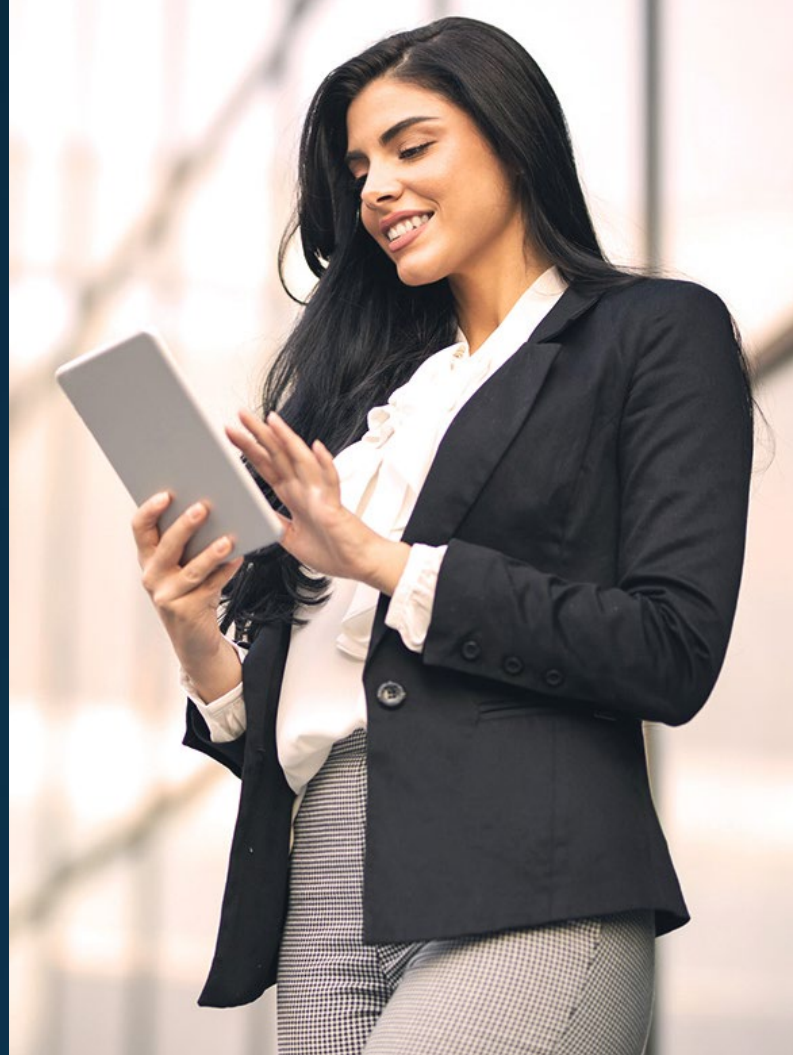


EBOOK

# Your roadmap to becoming a transformational CFO

eBook three:

Three steps to elevate  
your role as a finance leader



**Anaplan**

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# Foreword

As organizations continue to face a barrage of economic challenges, no other roles in the C-suite have evolved as much as the CFO. You are no longer simply a steward of cost, compliance, and historical financial performance. Instead, there's a growing expectation for CFOs to be value creators with a remit to develop and execute corporate strategy and vision. Your role is no longer about looking in the proverbial rear-view mirror. Instead, it requires you to be a forward-looking leader who is instrumental in your organization's commercial success.

So how do you chart a path to becoming a transformational finance leader? One clear advantage you have as CFO is your holistic financial perspective of the organization. But financial expertise alone will only get you so far. Here, we outline some of the crucial steps you can take to make your transformational journey a little easier to pave the way for success.

Our eBook series will help you step into the role of a transformational finance leader who anticipates disruption and preempts opportunities to thrive and drive business resilience.

The first two eBooks provide you with ways to overcome some of the more pressing professional challenges currently facing CFOs and identify the emerging roles under the banner of transformational CFO. This third eBook offers you steps to elevate your role as a finance leader.



CFOs who say their finance function has boosted organizational resilience in the past year are 6.5 times more likely to spend most of their time on talent management.”

McKinsey, 2023

# Step one: Leadership: The human CFO

Renowned leaders throughout history – people like Abraham Lincoln and Mahatma Gandhi – have all shown the importance of empathy and authenticity to inspire change. The same is true of great finance leaders.

As CFO, your ability to motivate others and generate buy-in on objectives is closely linked to your ability to communicate strategy clearly and transparently. And yet too often, leadership failings mean that a disconnect exists. To succeed, effective communication across the following distinct areas is key.

## Planning, budgeting, and forecasting (PBF)

Your ability to communicate the purpose and value of planning, budgeting, and forecasting to the wider business is the cornerstone of achieving organizational goals. Broader participation in the PBF process is vital to making sure that appropriate targets are set and to ensuring a commitment to delivery.

## Transformational programs

For many employees, transformation is synonymous with cost-cutting or downsizing, and that is particularly true during an economic downturn. It’s your job as CFO to counter those concerns by communicating the value being created by transformational programs.

The team should feel involved in change initiatives from the outset and should be supported if projects fail without fear for their jobs. As CFO, it’s critical that you communicate objectives, milestones, and metrics, including any necessary changes to the plan, while providing ongoing support and ultimately ensuring that the goal is kept alive. Nurture creativity and empower teams to experiment and learn from failure. When people feel valued, they feel confident and are more productive. The result: a win for you, a win for your teams, and a win for your organization.



## Step two: Technology: The CFO as a digital guru

Technical innovation will always be part of doing business. However, more recently, the pace of innovation has ramped up, prompting understandable concern about the impact of certain technologies, not just on how we work, but also how we live.

Rather than fighting new developments, the trick is to understand their potential benefits, limitations, and how you can best use them to your strategic advantage.

Proper use of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) for task automation can reduce the risk of human error, and enhance efficiency and financial performance. AI/ML is now commonly embedded in the latest cloud technology, empowering you to switch from the limitations and frustrations associated with spreadsheets to a dynamic planning platform. This presents prime opportunities to eliminate mundane, financial grunt work, freeing up your finance team to focus on higher-value, data-driven decision-making. This will help boost your organization's outcomes like improving employee, customer, and supplier relationships, and ultimately profitability.

Your challenge, as CFO, is to identify skills and capability gaps, and devise strategies to plug them. This could be through training to upskill existing staff, outsourcing to specialist providers, or strategic hiring of the right talent to create greater value for your organization.

“

**55% of global CEOs reported that a lack of key skills is inhibiting their ability to grow.”**

**PwC, 2019**



Improved communication and collaboration through social technologies could raise productivity by 20-25%."

McKinsey, 2012

## Step three: Collaboration: The connected CFO

Collaboration across functional areas of the business is the key to achieving your corporate financial objectives. Creating a connected leadership team means everyone at the table is held accountable for their performance. Success requires having close working relationships with your colleagues, underpinned by empathy and understanding.

As a finance leader, you can lead the charge by partnering with your counterparts across other functions to fully understand the business, and by using that knowledge to help make informed decisions and strategic recommendations to executives and the board. As a transformational CFO, you recognize that reaching out to operational leaders is paramount to value generation and comprehending performance drivers.

A connected leader cultivates honesty, integrity, and trust with their peers by consistently demonstrating those qualities. It requires you to have regular and meaningful contact with your counterparts across the business: schedule 1-to-1 check-ins or group gatherings; build trust by finding out about their personal interests and challenges; be human by honestly sharing

your professional flaws to encourage others to open up too; and ask for explanations and offer ways to improve instead of interrogating on why results aren't as expected.

Indeed, Deloitte analysis found that the more connected an organization is, the higher the forecasting accuracy and the greater the planning efficiency it achieved. They found that 63% of respondents in organizations whose business functions are fully connected complete their planning in under three weeks. They also found that 69% of organizations have adopted Connected Planning for two or more business functions at their enterprise, 31% have connected three or more functions, and two-thirds have all their functions connected. Across most industries, finance is connected to sales (84%), supply chain (70%), workforce (67%), and marketing (67%).

It's the combination of connected leaders and connected tools that really delivers stronger outcomes. The concept of Connected Planning has been **recognized by analyst firms** including Gartner, Forrester, and Ventana Research, and business leaders are already reaping the benefits of this approach.

# Conclusion

The pace of change in business has stepped up a notch with numerous economic factors unleashing pressures on business like never before. The impact on you, the CFO, is significant as you lead the charge to reimagine the modern digital organization. Our [first eBook](#) analyzes the challenges you face as a modern CFO and outlines the steps you can take to mitigate the risks.

There is a growing expectation to extend your leadership capabilities beyond the confines of finance to a broader remit encompassing three distinct roles: strategic advisor, captain of capital, and chief planning officer. We analyze these new roles and the emergence of new responsibilities within FP&A in the [second eBook](#) in this series.

Rising to that leadership challenge demands acquiring new skills as you become a transformational leader, providing critical support and insight to the whole business, and driving collaboration across an increasingly interconnected organization. As you step beyond the boundaries of traditional finance, connected leadership and the use of digital tools, including Connected Planning, will help you anticipate disruption and build business resilience that unlocks more successful financial outcomes.

Discover more about how Anaplan can help you become a transformational CFO [here](#).



## Reference links

[McKinsey: CFO's balancing act; Juggling priorities to build resilience](#)

[PwC: PwC's 22nd Annual Global CEO Survey](#)

[Deloitte: Connected Planning](#)

[McKinsey: The social economy: Unlocking value and productivity through social technologies](#)

## About Anaplan

Anaplan is the only scenario planning and analysis platform designed to optimize decision-making in today's complex business environment so that enterprises can outpace their competition and the market. By building connections and collaboration across organizational silos, our platform intelligently surfaces key insights — so businesses can make the right decisions, right now.

More than 2,400 of the world's best brands continually optimize their decision-making by planning with Anaplan.

To learn more, visit [www.anaplan.com](http://www.anaplan.com)