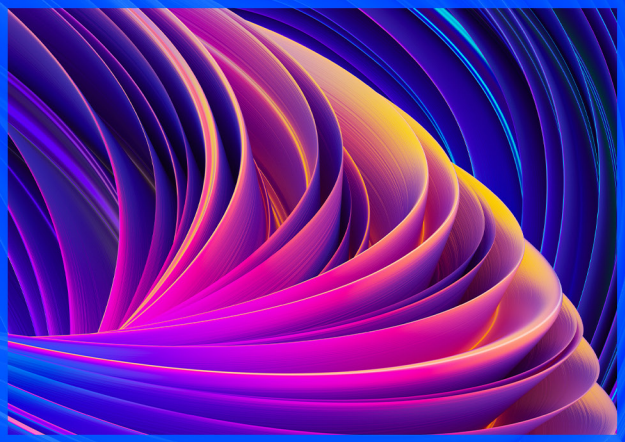
Take command of the financial close



How agentic AI and embedded governance can turn the month-end rush into an always-ready finance engine

The financial close has long been defined by pressure, complexity, and a race against time. For many finance organizations, month-end remains the moment when all the issues finally become visible: the upstream transaction problems, data quality gaps, manual accounting judgments, reporting delays, and control exceptions. By then, finance teams are reacting under deadline pressure rather than managing financial outcomes continuously.

Agentic artificial intelligence (AI) changes the frame. The opportunity is not simply to automate more close tasks or accelerate the same checklist. It is to reimagine transact-to-record as a continuously governed finance process, where source transactions are monitored as they occur, accounting implications are assessed earlier, exceptions are surfaced proactively, and close readiness is visible before period-end.

This concept is brought to life through the close command center. As a centrally governed environment, it coordinates workflows across the entire transact-to-record lifecycle from transaction origination to management insight. And with embedded governance, the command center transforms the close from a reactive, sequential process into a proactive, exception-driven model. This shift reflects a broader move in finance and accounting from individual AI assistance to multiagent orchestration across the function and process, where specialized agents, finance professionals, and enterprise systems work together within defined risk and control boundaries.

Breaking the month-end cycle

The financial close has become a tangled web. Instead of a linear process, activities are spread across different systems, geographies, and reporting requirements. Information is often fragmented, siloed in everything from enterprise resource planning (ERP) and billing platforms to spreadsheets and unstructured documents. When work can only move forward in sequence, delays compound, issues surface late, and teams spend significant effort reconciling problems after the fact.

Most close issues don't start during the close; they begin with the daily transactions that feed into it. A miscoded supplier invoice, revenue that doesn't align with contract terms, or an accrual based on incomplete data can all create problems that go unnoticed for weeks. Reporting teams may then spend valuable time explaining variances that could have been identified earlier.

Agentic AI offers a way to untangle this process. Rather than simply automating individual tasks, it coordinates work from the initial transaction to the final report. Multiagent systems monitor source activity, interpret accounting context, initiate actions, route exceptions, maintain state across workflows, and connect upstream transaction quality to downstream reporting outcomes. This allows finance organizations to manage close readiness continuously rather than discover issues when the close calendar begins.

Moving to this model requires a shift from isolated experiments to making agentic capabilities a core part of the finance operating model. This means rethinking how work is coordinated, how progress is tracked, and how governance is applied from start to finish.

From close automation to agentic transact-to-record

The agentic close operates on a simple premise: it is the outcome of continuously governed transactions.

In a transact-to-record process, financial quality is created through the full chain of activity, from the first transaction to the final analysis. Agentic AI connects this chain. It monitors financial data as it flows, identifies exceptions early, helps coordinate a resolution, and produces the evidence needed for review and control.

This is where multiagent systems become powerful. Rather than relying on one general-purpose AI assistant, this model uses a team of specialized agents, each designed for a specific finance outcome. An orchestration layer coordinates dependencies, evaluates risk, routes work, and escalates decisions requiring human judgment. In practice, this model includes specialized agents that tackle different parts of the process:

- **Transaction quality:** Monitors for missing, late, duplicate, incomplete, or unusual activity
- **Policy and accounting:** Assesses transaction activity against accounting rules and finance policies
- **Accruals:** Identifies required accruals based on operational activity, commitments, purchase orders, contracts, or service delivery
- **Reconciliations:** Identifies reconciling items and proposes resolution paths
- **Journal entries:** Drafts entries complete with supporting rationale and documentation
- **Intercompany:** Monitors for breaks, mismatches, and unresolved settlements between entities
- **Variance analysis:** Prepares flux commentary and highlights unusual financial movements
- **Reporting:** Summarizes the close status, bottlenecks, and financial statement risks
- **Orchestration:** Coordinates dependencies, routes exceptions, maintains close readiness, and connects upstream activity to downstream reporting outcomes.

The purpose of implementing AI agents into the close is not autonomy for autonomy's sake. The true value is in coordinated execution throughout the process with embedded judgment points, governed access, transparent evidence, and clear human accountability.

The close command center: A new operating model

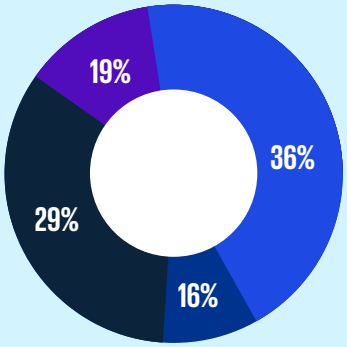
The close command center is more than just a passive dashboard—it is a new way of working. The close command center brings orchestration, visibility, and control into a single operating model. It acts as the central environment that coordinates, monitors, and governs activities across the entire transact-to-record lifecycle.

By centralizing coordination, the command center connects transactions, accounting, consolidation, reporting, and controls. This reduces handoffs and stops teams from having to scramble across separate tools, trackers, and email threads. Instead of a reactive month-end rush, the close becomes an "always-ready" process with real-time visibility.

- **For executives:** It offers a clear window into overall close readiness, material risks, and emerging business insights.
- **For controllers:** It provides a unified view of accounting activities, approvals, policy exceptions, and financial statement risks.
- **For accountants:** It acts as a smart workspace, prioritizing the exact items that need immediate attention so they can stop searching across multiple systems.

The model is designed for incremental adoption. Existing finance platforms remain in place, with agentic capabilities layered on top to close coordination gaps rather than replace established systems. Rather than rebuilding legacy headaches, this approach uses clear design principles: define your desired outcomes first, start with the systems you already have, and ensure every new capability strengthens the overall ecosystem.

Which potential benefit of an AI close command center is most appealing to your organization?



Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding

- Achieving a faster, more accurate close
- Automating reconciliations and flux analysis
- Gaining real-time, on-demand visibility into financial performance
- Increasing the strategic capacity of our finance team

Source: KPMG webcast, "The agentic close: From month-end sprint to always-ready finance," March 2026

Embedding trust through governance and controls

For finance leaders to adopt and scale agentic AI, they must first trust it. Chief financial officers (CFOs) and controllers need clear visibility into how these agents work, from the data they use to the logic behind their decisions. Every action must be auditable.

A core challenge is that seemingly simple financial terms such as "revenue," "customer," or "margin" have different meanings depending on context. Without shared definitions, an AI system can easily misinterpret data. Data complexity compounds this risk when financial information is distributed across platforms that don't talk to each other.

A governed agentic close depends on a common financial language across the full transact-to-record lifecycle. This means setting clear, company-wide definitions, policies, and business rules across all accounts and systems. By connecting shared language directly to your data, you give AI agents a reliable foundation for making decisions.

Defining terms is just the start. Multiagent systems introduce new risks, including AI hallucinations, inappropriate system actions, cybersecurity vulnerabilities, excessive access rights, and inconsistent logic. In a finance department, these risks are heightened because agents may interact with sensitive data, controlled workflows, ledger-impacting processes, and financial reporting.

Governance can't be an afterthought; it must be embedded directly into the operating model from day one. Human review remains essential where exceptions arise, judgment is required, or actions could alter the ledger, external reporting, or control conclusions. We must design agentic workflows with built-in guardrails: role-based access, segregation of duties, strict spending limits, and mandatory approval chains.

Finally, every step should be transparent. Auditability, observability, and traceability are equally critical. Finance teams need to see exactly where an agent got its data, the reasoning behind its recommendation, who approved it, and the audit trail it left behind. Embedding controls directly into workflows from the start establishes a controls-first posture, allowing finance leaders to scale with confidence.

Running the close by exception

An exception-first close reframes the traditional financial close process. Routine tasks are handled automatically as transactions happen, allowing the system to proactively flag only the exceptions—the specific items that actually require human review, investigation, or professional judgment.

Rather than treating the close as a high-pressure, fixed window at period-end, it becomes a continuous, risk-focused process. AI agents monitor transactions, accounting events, and reconciliations in real time. Instead of pushing every single document down the same path; these agents help filter the workload by determining what can proceed automatically, needs more evidence, or must be handed off to a person.

The right approach is to use agents to support exception-based execution across the full close lifecycle, with human review applied where judgment, materiality, or policy requires it. Finance leaders gain an integrated view of close status and emerging issues while the rest of the team focuses on items requiring action. Accountants spend less time chasing down status updates and reconciling preventable issues. Controllers get a head start with visibility into risk and readiness. Finance executives receive insight into financial results before the close is complete. And internal and external audit benefit from stronger evidence trails and clearer control execution.

The close becomes less about completing steps and more about managing risk, quality, timing, and confidence in financial outcomes.

Making the agentic close practical

The market is moving quickly, but finance executives are shifting their focus from broad experimentation to practical adoption. Interest in agentic AI remains high, yet many organizations are intentionally slowing down to ensure the right foundations are in place: data readiness, system integration, governance, cybersecurity, talent, and measurable value.

This is the right discipline. Agentic close should not begin with a broad mandate to automate everything. Instead, it should begin with targeted use cases tied to measurable outcomes, then expand across the close lifecycle as trust, evidence, and control maturity grow.

Common starting points include transaction quality monitoring, accrual support, reconciliations, journal entry preparation, variance analysis, close task orchestration, intercompany exceptions, and close status reporting. These areas are ideal because they combine repetitive tasks with high coordination effort and clear exception patterns. As confidence builds, organizations can expand from AI-assisted recommendations to governed execution, allowing increased autonomy only where controls, evidence, and performance support it.

To guide the journey, keep several core design principles in mind:

- **Start with outcomes, not agents.** Define the business objective first. Are you trying to reduce manual journals or reconciliation breaks? Get earlier visibility into accruals? Improve control evidence or transaction quality? Design agents around that specific goal.
- **Design end to end, not function by function.** The agentic model should bridge the entire journey, connecting transaction quality, accounting events, subledger activity, reconciliation, consolidation, reporting, and insight.
- **Build on existing platforms.** ERP, enterprise risk management, and other platforms don't need to be replaced; they remain core. Agentic capabilities should coordinate across the existing estate and bridge gaps rather than create another disconnected layer.
- **Create agent roles intentionally.** Each agent should have a defined purpose, data access, decision authority, escalation path, control requirement, and relationship to other agents in the workflow.
- **Embed controls from the start.** Integrate into workflow design human approvals, access controls, audit trails, policy checks, exception thresholds, and escalation logic.
- **Establish a common financial language.** Setting clear, company-wide definitions for terms, accounting policies, and business rules ensures AI doesn't misinterpret data.
- **Measure value continuously.** Track progress with concrete metrics, including close cycle time, manual journal volume, reconciliation exceptions, late adjustments, and hours saved.
- **Scale incrementally.** Begin with targeted use cases, validate outcomes, strengthen governance, and expand toward broader orchestration across the close lifecycle.

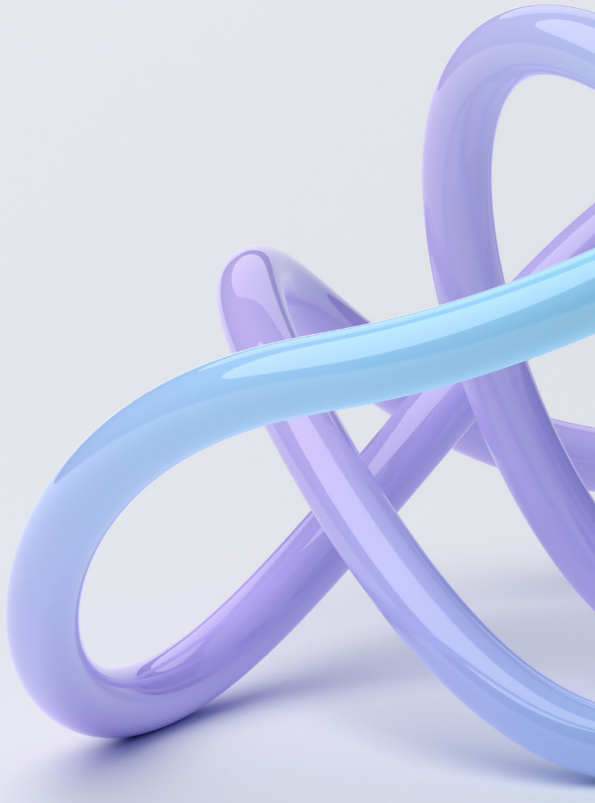
In summary: What this means for finance executives

The finance function is entering a new phase of transformation. While the first wave focused on digitizing core systems, the next wave will focus on orchestrating outcomes through multiagent systems.

For CFOs and controllers, this is an opportunity to build a finance function that is faster, more transparent, more resilient, and better controlled. But the path forward requires more than just deploying new technology. It demands a modern operating model that connects process design, data governance, controls, talent, and technology across the entire transact-to-record lifecycle.

Agentic AI should not be seen as a replacement for human judgment. Instead, its greatest value is in elevating where judgment is applied. By allowing routine work to progress automatically, surfacing exceptions earlier, and embedding governance into execution, finance teams can spend more time on oversight, analysis, risk management, and business partnership.

The financial close is poised to evolve from a discrete period-end event into a process embedded in daily operations, continuously prepared as the natural output of a fully governed transact-to-record process. Looking ahead, as agentic capabilities mature, organizations that pair multiagent orchestration with strong governance foundations will be better positioned not only to modernize the close, but to operate finance functions that are more resilient, insight-driven, and prepared to support real-time decision-making.



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