

# CFO SPOTLIGHT: NEERAJ VOHRA, CFO OF FRONTIER STRATEGY GROUP

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## 1. What steps have you taken to be more strategic in your roll?

I came to the CFO role from investment banking having spent the majority of my career at Friedman Billings Ramsey heading up the FinTech and Tech Services practice. My vantage point of working with many CFOs – both raising capital and M&A – helped me understand the importance of the CFO's role in growing shareholder value. As a result, I am often brainstorming with our executive team on ideas on how to grow shareholder value. The ideas range all the way from new product development to acquisitions and everything in between. Having a good relationship with the CEO allows me to call him on an impromptu basis and suggest shareholder value creation ideas on an informal basis.

Another step is to make sure you are paying attention to what's happening in your industry so you can take advantage of some of the trends. Being in the TMT (technology, media and telecom) industry means there is never a dull moment and always something new to learn.

I have also found it helpful to interact with all parts of our organization – R&D, sales, product and marketing. And most importantly, make sure you are interacting with your clients – they are the market!

A final critical step to being more strategic is having a great finance and accounting team. Having a strong Controller as part of the team allows me the flexibility to focus on the more strategic activities. Make sure you spend all the time required to interview as many candidates as necessary to get skilled team members who complement each other.

## 2. What is the biggest challenge you are currently facing?

We spent 18 months reviewing acquisition ideas and in February announced an acquisition that almost tripled our size and doubled our global footprint – the biggest challenge I am facing is integration. Although I have done M&A transactions as an advisor, this is the first acquisition I have made as an operator so there's lots to learn.

My biggest project right now is conforming everyone's chart of accounts and installing a new cloud-based accounting software system for all geographies. Our three international locations were all run centrally from the US and had one chart of accounts but the acquisition target's international operations are decentralized and have variations in their accounts. In addition,

they were using different accounting software in the US versus Europe versus Asia. Given the fact that we have PE backing and acquisition debt, I need to be able to report consolidated financials on a timely and highly confident basis and thus the urgency in finishing this project.

**3. What are the 1-3 things that anyone who aspires to be a CFO should know about about the role that they may not have considered?**

Although most CFOs come to the position from a background in accounting, many are like me who come at it from finance or another discipline. Regardless of the experience, one of the things that anyone who aspires to be a CFO needs to appreciate is how much disparate information about the business you need to quickly understand at both the macro and detailed level. The first six months as a CFO at a new company are a blur – plan on asking lots of questions and reading lots of internal documents and contracts.

Another thing you need to know is that although the position requires you to work closely with the CEO and thus have a great working relationship with him or her, there will be times when you have to stand your ground. This often comes up in the budget forecasting process when the CEO is naturally inclined to push the numbers as much as possible and the CFO has to rein in the projections. I have learned that if the company makes the forecasts, the numbers are the CEO's. Guess who owns the forecasts if the company misses them?

Unfortunately, one other thing every aspiring and potential CFO needs to know is that there are CEOs who easily cross the line from right to wrong. I am lucky to not have that challenge now but had to deal with it earlier in my career. When that happens, you have only two choices: to go along with the CEO and lose your integrity or to leave. And once you leave, be prepared for the CEO to misrepresent your tenure at the company. My personal advice – make sure you do your own due diligence, so you pick the right CEO as a business partner.

**4. Do you have a personal mantra, words of wisdom or favorite inspirational quote?**

Yes, I remind myself of Ralph Waldo Emerson's quote "The only person you are destined to become is the person you decide to be" on a daily basis. That helps me take full responsibility for my actions.

**5. What are the 3 most important components for your personal and professional success?**

In no particular order, long days of hard work, finding a way to be part of a great team, and luck!

**6. When you are not working, how do you spend your downtime (hobbies, activities, etc.)?**

When I am not working, I am either working out, tinkering with computers, reading, cooking or exploring wines (I need to somehow find a way to put leisure travel on that list)!