

Finance Function Automation and AI Survey Report

Revolutionizing finance functions with automation and
advanced artificial intelligence



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Foreword

In an era defined by rapid technological advancement and unprecedented data proliferation, the finance landscape stands on the brink of transformation. The Finance Automation and AI Survey Report encapsulates a pivotal moment in this journey, offering insights into the evolving role of automation and artificial intelligence (AI) in reshaping finance functions worldwide.

As organizations navigate the complexities of a digital age, the imperative to embrace automation and AI has never been clearer. This report guides finance leaders through the intricacies of this revolutionary shift, from envisioning strategic possibilities to navigating practical implementation challenges.

At its core, this report is a testament to the potential of automation and AI to revolutionize finance operations. From predictive analytics to machine learning, these technologies hold the promise of unlocking unprecedented efficiencies and driving strategic insights.

Through real-world examples and expert analysis, we delve into the transformative power of these innovations, illustrating their tangible impact on finance processes and decision-making.

Yet, amidst the excitement of technological innovation, this report also underscores the importance of addressing critical questions surrounding accessibility, skill development, and culture for change. As automation and AI become increasingly pervasive, it is imperative for finance leaders to cultivate a holistic understanding of these technologies, leveraging their potential while mitigating associated risks.

Moreover, this report sheds light on the evolving role of finance professionals in an automated world. As routine tasks are automated, finance teams are liberated to focus on higher-value activities, from strategic planning to stakeholder engagement. However, this shift also necessitates a reevaluation of skill sets and organizational structures, as finance professionals adapt to new roles as strategic advisors and data-driven decision-makers.

In closing, the Finance Automation and AI Survey Report represents an urgent call to action for finance leaders to embrace innovation, cultivate digital fluency, and harness the transformative power of automation and AI. As we embark on this vital journey, let us seize the opportunities to drive organizational success by becoming truly efficient strategic partners.



Dan Wells,
Founder & CEO of GrowCFO



“Right now, AI is the worst it will ever be. For us to ensure that we invest the right amount of time in AI technologies, we not only need an understanding of what's available now, we also need to keep our eyes on the horizon.

This doesn't mean adopting every AI tool that you find. It means adopting a pragmatic approach to assessing the use cases and return from these tools, and making the decision: 'Is this for now, or is this for later when it's likely to be better?'”

Adam Shilton

AI and Automation in Finance Expert

1. Automation

Automation has become a cornerstone of modern finance, revolutionizing traditional processes and driving efficiency across various functions.

In today's rapidly evolving business landscape, finance leaders are increasingly turning to automation to streamline operations, reduce manual effort, and enhance accuracy. From routine data entry tasks to complex financial analyses, automation technologies offer a range of solutions to optimize workflows and improve productivity.

In finance operations, automation plays a pivotal role in areas such as accounts payable, accounts receivable, and general ledger management. Tasks once burdened by manual intervention, such as invoice processing, expense management, and reconciliation, are now being automated using advanced software solutions.

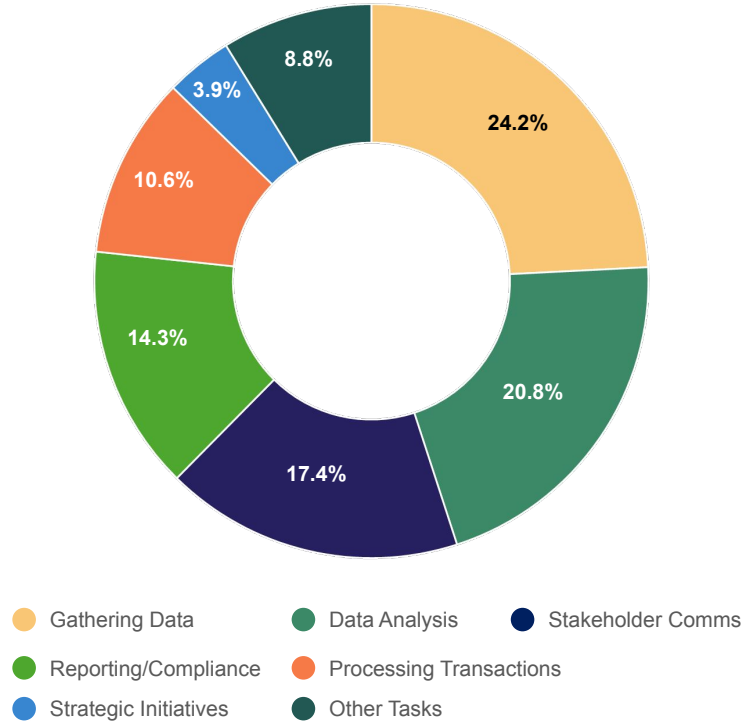
Additionally, automation extends to financial planning and analysis (FP&A), where budgeting, forecasting, and variance analysis processes are being streamlined to facilitate faster decision-making and strategic insights.

Furthermore, automation enables seamless integration between disparate systems and applications, enhancing data accuracy and accessibility. Through APIs and workflow automation tools, finance teams can automate data transfer between financial software platforms, reducing errors and minimizing the need for manual intervention.

As organizations continue to embrace digital transformation, the role of automation in finance will only grow in significance, offering opportunities to drive operational excellence, improve financial performance, and unlock new levels of agility and competitiveness.

Most Time-Consuming Activities

Activities Consuming the most Time



In finance functions, certain activities consume a significant amount of time, emphasizing the need for automation to streamline processes and enhance efficiency.

According to results, gathering data ranks as the most time-consuming activity at 24.2%, followed closely by data analysis at 20.8%. Stakeholder communications also demand considerable attention, accounting for 17.4% of time spent.

Additionally, reporting and compliance tasks still occupy a substantial portion of resources at 14.3%. Meanwhile, processing transactions and addressing strategic initiatives command 10.6% and 3.9% of time, respectively.

To optimize productivity and enable finance professionals to focus on value-added tasks, automation solutions should target these time-intensive activities, allowing for more strategic decision-making and resource allocation in finance functions.

Why Automate? Some Worrying Stats...



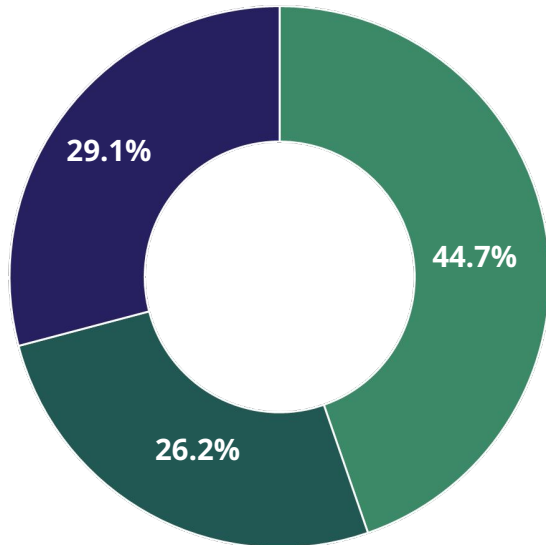
Automation in finance mitigates human errors inherent in manual processes and spreadsheet-based workflows, reducing the risk of inaccuracies and inconsistencies. To deliver financial excellence in modern-day finance functions, it's essential for finance teams to free up the maximum time possible towards focusing on more strategic value-enhancing activities.

With a shortage of skilled personnel for key activities such as FP&A, business partnering, and month-end procedures, automation alleviates the burden by expediting tasks and ensuring timely completion. Research indicates that 72% of finance teams who leverage automated data flows achieve month-end closure in under five days, demonstrating huge efficiency gains.

However, concerns persist, with 41% of companies expressing worry about data security during the month-end process. Despite these challenges, automation remains a critical tool for enhancing accuracy, efficiency, and security in finance operations.

Overwhelmed by Recurring Manual Tasks

Time Spent by Category



- Tedious tasks causing overwhelm
- Ongoing responsibilities I enjoy
- Value-enhancing strategic activities

According to our GrowCFO community data, finance professionals waste around 44.7% of their time performing tedious tasks that create overwhelm. However, 26.2% is spent delivering enjoyable ongoing responsibilities, suggesting a degree of fulfillment within routine duties.

Additionally, 29.1% of time is focused on value-enhancing or strategic activities, indicating that opportunities for impactful contributions are valued within the finance role.

While some may experience challenges with monotonous tasks, there is also a significant proportion who derive satisfaction from their ongoing responsibilities and occasional value-enhancing projects, highlighting a nuanced perspective on job satisfaction within the finance profession.

These results clearly show the critical need to automate recurring manual tasks to free up more time for fulfilling opportunities.

LEADERSHIP TEAM



Financial Leadership

- ✓ People Management
- ✓ Team Coordination
- ✓ Delivery & Monitoring



Strategy & Change

- ✓ Vision & Goals
- ✓ Business Alignment
- ✓ Driving Change



Business Impact

- ✓ Boards & Committees
- ✓ Cross-Firm Support
- ✓ Stakeholder Mgt.

STRATEGIC FINANCE



FP&A

- ✓ Planning & Budgeting
- ✓ Modelling & Analytics
- ✓ Forecasting Results



FBP

- ✓ Sharing Data Insights
- ✓ Decision Support
- ✓ Managing Outcomes



M&A / CF

- ✓ Fundraising
- ✓ Acquisitions/Disposals
- ✓ IPO/Exits/Valuations

CONTROLLERSHIP



Financial Operations

- ✓ FinOps: AP/AR/Payroll
- ✓ Treasury, Tax
- ✓ Systems, ESG, Other



Recording & Reporting

- ✓ Maintaining Records
- ✓ Close Process
- ✓ Performance Reporting



Control & Compliance

- ✓ Processes & Controls
- ✓ Risk & Compliance
- ✓ Technical, Audit

An illustrative example



Automation Opportunities

Research shows that modern-day technology solutions offer significant opportunities to automate many financial activities, driving efficiency and accuracy within finance functions.

With financial operations, recording and reporting scoring 75%, it's evident that technology plays a pivotal role in streamlining transactional processes and enhancing reporting capabilities.

Control and compliance activities at 50% indicate a moderate level of automation in ensuring regulatory adherence and risk management. Similarly, FP&A, finance business partnering, and M&A activities at 50% and 25% respectively suggest potential for further automation to optimize strategic decision-making and support business growth initiatives.

By leveraging advanced technologies such as API integrators, optical character recognition, and robotic process automation, finance functions can unlock greater efficiencies, reduce manual efforts, and focus on value-added activities critical for success.

Types of Automation in Finance



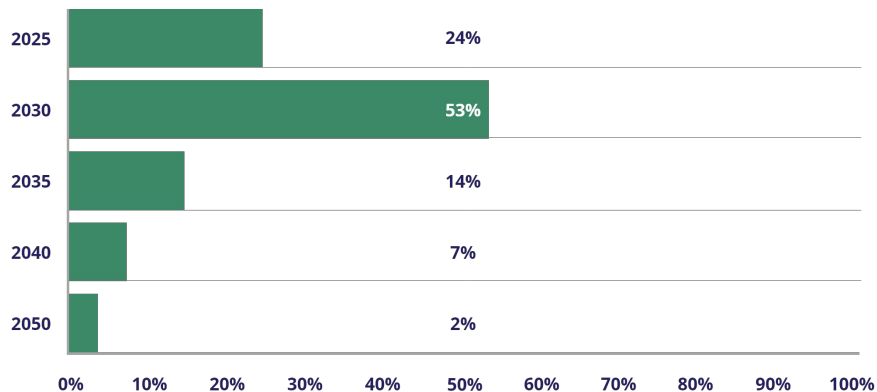
Automation in finance encompasses various technologies and processes aimed at streamlining repetitive tasks, improving efficiency, and enhancing accuracy:

- Workflow Automation: Involves automating sequential tasks or processes, such as invoice approval workflows or expense management processes, to ensure smooth and efficient execution.
- Application Programming Interfaces (APIs): Enabling seamless integration and communication between different systems and software applications.
- Robotic Process Automation (RPA): Software bots that mimic human actions to perform rule-based tasks such as data entry, reconciliation, and reporting.
- Optical Character Recognition (OCR): Extracts data from documents such as invoices and receipts, eliminating manual data entry and reducing errors.

These types of automation help organizations optimize processes, improve productivity, and drive better decision-making.

Timeline for Automation

By when do you expect the majority of finance functions to have fully automated their recurring financial processes?



Debates persist regarding the timeline for automation in finance functions. According to GrowCFO research, only 24% of finance leaders foresee full automation of their recurring processes by 2025, while 53% anticipate it by 2030.

Modern-day finance teams should be automating these tasks:

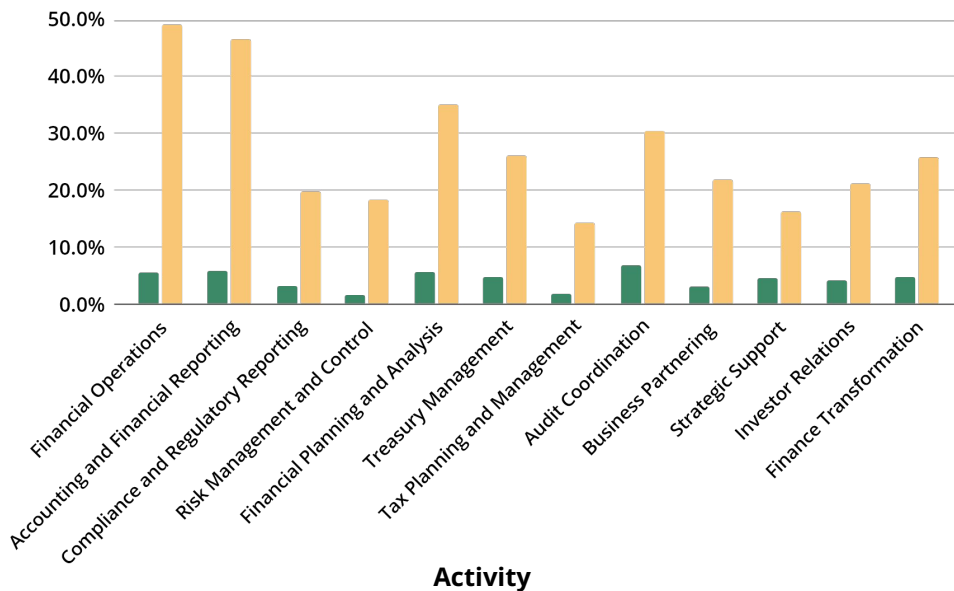
- Processing purchase invoices and expenses
- Bank reconciliations using automatic matching
- Monthly management accounts
- Credit control processes
- Tax compliance processes

This research underscores the importance of the ongoing journey towards automation in finance functions, highlighting the urgent need for proactive adoption of modern technologies to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

Enhancing Efficiency Through Automation

Automation % per Finance Activity

■ Full Automation ■ Partial Automation



The survey data illustrates the extent of full or partial automation across key tasks for the 12 core finance activities. While full automation remains relatively low across all activities, ranging from 1.5% to 6.8%, partial automation shows more significant adoption, ranging from 14.3% to 49.3%.

Financial operations, accounting, and financial reporting exhibit the highest levels of partial automation at 49.3% and 46.5% respectively, indicating substantial progress in automating recurring transactional and reporting tasks.

Conversely, compliance, regulatory reporting, and risk management lag behind, suggesting critical opportunities for further automation to enhance regulatory compliance and risk mitigation efforts.

Overall, the data highlights the ongoing journey towards automation in finance functions, with partial automation being more prevalent than full automation across various activities.

Application Programming Interfaces (APIs)

Pre-built APIs:

Pros:

- 1. Plug-and-play
- 2. Rapid integration
- 3. Standardized solutions

Cons:

- 1. Limited customization
- 2. Dependency on vendor
- 3. Potential compatibility issues

Custom APIs:

Pros:

- 1. Tailored solutions
- 2. Flexibility
- 3. Scalability

Cons:

- 1. Time-consuming development
- 2. Higher cost
- 3. Maintenance overhead

API Connectors:

Pros:

- 1. Seamless integration
- 2. Interoperability
- 3. Simplified data exchange

Cons:

- 1. Middleware dependency
- 2. Potential performance issues
- 3. Compatibility constraints

Finance teams have various options for integrating systems within their activities, including the following:

1. **Pre-built APIs** offer ready-made interfaces, simplifying the integration of common finance software and services with minimal setup.
2. **Custom APIs** provide tailored interfaces designed to meet the specific needs and requirements of a finance function or organization, offering flexibility and customization.
3. **API Connectors** serve as middleware, enabling seamless communication between different applications. These connectors facilitate data exchange and workflow integration, ensuring smooth interoperability across various systems.

Whether leveraging pre-built APIs for quick integration, procuring custom APIs for tailored solutions, or buying API connectors for seamless communication, finance teams can optimize their operations and streamline processes to enhance activities.

Financial Operations: Deep Dive

Automation has revolutionized finance operations processes, particularly in accounts payable (AP) and accounts receivable (AR), where repetitive tasks can be streamlined to improve efficiency and accuracy.

In AP, technologies like Optical Character Recognition (OCR) are employed to automate invoice processing. OCR extracts data from invoices, eliminating manual data entry and reducing errors. Invoice approval workflows are automated through intelligent routing, ensuring timely approval and payment. For instance, software solutions offer end-to-end AP automation, from invoice capture to payment execution, improving invoice cycle times and optimizing cash flow management.

Similarly, in AR, automation is transforming collections management. AI-powered algorithms analyze customer payment behavior to predict payment dates and prioritize collection efforts. Automated email reminders and payment portals streamline communication and facilitate self-service payment options for customers. For example, platforms offer features such as invoice presentment, payment reminders, and cash application, accelerating cash conversion cycles and reducing days sales outstanding.

Furthermore, robotic process automation (RPA) is increasingly utilized in both AP and AR to automate repetitive, rule-based tasks such as data entry, reconciliation, and reporting. RPA bots mimic human actions across multiple systems, improving process efficiency and reducing manual errors.

Overall, automation in finance operations processes such as AP and AR enhances productivity, accuracy, and customer satisfaction. By leveraging technologies like OCR, AI, and RPA, finance teams can streamline workflows, optimize resource allocation, and focus on value-added activities to drive business growth.

Maintaining Accounting Records: Deep Dive



Automation plays a crucial role in streamlining repetitive accounting tasks and improving accuracy. One common example is the automation of bank reconciliations using software that automatically matches bank transactions with entries in the general ledger, eliminating the need for manual reconciliation.

Another example is the automation of expense management, where software automatically captures expense data from receipts and categorizes it accordingly. This streamlines the expense reporting process and ensures ongoing compliance.

Additionally, automation is utilized for payroll processing, where software calculates employee wages, deducts taxes, and generates paychecks automatically. This not only saves time but also reduces errors associated with manual calculations.

Overall, automation in bookkeeping and accounting functions enhances efficiency, reduces manual effort, and improves data accuracy, allowing finance to focus on more strategic tasks.

Financial Planning & Analysis: Deep Dive



Automation streamlines many FP&A tasks to improve efficiency and accuracy. Budgeting and forecasting processes can be automated using software that aggregates historical data, applies forecasting algorithms, and generates financial projections automatically. This enables teams to focus on analyzing results.

Additionally, variance analysis is automated through tools that compare actual financial performance against budgeted or forecasted figures, highlighting discrepancies and identifying areas for further investigation. This accelerates the decision-making process and enables timely corrective actions.

Financial reporting is automated using software that pulls data from multiple sources, formats it into standardized reports, and distributes them to stakeholders automatically. This saves time and ensures consistency in reporting across the organization.

Overall, automation in FP&A enhances productivity, enables faster decision-making, and improves the quality of financial analysis.



"Given the explosion of captured data in various formats and the persistence of traditional manual ways of working, automation presents an opportunity to learn and harness new technologies to eliminate manual work, reduce errors, and produce better outcomes.

Whilst we exist in a rapidly changing Finance function, constantly evolving solutions are at our fingertips to help us meet the challenges we will face. By discovering what these are and how to leverage them, we can save time and redeploy it into creating bigger and better solutions, ultimately driving a flywheel of success.

In doing so, we will develop relevant, sought-after skills that increase our value to the organisation and enhance our career prospects."

Dan Stockdale

Power BI, Excel, Financial Modelling and Forecasting Trainer

Finance leaders may want to ask:

- How can we identify repetitive tasks suitable for automation to enhance operational efficiency?
- What technologies are available to automate routine finance processes and streamline workflow management?
- Have we assessed the potential impact of automation on employee roles and skill requirements?
- Are we effectively leveraging automation to reduce errors, minimize costs, and improve overall productivity?

2. Artificial Intelligence

The integration of AI is increasingly revolutionizing finance functions, offering unprecedented opportunities to enhance efficiency, accuracy, and strategic decision-making. As finance navigates this transformative landscape, understanding the potential applications and implications of AI is paramount.

AI technologies include machine learning, natural language processing, robotic process automation, and predictive analytics. By leveraging AI, finance can automate repetitive tasks, extract insights from vast datasets, and uncover hidden patterns or anomalies with amazing speed and accuracy.

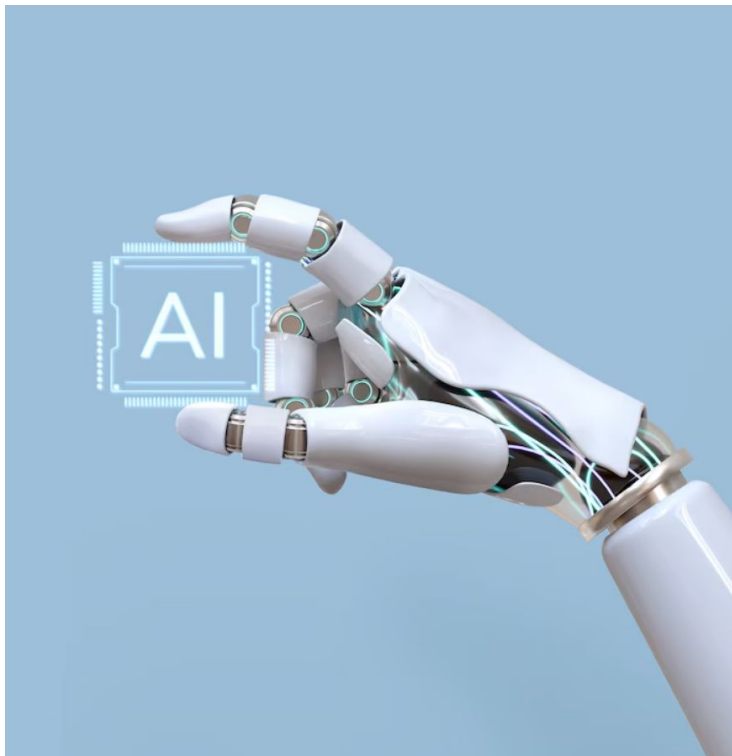
Predictive analytics allows finance to analyze historical data and identify trends. AI-powered algorithms generate accurate revenue forecasts, cash projections, and risk assessments, enabling teams to anticipate market trends, mitigate financial risks, and make data-driven decisions with confidence.

Moreover, AI holds immense potential in fraud detection and risk management. Advanced AI algorithms can analyze transactional data in real-time, flagging suspicious activities and anomalies that may indicate fraudulent behavior, minimizing financial losses whilst enhancing compliance with regulations.

Additionally, AI-driven automation is streamlining routine finance tasks such as invoice processing, expense management, and reconciliation. By automating these manual processes, finance teams can reduce operational costs, minimize errors, and free up valuable time for strategic decision-making.

As finance explores AI, it must consider the ethical and regulatory implications of its adoption, ensuring data privacy, transparency, and accountability. By fostering a culture of innovation, finance teams can harness the full potential of AI to drive organizational growth and success.

Understanding Artificial Intelligence



Understanding artificial intelligence involves grasping its broad definition and the various types or levels it encompasses.

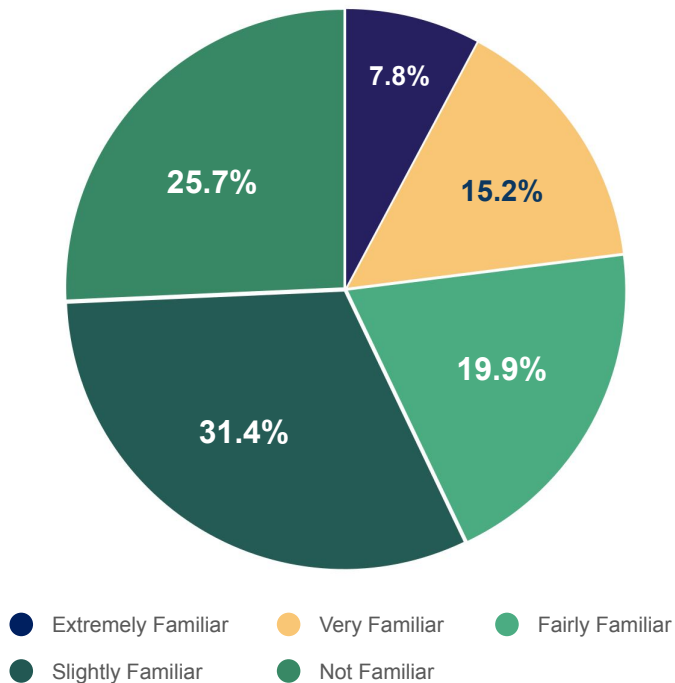
At its core, AI refers to the simulation of human intelligence by machines, enabling them to perform tasks that typically require human cognition. Different levels exist, ranging from basic rule-based systems to advanced machine learning algorithms:

- **Machine Learning** enables machines to learn from data and improve their performance over time without programming.
- **Deep Learning** involves neural networks with multiple layers, allowing machines to extract intricate patterns from data.
- **Natural Language Processing** enables machines to understand human speech and text to perform commands.
- **Predictive Analytics** analyzes data to forecast future events or outcomes based on historical patterns and trends.

Understanding these types and levels of AI is crucial for unlocking its potential and harnessing its capabilities in various applications.

Familiarity with AI Technologies

How familiar are your team with AI?



Understanding your finance team's familiarity with AI is crucial for effective implementation and adoption.

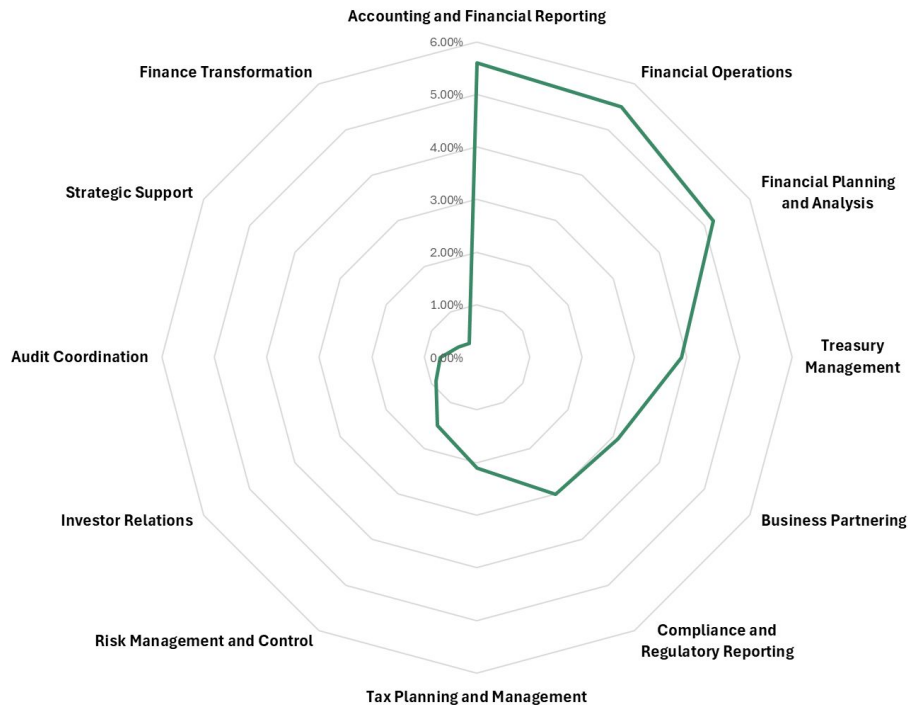
While a significant portion may have some level of familiarity, it's notable that nearly a quarter of most people are not at all familiar with AI. This suggests a potential gap in knowledge and readiness for integrating AI technologies into finance operations.

To bridge this gap, consider offering training programs or workshops to enhance AI literacy across the team. Additionally, fostering a culture of continuous learning and providing resources for self-education can empower team members to explore AI's potential applications in their roles.

By increasing familiarity with AI, your finance team can leverage its capabilities more effectively, driving innovation and efficiency within the organization.

Utilizing AI in Finance Activities

Adoption of AI in Finance



Our report unveils insights into the modest adoption of AI across the 12 core finance activities. Accounting, financial reporting, and financial operations lead the pack with around 5.5% AI integration.

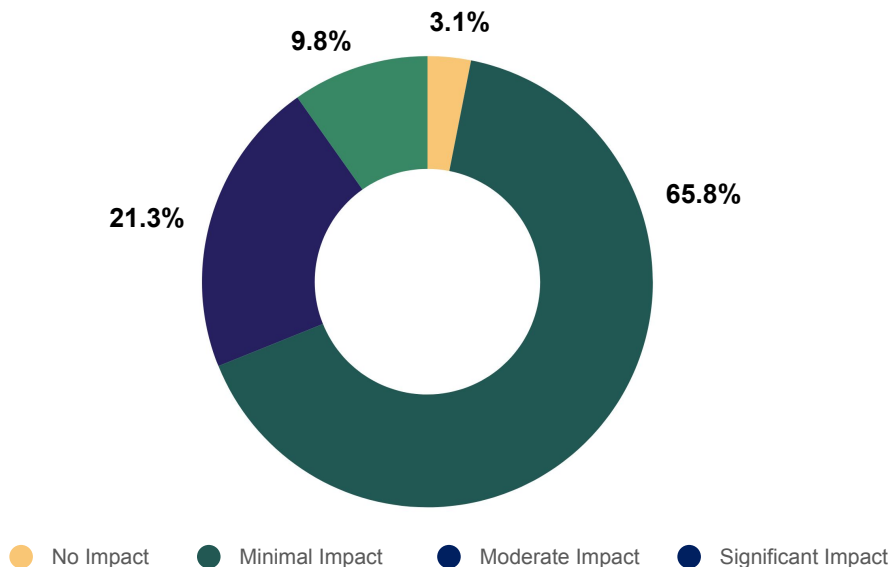
Interestingly, FP&A and treasury management follow closely, each at 5.2% and 3.9%. However, Business Partnering and Compliance and Regulatory Reporting show slightly lower AI utilization, at 3.1% and 3.0%, respectively.

These findings underscore varying levels of AI integration across different finance functions, reflecting the evolving landscape of technological adoption within the finance industry.

It's clearly evident that AI is currently making a bigger, but still modest, impact within the recurring routine transactional side of finance, but is yet to play a major role in helping companies to deliver their strategy. However, it is increasingly being used to support decision making by providing AI-driven insights.

Impact of Automation and AI

How much impact does automation and AI have on your finance team's ability to focus on strategic value initiatives rather than spending time on less-valued recurring activities and tasks?



According to responses from finance leaders in our survey, the impact of automation and AI on their finance team's ability to focus on strategic value initiatives varies significantly.

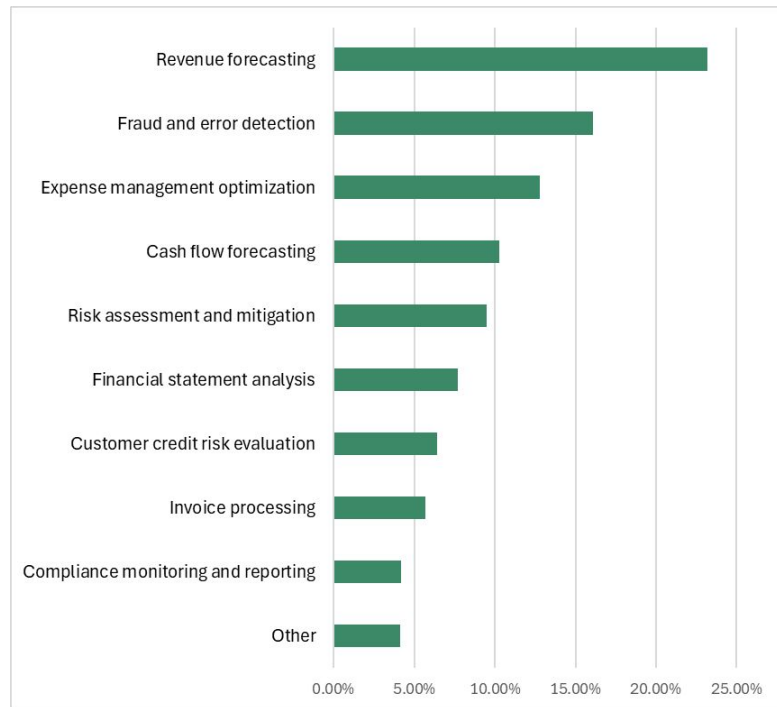
A majority of respondents, 65.8%, report experiencing minimal impact, suggesting that while automation and AI technologies may have some influence, it is not substantial enough to significantly shift their focus away from less-valued recurring activities and tasks.

However, a notable portion of 21.3% stated a moderate impact, indicating some degree of improvement in prioritizing strategic initiatives. A smaller percentage, 9.8%, report a significant impact on their team.

These results clearly suggest that automation and AI has yet to have a significant impact on freeing up sufficient time to redirect people's efforts toward more strategic value initiatives.

Adoption of AI in Finance: Focus Areas

Where would you most like to adopt AI into your finance function?



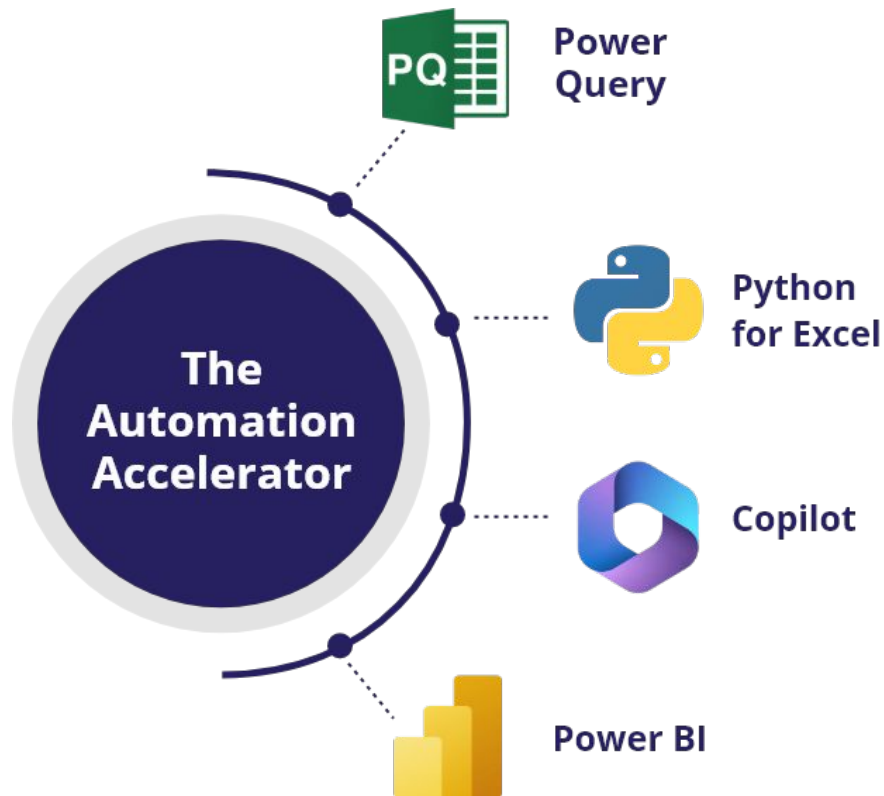
The responses indicate a clear priority for AI adoption in revenue forecasting, with 23.2% of respondents expressing a desire to implement AI in this area. This suggests a recognition of the potential for AI to enhance accuracy and reliability in predicting revenue streams, which is crucial for effective financial planning and decision-making.

Additionally, the substantial interest in fraud and error detection (16.1%) underscores the importance of safeguarding financial operations against fraudulent activities and errors, indicating a proactive approach towards risk management.

Furthermore, the percentage of respondents interested in expense management optimization (12.8%) highlights a focus on improving cost efficiency and resource allocation.

These insights emphasize the strategic importance of AI adoption in finance, reflecting a drive towards operational excellence, risk mitigation, and performance improvement.

Month-End Close Process: Automation and AI



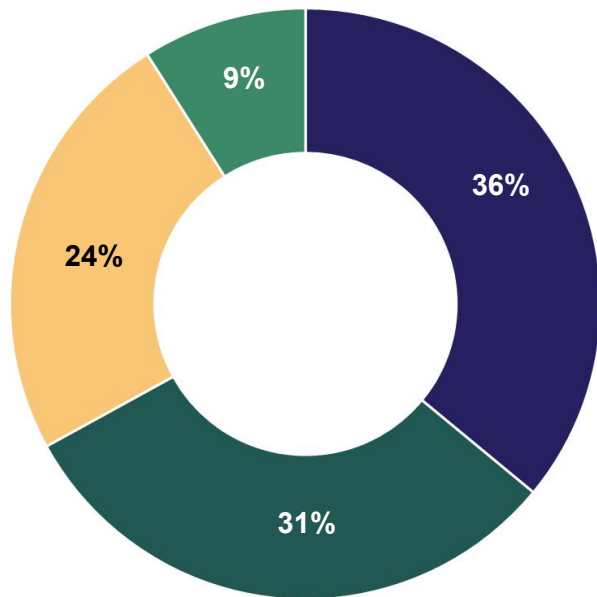
Affordable automation and AI technologies now exist to support key activities within the month-end close process. Around 35% of finance teams use Power BI in some form, but there remain huge opportunities to leverage game changing technologies:

1. **Power Query/Pivot:** Simplify and accelerate data transformation, establish robust data connections, and perform thorough data cleansing for accurate information.
2. **Power BI:** Shorten your close within hours, draw deeper conclusions and generate self-serve actionable insights.
3. **Python for Excel:** Automated finance functions that extract data and incorporate customized functions.
4. **Copilot:** A game changer containing essential automation and AI technology that financial professionals love.

With these tools, finance teams can enhance efficiency, accuracy, and decision-making, paving the way for greater success in financial operations. Before getting started, ensure you have access to focused training on how best to use them in finance.

AI Implementation Timelines

AI Adoption in Finance Functions



● No current plans ● Being planned ● Existing pilot ● Ongoing use of AI

Feedback on AI adoption in finance functions reveals varying levels of readiness and engagement among organizations.

A significant portion, 36%, indicate no current plans for AI adoption, suggesting a reluctance or lack of immediate interest in integrating AI technologies into their finance operations. However, 31% are actively planning for AI implementation, signaling a growing recognition of its potential benefits.

Furthermore, 24% have existing pilots underway, demonstrating a proactive approach to testing AI solutions in real-world scenarios. Additionally, 9% report ongoing use of AI in their finance functions, indicating successful integration and ongoing utilization of AI technologies.

Overall, these findings underscore the evolving landscape of AI adoption in finance, with some organizations at the forefront of innovation, while others are still in the early stages of exploration and planning.



"Pioneering AI technologies are redefining finance, driving efficiency and strategic insights. Predictive Analytics, once exclusive to large enterprises, now empowers finance teams to uncover correlations and enhance forecasting accuracy.

For instance, in cash flow forecasting, these technologies can already unveil customer payment patterns, enabling better informed decisions.

Accessibility is the future trend. Previously confined to data scientists, tools like Alteryx now democratize Machine Learning and Predictive analytics. The imminent evolution lies in platforms seamlessly integrating with existing systems, simplifying complex tasks with ease."

Joe Paget

Experienced FD, MD and Founder of 4thRevolution

Finance leaders may want to ask:

- In what ways can AI optimize our financial processes to improve cost efficiency?
- How can AI enhance our revenue forecasting accuracy and support strategic decision-making processes effectively?
- What AI-driven solutions should we implement to strengthen fraud detection and error prevention within our operations?
- Are we fully leveraging from affordable AI-powered tools during our monthly financial close and reporting process?

3. Finance Transformation

It's clear from the data that finance transformation has emerged as a critical imperative for organizations seeking to thrive in today's dynamic business landscape. This paradigm shift encompasses a holistic restructuring of financial processes, technologies, and organizational culture to drive efficiency, agility, and strategic value creation.

At its core, finance transformation endeavors to align financial functions with broader business objectives, enabling finance leaders to transcend traditional roles and become strategic partners in decision-making processes. Key drivers of finance transformation include technological advancements, evolving regulatory landscapes, globalization, and shifting consumer expectations, all of which necessitate a proactive and adaptable approach to finance management.

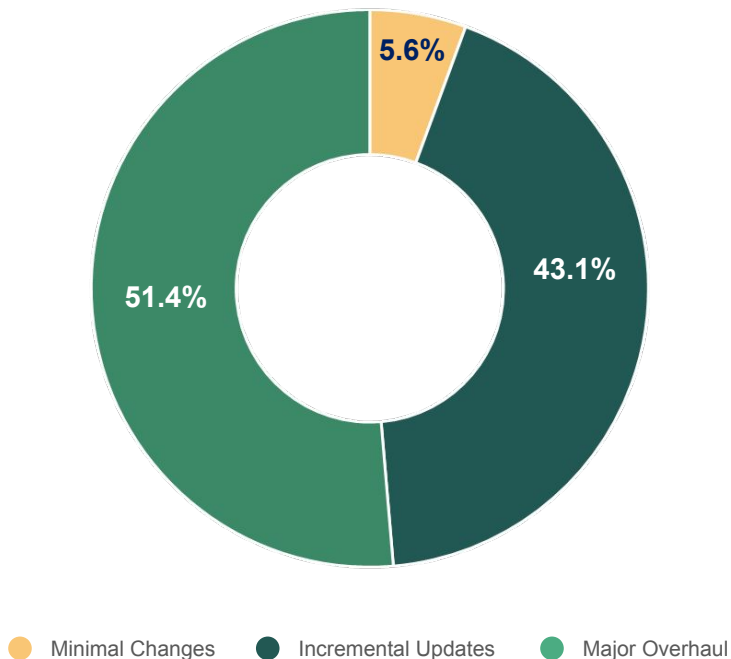
Central to finance transformation is the adoption of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, data analytics, and cloud computing.

These tools empower finance professionals to automate routine tasks, enhance data-driven insights, and facilitate real-time decision-making, thereby enabling organizations to operate with greater agility and foresight.

Additionally, finance transformation entails a reevaluation and optimization of financial processes, with a focus on standardization, simplification, and efficiency gains. For example, process automation, and digital workflows to streamline operations and reduce costs.

Moreover, finance transformation requires a cultural shift, fostering a mindset of innovation, collaboration, and continuous improvement. Finance leaders must champion change initiatives, cultivate digital literacy among team members, and promote a customer-centric approach. By embracing finance transformation, organizations can unlock new opportunities for growth, mitigate risks, and enhance competitiveness in an increasingly digital world.

Planned Systems Upgrades



The feedback for planned systems upgrades unveils intriguing insights into the strategies of modernization. Amidst the landscape of technological evolution, only 5.6% of respondents opted for minimal changes.

Incremental updates contributed 43.1%, showcasing a popular preference for gradual enhancements, likely driven by considerations of cost-effectiveness and risk mitigation.

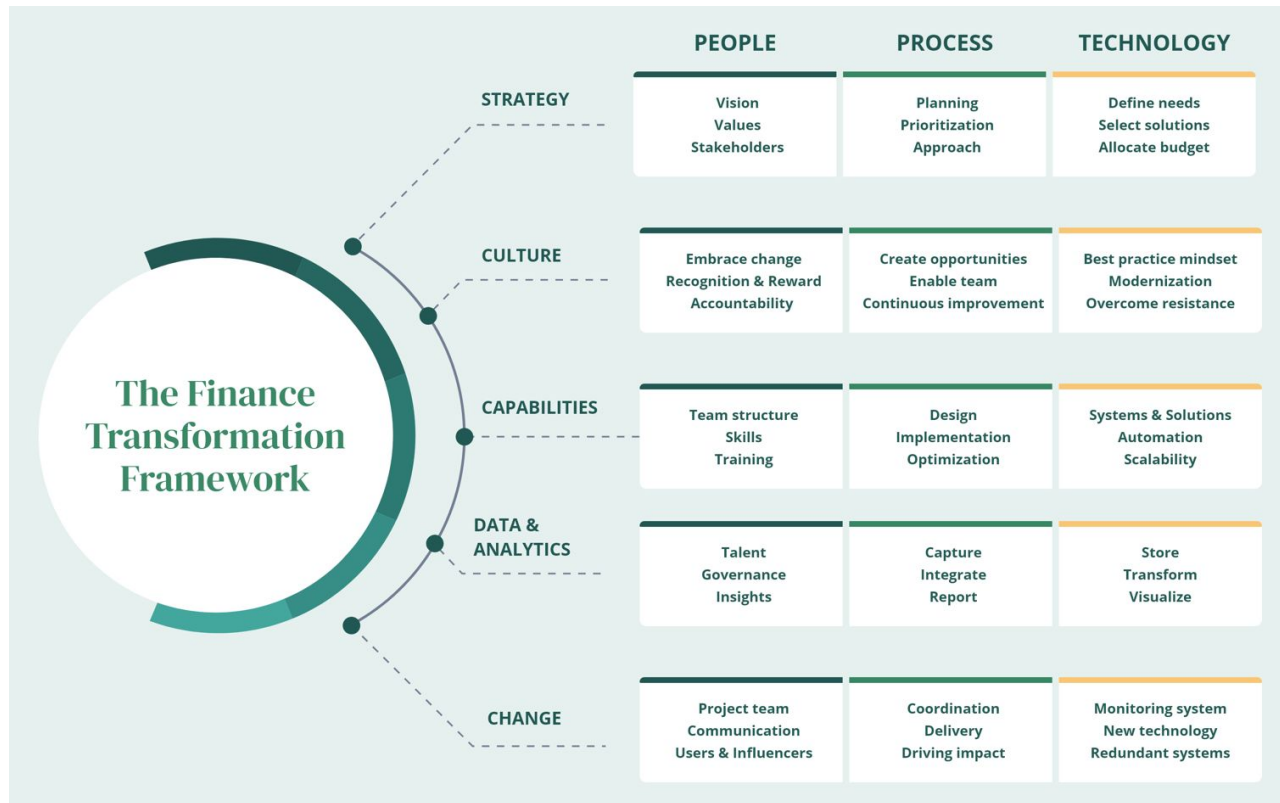
However, the most striking revelation is a huge 51.4% planning a major overhaul, signaling a bold stance towards embracing innovation and future-proofing systems. This resounding majority reveals a collective drive for transformative change, driven by aspirations for enhanced efficiency, competitiveness, and adaptability in an ever-evolving digital world.

As organizations navigate the complexities of technological advancement, these results indicate a major need for upskilling finance teams to optimize processes and implement systems.

What is a Finance Transformation?

What?		Improving anything from a spreadsheet or process, to implementing a completely new ERP or accounting system
Who?		Everyone in finance! Individuals are best-placed to optimize their own activities
How?		Figuring out what is within our control and influence to impact, and taking steps to start
When?		Ideally through continuous improvement – when transformation becomes a mindset

Finance Transformation Framework



The GrowCFO Finance Transformation Framework covers five core themes: strategy, culture, capabilities, data & analytics, and change, revolutionizing the way that finance functions work.

This holistic approach drives sustainable growth by optimizing people, processes, and systems.

By aligning with business objectives and fostering a culture of innovation, organizations can unlock their full potential and adapt to dynamic market landscapes.

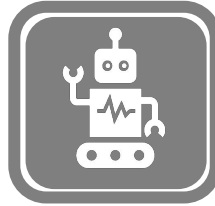
With a focus on continuous improvement, the framework empowers finance leaders to drive meaningful change and achieve lasting success.

5 Signs You Need a Finance Transformation

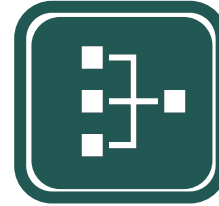
**Manual
Processes**



**Use of
Spreadsheets**



**Slow
Reporting**



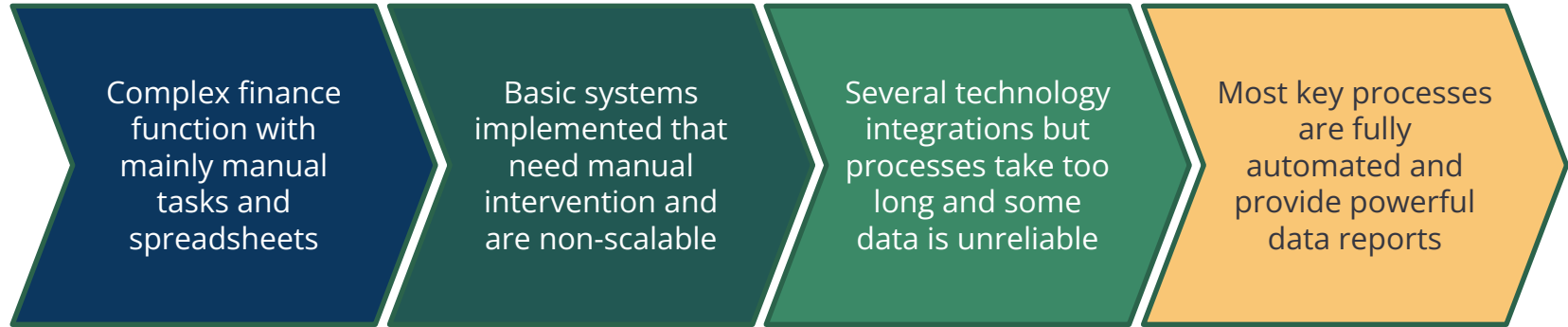
**Poor Data
Visibility**



**Outdated
Systems**

Maturity Assessment

Where does your finance function rank on this chart?



Understanding your current position provides a valuable baseline for crafting a tailored transformation strategy. Whether positioned at the early stages of minimal changes, embracing incremental updates, or poised for a major overhaul, this self-awareness lays the groundwork for informed decision-making and targeted action. By pinpointing your place on the transformation spectrum, finance leaders can effectively prioritize initiatives, allocate resources, and rally organizational support towards achieving your desired level of transformation.



“In today’s rapidly evolving marketplace, the finance sector faces unprecedented challenges and opportunities due to technological advancements. This dynamic environment demands effective change and transformation, where finance has the potential to exert greater influence than ever before. Traditionally, the expertise needed for such transformation came from costly consultants or interdepartmental transfers, but this approach is no longer enough.

We must now focus on internally developing our finance teams, equipping them with the necessary skills, mindsets, and visionary leadership. By investing in our teams, we empower them to adapt, innovate, and drive sustainable transformations that align with strategic organizational goals. This shift is crucial for transforming finance into a strategic partner, capable of leading our businesses through global changes and challenges.

GrowCFO’s Finance Transformation program will help teams accelerate the progress on this journey – setting them up for success and making the most of this incredible opportunity.”

Oli Deacon

Ex-Microsoft FD, Executive Coach and Professional Mentor

Finance leaders may want to ask:

- How can we optimize processes to streamline operations and maximize efficiency while minimizing costs?
- Are our current technologies equipped to meet the demands of evolving regulatory requirements and industry standards?
- What steps can we take to enhance data analytics capabilities for more informed decision-making and strategic planning?
- Are we fostering a culture of innovation and digital literacy to adapt to rapidly changing market dynamics?

4. Barriers to Change

Embracing change is a hallmark of progress, yet within the world of finance, navigating the journey toward automation and AI integration is often fraught with obstacles.

As finance leaders, we recognize the imperative of evolving our practices to remain competitive in an increasingly digital landscape. However, understanding and overcoming the barriers to change is pivotal to successfully implementing transformative technologies.

One of the primary hurdles faced by finance teams is the challenge of skill and expertise gaps. The rapid evolution of technology demands proficiency in new tools and methodologies, yet many organizations struggle to cultivate the necessary talent internally.

Budgetary constraints further compound this issue, as allocating resources to innovation initiatives can be a delicate balancing act.

Resistance to change, though often a natural response to upheaval, can impede progress if not addressed proactively. Overcoming inertia and fostering a culture of adaptability is essential for driving meaningful transformation.

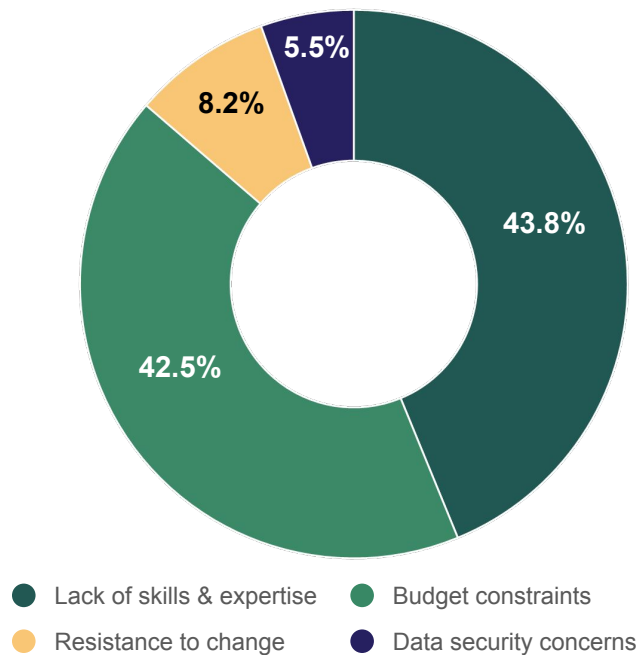
Additionally, concerns surrounding data security loom large, particularly in an era marked by increasing cyber threats and regulatory scrutiny.

In this section, we dive into the multiple barriers hindering the adoption of automation and AI in finance. Through data and analysis, we aim to uncover actionable insights that empower finance leaders to navigate these challenges effectively.

By understanding the landscape of obstacles, we can chart a course toward sustainable change and innovation within our organizations.

Barriers for Adopting Automation and AI

What are the main barriers preventing you from adopting the most impactful automation and AI systems?



The survey results reveal several key barriers hindering the adoption of impactful automation and AI systems in finance.

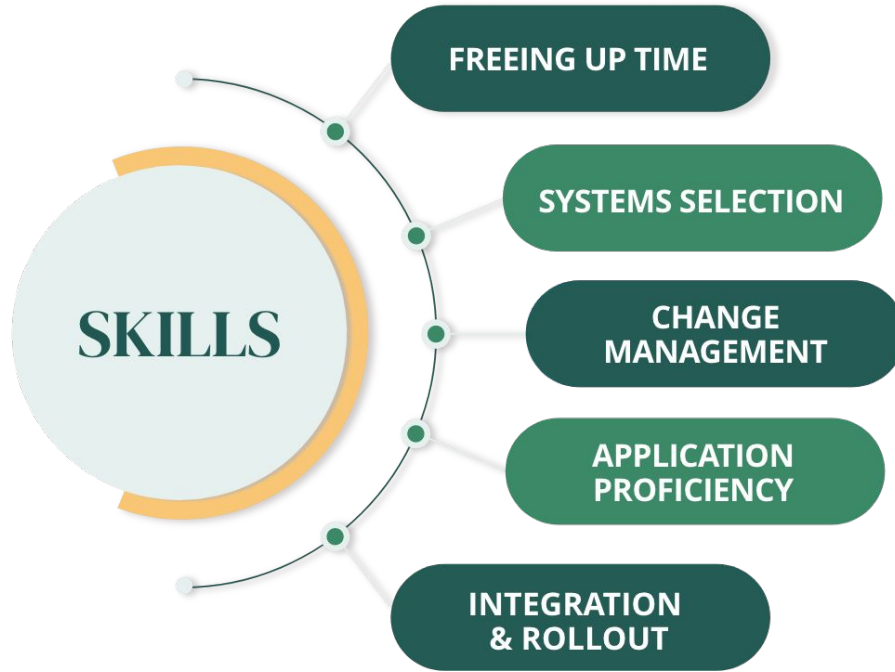
Topping the list is the lack of skills and expertise, indicating a need for upskilling or hiring talent proficient in AI technologies.

Budget constraints closely follow, underscoring the financial challenges firms face in implementing advanced systems.

Resistance to change emerges as a relatively minor barrier, suggesting a generally receptive attitude toward adopting new technologies. However, data security concerns still linger, albeit at a lower priority, highlighting the importance of robust cybersecurity measures in AI implementation strategies.

Overcoming these barriers demands a comprehensive strategy, including investment in training, strategic allocation of resources, fostering a culture of adaptability, and ensuring stringent data protection protocols.

Lack of Skills and Expertise



In the ever-evolving landscape of finance, the adoption of automation and AI technologies hinges on acquiring the necessary skills and expertise. These include:

- Freeing Up Time: Make time for change by prioritizing tasks, delegating effectively, and automating processes.
- Systems Selection: Research and select affordable systems tailored to your specific needs and goals.
- Change Management: Communicate the benefits of change, provide training, and address concerns.
- Application Proficiency: Access comprehensive training to ensure proficiency in using new technologies and applications such as Power BI, Python and Copilot.
- Integration & Rollout: Ensure seamless integration with existing systems and plan for a smooth rollout.

By addressing these skill gaps, finance teams can harness the full potential of automation and AI to drive efficiency and innovation in their operations.

Budget Constraints



Budget constraints pose a significant challenge for finance teams aiming to adopt automation and AI technologies.

While some advanced systems come with hefty price tags, others, such as Power BI, Python for Excel, and Copilot, offer affordable options.

Despite their accessibility, many teams have yet to embrace these cost-effective solutions. This reluctance may stem from a lack of awareness or the misconception that only high-priced tools can deliver the desired outcomes.

However, by exploring and investing in more budget-friendly options, finance teams can overcome financial barriers and unlock the benefits of automation and AI to enhance their operations. This provides teams with improved working knowledge of AI systems and better positions them to create powerful investment cases for more expensive technologies.



"To fully benefit from modern-day technology, automation, and AI, finance functions must overcome any existing barriers to change by fostering a culture of adaptability and continuous learning.

Embracing these advancements can enhance efficiency, accuracy, and strategic decision-making. It's essential to invest in robust training programs and clear communication to ensure everyone understands the benefits and uses of new technologies, and is able to fully leverage them within their existing roles.

By addressing resistance and skill gaps proactively, finance teams can unlock the full potential of AI and automation, transforming finance operations into a more dynamic and forward-thinking function."

Vineta Bajaj

Group CFO and Executive Board Member, Rohlik Group

Finance leaders may want to ask:

- How can we address the lack of skills and expertise hindering automation and AI adoption?
- What strategies can we employ to navigate budget constraints and invest in advanced systems?
- How can we minimize resistance to change and encourage a culture of innovation within the team?
- What measures should be taken to address data security concerns associated with automation and AI implementation?

Closing Thoughts

As we conclude this journey through the Finance Automation and AI Survey Report, it is evident that we stand on the verge of a new era in finance. The insights highlighted in this report offer a glimpse into the transformative potential of automation and artificial intelligence, defining pathways to enhanced efficiency, strategic foresight, and organizational resilience.

At its essence, this report serves as a catalyst for reflection and action. It challenges finance leaders to confront the realities of a rapidly evolving landscape, where traditional models are being disrupted and new opportunities abound. In embracing automation and AI, organizations have the chance to redefine finance functions, transcending operational constraints to become strategic drivers of value creation.

Yet, amidst the promise of technological innovation, it is essential to acknowledge the complexities and nuances inherent in this journey. Automation and AI are not generic remedies; they are tools that require thoughtful integration, skillful management, and ethical stewardship. As finance leaders navigate this terrain, they must remain vigilant, balancing the imperatives of efficiency with the principles of integrity and accountability.

Moreover, this report underscores the requirement for collaboration and knowledge-sharing within the finance community. The challenges and opportunities presented by automation and AI are not unique to any one organization; they are shared experiences that demand collective engagement and collective solutions. By fostering a culture of collaboration and openness, finance leaders can harness the collective wisdom of the community, driving innovation and driving progress.

As we look to the future, it is clear that the journey towards automation and AI is not a destination but a continuous evolution. The insights uncovered in this report are only a glimpse of what lies ahead, as technology continues to advance and organizations adapt to new realities. Yet, amidst the uncertainty and complexity, one thing remains constant: the necessary commitment of finance leaders to drive meaningful change to benefit their organizations and stakeholders alike.

In closing, let us embrace the possibilities before us, guided by the insights and inspiration of this report, to create a future where finance functions are not just efficient, but truly transformative, driving innovation, growth, and impact in an ever-changing world.



Dan Wells,
Founder & CEO of GrowCFO



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