



OUTSOURCED F&A LETS CFOS STAY FOCUSED ON GROWTH

CONSERO WHITE PAPER

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More than **90%** of over 380 finance executives polled say they need to do more with the financial and operations data at hand to help top management make critical decisions. More than **70%** say “supporting decision-making” is their number-one goal for 2017.

What keeps CFOs up at night? According to a [recent survey](#) from The CFO Alliance, most heads of financial operations at businesses all over the world aren't exactly counting sheep while they toss and turn in bed. Instead, their thoughts turn to time, data and a paradoxical excess and shortage of both, all at once. Many executives, managers or anyone with corporate experience can probably relate. This is especially true for small to medium sized business (SMBs) where there are certainly fewer resources to get tasks accomplished – not as many systems, certainly not as many people.

“The biggest thing keeping CFOs up at night is – not surprisingly – ‘too much to do and not enough time to do it,’” according to the CFO Alliance survey. Having strategic agility is another top concern – which tied very closely to not having the right systems, or the right skills on their finance team. For the strategic CFO, visibility into the right data is

invaluable. However, there is more data being generated from more sources. With outdated technologies, inefficient processes and misaligned teams, CFOs are operating at a disadvantage to obtaining quality data. If CFOs aren't leveraging systems that can deliver timely and accurate information, they can't pivot effectively. For finance chiefs at many companies, the answers to their most pressing concerns seem just out of reach. If only they had the right tools, processes and people at their disposal to mine their most precious resource. Many feel they could transform the company if they could unlock the code to their black box of concerns.

What it all comes down to is strategy. A CFO's primary duty is to develop and execute a long-term financial plan for the business. But this plan is really made up of small, short-term tasks that must be delegated and accomplished appropriately. Bridging that gap between long-term strategic





“When you are a brand-new company, you may need a general-ledger accountant and AR and AP expertise, but you may not need them full time. And when cash is dear, and you’ve got a full-time head doing a 50% job, it’s painful. Consero can put a 50% person until you grow.”

thinking and tactical, short-term execution is the crux of the CFO’s daily worries.

Perhaps it always has been this way, but the best business leaders rarely see the status quo as an obstacle. Instead, they are leveraging the best tools available to check off the daily line items while keeping the future constantly in view.

BRIDGING THE GAP

In an article for CFO.com, David McCann points out that the size of a company often dictates how their finance departments are organized. What’s peculiar, McCann finds, is the similarities shared by very small and very large companies. Firms logging either less than \$5 million or more than \$1 billion in annual revenue tend to outsource almost all of their finance and accounting work, at least the most routine, transactional tasks. But between that gap where so many businesses lie, F&A outsourcing has commonly been a rarity.

It is increasingly observed that a company in between the very large and very small are choosing to strategically outsource transactional F&A functions while keeping a core team in-house. Synergis Education, whose CFO Scott Wenhold spoke with McCann, did just that using Consero Global.

Synergis claims around \$75 million in annual revenue, hardly a lightweight by any means, but leverages Consero’s shared services model to maintain a lean, in-house F&A staff. This allows CFO Wenhold to work with just three analysts to coordinate strategically, without disregarding the “boring” work that would otherwise consume much of their time.

AGREEING ON CHANGE

This model may be cutting-edge, and executives may indeed be skeptical of committing to such a seismic shift. But recent surveys and studies of F&A professionals –





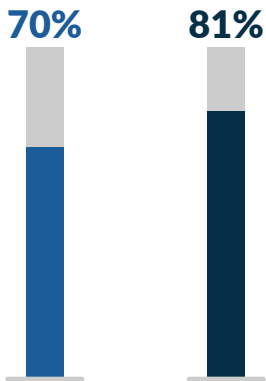
along with the results attained by those who outsource these tasks strategically – prove it is the most logical solution.

Again, picking the brains of the modern CFO is incredibly illuminating on this subject. A survey from Ernst and Young of nearly 800 finance leaders around the world revealed that more than **half of CFOs feel stuck in a creative rut**. Too much of their time and energy is being spent on transactional tasks, routine bookkeeping and compiling reports, according to the survey. Of course they want to spend more time in a big-picture mindset, and often have highly capable staff and systems at their disposal. Somehow, though, the puzzle pieces don't fit.

It's easy to assume that many executives don't want to change, or at least believe this is the way it should be. After all, the people working for the executives are expected to handle most of

the transactional, nose-to-the-grindstone duties, and it would only be fair if the CFO had to shuffle some papers around once in awhile. But **another study from CFO.com** argues that this organizational hierarchy is outdated and inaccurate. Most non-executive staff, responding to a survey, said they wanted their CFO to be a strategic, visionary leader – a “catalyst” for innovation and change. In reality, staff members said their CFOs instead took on the less-appealing role of “steward” or “administrator.”

We are quick to speculate that executives and associates hold competing views of corporate organization, but this survey posits that this presumption is often false. Seventy percent of staff members surveyed felt their company would benefit from reducing the amount of time spent on administrative tasks, and 81 percent felt automation and technology was the best way to accomplish this goal.



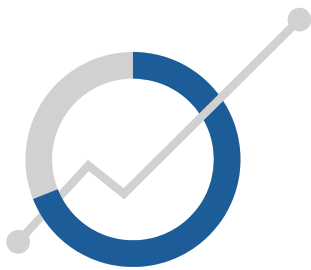
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57% of group CFOs believe that the delivery of data and advanced analytics will be a critical capability for tomorrow's finance function.



69% see the finance leader role fundamentally changing as traditional finance tasks are automated or managed in shared service centers.

COLLABORATING AND CREATING

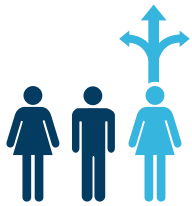
At every level of the traditional corporate structure, business goals and the methods to achieve them are surprisingly similar. But until recently, the best way to narrow this unified vision has been elusive for most companies. A shared services model for F&A like the one enabled by Consero is proving to be the best way to enable strategic planning despite limited time and resources.

The difference between good reporting and actionable reporting is seen when CFOs have access to not just a trove of data, but well-organized and visual ways to capture and use that data. The managed services approach to F&A is more than a reporting tool – CFOs can gain access to the information they need to spark the connection between data and insight. With Consero, that can take many forms:

- Understanding where problems exist.
- Facilitate the right business discussions in problem areas.
- Continuously measure and compare ongoing performance.
- Hold managers accountable for results.
- Understand and compare against typical impacts for similar companies.

The business world is already familiar with cloud services and their ability to connect and organize disparate teams. An outsourced financial partner takes this value-adding approach a step further by centralizing the most common F&A tasks, from transactional work to data visualization and reporting. Working with an outsourced partner gives you get access to best-in-class SaaS technology that is implemented in weeks, not months or years. The

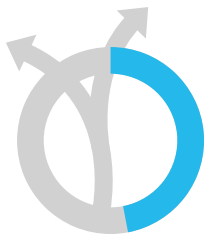




One-third of executives now rely on outsourced F&A teams for intellectual capital, global scalability and cost-savings.

heavy lifting is not the burden of your finance team which allows them to stay focused on strategy and driving revenue. In this way, outsourced finance partner connects businesses to the people, processes and technology they need, without requiring CFOs to delegate or micromanage.

With the most time-consuming tasks taken care of, CFOs have more time to spend doing what they signed up for – working with their CEO and F&A teams to understand the data before them and make informed decisions on where to steer the business. That's a level of insight that enables them to make the best decisions, whether it's for something a few days or a few years down the road.



47% say their current function does not have the right mix of capabilities to meet its future priorities.

Forward-looking CFOs cannot afford to get bogged down in transaction processing. Instead, they should have confidence that the financials and processing are executed correctly. This frees their time to focus on strategic growth of the business.



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