



# Voice of the CFO

A recurring conversation with CFOs  
on finance-related issues



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# Future of finance: How CFOs are navigating all things AI

In our conversations with CFOs, AI is a frequent topic. CFOs are navigating the rapidly evolving landscape of AI, with a focus on governance, end-to-end AI process optimization, and preparing for the future of finance—an agentic world of AI agents and employees. Discussions highlighted a shift toward centralized AI governance, moving away from decentralized experimentation. Pilots put AI through its paces, but now the focus is shifting to operations and AI's role in them. Companies are integrating AI into their operations, with some embedding

GenAI in new platforms and processes. While AI has the potential to transform financial processes, making them more efficient and strategic, human oversight remains crucial. The interest in AI continues to increase, with Fortune 500 companies expanding their AI budgets. Despite progress, it's acknowledged that the industry is still in the early stages of AI development, with much to be explored in its potential to transform operations.

## On the CFO agenda

### Governance for AI

Adopting C-suite oversight

### End-to-end process optimization

Pilots are out, AI process integration is in

### Organizational impact

Preparing for an agentic world of agents and employees

# Governance for AI

## Adopting C-suite oversight

CFOs run large organizations with various departments testing AI tools and techniques in their own fiefdoms, which makes perfect sense. However, the march of time and AI's growing dominance in business demands that CFOs pivot and adopt a more active role.

A financial services organization described its shift from localized experimentation to executive management oversight of AI adoption:

"We're a small team that collaborates across all functions. Our goal is to drive AI adoption throughout the company. Within finance and actuarial, we're reimagining the close process and

forecasting to create a seamless, efficient workflow using AI."

An IT distribution company highlighted the importance of governance in AI implementation:

"Last year, we were mired in inadequate change management around AI tools. To address this, we established global governance for AI and automation to ensure promising ideas are appropriately marshaled, vetted, and communicated."

Another CFO centralizes governance with an architecture board review process. "We're deploying globally across 20,000 employees. It's not perfect yet, but it's spurring more ideas we can execute on."

CFOs have their hands in cybersecurity, whether it's meetings with the CIO and CISO or reviewing agreements with cloud providers. The CFO of a global distributor noted:

"Our board reviews cybersecurity on a quarterly basis. The board ensures we have the appropriate security and protocols to protect our data."

If there is any area where CFOs have made major strides, it's in getting their data right for AI from a governance standpoint. The CFO for a multinational food and drink company conveyed his assessment:

"We have a single global ERP that centralizes our data management. It is neither perfect nor best in class; it's probably good enough."

Other CFOs are looking to govern AI from an expenditure outlay perspective. According to Forbes, Fortune 500 companies are leading the charge in AI spending, with annual budgets increasing by an impressive 150 percent year-over-year as of February 2025.<sup>1</sup>

"We're being intentional about what we fund," remarked a CFO. "With governance in place, great ideas must go through a review process in order to receive resources, people, and funding."

"Governance puts the mindset around value."

—CFO for a distribution and logistics company

<sup>1</sup> Fortune 500 companies continue to beef up AI budgets: Wedbush analysis | Fortune, March 2025



# End-to-end process optimization

Pilots are out, AI process integration is in

Most companies responded to ChatGPT's launch in November 2022 by green lighting AI pilots to test the viability of the technology. That period of experimentation is nearly in the rearview mirror. In its place is the realization and tireless efforts around integrating AI with operations.

"I believe we have to start seeing AI as part of an end-to-end process," observed Sanjay Sehgal, KPMG Partner, Advisory. "Let's call AI what it is—an operating system."

His words struck a nerve with CFOs because it hits close to home at what troubles CFOs month after month, year

after year. The CFO for a consumer and retail company expressed their predicament bluntly:

"We're uncovering errors in our tax processes, and we know our current operational capacity isn't sustainable for long-term growth. That's why we're focused on how AI and technology can help solve our most pressing business challenges. We don't have all the answers yet, but that's where our attention is right now."

A CFO for a distribution company shared their company's progress on AI end-to-end processes:

"We're implementing new platforms with GenAI embedded not only in the systems, but also the processes."

The CFO of an IT solutions provider offered an alternative perspective:

"Instead of waiting for AI end-to-end processes to develop, we've got to fix things and do better. I don't need an end-to-end answer to start moving forward with efficiencies and ways to improve."

That's understandable. Go-slow strategies are plentiful, from walk before you run to start small, think big, as well as build a strong foundation, iterate and improve, and scale gradually. Business

change maxims may not account for AI's potential to transform operations and equip AI start-ups to compete with household name businesses.

Many CFOs are going through global digital transformations. Turning the ship into a not-experienced-yet direction is no easy feat. Most agree that we're in the early innings of AI in end-to-end processes. The nagging fear with AI is its fast-mover status urged on with every launch of large language models.

"Put that benchmark goal out there and solve for end-to-end AI-driven processes."

—Sanjay Sehgal, KPMG Partner, Advisory

# Organizational impact

## Preparing for an agentic world of agents and employees

The agentic era is poised to transform large enterprise finance. The integration of AI agents is expected to revolutionize financial processes such as the monthly closing of books, and audits and financial reporting, making them more efficient, accurate, and strategic. The question remains—how will agents and employees collaborate in a hybrid world?

“We’re going to have a lot more agents built into the organization, into finance, doing various things across the board,” advised Sanjay Sehgal, KPMG Partner, Advisory. “If security can be maintained, what does the future finance organization look like?”

The CFO for another consumer and retail company shared how they’re operationalizing AI. As a retailer, they have cameras throughout stores and outside where high-dollar equipment resides:

“The cameras use AI to distinguish between customers and team members recognized by their vests. When a customer views a particular piece of equipment, a team member is notified and provided with the relevant product details.”

Using AI in this way, team members become knowledge experts. The company also offers an AI chatbot

feature that allows team members to use voice prompts to quickly access product information. For example, when assisting a customer, a team member can instantly retrieve relevant details to support the conversation. Regardless of experience level, every team member becomes a more informed and confident salesperson.

This example exemplifies the potential harmony of a hybrid world of agents and employees. As AI technology continues to evolve, it’s likely that more finance processes will become automated. Nevertheless, human oversight, judgment, and expertise will remain

essential for complex, high-stakes decisions and tasks that require creativity, empathy, and nuanced understanding.

CFOs spend an inordinate amount of time on AI from a leadership perspective. It only stands to reason that some CFOs wish to use AI to boost their own daily output or at least remove some drudgery. The CFO for a pharmaceutical company acted on this interest:

“I asked the three people in finance with the most advanced AI experience to meet with me every two weeks with the purpose of training me on AI. It’s been valuable.”

“We’re seeing a lot of productivity, but we’re not seeing headcount reductions yet.”

—CFO for a utility distributor

# Key considerations

- Use governance attuned to AI
- Select processes for AI integration
- Embrace the future of finance

# Additional resources

[You can with AI: Podcast Series](#)

[The agentic AI advantage: Unlocking the next level of AI value](#)

[Rethinking strategic workforce planning with AI agents](#)

[Three essentials for effective upskilling, reskilling, and career mobility with AI](#)



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