Vplan

E-book

From Excel to productivity

The ultimate guide



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Chapter 1

Why Excel falls short for planning

Picture this

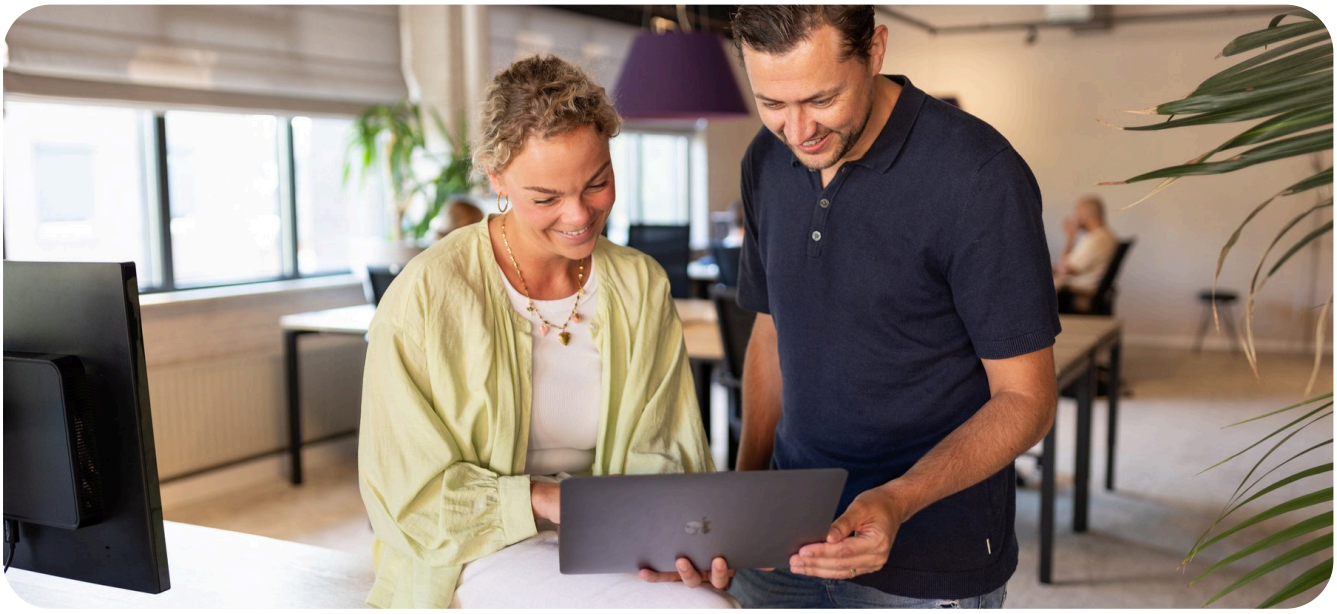
You're a project manager working on a new product launch. The deadline is tight, several teams are involved and you're using Excel to keep track of the planning.

At first glance, the spreadsheet you've built looks fine, until you notice that a few tasks suddenly don't add up.

You decide to make a quick change, but an error in a formula shifts every date. And that's not all: a colleague who was also working on the file turns out to have edited the spreadsheet at the same time. Now nobody knows which version is the right one, and a large part of the data has disappeared or been overwritten.

The takeaway

In this example everything goes wrong at once, but sadly it will sound familiar to many people who use Excel for planning and project management. Excel was designed for calculations and data analysis, not for managing projects or planning. Let's look at the main challenges that come with it.



Chapter 2

The five biggest challenges of planning in Excel

1

Inflexible and not automated

Excel relies on manual data entry and offers few ways to automate processes. That can take a lot of time and increases the risk of mistakes.

2

Errors and error-proneness

A small slip in a formula can have big consequences. Think of a forgotten cell calculation or a row copied the wrong way. In complex spreadsheets an error like this is often hard to spot, yet it does affect your whole planning. How many hours have you already lost hunting for ‘that one mistake’?

3

Collaborating in Excel

When you work as a team, several people need access to the same spreadsheet, which can lead to version conflicts. Think of conflicting edits, lost data or opening the wrong version: you're never quite sure you're working with the right information.

4

Visual limitations

In Excel it quickly becomes hard to follow complex timelines or several projects at once. Showing links and dependencies is almost impossible. Before you know it, you're lost in a tangle of columns, colours and formulas.

5

Scalability

Excel works fine for simple tasks or small projects. But as soon as your planning grows, with subtasks, dependencies and several teams, it's hard to keep an overview. Excel simply wasn't built for that level of complexity. You get stuck in endless rows and columns.

Chapter 3

Why you don't want to fall behind

So what is the right solution?

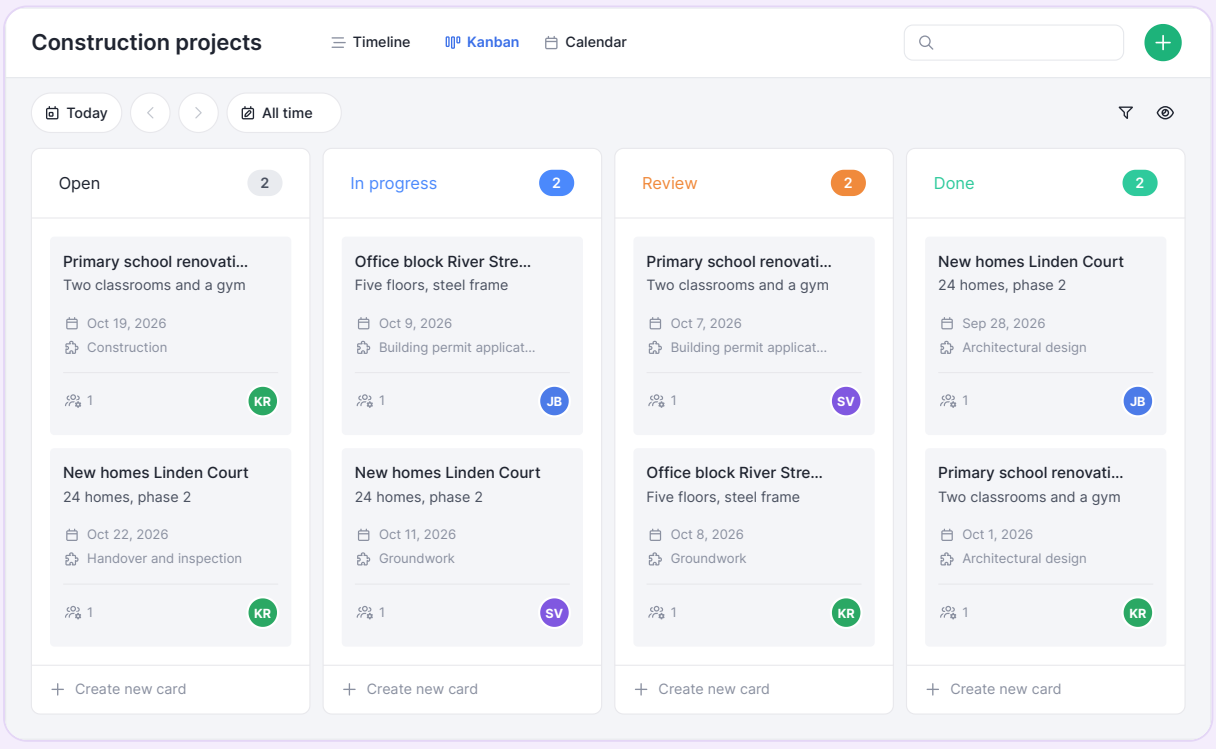
After all the frustrations that come with Excel, you may be wondering what the right solution for project management and planning actually is. At a time when teams work remotely, projects change course in no time and efficiency matters more and more, you need a tool that's designed for flexibility, automation and collaboration. These are the benefits.

1 Real-time collaboration

With tools like vPlan, you and your team can work together directly in the same environment, without having to worry about conflicting versions. Everyone works on the same platform with the same up-to-date information, so communication runs more smoothly and misunderstandings are avoided.

2 Process automation

Instead of entering repetitive tasks by hand, online tools let you automate workflows. Think of tasks that repeat automatically, notifications that remind you of upcoming tasks, or follow-up tasks that are assigned automatically when a project phase is finished. This not only saves you time, it also makes sure nothing slips through the cracks.



3 Visual tools

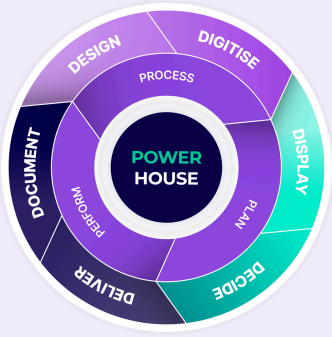
Most modern planning software offers several visual views, such as a timeline, kanban board, calendar or list. You can often personalise views with filters or other settings. This visual approach makes it easy to set priorities, keep an eye on deadlines and see dependencies between tasks. So you always have an overview, however big your project is.

4 Scalability and flexibility

Whether you're working on one project with a small team or managing several complex projects, modern tools are flexible enough to grow with your needs. You can easily add teams, expand projects and even adapt specific workflows to the way you work.

5 Accessibility and integration

Most planning tools, including vPlan, are cloud-based. That means you can reach your projects from anywhere: at the office, at home or on the road. They also integrate easily with other software, such as ERP or accounting systems. So you work in a seamless ecosystem that connects everything.



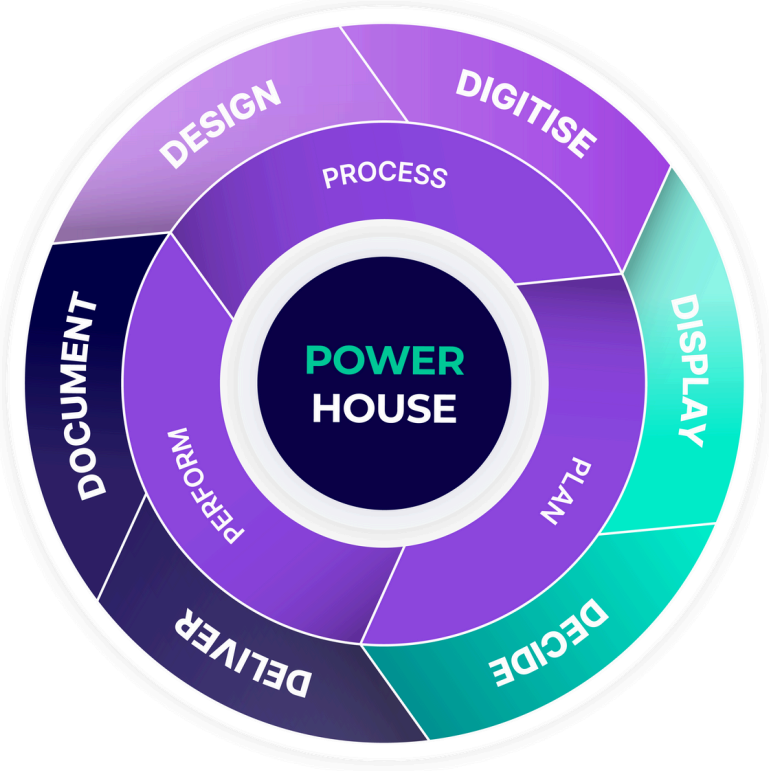
Later in this chapter

The Powerhouse model

Tools alone are not enough. On the next pages you'll read how the right way of working makes your processes more efficient.

The Powerhouse model

The Powerhouse model offers a structured approach to improving your processes.



Having a good idea is one thing; turning it into results is often another story. You probably know the feeling: you have a clear strategy, motivated people and a clear goal, yet the work isn't moving forward. Meetings take too long, collaboration doesn't run smoothly and the results don't come.

Sound familiar? The good news is that the Powerhouse model helps you tackle these bottlenecks and take your business to the next level. Many companies face the same question: how can you make your processes more efficient and raise your productivity? We believe that takes not only the right tools, but also the right way of working. We're happy to explain how.

Chapter 3 · Powerhouse model

Three pillars

vPlan's Powerhouse model is a practical method for working smarter and more efficiently. It consists of three pillars that together bring more structure, control and productivity.

Pillar 1 · Process

Bring structure and automate where you can to save time.

In this phase we look at setting up the work process efficiently and optimising the workflow. By cutting unnecessary steps and applying smart automations and integrations, you free up room for important tasks and build a structured foundation that brings more calm.

Pillar 2 · Plan

Visualise the work and make well-informed decisions.

In this phase we look at creating and visualising a clear overview of all tasks and priorities. This gives you insight that helps you make focused choices and reach your goals faster.

Pillar 3 · Perform

Collaborate effectively, record progress and get results faster.

In this phase the focus is on teamwork and clearly recording progress and data. This makes continuous improvement possible. Analyse performance and adjust your strategies to keep working efficiently.

This model helps you approach your work in a structured way, raise your productivity and achieve better results.

More about the Powerhouse model →

Real-world example: stuck in Excel

Many companies start out running their planning and processes in Excel. At first it seems a handy, flexible solution, but as a company grows, problems often start to appear.

Think of:

- Losing the overview because of countless tabs and complex formulas.
- Errors caused by manual entry and version control.
- No real-time collaboration, so team members work with outdated information.

Example

A manufacturing company uses Excel to keep track of its planning. The result? Employees work in different versions of the same sheet, tasks are done twice and deadlines are missed.

With the Powerhouse model you bring in the right structure, processes become more efficient and productivity goes up. Applying the Powerhouse model streamlines workflows, improves collaboration and gives teams real-time insight into progress. So you work more efficiently and your productivity rises!



Chapter 4

The smart choice for planning and project management

What is vPlan?

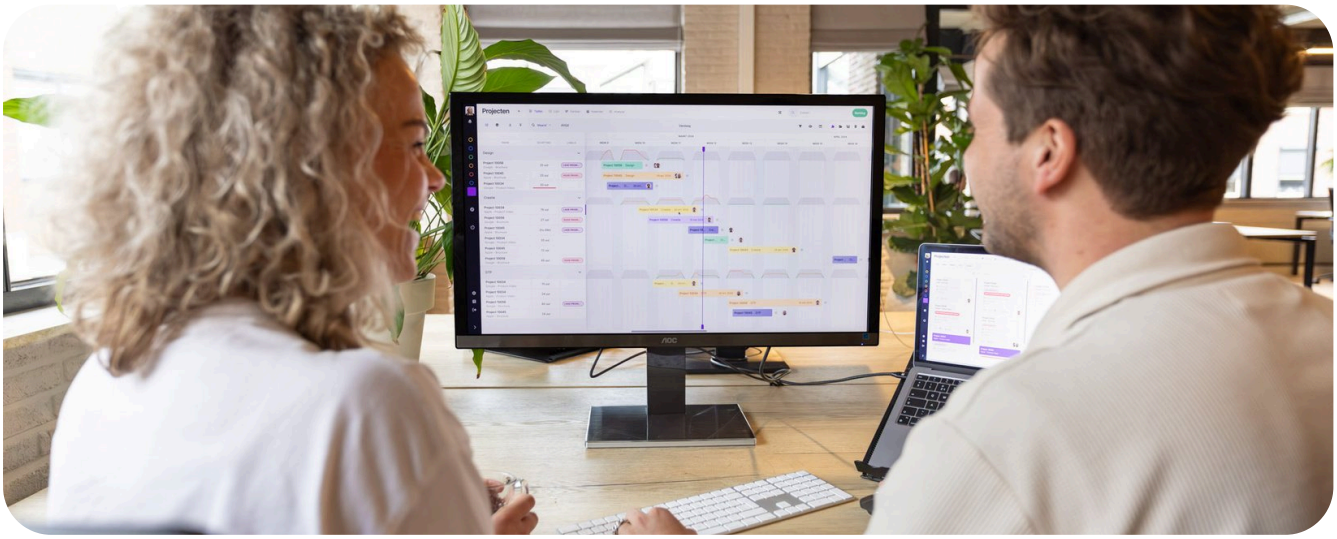
Picture this: a busy working day full of deadlines, meetings and team members who depend on each other. vPlan is the powerful tool that helps you bring structure to that chaos. It's a visual productivity platform that you set up around your own specific workflows. So you can plan and manage your work quickly and easily.

With vPlan you don't just keep the overview in different views, you also get:

- **Control over capacity**
- **Insight into deadlines**
- **Insight into progress**
- **Control over lead times**

On top of that, you work together in one tool, so everyone knows what needs to be done. No miscommunication, no confusion: just overview and calm.

In short, vPlan makes your working day more productive. Curious how vPlan can help you? We'll show you with an example in which construction projects are planned.



Chapter 4 · Step 1

Design and digitise your process

You map out the construction process. You define the different phases, such as design, the permit application, the build itself and the handover. By setting up vPlan around this structure, you create clarity and reduce the risk of errors.

Example

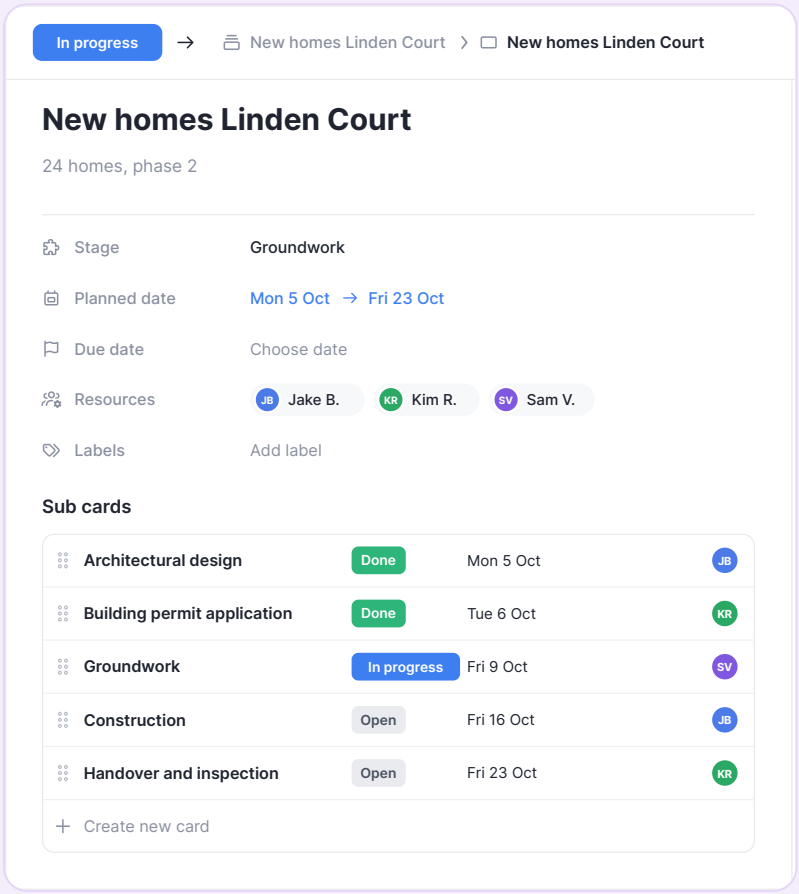
You start by designing your construction project. In vPlan you create phases such as:

- Architectural design
- Building permit application
- Groundwork
- Construction
- Handover and inspection

Integrations and automations

Connect vPlan to the software you already use, such as an ERP system or accounting software. This lets you bring projects in automatically from your current systems. It saves time and means you don't have to enter data by hand.

View the integrations →



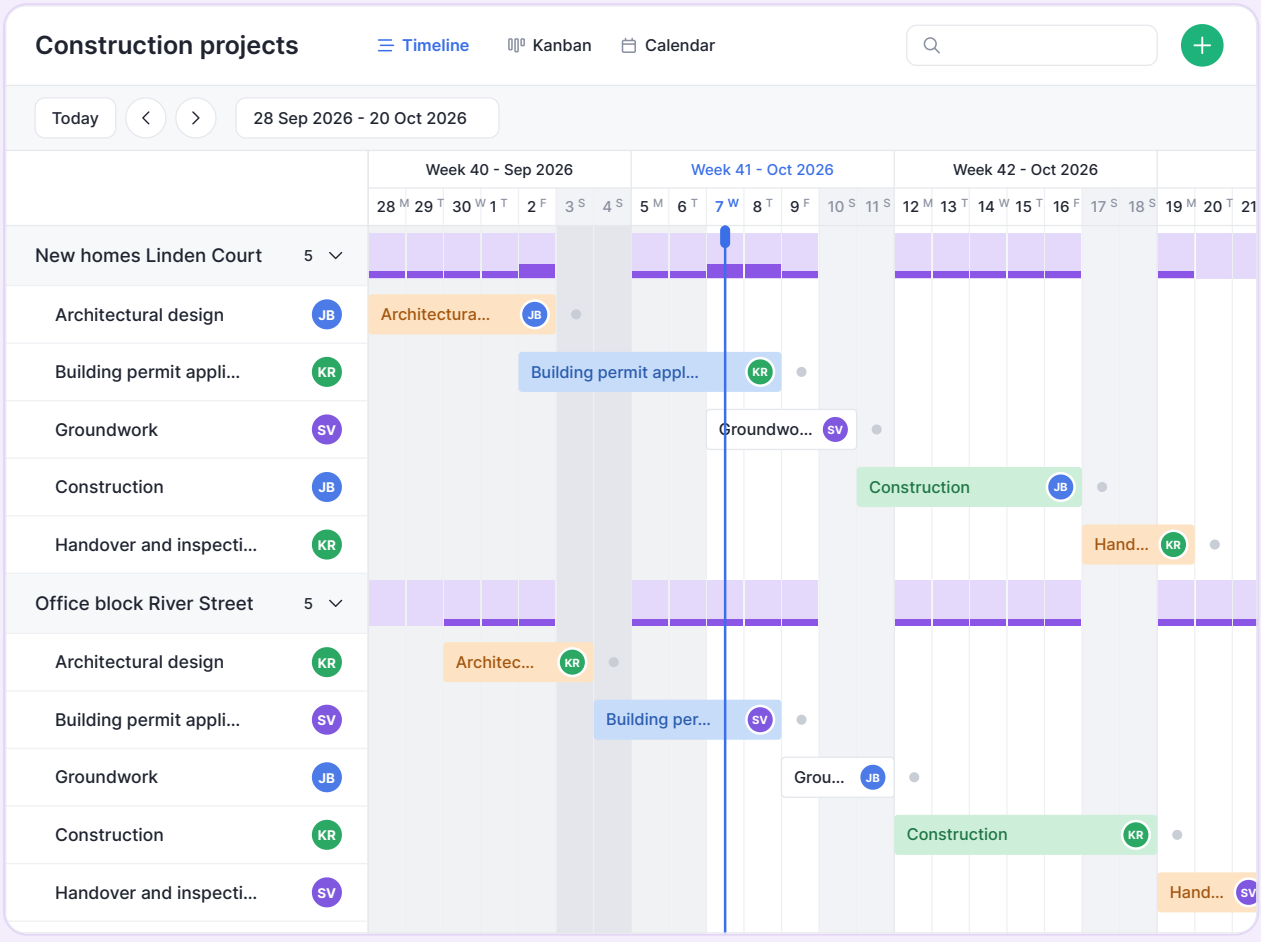
Chapter 4 · Step 2

Visualise your planning and make decisions

Now that the basis of your planning is in place, it's important to show it visually. This helps you follow progress and make quick adjustments where needed.

Example

You visualise your process in vPlan's Timeline view, which gives you a clear overview of the project's phases and the dependencies between them.



Capacity and deadlines

While reviewing the planning, you see that the groundwork overlaps with the building permit application. You decide to bring the groundwork forward a little, so there's enough time for approval.

Making decisions

Thanks to the visual view, you can quickly decide to give certain tasks priority. You see that the permit application is crucial for the project's progress, so you decide to put more resources on it.

Chapter 4 · Step 3

Do the work together and record it

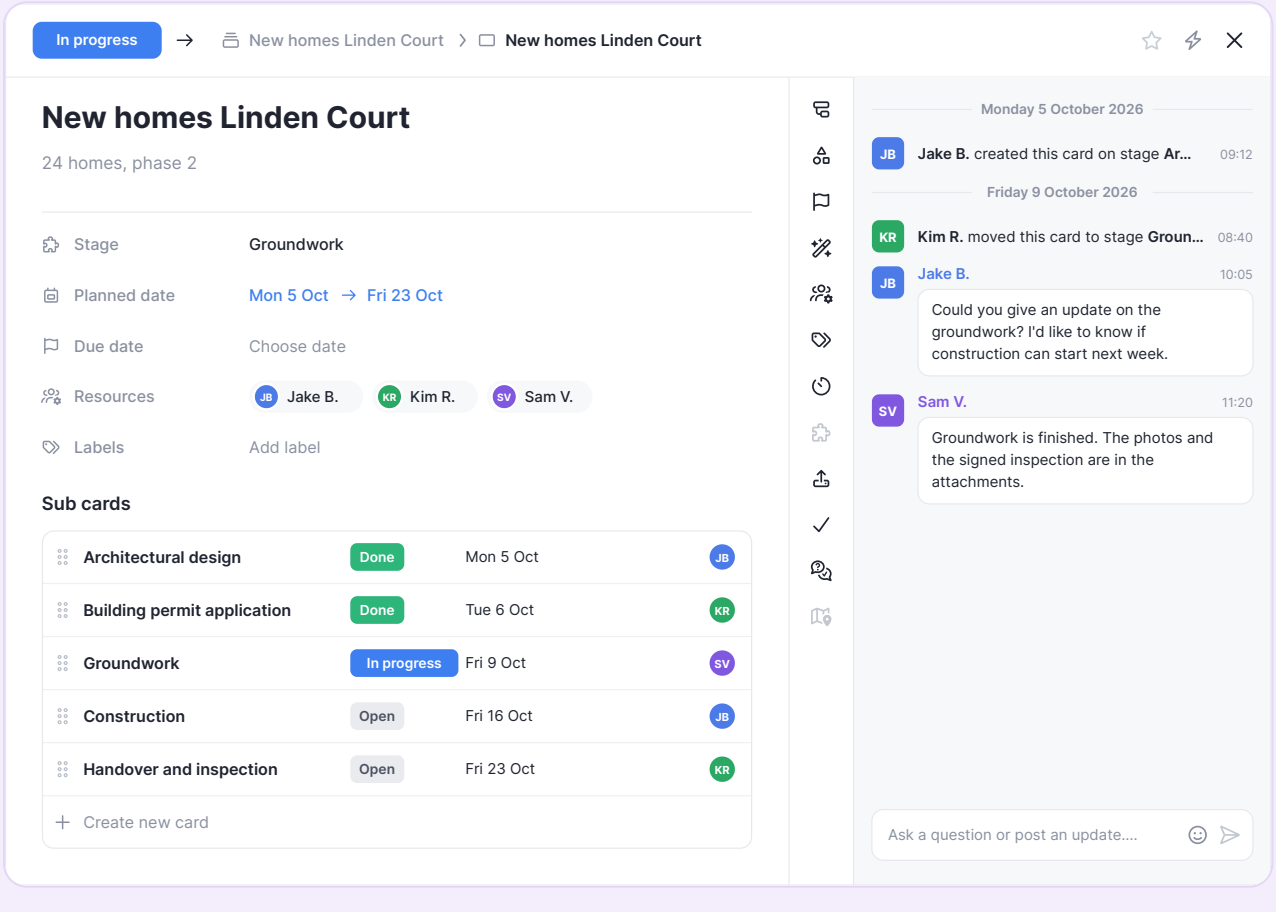
Everyone on the team now knows what to do. With vPlan, the team can easily follow progress and communicate effectively. Anytime, anywhere, on desktop and in the mobile app.

Example

Team members can track their progress in vPlan. Say the project lead has a question about the groundwork. They can add a comment to the relevant task and ask for an update.

Collecting data

Besides comments, team members can also add attachments, such as signatures or photos. That way all the important information is in one place. This makes collaboration and communication easier.



Notice the difference?

With vPlan you feel right away how the work process runs more smoothly and productively. By digitising and visualising your planning, you can tackle bottlenecks before they grow. Unlike Excel, which often leads to confusion and delays, vPlan offers real-time collaboration and efficient documentation. So you create more time and room for the tasks that matter.

Chapter 5

Moving from Excel to vPlan

Five steps for a smooth switch.

1 Analyse your current processes in Excel

Make a list of all the processes you manage in Excel. Identify inefficiencies, such as manual entry and version conflicts, and note where improvements are needed.

2 Set goals for the switch

Define clear, measurable goals, such as saving time, improving collaboration and reducing errors. Make sure the whole team understands and supports these goals.

3 Import your data and set up vPlan

Use vPlan's integration features to transfer data from Excel or other systems automatically. This saves time and means you don't have to enter data by hand.

4 Training and implementation

Organise training sessions to help your team get familiar with vPlan. This increases adoption and makes the transition smoother.

5 Measure and optimise

Review your workflows in vPlan regularly and adjust them where needed. Keep collecting feedback from your team and keep looking for ways to improve efficiency.

Chapter 6

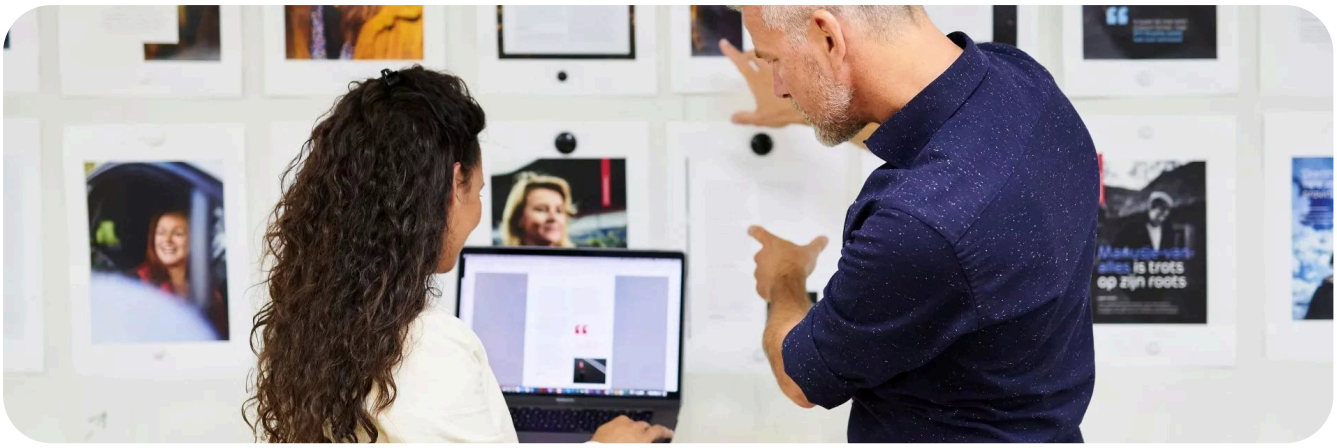
Success stories



Sempergreen

Sempergreen, a supplier of green roofs, green facades and ground cover, used to struggle with a cluttered Excel setup. All their orders from AFAS now go straight into the vPlan backlog, ready to be scheduled. Since switching to vPlan, they manage all their processes in one place and have less manual work. That saved time, improved communication and reduced the cost of mistakes. Where field technicians used to head out with paper work orders, they now know at the weekend where they need to be on Monday. They're very happy to have everything at their fingertips.

Read the full story →



vPlan gives 1609bold more room for creativity

At marketing agency 1609bold, Excel was a source of frustration: there was no clear overview and project management was inefficient, especially when colleagues were away. Switching to vPlan made a world of difference. The team now has real-time insight into project progress and can plan tasks flexibly. vPlan saves them half an hour every day by bringing data together in one place and cutting down on daily corrections. The result: more freedom and creativity in their work.

Read the full story (in Dutch) →



Accountancy firm DDJ counts on vPlan

DDJ, an accountancy and advisory firm in Arnhem, moved from a cluttered Excel planning to vPlan to improve its planning process. Keeping client data up to date by hand and adjusting the planning used to take a lot of time and led to errors. Thanks to vPlan's integration with AFAS, employees can now easily keep track of the status of each assignment. This improves communication and saves more and more time. With the user-friendly interface and real-time insight into the planning, DDJ can now add more value for its clients as the firm continues its digital transformation.

Read the full story (in Dutch) →

Chapter 7

Is your planning ready for the future?

Can you tick every box?

- [ ] Changing my planning costs no extra time and causes no chaos
- [ ] Everyone works in the same version of the planning
- [ ] I have instant insight into capacity and deadlines
- [ ] Changing the planning takes little manual work
- [ ] My planning makes collaboration easy

Couldn't tick every box?

It's time to let go of the old idea that everything has to be planned in Excel. How often do we reach for a spreadsheet automatically, simply because we're used to it? Excel was not designed for the complex work of planning and project management. At a time when speed, collaboration and overview are essential, one thing is clear: we need to switch to a better way of working.

vPlan offers the solution. It's not just another tool, but a whole new approach to how you plan and work together. No more cumbersome formulas, no more version conflicts, no more endless fiddling with complicated spreadsheets.

> **"Excel was launched in 1987, just like the Nokia Mobira Talkman: a phone we left behind long ago. So why are we still using Excel for our planning?"**

It's time to make the switch. Try vPlan today and see for yourself how you work more productively, optimise your processes and finally get a grip on your projects.



Chapter 8

Your planning, only more efficient!

Whether you're looking for a fresh start, tailored advice or more information: we're here to help. Choose what works for you, and get started today.

Try for free →

Contact →

Vplan