

The Evolving CFO Role in 2026: Real Time Insight as a Strategic Imperative

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The CFO role in 2026 has shifted from financial stewardship to enterprise-wide strategic orchestration, driven by economic volatility, AI maturity, and the need for continuous, data driven decisions. What distinguishes successful finance leaders now is their ability to convert continuous data flows into decisions, not just report on the past. This shift is inseparable from a broader operational change: the real-time automation of transactional finance, particularly accounts payable (AP) and accounts receivable (AR), which form the heartbeat of working capital and the primary source of cash signal. As Workday notes, modern CFOs are now "*strategic navigators, co piloting the business alongside the CEO*"—a role impossible to fulfill without real-time financial visibility. [[workday.com](https://www.workday.com)]

This transformation exposes a long-standing constraint: manual AP and AR processes block strategic finance. Eye Share highlights that outdated processes "*create delays... produce inconsistent data... and hide problems instead of surfacing them,*" preventing CFOs from...

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About the Author



As the Global Senior Director of Financial Automation Solutions at Quadient, Sarah-Jayne draws on her 20+ years of experience in the accounts receivable space to leverage technology and process improvement strategies to solve her clients' credit, collections, and payment challenges. A former finance professional herself, SJ has managed global teams and owned many AR-related initiatives, including implementing credit and collections software and partnering with fintech solution providers to improve the customer payment experience. Sarah-Jayne is considered an industry expert and is a frequent featured speaker on panel discussions and webinars, as well as in-person events.