ASC 842 LEASE ACCOUNTING HANDBOOK

A 2019 Guide for Lessees

Implementing Processes, Controls, & Systems to Achieve & Maintain Compliance with the New Lease Accounting Standard
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INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW LEASE ACCOUNTING STANDARDS
In 2019, the new FASB lease accounting standard, ASC 842, began to go into effect for public company filers. Other entities, including private companies, have an additional year to prepare for adoption. However, lessons learned from early implementation projects demonstrate that ASC 842 will require more effort than companies originally anticipated. Developing a strong understanding of the compliance requirements for the new standards is crucial for lessees to adopt on time and without material weakness.

**Why the Standards Were Introduced**

The change to lease accounting rules comes with many other accounting standard updates, all created with the purpose of closing loopholes in accounting guidance that could potentially allow companies to mislead financial statement users as to the true nature of the company’s financial state.

ASC 842 closes the lease accounting off-balance sheet loophole which allowed corporations to report their operating leases, often a major portion of the lease portfolio, in the footnotes of financial statements. Under the new standard, companies are required to capitalize operating leases on the balance sheet — reporting them as right-of-use assets and lease liabilities. As a result of the shift, operating lease obligations will face increased auditor scrutiny, pushing companies to focus on ensuring accuracy and completeness of what they report as well as leading to greater comparability of financial statements.

**Knowing Your Deadline**

The following is a table showing when private companies need to transition to the new rules:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IF YOUR YEAR END IS:</th>
<th>YOU MUST TRANSITION TO THE NEW STANDARDS BY:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 31</td>
<td>January 1, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 31</td>
<td>April 1, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30</td>
<td>July 1, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 30</td>
<td>October 1, 2020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Early adoption is permitted for all organizations, but very few major public companies elected to early adopt. It is expected that private companies will follow the same pattern. This is primarily because the transition process is a huge undertaking. Organizations with sizable lease portfolios will likely need to make use of all the time between now and the deadline to identify leases, extract data, input data into a lease accounting system, and test the system under the new rules, among other steps.
The Major Changes

The most notable change is the capitalization of operating leases, which occurs under both FASB’s ASC 842 and the International Accounting Standard Board’s IFRS 16. However, the FASB and IASB split on how to classify operating leases, with the FASB deciding to keep the dual classification model of operating and finance leases, and the IASB dropping the operating classification so that all leases greater than $5,000 in value and longer than 12 months in length will be classified and accounted for as finance leases.

Under finance lease accounting, an asset and liability are recorded at the present value of the lease payments on the balance sheet. On the income statement, the lease is recorded as a straight-lined depreciation expense plus a front-loaded interest expense.

Under FASB’s new operating lease accounting, operating leases will be capitalized but accounted for differently from finance leases (previously called capital leases). The present value of the operating lease payments will be recorded as a separate asset and liability and the profit and loss (P&L) expense will remain as the straight-line average expense.

Most notable is that the operating lease liability will not be classified as a debt, but rather as an “other” operating liability. This is significant as it will not impact debt covenants that limit debt.

The FASB allows a short-term lease (12 months or less) exemption, but not an exemption for leases less than or equal to $5,000 in value.

The FASB lease classification test is as follows:

A lessee shall classify a lease as a finance lease if the lessee effectively obtains control of the underlying asset as a result of the lease. A lessee effectively obtains control of the underlying asset when the lease meets any of the following criteria at lease commencement:

a. The lease transfers ownership of the underlying asset to the lessee by the end of the lease term.

b. The lease grants the lessee an option to purchase the underlying asset that the lessee is reasonably certain to exercise.

c. The lease term is for substantially all of the remaining economic life of the underlying asset.

d. The sum of the present value of the lease payments and the present value of any residual value guaranteed by the lessee amounts to substantially all of the fair value of the underlying asset.

e. The underlying asset is of such a specialized nature that it is expected to have no alternative use to the lessor at the end of the lease term.

When determining lease classification, one reasonable approach to assessing the criteria for c and d would be to use the “bright line” tests of ASC 840 to determine how to define “substantially all”:

a. Seventy-five percent or more of the remaining economic life of the underlying asset is a major part of the remaining economic life of that underlying asset.

b. Ninety percent or more of the fair value of the underlying asset amounts to substantially all the fair value of the underlying asset.
Exhibit 1: Executive Summary of the New Lease Accounting Standard

Timeline:

- The final standard was issued in 2016.
- Public companies began transitioning to the new standard January 1, 2019.
- Private companies will transition starting January 1, 2020.

New Lessee Accounting Standard Summary

- Capitalize all leases (except those exempted as noted above) at the present value (PV).
- For the IASB, all capitalized leases will have a P&L pattern that is front-loaded (rent expense replaced by straight-line amortization of the asset and imputed interest on the liability).
- The initial measurement of variable lease payments included in lease assets and lease liabilities includes only variable lease payments that depend on an index or a rate, measured using the index or rate at lease commencement.

Variable rents based on a rate (e.g. LIBOR) or an index (e.g. CPI) are booked based on spot rates. Variable rents based on usage or lessee performance (e.g. sales) are not booked unless intended as a tool to avoid capitalization (also known as disguised minimum lease payments which will have to be estimated and capitalized).

For the FASB, one should reassess and book variable lease payments that depend on an index or a rate only when the lessee is reassessing the lease liability for other reasons (e.g., when there is a change to the lease term upon the occurrence of a significant event or a significant change in circumstances within the lessee’s control). The changed lease payment (due to changes in the rate or index) still needs to be tracked to provide footnote disclosure of future lease payments. The IASB voted to require reassessments whenever the reference index or rate in a variable rent clause changes the future of contractual rents.

- For the FASB, short-term leases (with terms of 12 months or less), including renewals where the lessee is reasonably certain to exercise to renew, can be accounted for under the off-balance sheet method with additional disclosure. For the IASB, short-term and low dollar value leases of $5,000 or less (even if material in the aggregate) can continue to be accounted for off-balance sheet if so elected.
SECTION I

THE NEW LEASE ACCOUNTING STANDARD: TIMING, KEY PROVISIONS, AND CHANGES IN DIRECTION
Key Changes for the New Standard

For US lessees, adoption of the new rules will result in a significant change from ASC 840 reporting where operating leases are off-balance sheet.

Leases Capitalized: The new rules will require a lessee to capitalize all leases longer than 12 months. While leased assets will be capitalized normally, lease obligations should be recorded using the lease term and lease payments based on assumptions related to contractual rents, including:

- Bargain or compelling renewal rent and purchase options where the lessee is reasonably certain to exercise the options
- Variable (contingent) rents
- Likely payments under residual guarantees

Estimates of Lease Term and Lease Payments: For purchase and renewal options, a lessee should reassess whether the exercise of an option is “reasonably certain” (and thus must be recognized) only upon the occurrence of a significant event or a significant change in circumstances that is within the lessee’s control.

Transition: Existing capital leases are grandfathered under ASC 842.

For the FASB, lessees may choose between two available transition methods. The first is a “modified retrospective” approach where all operating leases existing at or entered into after the date of initial application will be booked on a prospective basis, but those that expire in the periods of comparative statement will not have to be rebooked. The asset and obligation are booked at the PV of remaining rents at the earliest date presented in the financial statements.

The second transition option is a practical expedient that was approved in 2018 which allows companies to “recognize a cumulative-effect adjustment to the opening balance of retained earnings” at their adoption date. Both transition methods must be applied in the same way.

Present Value Calculation: The lessee will calculate the PV of the estimated lease payments using the implicit rate in the lease, if it is known to the lessee, or the company’s incremental borrowing rate (the interest rate the lessee would incur to borrow under a secured loan with terms similar to those of the lease). The implicit rate is defined as follows in the new FASB standard:

“The rate of interest that, at a given date, causes the aggregate present value of (a) the lease payments and (b) the amount that the lessor expects to derive from the underlying asset following the end of the lease term to equal the sum of (1) the fair value of the underlying asset minus any related investment tax credit retained and expected to be realized by the lessor and (2) the deferred initial direct costs of the lessor.”

The PV is considered to be both (1) the value of the right to use the leased asset (ROU asset), and (2) the “principal” balance of the obligation to pay rent (lease liability). This amount will be recorded as both an asset and a liability.

The Profit & Loss Statement: For finance leases, the asset will be amortized as an expense in the P&L over the estimated lease term on a straight-line basis (SL). Interest expense will be imputed on the lease liability. The sum of the interest and amortization creates a front-loaded lease expense pattern. Capitalized operating leases will continue to use the straight-line average rent as the expense, and operating lease assets and liabilities will be reported separately from capital lease assets and liabilities.

Lease Payment Breakdown: Under the new standard, the lease payment for a finance lease will be broken down into: (1) an interest component (charged to P&L), and (2) a principal component.

Lease Cost for Operating Leases: The reported lease cost for those leases that qualify as operating leases will be the same as it is under current GAAP, that is, the straight-line average of the lease payments reported as rent expense. The “rent expense” will be the sum of the imputed interest on the liability and amortization of the asset.
Exhibit 2: Lease Accounting Under the New Standard: A Real-World Example

Operating lease example: Here’s an example of how the new lease accounting standard under the FASB’s approach would work for an operating lease based on provisions of the new standard.

A company leases several PCs for three years. The rent is $1,700 a month for 36 months ($61,200 in total). Under the new standard, this lease would likely be considered an operating lease as the PV is less than 90% of the fair market value. Thus, the lease must be capitalized and reported as a right-of-use asset and liability on the balance sheet.

At a 5.5% incremental borrowing rate, the present value of the rental payments is $56,557. This is the amount that is capitalized on the balance sheet. The lessee’s initial balance sheet entries are:

- Debit Right-of-Use Lease Asset = $56,557
- Credit Capitalized Lease Obligation = $56,557

On the P&L, the first year’s imputed interest expense is $4,425 and the amortization expense is $15,975. Together, these two items total $20,400 for the first year’s lease expense. Under the current GAAP standard, the rent expense would total $20,400 on a straight-line basis.

Table 1. PC Lease Example: Assumptions and Calculations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSUMPTIONS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rent in advance</td>
<td>$1,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term in months</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incremental borrowing rate</td>
<td>5.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair Value of leased assets</td>
<td>$65,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CALCULATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PV of payments - Inception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PV of Payments - Year 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PV of Payments - Year 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total rent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Annual Journal Entry Summary

**ENTRY TO CAPITALIZE THE LEASE AT INCEPTION**

- Debit Right-of-Use Lease Asset = $56,557
- Credit Capitalized Lease Obligation = $56,557

**ENTRY TO RECORD FIRST YEARS LIABILITY ACTIVITY**

- Rent expense (imputed interest) = $2,572
- Liability = $17,828
- Cash = $20,400

**ENTRY TO RECORD ASSET ACTIVITY**

- Rent Expense (amortization of asset) = $17,828
- Asset = $17,828
**Finance lease example:** Below is an example of the IASB’s approach for the same lease as in the example above.

A company leases several PCs for three years. The rent is $1,700 a month for 36 months ($61,200 in total). Under IAS 17, this is considered an operating lease, as the PV of the payments is less than 90% of the fair value of the assets and is accounted for as an off-balance sheet transaction. Under the new IASB standard, the lease must be treated as a finance lease. That is, it is capitalized and reported as an asset and liability on the balance sheet with interest expense and amortization expense reported on the P&L statement.

At a 5.5% incremental borrowing rate, the present value of the rental payments is $56,557. This is the amount that is capitalized on the balance sheet. The lessee’s initial balance sheet entries are:

- **Debit Right-of-Use Lease Asset = $56,557**
- **Credit Capitalized Lease Obligation = $56,557**

On the P&L, the first year’s interest expense is $2,572 and the amortization expense is $18,852. Together, these two items total $21,425 for the first year’s lease expense. Under the current IASB standard, the rent expense would total $20,400 on a straight-line basis. Thus, capitalizing the lease has increased the company’s lease expense by $1,025 in the first year. The cross-over point occurs in the second year of the lease, when the total lease expense under the new standard would be less than the expense under the current IASB standard.

### Table 1. IASB method PC Lease Example Assumptions and Calculations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSUMPTIONS</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rent in advance</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Incremental borrowing rate</td>
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<td>Fair Value of leased assets</td>
<td>$65,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CALCULATIONS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PV of payments - Inception</td>
<td>$56,557</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total rent</td>
<td>$61,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2. Annual Journal Entry Summary

#### ENTRY TO CAPITALIZE THE LEASE AT INCEPTION
- **ROU asset** $56,557
- **Capitalized operating lease liability** $56,557

#### ENTRY TO RECORD FIRST YEARS LIABILITY ACTIVITY
- **Imputed Interest Expense** $2,572
- **Liability** $17,828
- **Cash** $20,400

#### ENTRY TO RECORD FIRST YEAR’S ASSET ACTIVITY
- **Amortization expense** $18,852
- **Accumulated Amortization** $18,852

### Table 3. Income Statement Impact of Front-Ended Lease Expense

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPARATIVE REPORTED OPERATING LEASE EXPENSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FASB Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IASB Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IASB B/(W) than FASB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evolution of Key Issues Regarding Lease Payments

Lease Term: The FASB and IASB decided that the lease term will be defined at inception as the contractual term plus renewal or purchase options, where the lessee is “reasonably certain” to exercise the option to renew or purchase. This is essentially a reversion to ASC 840. Under ASC 840, a renewal or purchase option is included in the lease term if there are bargains or if there is “compulsion” to exercise – where the lessee would incur an economic penalty for failure to exercise the option. Under the new standard, for purchase and renewal options, a lessee should reassess whether the exercise of an option has now reached the level of “reasonably certain” (and thus must be recognized) only upon the occurrence of a significant event or a significant change in circumstances that is within the lessee’s control. The FASB and IASB agreed that the term “reasonably certain” is a high hurdle.

Variable Lease Payments: Only certain variable lease payments will be included in the lessee’s lease capitalization, including:

- Variable lease payments that depend on an index (like the CPI) or a rate (like LIBOR, using the spot rate at lease inception for floating leases).
- Variable lease payments that are “disguised” minimum lease payments based on usage of the underlying asset or on lessee performance—in other words, payments that are “reasonably certain,” in which case an estimate of the expected rents must be capitalized.

Change in Required Adjustment of Variable Rents: Lessees are required to reassess index- or rate-dependent variable lease payments only when they are reassessing the lease liability for other reasons. For example, reassessment may be required when there is a change to the lease term upon the occurrence of a significant event, or when there is a significant (but controllable) change in the lessee’s circumstances. Do not overlook the requirement to disclose future lease payments, meaning that although a FASB company is not required to rebook when variable rents change, it is required to disclose the adjusted payments.

Residual Guarantees: Lessees need only include the likely payment under a residual guarantee in the lease payments capitalized – not the full amount of the residual guarantee. Residual guarantees are common in synthetic leases, TRAC leases, split TRAC leases, and open-ended fleet leases.

Impact of the New Standard

Financial Impact — Significant, But Less Than Originally Envisioned: For many US companies, the overall financial impact of the lease accounting changes is not as great as originally thought. Certainly, the impact of capitalizing leases is significant, as it puts new assets and liabilities on the balance sheet. However, due to the FASB decision on the operating lease expense pattern, the impact on profitability for many companies will not be significantly different from what is under the existing standards. Some financial ratios and measures will be impacted. However, IASB companies will see much more significant changes including higher debt amounts, permanent lost capital, new permanent deferred tax assets, and temporary reduced earnings.

For most leases, the amounts capitalized will generally be the same as the estimates used by major ratings agencies. For IASB companies, the increase in liabilities classified as “debt” due to capitalizing operating leases may result in debt covenant breaches that will require negotiation and adjustment. US bankruptcy laws do not consider operating lease obligations as debt, as do many other countries, so the FASB decided to classify operating lease obligations as non-debt “other” liabilities. Also, financial measures like return on assets, liabilities to net worth, etc. will/may change, so a lessee should make pro forma calculations to determine if loan covenants, other contracts, or internal performance and incentive plan measures using those measures are affected.
**Tax Impact — Minimal, Depends on Jurisdiction:** Lessees should investigate the following areas further with their tax departments to determine if there are any tax changes that may result with the new standard:

- In many taxing jurisdictions, typically in North America, the income, sales, and property tax code for leases are entirely independent of the accounting treatment. Regardless of what changes take place, there is expected to be no impact on taxing in these jurisdictions. As such, the lease versus buy decision will not be impacted by taxes. In these same jurisdictions, however, the changes to lease accounting for IASB companies may increase the administrative burden with regards to tracking deferred income taxes. This would result from timing differences, which are expected to occur under capitalized operating leases. IASB companies will also have to track operating leases for personal property tax purposes, as they are not taxable for the lessee. The difference in administrative costs of tracking tax treatments that differ from book treatments is not expected to be material for companies with an Enterprise Lease Accounting (ELA) system that has strong accounting and reporting capabilities.

- In other taxing jurisdictions, and as sometimes seen in Europe, the tax code makes reference to or uses the accounting treatment for the purposes of calculating taxable income without any adjustments. The new standards may in fact impact the amount of taxes paid in these jurisdictions. However, there are certain taxing jurisdictions taking action to ensure that such accounting changes do not impact taxes by revising the tax code to be consistent with the existing standards. Again, where timing differences occur, you will be required to track deferred tax amounts.

- Personal property tax and sales tax could possibly be impacted in some taxing jurisdictions. Ordinarily, the responsibility to pay these amounts is determined by the legal substance of the lease contract or within the lease contract terms. The accounting treatment would not impact either the amount or responsible party for these payments. Nevertheless, companies should consult with their tax departments to ensure there are no tax consequences as a result of the lease accounting changes in all of the countries and taxing jurisdictions in which they transact or a nexus exists.

**Operational Impact — Substantial Increase in Administrative Burden:** The new lease accounting standard will increase a lessee’s administrative burden due to the required increase in process controls; data collection, analysis, and maintenance; monitoring; internal reporting systems; and, most importantly, audit scrutiny. Here are some of the key factors contributing to the added burden:

- There is a new, expanded definition of what is included in lease payments — in particular variable payments and expected payments under residual guarantees.

- Data to calculate payments comes from several sources in the organization.

- Calculation of lease payments is complex.

- Non-lease components in gross or bundled billed payments must be separated (unless the practical expedient not to separate is selected for all asset classes).

- Calculation of some payments involves judgments and estimates.

- Calculations to determine the amounts to record in order to capitalize operating leases are complex.

- Financial disclosure requirements are expanded.

- Income tax reporting and accounting may be more complex.

- For most companies, the scale of the administrative requirements will mean additional systems and tactical support.
To Meet the Timetable for Implementation, Lessees Must Prepare Now

For those lessees that have not already adopted, it is critical to not underestimate the timetable for implementation. This is especially true if a company’s lease portfolio includes many lease schedules with multiple assets, non-homogeneous assets, lessors, countries, or languages.

It is likely to take more than twelve months for some companies to fully overhaul the lease accounting processes, systems, and controls that will be required to comply with the new standard. Companies must:

1. understand the new rules to determine compliance requirements,
2. start and complete a transition process, and
3. develop an ongoing process for complying with the new standard beginning on the effective date.

The lease accounting rules are complex and lessees must read them in detail to understand how to comply and what the implications are.

Setting Objectives and Defining Compliance and ROI Success

To address the lease accounting changes, companies will have to change how they manage their leasing activities. Accounting for operating leases was relatively simple, since those leases were treated as operating expenses. Accounting for capitalized operating leases, however, requires a much more rigorous approach, given the increase in risk and complexity. Such complexity issues include the impact of estimation errors as well as the increased compliance requirements of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act.

As with any change-management project, you should start by defining the objective, scope, and strategy of the project or process. See an example of an objective that you might establish for your company’s transition to the new standard. It is deliberately stated in past tense as if it has already been accomplished. The objective is not exclusively focused on compliance. Instead, it is designed to yield financial returns from the investment in compliance by improving the financial performance of your leasing process and portfolio.

Objective Example: By the implementation deadline for the lease accounting changes, we will have developed, deployed, documented, and iteratively refined a leasing process that is compliant with the new lease accounting standard. This process will be well-controlled, auditable, automated, and scalable, and we will be able to demonstrate that we made good economic decisions throughout the lease lifecycle.

Metrics Example: We know we have been successful in meeting this objective because:

- We can generate reports with the push of a button, quickly and easily, for:
  - The lease accounting changes that reflect the final new lease accounting standard.
  - Preparation of our financial reporting disclosures, including SEC-required comparables, with full auditability.
  - Internal management of all lease terms that require timely decision making.

- All stakeholders who use the data, trust the data.

- All stakeholders in the leasing process receive timely, accurate, and complete reporting and notifications, especially notifications about the end of term.

- The financial performance of our lease portfolio, process, and people is measurable and continuously improving. For example, we know quantitatively how much money we are saving by leasing rather than buying. And we know how much money we could be saving if specific underperforming people and groups managed their leased assets at the end of term more effectively and returned assets on time. We can provide those under-performers with the automated notifications and scorecards that they need to improve their performance quickly and easily.
SECTION II

TRANSITIONING TO THE NEW STANDARD: HOW TO MEET THE NEW REQUIREMENTS AND DRIVE SAVINGS AND ROI
Introduction

The remainder of this handbook will provide you with comprehensive guidance on implementing the new lease accounting standard. The transition process will require the collaboration of many individuals and departments within your company. At the same time, the process we recommend here will achieve major efficiencies in the handling of lease-related information across your entire company and improve the financial performance of your leasing process and portfolio. The result: significant, recurring, annual cost savings for the company as a whole and a measurable, quantitative, positive ROI for your compliance project. Thus, while this transition process is motivated by the need to comply with the new standard, it is also an investment in managing the company’s leasing activities more efficiently and effectively. Therefore, if properly implemented, the process will pay for itself and bring continuous, sustainable, and annual returns.

We recommend an 8-step process (page 17) that will most effectively get your entire company into compliance with the new standard.

Review Your Leasing Policies: In view of: (1) the complexities of the new standard, (2) the additional administrative burdens that will be entailed, and (3) the changes that will be required, it is critical at the start of the transition process that you thoroughly evaluate your company’s leasing policies.

Lease versus Buy: Review of your leasing policies includes reviewing your lease versus buy (LvB) analyses. Previously, LvB analysis and decision making were primarily based on economics, as operating leases were off-balance sheet and treated as an operating expense. Now that operating leases will be capitalized, there are financial metrics that must also be considered. The analysis will continue to focus on the after-tax implicit cost considering timing of lease payment cash disbursement, tax cash flows, and non-accounting expenses. Nevertheless, the changes in financial ratios should be analyzed to the extent that they impact the LvB decision.

In an asset purchase, depreciation is stretched out over the asset’s useful economic life. For IASB lessees, if an asset is leased, depreciation may be accelerated and spread over a shorter lease term. Thus, under the new lease accounting rules, because of additional assets on the balance sheet and the acceleration of lease costs (at least for IASB lessees), the return on assets/return on equity calculations will look worse for a now-capitalized operating lease.

However, for FASB lessees, under the new rules operating leasing will still look better than buying. That’s because the amount recorded will be less than the cost of the asset and the reported lease cost will be level — not front-ended.

Why Leasing Will Remain Attractive Despite the Accounting Changes: Your review of leasing policies should also take into account the quantitative and qualitative reasons why leasing will remain attractive.

Under the new rules, the accounting benefits for leasing (off-balance sheet financing) will only partially recede. They will remain only to the extent that the PV of the rents is less than the cost of the asset, in which case the lessee capitalizes only the PV. In that case, from a budget perspective, the amount of capitalized lease payments is less than the cost amount had the asset been purchased. Under certain leases like synthetic leases, TRAC leases, and auto/truck fleet leases the amount capitalized may be significantly lower than the cost of the asset.

There are many reasons why companies lease, and most will still remain favorable per the chart below.

A likely outcome of the changes in the accounting rules is that companies may decide to negotiate different lease terms — possibly shorter terms. They may also choose CPI variable rents versus stepped up contractual rents.
Sale-Leaseback Transactions

Also under the new rules, sale-leasebacks that were transacted to remove assets from the balance sheet will no longer provide this relief except to the extent the PV of the payments is less than the book value of the asset. The capitalized value of the sale-leaseback rents will replace the asset cost on the balance sheet.

FASB decided that for a transaction to be considered a sale-leaseback, the sale must meet the requirements of the new Revenue Recognition joint standard (ASU 2014-09/ASC 606/IFRS 15). However, “continuing involvement” in the form of a fixed price purchase option (even if it is not viewed as a bargain) precludes sale recognition under that standard. The FASB clarified that an ordinary leaseback (meaning with no option to purchase) does not trigger that clause and precludes sale-leaseback accounting. The FASB also decided that the presence of a fair market value purchase would also not preclude sale treatment provided that the asset was readily available in the marketplace and not specialized (this may be a high hurdle to meet).

• The IASB concluded that a “substantive repurchase option” precludes sale recognition.

• “Failed” sale-leasebacks are accounted for by the seller/lessee as a loan and the asset remains on its books. For the lessor, the transaction is recorded as a loan.

• The FASB decided that if the leaseback is classified as a finance lease, the transaction would not be considered a sale. In other words, if the risks and rewards of ownership are being transferred back to the seller-lessee, no sale really happened.

• For those sale-leasebacks that meet the Revenue Recognition sale criteria, both parties treat the lease like any other lease.

• For the gain, the two Boards split: the FASB concluded that the full gain should be recognized just as it is with any other sale. The IASB held that only the portion of the gain applicable to the residual asset can be recognized at sale.

• If the official sale price is higher or lower than the market price (“off-market”), a reduced sale price is treated as a prepayment of rent; a higher sale price is treated as additional financing by the buyer-lessee to the seller-lessee.
Transitioning to the New Standard: A Comprehensive 8-Step Process

For many companies, leasing will continue to be an important technique for acquiring the use of assets. At the same time, given the nature and complexity of the requirements under the new standard, the transition will require substantial time and effort.

To help those companies that have not yet transitioned achieve compliance in an efficient and timely fashion, we have devised an 8-Step Transition Process that will guide you from creating an internal transition team to acquiring a lease software that will facilitate your compliance efforts with the new lease accounting standard.

When properly followed, this process will also result in substantial savings for your company and will ultimately pay for itself. By following this process, your firm will be in the forefront of companies that are well prepared and in full compliance with the new standard.

Step 1: Create a Lease Accounting Project Team

Companies should create a Lease Accounting Project Team that will oversee the transition process, establish timelines, and be fully responsible for timely and effective completion of the project. The team should include representative stakeholders that lease equipment, administer leases, or use information concerning leases. These would include Finance/Treasury, Lease Administration, IT, Accounting, and other business units. In some cases, depending on the degree of technical complexity or internal sensitivity of the asset type, there may be a need for a specialized team devoted to leasing of specific asset types (e.g., a global executive auto program).

Step 2: Deploy Software Designed for Your Processes and Portfolios — Enterprise Lease Accounting for Real Estate and Equipment Leases

If your company is still using spreadsheets, a fixed asset subledger, or an asset management system (a system without the required lease and accounting capabilities) to manage your portfolio of leased assets, it is critically important to acquire software specifically for your unique requirements. Full lease lifecycle automation is required to capture the data and documents and maintain the completeness and accuracy required to generate auditable financial reporting. Furthermore, you must verify that your software provider meets the new lease accounting standard’s requirements and can support your firm’s transition process.

Because leasing is fundamentally an interdepartmental, cross-functional, decentralized process in most large geographically distributed companies, selecting a software system that is web-based or cloud-based is essential to including all of your stakeholders, wherever they may be, in order to achieve your objective. The software-as-a-service model is now widely accepted and available as a delivery model.

If you are an international company, the software should be multicurrency and multilingual. It should also have multi-lessor capabilities (i.e., it should be lessor-agnostic), because most large companies lease from a mix of commercial banks, vendor captors, and independent leasing companies. This eliminates the possibility of using any software system offered by a single lessor (often offered to clients in an effort to monopolize their leasing business). Your software provider should also have the ability to integrate with not only your internal ERP, procurement, and asset management systems, but also your lessors’ systems to achieve straight-through processing (STP).
You also need to be able to load any kind of asset into the system—essentially, whatever you lease: real estate, furniture, airplanes, forklifts, water coolers, copiers, rail cars, pea pickers (seriously), etc.

To determine whether a particular lease administration and accounting software package is appropriate, start by giving the prospective software provider a sample data set so that you can test your data in their system. Then, ascertain whether or not the system can generate capital lease debits and credits for each asset, each transaction, and the portfolio as a whole. If it can’t perform these basic and essential functions, it won’t support your firm’s transition to the new lease accounting requirements, and you should continue to investigate alternatives. The ability of your lease administration and accounting software to easily integrate into your ERP is also important. Your software vendor should have the ability to export journal entries at both the asset and summary levels with any account configuration.

Once you have decided on appropriate lessee software, you should configure and integrate the system for maximum efficiency. You should: (a) include your organizational structure, GL coding, and other business coding; (b) set up users, groups, and their authorizations; (c) integrate the system with your single sign-on, purchasing, accounts payable, and general ledger systems where appropriate; and (d) train your stakeholders

**Step 3: Establish a Totally New, Retrospective Lease Information Database**

To be absolutely sure that you have all the information you need to move forward under the new standard, you should establish an entirely new lease information database. Of course, you already have accumulated a substantial amount of data about your current leases. But setting up a completely new database will ensure that all members of the company’s team and all departments that need the information for compliance will have it at their fingertips. This procedure will also ensure that your current database is completely accurate, especially if you scrape the data from the original documents or reconcile your existing data to your original documents.

Here are the steps we recommend:

- Create a master list of data elements by obtaining all relevant reports and data from all stakeholders within your company.
- Compile a complete set of all internal lease-related documents.
- Capture the required schedule-level and asset-level data for every lease by abstracting and cleansing the data from the documents.
- Reconcile and integrate data from other sources, including lessors, vendors, and internal asset management systems.
- Require asset owners to attest to the accuracy and completeness of the data.
- Populate your lease administration system with key financial variables such as the borrowing rate for the company, the spot rate for floating rate leases, and the CPI for leases with CPI-based variable rents.
- Load your lease information database into the lease administration system.

The major components of Step 3, as shown above, encompass a wide range of specific actions that should be taken.

**Step 4: Build a Reports Library and Automate the Distribution of Reports to Stakeholders**

Create a set of reports that allows you to report on and analyze all leases and underlying assets, expenses, and obligations in your lease portfolio. The lease accounting software system that you choose should have a library of canned reports immediately available when you load your database. In addition, you should be able to easily build your own reports from scratch. The reporting should be automatically updated when you load the data and documents for a new lease. In addition, your lease administration system should enable you to send the reports automatically to any other specified stakeholder on a routine basis.
Step 5: Analyze and Triage the End of Term – Generate Immediate Savings and Better Data

- Generate reports for all asset classes based on their end-of-term status: return, buyout, or renew.
- Generate an “evergreen” report to determine the status of leases that are past their original lease end date, including all contractual renewals (intentional) and automatic evergreens (unintentional).
- Follow up with asset owners and asset users for every lease schedule past due and resolve the issues:
  - Update information in the lease administration system at the asset level.
  - Recalculate expected payments if it is a partial buyout or partial return, and reconcile this against invoices.
  - Perform analysis with users to determine the best economic option, make the decision, and act on it.
  - Calculate savings created from these actions.
- Configure end-of-term internal and contractual notifications.
- Develop procedures to manage the end of term effectively:
  - Pay attention to the date required to notify lessors about end-of-term decisions and use it as a marker to determine when to notify asset owners.
  - Include asset-level data and economic analysis of end-of-term options in a spreadsheet to accelerate the decision about lease renewal.
  - Require a decision and, if necessary, a commitment, for the return of the equipment by the deadline.
  - Send follow-up automated notifications on the date committed for the return of the equipment and require the asset owner to report the date the equipment was returned, so that you can determine if you owe anything to the lessor.
- Create an asset owner scorecard, which measures the performance of each asset owner, and distribute it to the asset owners and their supervisors.

Under the new lease accounting changes, increasing the percentage of timely returns will reduce the lease term for prospective lease transactions.

Step 6: Maintain Database Accuracy and Completeness

In order to maintain the accuracy and completeness of your lease information database, you must capture all new leases as they become available. Because of the decentralized nature of many companies, this is often difficult to do. One strategy that has proven to be effective is to mandate that users around the world use a common, simple, and automated country-specific lease versus buy tool that is integrated with your lease administration system. This will allow you to see all of the LvB activity, such that if the outcome of the LvB analysis is a recommendation to lease, you can track the transaction as it moves through your automated process. LvB is the earliest opportunity to establish a control that enables distributed, local decision making while facilitating centralized visibility. Here are the steps we recommend to maintain the accuracy and completeness of your database:

- Gain visibility into your leasing pipeline by mandating a global lease versus buy process and tracking lease originations.
- Identify internal sources for a variety of variables, including intentions to exercise options to renew leases or options to purchase.
- Manage transactions for efficiency and the benefit of internal users; capture new leases as they are signed.
- Send periodic notifications to asset owners to test the accuracy of the data and capture changes during the lease term.
Step 7: Roll Out the Leasing Process Globally

Having completed all of the previous steps, you will be ready to implement the transition to the new lease accounting standard. Here are the steps in the global rollout:

- Develop a launch strategy that works for your company and culture (e.g., by business unit, country, etc.).
- Take into account the degree of centralization/decentralization within the company and with respect to the conduct of leasing activity.
- Seek to enable decentralized work and decision-making with centralized controls and reporting.
- Test-launch the transition rollout with early adopters and streamline the process by incorporating the lessons learned (e.g., 6-Sigma approach for repeatability and scalability).
- Train users (or train the trainers, as appropriate for your company’s culture) on the new processes, procedures, and tools.
- Communicate with all concerned to achieve universal adoption of the processes.
- Listen to feedback and suggestions from users to improve the processes incrementally, especially concerning ease of use.

Step 8: Ongoing Activity — Generate Accounting Information Required by FASB and IASB Monthly and Annually

After completing this intensive preparation and roll-out process, you will be ready to transition to the new standard at the effective date and continuously improve the performance of your leasing program.

Companies will then need to develop and implement operating procedures to generate the accounting information required for financial reporting under FASB/IFRS rules as required.

Using the automated reporting function of your lease accounting and administration system, you will be able to access and analyze complete, accurate, and up-to-date lease information. You will then be able to calculate: (1) contractual rents and bargain renewal rents, (2) the variable rents for the term, (3) any expected payment under residual guarantees, (4) the PV of the total estimated payments over the term, and (5) the principal and interest of the lease obligation.
Keeping Internal Groups Up-To-Date

Meet Routinely with the Controller’s Team:
On each accounting reporting date as defined by your Controller’s team, review the assumptions for variable rent with the Controller’s Department and review your renewal assumptions (whether there has been a change in determination regarding bargain renewals) with the operations department. Also determine whether floating rate or CPI variable contractual rents have changed or if there is a change in the expected amount to be paid under residual guarantees. If changes are material, you may revise the PV calculation for future contractual and renewal rents and provide the new PV, principal, and interest run-out to the controller’s department. Or, you may choose to input the new numbers into your lease accounting and administration system.

While the requirements have been greatly relaxed with regards to reassessment, when practical, and when acceptable to your auditors, there can be improved financial reporting by reassessing on a more frequent basis than will be required under the new standard. Regardless of the requirements to reassess, management should be aware of all economic changes to their balance sheet. Continual monitoring of changes to future contractual payments is considered best practice.

Auditors may look at historical renewals to corroborate assumptions being made on existing leases. Companies should assume that historical renewal and evergreen activity will need to be readily available for audit scrutiny. This will require systems that are more sophisticated and transparent than traditional ERP systems.

Provide Controller with Reports for Financial Statements:
Prepare disclosure information annually for the controller’s department to be included in the annual report’s leasing footnote. The following are the quantitative disclosure requirements for lessees:

1. Finance lease expense, segregated between amortization of ROU assets and interest on lease liabilities.
2. Operating lease expense.
3. Short-term lease expense, excluding expenses relating to leases with a lease term of one month or less.
4. Variable lease expense.
5. Sublease income.
6. Cash paid for amounts included in the measurement of lease liabilities, segregated between operating and financing cash flows and between finance and operating leases.
7. Supplemental non-cash information on lease liabilities arising from obtaining ROU assets, segregated between finance and operating leases.
8. Weighted-average of the remaining lease term, disclosed separately for finance and operating leases.
9. Weighted-average discount rate for finance and operating leases as of the reporting date.
10. Gains and losses arising from sale and leaseback transactions.

The FASB decided to retain the requirement for a lessee to disclose a maturity analysis of its lease liabilities. This analysis shows the undiscounted cash flows on an annual basis for a minimum of each of the first five years and a total of the amounts for the remaining years, and reconciles the undiscounted cash flows to the discounted lease liabilities recognized in the statement of financial position.
Provide Journal Entry Information: Provide information for necessary journal entries directly from the lease administration system, which has a lessee accounting subledger that can generate debits and credits at a detailed asset level and/or general ledger summary level.

Conduct a Periodic Review of Estimates: Every time the company reports earnings, you should re-run the entire process as outlined above, contacting internal sources to get new estimates of key information; then, input changes to the system and assess any requirements for adjusting journal entries. As discussed, the requirements in this regard have been relaxed for financial reporting, but best practices would continue to require this be performed on an annual or more frequent basis, if not for compliance purposes, for economic analysis of leasing metrics.

Send Reports for Tax Leases to the Tax Team: Each year, provide to the tax department actual rents paid under “true” (tax) leases and accounting lease expenses for those leases. This information is to be included in the company’s tax return and used to prepare deferred tax entries, as the accounting expense may be different from the tax deductions for those leases. You should specifically provide the actual rent paid (for the tax return) and the deferred tax accounting entry.

The Bottom Line: If You Haven’t Already, Start Now
Getting ready for the implementation of the new lease accounting standard is going to take a great deal of resources, dedication, smart planning, and cooperation across all groups in the organizations that are involved with leasing activity.

Based on companies that have already completed the implementation project, the time frame from start of the transition to total readiness could be in the 9-18 month range, or perhaps longer, depending on the complexity of the portfolio. It will likely take 3-6 months to secure the budget and resources to move forward in the transition program. It will likely take an additional 6-12 months to establish the systems and set up the processes and procedures to prepare the company’s financial and accounting systems to be ready. The more lease transactions in a company’s portfolio, the longer the transition is likely to take.

You May Already Be Behind
First steps:
- Budget the time and resources required to perform the work.
- Determine the proportions of Internal Resources vs. Outsourcing (see next section) to deploy to the process.
- Determine whether a Behind-the-Firewall or SaaS application is best for the company. Conduct a build versus buy analysis for this decision.
- In planning, allow a minimum of one year for implementation of this transition process; 12 to 18 months if it is a global program (i.e., more than 5 countries).
Consider On-Demand Lease Accounting and Portfolio Management Software

Leasing is inherently cross-functional and interdepartmental. It typically involves a wide variety of stakeholders, including Procurement, regional and corporate Treasury, asset users, operations managers, asset managers, regional and corporate Controllers, Lease Accounting, Financial Reporting, FP&A, and internal and external auditors. Whether your portfolio is domestic or global, enabling all of your stakeholders to access the same cloud-based software and promptly get the tools they need will help you establish and monitor controls of any lease transaction, regardless of changes in location, jurisdiction, personnel, or exchange rates. Here are some features to expect from an Enterprise Lease Accounting software platform:

- You can access a suite of cloud-based, multilingual software services that automates the end-to-end lifecycle of leases via the web.
- You can drive down the cost of capital using competitive capital sourcing features in any country around the world.
- During the term, you can track leases, assets, lessors, stakeholders, and any related events in any jurisdiction using portfolio management features.
- At the end of term, you can improve the timeliness of decision making and return performance by configuring the software to automatically notify users prior to the end of term, and you can include the economic analysis and logistical instructions for any option in the lease.
- You can generate reports that quantify the financial performance of your portfolio and the operational performance of your stakeholders.
- You can employ a robust lease accounting subledger that you can use to generate debits and credits at the asset, schedule, or portfolio levels, including an audit history to ensure controls and auditability of each transaction.
- You can integrate with procurement systems (e.g. iProcurement, Ariba) and ERP systems (e.g. Oracle, SAP) for straight-through processing.

Consider Outsourcing: Drive Maximum Savings Quickly

If you do not have the resources, time, or expertise to manage the transition smoothly, consider outsourcing tasks in your leasing program to a lease servicing company. Several global companies offer an affordable suite of lease administration services.

Outsourcing to a service provider will save you considerable time, money, and headache. Get the service provider to make a compelling business case based on quantitative savings (i.e., identifying hard and soft cost savings). If they prove their business case, check their references to ensure that they have previously faced situations similar to yours.

In Sum

The transition process to the new lease accounting standard will include the development of a new leasing strategy; the creation of new processes and controls; and the selection, management and implementation of new software. Throughout the process, it will be important to incorporate lessons learned from companies that have already adopted the standards in order to continuously improve the implementation and ongoing, sustainable processes for lease accounting.