Hey! What's New? 2026-60

What Skills Will CFOs Need in the Years Ahead?

Megan Breen writes, in the November issue of *INTHEBLACK*, that "technological literacy is only a part of a modern finance leadership approach – communication, judgment and change management are equally important."

Today, there are a range of choices available to finance leaders, she says. "Technology now makes it possible to examine the work itself before deciding how it should be resourced. A process that once appeared to require a team of people may contain a relatively small amount of work that genuinely needs human intervention and judgement, surrounded by tools to handle repetitive activities.

That changes the question from where work can be done more cheaply to what professionals should be doing in the first place. "I think now I would ask, 'What parts of it can I automate and essentially keep the knowledge in-house or within my control?'"

Breen adds that, "as organizations adopt agentic AI, they will need to decide whether to treat these systems like employees with defined roles and expectations, or more like tools that require firm boundaries and oversight."

That thinking has also shaped how Anne La Fontaine, FCPA, sees the evolution of the CFO role.

In her current role as an advisory board member with digital software business Specia AI, Fontaine is helping clients to understand automation possibilities. This could look like refining accounts payable processes where dashboards can flag unusual transactions, identify irregular spending or reveal where multiple suppliers are being used for similar purchases.

According to Breen, "the value is in what finance and accounting professionals can do with that information. Why are several vendors being used? Could purchasing be consolidated? Are rebates or savings being missed? Is there a wider issue behind what initially looks like an isolated transaction?"

She quotes La Fontaine as saying that "where you previously had a sample population that you were testing for an upcoming audit, there is now the ability to enable continuous assurance, enhancing the entity's governance framework." La Fontaine adds that this is where technology can change the contribution that finance makes to the wider organisation. "Finance is really the glue that holds the organization together, because we get a very good view of the organization end-to-end," she says.

That view gives professionals access to information from across the business, and the value lies in interpreting it. "How do we deal with all this data?" she asks.

"How are we going to manage and synthesise it and be able to harness that to tell the story about what is behind the numbers?"

Automation can help with the collection and processing of information. The finance team's role is then to understand what it means — identifying risks, spotting opportunities and helping the organization decide where to focus.

“We have that unique ability to be able to collect the data and hopefully we get help through automation to collate it more efficiently,” Breen concludes. “That enables the team to spend more time analyzing the information to not only tell the story behind the numbers, but also partner with business leaders to drive future strategic initiatives and opportunities.”

For more, have a look at What skills will CFOs need in the years ahead? | INTHEBLACK.