

Hey! What's New? 2026-29

Facing Uncertainty on Several Fronts, North American Finance Leaders Zero in on Cost Management

In an article on Deloitte's webpage, authors Steve Gallucci, John Goff and Laura Bauke write that "A heightened focus on cost management is reflected in the results of the *Q1 2026 North American CFO Signals* survey, which polls 200 chief financial officers from North American organizations with at least US\$1 billion in annual revenues each quarter. In it, 52% of respondents cite cost management as their most worrisome internal concern – the top response. Six months ago, cost management ranked third (47%). Meanwhile, their No. 1 external worry is now supply chain disruption, which rose from 35% in the *Q4 2025 CFO Signals Survey* to 52% this quarter." The survey was carried out in the first two weeks of March, just after the start of the Middle East conflict.

"It's too soon to know how geopolitical conflicts may play out. But changes in input costs or interruptions in supply chains can put pressure on finance chiefs to tamp down spending," the authors say.

Focusing solely on the "cost" part of cost management, though, may not be sufficient, they add. "Saving in one area might free up money to invest in projects or technologies that could deliver long-term competitive advantages or generate greater efficiencies. For many CFOs, then, the question could be: How do you rein in costs without stifling innovation?"

The balancing act can be seen in the latest survey. When asked to select up to three factors driving their organization's efforts to manage costs, 49% of respondents cite pressure to invest in new technologies, such as cloud or artificial intelligence. But at the same time, 48% also cite shrinking profit margins as a key reason they're prioritizing cost management now.

"This concern about profit margins is understandable," they write. "The Federal Reserve has indicated it expects the 2026 inflation rate to come in higher than originally forecast. At this point, however, surveyed CFOs appear more interested in diverting capital than in reflexively reducing it."

Asked to indicate how current cost management considerations are changing their organization's allocation of capital, more than half (52%) cite redirecting operating expense investments. "It was the No. 1 answer. In addition, 46% say their organizations are redirecting capital expenditure investments due to cost management considerations, the second most-cited response. At the bottom of the list? Reductions in current CapEx (41%) and OpEx (39%) allocations."

According to the authors, "if finance chiefs are feeling pressure to manage costs *and* preserve funds to invest in new technologies, that pressure will probably find its way to their departments. To be sure, cost management typically involves many functions across an organization. But nearly 7 in 10 respondents (68%) say that, excluding the CEO and board of directors, finance has the greatest responsibility for overseeing cost management at their organizations. When asked which levers have proven to be most effective in controlling costs within their organizations, excluding workforce reductions, more than half of respondents (53%)

say automation or technology upgrades – the most-cited choice. Increased productivity efforts or investments are next, at 43%.”

So, which technologies do CFOs deem most important for enabling cost management in their businesses? The survey found that the No. 1 response is cloud-based planning, budgeting and forecasting, chosen by 43% of respondents. That’s followed closely by data analytics tools at 42.5%.

Deloitte’s *Finance Trends 2026* survey, which polled 1,326 finance leaders around the world and across industries, shared similar findings. “Among Finance Trends respondents who own expense oversight for their organizations, a majority (51%) cited cloud investment as their preferred cost management method.”

Rapidly evolving technologies, such as cloud computing and AI, say the authors, “will most likely have a major impact on how organizations improve spending and efficiency. Nevertheless, finance chiefs still face sizable obstacles in managing costs – hurdles that technology alone may not be able to solve.”

That tone is set at the top, they conclude. “As such, CFOs may want to make sure employees are equipped with both the tools and the mindset to help reduce costs or boost efficiency.”

For more see [CFO Signals new tech investment | Deloitte Insights](#).