

Hey! What's New? 2024-115

How Can Financial Controllers Transform to Shape the Future with Confidence?

According to a report published by EY this month, “enterprises are transforming at pace in response to evolving customer expectations, rapid technological changes and an increasingly complex business environment. Adaptability, resilience and long-term value creation are critical to growth.”

Led by forward-looking CFOs, says the report, the most dynamic finance functions are supporting enterprise-wide transformation through their own bold and innovative change agendas. “This presents controllers with an exciting opportunity to shape their roles in the Age of And — an age where there’s no option but to balance multiple challenges in parallel.”

To thrive in the Age of And, the report advises controllers to fulfill their traditional reporting and compliance remit, and be catalysts for transformation and value creation. “In doing so, they can reinforce their position as indispensable partners to the CFO. They can also establish themselves as trusted and strategic advisors to their peers in other functions and to the board.”

The report’s analysis, based on insights from more than 1,000 controllers and senior finance leaders, suggests that controllers have an exciting opportunity to rethink their role. “By doing this, they can capitalize on the significant contribution that controllership already makes to organizations and position it to have an even greater contribution in the future.”

So, how can controllers seize the opportunity to create value? How can organizations attract and retain the best controllership talent to deliver transformation?

This research, notes the report aims to identify and define the DNA of the future financial controller — someone who mitigates risk, catalyzes innovation, turns data into action and helps to shape the future with confidence. “As such, it offers invaluable insights for controllers, as well as senior finance leaders aiming to develop their teams and drive success across their organizations. These insights form part of the CFO Imperative Series, which provides critical answers and insights to help finance leaders shape the future with confidence.”

When asked how the role of the financial controller would specifically evolve, the report pointed out that the most common answer was that it would shift from being largely focused on value protection and optimization to also embracing value creation. It then suggests that controllers can realize their potential as value creators, while fulfilling their traditional responsibilities as value protectors and optimizers, in these three important ways.

1. Embrace three transformational opportunities: data, artificial intelligence (AI) and sustainability.
2. Get future ready. Although controllers may see themselves as value creators, they do not prioritize innovation. Instead, they tend to look at value creation through the lens of driving growth. Only one fifth (21%) of the respondents ranked seeking out technological opportunities as a “top three” definition of creating value.
3. Become a confident controller While most controllers lead their finance function in data governance, strategy, analytics and reporting, confident controllers are more likely to do so at

an enterprise level. Nearly half (45%) of confident controllers lead in enterprise-wide analytics and reporting (1.7 times higher than other respondents).

In conclusion, the report advises CFOs, “to make innovation part of your controller’s job description and performance criteria. Give them the opportunity to lead a transformation program or another innovative project and provide them with appropriate budget, staff and mentoring.” As well, “equip your controllers with the future-focused skills that can support them to create value in their current role and advance to more senior positions, including a CFO, if that is their aspiration. And, finally, “build a pipeline of controller talent by taking an open-minded approach to recruitment and retention. Hire people based on their mindset and willingness to learn, rather than their educational background. Articulate how the finance function contributes to the organization’s purpose to inspire people in their work.”

For a whole lot more detail on the research findings, see [ey-gl-dna-of-the-financial-controller-09-2024.pdf](#).

