

SYNCHRONISE

Australia

Finance leaders are moving beyond AI experimentation and focusing on turning technology investments into measurable business value

Australian finance leaders remain cautiously optimistic despite ongoing economic uncertainty. More than 70% of respondents indicated they are somewhat or very confident in their organisation's ability to navigate current economic challenges, highlighting resilience amid continued market volatility. At the same time, finance functions are increasingly prioritising data security, advanced analytics, broader data utilisation and AI as critical capability areas for the next 12 months.

70%

respondents indicated they are somewhat or very confident in their organisation's ability to navigate current economic challenges



AI adoption is becoming mainstream across Australian finance teams. Almost three-quarters of respondents report using AI in some capacity, yet only a small proportion of this group have implemented AI as part of a defined strategy. Most finance functions remain in the experimentation or early operationalisation phase of their AI journey, suggesting the technology is delivering value but has not yet been scaled consistently across finance activities. AI is most commonly being applied to financial forecasting, process automation, risk management and cash flow management, demonstrating a strong focus on improving efficiency and decision-making.

A notable finding is the gap between technology adoption and value measurement. While more than 80% of organisations have established formal methodologies for measuring technology investment returns, relatively few respondents describe their ability to measure AI returns as highly effective. This suggests finance leaders have a ways to go to demonstrate tangible business outcomes from transformation investments.

Cost optimisation remains a significant focus. Automation, technology rationalisation and cloud-based systems are delivering measurable efficiency gains, reinforcing the role of technology-enabled transformation in helping finance functions maintain productivity and control costs.

Finding the gap

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Notable findings

01 AI adoption is widespread, but strategy maturity is lagging.

02 Data remains the foundation of finance transformation.

03 Measuring AI ROI lags.

04 Automation is delivering the strongest gains in efforts to optimize costs and achieve efficiencies.

05 Economic and trade uncertainty is impacting finance activities.

01

AI adoption is widespread, but strategy maturity is lagging

Nearly 64% of finance functions in Australia are using AI but not under a defined strategy, while only around 12% report deploying AI through a formal strategic framework.

Why this matters

Many finance teams have moved beyond AI curiosity and into active deployment, but governance, operating models and enterprise-wide alignment may not be keeping pace.

What CFO and finance leaders should consider

The next phase of AI success will depend less on technology selection and more on governance, workforce readiness and repeatable implementation frameworks.

02

Data remains the foundation of finance transformation

The highest-rated priorities for Australian finance leaders are:

-  Security and privacy of data
-  Data insights and analytics
-  Access to broader internal and external datasets
-  AI

Why this matters

Finance leaders recognise that AI outcomes are only as strong as the underlying data environment, including its security.

What CFO and finance leaders should consider

Investments in cybersecurity, analytics, data governance and data quality are not only as important as AI initiatives, but also will help organisations realise greater value from their AI deployments.

03

Measuring AI ROI lags

More than 80% of finance leaders report having a formal methodology for measuring technology investment returns, yet most rate their ability to measure AI ROI as only somewhat or moderately effective.

Why this matters

When it comes to AI and other technology investments, boards and executive teams increasingly expect evidence of impact rather than proof of concept.

What CFO and finance leaders should consider

Establishing clear performance metrics, financial outcomes and business case disciplines will be critical to sustaining AI and technology transformation investment.

04

Automation is delivering the strongest gains

In their efforts to achieve meaningful and measurable cost and efficiency benefits as well as to optimise costs, finance functions are seeing the most progress through automation tools, analytics, process transformation and technology rationalisation – more so than through AI.

Why this matters

Australian organisations are realising value from practical, operational technology initiatives rather than relying solely on emerging AI capabilities.

What CFO and finance leaders should consider

Prioritise scalable automation opportunities that improve efficiency, reduce manual effort and strengthen financial controls.

05

Economic and trade uncertainty is impacting finance activities

Most respondents reported that economic, monetary and trade policy changes have had at least a moderate impact on financial reporting, forecasting and profitability. Cash management, by far, represents the area of finance requiring the most attention due to the impact of these changes on the enterprise.

Why this matters

The finance function is being asked to provide greater visibility, forecasting accuracy and decision support in an increasingly uncertain economic environment.

What CFO and finance leaders should consider

Organisations should strengthen scenario planning, forecasting and cash management capabilities as well as data-driven decision-making to improve resilience.





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The role of finance executives is dynamic, constantly evolving to keep pace with technology and the changing demands of internal and external customers. Protiviti helps finance leaders address their current challenges, prepare for future challenges and explore opportunities for continuous growth, delivering innovative solutions and supporting finance as a forward-thinking, strategic partner for the business.

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