

Gartner CFO & Finance Executive Conference Highlights

Key Insights from Top Sessions

**26 – 27 February 2024
Sydney, Australia**



Insights from APAC's preeminent gathering of CFOs & Finance Leaders

Slowing growth, persistent high inflation, scarce and expensive talent, and global supply constraints continue to add pressure and drive volatility for CFOs and finance executives.

Gain the blueprint for driving profitable growth and leading successful finance transformation by exploring insights from the **2024 Gartner CFO & Finance Executive Conference, Sydney, Australia**. Explore top actions and recommended resources from highly rated, analyst-led sessions to help you:

- **Advance digital leadership** to prepare for the future of the finance function.
- **Utilize AI** to unlock more value from finance data and processes.
- **Hire, engage and retain** finance talent.
- **Create a cohesive and tailored technology roadmap** across the finance function.
- **Uncover best practices** for how to support your organization through complexity and times of slow growth.

“CFOs are seeking faster insights and more predictive capabilities. This conference lays the groundwork to build a digital finance function that helps you unlock the power of data, technology and innovation to drive profitable growth in the years to come.”



Alexander Bant
Conference Chair, Practice VP
and Chief of Research for
CFOs, Gartner

Gartner CFO & Finance Executive Conference

26 – 27 February 2024 | Sydney, Australia

[View Full Agenda](#)

Available On Demand

Watch the 2023 Conference Keynote

VP Analysts Dennis Gannon share what it means to be a “Human Leader” as a CFO to drive enterprise success.



[Watch Now](#)

Tracks at a Glance

Attendees participated in more than 50 Gartner research-backed sessions specifically designed to help CFOs and finance leaders build their finance transformation roadmaps. Each track showcased a particular area of focus to help attendees consume insights most relevant to their roles within the finance function.

CFO: Drive Hard Trade-Offs Across the Business

Returning to profitable growth is a career-defining opportunity for CFOs. To get this right, CFOs must avoid making blanket decisions and focus instead on strategic and deliberate reallocation of resources. Learn how leading CFOs are placing bets to reduce risk while maintaining the pace of innovation and transformation.

FP&A: Navigate Planning Complexity

FP&A success will be defined by how effectively it is able to drive business performance during volatility and disruptions. Learn how to enhance FP&A's predictive and preparedness capabilities to turn uncertainty into opportunity for your organization.

Controller: Remove Friction From Finance

The finance function's ability to deliver on its data and analytics promise to drive improved business decision making is being constrained by the slow pace of digital transformation in the controllership. Learn how to quickly advance the controllership's digital maturity.

Finance Transformation: Maximize Digital ROI

In uncertain times, organizations are focusing attention on activities that will bring immediate and short-term impact. This track provides guidance on building your technology roadmap, picking the right vendors, identifying the proper skills and sequencing change to provide a steady stream of value throughout an organization's financial transformation journey.

Building Finance Teams for an AI Future



Mark D. McDonald

Senior Director Analyst

Session Summary

Finance professionals agree that finance teams will need new skills to support a more technologically sophisticated finance organization of the future. AI plays a significant role and requires a range of new competencies from people across the organization. What do those skills look like? How will finance teams evolve? What can teams do now to prepare for the future without the disruption of retraining the entire organization? This session explored the near-term and long-term workforce demands that lie ahead.



By 2026, finance organizations with more than 3 years of AI skills investment will double productivity over organizations with no AI skills.

Key Actions for Finance Leaders

- Accelerate AI programs by building citizen data scientist capabilities. Start with a learning program focused on building block topics and select a limited set of elective concepts that have targeted application to common business problems.
- Change hiring profile for future employees by focusing on talent with technological or AI-related backgrounds (e.g., data science, statistics or computer programming). Employees with finance or accounting backgrounds should comprise less than 50% of new hires.
- Prepare your future leaders by including data science in the curriculum of your leadership training and development programs.

How to Get Started:

- Complete the [Executive Checklist to Permanently Fix Your AI Talent Shortfall](#) to determine the key areas in which you can upskill your AI talent.
- Explore the [Future-Forward Talent Guide for Finance](#) (*free research*) to uncover three key actions you can take to build and nurture a future-ready finance team.

Digital Finance Shared Services — A Strategic Roadmap That Enables Finance Transformation



Tamara Shipley
VP Analyst

Session Summary

A digital finance shared services organization can seize the opportunity to significantly reduce the cost of finance and set its course to become the finance function's digital transformation partner. In this session, transformation leaders learned how the three-year strategic roadmap repurposes SSOs and pivots them to new responsibilities that enable accelerated and sustainable digitization efforts.



70% of CFOs expect more judgement-based, analytical work delivered by shared services by 2025.

Key Actions for Finance Leaders

- Enable global process owners (GPOs) with technology planning responsibilities and process design authority, versus limiting their role to short-term solutioning and reactive process fixes.
- Measure SSOs on outcomes, not input factors like headcount and volume. Actively add, amend and update outcomes as business priorities change.
- Assess the nonfinancial benefits of technologies used to serve stakeholders and task SSOs to highlight technology gaps and inefficiencies. For example, technologies like process mining, digital twins, knowledge management capture, control and fraud analytics allow shared services to professionalize its service delivery capabilities.

How to Get Started:

- Read the [2023 Strategic Roadmap for Digital Finance Shared Services](#).
- Define key business requirements using the [SSO Strategic Roadmap Template](#), included in your 2023 Strategic Roadmap.

Digital Storytelling: The Key to a Data-Driven Business



Clement Christensen
Senior Director Analyst

Session Summary

CEOs have tasked Finance with driving greater use of data in decision-making, but most teams have run into an age-old challenge: Human nature. Human beings don't remember data, we remember stories. For teams creating self-service tools and black box advanced analytics, this session provided guidance on how to tell compelling, data-driven stories in a digital world.



Total profits lost due to decisions that aren't financially sound are equal to 3% of EBITDA.

Key Actions for Finance Leaders

- Incorporate graph analytics into your stable of regular analytics to better understand the relationship between operational decisions and financial outcomes.
- Compare decision maps — a visual representation of the various considerations and the order in which those considerations occur to the decision maker — to determine the most representative approach to decision making.
- Rethink how you're orienting your reporting suite to your audience. Does your list of reports match how business leaders see the world? If a business leader needs to make a complex decision, how many dashboards do they need to make that decision?

How to Get Started:

- Watch the Gartner webinar on [Crafting a Persuasive Finance Transformation Story](#) (*free webinar*) to understand how to tell an impactful finance transformation narrative.
- Leverage [Gartner Templates and Analyst Document Review](#) to develop decision maps and improve the storytelling guidance in your self-service dashboards.

Reduce Change Fatigue in Finance Employees



Hilary Richards
VP Analyst

Session Summary

Technology changes and hybrid work models bring many benefits but can come with unintended costs like employee fatigue. Employee fatigue can damage employee engagement and intent to stay. This session shared strategies to energize weary finance employees and reduce change fatigue — even though the pace of change shows no sign of slowing down.



Since prepandemic times, employees' ability to absorb change before becoming fatigued has declined 50%.

Key Actions for Finance Leaders

- Facilitate early detection of small change impact by tracking employee mental energy on a near-term basis.
- Give employees time and space to identify concerns during change to enable them to take control of their situation. Help employees help each other manage through change.
- Meet with your Finance leadership team to discuss how to factor change fatigue into finance's transformation plans.

How to Get Started:

- Review the [leading indicators used by Medtronic](#) to determine when and the extent to which finance staff are impacted by small change fatigue.
- [Talk with a Gartner expert](#) about how to provide more visibility into team capacity to troubleshoot process bottlenecks and factor change fatigue into finance's transformation plans.

Evolving Finance Business Partners for Autonomous Finance



Nick Duffy
Director Analyst

Session Summary

Zero percent of CFOs believe that finance business partners (FBP) primarily spend time on value creation. FBP struggle to maximize their impact due to poor internal branding, unwieldy responsibility scopes and excessively siloed ways of working. Autonomous finance will provide a platform to further evolve finance business partner roles but will require certain actions from FP&A leaders. This session shared opportunities to evolve your business partnering strategy.



82% of surveyed finance leaders said that their FBPs could be classified as operational data experts or plan evaluators, but 89% of leaders aspire to a more strategic profile for their FBPs — that of decision expert or co-pilot.

Key Actions for Finance Leaders

- Map your current business partner roles to the four profiles to realize current state: Operational data expert, plan evaluator, decision expert or co-pilot.
- Consult with FBP customers to determine the biggest need. Build your perfect world finance business partner model based on this need.
- Take incremental action to redefine finance business partner roles toward that desired state. Start by eliminating or moving other work away from FBP by, for example, making investments in self-service reporting.

How to Get Started:

- Understand [What Is Autonomous Finance](#) (*free research*) and the building blocks of an autonomous finance function.
- Map your current business partner roles to the [Four FBP Profiles](#) to realize your current state, determine areas of need and take incremental action to redefine finance business partner roles for autonomous finance.

Get Your Finance Transformation Back on Track



Geraldine Garaud
Director Analyst

Session Summary

Sixty-nine percent of finance transformation leaders agree that their organization's transformation is moving slower than expected. Yet, many fail to recognize the importance of discipline in finance transformation and project management methods they can use to continuously reenergize their initiatives. This session shared advice on how to get your finance transformation back on track with lean methods.



CFOs rated transformation-related activities as three of their top four most difficult priorities to achieve in 2023.

Key Actions for Finance Leaders

- Build a lean mindset into your finance transformation program to allow you to course-correct your finance transformation journey and get it back on track.
- Adopt five key tactics (Rearrange, Automate, Combine, Eliminate and Simplify) to eliminate waste in your finance transformation and help free up capacity for your organization and stay on track or even ahead of schedule in your transformation.
- Identify and deploy the appropriate lean method against your finance transformation setback (e.g., translating strategy to execution, prioritizing initiatives, streamlining processes, etc.).

How to Get Started:

- Understand [What Is Finance Transformation](#) (*free research*) and the key components for successful finance transformation.
- Use the [Gartner Finance Guide to Lean](#) to learn how to identify transformation priorities using value stream mapping.

Strengthen the Foundation of FP&A Technology Investments to Harness Advanced Capabilities



Matthew Mowrey

Senior Director Analyst

Session Summary

FP&A technology is underutilized, and organizations continue to turn to spreadsheets to manage their planning processes. This session addressed the evolutionary path FP&A technology will take in the next three to five years, the impact it will have on the FP&A organization and key actions to take now to maximize return on investment and avoid costly mistakes.



74% of finance leaders at least somewhat agree that finance teams are too conservative with digital technology.

Key Actions for Finance Leaders

- Build an FP&A technology strategic roadmap to keep momentum and harness the capability of existing FP&A technology.
- Experiment with machine learning and other components of AI, no matter the level of sophistication, as this presents an opportunity to set a new standard in FP&A.
- Create a rescoping policy and document data lineage to ensure the IP that supports your competitive advantage is protected.

How to Get Started:

- Use the [2023 Strategic Roadmap for FP&A Technology](#) to explore underutilized components of FP&A technology and how creating an FP&A technology roadmap sets organizations up to exploit modern capabilities.
- Explore best-fit technologies by reviewing Gartner market research on technologies and vendors, including the [Magic Quadrant™ for Financial Planning Software](#).

Developing and Retaining Digital Finance Talent



Hilary Richards
VP Analyst

Session Summary

Eighty-three percent of digital finance talent believe the skills acquired in the finance function will help further their careers, but only 58% believe they currently have career advancement opportunities in finance. Finance teams struggle to attract and retain digital talent because the talent pool is unclear about their career possibilities. This session shared how existing management practices alienate digital finance talent and how to improve the retention of this critical talent pool in Finance.



Digital finance talent is 63% more likely to be looking for another job than core talent, and 69% more expensive to replace than core talent.

Key Actions for Finance Leaders

- To retain digital finance talent, implement strategies to increase the sense of belonging among digital talent in your function.
- Focus your talent retention strategy on aligning to purpose, connecting people and clarifying the long-term career possibilities.
- Build new career path options and flexible career management approaches to show digital finance talent they have a place in your future finance function.

How to Get Started:

- Understand how to better retain digital talent by [Building a Stronger Sense of Belonging](#) centered on purpose, possibilities and people.
- Read the Gartner guide to [Help Digital Talent Fit Into Finance](#) (*free research*) to reduce employee turnover and accelerate digital finance transformation.

Gartner supports your journey toward an autonomous finance function.

Autonomous finance yields augmented real-time insights, effortless compliance and greater flexibility in financial strategy.

Research



Autonomous Finance Resource Center

64% of CFOs believe autonomous finance will become a reality within the next six years. So, how should you prioritize your digital investments? Get started with:

- Three CFO mindset shifts to enable an autonomous future
- Examples of AI use cases in finance
- Key actions to drive AI success

[Get Started](#)



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Map your path to digital finance maturity with the Gartner Digital Finance Score.

This diagnostic tool from Gartner measures maturity against your organization's unique priorities, resulting in a detailed breakdown of your path to digital finance maturity.

- **Benchmark your function** across eight objectives and 31 key management activities.
- **Identify performance gaps** and highlight areas where your organization excels.
- **Build an action plan** that prioritizes highest impact activities to improve your function's effectiveness and close gaps in maturity.

 Support digital transformation by defining your path to maturity.

[Download Sample Report](#)

Finance Functional Activity Map

| Define Finance's Digital Strategy | Apply Technology to Innovate | Build Digital Finance Ops Model | Drive Finance Process Optimization | Manage Data | Build Analytics Assets | Develop Digital Talent | Manage Digital Enterprise Portfolio |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Develop the Fintech Roadmap | Evaluate Technology Model Options | Optimize Finance Org Structure | Design Fit-for-Purpose Processes | Establish Metrics Framework | Build Semantic Models | Develop Digital Talent Strategy | Shape Enterprise Digital Strategy |
| Prioritize Spend to Enable Digital | Build Effective Vendor Partnerships | Define FIN/IT Collaboration Model | Monitor Process Performance | Govern Data Assets | Create Enterprise Reports | Define New Digital Career Paths | Resource Digital Investments |
| Manage Digital Change | Increase Technology ROI | Build Composable IT Architecture | Drive Process Automation | Integrate Data | Maintain Dashboards | Develop Digital Competencies | Govern Digital Investments |
| Build Digital Culture | Optimize Use of Technology | Improve Business Partnership | Continuously Improve Processes | Unlock Data Value | Create Advanced Analytics Models | | Track Digital Portfolio Performance |

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