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How AI Front-Runners in Finance Achieve Success

Most finance functions only realize success in half or fewer of their AI initiatives, indicating considerable opportunity for improvement. A select group of effective finance teams stands out, achieving success rates of 61% to 100% in their finance AI projects. These AI front-runners increase the likelihood of success of their AI projects through three key practices: diversifying their AI portfolios, redesigning organizational structures to support AI and strategically leveraging data science expertise.

CFOs and finance leaders should use this report to better understand these three practices to increase the likelihood of success for their own AI initiatives.

Average success rates of finance AI initiatives

Percent of respondents

Very high success rates (91% or more)

12%

High success rates (61% to 90%)

25%

Moderate success rates (41% to 60%)

21%

Low success rates (11% to 40%)

21%

Very low success rates (10% or less)

21%

AI front-runners

n = 40, n = 60
Source: Gartner



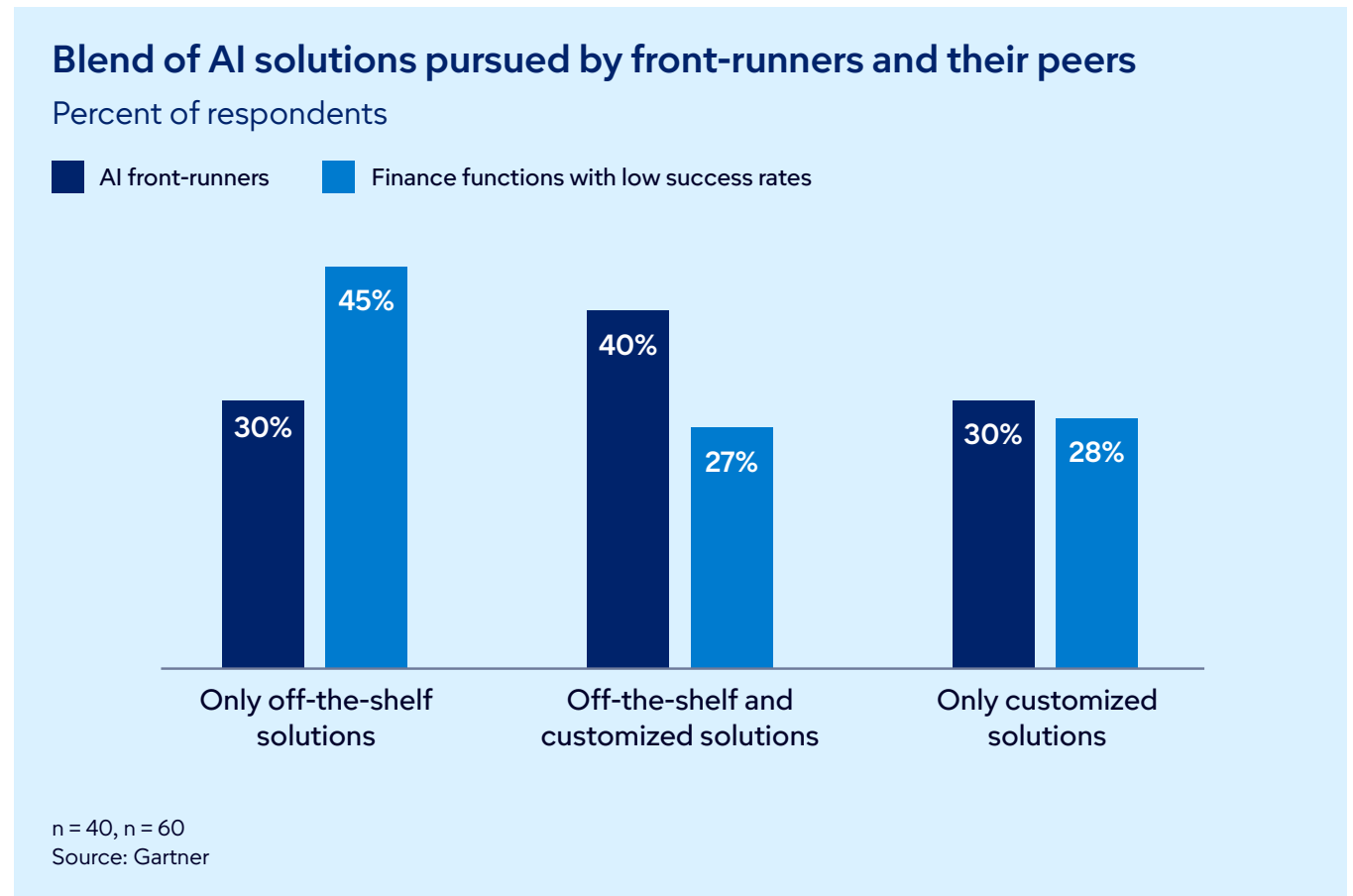
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AI front-runners blend custom and off-the-shelf AI solutions

The most common approach to adopting AI in finance is to use off-the-shelf solutions, with 65% of finance leaders stating that their function employs at least one of these tools for their easy implementation, quick deployment and predictable costs.

That said, convenient, off-the-shelf solutions can fall short in meeting the unique needs of the finance function and may even end up costing more than an in-house build, especially if extensive integration is required.

AI front-runners are more likely than their peers to invest in a blend of custom and off-the-shelf AI solutions. Organizations that pursue a broader mix of approaches see their AI project success rates climb by 19% compared to those who stick to only off-the-shelf tools.



AI front-runners establish new teams and leadership for adoption

More than half of AI front-runners have established new teams, such as centers of excellence, and 40% have created a leadership role to drive adoption.

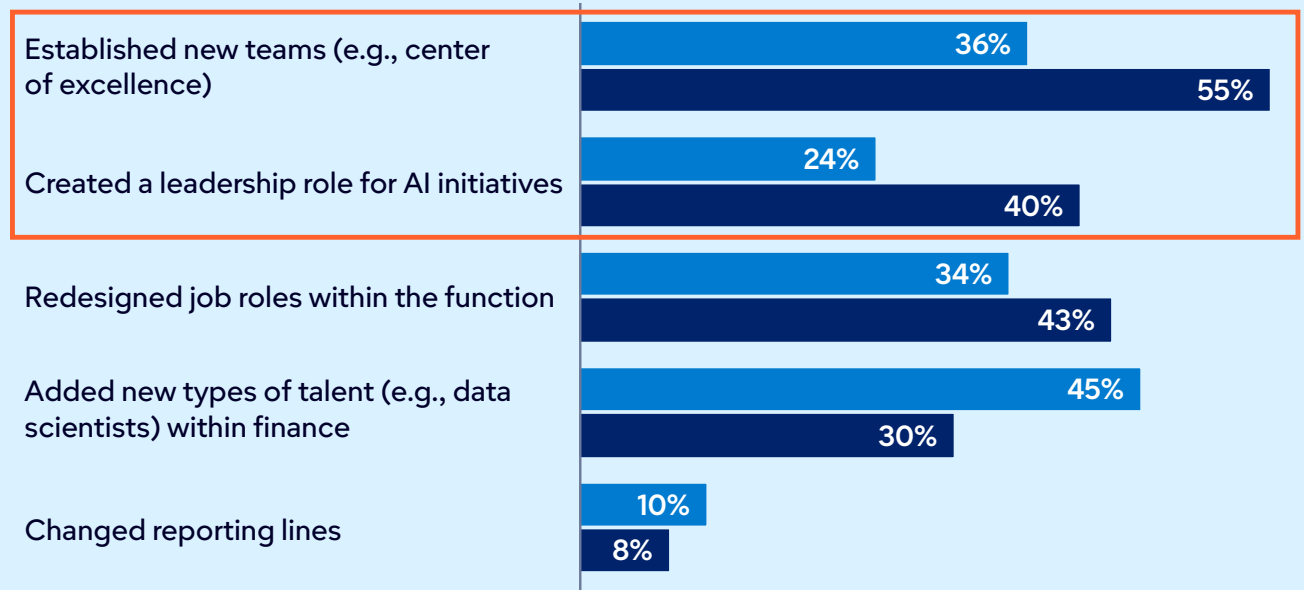
Establishing new teams provides focused leadership and governance for AI projects as well as a structure to share best practices for AI adoption and implementation. Having dedicated leaders to oversee the life cycle and performance of AI projects helps keep efforts aligned with strategic goals and overcome barriers as they arise.

Surprisingly, front-runners are less likely to focus on adding new types of talent within the finance function to help drive AI adoption. Recruiting digital talent into the finance function can be both costly and time-consuming and doesn't always guarantee a good fit with the function's business needs or culture. While acquiring the right digital skills will remain important over the long term, front-runners are prioritizing doing what they can with what and who they have.

Organizational design shifts pursued for AI adoption

Percent of respondents

- Finance functions with low success rates
- AI front-runners



n = 67, n = 40
Source: Gartner

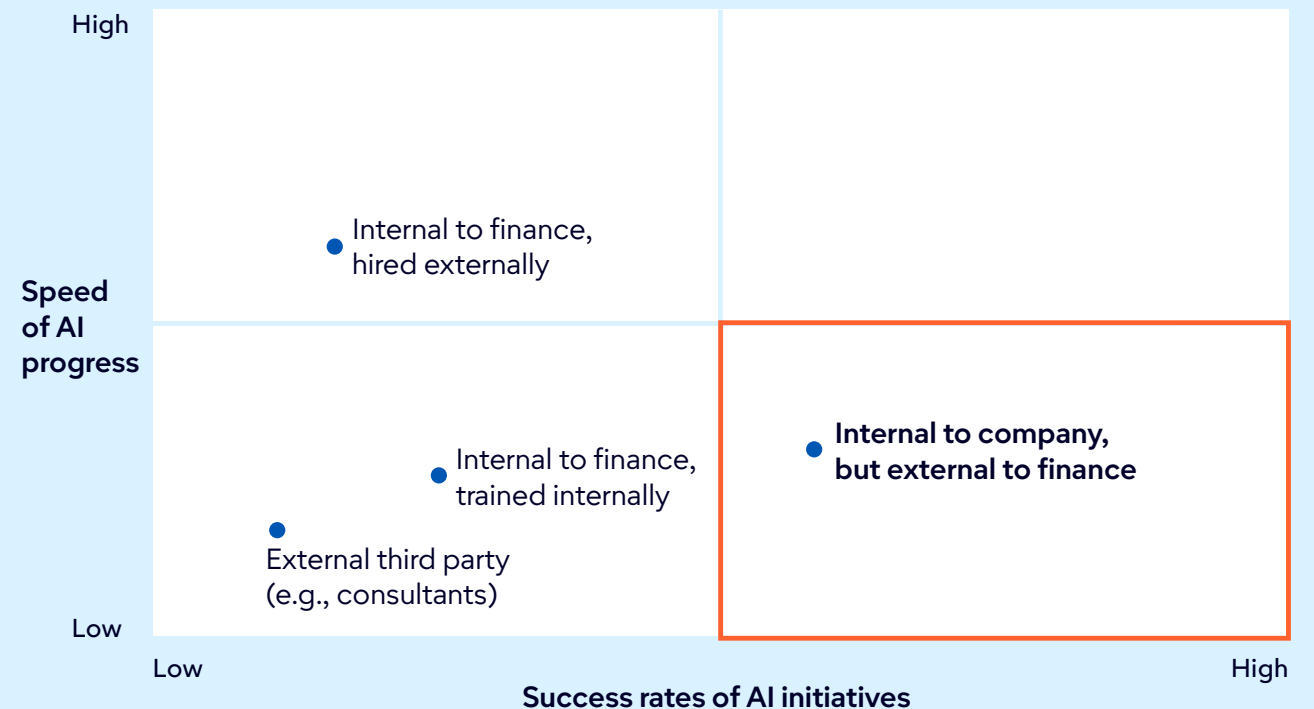
AI front-runners leverage enterprise data science expertise

AI front-runners are more likely to leverage data scientists from other parts of the organization. Tapping into enterprise data science teams offers advantages, particularly in terms of stronger expertise in shared systems, standardized methodologies and centralized governance. These factors help drive consistency across business units and ensure that AI projects remain aligned with broader organizational goals.

In contrast, organizations that have seen faster but less steady progress with AI tend to hire data scientists directly into their finance teams. This model reduces the time spent on upskilling or cross-functional handoffs and ensures that domain expertise fits squarely within the finance function.

Ultimately, the right answer depends on your finance organization's AI strategy, current talent pool, and whether your priorities lean toward speed or long-term scalability.

Two-by-two of speed and success for data scientist acquisition approaches in finance



Source: Gartner

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