

ANALYZE

Intermediate

30 MIN

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Reconcile a budget export against actuals and draft commentary.

Have Copilot Cowork compare an approved quarterly budget to actual spend and generate the variance commentary.

MICROSOFT 365

Excel

WORKS WITH

Copilot Cowork

Business Outcome

A ready-to-review variance commentary instead of a blank-page write-up every quarter.

Workflow Steps

Step 1: Confirm you have the approved budget, not a draft

Excel

Check the file name and the approval date against whoever owns budget sign-off before starting.

A draft version that looked final but had one more revision cycle will produce commentary that's confidently wrong in a way that's hard to catch after the fact, since every number downstream still looks internally consistent.

Step 2: Let Cowork do the full reconciliation

Copilot Cowork

Hand it both files and let it work through the comparison end-to-end rather than doing the matching yourself first.

PROMPT

Reconcile this quarter's actuals against the approved budget by line item. For any variance over 10%, draft a short commentary paragraph explaining the likely driver based on what changed this quarter.

Step 3: Edit the commentary for context Cowork doesn't have

Excel

It can describe what changed in the numbers; it can't know about the contract renegotiation or headcount freeze that actually explains it — add that context yourself.

Step 4: File it with the source data linked

Excel

Keep the reconciliation sheet linked to both source files so anyone questioning a number later can trace it.

✓ Check the work

- Confirm the reconciliation totals tie back to both source files exactly.
- Read every drafted commentary paragraph against what you actually know happened that quarter.
- Check that variances under your threshold weren't silently dropped from the summary.

Expected Outcome

A reconciled actual-vs-budget sheet with a drafted commentary paragraph for every material variance.



Want help rolling this out across your team? **Go to Liminals.Tech** ■