trusted advisor and an objective resource for more than 14,000 enterprises in more than 100 countries — across all major functions, in every industry and enterprise size.

Supply chain digital transformation: How Gartner can help

Digital is a key priority for most supply chain leaders, but fewer than half have defined or plan to implement a supply chain digital transformation roadmap that addresses both short-term improvements and a strategic long-term vision. Supply chain digital transformation is proven to drive growth, mitigate risk and optimize costs, but requires strong alignment between business and supply chain strategy to succeed. Gartner experts in supply chain digital transformation guide supply chain leaders in designing roadmaps for the future digital supply chain planning organization. Visit gartner.com to learn how we enable our 2,500+ supply chain leader clients with digital supply chain technology insights, advice, data and tools.



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