



The big rethink

By Prashanth Brindavan and Brian Miske



CFOs and finance organizations are mining human and technological innovation to drive change and seize opportunities in a transformed world.

The role of the finance chief is changing—fast. In our conversations with chief financial officers (CFO)s, they report that they're being asked as never before to help solve complex strategic and operational issues, pulling them ever further outside the traditional domain of finance. As they help guide big changes in the wake of health, economic and social crises, we're seeing that a new and evolving mix of knowledge, skills, and leadership attributes are driving CFO success stories.

Two fundamental trends underpin what's happening. The first is digital acceleration. CFOs are helping to speed the shift to cloud computing, leveraging a fail-fast, iterative, hypothesis-driven approach. At the same time, they're

pursuing inclusive automation that can complement and enhance the capabilities of human workers. And they're employing process mining—leveraging event data to accelerate the speed at which finance can unlock insights.

The second trend is the broad shift to a decentralized workforce, which is challenging CFOs in their role as a strategic influencer and accelerating the importance of digital fluency as a key leadership skill.

What do these trends mean for you, and how can you best address them? Here's what forward-thinking CFOs have been telling us:

Embrace digital acceleration

Evolve digital capabilities across the organization, leveraging data and insights to increase speed to value and competitive advantage. More than just an investment in technology, digital acceleration requires continually looking for new ways to inform and shape opportunities by delivering a continual flow of insights and ideas across the organization.

TOP CFOS ARE ASKING:

How must our processes evolve to align digital strategy and business outcomes?

How can we more accurately measure the cost and value of our digital initiatives to improve resource allocation?

Go beyond automation to create the future

Working for organizations that have already embraced robotic process automation (RPA), machine learning, and other artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, sophisticated finance leaders are now looking beyond simple AI applications to create value for their organization. They're introducing platforms that help stakeholders maintain and support "edge" implementations and low-code applications, including pilots led by citizen developer teams. This is fostering greater digital fluency and adoption across the organization and driving companies toward "hyperautomation"—a state in which finance processes are automated to the fullest possible extent.

Accelerate cloud adoption

Several recent conversations with CFOs have focused on the operational, accounting, and financial impact of various cloud models. Finance leaders see great value in considering the big picture to strategically sequence cloud migration initiatives. They also agree that being able to concisely communicate what's happening and why—to the organization, third party-providers, and the market—helps with turning strategy into action.

Tap into process mining for new insights across the organization

Process mining gives the finance organization an opportunity to unlock data and insights at scale—to understand what's happening and why—and to better meet the needs of employees and customers. Deeper insight into business processes and their interdependencies makes it easier for finance to function as an advisor to the business.

CFOS ARE ASKING:

What is the "North Star" target state for our finance organization, and how should our automation effort evolve to realize it?

Do we have any blind spots across the spectrum of automation, from RPA through AI/machine learning?

When launching AI initiatives, should we be using ready-made solutions, or will coding and developing in-house increase our competitive advantage?

How will the evolution of our automation capabilities create a first-mover advantage, reduce costs, increase predictability, and enhance efficiency and effectiveness?

THESE FINANCE PROFESSIONALS ARE ASKING:

What is the value and benefits case associated with our cloud strategy?

What are the implications and risks associated with using third-party providers? Are they financially healthy? Are their applications or platforms scalable? And do their data privacy and regulatory standards align with ours?

What are the direct and indirect costs of implementing our cloud strategy? What's the fee structure, and how will it impact our balance sheet, income statement, and operations?

SMART CFOS ARE ASKING:

What are the potential efficiency gains if we optimize processes proactively?

Are we prioritizing improving business processes with the biggest business impact?

Can our finance organization perform process analyses in real time, identify the root causes of inefficiency, quickly address those shortcomings, and, ultimately, identify and prevent potential problems before they happen?

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We're looking forward to further discussions with CFOs—including you—on the digital trends that are changing finance and the role of the finance chief, which is becoming ever broader and more challenging by the day. Of course, so too are the opportunities growing for those who rise to the challenge.

Contact us



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