

Close automation and orchestration

A side-by-side comparison of SAP S/4HANA Cloud
for Advanced Financial Closing (AFC) and BlackLine
SmartClose

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1. Introduction

Close automation and orchestration—A side-by-side comparison of SAP S/4HANA Cloud for Advanced Financial Closing (AFC) and BlackLine SmartClose

Scope of the Whitepaper

Closing the books and financial reporting of multiple legal entities is a recurring activity of all corporations that involves a lot of manual steps and coordination of activities across several departments. The goal of digitalizing this process is always the same: automation of as many steps as possible and orchestration of the diverse manual steps and controls of the departments involved.

There are a multitude of solutions from different software vendors to achieve the goals mentioned above. This whitepaper focusses on the comparison of two solutions for companies that run their accounting and financial close activities in SAP ERP or SAP S/4HANA. The two solutions compared are SAP S/4HANA Cloud for Advanced Financial Closing (AFC) and BlackLine SmartClose.

The comparison of the two solutions is structured in three sections:

- **Management of task lists**
- **Processing of closing tasks**
- **Reporting**

The first section Management of task lists is relevant for a close manager (e.g. GL team lead) who is responsible for the period-end close process and has to prepare the closing checklists. We show how AFC and SmartClose differ in the setup of a close template and the periodic release of task lists. We also present how the solutions compare regarding the setup of different task types (e.g. automation possibilities) and regarding the setup of the calendar and scheduling options.

The second section Processing of closing tasks concentrates on the day-to-day processing of closing tasks during the period-end process and is relevant for all accountants and other personnel involved in the process. We show that the applications in both solutions are quite comparable and allow the user to get a quick overview of the tasks at hand, get notified when tasks are due or when automatic job runs have completed to check the results and take action.

The last section Reporting is not only relevant for the close manager but also for higher level executives in the finance department who want to get a quick overview over the status of the close process. We show which options are available in both solutions regarding dashboards and list reports. We also show additional reports that can be used by super users or administrators to get a quick overview in case of technical issues.

SAP S/4HANA Cloud for Advanced Financial Closing (AFC)

SAP AFC is the successor solution of the SAP Financial Closing Cockpit (FCc). Unlike FCc it is a cloud solution, or Software-as-a-Service (SaaS), that is hosted on the SAP Business Technology Platform (BTP), but this does not mean that it is only available for SAP S/4HANA Cloud customers. It can be connected to multiple SAP S/4HANA onPremise, SAP ERP onPremise and SAP S/4HANA Cloud systems and thus allow a closing hub scenario.

One of the benefits of the cloud solution is the regular update of the system, so that customers get new functionalities automatically. The release cycle is divided in weekly hotfixes (correction of issues), monthly feature deliveries (e.g. new filter criteria) and quarterly major releases (e.g. new integration options). The up to date feature roadmap can be found online [here](#).

BlackLine SmartClose

SmartClose is the close automation and orchestration solution from BlackLine and originates from the acquisition of Runbook in 2016. It is an add-on solution for SAP on-premise solutions such as SAP ERP or S/4HANA and thus has to be installed on each backend system. Compared with AFC it currently brings a broader functionality scope in terms of automation possibilities and scheduling options but it lacks the regular automatic feature updates that SAP AFC as a SaaS-solution has and it also cannot work across systems such as SAP AFC.

BlackLine plans to release a new solution called Accounting Studio which will be a cloud based hub for the orchestration and automation of the financial close process and potentially replace SmartClose in the long run. More information can be found online [here](#).

2. Management of task lists

Overview

Introduction

At period-end, may it be month-end, quarter-end or year-end, accountants need a closing calendar, or task list, that schedules all necessary activities of the entity and group close for all company codes while considering the dependencies between tasks. A close automation and orchestration solution such as SAP AFC or BlackLine SmartClose needs to have an application to manage the task lists, to assign tasks to users, link tasks with dependencies and setup technical jobs for automatic runs. These functionalities are shown and compared on the next pages in sections 1.1 to 1.5.

2.1 Application for task list management

Section 1.1 compares the application for the management of task lists in both solutions. In essence, the solutions are quite comparable and provide the user with a list with all available task lists. In both solutions there are basic functionalities for the creation of new lists, editing, copying and deletion. Furthermore it is possible to pause or hold active task lists and reactivate them in SAP AFC as well as in BlackLine SmartClose. The differences of the solutions reveal themselves in the details of the template creation (section 1.2.), the available task types and automation possibilities (section 1.3.), the implementation of calendar and scheduling functionalities (section 1.4.) and the periodic release of a task list (section 1.5.).

2.2 Creation of a task list template

SAP AFC and BlackLine SmartClose differ in the way how the template for the closing calendar/task list is setup.

In AFC the general task list structure of a company code can be modeled in a so called Task List Model. The main template is the so called Task List Template which is a tree-like structure and includes the individual task lists for all company codes (or one task list with central jobs for multiple company codes). From the template a Task List has to be created monthly/quarterly/yearly.

In BlackLine SmartClose a template is called Scenario and includes all tasks for an entity close for a given period (e.g. for month-end close 03/2023). To apply the Scenario to multiple company codes, SmartClose uses a rollout functionality.

2.3 Task types

Both solutions have the possibility to setup manual tasks (i.e. to function as reminders e.g. to post an accrual) or automatic tasks using the functionality to run SAP programs as a job. SmartClose furthermore has the functionality for automatic report analysis, integration of SAP workflows and the possibility to setup automatic email reports with attachments.

2.4 Calendar and scheduling

The planning of tasks in a closing calendar/task list requires that a day, time and time zone has to be entered for each task. Days are usually planned relatively to the closing date e.g. 31.12. which is often called ultimo or working day 0. If a task has to be done for example two days before ultimo, the task is planned for working day -2. The actual weekday of working day -2 then depends on the factory calendar which defines the working days of each month as well as non-working days like weekends or bank holidays. If ultimo is a Friday, then working day -2 will be the Wednesday before whereas if ultimo is a Monday, working day -2 will be the Thursday before, if weekends are defined as non-working days in the factory calendar. Another element that has to be considered for each task is the frequency for the consideration of the task. For example the task "Balance Carry Forward" should only be considered at the year-end close, but not at the month-end and quarter-end closes. Both solutions provide the functionalities described in the paragraph above. Regarding the frequencies, day and time settings SmartClose offers a bit more flexibility than AFC allowing for custom frequencies and a flexible time frame especially for the scheduling of jobs.

2.5 Creation of a task list

As described above AFC and SmartClose differ in the way how the template of a task list is setup. This also applies for the generation of the task list.

In AFC a Task List for the period-end close has to be generated and released from the Task List Template. If for example a task list for the month-end close 06/2022 needs to be prepared, the Task List Template has to be selected and then the functionality for generating the task list has to be applied stating the closing key date 30.06.2022. Afterwards the task list can be checked and released.

In SmartClose the release is a bit different. A Scenario is a mixture of a task list and template. To generate a month-end task list e.g. for 06/2022 the previous Scenario 05/2022 has to be copied to a new version, the key date adjusted to 30.06.2022 and afterwards the rollout functionality has to be used to generate the individual task lists for the company codes.

2.1 Application for task list management

SAP AFC

The management of task lists is done in AFC in the app Manage Closing Task lists. When the app is opened it shows two tabs, one which shows a list with all templates and one which shows a list with all task lists that have been generated from the templates. The lists can be searched and filtered or exported to MS Excel.

Template	User / User Group Responsible	Last Changed On
AFC_CLOUD_Demo_EAY - JB		Jul 19, 2023, 9:20:05 PM
AFC_CLOUD_Demo_EAF for JB		
AFC_CLOUD_PP	GL Specialist HQ	Jul 19, 2023, 3:26:58 PM
AFC_OP_MasterTemplate_2023 - Florida		Jul 19, 2023, 6:59:07 AM
AFC_OP_MasterTemplate_2023 - Texas		
WWW_AFC_OP_MasterTemplate_2023		Jul 18, 2023, 3:28:01 PM
AFC_OP_MasterTemplate_2023		

On the Templates tab, the user can perform the following functionalities on a template:

- Create a new template
- Display details
- Copy
- Edit
- Delete
- Generate a task list from a template

On the Task Lists tab, the following functionalities are possible for task lists:

- Release/Undo release
- Pause/Reactivate
- Set to Completed/Undo Set to Completed
- Delete

If a task list is released, it will be shown as available for the users in the Process Closing Task Lists app and automatic jobs will start running, when the planned start date and time is reached. As long as no task has been changed in a released task list (e.g. via job scheduling) the release of a task list can still be undone. Once a task has been changed in a released task list the release cannot be undone, but the list can be paused, so that jobs are not running automatically during that time. A paused task list can be edited and then released again with reactivate. Task lists will be set to completed once the period-end close activities are finalized to „archive“ the list.

BlackLine SmartClose

In SmartClose the user can use transaction “/PXY/RB0” (Overview of scenarios) in SAP GUI to manage scenarios. The app shows a list of all active (i.e. not archived) scenarios that can be executed (comparable to SAP AFC). As in SAP AFC the list can be searched and filtered and also exported to MS Excel. Compared with SAP AFC, SmartClose does not differentiate in task list templates and task lists and instead uses a so called scenario which is a mixture of a template and a task list. Scenarios are managed and executed from the same transaction Overview of scenarios.

Execute	Display	Change	Delete	Lock status	Status	Entity	Scenario name	Exec key	Exec
						DZ01	DZI-7943	1	1
						DZ02	DZI-7943	1	1
						DZ03	DZI-7943	1	1
						DZ04	DZI-7943	2	2
						DZ01	DZI-7943	2	2
						DZ02	DZI-7943	2	2
						DZ03	DZI-7943	2	2

The user can perform the following actions on a scenario:

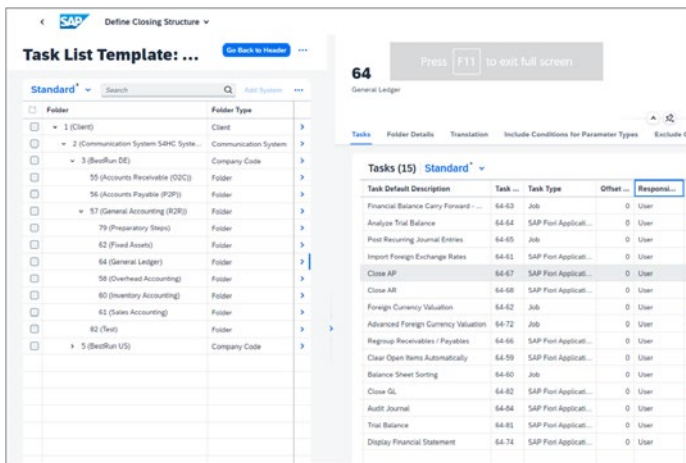
- Create a new scenario
- Display details
- Copy
- Edit
- Delete
- Lock/Unlock
- Hold
- Archive
- Rollout scenario to company codes

Scenarios include the closing dates and times of a particular period-end close. A close manager need to regularly copy the scenario to adjust the dates/times for the next close and use the rollout functionality to roll the task list out to company codes. The lock status needs to be set to unlock, so that users are able to execute tasks. After the period-end close is finalized and all tasks have been performed the close manager can archive the scenario, so that the app only lists the active scenarios (archived scenarios can be viewed separately).

2.2 Creation of a task list template

SAP AFC

A task list template is built as a hierarchical, tree-like structure. The root is called Client, which is not the same as the SAP Client in the connected backend systems, and is set by AFC automatically. As AFC is a closing hub solution, the first node(s) that need to be set are the communication systems i.e. the SAP systems that you use e.g. for your financial accounting. In the example there is one SAP S/4HANA onPremise system "AFC_S4H_OPN" connected.



Underneath the communication system there are various ways how to structure the tasks. In the example the tasks are structured first by company codes (company code "BestRun DE" in the screenshot), then by function ("Accounts Receivable (O2C" etc.).

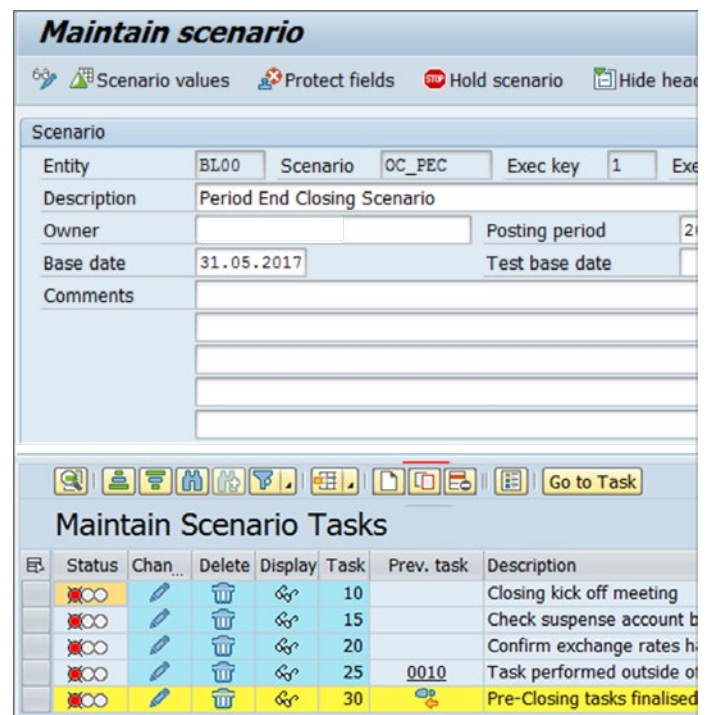
On task level the following properties are maintained:

- Task type (see next page)
- Users and authorizations
- Task schedule (working day, time, time zone)
- Closing type (Monthly, Quarterly, Yearly, Special)
- Job parameters (job variant)
- Dependencies to other tasks
- Notification setup
- Custom fields (for reporting)

To build a **Task List Template** in SAP AFC, a building block approach can be used. Therefore a single task setup can be saved as a so called **Task Model** in the connected SAP backend systems which includes the job parameters and closing type (but not users and task schedule). The folder structure of a company code can be saved as a so called **Task List Model** using the defined Task Models and defining dependencies between them. The **Task List Template** in the SAP AFC frontend can then be built using the Task List Models and Task Models.

BlackLine SmartClose

Task list templates are called Scenarios in SmartClose. Scenarios are either created for all company codes ("Entity" field is empty) or for a representative company code (e.g. BL00 in the screenshot) and contain all necessary closing tasks.



In the example there is the scenario "Period End Closing Scenario" which includes all the tasks that need to be performed for period end. This scenario is then rolled out to company codes (see section Creation of a task list from a template).

On task level the following properties are maintained:

- Task type (see next page)
- Users and authorizations
- Execution mode
- Rollout option
- Task schedule (frequency, time zone, planning profile etc.)
- Job parameters (job variant)
- Dependencies to other tasks
- Notification setup
- Custom fields (for reporting)
- Internal controls

A template for a task setup can be saved as a so called **Task Template**.

2.3 Task types

SAP AFC

The following automatic task types are currently available:

- **SAP Jobs**

SAP jobs can be used to automate SAP programs e.g. to automatically run the depreciation posting run via AFC. Jobs can be setup to automatically run at a given date and time and dependent of the successful finalization of predecessor tasks or they can be triggered by a user. All job details are available within the task in SAP AFC such as job log, spool, Batch Input file, result list depending on the ABAP program. Jobs can also be setup to trigger automations setup in the SAP Build Process Automation (e.g. iRPA bots). Job chains can be setup by linking tasks of the task type "Job" using dependencies.

The following manual task types are currently available:

- **Fiori apps**
- **Notes**
- **Web Application**

Fiori apps can be used to create a reminder for a user to process a manual task and includes a link to the Fiori app in the connected SAP system. For example there could be the task "Define distribution rules for assets under construction" which is setup as task type Fiori app. If the user clicks on the task in AFC the system opens the Fiori app "Define Distribution Rules for AuC" in the connected SAP system. In BlackLine SmartClose there is no possibility to include Fiori apps. Another possibility to use this task type is to register SAP T-Codes that can be triggered via SAP AFC (comparable with the task type "Execute Transaction" in BlackLine SmartClose).

Notes can be used like Fiori apps to create reminders for manual activities or to create deadlines/milestones. The user can manually change the task status to "Checked" after execution.

Web Application are like notes but also include a weblink to a website and can be used e.g. to link to a consolidation system which has a webinterface.

Further automation possibilities are on the SAP Roadmap like the integration of Robotic Process Automation (RPA), automatic balance validation or the scheduling of third-party application.

BlackLine SmartClose

The following automatic task types are currently available:

- **Create Batch Job**
- **Milestones**
- **Report Analysis**
- **Email Report**
- **Process Flow**

Create Batch Job is comparable to SAP Jobs in SAP AFC and can be used to automate the run of SAP programs.

Milestones can be used to automatically inform the user with a notification once the individual defined tasks have been completed. Therefore the milestone has to be connected to other tasks using dependencies (the same can be achieved in SAP AFC using task type Note.)

Report Analysis can be used to automatically analyze and interpret SAP outputs from SAP jobs. This may be limited in SAP S/4HANA programs, in case the updated programs no longer provide a spool list.

Email Report is a functionality to automatically send an email with an attachment from SAP (e.g. logs) to a group of users.

Process Flow gives the possibility to setup a workflow including multiple tasks behind a single task in the task list.

The following manual task types are currently available:

- **Execute Transaction**
- **Run Report**
- **Complete Desk Procedure**
- **Start Hyperlink**

Execute Transaction can be used to create a reminder for a user to execute a transaction.

Run Report can be used to manually trigger a SAP program with a variant (comparable to manually triggering of SAP jobs in SAP AFC).

Complete Desk Procedure can be used to create reminders for manual activities (comparable to SAP AFC task type Note).

Start Hyperlink include a weblink to a website (comparable to SAP AFC task type Weblink).

2.4 Calendar and scheduling

SAP AFC

The scheduling day and time of a task in SAP AFC is determined by the following factors:

- **Closing Type** of the task
- **Task Schedule** settings of the task
- **Factory Calendar** of the template (or folders)
- **Closing Key Date** of the task list

First of all the **Closing Type** of a task (Month-End, Quarter-End, Year-End, Special-End) determines if a task is considered in a given task list or not (e.g. the task "Balance Carry Forward" will only be set as Year-End Closing Task, so it will not be considered in Month-End or Quarter-End task lists).

The **Task Schedule settings** of a task determine the day and time of the task. The day of a task is set as relative distance (number of working days) to the **Closing Key Date** (which is usually the last day of the month e.g. 31.12.2022) and is called Offset in Days. To determine which days of a month are working days SAP AFC uses the Factory Calendar which can be setup for the whole task list template or on folder level to distinguish e.g. per Country. SAP AFC uses the **Factory Calendar** settings from the SAP backend system (e.g. SAP calendar setup in transaction SCAL in the case of SAP S/4HANA onPremise). The time can be set using the Planned Start Time and Time Zone. Additionally the duration of the task can be set in the fields Duration in Days, Duration in Hours and Duration in Minutes.

As an example take the close for December 2022. The task list will be set with Closing Key Date 31.12.2022. This is a Saturday, so tasks planned on Offset 0 will be planned for Friday 30.12.2022, tasks planned on Offset -1 (working day -1) will be planned on Thursday 29.12.2022 and tasks planned on Offset 1 (working day +1) will be planned on Monday 02.01.2023.

BlackLine SmartClose

The scheduling day and time of a task in BlackLine SmartClose is determined by the following factors:

- **Custom Frequency** of the task
- **Planning settings** of the task
- **Base Date** of the scenario

First of all the **Custom Frequency** of a task determines in which closing cycle a task is considered. Compared to SAP AFC it is not only possible to setup monthly, quarterly or yearly frequencies but also frequencies like "January only".

The **Planning** settings of a task determine the day and time of the task. First of all the **Planning profile** determines if the day of the task is planned using working days (standard profile), a specific day of week (e.g. Mondays), a fixed day of the month (e.g. first day of the month) or another custom frequency. The **Calendar code** determines the factory calendar which needs to be maintained in SmartClose. With the standard profile the day of a task will be determined using the **Base Date** (usually the last day of the month e.g. 31.12.2022) and an **Offset** of days.

Additionally SmartClose allows to setup a **Lead time** and a **Time frame** for each task to allow for a more flexible planning of tasks that do not necessarily have to be scheduled on a certain day and time but which can be scheduled between two periods in time. The **Lead time** is the number of days between the earliest and latest start date of the task and the **Time frame** is the number of days between the latest start date and the end date of the task. The dates are then calculated by SmartClose, the user only needs to enter the **times** for the **Earliest start date**, **Latest start date** and **End date** and the **Time zone** for the task.

2.5 Creation of a task list

SAP AFC

A **Task list** is basically the closing calendar and checklist for a given month, quarter or year that an employee can see in the Process Closing Tasks app.

For example the task list “Month End Close 06/2022” includes all tasks that have to run for the June 2022 month-end close and specifies e.g. that the depreciation posting run should run on 30.06.2022. Tasks within a task list can be setup to run for a specific organizational unit (Controlling Area, Company Code, Plant) or across several organizational units. In the example of the depreciation posting run this task can be setup for each company code individually or there could be one task that runs the depreciation posting run for multiple company codes.

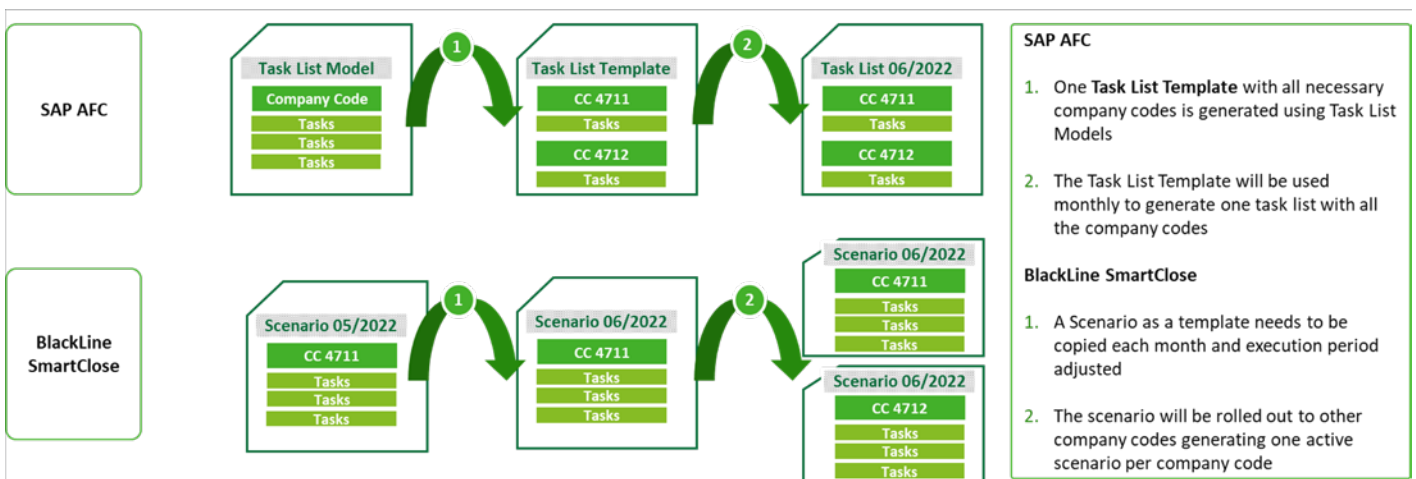
A task list is a specific instance of a **Task list template**. The task list template does not include actual dates (e.g. 30.06.2022) but uses working days (e.g. working day 0 would be 30.06.2022, working day -1 would be 29.06.2022 and working day +1 would be 01.07.2022). The task list template is the main template in SAP AFC for the closing calendar/checklist and can be created and edited in the Manage Closing Task Lists app. If there is a monthly close process, then an employee has to monthly generate a task list based on this template. SAP AFC will then automatically replace the working days by actual dates using the working days setup in the tasks, the closing cutoff date and the factory calendar setup defined in the template.

When building a task list template there is the possibility to use task list models. A **Task List Model** defines a folder structure including tasks that have to be used for e.g. a company code. If the task list template is structured per company code this is the most efficient way to build the template.

BlackLine SmartClose

A scenario also already includes the posting period and year. To create a task list for a specific month, the scenario needs to be copied. Afterwards the period needs to be adjusted to reflect the period to be closed. As a last step the scenario needs to be rolled out to the company codes. After the roll out to the company codes it is possible to deactivate specific tasks company code by company code (e.g. deactivation of fixed asset tasks for a company code which does not use the FI-AA module).

Of course it is also possible to create different scenarios and roll them out to different company codes, e.g. when the type of business differs. For example there could be a scenario “Overhead” for the company codes A and B and a second scenario “Production” for the company codes C, D and E. Both scenarios have different tasks (e.g. depreciation posting run is used for the production company codes but not for the overhead ones). For month-end closing the scenario “Overhead” will be rolled out to company codes A and B and the scenario “Production” will be rolled out to company codes C, D and E.



3. Processing of closing tasks

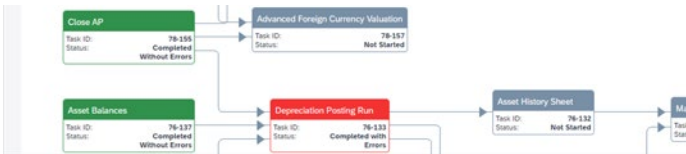
Overview

Application for the processing of closing tasks

The processing of tasks is fairly identical in both solutions. The user (e.g. accountant) has an own application that shows all tasks (automatical and manual ones) that have to be processed in a list form including the status. In AFC this is done using the "Process Closing Tasks" app and in SmartClose the user has to use transaction "/PXY/RB0" in SAP GUI.

Automatic tasks will be performed by the system (AFC/ SmartClose) at the scheduled date and time. As these tasks can fail (e.g. errors during a depreciation posting run because of missing accounts), the user needs to check the status after the automatic task has been performed and solve the issues to re-run the task. Manual tasks need to be performed by the user who has to set the status to "green" in the system afterwards.

In SAP AFC the status overview can also be shown in a graphical form using a dependency network. Due tasks are shown in grey, successfully completed ones in green and failed ones in red.



Custom views

Both solutions allow the user to customize the list view using filter settings and save the custom view as a variant that can be re-used each time the user works with the list. This allows the user to either see only the tasks that he is responsible for or all tasks that have to be performed at the period-end close of a company code including tasks that are performed e.g. by another department.

Attachments and Notes

AFC and SmartClose have the possibility to store instructions/ manuals for each task so that the user (or a substitute) can check the detailed to do's for the task. This is especially recommended for manual tasks but can also be used for automatic tasks (e.g. description of common job errors and resolution instructions).

Furthermore, the user can store attachments after a task has been processed. One example is the manual calculation and posting of a reserve where the user can attach a spreadsheet with the calculation of the reserve.

The user can also leave notes for each task in AFC and in SmartClose e.g. "The posting of HR reserves was done based on the spreadsheet provided by the HR department (see attachment)".

System notifications

Especially for automated tasks it is useful that the system notifies the user that the task has been completed either with errors or without. Both solutions send an email notification to the user after job execution (plus additionally a popup message in the system). The email from AFC includes a weblink that leads to the task within the system, so that the user can check the spools and logs of the job. This reduces the data footprint and prevents that a mail with attachment is sent to the wrong recipient. The SmartClose email includes the logs/spools as email attachment. In both solutions it is also possible to setup email reminders when a task is due or overdue which is helpful for the manual tasks that have to be performed by the user.

Compared to AFC, the notification setup in SmartClose also allows to customize the notifications per team and user, to setup individual notification texts per task, to send reminders each X hours (where X can be customized) and to send messages between users within the system.

In SAP AFC notifications are setup using so called "Notification Scenarios" that define in which cases an email gets send to the user. It is then possible to decide for each task which notification scenario will be used.

Side-by-side comparison

Transaction "/PXY/RB0" in SmartClose

My Tasks : user RBC-RMU
NOTE: Time shown (CET) is UTC + 02:00

Entity	Scenario name	Exec key	Execution id	Exec	Status	Task	Previ...	Next	Description	Team	Temp	Notif	Instr.
BL00	QC_PEC	1	30.06.2017			10		0030	Closing kick off meeting	CLOSE			
BL00		1	30.06.2017			15			Check suspense account balance	CLOSE			
BL00		1	30.06.2017			20		0025	Confirm exchange rates have been uploaded	CLOSE			
BL00		1	30.06.2017			25	0020	0030	Task performed outside of the system #3	AR_01			
BL00		1	30.06.2017			35		0040	Check suspense account balance_U-2	CLOSE			
BL00		1	30.06.2017			40	0035	0050	Check Suspense Account Balance	AR_01			
BL00		1	30.06.2017			45			Open closing period	AR_01			
BL00		1	30.06.2017			50	0040		GL Account 137000 check	AR_01			
BL00		1	30.06.2017			55			Start automated tracking for cash in transit	CLOSE			
BL00		1	30.06.2017			65		0080	Depreciation Test run	CLOSE			
BL00		1	30.06.2017			70		0080	Correct errors	CLOSE			
BL00		1	30.06.2017			75		0080	Depreciation Actual Run	CLOSE			
BL00	OC_PEC	1	2017_05			10		0030	Closing kick off meeting	CLOSE			

Fiori app "Process Closing Tasks" in SAP AFC

SAP Task List AM

AFC_CLOUD_Demo_EAY - JB-1 Recalculate Paths

AFC_CLOUD_Demo_EAY for JB

Fiscal Year: 2023 | Posting Period: 6 | Closing Type: Month-End Closing | User / User Group Responsible: --

Tasks (62) Standard

Task ID	Task Description	Task Type	Task Status	Planned Start	Planned Dur...	User / User Group Responsible	Processing User / User Group	Predecessor Tasks	Successor Tasks
82-1	Display Actual Distribution Cycle G/L	SAP Fiori Application	Not Started	Jun 30, 2023, 12...					
79-167	Final Time Recording Reminder E...	Note	Completed Without Errors	Jun 23, 2023, 6...	0d 0h 30min	AFC Manager (AFC_MANAGER)	AFC Accountant (AFC_ACC)		
80-168	Takeover Data from HR System	Web Application	Not Started	Jun 30, 2023, 12...		AFC Manager (AFC_MANAGER)	AFC Accountant (AFC_ACC)		
79-166	Takeover Data from HR System	Web Application	Not Started	Jun 23, 2023, 12...	0d 2h 0min	AFC Manager (AFC_MANAGER)	AFC Accountant (AFC_ACC)		
62-51	Manage Posting Periods for Fixed...	SAP Fiori Application	Not Started	Jun 30, 2023, 12...		AFC Manager (AFC_MANAGER)	AFC Accountant (AFC_ACC)	Depreciation Posting R...	
78-154	Regroup Receivables/Payables	SAP Fiori Application	Not Started	Jun 30, 2023, 12...				Foreign Currency Valua...	
76-133	Depreciation Posting Run	Job	Completed with Errors	Jun 30, 2023, 12...		AFC Manager (AFC_MANAGER)	AFC Accountant (AFC_ACC)	Close AP (78-155), Ove...	Manage Posting Perio...
62-46	Depreciation Posting Run	Job	Not Started	Jun 26, 2023, 1...	0d 0h 20min	AFC Manager (AFC_MANAGER)	AFC Accountant (AFC_ACC)	Asset Balances (62-50)...	Asset History Sheet (6...
64-72	Advanced Foreign Currency Valuat...	Job	Not Started	Jun 30, 2023, 12...		AFC Manager (AFC_MANAGER)	GL Specialists HQ	Close AP (64-67), Clos...	
78-157	Advanced Foreign Currency Valuat...	Job	Not Started	Jun 30, 2023, 12...		AFC Accountant (AFC_ACC)		Close AP (78-155), Clo...	
60-38	Release Planned Price Changes	Job	Not Started	Jun 30, 2023, 12...			GL Specialists HQ		
74-125	Release Planned Price Changes	Job	Not Started	Jun 30, 2023, 12...					
64-62	Foreign Currency Valuation	Job	Not Started	Jun 30, 2023, 12...		AFC Manager (AFC_MANAGER)	GL Specialists HQ	Close AP (64-67), Clos...	Regroup Receivables ...
78-150	Foreign Currency Valuation	Job	Not Started	Jun 30, 2023, 12...		AFC Manager (AFC_MANAGER)		Close AP (78-155), Clo...	Regroup Receivables ...
72-116	Actual Settlement: Projects	Job	Not Started	Jun 30, 2023, 12...					

4. Reporting

Overview

SAP AFC

In SAP AFC the following apps could be used for reporting purposes:

Close Manager/Accountants

- Manage Closing Task Lists/Process Closing Tasks
- Financial Close Overview
- Closing Task Completion

Super User/Administrator

- Change Log
- Monitor Business Logs
- Monitor Communication Systems

The **Manage Closing Task Lists** app can be used by a close manager to get an overview of the templates and task lists and their status using the filters or by downloading the lists for further analysis in a spreadsheet. The **Process Closing Tasks** app can be used by an accountant to get an overview of the tasks at hand for the period-end close as described in the section “Processing of closing tasks” above.

The apps described above present the data of the closing task lists in a list form. In SAP AFC there are two apps that show the data in a dashboard form: the **Financial Close Overview** app and the **Closing Task Completion** app. The first one is a predefined dashboard and the second one is an app that allows to configure custom dashboards based on the data and reporting characteristics available in AFC (Currently there are three custom fields that can be used to enrich the tasks with custom reporting dimensions, but more flexibility is planned according to the SAP Roadmap). Both apps are shown in more details on the next pages.

The remaining apps mentioned above will be used primarily by AFC super users or administrators responsible for the operation or for audit purposes. To get a full audit trail, the app **Change Log** can be used to get an extract (Excel export) of all changes applied to Task List Templates, Task Lists and Tasks including information about the changed field, type of change, old and new value, user and time stamp. The app **Monitor Business Logs** provides an administrator with useful information in case of technical errors with the synchronization of the backend system or the scheduling of closing jobs. Another useful app for administrators is the **Monitor Communication Systems** app which gives an overview of all connected backend systems. The admin can see the status of the connection, when the last check has been performed and can check the connection with the click on a button. The same applies for the synchronization with the backend system (i.e. customizing settings). Furthermore the app shows an overview of the scheduled jobs which are in preparation and overdue to indicate where the business and IT have to follow up for error resolution.

BlackLine SmartClose

In BlackLine SmartClose the following reports are available:

Close Manager/Accountants

- Scenario Overview/My Tasks
- Scenario execution XL
- Business Task Manager
- Scenario status across entities
- Scenario status across execution IDs

Super User/Administrator

- Task log details & Log report
- Scenario details drill down
- Scenario handbook
- Data integrity check
- Customer configuration details
- Check archive link attachment status

The **Scenario Overview** is comparable with the Manage Closing Task Lists app in SAP AFC and can be used by the close manager to get an overview about the closing task lists. **My Tasks** is comparable to the Process Closing Tasks app in SAP AFC and provides the accountant with his own closing calendar or task list. Both applications show the result in a list form.

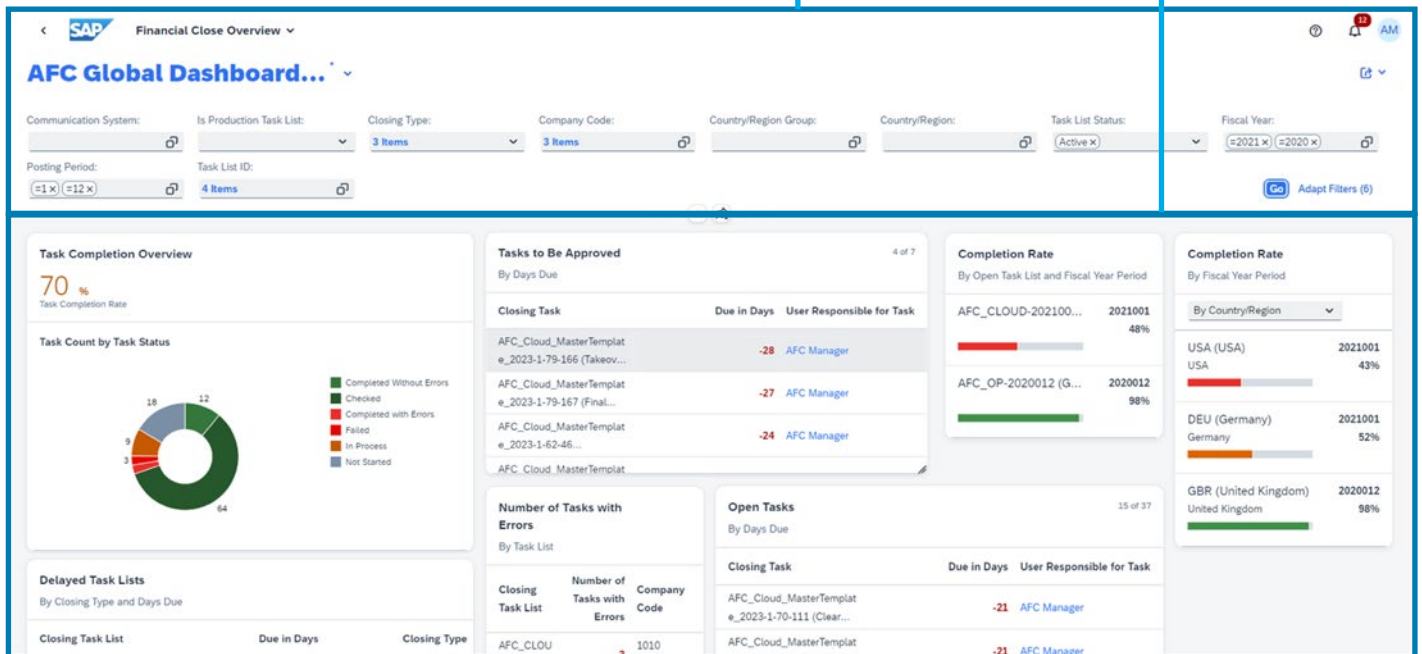
From a dashboard perspective SmartClose offers the **Scenario execution XL** report which is comparable with the dashboards in SAP AFC (but allows unlimited custom defined reporting dimensions compared to the three custom fields in SAP AFC). It provides donut charts to give an overview of the task status and a list section with filtering options. The **Business Task Manager** report allows a detailed task status analysis per task or team, the **Scenario status across entities** report compares a set of tasks across entities and the **Scenario status across execution IDs** report compares a set of tasks between different points in time.

In SmartClose there are also a couple of reports targeted for super users of administrators. The **Task log details** and **Log report** can be used for audit trail analysis. The reports **Scenario details drill down** and **Scenario handbook** provide an overview of the close and can be also used by close managers. For error management and resolution admins can use the reports **Data integrity check**, **Customer configuration details** and **Check archive link attachment status**. All reports are described in more detail on the following pages.

SAP AFC—Financial Close Overview

Filter section

Dashboard section

**App overview**

Financial Close overview is a pre-configured dashboard in SAP AFC. It contains a filter section on the top and a dashboard section underneath containing multiple pre-configured visuals. The filter settings will be applied to all dashboard visuals. All visuals in the dashboard section can be used for further analysis by clicking on a data point on the visual. This will perform a drill-down and show the results in a separate dashboard in the Closing Task Completion app (see next section). This allows a drill-down from a global dashboard overview down to a single task which SAP calls semantic navigation.

Task Completion Overview

The Task Completion Rate shows how many tasks are completed without errors (e.g. 2%). The donut chart shows the number of tasks by task status. The click on a coloured item on the donut chart or one of the legend items opens a detailed task list— You will be directed to the Closing Task Completion App which inherits the selected filters from Financial Close Overview.

Delayed Task Lists

Shows the delay of task lists that are still open. The click on a particular task list shows an overview of tasks that are still open.

Completion Rate

Grants an overview on the relevant closing task lists with a completion ratio. Click on specific task list for detailed information.

Completion rate by company code

Grants an overview on the relevant closing tasks with a completion ratio (e.g. by company code, country or region). The click on a specific company code/country/region will reveal detailed information.

Tasks to be approved

Shows all tasks (incl. Due date) that needs to be checked and approved by the users that are responsible for the given tasks.

Tasks with errors

Shows the number of errors per task list and the corresponding Company Code and Region.

Open Tasks

Shows which tasks are still open and need to be processed (incl. Due in days and responsible user).

SAP AFC—Closing Task Completion

The screenshot displays the SAP Closing Task Completion app interface. At the top, there is a filter section with various dropdowns and input fields for configuration. Below this is a horizontal bar chart showing the completion progress for different countries/regions: USA (USA), United Kingdom (GBR), Germany (DEU), and Australia (AUS). The chart uses a color-coded legend: In Process (blue), Completed with Errors (orange), Not Started (green), Completed Without Errors (red), and Failed (purple). Below the chart is a table section titled 'Closing Tasks (259)' with columns for Task Status Description, Task List ID, Company Code, Posting Pe..., Task Default Description, Country/Region Group, and Country/Reg.

Task Status Description	Task List ID	Company Code	Posting Pe...	Task Default Description	Country/Region Group	Country/Reg
Completed Without Errors	AFC_GLOBANT Template ID -01	BestRun US (1710)	9	Asset Balances	North America (NA)	USA (USA)
Completed Without Errors	AFC_GLOBANT Template ID -01	BestRun US (1710)	9	Close AP	North America (NA)	USA (USA)
Completed with Errors	AFC_GLOBANT Template ID -01	BestRun US (1710)	9	Foreign Currency Valuation	North America (NA)	USA (USA)
Failed	AFC Demo - JR JAN	BestRun DE (1010)	1	Revenue Posting Run	Middle and Eastern Europe (MEE)	Germany (DE)
Failed	AFC Demo - JR JAN	BestRun US (1710)	1	Calculate Contract Liabilities and Assets	North America (NA)	USA (USA)
In Process	AFC Demo - JR JAN	BestRun UK (1110)	1	Post Tax Payables	Europe, Middle-East & Africa (EMEA)	United Kingdom

App overview

Closing Task Completion is an app that allows to configure and save custom dashboards in SAP AFC. The app has a filter section, a chart section and a table section, but it is also possible to just see the chart section or the table. The filter settings are applied to both the chart and table.

Chart section

The screenshot shows the chart selection menu in the SAP app. It features a search bar labeled 'Search in Chart Types' and a list of 14 different chart types: Bar Chart, Column Chart, Line Chart, Pie Chart, Donut Chart, Heat Map, Bullet Chart, Vertical Bullet Chart, Stacked Bar Chart, Stacked Column Chart, 100% Stacked Bar Chart, 100% Stacked Column Chart, Waterfall Chart, and Horizontal Waterfall Chart.

There are 14 different chart types available that can be used in the chart section. Using the View By option allows to group categories and e.g. show the task status by Country.

Table section

The table section shows a list view of all tasks that are included in the chart section above. By clicking on the arrows on the right hand side of the table it is possible to directly navigate to the task itself to check for example the job logs or spool reports. Furthermore the dashboard is interactive e.g. if you click on the bar "Completed with Errors" in the bar chart, the table view will only show a list of all items that have completed with errors.

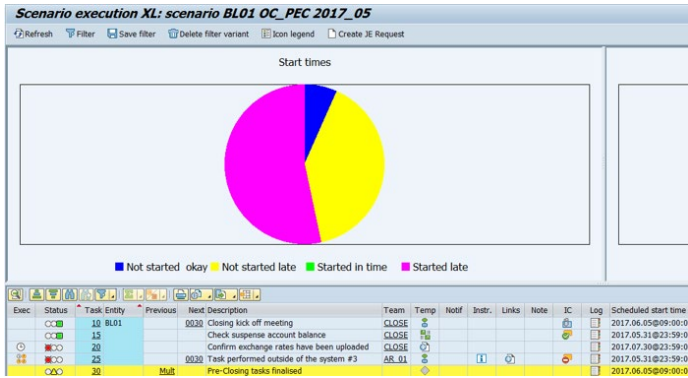
Reporting characteristics

The Closing Task Completion app can use 39 dimensions and 8 measures for reporting purposes. The dimensions include: **Task list infos** (e.g. task list ID, task list status), **Task infos** (e.g. task ID, task type, task description), **Task status** (e.g. task status, status changed by), **Task timing** (e.g. offset in days, planned start/end), **Close info** (e.g. closing key date, posting period), **Org unit** (e.g. Company Code), **Geography** (e.g. Country, Region), **User info** (e.g. processing user, user responsible), **Approval info** (e.g. approval status, approved/rejected by) and **Custom fields** (3 custom fields).

The measures include: **Task amounts** (Task Count, Completed Task Count), **Percentages** (Task Completion in Percent) and **Durations/Due info** (Due in days, Initial duration in hours, Initial duration in minutes, Planned duration in hours, Planned duration in minutes).

BlackLine SmartClose—Closing Manager Reports

Scenario execution XL



The "Scenario execution XL" report consists of a chart section and a table section. The chart section is a donut chart that shows the percentage of start times (Not started okay, Not started late, Started in time or Started late) and another donut chart (not shown in the screenshot) that shows the percentages of end times (Open okay, Open late, Ended in time, Ended late). The table section shows a list view of all the tasks. Chart and table can be filtered using the filter in the menu.

Business Task Manager

Scenarios	Status	Alert Strt	Alert End	Total	Not Startd	N.S.%	Running	Run. %
Totals				15	5	33	4	27
OC_PEC - Period End Closing Scenario				15	5	33	4	27
2017_02				15	5	33	4	27
0010				1				
0015				1				
0020				1	1	100		
0025				1	1	100		
0030				1			1	100
0035				1				
0040				1			1	100
0045				1				
0050				1	1	100		

The report "Business Task Manager" shows an overview of the task status and further task KPIs (total amount of tasks, running tasks, finished tasks etc.) per entity (e.g. Company Code). The report can be shown per task or per team.

Scenario status across entities

The screenshot shows a report titled "Scenario status across Entities". It includes a table with columns: Status, Task, Description, BLO0, Entity, and BLO1, Entity. The table compares the status of tasks like "Closing kick off meeting", "Check suspense account balance", and "Pre-Closing tasks finalised" across two entities, BLO0 and BLO1.

The "Scenario status across entities" report can be used to compare the close status of one or multiple tasks across several entities (e.g. company codes).

Scenario status across execution IDs

The screenshot shows a report titled "Scenario status across execution IDs". It includes a table with columns: Stat., Task, Description, 2017_03, Team, L:St date, L:St time, 2017_04, Team, L:St date. The table compares the status of tasks like "Closing kick off meeting", "Check suspense account balance", and "Pre-Closing tasks finalised" across two execution IDs, 2017_03 and 2017_04.

This report allows to compare the status of several tasks of a company code across two task lists and allows a comparison of the start dates and times e.g. of two subsequent month-end closes.

BlackLine SmartClose—Super User Reports

Task log details & Log report

Task log details

KZCL Time shown (CEI) is UTC + 02:00
 Entity INCL BL00
 Scenario INCL OC_PEC
 Execution id INCL 2017_04
 Archived on INCL All
 Log date INCL All

olve id	Arch. time	Archive user	R/R area	Scenario name	Execution id	Task	Scenario step description	Log date	Log time	User Name	Status	Runbook log details
00:00:00		BL00	OC_PEC	2017_04	10		Closing kick off meeting	16.06.2017	13:28:49	RBC-RMU	Task created.	
								26.06.2017	12:48:38	RBC-RMU	Task closed manually. (Secondary operator)	
								26.06.2017	12:48:38	RBC-RMU	One of the next Task(s) to receive a message	
								26.06.2017	12:48:38	RBC-RMU	Milestone: Message on completion notification	
					15		Check suspense account balance	16.06.2017	13:28:49	RBC-RMU	Task created.	
								16.06.2017	13:28:49	RBC-RMU	Control Task created	
					20		Confirm exchange rates have been uploaded	16.06.2017	13:28:49	RBC-RMU	Task created.	
					25		Task performed outside of the system #3	16.06.2017	13:28:49	RBC-RMU	Task created.	
								16.06.2017	13:28:49	RBC-RMU	Control Task created	
					30		Pre-Closing tasks finalised	16.06.2017	13:28:49	RBC-RMU	Task created.	
								26.06.2017	12:48:38		Milestone status changed from open to starts	

Log Report

Entity INCL BL00
 Scenario INCL OC_PEC
 Execution id INCL 2017_04
 Archived on 00.00.0000 at 00:00:00 by

NOTE: Time shown (CEI) is UTC + 02:00

Entity BL00
 Scenario OC_PEC
 Execution id 2017_04
 Archived on 00.00.0000 at 00:00:00 by

Task 0010 Closing kick off meeting

Log details
 RBC-RMU 16.06.2017 13:28:49 Task created.
 RBC-RMU 26.06.2017 12:48:38 Task closed manu

These reports shows a full audit trail of all changes that have been performed on tasks including date, time and user info.

Scenario details drill down

Scenario details drill-down

NOTE: Time shown (CEI) is UTC + 02:00

Entity INCL BL00
 Scenario INCL OC_PEC
 Execution id INCL 2017_04

Entity	Scenario	Exec id	Period	Description	Arc date	Arc time	Arc user	Owner	Global Lock	Base date	Notif.	Ins
BL00	OC_PEC	2017_04	2017-04	Period End Closing Scenario			MARINESCU		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	01.05.2017		
OCB	10			Closing kick off meeting								
OCB	15			Check suspense account balance				FRL3N				
OCB	20			Confirm exchange rates have been uploaded								
OCB	25			Task performed outside of the system #3								
OCB	30			Multi Pre-Closing tasks finalised								
OCB	35			Check suspense account balance_U-2				RFITENGL				
OCB	40			0035 Check Suspense Account Balance				SUSPENSE ACCOUNT ZERO BALANCE CHECK				
OCB	45			Open closing period				RFOBS200				
OCB	50			0040 GL Account 137000 check				CHECK BALANCE 2				

This report is comparable with the „Scenario execution XL“ report but has a different output format.

Scenario handbook

Scenario handbook

Entity INCL BL00
 Scenario INCL OC_PEC
 Execution id INCL 2017_04
 Scenario owner INCL All
 Team INCL All

Live scenarios Archived scenarios
 Unlocked scenarios Locked scenarios
 Active Tasks Inactive Tasks

SCENARIO DETAILS REPORT
 Scenario header details
 Scenario Task list
 Task details
 Task operators
 Task instructions
 Task Control Exec Note
 Task user notes
 Step I.C. template

Entity BL00 Blackline International
 Scenario (GLOBAL) OC_PEC Period End Closing Scenario
 Execution id 2017_04
 Posting period 2017 - 04
 Owner MARINESCU Locked Time zone lock
 Periodic Every 01 months Base date 01.05.2017
 Comments

Tasks
 0010 Closing kick off meeting
 0015 Check suspense account balance

The „Scenario handbook“ shows the complete closing task list in a handbook layout instead of a list output.

Data integrity check

Data Integrity Check

Users with no SAP authorization for Smart Close:
 RBC-TRAIN3 RBC-TRAIN3 Transaction code ==> /FXV/RB0

Operators with no SAP authorization for scenario execution:
 RBC-TRAIN3 RBC-TRAIN3 Transaction code ==> /FXV/RB1A

Operators with no SAP authorization for "My steps":
 RBC-TRAIN3 RBC-TRAIN3 Transaction code ==> /FXV/RB7A

Responsibility group operators without SAF authorization for transactions:

RB00	CLOSE	FARTNER4-REC	RB00	PEC_DEMO	2016_04APR	0051	Transaction code ==> FB50
RB00	CLOSE	FARTNER4-REC	RB00	PEC_DEMO	2016_06	0600	Transaction code ==> KSU1
RB00	CLOSE	FARTNER4-REC	RB00	PEC_DEMO	2016_04APR	0600	Transaction code ==> KSU1
RB00	CLOSE	FARTNER4-REC	RB00	PEC_DEMO	SGN_DEMO11	0600	Transaction code ==> KSU1
RB00	CLOSE	FARTNER4-REC	RB00	PEC_DEMO	2017_02	0600	Transaction code ==> KSU1
RB00	CLOSE	FARTNER4-REC	RB00	PEC_DEMO	2017_01	0600	Transaction code ==> KSU1
BR00	CLOSE	RETRNER4-REC	BR00	DFC_DEMO	SGN_DEMO10	0600	Transaction code ==> KSU1

This report shows the result of several data integrity checks including scenarios without tasks, users with no profiles or SAP authorizations and teams with invalid operators.

Customer configuration details

Customer configuration details

Customer system configuration details as of 26.06.2017 13:27:02 RBC-RMU

Customer number: 131810001
 System id: 560
 Installation number: 0020156739
 License number: 0000000049968951892
 License limitation: 999 scenarios
 Number of Entities in use: 50
 Number of scenarios in use: 123
 Number of registered users: 73 of 141
 Blackline Service Pack: RBSSP03
 Application patch level: FXV RB5-SP03.00.00

Table CVERS

Software Component	Release	SP Level
BI_CONT	747	0013
BSAR	10C	0000000002
DMIS	2011_1_731	0010
EA-APPL	606	0016
EA-DFES	600	0027

This report produces an output containing information about the SAP environment in relation to Smart Close and can be used for error resolution with the BlackLine service team.

Check archive link attachment status

Check Archive link attachments status

Refresh

Entity	Scenario name	Execution id	Exec key	Task	Description	Team	Task Template	Template
BL00	OC_PEC	2017_04	3	15	Check suspense account balance	CLOSE	Execute Transaction	FRL3N

This report can be used to analyze spool outputs that have not yet been linked to a task and have to be attached to a task manually by a user.

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